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A Priceless Answer

To justify sounding a false alarm that doctors’ opposition will torpedo single-payer health-care reform, Mike Konczal turns to a Koch-brothers-funded analysis that claims Medicare for All would either slash doctors’ income and hospital funding or break the bank (“The Score: $5 Trillion Questions,” May 13).

Konczal credulously adopts the Koch study’s underestimate of single-payer savings on insurance overhead. But more important, he (like that study) ignores overwhelming evidence that single-payer would save doctors and hospitals vast amounts on billing, insurance paperwork, and other wasteful tasks that are required by the current byzantine payment system but would be eliminated under single-payer. For instance, a recent Harvard Business School and Duke University study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that the average primary-care doctor at an efficient group practice spent $99,581 (and 243 hours) annually on billing. That’s four times what Canadian doctors spend interacting with insurers.

The $75,000 savings in per-doctor billing costs means doctors’ take-home pay could be stable even if their per-patient revenue goes down. It also means they could use the time they currently spend jostling with insurers to deliver (and bill for) more care.

A similar calculus applies to hospitals. At a six-hospital system in Toronto, the equivalent of just 5.5 full-time employees handle all insurance billing and patient collections. A comparable hospital system in the US employs more than 200 people for those tasks. US hospitals spend one-quarter of their budgets on administration, versus 12 percent in Canada. Streamlining hospital administration by paying hospitals global budgets (the way we currently pay fire departments and Canada pays hospitals) would produce major savings, freeing up vast resources for care. Indiscriminately slashing hospital budgets, by contrast, would be neither necessary nor desirable under Medicare for All reform—and the House and Senate bills propose no such thing.

All told, single-payer could save doctors and hospitals about $225 billion annually on billing and bureaucratic costs (in addition to about $220 billion saved on insurance overhead and tens of billions more from streamlining the billing for nursing homes, home-care agencies, etc., and by lowering drug prices), offsetting the costs of providing first-dollar comprehensive coverage to everyone in the nation. Even though Konczal doesn’t understand that, most doctors do. That (and altruism) explains why single-payer is now doctors’ favorite health-care-reform option and 23,000 have joined Physicians for a National Health Program.

**David U. Himmelstein, MD**
Co-Founder
Physicians for a National Health Program
New York City

**Steffie Woolhandler, MD, MPH**
Co-Founder
Physicians for a National Health Program
New York City

**Adam Gaffney, MD, MPH**
President
Physicians for a National Health Program
Boston

On the Record

Kudos to *The Nation* for publishing Mark Hertsgaard and Kyle Pope’s article about the failure of the media to report on the threats of climate change (“Fixing the Media’s Climate Failure,” May 6). They do a masterly job of reviewing the problems with reporting, the history of nonreporting, and how the media can over-
Duck and Dodge

Tax policy, usually an underdiscussed subject, has become a heated issue in the race for 2020, with Democratic candidates offering proposals to redress some long-standing unfairness in the tax code. Elizabeth Warren has a bold proposal to levy a new wealth tax, and Bernie Sanders is calling to significantly hike the rate on inheritances.

But before any new taxes are imposed, we have to grapple with a problem plaguing our existing tax structure: A lot of people already avoid paying what they owe. That problem is worst at the top of the income scale, yet the IRS too often expends its precious resources going after the poor.

Our current president offers a particularly egregious example of what the rich can get away with. Over the course of his time in the business world, there were two consecutive years when Donald Trump was the biggest loser in the country, and in numerous other years he bled more money than “nearly any other individual American taxpayer,” according to a recent bombshell report in The New York Times. He lost more than $1 billion over a decade. He has defended himself by pointing out that by declaring such big losses, he was able to reduce his tax bill. In fact, from what we can gather, he may have avoided paying any federal income taxes at all in many years.

Though Trump’s defense puts a big dent in his boasts about his business acumen, it is legal to write off losses. According to tax-law professor Lily Batchelder, “Claiming large tax losses is one of a handful of positions taxpayers must automatically disclose to the I.R.S. as potentially abusive tax shelters.” And the Times has unearthed other examples of Trump and his family dodging taxes through schemes and, in some instances, outright fraud during the 1990s. That included setting up sham corporations to funnel money from his parents to him and his siblings, undervaluing their real-estate holdings by hundreds of millions of dollars, and taking improper deductions. Fred and Mary Trump gave their children over $1 billion but paid just 5 percent of it in taxes, despite the tax on gifts and inheritances at the time standing at 55 percent.

There are plenty of other ways Donald Trump has wriggled out of tax obligations. Some may be legal, and some are likely not, but all are troubling examples of the ways the rich can avoid paying their fair share. In the early 1990s, he used a complicated maneuver to essentially disappear hundreds of millions of dollars on which he would have owed taxes—a move “so legally dubious his own lawyers advised him that the Internal Revenue Service would most likely declare it improper if he were audited,” the Times reported in 2016. He has aggressively fought to reduce what he owes to state and local governments by arguing that the on-paper value of his properties should be lowered, even claiming to tax authorities that his holdings were worth less than the value he assigned them in other legal documents.

It’s impossible, of course, to say whether he has illegally shirked his tax obligations and, if he has, by how much and for how long. That’s because unlike every other president since Richard Nixon, Trump has refused to publicly release his tax returns. Even as Congress has sought to get the Treasury Department to turn over these documents, as it is legally obligated to do, the Trump administration has refused. If he has indeed improperly avoided paying the IRS what he owes, that makes Trump pretty typical for his cohort. The more income people have, the larger the share of it they are likely to have misreported to the IRS. This phenomenon is most acute for the richest 1 percent; those most likely to accurately report their taxes, on the other hand, are the lowest-income filers.

But the IRS has become toothless when it comes to cracking down on tax evasion among the wealthy, thanks to a series of steep budget cuts over the last decade. Its annual budget has fallen by $2 billion since 2010. Audits have subsequently fallen by 42 percent as staff and resources dwindled. And they have declined most precipitously for the rich: Audits of the top 1 percent fell from 8 percent in 2011 to 2.5 percent in 2017, while the amount the IRS recouped from millionaires dropped by more than $3 billion.
over the last eight years. And when the rich do get audited, it tends to be a far less thorough undertaking than it was before the agency’s budget was cut.

That’s not to say that the IRS is sitting on its hands, though. As it’s gone easier on the rich, the agency has kept its sights trained on the poor. While the audit rate for those making millions of dollars a year has fallen 52 to 70 percent, it has dropped by only about a third for people who receive the earned income tax credit. Audits of EITC recipients, who make less than $55,000 a year, accounted for a bigger share of audits in 2017 than in 2011. “As the IRS has dwindled in size and capability, audits of the poor have accounted for more of what it does,” report ProPublica’s Paul Kiel and Jesse Eisinger. That’s because congressional Republicans have pressured the IRS to keep cracking down on the program’s overpayments, even as they continue slashing the agency’s budget. (Research suggests that when EITC recipients misreport, the problem usually lies in the complexity of the law, leading to honest mistakes—not because poor people are trying to defraud the government.)

If there’s a tax-evasion problem, it festers at the top of our income scale, not at the bottom. And yet the rich are oupplaying the cop on that beat. Trump likes to brag that not paying taxes makes him “smart.” We shouldn’t let wealthy people like him outsman our government and get away with shirking what they owe.  

—from Bryce Covert, The Nation

**Coalition of the Killing**

**The “B Team” is pushing for war against Iran.**

ENgaged on by the ultra-hawkish duo of National Security Adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, President Donald Trump has brought US-Iranian relations to the brink of war. Like the war against Iraq in 2003, launched on the pretext of spurious charges about nonexistent Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and links between Saddam Hussein and 9/11, the crisis with Iran is a manufactured one. And were it to occur, a war between the United States and Iran would have incalculable consequences—for Iran’s civilian population, for the entire region, and for the world’s economy, still dependent for a third of its oil on shipments from the Persian Gulf. It is a war that the American people, its representatives in Congress, America’s allies, and the United Nations cannot allow to happen.

There should be no mistaking White House intentions. In May, Washington reinforced its already overwhelming military presence in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Central Asia by dispatching an aircraft carrier, a B-52 bomber force, a Patriot missile battery, and other assets to the region, threatening Iran with “unrelenting force” while issuing unproven and highly questionable charges that Iran and its “proxies” may be about to attack US forces. Underscoring the threat, Bolton reportedly demanded that the Pentagon provide him with an option to dispatch 120,000 troops to the region. Those unprovoked actions followed draconian new economic sanctions that, Pompeo said, would bring Iran’s oil exports to zero, and an announcement that Washington was ending waivers that allow countries such as India, Turkey, and Japan to buy Iranian oil. Those new sanctions also target Iran’s exports of steel and other metals. And in an utterly unprecedented action, the State Department designated Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, its main military force, as a terrorist organization while ratcheting up recent US rhetoric claiming Iran is an “outlaw regime” that uses “terrorism as a tool of statecraft” while “spread[ing] may-hem across the Middle East.”

As if that were not enough, on May 3 the administration took a momentous step aimed directly at the heart of the Iran nuclear accord, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. No longer, the White House said, would the United States permit Iran to enrich uranium or “transfer enriched uranium out of Iran in exchange for natural uranium.” Both of these activities were explicitly allowed under the JCPOA, which was signed by President Barack Obama in 2015.

In response, Iran declared that it would no longer abide by some of the provisions of the now-crippled JCPOA. And Tehran gave an ultimatum of sorts to the Europeans: Either help break US economic sanctions within 60 days, or Iran may cancel the main provisions of the accord and resume producing highly enriched uranium. “The nuclear deal has not produced any positive outcome,” Javad Zarif, Iran’s foreign minister, told The Nation in a meeting with a small group of reporters at the end of April. “So we will decide, the Iranian people will decide, about the future of this engagement. They have lost hope. They have lost faith in the utility of international engagement. And that is alarming.” The entire edifice of the six-power agreement with Iran may be about to crumble. For Trump-administration hawks, that puts their cherished military option back on the table.

One spark—a rogue militia attack on US forces in Iraq, a battle involving Iran-allied forces in Syria or Lebanon, an incident in the Persian Gulf—could set off the conflagration that Trump’s advisers seem to want.

Who else wants war? It isn’t just Bolton, who has advocated war with Iran for many years. Joining Bolton on what Zarif calls the “B Team” are Bibi, bin Salman, and bin Zayed (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Abu Dhabi’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, the effective ruler of the United Arab Emirates). Together, they represent Trump’s Coalition of the Killing.

With Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan already plagued by conflicts, a war with Iran would destabilize virtually all of southwestern Asia, sending each of those ongoing wars into higher gear and prompting Iran to strike back at US, Saudi, and Israeli interests in the region. Lebanon’s powerful Hezbollah militia, a leading ally of Iran, could launch its vast arsenal of upgraded missiles (continued on page 8)
In 1972, the British art critic John Berger responded to the proliferation of television by making his own show. The series, called *Ways of Seeing*, encouraged viewers to think critically about the images flowing through their sets, connecting theories from thinkers like Walter Benjamin to midcentury media consumption. He adapted the show into a book with the same name that year. Damon Krukowski set out to emulate Berger’s model in his new book, *Ways of Hearing*. Noting how podcasts, streaming music, and other audio saturate contemporary life, he hoped to shine some light on the ways that the digitization of sound has profoundly reconfigured our listening habits.

*Ways of Hearing* began life as a podcast series on Radiotopia, but Krukowski, following Berger, always meant to publish it as a book as well. A slim volume with eye-catching illustrations, *Ways of Hearing* invites readers to consider how the shift from analog to digital distribution has changed our relationships to music and to one another. It’s an accessible critique of capitalism disguised as a meditation on technology. —Sasha Geffen

**SG:** The book is more or less an illustrated transcript of the podcast. How do these two incarnations of the project work in concert?

**DK:** The book came about because as I made the podcast, I had in mind this television series by John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. He’s using ideas from Benjamin and other critical thinkers from the early 20th century, and he’s popularizing them, but he’s doing it in a way that uses the new medium. So I had this very specific model in mind for the podcast. Where we are right now in our media culture is a very aural moment. Everyone’s got earbuds in. There’s this real mania for listening, and yet I don’t feel like there’s a lot of critical discussion. So I thought, “OK, let’s use the medium the way Berger did.”

**SG:** Were you writing for people who grew up with digital sound or people who had lived through the shift from analog to digital?

**DK:** Broadcast—radio and podcasting—is such a beautiful, democratic thing. It goes out in the air, and you don’t know where it goes. That’s a wonderful openness that I wanted to embrace. Radiotopia coached me toward that. They would go through my scripts and call attention to language I used that maybe not everybody knows. I never struck any of these words out, but I did make sure they were intelligible from context. It was a project meant to be democratizing and popular, like Berger’s.

As for the book, it’s small. It’s illustrated. It’s paperback. It’s cheap. You don’t feel like it’s not for you, I wanted to be as generous as I possibly could.

**SG:** The powers that be are working to create a docile con-

They want to keep you on their platform. That’s the danger of this moment, economically and technologically; no alternatives. [Corporations] squeezing out alternatives—buying them out, putting them out of business.

**SG:** I see glimpses of alternatives, new platforms where people communicate in ways that aren’t profitable yet. I’ve discovered music non-algorithmically through the video-sharing app TikTok. A lot of it is young people being silly for the camera. You get these moments, and then they get eaten up by the machine.

**DK:** I feel very positive about youthful uses of technology. They’re continually chaotic and inventive and noncorporate. All these corporations are bewildered by how their platforms are used by young people, and that’s fantastic.

**SG:** What tools can people use to sneak their way out of that conditioning?

**DK:** I think it’s going to be through criticism. That might be a pat Marxist answer, but I really do believe that. To put it in old-fashioned terms, I find that a lot of our online life is very alienating. It can be very depressing in the way it changes our relationships from person-to-person to person-to-corporation.

People deserve better and often hanker for it but don’t know how to start constructing it. I think that’s the gift of criticism, to alert people that there might be another way to organize ourselves and make decisions about things. That’s contradictory to a lot of the goals of these companies running our digital lives. They don’t want you dealing with alternatives.

That’s the gift of criticism, to alert people that there might be another way to organize ourselves.
**Heartbeat-Ban Threat**

On May 7, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, a Republican, signed the most extreme abortion ban in the country. HB 481 outlaws abortion once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, usually about six weeks into a pregnancy and before many women even know they are pregnant. Doctors who violate the Georgia law can face criminal charges. The law is silent on whether the women can be prosecuted, too.

Kentucky, Mississippi, and Ohio also enacted so-called heartbeat-ban laws this year, and legislators in Missouri, Tennessee, and Alabama are vying to pass their own versions.

None of these efforts have gone unchallenged. The courts suspended the Kentucky law shortly after it was passed, and a federal judge will hear a challenge to Mississippi's in late May.

The Georgia law will not go into effect until 2020, and "everyone in America expects it will be challenged in court before then," Mary Ziegler, a law professor at Florida State University, told The Washington Post. "Courts may block it from being enforced even in 2020."

What makes the Georgia law so dangerous to reproductive rights is that it states that after a heartbeat can be detected, a fetus is a "natural person" and a "human being."

This threatens the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion nationwide. "By making the fetus a person, it's an end run around Roe," Columbia Law School professor Carol Sanger told the Post. "Once you determine a fetus is a person, you can't kill."

—Noah Flora

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**Eurovision’s Muddled DNA**

Pop genetics don’t belong in a musical event—or its marketing.

Although unfamiliar to most Americans, the Eurovision Song Contest is the longest-running televised musical event in the world. Launched in 1956 by the Eurovision broadcasting network as part of a broader attempt to unite Europe after World War II, the competition borrows from the campy musical aesthetics of Abba and Céline Dion (both past winners) and precedes popular shows like The Voice by many decades.

Eligible entrants may come from countries with a European Broadcast Union member—including nations in Europe, other states on the Mediterranean, and via no easy historical logic, Australia.

The main sponsor of this year's competition, which ran May 14 to 18 in Tel Aviv, Israel, was MyHeritage, a DNA ancestry-tracking company that launched a campaign called One Big Family to promote the event using the contestants’ genetic profiles. Unsurprisingly, most of them show relations to populations from the continent of Europe. Others reflect the identity politics of recent population shifts: Dami Im, who represented Australia, is described as having migrated Down Under as a child from “her native Korea” in a way that pits race against citizenship. Though Im is (ostensibly…hold that thought!) “not of European origin,” the MyHeritage test breathlessly reports her as “2.1% Finnish.” The dramatically hyped reveal implies that that dollop of Finnishness makes her part of the “family” after all.

Sweden’s John Lundvik, who appears to be black, has no DNA profile on the website, but 1991 Swedish champion Carola Häggkvist does. She’s supposedly “100% Northern European,” with “3300 relatives from 30 different countries” on MyHeritage that she can now reach out to directly. Never mind that having thousands of relatives in 30 separate nations would seem to call into question the possibility of being 100 percent anything at all—and instead point to the empirical truth that all humans are extremely and recently interrelated.

Häggkvist’s example demonstrates, the incoherence of simultaneously asserting purity and diversity makes sense only through the powerful cultural confusions that mistake politics and geography for biology. This romanticizing of genetic connection translated into percentages is an old problem. Describing someone as 25 or 50 or 75 percent this or that or that is a reinscription of eugenic proportionalism that goes back to slavery, to Jim Crow, to Nazi blood laws, to the walled and wartorn worlds of half-breeds, quadroons, octoroos.

Of course, it’s also a new version of an old problem. Political standoffs around the world are increasingly informed by narratives of biological difference. These beliefs have terrible implications for democracy, equal protection, and justice. Yet there is profit to be made from such fictions—so ancestry-tracking companies have invested in selling the romance of family connection as a way of mining, owning, and exploiting the samples that consumers submit to them. Ubiquitous television ads push idiotic assignments of cultural inheritance: “I’ve traded in my lederhosen for a kilt!” proclaims a satisfied customer on one. And consider 23andMe’s advertisements during the 2018 World Cup. Proffering a “new way for people to experience global events,” the company produced a campaign named Root For Your Roots. “Why not pick a team based on your genetic ancestry?” the website announcement reads. Another customer says in a sidebar, “Team England is in my DNA… Go Team England!”

It’s human to want to write ourselves into mythic narratives and epic lineages. And technology has fast-tracked the romantic memorialization of our place in the world. At its most utile, DNA ancestry tracking allows us to identify certain close familial relations and, more generally, some of the broad continental contours from which our ancestors might have come. However, it’s unfortunate that companies claim to deliver results in biologized percentages that overlap with purely social categories like race, ethnicity, and belonging to a nation-state, as well as even more incoherent designations like “Hispanic.”
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There is great irony in an arc that begins with Eurovision’s redemptive, post-Holocaust origin story yet lands us in a world where the bounds of “one big family” are mapped by assays for biological purity. This isn’t intended as disparagement of Eurovision’s greater project. Music can create community, and its prescriptions are the literal manifestations of harmony with others, despite the contest’s many controversies—from Austrian contestant Conchita Wurst, a drag queen whose 2014 win caused a homophobic backlash in Russia, Serbia and Turkey, to this year’s “parodic” promo in which the Israeli public broadcaster greeted attendees with a song touting the “complex identities” of Israelis and a line that went, “Most of us are Jews, but only some of us are greedy.”

Aware that my yearning for international chorale was born of my own experience as an African American, I watched the show and sang along. “My father raised me like the wind / Blowing softly, singing, telling fairy tales,” crooned Joci Pápai, who identifies as Roma and was Hungary’s representative this year. “He lived where every road ended / One thousand and one years aren’t enough for a life.” Now, as in the 1950s, a friendly coming together in song feels like an appealing way to soothe lives marked by loss, disappearance, and unnatural death.

But if we are to truly heal our collective sadness, we must find a path to community other than genetics. Biological reductionism is not romantic. It is not a game. It ought not be driven by data dives for profit. The powerful return of biological determinism in all parts of life—from our credit ratings to our criminal predispositions—is built upon deadly hierarchies of inheritance. We should fear this, for praxis makes perfect, and repetition, over time, will render it real.

Music creates community; its prescriptions are the literal manifestations of harmony with others.
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Lord of the Lies

Trump’s constant falsehoods threaten to undermine our democracy.

According to The Washington Post’s “Fact Checker” column, President Donald Trump made his 10,000th “false or misleading claim” on April 26, 827 days into his first term. Astonishingly, the pace of his falsehoods keeps accelerating, from fewer than five per day during his first 100 days in office to an average of more than 17 per day in the week leading up to number 10,000. During a recent 45-minute telephone interview with Fox News’ Sean Hannity, Trump managed to utter a falsehood about once every minute.

There is no discernible pattern to Trump’s lies. The Post found that 2,217 occurred during his rallies, 1,803 on his Twitter feed, and 999 in his speeches. He lied about the same topic—his imaginary border wall—on 160 separate occasions. Overall, the president has repeated 21 false claims 20 or more times, and more than 300 false claims at least three times. He has lied about everything from North Korea’s nuclear program to paying off porn actresses. He lies about steel mills and windmills. At his April 27 rally in Green Bay, Wisconsin, he lied about the weather forecast—though it turns out that weather-related falsehoods are surprisingly common with him. On the morning of July 26, 2018, for instance, the traveling press corps was informed that the president’s departure from Washington by helicopter had been canceled because of bad weather. Reporters looked up and saw nothing but sun and sky. In the Trump White House, it’s apparently OK to lie even about whether the sky is blue.

By now, just about everyone is aware of the president’s pathological predilection. When he spoke to the United Nations General Assembly in September of last year and repeated one of his favorite lies—that in his first two years in office, he had accomplished more than “almost any administration in the history of our country”—the assembled audience of world leaders burst into laughter. The tape shows Trump (briefly) speechless. He later admitted that he “didn’t expect that reaction,” but then changed his mind and fibbed yet again, claiming that he “meant to get some laughter.”

Many of Trump’s lies, of course, have significant consequences. At the Green Bay rally, he accused abortion providers of routinely murdering newborn infants. “The baby is born. The mother meets with the doctor. They take care of the baby. They wrap the baby beautifully. And then the doctors execute the baby. The mother will execute the baby.” As New York Times columnist Michelle Goldberg pointed out, “Abortion providers are regular targets of domestic terrorism, and Trump’s lies serve as incitement.” Earlier that week, Goldberg continued, “a 30-year-old Trump supporter named Matthew Haviland was arrested and accused of threatening to rape and murder a professor who supports abortion rights. According to an affidavit by a F.B.I. joint terrorism task force officer, Haviland wrote in an email, ‘I will kill every Democrat in the world so we never more have to have our babies brutally murdered by abortion terrorists.’”

Even after Trump’s 10,000 lies in office, many in the media still find themselves paralyzed by journalistic practices that prevent them from calling a lie a lie or a president who tells lies a liar. And so the media continue to enable him. The day after the rally, The New York Times reported that what Trump had done was to “revive...a standard, and inaccurate, refrain about doctors ‘executing babies.’” That’s not quite the same as saying Trump lied.

Daniel Dale of The Toronto Star, who also tracks the president’s deceptions, says that most journalists rarely bother to mention that Trump’s statements are filled with falsehoods. “If you watched a network news segment, read an Associated Press article or glanced at the front page of the newspaper in the city that hosted him, you’d typically have no idea that he was so wholly inaccurate.” Most coverage, Dale points out, reads something like “Trump speaks to big excited crowd, insults X and Y, talks policy Z.”

According to a CNN study, “The Mueller report documents at least 77 specific instances of Trump’s lies or misleading statements.” Many in the media find themselves paralyzed by journalistic practices that prevent them from calling a lie a lie.
where President Donald Trump’s campaign staff, administration officials and family members, Republican backers and his associates lied or made false assertions” to the public.

Predictably, Trump and his handpicked attorney general, William Barr, have been lying about those lies ever since. Even before Barr undertook what Lawfare’s Paul Rosenzweig termed a “transparent effort to mislead the public in advance of the report’s release,” only 29 percent of Americans agreed with Trump that he had been exonerated—much less with his lunatic contention that “This was a coup. This was an attempted overthrow of the United States government.”

It turns out, thankfully, that most Americans don’t believe Trump. Fewer than three in 10, according to a Post “Fact Checker” poll conducted late last year, believe his most common lies, and barely one in six believe anything close to all of them. Sixty-five percent of Americans don’t think that Trump is being honest with the country. What worries me, however, is that people don’t realize how much more dishonest Trump is than any of his predecessors. Only about 50 percent of Americans said they think he is “less honest” than any previous president. This illusion is fed by the media’s blasé coverage of Trump’s prodigious lying, and it contributes to a cynicism that only invites further dishonesty.

In her 1967 essay “Truth and Politics,” Hannah Arendt noted the importance of “the consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth” as a means of undermining not merely democracy but also “the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world,” thereby laying the groundwork for the replacement of a democratic system with a totalitarian one. It’s hard not to conclude that we are well on our way.

The illusion that Trump’s prodigious lying is somehow normal contributes to a cynicism that only invites further dishonesty.
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Letters

(continued from page 2)

I fully agree with the analysis of “Fixing the Media’s Climate Failure,” but I have a different take on fixing priorities, which involves changes in the message, messenger, target audience, and context.

Changing the message: The climate threat is more serious than widely portrayed, even by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, if we consider thawing Arctic ice and tundra that will increasingly release huge amounts of methane and CO2. We should not abandon hope, but this broader message increases the urgency to abandon fossil fuels.

Changing the messenger: It’s time to give more attention to the many collective statements by scientists, which could be publicized by an annual top-10 list of climate-related reports. Books by single authors are useful, but authoritative online reports with readable summaries pack more punch.

Expanding the target audience: Beyond urging journalists to learn the science, key publications should expand their coverage. For instance, The New York Times should begin a weekly sustainability section; Time magazine could include at least one or two green leaders in its annual roundup of the 100 most influential leaders.

Regarding context: Climate change should be seen as part of a larger global environmental emergency caused by pollution and human populations displacing and despoiling flora and fauna. Climate warming aggravates negative trends in the oceans, our landscapes, and biodiversity, but it is not the only cause of these trends. Even if warming is halted, which is very unlikely, these other damaging forces will continue. Thus, more attention needs to be given by the media to the United Nation’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Climate change must also be seen as an increasingly essential part of thinking about national and global security.

Today’s wicked problems will not be solved but can be alleviated. Similarly, the media’s climate failure will not be fixed but requires constant pressures on many fronts.

Michael Marien Lafayette, N.Y.

Corrections and Clarifications

In “A Republic of Readers” [April 29], Marc Cooper writes that Mexicans spend about five hours a day reading, just a few minutes per day less than readers in the United States. However, both figures, according to a 2005 study, should refer to the number of hours people in each country spend reading per week. We regret the error.

Also in “A Republic of Readers,” Cooper writes that the Mexican government reportedly shot 26 student activists in the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968. This figure, which is the official government tally, should have been framed as a minimum; the actual death toll is believed to have been significantly higher.

Due to an editing error, the penultimate sentence of Katha Pollitt’s column “Harvard’s Strike at 50” [May 20/27] says that Harvard “hasn’t been reluctant to meet student demands about fossil-fuel divestment.” The university has been reluctant to meet student demands. We regret the error.
At this point, we all know that climate change is happening (or at least most of us do). But do we really know what it will mean to live on a planet transformed by it? We know the seas will rise, but have we truly reckoned with the fact that they are on track to be four to eight feet higher by the end of the century, at which point they will drown the Maldives, the White House, St. Mark’s Basilica, and the Bengal tiger’s habitat? We know that Earth is getting hotter, but have we actually come to terms with what it would mean if half the world were so hot that it would essentially cook the human body to death, as would be the case with a temperature rise of 5 or 6 degrees Celsius?

That we do not really grasp what climate change will bring is the central premise of David Wallace-Wells’s *The Uninhabitable Earth*. An editor at *New York* magazine, Wallace-Wells describes in chilling detail the possibility of year-round fires scorching the planet; latent plagues revived as the ice that harbors these frozen pathogens melts; growing numbers of people left homeless by climate-fueled disasters, rising sea levels, increasingly scarce resources, and the toxic effects of pollution. Very little of what he reports here is new, as Wallace-Wells notes; most of it has been predicted in scientific studies for years. This is part of his point: For decades, we have avoided thinking about the catastrophe on the horizon. His gambit is that, by offering this information in the form of a taut, evocative, and frequently fires scorching the planet; latent plagues revived as the ice that harbors these frozen pathogens melts; growing numbers of people left homeless by climate-fueled disasters, rising sea levels, increasingly scarce resources, and the toxic effects of pollution. Very little of what he reports here is new, as Wallace-Wells notes; most of it has been predicted in scientific studies for years. This is part of his point: For decades, we have avoided thinking about the catastrophe on the horizon. His gambit is that, by offering this information in the form of a taut, evocative, and frequently
terrible view of the future that awaits, he might make the reality hit home in a way that scattered headlines do not.

The problem is that Wallace-Wells is not the first to attempt such a strategy. Since we started worrying about climate change, apocalyptic messages have been the bread and butter of climate writing. In 1988, when a major heat wave baked America, Time observed somberly that “the earth spoke, like God warning Noah of the deluge.” The “dreaded ‘greenhouse effect’” appeared to be underway. The following year, Bill McKibben detailed the science and likely effects of climate change in *The End of Nature*, warning that “our ability to survive the heat in the summer of 1988...is no proof of our ability to survive what’s coming.” Since then, there have been many more books and articles crying doom. Activists around the world have also raised the alarm through protest. For years, tens of thousands have demonstrated in the streets of Copenhagen and Paris and Rio and New York. But even so, emissions continue to rise steadily.

The daunting challenge of saying something about climate change that will break through where other warnings have not is at the heart of both *The Uninhabitable Earth* and *Losing Earth*, the new book by Nathaniel Rich. Both writers try to understand why it is that we have known about climate change for nearly four decades and yet seem to go through the same cycle of discovery time after time. Both try their best to force us out of this pattern. Yet both ultimately present variations on a familiar theme: They explain the problem in well-researched detail and issue calls for action in the closing pages. But it’s not 1988 anymore. What we need to know now is not what climate change will do but what we should—that is, how to think about climate change as a political problem.

**The Uninhabitable Earth**
*Life After Warming*
By David Wallace-Wells
Tim Duggan Books. 320 pp. $27

**Losing Earth**
*A Recent History*
By Nathaniel Rich
MCD. 224 pp. $25

political appointees, members of Congress, economists, philosophers, and anonymous bureaucrats” who learn about climate change, become alarmed, wonder why no one is doing anything about it, and then try, unsuccessfully, to mobilize a response.

In Rich’s cast of characters, there are two stars: the environmental lobbyist Rafe Pomerance and the climate scientist James Hansen. The story opens as Pomerance, then an organizer for the environmental nonprofit Friends of the Earth, stumbles upon a warning, in a single paragraph buried deep in an Environmental Protection Agency report on coal, that the use of fossil fuels could eventually bring about “significant and damaging changes” to the planet’s atmosphere. Bewildered as to why he has never heard of this threat before, Pomerance asks around and finds his way to an article about the scientist Gordon MacDonald, who had recently produced a report for the Department of Energy on the effects of carbon dioxide on Earth’s atmosphere. By now fully alarmed, Pomerance starts doing what he does best: making phone calls, first to scientists and then to politicians.

Meanwhile, Hansen is hard at work at NASA studying the atmosphere of Venus. In 1979, he is asked by Jule Charney, a scientist charged with producing an early report on the greenhouse effect, to bring his expertise to bear on the atmospheric conditions of Earth. Hansen uses his knowledge of atmospheric function and the power of new supercomputers to create what he calls “Mirror Worlds”: computer models sophisticated enough to play out the possible futures under different atmospheric conditions. For example, if carbon emissions double, then, according to Hansen’s models, Earth would warm by 4 degrees Celsius. By 1981, the two men’s paths converge. After reading one of Hansen’s studies, Pomerance pays him a visit. He is in search of the face of climate science and finds in Hansen a plainspoken Midwesterner perfect for congressional hearings. The two men, along with others now worried about global warming, organize and attend conferences for climate scientists and policy-makers in Florida and Cape Cod, Massachusetts. They meet with EPA staffers and representatives from the American Petroleum Institute. They draft reports explaining in detail the threat posed by a warming planet. In hearing after hearing, they beg Washington’s power players to take this threat seriously. Gradually, they find allies: then-Senators Al Gore, John Chafee, and Timothy Wirth; former EPA administrator William Reilly; the environmental lawyer Gus Speth; scientists like MacDonald and Stephen Schneider; and dozens of other dignitaries. But action remains elusive.

Rich follows these efforts through the 1980s, marking the incremental advances until 1988, when Pomerance and Hansen achieve a breakthrough: The combination of a major heat wave in the United States and Hansen’s forceful testimony before the Senate finally puts climate change in the headlines. A few days later, Pomerance attends the “Woodstock for climate change” in Toronto to discuss emissions-reduction targets with scientists and politicians from around the world, all hoping to build support for a then seemingly plausible reduction of 20 percent by the year 2000.

Yet as the climate message picks up momentum, it begins to generate pushback. Though the oil industry conducted internal research on the greenhouse effect for years, most of its employees were ignorant of the relationship between fossil-fuel use and climate change until Hansen’s testimony. Faced with this challenge to their core commodity, industry executives decide that their best option is to enter the debate posing as benign skeptics—to question alarmist predictions, emphasize uncertainties, and discourage energetic regulation. But even as the industry begins to mobilize, it plays only a minor role in Rich’s narrative, one described in just a few pages. Instead, the main heavy here is former New Hampshire governor John Sununu, the White House chief of staff during the George H.W. Bush administration, a contrarian budget hawk who is suspicious of environmentalists and angry about the challenge they pose to the president’s authority.

Sununu comes out of nowhere in the closing chapters of the book to thwart what little progress has been made, directing the Office of Management and Budget to alter Hansen’s testimony and declaring climate change verboten in White House discussions. Yet Rich’s portrayal of him as a lone villain is so unconvincing that it merely magnifies the absence of the other opponents, the fossil-fuel industry in particular.
IDEAS WITH IMPACT

RENOVATING DEMOCRACY
NATHAN GARDELS AND NICOLAS BURGOSOEN
GOVERNING IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION AND DIGITAL CAPITALISM

OCEAN OUTBREAK
CREW HARRELL
CONFRONTING THE RISING TIDE OF MARINE LESTANCE

HUSTLE AND GIG
ALEXANDRIE J. RAVENEL
STRUGGLING AND SURVIVING IN THE SURIVAL ECONOMY

dispossessed
NOEL K. WATSON
HOW PREATORY SEDUCIBILITY FOELED THE AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS

MEAN GIRL
LISA DUGGAN
AYN RAND AND THE CULTURE OF CHERED

NO GO WORLD
RUBEN ANDESSON
HOW FEAR IS RERDRAWING OUR MAPS AND INFECTING OUR POLITICS

RED ROUND GLOBE HOT BURNING
PETER LEBNAUTH
AT THE CROSSROAD OF COMMON'S, CLOSURES, OF LOVE AND TERROR, OF RACE AND CLASS, AND OF KATE AND NED DESCOUR

There Is No More Haiti
GREG BECKETT
BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH IN PORT-ESPINISE

THRESHOLD
IEVA JUSONIYTE
EMERGENCE RESPONSES ON THE US-MEXICO BORDER

DEPORTED TO DEATH
JEREMY SLACK
NEW GERMAN VIOLENCE OF DIFFERENT IMMIGRATION

WAR OVER PEACE
URI BEN-ELIEZER
ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF ISRAEL'S NATURALISTIC NATIONALISM

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Either way, we know who wins in the end. By 1989, Pomerance has wangled a fair amount of publicity but little power to back it up. That year, he travels to an international conference in the Netherlands, where representatives of some 60 countries gather to hammer out an agreement to stabilize global carbon emissions at 1990 levels by 2000. Pomerance and other activists are there to advocate for an even more aggressive treaty—one that would not only stabilize emissions but reduce them. Yet their plan for achieving it is underwhelming, to say the least. They hope that by staging stunts and holding press conferences, they can embarrass the US delegate, Allan Bromley, into making a commitment. Unsurprisingly, the stunts have little effect. Even the less ambitious agreement to merely stabilize emissions is thwarted when Bromley works behind the scenes at Sununu's direction to torpedo it.

With this, Rich's history ends. What he sees as an age of innocence had come to a close, in two ways. It was clear that climate change was on the horizon and that it was going to be bad. But it was also becoming clear that knowledge of the threat alone would not rouse enough people to take up the common cause of planetary survival.

Much of this story is uncanny and unsettling. Reading about high-level discussions on climate change taking place a full four decades ago will disabuse you of any lingering fantasy that politics moves in a progressive direction over time. Yet although Rich shows us how some of the early advocates for action on climate change failed, he tells us very little about why. Focused as he is on a couple of characters, it is hard to get a sense of whether their meetings matter at all that much even within the Beltway; certainly, we get no sense of the wider world outside these elite circles of scientists and policymakers. Other than Sununu's vindictiveness and human shortsightedness, we have very little sense of the forces arrayed against Hansen and Pomerance. The inattention to the fossil-fuel industry is most glaring, but Rich also fails to address the consolidation of business interests more broadly against efforts to decarbonize. Nor do we get a glimpse of the movements that might have responded otherwise—say, those outside DC organizing against Reaganomics. So reading Losing Earth often feels like reading a script for a West Wing episode about climate change, only with less repartee.

Politics, for Rich, takes place primarily within the halls of power. Perhaps this is because that is simply how Pomerance and Hansen saw things. They try valiantly to persuade other elites to put aside their differences in order to tackle a common threat and are surprised when they get nowhere. They never seem to consider changing tacks or bringing outside power to bear on their insider dealings. The public, in this strategy, is an amorphous mass to be mobilized only through occasional statements to the press. The prospect of engaging with existing social movements—including those not considered environmentalist—or organizing new ones seems never to occur to them or to Rich, even though the environmental-justice movement was taking off at the same time. Ordinary people, meanwhile, are represented by a group of philosophers and economists that Rich dubs “the Fatalists,” who deduce that “we could not be counted on to save ourselves.”

The limits of Rich’s story are particularly resonant in how he frames the stakes. He narrates early efforts to act on climate change as if they were happening in isolation from the political and economic turbulence of the decade he’s chronicling. We had “something close to a blank slate in the spring of 1979,” he writes in Losing Earth’s introduction; it was a time when the subject of climate change was still free of “political toxicity and corporate agitprop.” But 1979 as a “blank slate”—really? Certainly, it’s a curious way to describe a moment characterized by spiraling inflation amid the rise of a right-wing movement on the verge of taking power.

Despite his narrow focus, Rich draws broad conclusions. Climate change, he suggests, is just the latest in a series of unfortunate events since the Industrial Revolution when “humanity lost control of its technology” and the spinning jennies, coal furnaces, and steam engines took on lives of their own. Sure, fossil-fuel companies may have acted with “mustache-twirling depravity,” but for Rich, they are only partly to blame. Don’t kid yourself, he admonishes us: “Everyone knew,” but no one did anything. The problem, in the end, lies with all of us. “We do not like to think about loss, or death,” he solemnly declares, and so we looked away.

Ultimately, Rich’s history is told as a fable, complete with a moral. “I know that I’m complicit,” he observes. “My hands drip crude.” His epigraphs drive home this point. Several suggest that divine retribution awaits. He opens the book with a long passage from Proverbs 1:20-29, which includes the lines “And you neglected all my counsel / And did not want my reproof / I will also laugh at your calamity / I will mock when your dread comes.” He concludes with the lyrics to Tiny Tim’s “The Other Side”: “The ice caps are melting / The tide is rushing in / All the world is drowning / To wash away the sin.”

If you’re looking for sin, you’ll find it. But Rich could stand to look a little harder in the direction of the oil companies, energy lobbyists, and assorted Reaganites arrayed against Pomerance and his little band of environmentalists. The former appear hardly at all in the story he tells, and when they do, their good faith is generally assumed—even though they begin to act nefariously the minute it seems the underdogs might pose a threat. Rich seems constitutionally incapable of grasping the role of power in the political processes he claims to diagnose. Not everyone’s hands, however, are clean, are on its levers. And Rich’s narrative, which explicitly seeks to dissuade readers from blaming the fossil-fuel companies for our current predicament, helps excuse those whose are.

It is an astonishing feat of false equivalence, for example, to suggest that someone who might have seen a video about climate change in high school or an item in an environmental newsletter—to name a couple of the examples that Rich gives to support his claim that “everyone knew”—is responsible for the failure to do anything about climate change in a way that approaches the culpability of companies that for decades put their unfathomable resources into studying the problem, or of a political party, then on the rise, that eventually made climate-change denial all but an official line. To compare all of us to such actors is to work very hard to make the case for shared culpability.

It’s true that pointing a finger at fossil-fuel companies, oil lobbyists, and Republican Party activists alone is insufficient. The entire world runs on cheap oil, and fossil-fuel executives have done what any good capitalist would do—that is, whatever they could get away with. This doesn’t mean, of course, that we should absolve the fossil-fuel industry or its political backers of responsibility, but rather that we should...
indict the economic and political system that drives them.

While Rich zeroes in on a small group of policy elites and draws general lessons about all humanity from their actions, Wallace-Wells marshals vast quantities of data about our future but comes to few conclusions. Reflective rather than narrative in form, The Uninhabitable Earth has very few characters apart from the author himself grappling with the implications of an ever hotter world to come.

Wallace-Wells takes seriously the charge that climate change will transform every aspect of human life, and he tries to cover it all, from ethics to economics, storytelling to technology. The result is an impressively thorough and thoughtful compilation, a useful and up-to-date primer addressing everything from the likelihood of a massive methane release from the Arctic’s melting permafrost to the future of warfare in a hotter world. Yet he is, if anything, perhaps too ecumenical. In his quest to be encyclopedic, he tends toward aggregation rather than synthesis, stacking every possible climate scenario into a murkily horrifying future and introducing contradictory ideas while doing very little to reconcile them.

The first half of The Uninhabitable Earth sticks closely to the formula of the viral article that his book is based on. Wallace-Wells relentlessly details the conditions of a world transformed by climate change. Each of the 12 short chapters addresses a specific kind of doom. He examines how a warmer planet will kill life in our oceans, make our air unbreathable, burn our forests, kill our crops, bake our cities. Climate change, he argues, threatens the most basic elements of our lives—where we live, what we eat, what we drink.

Floods in 2017 affected 41 million people in South Asia and killed 1,200; with an optimistic 2 degrees Celsius of warming by 2100, he tells us, the land where 375 million people live would be flooded, including Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Mumbai. Indonesia is already making plans to move its capital from the sinking city of Jakarta.

Likewise, Wallace-Wells explains, the droughts that now occasionally ravage drier regions will threaten almost all of the world’s agricultural production, expanding the desert and creating dust bowls. Freshwater lakes and aquifers will dry up everywhere from the American West’s Ogallala Aquifer to central Asia’s Aral Sea. Cape Town, South Africa; São Paulo, Brazil; and Barcelona, Spain, have already faced water shortages in the past few years.

After this deluge of data, Wallace-Wells tries to make sense of why we haven’t acted to stop this foretold catastrophe and discusses how its unfolding will shape our lives. It is here, in the exploration of the social dimensions of climate change, that his book most clearly intersects with and diverges from Rich’s. Wallace-Wells opens The Uninhabitable Earth by emphasizing the speed with which climate change has worsened: Half of all carbon emissions from fossil fuels have been produced in the past three decades and about 85 percent since the end of World War II. Rich notes this too but sees it as evidence of futility: In the years since we came to understand it, climate change has only advanced, he says. For Wallace-Wells, this speeding-up indicates that the blame lies not with humanity as a whole. We don’t need to go back to the Industrial Revolution to learn what went wrong; instead, he argues, the problem is far more recent. It is a problem that has dramatically worsened within the span of a human lifetime.

On the question of its causes, however, Wallace-Wells wavers. At times he tends, like Rich, toward self-flagellation: “Each of us imposes some suffering on our future selves every time we flip a light switch, buy a plane ticket, or fail to vote.” Yet he also recognizes that addressing climate change through individual consumer choices is not sufficient and, unlike Rich, he is willing to name the system within which these choices are made. The left, he concedes, is right to center capitalism’s role in climate change.

Despite this concession, Wallace-Wells remains unwilling to follow through on its implications. “Many on the Left point to the all-encompassing system,” he writes, “saying that industrial capitalism is to blame. It is.” But—and there’s always a but—we are all stakeholders in capitalism, all complicit by way of our consumer habits.

It’s true in a very basic sense that we all bear some measure of responsibility for climate change. We all rely on fossil fuels; they are impossible to avoid. There is no ethical consumption under climate change, you might say. Yet in their fixation on individual complicity, both Wallace-Wells and Rich miss the point of structural analysis. We can’t absolve ourselves as individuals without changing the political and economic systems that shape our lives. Capitalism is the biggest of all, and yet people have been trying to systematically address its ills for a long time. At times they have even succeeded. This is not to say that it’s easy, but it certainly isn’t impossible. Many people have been able to understand social problems in relation to capitalism while understanding that capitalism is a human creation that can be unmade. Millions of people have come to understand their experiences in relationship to its larger dynamics and have identified political antagonists while recognizing that the problem is larger than those villains alone. All of these lessons are relevant to the struggle to understand and politicize climate change.

To his credit, Wallace-Wells clearly wants to believe that we can keep Earth habitable. He criticizes full-on doomsayers like Paul Kingsnorth, the English writer and founder of the Dark Mountain Project, who has argued that the destruction of nature is too far advanced and that we should give up and move to the woods as the earth revolts and civilization collapses. Wallace-Wells, by contrast, insists over and over that we have a shot at avoiding the worst and that it is our duty to take it. But to close his book by declaring that the portrait he has painted in such gruesome detail throughout previous chapters is “entirely elective” feels like the plot device that declares “It was all a dream!” That is to say, it is not very convincing—and not only because of the whiplash, but also because, after so many pages describing in sweeping terms what a hotter future holds and the reasons we’ve collectively failed to avert it, it is very hard to imagine how we could have acted differently.

If Rich’s narrative focuses too closely on the efforts of a few individuals, Wallace-Wells’s offers too little sense that humans are acting at all. Oil and climate are the primary actors in his story. Temperatures rise, and so does violence; as the use of fossil fuels expands, so does progress. Next to these heavy hitters, human agency seems to count for little. And while Wallace-Wells insists that we need to engage in politics, he gives little sense of what that entails. His exhortations, moreover, imply that the moment for politics is now or never: We can either prevent the truly catastrophic warming from happening or pass a point of
no return and suffer the dark fate his book describes. But politics will continue to shape the world long after temperatures rise.

Rich too, in closing, pivots to a call for action, but he urges us to think about climate change not as a political issue but as a moral one—for “if we speak about climate as only a political issue,” he writes, citing the now-partisan nature of American climate politics, “it will suffer the fate of all political issues.” Moral claims, he argues, can override the kind of petty maneuvering that doomed the efforts that Losing Earth describes. But casting “the issue in human, rather than political terms,” as Rich would have us do, does not simply make the political challenges go away.

“W
e have everything we need but the political will” is the oldest climate moral in the book, and one that very well might lead many to believe things really are hopeless. But the political will we need isn’t found only in Washington or just for leaders to discover or muster. Politics isn’t simply a “moral multiplier,” as Wallace-Wells describes it, or a battle of lobbyists, as Rich suggests; it’s an activity that has its own histories, lessons, and forms of resilience, all of which we would do well to study far more closely.

In fact, the absence of climate politics from these books makes them feel already somewhat dated. After all, climate change is very much on the political agenda these days, forced into the spotlight by a new wave of action that combines the language of scientific urgency with calls for justice, against mounting evidence that climate change is here in the form of thousands of people killed by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and thousands of homes destroyed by wildfires in California. Indigenous water protectors and climate activists have blocked routes for the Keystone and Dakota Access oil pipelines; Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—who was inspired to run for office by the Dakota Access protests—announced immediately after her election that she would push for a Green New Deal and joined Sunrise Movement protesters sitting in House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office. They are part of an explosion of movements more generally, from Red for Ed to Black Lives Matter, insisting that things cannot continue as they have.

It is hard to tell what will come out of these various surges of political energy and action; they will surely unfold in ways we cannot predict. But what is clear is that these activists’ understanding of the problem extends beyond technical analyses of carbon emissions to encompass the broader system of corporate impunity, oligarchic power, and deep racial and class inequality within which climate change is unfolding. Above all else, what they understand is that tackling climate change requires collective action.

To recognize the significance of these new movements’ rise is not to say that you have to be cheery about our prospects. Nothing, not even the most ambitious version of the Green New Deal, is going to solve climate change, if by that we mean make it not happen, which is not at all the same thing as saying that it doesn’t matter what we do. But the point isn’t to arrive at a single solution. There is no real end, after all. The next 12 years are crucial for determining how much worse it will get, but the decisions before us will continue long afterward: decisions about whether to build walls or welcome Refugees, about how to relocate homes as seas rise and how to make food as crops wither, about how to live together on a more difficult planet. We will be living with climate change forever. It is heavy as hell. But we must get used to it—and then figure out what to do next. And next. And next.
Lauren Kessler “has written a keenly observed and deeply felt narrative about what it means to be locked up for life. This book, so original and so compelling, took hold of me, and wouldn’t let me go. It was revelatory.”
— Alex Kotlowitz, bestselling author of There Are No Children Here

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— Geoffrey Paddock, author of Indiana Political Heroes

“The title of Tom Howard’s collection says everything you need to know: these stories are fierce, and they are pretty (though I’d call them beautiful instead). These shards of life offer up a strange and gorgeous and mind-clearing punch, and I look forward to the career in words Howard has in store for us all.”
— Bret Lott, author of Letters and Life and Jewel

Charlie Chaplin’s Own Story covers Chaplin’s earliest life through his first brushes with fame and depicts Chaplin as he wished to be seen in 1916, when he was on top of the world.

“This is an extraordinary memoir, self-ironic and humane, dealing with one of the darkest chapters of twentieth-century history.”
— Konrad H. Jarausch, author of Out of Ashes A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century

Rivke Zilberg “grapples with the twin challenges of being a refugee—agonizing over the fate of loved ones left behind and struggling to adapt to a strange new social, cultural, and economic environment, uncertain of her future.” —Jeffrey Shandler, author of Anne Frank Unbound

“...”

Featuring exquisite color photographs, The Life and Art of Felrath Hines explores the life, work, and artistic significance of Felrath Hines, one of the most noteworthy art conservators of the 20th century.
One condition of being logged on is to submit yourself to a confusing line of questioning: How do we know you’re real? Can you account for your sentience? Are you able to find the three matching stoplights in this grid of grainy images? Fulfilling these requests has become so routine that we barely reckon with the underlying question: Are you even a human?

The Internet’s persistent and growing sense of fakeness is nothing new. In 2013, after noticing the potential for site traffic to be dominated by bots, engineers at You-Tube coined a term for the moment when they would no longer be able to distinguish human from nonhuman activity: “the Inversion.” Maybe we’ve already reached that threshold, and maybe we don’t care that much. Every day we are faced with a mirage of fast-moving feeds, and the constant effort to make money off the Internet’s users (us) has only amplified the confusion as an increasing number of stakeholders attempt to capture and define our wants, creating more and more automated activities and algorithmic interactions. It has also produced a ton of crap—in our minds, on the Web, and in our world.

Jenny Odell, a visual artist, writer, and Stanford design lecturer, is a spelunker of this massive, ever-growing dump. Her projects, ranging from investigative journalism to performance art, are driven by what she calls her “strange fascination with the utter garbage of the internet.” For example, her 2017 photo essay “There’s No Such Thing as a Free Watch” examines the strange junk and scams that proliferate in social-media marketplaces, following the clues left behind, from North America to Asia, by an Instagram ad offering a free luxury timepiece. We find ourselves traversing vast spaces, real and imagined: retail websites stitched together from pilfered images, factories in China supplying a legion of wristwatch peddlers, direct-message threads with unrepentant Instagram hustlers. Fake brands, identities, and products are in constant gestation. The watch, Odell tells us, is just a “physical witness” to all the machinations and “shifting winds” of the various economic interests in pursuit of our eyeballs and wallets. These snake-oil salesmen are as real and integral to the global economy today as the people who make money in more traditional ways.

Odell’s new book, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*, describes itself as a “field guide” for navigating this spiderweb of digital commerce. But it is also about finding a way to escape from it, to...
create more meaningful forms of work, relationships, and selves in the face of such an onslaught of fabrication. The book expands on a talk she gave at the art and technology conference Eyeo; in it, she weaves stories about her family, her love of bird-watching, Gilles Deleuze’s idea of the “right to say nothing,” and the importance of public space into lessons about how to live “in a world where our value is determined by our productivity.” Tying all these ideas together is Odell’s notion that in the face of capitalist optimization, “doing nothing” is “an act of political resistance.” Through our inactivity, she insists, we will be able to recover a more humane world in an accelerating age of commodification.

Grounding her argument in the environment, Odell sidesteps the familiar advice, “Just turn your smartphone off.” She doesn’t want us to escape from the world of sociability but rather make new communities or at least restore old ones. For her, it’s not about abandoning communication and technology but about using it for our own ends. Despite such bold prescriptions, she doesn’t tell us exactly how we might go about doing this so much as offer up a meditation on why we should. Unlike her art, How to Do Nothing is less a work of social criticism than a personal discovery. It succeeds in detailing how one can willingly become addicted to the Internet’s attention economy and calls on us to move away from it, but it doesn’t fully confront those structures and forms of domination—24/7 surveillance, Big Tech’s grip on basic services, the proliferation of monopolies—that hinder so many of us from doing just that.

Odell grew up in Cupertino, California, a Bay Area suburb that’s home to dozens of tech companies, the largest of which is Apple. She has, from an early age, been able to observe Silicon Valley’s changing fortunes, from the dot-com bubble to the start-up explosion. At the University of California, Berkeley, she studied literature and art and wrote her thesis on Emily Dickinson’s fascicles, the hand-sewn bubble to the start-up explosion. At the University of California, Berkeley, she studied literature and art and wrote her thesis on Emily Dickinson’s fascicles, the hand-sewn booklets in which the poet kept her work. After graduation, Odell entered an MFA program in design at the San Francisco Art Institute, where she started to develop her investigative-art style, which she compares to gathering “open source intelligence,” or the sleuthing that one can do using the archives of publicly available information.

One of Odell’s earlier projects, Satellite Landscapes, mined the archives of Google Maps’ satellite images. Using photographs of power plants and waste-processing sites, she captured how the infrastructure necessary to meet human needs can seem monstrous and inhumane, even as its operations sustain life. As an artist in residence at the San Francisco dump, she continued to hone her Internet sleuthing skills in an epic dumpster dive, resulting in a collection of salvaged items that showed how even the most disparate pieces of trash are linked. In her 2014 Pipe Dream, she mined Google Maps once again; this time, she used its street views to illustrate how a crude-oil pipeline connected Portland, Maine, with Montreal.

One of Odell’s most recent projects, Excavating Calabazas Creek, used public records obtained from Valley Water, Silicon Valley’s water-management agency, to examine how the modifications to a creek in Cupertino explained her hometown’s evolving history, from farm town to sleepy suburb to tech incubator. As she puts it in her new book, “The creek is a reminder that we do not live in a simulation—a streamlined world of products, results, experiences, reviews—but rather on a giant rock” that is full of “a deep weirdness, a world of flowerings, decompositions, and seepages, of a million crawling things, of spores and lacy fungal filaments.”

Lately, Odell has also turned her sleuthing skills to reporting, including her 2018 New York Times feature “A Business With No End.” In it, she tries to solve a mystery that one of her students at Stanford brought to her: Unwanted packages from a company called Valley Fountain keep arriving at his parents’ doorstep in Palo Alto. Odell traces the origin of this mail to a building in downtown San Francisco that turns out to be home to 140 other companies (with names like Bropastures and Your Friend Bart) connected to Amazon storefronts that peddle an amazing variety of items—“fake facial wounds,” lamps, makeup, hemorrhoid creams—at a high markup.

At first, Odell thinks the whole scheme can be chased up to drop shippers, online retailers advertising items on social media that, if purchased, can be bought cheaply from a warehouse and then shipped to the customer. But she soon learns that many of these drop shippers are people employed by a network of companies affiliated with Olivet University, a religious school operated by the Korean pastor David Jang. The leader of an international Christian group known as the Community, Jang reportedly has a close financial relationship with religious publications like Christian Today and secular ones like the International Business Times and Newsweek.

Following a bread-crumble trail of LLCs, Odell manages to link the strange packages to this network of companies, describing a dizzying series of events that culminates with investigators from the Manhattan district attorney’s office raiding the offices of Newsweek as well as a planned satellite campus that Olivet was building on the site of an abandoned psychiatric hospital. “Trying to map the connections between all these entities opens a gaping wormhole,” Odell writes. “I couldn’t get over the idea that a church might be behind a network of used business books, hair straighteners, and suspiciously priced compression stockings—sold on Amazon...all while running a once-venerable American news publication into the ground.”

While the reporting in the piece is breathtaking, the experience of scrolling through “A Business With No End”—with its uncanny article design (made in collaboration with the artist Tracy Ma) filled with screenshots from weird websites and frenetic animations that pop off the screen—has its own power, mimicking the hallucinatory feeling of Odell discovering and yet not fully pinning down all of these connections.

“At some point I began to feel like I was in a dream. Or that I was half-awake, unable to distinguish the virtual from the real,” she writes. The same is true for anyone who reads it. “A Business With No End” leaves its readers, purposefully, with more questions than answers.

Odell cites Freder Jameson as an inspiration, and as she explained to me in an interview, she’s trying to do something that Jameson knew was almost futile: to tell the story of objects caught in the often confounding space of “the great global multinational and decentralized communications network.” She hopes to dispel, if only for a moment, the confusion that comes from this space or at least to re-create its discombobulating feeling so that we, too, are forced to ask ourselves if we are indeed human.

How to Do Nothing marks an important turn in Odell’s work: the attempt to find some peace and quiet in the midst of the Internet’s chaos by imagining a new mind-set and new ways of living.

As with her art and reporting, Odell finds herself covering a lot of terrain in that
attempt. She jumps from the lessons we can learn from the 19th-century struggle for an eight-hour workday to an analysis of the 1960s commune movement, explaining that its apolitical nature led to failure but that its basic principle of retreat is integral to any resistance to today’s attention economy. She also offers several tours of the locales in which her book was written and where she finds peace herself, bringing readers from the Rose Gardens of Oakland to the hills and hidden creeks that cut across the Bay Area.

While none of these things have much to do with the tech world or the Internet, Odell gathers them into a larger theory about how we might detach ourselves from the compulsive sense of productivity demanded by digitization. This is not to say that she doesn’t devote plenty of space to withering criticism of Mark Zuckerberg, Peter Thiel, tech libertarianism, or Silicon Valley’s design fetish; she does, and all of it is sharply composed, including an illuminating lesson on “persuasive design”—the constantly evolving strategies that tech companies use to grab our attention. Despite these moments of critical insight, Odell often proves to be more interested in the solution than in the problem that face us today: By “doing nothing,” she insists, we can replant ourselves in the immediate environment—may help develop a respect for our shared space, but can it really power collective action? Citing Cicero, William James, and Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener,” Odell also argues that we can find a “third space” of social interaction in which to employ the tactics of “refusal, boycott, and sabotage” against the cycle[s] where both financially driven platforms and overall precarity close down the space of attention.” But again, it's easy to wonder: What will prevent these acts of resistance from themselves becoming another monetizable sector?

Odell knows that we can’t escape the Internet, no matter how much we may want to, but she does ask us to direct our attention and energies elsewhere. The problem is that, in today’s world, we might need to direct more time and attention toward the Internet if we are to liberate ourselves from its exploitation and excesses.

Many are beginning to realize this. Google workers have marched out of their offices around the world in response to sexual misconduct at the company; Amazon employees are demanding fair wages and insisting that it refuse to work with oil companies. Consumers, too, have begun to boycott companies like Amazon and Uber for their abusive workplace practices. Odell acknowledges that “doing nothing” is a visionary concept, a “way station” to practical organizing. (She looks at the history of the 1934 San Francisco general strike in her section on a “third space.”) But the kernel of truth it’s founded on is that the economic system as we know it does more harm than good, and thus we need to create new terms of engagement that lead us not toward individual acts of resistance but toward collective action.

How to Do Nothing accomplishes something that neither the recent wave of Internet histories (Shoshana Zuboff’s The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, Tim Wu’s The Attention Merchants) nor the popular self-help books on digital detox have achieved. Odell helps readers discover ways of living outside the Web that are still richly alive. They are her particular ways of living outside the Web, but they are nonetheless imagina-
Vice, Crime, and Poverty
How the Western Imagination Invented the Underworld
DOMINIQUE KALIFA

“In theory, we’ve left those ideas behind. In practice, the poor, the mentally ill, and those classified as deviant are all still seen too often as a single stigmatized mass, to be cured, saved, policed, condescended to, and enjoyed as lurid entertainment by those who consider themselves their social superiors.”
—Pacific Standard

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—Times Higher Education

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Wounded Knee, South Dakota, 1973 (AP)

Nepholopsis obscura, the common ribbon leech, is black and slimy, segmented, and like the earthworm, hermaphroditic. In the shallow waters of the Great Lakes region, it spends the day buried in mud and then, when darkness falls, emerges to feed on animal remains. Bobby Matthews is an Ojibwe who traps these leeches on the aptly named Leech Lake Indian Reservation in Minnesota. “As soon as the ice goes out in April I start looking around,” he says. At dusk, he sets his traps—perforated containers suspended from a Styrofoam float—and removes them at dawn. A sturdy overnight haul, sold to convenience stores and bait shops, can net him $1,000. Though Matthews makes a decent living as a leech trapper, he is also a man of countless other seasonal trades: a collector of pine cones, a harvester of wild rice, a hunter, and a cutter of cranberry bark. “When the zombie apocalypse comes, I am certain that I want to be with Bobby,” David Treuer writes in his manifold new history of Native America, The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee. His is an Indian kind of labor: “a patchwork of opportunities that are exploited aggressively and together add up to a living. A good one.”

Matthews is one of many memorable characters in Treuer’s book, which combines social and political history with personal memoir and reportage. It’s a familiar mix for Treuer, a professor of English at the...
University of Southern California and the author of two previous books of nonfiction and four novels, all with Native American themes. Treuer grew up in a world of leeching and riceing, on the Leech Lake reservation, where his Ojibwe mother worked as an attorney and his Jewish father, a survivor of the Holocaust, taught high school and worked for the tribe. In Treuer’s youth, he, like many young people, badly wanted to flee—and he did, earning an undergraduate degree at Princeton and a graduate degree in anthropology at the University of Michigan. But his childhood community and the land where he spent his early years have been central to his work. In *Rez Life*, he weaves reported portraits from Indian Country into a history of federal regulation; in his novel *The Hiawatha*, he traces three generations of an Ojibwe family in Minneapolis.

Treuer’s latest book is more than an addition to his previous literary and historical projects; it is also a response to Dee Brown’s best-selling stylized history, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970). Brown, a librarian and prolific moonlighting writer, intended to render an appropriately bloody, demoralized account of American Manifest Destiny from 1860 to the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. Treuer does not dispute the basic facts of Brown’s account—yet as his title suggests, he takes issue with its conclusions. For Brown, indigenous civilization reached its metaphorical end in 1890, when the few surviving members of the hundreds of North American tribes were consigned to “the poverty, the hopelessness, and the squalor of a modern Indian reservation.” But where Brown sees only ashes, Treuer sees a spark: Native life continued to flourish, defiantly, throughout the 20th century. His book begins with a chapter dedicated to the impossible aim of “Narrating the Apocalypse: 10,000 BCE–1890.” It then offers broadly thematic chronological slices of the 20th and 21st centuries, from “Purgatory: 1891–1934” to “Digital Indians: 1990–2018.” “We are, in a sense, the children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those hundreds who survived Wounded Knee,” Treuer writes, “and who did what was necessary to survive, at first, and then—bit by bit—to thrive.”

For Treuer, Wounded Knee is at once a monument and a still-living space, a pivot in the history of Native Americans. To recall the grim events: In December 1890, police officers on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota shot and killed Sitting Bull, a leader of the Hunkpapa Lakota tribe. A chief named Spotted Elk, eager to avoid the same fate, decided to leave Standing Rock with 350 followers and seek the safety of the Pine Ridge Reservation about 250 miles to the south. But a few days into their journey, the caravan was stopped and led by the Seventh Cavalry to a frigid campground at Wounded Knee Creek. A fight erupted, and the soldiers began to shoot. They killed at least 150 Native people, more than half of them women and children. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* ends with these images of death and a quote from the Oglala Lakota leader Black Elk: “I did not know then how much was ended…. A people’s dream died there…. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.”

The legal prelude to this massacre came three years earlier, when the Dawes Act broke up tribal lands into individual tracts in order to divide and uproot Native communities—a strategy that would continue for decades. Treuer writes that between 1890 and 1934, “the assaults on Indians and Indian homelands were perhaps at their most creative, if not their bloodiest…. The government’s weapons were cupidity and fraud.” Yet the Indians resisted: In the early 1900s, the so-called Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma took advantage of homesteading laws to migrate north and west; in 1918, Minnesota’s Red Lake Chippewa established an executive patterned after its traditional system of hereditary chiefs; and in the 1930s and 40s, Native Americans laid claim to the social and financial resources vouchsafed by the New Deal and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, nicknamed the Indian New Deal.

In the mid–20th century, many Native Americans followed a path not dissimilar to that of African Americans: winning recognition through their service in the two world wars, migrating to the cities and experiencing the incomplete uplift that came with industrial jobs and federal programs. And just as the civil–rights movement had groups like the Black Panthers and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the struggle for Native rights had Red Power and the American Indian Movement.

AIM was primarily urban and “lacked a solid base of support on the reservations,” Treuer notes, but it cemented its revolutionary reputation on the tribal land of Wounded Knee. In 1973, members of AIM, already in South Dakota to protest the murder of an Indian man, flocked to Pine Ridge to attend the impeachment proceedings against Dick Wilson, the corrupt chairman of the reservation and a member of the Oglala, the same tribe as AIM leader Russell Means. After the impeachment effort failed and Means was beaten by Wilson’s private security force, AIM militants took hasty action in the village of Wounded Knee. They seized a trading post and church and exchanged fire with state and federal agents. For the next 71 days, Treuer writes, there were “demands, meetings, breakdown, violence, repeat.” Although a deal was finally reached—the Oglalas would be given a meeting with the Nixon White House, and the Justice Department would investigate the crimes occurring on Pine Ridge—Wounded Knee again marked an Indian defeat: The occupiers killed one of their own, and logistical chaos left many in the militants’ camp hungry and cold. The lasting impression was one of disillusionment and anger.

While the events at Wounded Knee marked the end of AIM’s radical push, the movement persisted as a philosophy, reinforcing the notion that, as Treuer writes, “Indians need not accept their position of disenfranchisement.” After centuries of forced disavowal, “simply ‘being Indian’—choosing to be Indian—constituted a social good.”

This revolution in identity, of which AIM was only one notable manifestation, enabled the building of institutions and laws, both on and off the reservation, that reshaped Native American life over the next quarter-century. Native advocates opened schools and housing complexes, and non-Native public servants (including Treuer’s father), funded by President Johnson’s War on Poverty, lent their assistance. New federal statutes—the Indian Education Act (1972), the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978), the Indian Child Welfare Act (1978), and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990)—not only recognized the civil rights of Native Americans but also the sovereignty of their tribes. A series of momentous court decisions gave further weight to tribal authority: *The United States v. Washington* (1974), which entitled tribes with treaty fishing rights to half the state’s annual catch; *Joint Tribal Council of the Passamaquoddy Tribe v. Morton* (1975), which...
awarded significant acreage and financial compensation to two Indian nations in Maine; and *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians* (1987), which affirmed the tribal right to gaming and, as Treuer writes, “flung wide open [the] door to economic development.”

For the most part, though, the American legal system has not been a force for good in Native lives. It was, and still is, contingent and acutely political and thus unreliable as a vehicle for change. But tribes have occasionally put court decisions and legislative acts to transformative use. In this way, indigenous nationhood has proved at least conceptually ineluctable, a fact that the federal government has been unable to ignore.

A theme that reveals itself at first slowly, and then sharply, in Treuer’s volume is that colonizers do not always know where their policies will lead. In the late 1800s, a group closely allied with the Office of Indian Affairs (now the Bureau of Indian Affairs) sought to impose “civilization through citizenship, free enterprise, and private ownership of land,” beginning with the establishment of Indian boarding schools. Across the country, Native families lost their children to institutions that substituted forced assimilation for education; Treuer’s own grandmother was sent to an industrial school in Tomah, Wisconsin, at the age of 4 “and did not return home until she was ten.” Yet what resulted from putting together all these children from different tribes was the formation of a new pan-Indian identity. They “brought their experiences of their tribes to school,” Treuer observes, “mingled with and met other tribal people, and if they returned to their tribes, they brought all of that with them, along with the academic and practical skills that would be invaluable in the conflicts ahead.”

The divvying up of Indian lands in the 19th and 20th centuries likewise proved to have unintended effects. The Dawes Act of 1887 split reservations into small, individual tracts in an effort to extinguish “the tribe as a social unit, encourage private enterprise and farming, reduce the cost of Indian administration, fund the emerging boarding school system (with the sale of ‘surplus land’) and provide a land base for white settlement.” But the Native peoples of Oklahoma, many of whom had been settled there under an 1830 removal order, responded by crafting a work-around. In the absence of unifying reservations, Treuer writes, “they essentially borrowed American civic structures to preserve their tribes and their tribal selves.” They levied taxes, ran Native candidates for mayor, “and engaged in a frenzy of institution building.” To the frustration of white regulators, the children in Chickasaw neighborhood schools studied in their mother tongue. Other Indians, stripped of their homeland, traveled west and did as diasporas do: They mixed and redefined themselves while integrating “their culture and their understandings of themselves.” Through this syncretic process, “Indians were figuring out how to be Indian and American simultaneously.”

In Treuer’s narratives of Indian becoming and unbecoming, the US military emerges as a critical locus. “There has never been anything like consensus between tribes as they puzzled out how and to what extent they would work with (or against) the American government,” Treuer writes in a chapter titled “Fighting Life: 1914–1945.” In World War I, Indian boarding schools became a “rich source” of volunteer soldiers, and thousands of boys were shipped off to combat. A debate arose between policy-makers and generals as to whether Indians should serve alongside whites (what Treuer calls the assimilationist camp) or in segregated units (the preservationist camp). The military preferred integration, and during the war “tales of Indian heroism abounded and fed the stereotype of the ‘Indian brave.’”

In World War II, Native soldiers likewise distinguished themselves in high-profile ways: the Navajo “code talkers,” the Meskwaki warriors in North Africa, and in the case of Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian, helping raise the flag at Iwo Jima. “By 1944, more than a third of the Indian adult male population had served in the war,” Treuer writes. The result was “transformative—it raised Indians’ visibility in the American landscape” and, by 1948, produced universal suffrage for tribal citizens.

Even so, Treuer argues, this growing visibility often came at a high personal cost. In the military, as in boarding schools, Native youths “did pick up skills. They became literate and learned trades.” But they also suffered disproportionately from the traumas of war and often kept these traumas secret, to terrible effect. After Hayes left Japan, for example, he was arrested more than 50 times and died in 1955 of exposure and alcohol poisoning, a symbol “for many Americans of the ‘plight’ of modern Indians.”

In discussing this part of Native history, Treuer relays a story from his own family. In 1998, after a trip to France to promote his first novel, he ran into his maternal grandfather, with whom he was never close, back home on Leech Lake. Treuer happened to mention Saint-Malo, a city in Brittany, and shook loose his grandfather’s memory “as if someone had cast a spell of volubility” over him. His grandfather explained that he’d been hit with shrapnel and refused to become a sniper because “he was too scared to be tied into a tree.” Never before had Treuer heard of these experiences.

The conversation opened up a hidden history of pain, if only briefly. His grandfather fatally shot himself just after his 83rd birthday. Treuer cleaned up the room where his grandfather died and, years later, requested his personnel records in order to find more of “the answers I thought I needed” about his grandfather’s past. But the file was less than revealing: “Paper lies. So do people,” Treuer writes. What remained was a quality of depletion, “the feeling of powerlessness that takes hold of even the most powerful Indian men.”

Treuer, whose other books have attended to what he calls “the tiny, fretful, intricate details” of the Native experience, brings the same sensibility to *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*. This is particularly true in his telling of family narratives, including that of his father, Robert Treuer, an Austrian by birth, who drew an instinctive line between the persecution he’d suffered as a European Jew and what he saw around him on Leech Lake. One summer, when David Treuer was back on the reservation as a young adult, he learned from his girlfriend’s aunt what a formidable role his father had played in the community:

On Saturday afternoons back in the 1950s, my father would drive to the small village where she lived and pick up all the Indian kids hanging out...
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there and drop them off in Bemidji, where there was more for them to do, then pick them up later when he was done in town and drive them home. He was the only white man who even thought about us, and went out of his way to give us something to do, something to look forward to, the aunt said.

These anecdotal and personal pauses make Treuer’s book feel unhurried, despite its vast scope; they also give it a tender pitch. Treuer makes stops for his father and grandfather, for Bobby Matthews and his leeches, and for Kevin Washburn, a Chickasaw who served as assistant secretary for Indian affairs in the Obama administration and is now a law professor at the University of New Mexico. In North Dakota, we meet Chelsey Luger, a journalist and health advocate of Ojibwe and Lakota ancestry. And in Washington State, at the bustling Tulalip Casino, we’re introduced to Eddy Pablo, a fisherman and entrepreneur who wants his tribe to get into the legalized marijuana industry, from seed to sale.

At times, these stories meander, and not always in an illuminating way. Treuer acknowledges the difficulty of weaving individual stories into such a wide-ranging history: “It’s hard, sometimes, to understand a life, to narrate it, when it doesn’t have a through line.” One wishes that he had cut short some of his anecdotal asides to refine his arguments or explore other moments and figures in Native American history. Toward the end of his book, Treuer notes that in 2018, “not only did record numbers of Indians run for public office, record numbers of them were women.” But The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee pays insufficient attention to the history of Native women leaders, especially in recent years, as so many have attained welcome visibility.

We might have learned, for example, about Krystal Two Bulls, the Oglala Lakota and Northern Cheyenne environmental activist who helped lead the protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline; Adrienne Keene, the Brown University professor whose Native Appropriations blog and podcast have become an indispensable source of cultural criticism; or Sharice Davids (Ho-Chunk) and Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo), who became the first Native women to serve in Congress.

The words of another American Indian woman, the Oglala poet Layli Long Soldier, serve as an elegant companion to Treuer’s book. In the poem “Diction,” she writes:

Plains Indi-til 1890, when a
Wounded Knee. By
left in the continen-
on at the time the
By way of contrast,
were still coming. By
Knee, the population of
0, there would be only
reservations in the west.

Pushing up against “By / Knee, the population of / 0” is the phrase “were still coming,” a distillation of a theme in Treuer’s history: We’re still here. In 1890, the US census counted fewer than 200,000 Indians; today, more than 5 million people identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, and an additional 1.2 million as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. We’re still here, Treuer reminds us, is not only about the past. It testifies to “something much more, much greater and grander, than a catalog of pain.”

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**Twenty-First Century Woman**

I don’t know how to turn on a TV anymore

**Ankle-Length Cardigans**

Great returns on the pavement produce false ideas of equity in the guarantee that is summer

**Looking in the Mirror**

To see if my shirt is on fire
It isn’t

AMANDA NADELBERG
As the campaign to impeach Bill Clinton rolled forward in 1998, the White House called on the assistance of a longtime ally: the Ivy League. The administration summoned a team of experts to testify on the president’s behalf in front of the House Judiciary Committee that included a Yale law professor, a Harvard political scientist, and a Princeton historian. The historian, Sean Wilentz, was the youngest member of the group, but he was also the most zealous. After the witnesses were sworn in, Wilentz told the committee that if they supported impeachment without being absolutely certain that the president’s transgressions constituted high crimes and misdemeanors, “history will track you down and condemn you for your craveness.”

Wilentz’s appearance garnered poor reviews—“gratuitously patronizing,” wrote The New York Times—but it whetted his appetite for partisan skirmishing. He had come to the Clinton team’s attention as the result of a campaign he’d led with Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to gather signatures from prominent historians for a petition that charged the supporters of impeachment with endangering the US Constitution. Now it seemed that Schlesinger, the aging liberal giant, had found his successor—a public intellectual, rigorous scholar, and Democratic Party street fighter who would carry the battle for liberalism into the next generation.

Over the following decade, Wilentz cemented his place as Schlesinger’s intellectual heir. Like Schlesinger, he’d begun his career as a specialist in early American political history, then moved on to writing about the entire scope of the nation’s past. Outside academic circles, he was well known for his regular contributions to the Leon Wieseltier–run “back of the book” at The New Republic, where he opined on subjects ranging from the influence of postmodern theory (bad) to the popularity of David McCullough (also bad) in essays thrown down like lightning bolts from Mount Princeton. In 2005, he published The Rise of American Democracy, a 1,000-page opus on the emergence of popular government in the United States, from the Declaration of Independence to the Civil Rights Movement, and he continues to publish essays, reviews, and books on topics ranging from American democracy to political philosophy to the history of science and technology.
of the Constitution and continued up to the Civil War—a period in American history in which he finds an important lesson for how to achieve political change in a democracy.

The two books capture the dueling sides of Wilentz's public persona. In *The Politicians and the Egalitarians*, we meet the gifted essayist who is one part New York intellectual and one part Beltway pundit. In *No Property in Man*, we discover the meticulous historian who can back up every claim with impeccable footnotes. Taken together, the two books constitute an extended defense of what Wilentz calls “mainstream politics” against the lures of “abstract moralism.” Would-be prophets can maintain their purity only by rejecting the political establishment, thereby giving up any hope of exercising power; Wilentz’s pragmatic politicians, on the other hand, accept the compromises that working within the system demands, and as a result, they make a real difference.

It’s a way of thinking that made a lot more sense before Trump was elected president and before Sanders became one of the most popular politicians in the country. With the political establishment in crisis and the global liberal order dancing on the edge of the abyss, it’s become clear that the division between pragmatic insiders and committed moralists is—to use a bit of vintage Clintonian rhetoric—a false choice.

Trump was the first to seize on the opportunity afforded by the collective failure of the political class, but the left has not been far behind. Since 2016, radicals have campaigned to transform the Democratic Party, one primary and one piece of legislation at a time. Their goal is to save mainstream American politics from itself by proving that the system is still capable of delivering transformative change. They are part of a tradition that has deep roots in American history and that today just might remake American democracy. The odd thing is that, not so long ago, one of the most eloquent defenders of this tradition was a young historian named Sean Wilentz.
However, Thompson’s book appeared in 1963, when the New Left was just catching fire on both sides of the Atlantic. In Reagan’s America, that flame was sputtering, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for Wilentz to carry the torch. Writing for The New Republic in 1989, he dismissed “mere politicians” and “the wishful thinking of the liberals that the welfare state is all America needs.” But he struggled to come up with a realistic alternative: “The nation’s political institutions,” he explained, “have become so compromised by bureaucratic special interests and private corporate power that it’s hard to know how much any movement from below can achieve.”

Matters looked even grimmer to Wilentz in the Clinton years. “Although a few revolutionary sects, of the Old and New Left variety, still cling to a kitschy afterlife,” he observed in 1994, “most of the extreme left has trailed off from socialism into the politics of personal identity or into academic fads.” Revealing in their isolation, radicals had conceded their distance from the wider culture rather than claim American traditions as their own. “Amid the cacophonies of today’s interest and identity politics,” Wilentz wrote in a wistful essay on Eugene Debs from 1993, “it is hard to imagine a re-invented sense of comradeship upon which some future Debs might build.”

Wilentz’s prize exhibit for left-wing marginalization was the contemporary professoriate, “at worst irresponsible and at best irrelevant.” Universities had become havens for charlatans and hacks preoccupied with deconstructing MTV, “the hip-hop craze,” and other excrescences from “the idiot culture.” (One can only imagine what he made of the Hamilton cast’s performance at Obama’s White House—of Hillary Clinton’s quoting from the musical in her acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention.) “Theorizing about the transgressive narratives of a Madonna video threatens no vested interests outside the English department, least of all the record company tycoons who suddenly find their products studied in the classrooms as well as in the dorms,” he grumbled.

Leftists were faced with a painful question: “In an America where socialism is discredited and where liberalism is in an intellectual crisis, how do we say what we mean to say without becoming irrelevant?” At the time, Wilentz’s answer was to tailor the message to fit the audience. Radicals should make practical demands in electoral politics and save their utopian musings for little magazines—i.e., liberalism in the streets, socialism in the sheets (of left-wing journals). “Leading a political double life, between bright dreams and piecemeal reforms, is risky,” Wilentz acknowledged. “It easily gets labeled half-hearted and hypocritical—and may actually become half-hearted and hypocritical.” But conditions were desperate, and he would not let go of the promise of American radicalism. Although the hour was getting late, the democratic revolution that began in 1776 could be rescued from the abuses of the right and the neglect of the left. Only then would Americans have the politics they needed, a politics “focused on the glaring and growing inequalities that divide the rich and powerful from the rest of us.” It was a moving call to action. But what, exactly, did it mean?

Not Clintonism, at least not at first. Despite his later association with the first couple, Wilentz lamented the sad decline of American politics.” I think American politics is wonderful.” Liberalism became an end in itself, while faith in democracy’s radical potential turned into hostility toward critics of Clinton, who, Wilentz suggested, were motivated by “a deep-seated contempt for American politics.”

Ralph Nader’s third-party bid for the presidency and the result of the 2000 election solidified Wilentz’s conversion, trauma-bonding him to the Democratic Party establishment and providing yet another example of the disastrous consequences of left-wing utopianism. Wilentz saw the Clinton years as proof that pragmatic liberals could restrain capitalism’s excesses while delivering widespread prosperity. Whatever faults remained in the system were either the inevitable trade-offs of modern life or the results of handing elections to a radicalized Republican Party that had been taken over by right-wing ideologues all too willing to do the bidding of their plutocratic donors.

Conflict remained essential to how Wilentz thought about politics, but his enemy had now shifted from the capitalist class to the Republican Party. His days of quoting Marx and lamenting the sad decline of American socialism were finished. “I happen to love American politics,” he told Newsweek in 2007. “I think American politics is wonderful.”
Gathering together essays published from 1992 to 2013, *The Politicians and the Egalitarians* is Wilentz’s fullest defense of American politics—and in particular of American liberalism. The book presents itself as a guide to the two “keys” for unlocking the secrets of American political history. One is the inevitability of partisanship; the other is the existence of a homegrown tradition in America that is opposed to economic inequality. “Most of the better moments in our democratic history,” he argues, “have come about not through the workings of a consensual republican general will, but from the clash of interests.” It’s a sentence he could have written at any point in his journey from would-be American E.P. Thompson to baby-boomer Arthur Schlesinger. The only change has been in the site of the battle, which has shifted over time from the picket line to the halls of Congress.

The heroes of Wilentz’s account are the “egalitarian politicians” who used the machinery of party politics to make the United States a more equal country: Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Lyndon Johnson, among others. “The great issues in our history,” Wilentz argues in the introduction, “have been settled not from friction between politicians and egalitarians but from the convergence of protest and politics.” Most of the book consists of character studies meant to demonstrate the power of this synthesis, and many of them are fairly convincing. Jefferson, Lincoln, and Johnson all neatly fit within Wilentz’s framework. Some of the other case studies don’t fit as neatly with his thesis. Theodore Roosevelt, for example, is a tougher sell as an egalitarian politician. A wily defender of the business community as president, he embraced the cause of reform only during his doomed 1912 campaign on the Progressive ticket, and he dropped this newfound radicalism just as quickly in the run-up to World War I so that he could reunite with his true love, unhinged militarism. (“I have no doubt he thinks he believes what he says, but he doesn’t,” remarked a GOP elder during Roosevelt’s flirtation with progressivism.)

Even stranger is a chapter on W.E.B. Du Bois that offers an eloquent but off-topic meditation on *The Souls of Black Folk* while skipping past Du Bois’s frequent condemnations of the two-party system: for instance, his 1950 description of Republicans and Democrats as “one combine, with one aim and one policy, one kettle of graft and one pool of grafters; one set of lies and one bunch of liars,” delivered when Du Bois was making a third-party run for the Senate.

Despite some of Wilentz’s detours, there is an undeniable force to his broader argument. From the abolition of slavery to the passage of Obamacare, political parties have been indispensable champions of reform.

Things get a little trickier, though, when it comes to the relationship between partisanship and economic inequality. When explaining the origins of American egalitarianism, Wilentz emphasizes that the country’s abundance of land ensured that by 1776, wealth was already far more evenly distributed among white men in the 13 colonies than it was in Europe. Over the next century, the barriers to suffrage for white men tumbled, and the United States became home to the first mass political parties in world history. But here is where his story about the rise of partisanship and the decline of economic inequality begins to falter: By 1860, almost 30 percent of the nation’s wealth belonged to the richest 1 percent—more than twice the prevailing level in the Revolutionary era—despite decades of heightened party activism and partisan conflict. Democratic politics, it turned out, was no guarantee against economic inequality.
A variation of this story repeats itself in the Gilded Age, when party polarization and economic inequality again surged alongside each other. The gap between rich and poor declined in the middle of the 20th century, which also happened to be a period of unusual bipartisan overlap. And in our second Gilded Age, polarization and economic inequality are back at historic highs.

Wilentz suggests that the clearer lines of battle created by partisanship has helped move American democracy forward. But it appears that when control of the government is split between ideologically divided parties, partisanship leads mostly to gridlock. For the people who are already benefiting from the status quo, a paralyzed government is far from the worst of fates. For everyone else, it removes the most effective agent we have for redistributing wealth.

Far from a force of egalitarianism, partisanship can sometimes end up bolstering the interests of the donor class. As the cost of running hotly contested campaigns grows, politicians become even chummier with their financial backers, who know a good investment when they see one. Seasoned candidates become so accustomed to the status quo that they might even decide—to pick an example at random—that it’s a good idea to accept $675,000 for three appearances at Goldman Sachs right before running for president.

For Wilentz, focusing on the kind of genteel corruption perfected by the Clintons distracts us from the systemic depravities represented by the GOP’s plutocratic pseudo-populism. He’s not entirely wrong, but that generous attitude toward the Democratic wing of the political elite has led him to consistently underestimate the appeal of candidates running against Washington, whether it was Obama in 2008 or Sanders and Trump in 2016. Trump has been especially difficult for Wilentz to interpret. “There has been nothing like him in American presidential politics, ever,” he said of Trump in the spring of 2016. “He is truly outside politics.” Wilentz has repeated that argument many times since Trump’s election: The president, he insists, “represents a sharp break in our national political history—something unlike anything America, in all of its turbulence, has seen before.”

It’s the historian’s equivalent of “This is not normal,” and it’s safe to assume that Wilentz approached his follow-up to The Politicians and the Egalitarians with this background in mind. An academic monograph on slavery and the founding fathers might not seem like promising material for a response to the age of Trump. But No Property in Man is also a defense of the American political system, a system Wilentz believes is today confronting an existential threat. Despite it all, Wilentz still loves American politics, and he wants you to love it, too.

Wilentz first brought the book’s thesis to public attention in 2015, in a column attacking Bernie Sanders. That fall, Sanders had told an audience that the United States “in many ways was created, and I’m sorry to have to say this, from way back, on racist principles. That’s a fact.” Ever the Clinton partisan, Wilentz responded two days later in a column for The New York Times, writing that “as far as the nation’s founding is concerned, it is not a fact” and accusing Sanders of spreading a dangerous “myth” that could “poison the current presidential campaign.”

Sanders, of course, wasn’t the only public figure to accept this “myth.” The notion that white supremacy has been a fixture of American life since the Constitution’s ratification is now conventional wisdom among liberals; if anything, during the 2016 prima-
The book revolves around what Wilentz calls repeatedly the “paradox” of an American Constitution that “would tolerate slavery without authorizing it.” Wilentz acknowledges that this is an awfully fine distinction. Even if the framers did not authorize slavery, they certainly created a government that did an excellent job of protecting it. In 1790, just under 700,000 enslaved people lived in the United States. By the time Abraham Lincoln won election to the White House, there were almost 4 million spread across half a continent, and the Constitution played a role in this expansion. That expansion could take place because of significant concessions made to slaveholders, most notoriously the inflated political power granted by the three-fifths clause.

And yet, Wilentz argues, there’s more to the story than the relentless advance of human bondage. By 1787, slavery had been either abolished or put on the road to extinction in five states, plus the soon-to-be state of Vermont. The institution’s legitimacy was even under attack in Virginia, home to Jefferson, Madison, Washington, and the nation’s largest slave population. And so the framers of the Constitution had to arrive at a compromise that would be acceptable to both the free states of the North and the unrepentant slave states of the deep South. Neither side could win, and neither could lose.

The framers resolved this problem by dodging it, leaving behind a government that could be used either to defend slavery or to crush it, depending on which side could build a democratic majority. In other words, according to Wilentz, they left the door open for future generations to decide—and in 1860, the Republican Party barreled through that door.

In this way, Wilentz insists, the early debates over property in man were of “unsurpassed importance” in slavery’s abolition. Wilentz’s reasoning has the elegance of a syllogism: “Everybody knew that the heart of the matter was slavery, and that the main political issue was the future of slavery in the territories. That issue turned on a fight over the Constitution and property rights.” QED.

In a technical sense, the logic is flawless. But disputes over constitutional hermeneutics rarely fuel herculean political struggles. As Wilentz himself has documented at length in other works, the shrewdest egalitarian politicians understood that the antislavery movement drew its energy from different sources—from fears about a nefarious slave power scheming to impose its will on the rest of the nation, from visions of a free country where all white men had an equal chance in the race of life, and from Republicans’ willingness to issue the kind of moral denunciations that Madison would never have dreamed of putting into the Constitution. They saw parties as a means to an end, and they were willing to challenge the entire political establishment to achieve their goal. In the debate over slavery, Lincoln agreed with the radical Charles Sumner, whose 1864 pamphlet, “No Property in Man,” gives Wilentz’s book its name: “Morals is the true soul of politics.”

So what should we take away from this history? Wilentz clearly sees it as another example of the good that pragmatists can do by exploiting the latent egalitarianism of the American political tradition and by working out compromises needed to get practical things done. The book’s dust jacket even manages to sneak in a clue about the contemporary inheritors of this tradition. It shows the author sitting on a couch, hands clasped, with a framed picture just above his shoulder—a photo of Wilentz with Bill Clinton.

But if Wilentz were not so closely associated with the Clintons, he might now be claiming vindication as a Bernie bro ahead of his time. Thirty years ago, he was...
A t long last, *The Common Wind*, Julius Scott’s classic in African-American history and studies of resistance, has found a publisher in Verso. The volume, which began as his 1986 dissertation and went unpublished because Scott’s perfectionism and ill health, has acquired a cult following over the years. Modeled after Fernand Braudel’s masterpiece on the Mediterranean, *The Common Wind* started out as a history of the Caribbean and the informal communication networks that emerged among people of African descent during the Age of Revolution. But the project ended up doing so much more: Through traditional archival work and innovative interpretation, Scott—who is now an emeritus historian at the University of Michigan—unearthed an entire underground world.

Along with the popularity of the subaltern school in South Asian history, recent peasant studies in Latin American history, and James C. Scott’s much-cited works on the “weapons of the weak” and the everyday politics of the oppressed, *The Common Wind* redefined for many historians how we write “history from below.” Drawing on Georges Lefebvre’s study of the role of rumor in the French Revolution, Scott brought Lefebvre’s techniques into the world of black revolutionaries. Tracking the currents of the ocean and the well-traversed routes of trade, war, and rebellion, Scott showed how ideas of black resistance flowed among the slave colonies of various European nations and helped inspire new visions of freedom among the enslaved.

All of this revolutionary unrest came to a head with the Haitian Revolution. News of the rebellion could not be contained by anxious slaveholders and local authorities, and it inspired urgent demands for emancipation among the enslaved throughout the so-called New World. “Sweeping across linguistic, geographic, and imperial boundaries,” Scott writes, “the tempest cre-
ated by the black revolutionaries of Saint-Domingue and communicated by mobile people in other slave societies would prove to be a major turning point in the history of the Americas.” The title of his study was taken, appropriately, from Wordsworth’s ode to Toussaint Louverture: “There’s not a breathing of the common wind / That will forget thee.”

Reading *The Common Wind* today, one is struck by how Scott’s arguments have remained at the cutting edge of historical scholarship even after all these years. He uncovered a world of masterless men, free and enslaved, and helped map what he terms a “complex (and largely invisible) underground” of mariners, rebels, and runaways. Using concepts developed by Christopher Hill and C.L.R. James, Scott committed himself to years of painstaking research in the archives of various former slave colonies in order to chart the routes of black resistance in the late 18th century. Runaway slaves—especially those who created Maroon communities on the outskirts of plantation slavery—shared an ideological and political “common space,” he argues, and it was there that new visions of resistance, freedom, and political literacy arose.

In *The Common Wind*, Scott illustrates how the slave grapevine and forms of slave resistance not only connected isolated plantations but also jumped islands. The First Maroon War in Jamaica in the 1730s coincided with a slave uprising in Cuba. Not surprisingly, extensive maroonage by the enslaved in Haiti preceded the revolution and helped lay future communication networks among black radicals. François Mackandal, the leader of a Haitian Maroon community, and Dutty Boukman, who is credited with starting the slave rebellion in Haiti, had both escaped from Jamaica, then a British colony. Runaways from the Danish islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John also moved around, often seeking protection in Spanish Cuba, until the authorities there reversed their policy of granting asylum to foreign slaves.

News and rumors of colonial rebellions, as well as the seeds of revolutionary politics, spread by means of what Scott calls “inter-island mobility—the world of ships and sailors.” The cities and ports of the islands, where news and commodities were exchanged widely, were home to large numbers of free blacks and runaways. Like the serfs of medieval Europe who sought the freedom and anonymity of urban areas—*Stadtluft macht frei* (City air makes you free), as the German saying went—runaway slaves gravitated to cities. Black seamen and itinerant seafarers brought and exchanged transatlantic news of British abolition and French revolutionary ideas in British, French, and Spanish ports. Bilingual and even trilingual runaways had, as Scott puts it, “access to policies toward slavery in three colonial empires and could therefore play a vital role in bringing together and transmitting the politics of each.”

Coastal commerce and seafaring blacks ended up becoming the common wind that blew slave resistance across the seas and among different slave societies. Encompassing not just the Caribbean but also the port cities of British North America, the West India trade helped widen this circuit of black underground communication. News of revolution flowed in the other direction as well, in the aftermath of the American Revolution when thousands of British loyalists—at times with their slaves—settled in the British West Indies and those free black Haitians who fought alongside the Americans brought its visions of revolution back home with them.

W. Jeffrey Bolster and several other historians have followed Scott’s lead in illuminating the importance of African-American sailors to the politics of resistance and emancipation, and from their work as well as Scott’s we know that many of the leading early black abolitionists—including Olaudah Equiano, the author of one of the first slave narratives, and Paul Cuffee, an African-American Quaker and sea captain from Massachusetts—were sailors. We meet many others like them in Scott’s book. The black abolitionist David Walker, for example, relied on black sailors to help distribute his seminal 1829 pamphlet “Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World.”

Local colonial authorities, Scott shows us, responded to this developing network of political communication by seeking to curtail black mobility and freedom. The attempts to regulate the movement of black sailors reached a zenith in the 19th-century US South with its notorious Negro Seamen Acts, which, in violation of international law, imprisoned all free black seamen from ships visiting Southern ports for the duration of their stay in order to prevent the passing of information about slave rebellions, especially the Haitian Revolution. The “mobile resistance” of black sailors and rebels, as Scott aptly calls it, turned out to be a central worry of counterrevolutionary politics at the time, and Scott uses his transnational lens to track the white fears and opposition that emerged in response.

But there was little that could stop the growing winds of antislavery sentiment and activism. News of the *Somerset* case of 1772—in which the most famous runaway in the British Empire, James Somerset, won his freedom—and of the British abolitionist crusade against the African slave trade in the 1780s and ’90s made Jamaican planters bemoan “an active conspiracy of misguided British humanitarians and mobile black agents.” Meanwhile, in the Spanish slave colonies, the *pardos* (free blacks) and the enslaved claimed that the Spanish king had issued a cédula protecting their rights. The borders of all three slaveholding European empires proved to be porous, as enslaved and free blacks carried news of antislavery politics among their ports.

Even more than British abolition and Spanish reformism, the French Revolution, the struggle for the rights of the *gens de couleur* (people of color), and local traditions of slave resistance combined to unleash a massive slave rebellion in Haiti in August 1791. The incendiary black communication network that circulated rumors and information throughout the black Atlantic was central in bringing all of these different currents together. With the start of the Haitian Revolution, this network began to bear fruit and spread out even farther.

In the revolution’s aftermath, the common wind of black resistance picked up speed, sowing terror and counterrevolution among slaveholders and colonial authorities across the Caribbean who wanted to contain the contagion of black liberty. They arbitrarily arrested those deemed suspicious and passed laws curtailing and monitoring black mobility. “French noirs” and French refugees from Haiti, Scott shows, soon spread word of the rebellion throughout the Americas. One of the former, Pedro (or Pierre) Bailly, was tried in New Orleans for fomenting slave rebellion, and Scott quotes him at length: “We have the title of ‘Citizens’ in Saint-Domingue and the other French islands…. All of us are human, there should be no differences: color should not differentiate us.”

Perhaps the most notable achievement of *The Common Wind* is Scott’s ability to embed slave resistance and the Haitian Revolution...
within the broader history of antislavery. In his 1995 landmark book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot documented how Western historians have long ignored or discounted the significance of the Haitian Revolution in the history of abolition. Both Scott and C.L.R. James, with his classic *The Black Jacobins*, have helped shatter this paradigm, demonstrating how the rebellion was central to revolutionary abolitionism across the Atlantic.

The Haitian Revolution, as Scott notes, “energized the culture of expectation and anticipation among slaves.” It also served to make the network of black communication ever more “purposeful,” as Haiti emerged as the “center of antislavery and black self-determination,” an “object of identification for Afro-Americans throughout the New World.” In the 1790s, news of rebellion and conspiracy reached places like Charleston, South Carolina; Richmond and Portsmouth, Virginia; and Pointe Coupee, Louisiana. In 1811, Charles Deslondes, a “free mulatto” inspired by the Haitian Revolution, led the largest slave rebellion in US history.

By highlighting the role of political rumor and information networks in the Atlantic world’s rebellions, Scott not only rewrote the history of the Age of Revolution; he provided a new understanding of black politics during the era of legal slavery. One can observe the influence of his insights throughout recent American historiography. For instance, Steven Hahn’s Pulitzer Prize–winning study of black politics in 19th-century America, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, also emphasizes the role that the slave grapevine played in remaking the political imagination of the enslaved. The history of the black Atlantic as it is currently known would simply not have been possible without Scott’s immense contributions.

In *The Common Wind*’s epilogue, Scott underscores how the Haitians themselves viewed their activism as part of a broader transatlantic abolition movement. Though not mentioned in the book, Henri Christophe, the ruler of Haiti’s northern kingdom, for example, recruited the British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson to represent Haiti in Europe and named one of its men-of-war after William Wilberforce, the British abolitionist parliamentarian. Haiti’s southern republic, under Alexandre Pétion, sought to promote abolitionism within the Caribbean and Latin America: It agreed to assist the Spanish-American independence movements led by Simón Bolívar only if these revolutionaries would guarantee the emancipation of local slaves. Yet for Scott, the most important aspects of the Haitian Revolution were the images of slave resistance that it generated and the underground network of black mariners and rebels that helped spread its revolutionary story. In fact, Scott closes his study with two American examples of Haiti’s influence: Charleston’s slave conspirator Denmark Vesey, a free black sailor who had lived in Haiti and planned to lead his followers there after starting a rebellion in 1822, and the fugitive slave William Wells Brown, who used the emancipatory image of the Haitian Revolution to further his case for the abolition of slavery in the American South in the 1850s.

In connecting the history of slave resistance with that of abolition, Scott has given a generation of scholars a new interpretive approach for identifying and exploring the common spaces and common winds of black resistance, in the past as well as the present. Even those who never studied under him remain students of his groundbreaking approach—not just in terms of the scholarship on slave resistance but also in terms of how the marginalized can appropriate and repurpose political information to forge a revolutionary politics of their own.
In the beginning, the wall was an experiment. To see if a show of force might deter illegal crossings, the Clinton administration authorized the Border Patrol in 1993 to position hundreds of agents and vehicles along the border between El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Within weeks, the number of apprehensions at the El Paso station dropped significantly, and although unlawful border crossings in nearby areas rose, the agent-and-vehicle blockade, later referred to as Operation Hold the Line, was considered a success. A year later, the administration tried something new: a 12-foot-high steel fence at the border between San Diego and Tijuana, along a stretch of land that leads to the Pacific Ocean. The number of illegal crossings in the area fell dramatically, an outcome that Janet Reno, then the attorney general, called “just excellent.” However, the flow of immigrants did not stop; it was merely redirected eastward, to remote areas that were much more dangerous to cross. Soon, smugglers became involved. But the steel fence served as tangible proof that action was being taken, and by 1995, Clinton could report in his State of the Union address that his administration had “moved aggressively to secure our borders.”

Securing the border, it turned out, was an ongoing process. It meant an almost yearly increase in the Border Patrol’s budget, a severe expansion of penalties on undocumented immigrants, and the construction of more physical barriers. In 2006, George W. Bush signed into law the Secure Fence Act, which provided funding for 700 miles of fencing along the border between the United States and Mexico. The fence took the form of vehicle checkpoints and steel barriers, which were erected over the next 10 years. The number of illegal crossings on the southern border declined steadily during that decade, a fact that Barack Obama cited as evidence of his own administration’s seriousness on the issue of securing the border. At the same time, the number of migrant deaths in the borderlands continued to rise. Accurate figures are difficult to come by, but the Border Patrol estimates that more than 7,500 migrants have died in remote mountains and deserts since the first wall was erected.

Of course, the word “wall” was rarely used, either by elected officials or in the media. For a long time, the preferred terms were “fence,” “barrier,” “border defense,” and “border-protection system.” But all of these euphemisms were stripped away in 2015, when Donald Trump made one of his campaign slogans a simple three-
Rabbits for Food
Binnie Kirshenbaum

“PSYCHIATRIC DAYROOM DARK AND JUST AS FUNNY...beautifully complex.”
—PAUL BEATTY, AUTHOR OF THE SELLOUT

The Night Swimmers
Peter Rock

“A BEAUTIFUL DELVING, A RAPTUROUS DIVE into the mysteries of ordinary life.”
—LENI ZUMAS, AUTHOR OF RED CLOCKS

Dark Constellations
Pola Oloixarac

“ONE OF THE FIRST CLASSICS of Spanish literature in the 21st century.”
—EL MUNDO

Here Is What You Do
Stories
Chris Dennis

“A tremendous debut...SUBVERSIVE, BRUTAL, TENDER, and FUNNY.”
—KIMBERLY KING PARSONS, AUTHOR OF BLACK LIGHT
word chant: “Build that wall.” This would be a structure, he assured his audiences, to keep out the “criminals,” “rapists,” and various “bad hombres.” He promised that it would be “big,” “beautiful,” and, above all, “impenetrable.”

What would happen if an impenetrable wall was completed in America—or, for that matter, any other country? This is the question that the British writer John Lanchester explores in his new novel, The Wall. It takes place in an unnamed island nation sometime after “the Change”—presumably the kind of climate catastrophe that scientists have warned us about for the past three decades. Parts of the world are submerged under rising seawater, forcing an untold number of “Others” to seek refuge on the island, where they are met by a 16-foot-high concrete wall.

The story is told from the point of view of Joseph Kavanagh, a young man who has just arrived at the Wall to begin his two-year military service as a “Defender.” Like the others conscripted into this role, he is tasked with protecting the homeland from outsiders. The increasingly draconian laws that the government has enacted to deter people from coming have had little effect on the number of migrants: They keep trying to reach the island. If an Other somehow manages to get past the Wall, the Defender responsible for the breach is immediately put out to sea as retribution.

The conceit of The Wall is simple, and the rules are straightforward. Yet Lanchester spends a lot of time discussing the daily minutiae of life there—again and again, he tells readers how cold it is at the Wall, how long a Defender’s shift is, how welcome the coffee breaks are, and how terrible it is to have to go back into the cold after a night at the barracks. By contrast, the main characters’ inner lives receive less attention, leaving readers with little insight into their pasts, their hopes, or their impulses. For this reason, The Wall is best read as an exploration of the immediate consequences and logical implications of a punitive border machine.

At the Wall, Kavanagh becomes acquainted with other Defenders, including the Captain, a mysterious figure with a knack for showing up exactly when he is least expected; the Sergeant, who laughs at his own jokes; and the Corporal, whose hobby is whistling. “Don’t look so worried,” the Corporal tells Kavanagh. “You know that thing they say, don’t worry, it might never happen? This is different. You’re on the Wall. It already has.” Defending the border means standing guard in 12-hour shifts, waiting for the slightest hint of movement on the water.

The first time a group of Others tries to breach the Wall while Kavanagh is there, he is on his coffee break. It takes him a moment to realize what’s happening, but he grabs his rifle and manages to repel them. The confrontation results in the deaths of several Defenders and all of the Others in the group. “So none of us would be put to sea,” Kavanagh says, with evident relief. He has been seriously injured, though, and has to spend a few days in the hospital, where he becomes close with a fellow conscript, a woman named Hifa. “Do you want to Breed with me?” she asks him, somewhat abruptly. Love and romance aren’t absent from the novel’s dystopian future, but life after the Change is so bleak that birthrates have fallen, and the government provides incentives—including exemption from service—to encourage people to become Breeders.

The story becomes more propulsive from this point forward. Kavanagh, Hifa, and the other Defenders return to active duty on the Wall, where they wait for more border crossings. There are rumors that the Others have sympathizers, island citizens who think the Wall should keep out the rising water, not human beings, and who object to turning the refugees into “Help”—that is, slaves of the state, which contracts them out as servants to individual citizens. Of course, the sympathizers are characterized as “traitors” by an ambitious politician Kavanagh meets, a “shiny young man with a mop of blond hair,” who assures the Defenders, “You are the best in the world. This country is the best in the world. We have prevailed, we do prevail, we will prevail.”

Lanchester is at his best when he examines this dystopia through the lens of class and privilege. As a citizen, Kavanagh enjoys a few freedoms, including freedom of movement, that the Others do not have. But he has no wealth or social connections, which means that serving a two-year stint at the Wall is inevitable. Still, he has ambition. Although he is unclear about his plans once his service is done, he believes that if he can distinguish himself somehow, opportunities might open up:

I used to have secret ideas about what I wanted to do: secret in the strong sense that I had never told anyone. I wanted to get away from home (that part was no secret), to get as much education as I could, to get a job where I made lots of money, and to become a member of the elite. All this was too vague to count as a plan. I didn’t know anyone who had done it; I didn’t know the details of how to do it; but I knew that it could be done. Elites have to let in some outsiders; that is a basic rule of how they work. It’s how they renew themselves and how they spread just enough of the benefits around to stop disorder rising from below. Also, elites need new blood because it’s the newly arrived members of the elite who know how the rest of the population is thinking, right now.

While breaking into the elites’ circles may be possible for someone like Kavanagh, those on the other side of the Wall aren’t as lucky: If they are caught crossing the border, they face a choice of being euthanized, returned to sea, or becoming Help. Even if they’re not apprehended at the Wall, Others who breach the border are likely to be arrested later (because everyone else on the island has been implanted with microchips) and then forced to make this impossible choice—a choice that does not bother Kavanagh all that much. “Wanting to have Help was on my secret wish list,” he confides. “Having Help was like having a life upgrade.”

Lanchester is the author of four previous works of fiction, most notably The Debt to Pleasure, a darkly comic story framed as a cookbook/memoir, and Capital, a novel set in London during the 2008 financial crisis. He is also a prolific writer of nonfiction whose essays and reportage on food, finance, technology, and British politics appear regularly in the London Review of Books, The New Yorker, and elsewhere. In his writing, he displays a phenomenal ability to absorb highly specialized material (on financial markets, for example) and make it intelligible to the general reader. While The Wall is a work of dystopian fiction, it contains all the ingredients of his intensively researched nonfiction.

The conceit of the novel—a nation walled off from the rest of the world—rests on hypotheticals that are already a reality in many countries: dangerously high sea levels,
militarized border walls, declining fertility rates, mass surveillance, buffoonish politicians. Even the idea of the Wall is not new; in the United States, for instance, some immigrant-detention facilities already use forced migrant labor. There are also those who argue, like Eric Posner and Glen Weyl in their recent book Radical Markets, that the United States should go one step further and allow US citizens to personally bring in migrant labor from abroad at a mutually agreed-upon price. (Politico covered the book under the obscene headline “What if you could get your own immigrant?”) So The Wall cannot be faulted for a lack of plausibility. Rather, this is a book that asks readers to consider the logical results of the border systems under which they currently live.

In a novel about climate change and the refugee crisis, it is easy for a writer to slip into moralizing. But Lanchester steers clear of the temptation. Kavanagh’s daydreams about wanting to have Help are presented matter-of-factly, as are his observations about his parents’ generation, which “broke the world” when it failed to stop global warming. Lanchester is also adept at exploring the power differentials between the Defenders and the Others and between the Defenders and civilians.

The landscape of speculative fiction allows for exactly this kind of unfettered exploration, taking readers in unexpected directions or revealing connections they might not have noticed. Novels like Ray Bradbury’s Farenheit 451, Octavia Butler’s Kindred, and Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go give us more than conjecture about future or parallel worlds: They explore the inner lives of ordinary people caught in extraordinary circumstances and give us a new language to think about dissent, freedom, and mortality. By comparison, Lanchester remains so focused on the brutal apparatus of border enforcement that he neglects those who are caught up in it, whether Defender or Other. In one chapter, Kavanagh spends a few days with his parents, from whom he feels alienated; in another, he goes with Hifa to visit her mother, from whom she feels similarly alienated. But these brief forays into the characters’ relationships feel too slight and schematic to contribute much weight to either of their stories.

Mange Meat

We’re so late-stage that we trade our storm-wet cash for synthetic fuzz, as if fleece wasn’t the shorn warmth of a bleating thing.

There is a new wolf in me this winter and I can’t keep it fed. I can’t stray near livestock, can’t turn up to casual drinks in blood, musk, and appetite.

I’d pay a lot for a fence that could hold me. When it becomes Queens, the bus route runs along Fresh Pond Rd without even rumor of reservoir.

Today was the day I paid for a new gym membership and also the day I told the sales associate I’d be cancelling it after the first month, I’m just visiting.

I’m trying to say that I’m trying to stay out in the elements until I can’t feel much of myself. I proffered my share of the rent, but no one took it.

At night, the meat of me is tender. What is a predator to do, soaked through? I wore wool, weatherlogged and weighing. Looked good enough to go home with.

A mouth rough enough it broke skin without asking. And that was okay. I can’t find the scar anymore when I want it, want someone else’s teeth to sink.

ALICIA MOUNTAIN

Despite these weaknesses, Lanchester deserves praise for telling a story of climate change and migration in the speculative mode at a time when reality itself can seem like a dystopia. In 2018, for example, the Trump administration announced a zero-tolerance policy on undocumented immigration. Almost immediately, US Customs and Border Protection began separating migrant and asylum-seeking children from their parents, placing them in detention facilities or in foster care, without the necessary paperwork to keep track of them. We may not yet have the Wall as Lanchester (or Trump) has imagined it, but new horrors are revealed every day: a 5-year-old child persuaded to sign papers forgoing her right to a bond hearing, a 2-year-old girl forced to appear in federal immigration court alone, detained siblings being told they are not permitted to hug each other. And yet we all seem to carry on as if this were acceptable.

Last summer, while on a trip to Arizona, I drove through Calexico, a small city on the border between California and Mexico. I’m not sure what I was expecting, but what I found was a sleepy town, where Border Patrol trucks sit next to beat-up Honda Accords in the Applebee’s parking lot. At the hotel, the clerk politely asked me about my day. He looked to be in his early 20s; he must have been no more than a baby when the first wall was built on the southern border. Noticing my soccer jersey, he asked me which team I was rooting for in the World Cup. It was a day like any other. What Lanchester captures perfectly in The Wall is that nothing about this is normal.
One was the optimism of 1963. It had been replaced by a sense of disillusionment, a sense of urgency that America was about to lose the last chance to have its soul.” This was how Jet magazine described the climax of the Poor People’s Campaign, which reached Washington, DC, in the tumultuous summer of 1968. For Jet and for many early civil-rights activists, the Poor People’s Campaign marked a frustrating epilogue to a movement that had captured the nation’s attention in the first half of the 1960s and come to a frustrating pace of change in its second half. Slowed by white backlash and political exhaustion, civil-rights leaders hoped the Poor People’s Campaign might give new energy to the radical visions of emancipation they had helped popularize, but for many in the movement’s rank and file, it felt like a desperate last cry rather than the beginning of a new phase in the struggle for racial equality.

In her new book King and the Other America, historian Sylvie Laurent helps rescue the Poor People’s Campaign from its unfair reputation and makes a compelling case that it deserves to be not only better remembered but also more closely studied and emulated by the left today.

For Laurent, the Poor People’s Campaign was the start of a new phase of radical activism and egalitarianism. While it failed to achieve the kinds of concrete reform that the earlier civil-rights movement won, it did inspire a whole generation of radicals to take a more holistic look at how discrimination in American society worked, helping them forge a powerful critique of racial and economic inequality in America. The Poor People’s Campaign, she argues, was a critical turning point and yet also a missed opportunity.

King and the Other America helps make another important argument. Situating the economic egalitarianism of the Poor People’s Campaign and Martin Luther King Jr.’s social democracy...
Jr.’s later years in a far longer history of black activism and social-democratic thinking, she helps map out the deeper intellectual and political roots of an entwined racial and economic egalitarianism that has been at the center of much of African-American politics for nearly a century. By doing so, Laurent offers us an elegant and timely history of how black intellectuals have long made a case for the intersections between class and race. Building on the work of Thomas F. Jackson, whose pioneering From Civil Rights to Human Rights redrew the history of King’s relationship to the social-democratic left in American history, Laurent helps us connect King’s vision of social democracy to a black political tradition that has always put economic inequality at its center.

To tell her story, Laurent begins not with the Poor People’s Campaign and its origins but goes back considerably farther, to the post–Civil War efforts by African Americans to achieve economic self-empowerment in the Reconstruction years. It is here, she argues, that one can find the origins of an intersectional egalitarianism and the roots of what become the Poor People’s Campaign and MLK’s social-democratic views.

During Reconstruction, various attempts at land ownership by African Americans were only the most prominent examples of black people trying to take control of their economic destiny. Frederick Douglass, for example, repeatedly pressed for the economic empowerment of recently freed black people, as well as the necessity of their uniting with poor whites across the South. Likewise, in an example often glossed over (and not mentioned by Laurent), South Carolina’s legislature also took on the project of economic redistribution. The most radical of the Southern legislatures during Reconstruction, it created a commission that redistributed land from former slave owners to anyone willing to pay taxes and interest for it over the course of several years. Open to anyone willing to pay taxes and interest, various attempts at economic redistribution. The most radical of the Southern legislatures during Reconstruction, it created a commission that redistributed land from former slave owners to anyone willing to pay taxes and interest for it over the course of several years.

The Nation Commission’s offer was taken up primarily by black people, as white citizens boycotted the Radical Republican state government. Although it was ended by a Democratic boycott, the Albany movement of 1961–62, the Birmingham campaign of 1963—had links to local struggles over black economic empowerment. As Laurent notes time and again in the exhilarating first chapters of King and the Other America, civil-rights leaders learned from left-wing activists how to agitate for civil and economic rights, seeing the two as inextricably linked.

An examination of King’s ideological foundations forms a large part of Laurent’s book. She acknowledges that his ideological worldview cannot be easily pinned down: It was not just socialist or Christian or anti-imperialist; often it was all three at once and tending to draw from a medley of different sources, centered on the potential of American democracy and his principled stance against racism and imperialism in American society. King also had a loosely socialist analysis of American inequality that became more pronounced as the years went on. While he was not what Laurent calls a “procommunist Marxist,” he did use a Marxist analysis of political economy to build his critique of capitalism in the United States and to understand the ways race relations had been formed in the South.

King’s socialism influenced his answer to the problem of racial inequality in America, too. A reckoning with racism, he insisted, was impossible without radically redistributing wealth and, by extension, power in American society. His analysis of the riots of the mid- to late ’60s, which took place primarily in Northern and Midwestern cities, cemented this argument for him. “A riot is the language of the unheard,” King insisted at the height of that “long, hot summer”: For him, race, class, and economic empowerment were therefore all intertwined in these urban rebellions. Civil rights and voting rights were critical for African Americans, but King recognized that in places outside the South, where African Americans had practiced the power of the ballot for decades, economic power was also a necessity for black emancipation.

Historians have long contended that King’s left turn, coming in the late 1960s, marked a radical break from his more liberal and integrationist politics in the 1950s and early to mid-’60s. But Laurent compellingly shows how King’s increasingly outspoken views on economic inequality were simply a case of him making public the views that he already held privately and that he felt he could no longer keep private after years of witnessing the appalling poverty in
both urban Chicago and rural Mississippi. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, King was already insisting that it was only the first stage in the struggle for black freedom. Without a frontal attack on economic inequality, political and civil rights were not enough.

By offering a prehistory of King’s economic politics, Laurent convincingly demonstrates how thinkers like Du Bois and Randolph influenced King and how their critiques of American capitalism flowed from even older intellectual and political traditions that were at the bedrock of black politics. For Du Bois, Randolph, and King, their mixture of racial pride with an understanding of the need for cross-racial solidarity to fight entrenched economic interests was not something new but long in the making.

Another of the strengths of Laurent’s book is the seriousness with which she treats progressive efforts to construct a more just and inclusive vision of America in the 1970s and ’80s. Placing King in conversation with intellectuals like Kenneth Clark, Gunnar Myrdal, and Michael Harrington, she helps bring the history of racial and economic egalitarianism into the years after King’s assassination.

While some of this political and intellectual history has been covered elsewhere, what makes Laurent’s work so valuable is the way she situates the activism of the 1970s and ’80s in the context of King and earlier struggles for racial equality. The Poor People’s Campaign, with its calls for massive government spending on a domestic “Marshall Plan,” helped sustain the visions of economic and racial equality into an age of increasingly conservative politics. The 1966 Freedom Budget proposed by Randolph, King, Bayard Rustin, and other leaders in the civil-rights movement helped inspire the efforts to sustain and protect social democracy in America in the 1970s and ’80s. As King wrote in his foreword to the Freedom Budget, it signified “a moral commitment to the fundamental principles on which this nation was founded.”

In addition to reminding us of all this useful history on the issue of economic inequality, Laurent does an excellent job delineating the challenges that often made assembling a multiracial coalition on behalf of the poor and working class in the United States so difficult. Her chapter “A Counter-War on Poverty,” on what happened with the Poor People’s Campaign when it arrived in Washington, is a case in point. In it, she discusses how the tensions between the leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and those representing Latino, Native American, and poor white activists threatened to derail the campaign. Latino activists like Rodolfo Gonzalez and Reies Tijerina criticized the Poor People’s Campaign for its treatment of nonblack denizens of Resurrection City, and cross-racial solidarity turned out to be a powerful ideal often difficult to put into practice.

Yet the multiracial coalition and the campaign held together. The common experience of poverty and economic disempowerment often proved an essential elixir of interracial and class tensions, and one cannot help but wonder if the Poor People’s Campaign might have persisted into the 1970s and ’80s had King and Robert F. Kennedy, another prominent supporter of the campaign, not been gunned down in 1968.

Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaigns of 1984 and ’88 came closest to reviving its vision, adopting a New Deal–like social-democratic politics in the mid-1980s, while building a wide-ranging and multiracial coalition to support it. But neither campaign broke out of the Democratic primaries and into the general election.

We would do well to recall the promise and learn the lessons of the Poor People’s Campaign today: A true multiracial coalition of working people in the United States will require an understanding of the unique historical experiences of the various racial and ethnic groups involved in order to achieve genuine gains for all. We cannot gloss over the differences in these experiences, but we cannot move forward without building a coalition that transcends them.

Recent debates about the need for reparations have opened another front in the long-lasting argument about whether social-democratic reforms will work for all Americans or, inevitably, leave the least of us behind, in particular those suffering from structural forms of racial inequality. King’s words have been used in support of reparations, with an oft-retweeted video of him talking in 1968 about the need for economic restitution to African Americans in the same vein as the aid to white farmers in the 1860s under the Homestead Act.

The creation of the act, with its associated funding of land-grant colleges, was in King’s view a worthy model that could be followed to help African Americans gain economic parity with other racial and ethnic groups. “Now, when we come to Washington, in this campaign,” King thundered, “we are coming to get our check.”

But the fact that King said this to a largely black audience in the Deep South while putting together his Poor People’s Campaign should give pause to anyone who argues that there is some kind of either/or at work between reparations and social democracy. Any political debate about reparations or broader social-democratic reforms will ultimately have to reckon with how King, Rustin, Du Bois, and many others found ways to make arguments for a politics specific to the inequalities experienced by black Americans and a politics that could also appeal to everyone. All pushed for the recognition of the unique historical and modern circumstances of African-American economic weakness, as well as the need for cross-racial solidarity to solve these problems.

The Poor People’s Campaign remains a clarion call for today’s left. One can make the argument for a social-democratic America and for those forms of justice that specifically address the violence and brutality of American racism. Perhaps for this reason, Laurent is not the only one recovering its importance and King’s social-democratic views. The recent collection of essays To Seek a Newer World, edited by Tommie Shelby and Brandon M. Terry, and the books of Michael Honey have also closely analyzed King’s relationship to the labor movement in Memphis, Tennessee, and have helped illuminate his social-democratic vision. Likewise, a latter-day Poor People’s Campaign has been launched by the Rev. William J. Barber II of North Carolina. As Barber explains, the new campaign seeks to highlight the issues facing poor and working-class Americans of every color by building a diverse grassroots base, bringing together “white women from the coal mines of West Virginia…with black women from Alabama.” This is precisely the kind of coalition that King fought for in 1968—and that we so desperately need in 2019.
Puzzle No. 3500
JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO

ACROSS
1 Alert: Spanish uncle vanished with slip of the lip over my dead body (3,2,1,3,4,2)
9 Fed reorganized, amid loud call for strange political ally? (9)
10 Mathematician’s error breaking rule (5)
11 Circle swimming hole the other way (4)
12 Uniformed students overdose on drinks, backing up propagandist (4,6)
14 Heard (perceived) part of show (5)
15 Engineer dictates conclusive assessment (4,4)
18 Exceedingly shoddy mimic in box (8)
20 Third of December: frightful date for military trainee (5)
23 Diner with lounge atmosphere, not excluding oxygen (10)
25 Formal park boundary (4)
27 A large quantity of boys grabbing ring (5)

DOWN
1 Singer, for example, with a number on live record (8)
2 Arrange to plead for slippery youngster? (7)
3 Oral disease moved quickly (4)
4 I teach pal mysterious Muslim rule (9)
5 Aware, naked, and hopeless (2-3)
6 Symbol pinned to your ear is a critical feature of many conversations (3,7)
7 Exercise regimen for Pontius and his family? (7)
8 Spanish performer, ripped or flipped (6)
13 Bone and grain maintaining Turkic population (10)
16 Highly concentrated incentive discussed after trade (9)
17 Mad, steep chaos! (8)
19 Carefully conserve a set of cards securing computer connection (7)
21 Head of livestock entrusted to brave pet (7)
22 Phase originally boosting runner! (6)
24 Barbie nearly failing as congregation’s leader (5)
26 British comic is an object of worship in audio recording (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3499

LEGAL~DOUBLET~S
E~I~A~O~T~U~H~F~
MEGAPHONE~CLEAR
O~O~D~V~N~R~W~E
NULL~PERSUASIVE
A~O~R~I~T~R~
DESIST~LOITER
E~H~S~O~V~B

ACROSS 1 & 4 LE + GAL + DOUBLETS
9 ME(GAP)H + ONE 11 NU(ish) LE
(OR VOID) 12 PER + SU + ASI-E REV
15 [LE(LE)T] - T - ER 16 SOS[O]
18 GALOSH 20 HEIFER (REV ANAG)
23 POSTIP + ONSING 24 ISLAND
26 CEASE (+ DESIST)
27 HO(OL)I(C) OR (rev.)
29 DE-[B]U-G

DOWN 1 LEMONADE 2 GIG OLOS REV 3 LAP + D REV 4 DOO Scholar E + R
5 U + TENSILE + S 6 AVG 7 THEWIRE
8 F(RE)E + CLEAR 14 SHOW / PIECE
(show n anag) 16 SHANGHAI (ghana n anag) 17 B - BREAKING (+ ENTERING)
19 [AB] + STAIN 21 FAG[O]LUR
22 [SENDING 23 2 def]
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Candace Falk
Rutgers University Press Classics

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—Howard Zinn

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—Tillie Olsen

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Candace Falk
Rutgers University Press Classics

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