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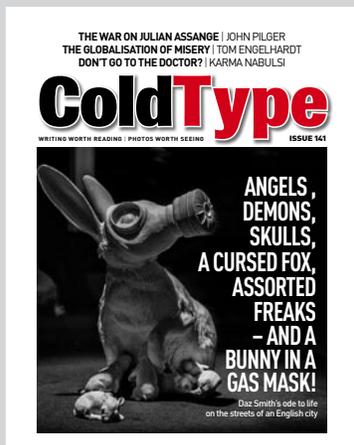
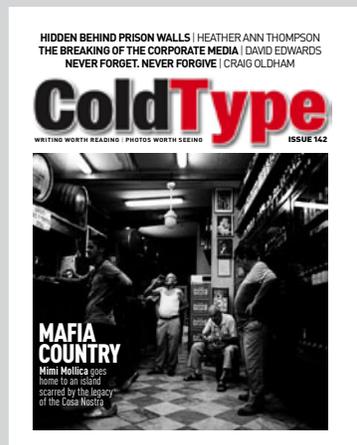
JANUARY 2018

**THE MOST
DANGEROUS
MAN
ON EARTH**



Photo: Gage Skidmore

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Olga Inguazova

War Ends

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The most dangerous man on Earth

Who cares? Not *them*, not it, not him, not (evidently) us, writes **Tom Engelhardt**

Let's start with the universe and work our way in. Who cares? Not them, because as far as we know *they* aren't there. As far as we know, no one exists in our galaxy or perhaps anywhere else but us (and the other creatures on this all-too-modest planet of ours). So don't count on any aliens out there caring what happens to humanity. They won't.

As for it – Earth – the planet itself can't, of course, care, no matter what we do to it. And I'm sure it won't be news to you that, when it comes to him – and I mean, of course, President Donald J. Trump, who reputedly has a void where the normal quotient of human empathy might be – don't give it a second's thought. Beyond himself, his businesses, and possibly (just possibly) his family, he clearly couldn't give less of a damn about us or, for that matter, what happens to anyone after he departs this planet.

As for us, the rest of us here in the United States at least, we already know something about the nature of our caring. A Yale study released last March indicated that 70 percent of us – a surprising but still less than overwhelming number (given the by-now-

well-established apocalyptic dangers involved) – believe that global warming is actually occurring. Less than half of us, however, expect to be personally harmed by it. So, to quote the eminently quotable Alfred E. Neuman, “What, me worry?”

Tell that, by the way, to the inhabitants of Ojai and other southern California hotspots – infernos, actually – being reduced to cinders in December, a month that not so long ago wasn't significant when it came to fires in that state. But such blazes should have been no surprise, thanks to the way fire seasons are lengthening on this warming planet. A burning December is simply part of what the governor of California, on surveying the fire damage recently, dubbed “the new normal” – just as ever more powerful Atlantic hurricanes, growing increasingly fierce as they pass over the warming waters of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico on their way to batter the United States, are likely to be another new normal of our American world.

In the wake of the hottest year on record, we all now live on a new-normal planet, which means a significantly more extreme





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Beyond himself, his businesses, and possibly (just possibly) his family, Donald Trump clearly couldn't give less of a damn about us or, for that matter, what happens to anyone after he departs this planet

”

Cover Story

Given the near majority of American voters who sent him to the White House, by campaign 2016 we were already living in a deeply disturbed country

one. Perhaps it's fitting, then, that the political version of that new normal involves a wildly overheated, overbearing, overhyped, over-tweeted president (even if only 60-odd percent of us believe that he could truly harm us). He's a man who, as the New York Times reported recently, begins to boil with doubt and disturbance if he doesn't find himself in the headlines, the focus of cable everything, for even a day or two. He's a man who seems to thrive only when the pot is boiling and when he's the center of the universe. And what a world we've prepared for such an incendiary figure! (More on that later.)

We're all now immersed in an evolving Trumppocalypse. In a sense, we were there even before The Donald entered the Oval Office. Just consider what it meant to elect a visibly disturbed human being to the highest office of the most powerful, potentially destructive nation on Earth. What does that tell you? One possibility: given the near majority of American voters who sent him to the White House, by campaign 2016 we were already living in a deeply disturbed country. And considering the coming of 1 percent elections, the growth of plutocracy, the blooming of a new Gilded Age whose wealth disparities must already be competitive with its 19th-century predecessor, the rise of the national security state, our endless wars (now turning "generational"), the increasing militarisation of this country, and the demobilisation of its people, to mention only a few 21st-century American developments, that should hardly be surprising.

Could Donald Trump be the end of evolutionary history?

Recently, as I was mulling over the extremity of this Trumpian moment, a depiction of evolution from my youth popped into my head. Sometimes back then, such illustrations, as I remember them, began with a fish-like creature flippering its way out of the water to be transformed into a reptile, but this one, known as the "March of

Progress," started with a hunched over ape-like creature. What followed were a series of figures that, left to right, grew ever more Homo-sapiens-like and ever more upright to the last guy, a muscular-looking fellow walking oh-so-erectly.

He, of course, was a proud specimen of us and we – it went without saying at the time – were the proud end of the line on this planet. We were it, progress personified! Even in my youth, however, we were also in the process of updating that evolutionary end point. At the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the fear of another kind of end, one that might truly be the end of everything, had become a nightmarish commonplace in our lives.

One night almost 60 years ago, for instance, I can still vividly remember myself on my hands and knees crawling through the rubble of an atomically devastated city. It was just a nightmare, of course, but of a sort that was anything but uncommon for those of us growing up then. And there were times – especially during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 – when those nuclear nightmares left the world of dreams and pop culture for everyday life. And even before that, if you were a child, you regularly experienced the fear of obliteration, as the air raid sirens wailed outside your classroom window, the radio on your teacher's desk broadcast warnings from Conelrad, and you "ducked and covered" under your flimsy desk.

With the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, such fears receded, though they shouldn't have, since by then, in a world of spreading nuclear states, we already knew about "nuclear winter." What that meant should have been terrifying. A perfectly imaginable nuclear war, not between superpowers but regional powers like India and Pakistan, could put so much smoke, so many particulates, into the atmosphere as to absorb sunlight for years, radically cooling the planet and possibly starving out most of humanity.

Only in our moment, however, have such nuclear fears returned in a significant way. Under the circumstances, more than half a century after that March of Progress imagery became popular, if we were to provisionally update it, we might have to add a singularly recognisable figure to the far right side of that diorama (appropriately enough): a large but slightly stooped man with a jut-chin, a flaming face, and a distinctive orange comb-over.

Which brings us to a straightforward enough question: Could Donald Trump prove to be the end of evolutionary history? The answer, however provisionally, is that he could. At a minimum, right now he qualifies as the most dangerous man on the planet. He might indeed be the final stopping spot (or at least the person who pointed the way toward it) for human history, for everything that led to this moment, to us.

What rough beast, its hour come round at last . . . ?

Whatever you do, however, don't just blame Donald Trump for this. He was simply the particularly unsettling version of Homo sapiens ushered into the White House on a backlash vote of dissatisfaction in 2016. When he got there, he unexpectedly found powers beyond compare awaiting him like so many loaded guns. As was true with the two presidents who preceded him, he automatically became not just the commander-in-chief of this country but its assassin-in-chief; that is, he found himself in personal control of an armada of drone aircraft that could be sent just about anywhere on Earth at his command to kill just about anyone of his choosing. At his beck and call, he also had the equivalent of what historian Chalmers Johnson once called the president's own private army (now, armies): both the CIA irregulars Johnson was familiar with and the US military's vast, secretive Special Operations forces. Above all, however, he found himself in charge of the planet's largest nuclear arsenal, weaponry that he and he

alone could order into use.

In short, like this country's other presidents since August 1945, he was fully weaponised and capable of singlehandedly turning this planet, or significant parts of it, into an instant inferno, a wasteland of – in his incendiary phrase in relation to North Korea – “fire and fury.” On January 20, 2017, in other words, he became the personification of a duck-and-cover planet (even though, as had been true since the 1950s, there was really nowhere to hide). It made no difference that he himself was woefully ignorant about the nature and power of such weaponry.

And speaking of planetary infernos, he also found himself weaponised when it came to a second set of instruments of ultimate destruction about which he was no less ignorant and to which he was even more in thrall. He brought to the Oval Office – Make America Great Again! – a nostalgia for his fossil-fuelised childhood world of the 1950s. Weaponised by Big Energy, he arrived prepared to ensure that the wealthiest and most powerful country on the planet would clear the way for yet more pipelines, fracking, offshore drilling, and just about every other imaginable form of exploitation of oil, natural gas, and coal (but not alternative energy). All of this was intended to create, as he proclaimed, a new “golden age,” not just of American energy independence but of “energy dominance” on a planetary scale. And here's what that really means: through his executive orders and the decisions of the stunning range of climate deniers and Big Oil enthusiasts he appointed to key posts in his administration, he can indeed ensure that ever more greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels will enter the atmosphere in the years to come, creating the basis for another kind of apocalypse.

On the promotion of global warming in his first year in office, it's reasonable to say, with a certain Trumpian pride, that the president has once again made the United States the planet's truly “exceptional” nation. In November, only five months after

Weaponised by Big Energy, Trump arrived prepared to ensure that the wealthiest and most powerful country on the planet would clear the way for yet more pipelines, fracking, offshore drilling, and just about every other imaginable form of exploitation of oil, natural gas, and coal (but not alternative energy)

Cover Story

If they, those nonexistent aliens, don't care and the planet can't care and the alien in the White House doesn't give a damn, then it's up to us to care. It's up to us to protest, resist, and change, to communicate and convince, to fight for life rather than its destruction

President Trump announced that the US would withdraw as soon as possible from the Paris climate agreement to fight global warming, Syria (of all countries) finally signed onto it, the last nation on Earth to do so. That meant this country was truly . . . well, you can't say left out in the "cold," not on this planet anymore, but quite literally exceptional in its single-minded efforts to ensure the destruction of the very environment that had for so long ensured humanity's well-being and made the creation of those illustrations of evolutionary progress possible.

Still, you can't just blame President Trump for this either. He's not responsible for the ingenuity, that gift of evolution, that led us, wittingly in the case of nuclear weapons and (initially) unwittingly in the case of climate change, to take powers once relegated to the gods and place them in our own hands – as of January 20, 2017, in fact, in the hands of Donald J. Trump. Don't blame him alone for the fact that the most apocalyptic moment in our history might come not via an asteroid from outer space, but from Trump Tower.

So here we are, living with a man whose ultimate urge seems to be to bring the world to a boil around himself. It's possible that he might indeed be the first president since Harry Truman in 1945 to order the use of nuclear weapons. As Nobel Prize winner Beatrice Fihn, director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, recently commented, the world might be only "a tiny tantrum" away from nuclear war in Asia. At the very least, he may already be helping to launch a new global nuclear arms race in which countries from South Korea and Japan to Iran and Saudi Arabia could find themselves with world-ending arsenals, leaving nuclear winter in the hands of . . . well, don't even think about it.

Now, imagine that amended evolutionary chart again or perhaps – in honour of The Donald's recent announcement that the US was recognising Jerusalem as Israel's

capital – call to mind poet William Butler Yeats's words about a world in which "the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity," while some "rough beast, its hour come round at last" is slouching "towards Bethlehem to be born." Think then of what a genuine horror it is that so much world-ending power is in the hands of any single human being, no less such a disturbed and disturbing one.

Of course, while Donald Trump might represent the end of the line that began in some African valley so many millennia ago, nothing on this planet is graven in stone, not when it comes to us. We still have the potential freedom to choose otherwise, to do otherwise. We have the capacity for wonders as well as horrors. We have the ability to create as well as to destroy.

In the phrase of Jonathan Schell, the fate of the Earth remains not just in his hands, but in ours. If *they*, those nonexistent aliens, don't care and the planet can't care and the alien in the White House doesn't give a damn, then it's up to us to care. It's up to us to protest, resist, and change, to communicate and convince, to fight for life rather than its destruction. If you're of a certain age, all you have to do is look at your children or grandchildren (or those of your friends and neighbours) and you know that no one, Donald Trump included, should have the right to consign them to the flames. What did they ever do to end up in a hell on Earth?

2018 is on the horizon. Let's make it a better time, not the end of time. **CT**

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Tom Engelhardt is a co-founder of the American Empire Project and the author of *The United States of Fear* as well as a history of the Cold War, *The End of Victory Culture*. He is a fellow of the Nation Institute and runs *TomDispatch.com*. His latest book is *Shadow Government: Surveillance, Secret Wars, and a Global Security State in a Single-Superpower World*. This essay was first published at www.tomdispatch.com

Rolling snake eyes in the Indo-Pacific

While everyone was focussing on the antics of Kim Jong Un, a far more dangerous exchange was taking place just off the Indian Ocean, writes **Conn M. Hallinan**

With the world focused on the scary possibility of war on the Korean Peninsula, not many people paid a whole lot of attention to a series of naval exercises this past July in the Malacca Strait, a 550-mile long passage between Sumatra and Malaysia through which over 50,000 ships pass each year. With President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un exchanging threats and insults, why would the media bother with something innocuously labelled “Malabar 17”?

They should have.

Malabar 17 brought together the US, Japanese, and Indian navies to practice shutting down a waterway through which 80 percent of China’s energy supplies travel and to war game closing off the Indian Ocean to Chinese submarines. If Korea keeps you up at night, try imagining the outcome of choking off fuel for the world’s second largest economy.

While Korea certainly represents the most acute crisis in Asia, the diplomatic manoeuvres behind Malabar 17 may be more dangerous in the long run. The exercise elevates the possibility of a confrontation between China, the US and India, but also between India and Pakistan, two nuclear-armed countries that have fought three wars in the past 70 years.

This tale begins more than a decade-and-a-half ago, when then Under Secretary

of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith – one of the most hawkish members of the George W. Bush administration – convened a meeting in May 2002 of the US-India Defense Policy Group and the government of India.

As one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, India traditionally avoided being pulled into the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. But the Bush administration had a plan for roping India into an alliance aimed at containing China, with a twist on an old diplomatic strategy: no stick, lots of carrots.

At the time India was banned from purchasing uranium on the international market because it had detonated a nuclear weapon in 1974 and refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). There was a fear that if India had nuclear weapons, eventually so would Pakistan, a fear that turned real in 1998 when Islamabad tested its first nuclear device.

Pakistan also refused to sign the NPT.

Under the rules of the Treaty, both countries were excluded from the 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group. While the ban was not a serious problem for Pakistan – it has significant uranium deposits – it was for India. With few domestic resources, India had to balance between using its uranium for weapons or to fuel nuclear power plants. Given that India is energy poor, that

India was banned from purchasing uranium on the international market because it had detonated a nuclear weapon in 1974 and refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Playing With Fire

In terms of impact, as scary as the Korea crisis is, a nuclear war between Pakistan and India would be qualitatively worse

was a difficult choice.

When the Bush administration took over in 2001, it immediately changed the designation of China from “strategic partner” to “strategic competitor.” It also resumed arms sales to New Delhi, despite India’s 1998 violation of the NPT with a new round of tests.

Then Washington offered a very big carrot called the 1-2-3 Agreement that allow India to bypass the NPT and buy uranium so long as it is not used for weapons. This, however, would allow India to shift all of its domestic fuel into weapons production.

At the time, Pakistan – which asked for the same deal and was rebuffed – warned that the agreement would ignite a nuclear arms race in Asia, which is precisely what has happened. India and Pakistan are busily adding to their nuclear weapons stocks, as is China and, of course, North Korea.

The 1-2-3 Agreement went into effect in 2008, although it has not been fully implemented.

Bush and Obama ignored Kashmir

Complicating this whole matter are on-going tensions between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, over which the two have fought three wars, the last of which came close to going nuclear. Rather than trying to defuse a very dangerous conflict, however, the Bush administration ignored Kashmir. So did the Obama administration, despite a pre-election promise by Barack Obama to deal with the crisis.

It would appear that a quid pro quo for India moving closer to the US is Washington’s silence on Kashmir.

In 2016, the Obama administration designated India a “Major Defense Partner,” made Japan a permanent member of the Malabar exercises, and began training Indian pilots in “advanced aerial combat” at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada.

The Trump administration has added to the tensions between India and Pakistan by encouraging New Delhi to deploy

troops in Afghanistan. While India already has paramilitary road building units in Southern Afghanistan, it does not have regular armed forces. From Islamabad’s point of view, Indian troops in Afghanistan will effectively sandwich Pakistan, north and south. So far, India has resisted the request.

The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also rolled out a new military strategy called “Cold Start,” which allows the Indian military to attack and pursue “terrorists” as deep as 30 kilometres into Pakistani territory. The danger is that a “Cold Start” operation could be misinterpreted by Islamabad as a major attack by the far larger Indian army. Faced with defeat, Pakistan might resort to tactical nuclear weapons, a decision that Pakistan has recently delegated to front-line commanders. Since India cannot respond in kind – it has no tactical nukes – New Delhi would either use its high yield strategic nuclear weapons or accept defeat. Since the latter is unlikely, the war could quickly escalate into a general nuclear exchange.

Such an exchange, according to a recent study by Scientific American, would not only kill tens of millions of people in both countries, it would cause a worldwide nuclear chill that would devastate agriculture in both hemispheres. In terms of impact, as scary as the Korea crisis is, a nuclear war between Pakistan and India would be qualitatively worse.

During his recent Asia tour, Trump used the term “Indo-Pacific” on a number of occasions, a term that was originally coined by the right wing Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe. Japan is currently in a tense standoff with China over several uninhabited islands in the East China Sea, and Abe is trying to dismantle Japan’s post-World War II “peace” constitution that restricts Japanese armed forces to “self-defense” operations.

Abe is also closely associated with a section of the Japanese political spectrum

that argues that Japan was simply resisting western imperialism in World War II and denies or downplays its own colonial role and the massive atrocities committed by the Japanese army in China and Korea.

Scary Asia

Asia looks like a pretty scary place these days. A right wing Hindu fundamentalist government in India and a revanchist Japanese Prime Minister are allied with an increasingly unstable administration in Washington to surround and contain the second largest economy in the world.

There are some hopeful developments, however. For one, following the recent Communist Party Congress, China seems to be looking for a way to turn down the heat in the region. After initially threatening South Korea for deploying a US anti-missile system, the THAAD, Beijing has stepped back and cut a deal: no additional THAAD systems, no boycott of South Korean goods.

The Chinese also dialled down tensions in the mountainous Doldam region on the border of China and Bhutan with an agreement for a mutual withdrawal of troops. There has been some progress as well in finding a non-confrontational solu-

tion to China's illegal claims in the South China Sea, although Beijing is not likely to abandon its artificial islands until there is a downsizing of US naval forces in the region.

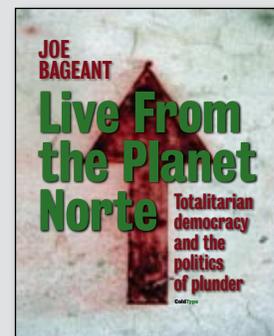
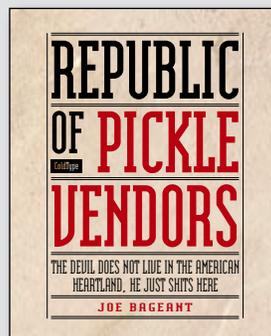
And, despite the tensions between the two, India and Pakistan formally joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization this past summer, a security grouping largely dominated by Russia and China.

The danger here is that someone does something stupid and things get out of hand. There are those who point out that despite similar tensions during the Cold War, all concerned survived those dark times. That, however, ignores the fact that the world came very close to nuclear war, once by design – the Cuban missile crisis – and several times by accident.

If you keep rolling the dice, eventually they come up snake eyes. **CT**

Conn M. Hallinan is a columnist for Foreign Policy In Focus. He has a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley and oversaw the journalism programme at the University of California at Santa Cruz for 23 years. He is a winner of a Project Censored Real News Award, and lives in Berkeley, California.

After initially threatening South Korea for deploying a US anti-missile system, the THAAD, Beijing has stepped back and cut a deal: no additional THAAD systems, no boycott of South Korean goods



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Forget corporate charity – it's time for tax reform

John Picton says it's good that billionaires such as Mark Zuckerberg donate cash to worthy causes, but it'd be better if their companies paid taxes

The less tax Facebook pays, the more wealth it can distribute to its shareholders – the largest of which is its co-founder and CEO, Zuckerberg

Mark Zuckerberg is the philanthro-capitalist poster boy, pledging to give away virtually all his wealth during his lifetime. But tax reform should trump the Facebook chief's charitable ways because his company makes money by selling its user base data to advertisers.

The UK government recently proposed taxing social media companies' revenues by reference to the size of their national user base. The plan is to stop the likes of Facebook making artificially low profits by paying large royalties to subsidiaries. The treasury said: "Pending reform of the international framework, the government will explore interim options to raise revenue from digital businesses that generate value from UK users, such as a tax on revenues that these businesses derive from the UK market.

"The UK will work with other countries to consider how such a tax could be targeted, designed and coordinated to minimise business burdens and distortion. However, the government stands ready to take unilateral action in the absence of sufficient progress on multilateral solutions."

According to the latest figures, 78 per cent of online adults are signed up to Facebook in Britain. It's likely, then, that the treasury's plan would increase Facebook's tax liability. It currently pays relatively lit-



SPREADING HIS WEALTH: Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg. Photo: Anthony Quintano, via Flickr.com

tle UK corporation tax. In 2016, it reported sales of £842.4-million, pre-tax profit of £58.4-million and paid £5.1-million in corporate tax.

The less tax Facebook pays, the more wealth it can distribute to its shareholders – the largest of which is its co-founder and CEO, Zuckerberg. But Zuckerberg does something surprising with this untaxed money: although he undoubtedly enjoys an extraordinary standard of living, he also gives much wealth away to good causes.

Because the wealthy are inclined to donate, not everyone objects to large and minimally taxed profit. A new movement of philanthro-capitalists has emerged, with the argument that the super-rich are well placed to meet worldwide social needs. This is because they are made up of skilled entrepreneurs, who have already proved their metal.

Through the Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative, which Zuckerberg runs alongside his wife Priscilla Chan, he has committed to give away 99 percent of his fortune over the course of his life. There is no question that it supports worthwhile causes. It has spent money to curb mass incarceration in the US, invests in research to cure diseases and, among other things, provides free eyesight examinations. But philanthro-capitalism is problematic when understood as a widespread alternative to old-fashioned tax-and-spend. Some wealthy people choose not to give to charity. Steve Jobs famously had no philanthropic public record, despite having amassed a personal fortune of \$8.3-billion.

Philanthro-capitalism is also undemocratic. Governments, when spending public money, are accountable to electorates. If a state pays for a social service, the decision flows from a deliberative process in which everyone has a stake.

When Zuckerberg spent \$100-million on public schools in New Jersey, he was able to stamp his preferences upon the nature of the project – a scheme criticised for widespread inefficiency.

There is also a problem particular to Facebook's strategy. Low business taxes are

sometimes tolerated by electorates if they are seen to support high-employment industries. Manufacturers might be given tax breaks in the hope that they will generate work.

But Facebook employs few people. In contrast to traditional industries, such as steel manufacturing or coal mining, its wealth is created without a large labour force. With fewer wage packets to pay, Facebook's advertising-based business pumps most of the money straight up to the top.

Facebook UK has routinely minimised its tax liability. Until last year, it routed all advertising sales through Ireland, which has lower corporation tax than Britain. Yet even the Irish branch doesn't pay very much, as it is understood that its wealth is transferred out of the country in royalty payments. Facebook UK also pays its employees in shares, which – if they appreciate in value – can be deducted from the corporation tax bill.

But Zuckerberg is unlikely to arrange Facebook's affairs to maximise tax. It's inevitable that he prefers control over the company's wealth – even if he chooses to spend the large surplus on good causes.

The UK government's proposals are welcome – because Facebook makes most of its money from advertising, taxing revenues based on the size of its national user head count has the potential to target the real source of the company's value: your data. **CT**

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John Picton is a lecturer in Charity Law at the University of Liverpool. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

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The media's two narratives on terrorism

Ramzy Baroud believes the demonisation and humiliation of innocent brown-skinned men and women will damage Western democracy

When President Donald Trump is constantly tweeting anti-Muslim propaganda, while his administration exploits every opportunity to advance anti-immigrant initiatives, the beleaguered small community of Muslims in the US can do little to stop the rising tide of Islamophobia

Within hours after Akayed Ullah, a Bangladeshi immigrant, allegedly detonated a pipe bomb in New York City on December 11, severely injuring himself and wounding four others, a most comprehensive official and media narrative emerged.

The formulation of the narrative concerning Ullah's motives, radicalisation and assumed hate for the US was so immaculate, one would have thought it took authorities months, not hours to compile such demanding evidence.

Strangely, Ullah's own family was surprised by the accusation concerning their son. However, the exact nature of what truly happened matters little. Not only was Ullah instantly found guilty by the media, all Muslims and immigrants, in fact, were.

Following each attack of this nature, Muslims in the US mobilize to fend off accusations concerning their faith, their values and their allegiance to the country in which they live. But it is not an easy fight to win. When President Donald Trump is constantly tweeting anti-Muslim propaganda, while his administration exploits every opportunity to advance anti-immigrant initiatives, the beleaguered small community of Muslims in the US can do little to stop the rising tide of Islamophobia.

The media has played a major role in propagating the negative attitudes towards

Muslims and Islam, which, in turn, provide the much-needed public support for the government to continue with its anti-Muslim measures.

Compare such attitudes with the way in which mass shootings carried out by white American men is communicated by the government and media alike.

Although mass killings by white males have proven to be the deadliest in the US, the discussion generated in the media and official discourses are centred mostly on mental illness of white attackers. In other words, there is consensus that violence perpetrated by members of the white community is not inherent to that community's race, culture or religion.

Five years after Adam Lanza killed 20 first graders and six adults at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, many are still at work trying to analyse Lanza's supposed mental illness that drove him to commit such a reprehensible act. The fact that Lanza was carrying more than 30 pounds of weapons seemed superfluous. Many pundits and politicians still refuse to engage in a discussion about guns.

The 'mental health' argument is also championed by Trump himself. "Mental health is your problem here", Trump said in a statement in response to a mass shooting by Devin Kelly, a white male who killed more than two dozen people in a Texas

church last November.

Resorting to easy answers when white men kill is now the norm. Killers of other races, skin colours and nationalities, however, get entirely different treatment.

As soon as the news emerged of Ullah's alleged bombing in New York, the Trump administration moved in full force to target immigrants. It called on Congress to end the diversity immigration lottery program, and to also shoot down chain migration – a government program that allows for easier immigration based on family connection.

Unprecedented hysteria against Muslims

The incessant media coverage and stubborn government targeting of Muslims have led to an unprecedented hysteria which, in turn, led to numerous incidents of Muslims being targeted because of their faith. Many accounts of Muslims being thrown out of airplanes, often kicking and screaming, is becoming a fact of life in the US.

When Khairuldeen Makhzoomi was kicked out of a Southwest Airlines flight last year for speaking Arabic on the phone, the agent who escorted him reprimanded him for using his mother tongue in public considering “today's political climate.”

Anila Dualatzai was dragged down the aisle of a plane heading to Los Angeles. She was “profiled, abused, interrogated, detained, and subjected to false reporting and the trauma of racist, vitriolic public shaming precisely because she is a woman, a person of colour, and a Muslim,” her attorney told the Washington Post.

While this hysteria plays well into the hands of opportunistic politicians such as Trump, actual facts suggest that violence is hardly a Muslim phenomenon.

Newsweek reported on statistics showing that white men have committed most of the country's mass killings. Since 1982, the “majority of mass shootings – 54 percent – were committed by white men,” numbers show.

Stephen Paddock, the 64-year-old white man who massacred 58 people and wound-

ed hundreds more at the Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas last October, was only one of an ever-growing list.

Countless government officials and journalists have fanned out to find out why Paddock would carry out such a heinous act, as if a white man's violence is a rare event in a country supposedly threatened by Blacks, Mexicans and Muslims.

Yet the truth is that the white man's profile is the most violent in the US.

“White men commit mass shootings out of a sense of entitlement,” John Haltiwanger wrote in Newsweek. Research conducted by Eric Madfis from the University of Washington argued in 2014 that, in the US, “middle-class Caucasian heterosexual males in their teenage years and in middle age commit mass murder . . . in numbers disproportionately high relative to their share of the population.”

He ascribed this finding to “white entitlement” and “heterosexual masculinity”, among other reasons. Still, a whole race, gender and religion are not held suspect; a rule that applies to some and excludes others. Certainly, anti-Arab and Muslim sentiment in the US has been around for generations, but it has risen sharply in the last two decades. Arabs and Muslims have become an easy scapegoat for all of America's instabilities and failures.

But demonising and humiliating brown-skinned men and women is certainly not the way out of the economic, political and foreign policy quagmires which American ruling elites have invited upon their country.

Such unlawful and undemocratic behaviour may feed anti-Muslim hysteria a little longer, and give the likes of Trump more fodder for their useless efforts in targeting innocent men and women. But, in the long run, it will do the country much harm, damaging its democratic institutions and contributing to the culture of violence, founded on entitled white men touting guns and killing innocent people.

CT

Demonising and humiliating brown-skinned men and women is certainly not the way out of the economic, political and foreign policy quagmires which American ruling elites have invited upon their country

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Ramzy Baroud has been writing about the Middle East for over 20 years. He is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author of several books and the founder of PalestineChronicle.com. His latest book is My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story (Pluto Press, London). His website is: ramzybaroud.net

In The Picture

© Luca Locatelli from *War Is Only Half The Story*, *The Aftermath Project* & Dewi Lewis Publishing



"United Colours Of War" by Luca Locatelli: A demonstration at SOFEX weapons fair, the world's most important weapons fair, which caters exclusively to Special Operations Forces and Homeland Security. It's held biennially in Amman, Jordan. 2012. This photo was a grant winner in 2114.

After the wars were over . . .

Sara Terry believes events that occur after wars end are as newsworthy as the horror and destruction of conflict. Those images, she says, "testify that war is not the final word on who we are as human beings, nor the final image of our spirit." Her new book, **War Is Only Half The Story**, is a 10-year retrospective of work on the Aftermath Project, a programme she set up to spotlight post-conflict photography





© Olga Ingurazova from War Is Only Half The Story, The Aftemath Project & Dewi Lewis Publishing

"Scars Of Independence" by Olga Ingurazova: An unguided missile launching mount, left in an Orthodox church destroyed during the war. Anukhva, Abkhazia. 2013. This was a finalist in 2014.

In The Picture

© Simon Brann Thorpe, from *War Is Only Half The Story, The Aftermath Project* & Dewi Lewis Publishing



“Toy Soldiers Budraiga No.02” by Simon Brann Thorpe: Toy Soldiers is a unique collaboration between a military commander and an artist in the creation of an allegory of modern warfare that stages real soldiers, posed as toy soldiers, in an investigation into the impact, legacy and dehumanizing effects of war. The series is set in Western Sahara, an invisible conflict stuck within a paradigm of post-colonial conflict for more than 40 years. Finalist, 2012

“The end of war does not mean peace. It is simply the end of death and destruction. Every story of war includes a chapter that almost always goes untold – the story of the aftermath, which day by day becomes the prologue of the future.” – Sara Terry, founder, The Aftermath Project.

War is Only Half the Story is a ten-year retrospective of the work of the groundbreaking documentary photography programme, The Aftermath Project, which has, for a decade, supported post-conflict storytelling by some of the world’s best photographers.

As a grant-making educational non-profit, the Aftermath Project was founded to help change the way the media covers conflict – and to educate the public about the true cost of war and the real price of peace. Using the post-conflict poetry of Nobel laureate Wislawa Szymborska as themes for each chapter, the book, which features the work of 53 of the project’s grant winners and finalists from around the world, explores some of the post-conflict stories that all often go untold.

Writing about the project, Terry says, “We decided on a fresh approach to the conversation, instead of a chronological overview of the decade of work that we have supported, designer Teun van der Heijden and I drew on two poems by Nobel laureate Wislawa Szymborska. Using her post-conflict verbal imagery, we created five themes for the book.

“With Szymborska’s words to guide us, we edited image to image – not worrying whether the work was that of a grant winner or a finalist, whether it came from Sierra Leone or Pine Ridge Indian Reservation or Ukraine or Laos or Guatemala I believe we have created a dialogue that’s never been heard before, a post-conflict visual symphony, one that invites you to listen over and over again.”

CT

*Sara Terry is a documentary photographer and filmmaker, and a Guggenheim Fellow in Photography. She began The Aftermath Project while working on her first post-conflict photography project, *Aftermath: Bosnia’s Long Road to Peace*.*

In The Picture

© Jessica Hines, from *War Is Only Half The Story, The Aftermath Project* & Dewi Lewis Publishing



"MY BROTHER'S WAR" By Jessica Hines: Chapter 4, Untitled #2, The Beginning. "I was standing on my balcony one evening in Saigon watching in amazement the traffic below. When I decided to make this photograph, it was not planned but felt – the image formed in my mind as I stood there in the fading light. I quickly ran into my room, grabbed the camera and made the shot before the light disappeared. The photograph I held was taken by Gary of what appears to be smoke from a bomb blast. I don't know the exact location where that photograph was made. This is but one of the mysteries surrounding Gary's photographs and experiences during the war." Finalist, 2010

In The Picture

"SAHEL – THE DYNAMICS OF DUST"
by Philippe Dudouit:
(From left to right)
Bibi, Al Hussein,
Mohamed and Akli are
part of a Tuareg rebels
music band, founded
by the Niger
Movement for Justice,
a primarily Tuareg
militant group, to
spread their message
all over the Sahel
region. In the 1990s,
as the first rebellion
took place, another
Tuareg band became
famous as far away
as Europe. Northern
Niger, 2008.
Finalist, 2014



© Philippe Dudouit, from War Is Only Half The Story, The Aftermath Project & Dewi Lewis Publishing

© Rodrigo Abd, from War Is Only Half The Story, The Aftermath Project & Dewi Lewis Publishing



"RECLAIMING THE DEAD: MASS GRAVES IN GUATEMALA, A STORY ONLY PARTIALLY TOLD"
by Rodrigo Abd: Lorenzo Cuxil and Felicita Oligaria look at a picture of a victim killed by the Guatemalan Army in a former military base in Comolapa, 80 km west of Guatemala City. Guatemalans honour their deceased loved ones on November 1 and 2. November 2, 2004. Finalist, 2009



WAR IS ONLY HALF THE STORY:
10 Years of the Aftermath Project

Edited by Sara Terry
& Teun van der Heijden

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Public companies and private spies

Meirion Jones & Rob Evans tell how the Royal Bank of Scotland, British Airways, Porsche, Caterpillar and other firms employ private security firms to spy on protesters

An investigation by New Yorker magazine alleged in November that disgraced film producer Harvey Weinstein used private detectives from two firms to spy on women he had allegedly sexually harassed or assaulted. The New Yorker claimed that a private spy posed as a women's rights advocate to get actor Rose McGowan to talk and secretly recorded the meetings. McGowan has accused Weinstein of rape, although Weinstein has "unequivocally denied" all claims of non-consensual sex.

In Britain these sorts of methods have come to be associated with the Metropolitan Police and their undercover police officers. Officers in the Special Demonstration Squad and its successors pretended to be animal rights activists and anti-capitalist demonstrators to infiltrate activist organisations such as Greenpeace.

The revelations that some of them had long relationships and even children with protestors while living under assumed identities led to the ongoing Pitchford Inquiry into undercover policing. However, some police say that there are far more questions to be asked about the activities of private sector undercover operatives.

The Bureau for Investigative Reporting and Guardian newspaper were given inside information which shines a light on this hidden world, when hundreds of pages of docu-

ments were leaked to us from two corporate intelligence firms. The documents cover the period 2003-11 and offer insight into how some operators in a normally subterranean industry work.

The subsequent investigation by the Guardian and the Bureau then identified five large companies which have paid corporate intelligence firms, often known as "private spies." These firms were paid to monitor campaigning groups that challenged their businesses, the leaked documents reveal.

The monitoring, which included the use of fake activists, who infiltrated campaign groups to spy on them, intelligence gathering and obtaining internal documents, was funded by household names including the Royal Bank of Scotland, British Airways, Porsche, the utility company RWE and the manufacturing company, Caterpillar.

The targets of the monitoring spanned the grieving family of a young protester crushed to death by a bulldozer to a range of environmental campaigns, including even phone mast protesters.

The leaked documents suggest that the use of secretive corporate security firms to gather intelligence about political campaigners has been widespread.

The cache of emails we obtained shows how one of the "private spy" firms, C2i International, used two infiltrators to acquire advance warning of demonstrations that

The targets of the monitoring spanned the grieving family of a young protester crushed to death by a bulldozer to a range of environmental campaigns, including even phone mast protesters

Who's Watching?

Cindy Corrie found it “really distasteful” that the corporate spies paid for by Caterpillar had misrepresented themselves to listen in to the conference call which she thought consisted of a small group of supporters

were being mounted against big companies. They then fed this information back to the companies.

The infiltrators pretended to be activists sympathetic to the cause of the campaigners. They helped to run the campaigns and attended their demonstrations, including on one occasion, dressing up as a pirate with a cutlass and eyepatch as part of a protest. They often obtained the campaigners' internal documents, including emails and accounts of meetings.

Caterpillar, one of the world's biggest manufacturing companies, hired C2i which gathered information about a grieving family that took legal action against the firm. A contract drawn up by Caterpillar and signed by C2i instructed that its work should be kept confidential.

Rachel Corrie was a 23-year-old student who was crushed to death in 2003 by an Israeli military bulldozer as she protested against the demolition of Palestinian homes. She had been run over by a bulldozer that was said to have been manufactured and sold to the Israeli military by Caterpillar.

Her family took legal action against Caterpillar, alleging that the firm was aiding and abetting war crimes by exporting bulldozers to the Israelis for decades, knowing that they would be used to demolish Palestinian homes.

In 2007, American judges dismissed the Corries' legal action, concluding that they did not have the jurisdiction to decide the case. Nine days later, her mother, Cindy, spoke on a conference telephone call to around 70 members of a campaign that was supporting the family's lawsuit. C2i obtained the campaign's notes of the call.

Her comments are recorded in a five-page “restricted – commercial” document known as a “corporate threat intelligence alert,” written by C2i and marked with the Caterpillar logo. According to the alert, the conference call was “held in direct response to the collapse” of the court case and the recent death of a 17-year-old in Gaza.



Rachel Corrie, a member of the International Solidarity Movement, was crushed to death in the Gaza Strip by an Israel Defense Forces bulldozer while kneeling in front of a Palestinian's home.

Photo: Denny Sternstein.

The alert noted that “Cindy Corrie gave an update on the court case and the future strategy of campaign was discussed . . . She gave a detailed chronological account of the legal developments in the case, most notably the judges' decision not to reinstate the case.” It recorded how she gave her views on the progress on the lawsuit and their options for taking it forward.

Cindy Corrie told the Guardian that she found it “really distasteful” that the corporate spies had misrepresented themselves to listen in to the conference call which she thought consisted of a small group of supporters. She added that her family had asked Caterpillar for an open dialogue about the lawsuit but had been turned down.

In the UK, Caterpillar hired a second corporate intelligence firm, Inkerman, to monitor protesters, according to another set of leaked documents. The clandestine Inkerman Group has gathered information about protesters and has covertly deployed infiltrators on demonstrations that are directed

at firms. An email from a senior Caterpillar representative from 2005 states: "Caterpillar have been working very closely with the Inkerman group, this partnership has been very successful in providing Caterpillar a proactive approach to activism directed against Caterpillar facilities in the UK."

One of its confidential documents has warned of the threat presented by protest groups who used direct action to disrupt the "economic welfare" of companies. Caterpillar told the Bureau that as our questions related to a lawsuit, the company could not discuss or comment on "matters of litigation." It added: "As a values based company, Caterpillar has deep respect and compassion for all persons affected by the political strife in the Middle East and support a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

Further leaks from Inkerman also show how the firm obtained what it called "verbatim" emails that were being circulated among local protesters who objected on health grounds to phone masts being built. These emails are not linked to the companies we mention here, and it is not known which company may have been involved. The campaigner who sent one of the emails believed the email was a private communication. Inkerman noted in a 2003 internal assessment that the anti-phone mast campaigners appeared to be copying tactics used by environmentalists against firms that it said it had "attracted their perverse attention."

Inkerman didn't reply when it was asked who had hired them to collect information about the mobile phone mast campaigners and how they obtained the emails.

The energy generating firm RWE hired Inkerman to provide "intelligence on potential threats or issues in the form of weekly reports and ad hoc updates." but this arrangement was terminated in 2009. RWE says it now only uses "publicly available and openly-sourced information to inform us of potential issues."

Leaked documents from C2i show that it claimed to have "real time intelligence as-

sets" in a range of environmental campaign groups, including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, local green groups in Oxford and what it termed "all anti-aviation groups." These were proposal documents looking for clients and it is not known who those clients may have been. Its clients included Royal Bank of Scotland, British Airways, and Porsche. The car manufacturer, which is owned by Volkswagen, said it was "sensible and responsible" to hire C2i briefly in 2008 to gather information on demonstrations as its Mayfair centre and showroom had at that time been "a target for protesters." The company added it was a short contract, which ended in 2008 and the company was not used again, as information about marches is now publicly available. British Airways also used C2i, but said it was on a trial basis. RBS used to use companies such as C2i to deal with any threat to staff and customers, told us but said in a statement: "RBS no longer uses these kinds of firms to gather information and has not done so for the last five years."

C2i also pitched its services in 2008 to Donald Trump's property development firm which was seeking to create a huge golf course and build a hotel and flats on ecologically sensitive land in Scotland. C2i said Trump's firm was "under threat from a consortium of environmental activists." However it is not known if Trump's firm hired C2i. President Trump's firm and C2i did not reply.

C2i, which changed its name before being dissolved in 2012, was set up by Justin King, a former special forces pilot who said he specialised in surveillance and counter-intelligence. **CT**

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Meirion Jones is an award-winning journalist best known for investigations into Jimmy Savile, Trafigura, vulture funds and the 'fake sheikh'. Rob Evans is a reporter at the Guardian. This article was produced by the Bureau for Investigative Journalism – www.thebureauinvestigates.com – and first published in partnership with the Guardian newspaper.

Why the documentary mustn't be allowed to die

John Pilger explains how documentary films – the blood, sweat and tears of ordinary people – have the power to break the silence of official lies

What concerned the regulator and the ambassador was the power of a single documentary film: the power of its facts and witnesses, especially young soldiers speaking the truth and treated sympathetically by the film-maker

I first understood the power of the documentary during the editing of my first film, *The Quiet Mutiny*. In the commentary, I make reference to a chicken, which my crew and I encountered while on patrol with American soldiers in Vietnam.

“It must be a Vietcong chicken - a communist chicken,” said the sergeant. He wrote in his report: “enemy sighted.”

The chicken moment seemed to underline the farce of the war - so I included it in the film. That may have been unwise. The regulator of commercial television in Britain - then the Independent Television Authority or ITA - had demanded to see my script. What was my source for the political affiliation of the chicken? I was asked. Was it really a communist chicken, or could it have been a pro-American chicken?

Of course, this nonsense had a serious purpose; when *The Quiet Mutiny* was broadcast by ITV in 1970, the US ambassador to Britain, Walter Annenberg, a personal friend of President Richard Nixon, complained to the ITA. He complained not about the chicken, but about the whole film. “I intend to inform the White House,” the ambassador wrote. Gosh.

The Quiet Mutiny had revealed that the US army in Vietnam was tearing itself apart. There was open rebellion: drafted men were refusing orders and shooting their officers in the back or “fragging” them with gre-

nades as they slept.

None of this had been news. What it meant was that the war was lost; and the messenger was not appreciated.

The Director-General of the ITA was Sir Robert Fraser. He summoned Denis Foreman, then Director of Programmes at Granada TV, and went into a state of apoplexy. Spraying expletives, Sir Robert described me as a “dangerous subversive.”

What concerned the regulator and the ambassador was the power of a single documentary film: the power of its facts and witnesses, especially young soldiers speaking the truth and treated sympathetically by the film-maker.

I was a newspaper journalist. I had never made a film before and I was indebted to Charles Denton, a renegade producer from the BBC, who taught me that facts and evidence told straight to the camera and to the audience could indeed be subversive.

This subversion of official lies is the power of documentary. I have now made 60 films and I believe there is nothing like this power in any other medium.

In the 1960s, a brilliant young film-maker, Peter Watkins, made *The War Game* for the BBC. Watkins reconstructed the aftermath of a nuclear attack on London.

The War Game was banned. “The effect of this film,” said the BBC, “has been judged to be too horrifying for the medium

Media Power

The documentary Death on the Rock revealed that the British Government deployed SAS death squads overseas against the IRA, murdering four unarmed people in Gibraltar

the BBC had banned, doctored or delayed some 50 major TV programmes on Ireland. There were, of course, honourable exceptions, such as John Ware. Roger Bolton, the producer of *Death on the Rock*, was another. *Death on the Rock* revealed that the British Government deployed SAS death squads overseas against the IRA, murdering four unarmed people in Gibraltar.

A vicious smear campaign was mounted against the film, led by the government of Margaret Thatcher and the Murdoch press, notably the *Sunday Times*, edited by Andrew Neil. It was the only documentary ever subjected to an official inquiry – and its facts were vindicated. Murdoch had to pay up for the defamation of one of the film’s principal witnesses. But that wasn’t the end of it. Thames Television, one of the most innovative broadcasters in the world, was eventually stripped of its franchise in the United Kingdom.

Did the prime minister exact her revenge on ITV and the film-makers, as she had done to the miners? We don’t know. What we do know is that the power of this one documentary stood by the truth and, like *The War Game*, marked a high point in filmed journalism.

Exuding an artistic heresy

I believe great documentaries exude an artistic heresy. They are difficult to categorise. They are not like great fiction. They are not like great feature movies. Yet, they can combine the sheer power of both.

The Battle of Chile: the fight of an unarmed people, is an epic documentary by Patricio Guzman. It is an extraordinary film: actually a trilogy of films. When it was released in the 1970s, the *New Yorker* asked: “How could a team of five people, some with no previous film experience, working with one Éclair camera, one Nagra sound-recorder, and a package of black and white film, produce a work of this magnitude?”

Guzman’s documentary is about the overthrow of democracy in Chile in 1973 by

fascists led by General Pinochet and directed by the CIA. Almost everything is filmed hand-held, on the shoulder. And remember this is a film camera, not video. You have to change the magazine every ten minutes, or the camera stops; and the slightest movement and change of light affects the image.

In the *Battle of Chile*, there is a scene at the funeral of a naval officer, loyal to President Salvador Allende, who was murdered by those plotting to destroy Allende’s reformist government. The camera moves among the military faces: human totems with their medals and ribbons, their coiffed hair and opaque eyes. The sheer menace of the faces says you are watching the funeral of a whole society: of democracy itself.

There is a price to pay for filming so bravely. The cameraman, Jorge Muller, was arrested and taken to a torture camp, where he “disappeared” until his grave was found many years later. He was 27. I salute his memory.

In Britain, the pioneering work of John Grierson, Denis Mitchell, Norman Swallow, Richard Cawston and other film-makers in the early 20th-century crossed the great divide of class and presented another country. They dared put cameras and microphones in front of ordinary Britons and allowed them to talk in their own language.

John Grierson is said by some to have coined the term “documentary.” “The drama is on your doorstep,” he said in the 1920s, “wherever the slums are, wherever there is malnutrition, wherever there is exploitation and cruelty.”

These early British film-makers believed that the documentary should speak from below, not from above: it should be the medium of people, not authority. In other words, it was the blood, sweat and tears of ordinary people that gave us the documentary.

Denis Mitchell was famous for his portraits of a working-class street. “Throughout my career,” he said, “I have been absolutely astonished at the quality of people’s

strength and dignity.” When I read those words, I think of the survivors of Grenfell Tower, most of them still waiting to be rehoused, all of them still waiting for justice, as the cameras move on to the repetitive circus of a royal wedding.

The late David Munro and I made *Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia* in 1979. This film broke a silence about a country subjected to more than a decade of bombing and genocide, and its power involved millions of ordinary men, women and children in the rescue of a society on the other side of the world. Even now, *Year Zero* puts the lie to the myth that the public doesn't care, or that those who do care eventually fall victim to something called “compassion fatigue.”

Year Zero was watched by an audience greater than the audience of the current, immensely popular British “reality” programme *Bake Off*. It was shown on mainstream TV in more than 30 countries, but not in the United States, where PBS rejected it outright, fearful, according to an executive, of the reaction of the new Reagan administration. In Britain and Australia, it was broadcast without advertising – the only time, to my knowledge, this has happened on commercial television.

Following the British broadcast, more than 40 sacks of post arrived at ATV's offices in Birmingham, 26,000 first-class letters in the first post alone. Remember this was a time before email and Facebook. In the letters was £1-million – most of it in small amounts from those who could least afford to give. “This is for Cambodia,” wrote a bus driver, enclosing his week's wages. Pensioners sent their pension. A single mother sent her savings of £50. People came to my home with toys and cash, and petitions for Thatcher and poems of indignation for Pol Pot and for his collaborator, President Richard Nixon, whose bombs had accelerated the fanatic's rise.

For the first time, the BBC supported an ITV film. The *Blue Peter* programme asked

children to “bring and buy” toys at Oxfam shops throughout the country. By Christmas, the children had raised the astonishing amount of £3,500,000. Across the world, *Year Zero* raised more than \$55-million, mostly unsolicited, and which brought help directly to Cambodia: medicines, vaccines and the installation of an entire clothing factory that allowed people to throw away the black uniforms they had been forced to wear by Pol Pot. It was as if the audience had ceased to be onlookers and had become participants.

Something similar happened in the United States when CBS Television broadcast Edward R. Murrow's film, *Harvest of Shame*, in 1960. This was the first time that many middle-class Americans glimpsed the scale of poverty in their midst.

Harvest of Shame is the story of migrant agricultural workers who were treated little better than slaves. Today, their struggle has such resonance as migrants and refugees fight for work and safety in foreign places. What seems extraordinary is that the children and grandchildren of some of the people in this film will be bearing the brunt of the abuse and strictures of President Trump.

In the United States today, there is no equivalent of Edward R. Murrow. His eloquent, unflinching kind of American journalism has been abolished in the so-called mainstream and has taken refuge in the internet.

Britain remains one of the few countries where documentaries are still shown on mainstream television in the hours when most people are still awake. But documentaries that go against the received wisdom are becoming an endangered species, at the very time we need them perhaps more than ever.

In survey after survey, when people are asked what they would like more of on television, they say documentaries. I don't believe they mean a type of current affairs programme that is a platform for politicians

Year Zero was watched by an audience greater than the audience of the current, immensely popular British “reality” programme Bake Off. It was shown on mainstream TV in more than 30 countries, but not in the United States, where PBS rejected it outright, fearful, according to an executive, of the reaction of the new Reagan administration

Media Power

and “experts” who affect a specious balance between great power and its victims.

Observational documentaries are popular; but films about airports and motorway police do not make sense of the world. They entertain.

David Attenborough’s brilliant programmes on the natural world are making sense of climate change – belatedly.

The BBC’s Panorama is making sense of Britain’s secret support of jihadism in Syria – belatedly.

But why is Trump setting fire to the Middle East? Why is the West edging closer to war with Russia and China?

Mark the words of the narrator in Peter Watkins’ *The War Game*: “On almost the entire subject of nuclear weapons, there is now practically total silence in the press, and on TV. There is hope in any unresolved or unpredictable situation. But is there real hope to be found in this silence?”

In 2017, that silence has returned.

It is not news that the safeguards on nuclear weapons have been quietly removed and that the United States is now spending

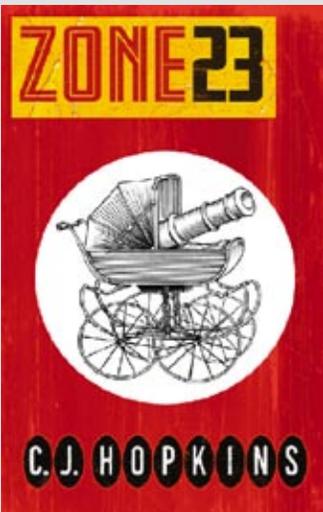
\$46-million per hour on nuclear weapons: that’s \$46-million every hour, 24 hours a day, every day. Who knows that?

The Coming War on China, which I completed last year, has been broadcast in the UK but not in the United States – where 90 per cent of the population cannot name or locate the capital of North Korea or explain why Trump wants to destroy it. China is next door to North Korea.

According to one “progressive” film distributor in the US, the American people are interested only in what she calls “character-driven” documentaries. This is code for a “look at me” consumerist cult that now consumes and intimidates and exploits so much of our popular culture, while turning away film-makers from a subject as urgent as any in modern times.

“When the truth is replaced by silence,” wrote the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, “the silence is a lie.” Whenever young documentary film-makers ask me how they can “make a difference,” I reply that it is really quite simple. They need to break the silence. **CT**

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This is an edited version of an address John Pilger gave at the British Library on December 9 as part of a retrospective festival, The Power of the Documentary, held to mark the library’s acquisition of Pilger’s written archive. Read more of Pilger’s work at www.johnpilger.com



ZONE 23

C.J. Hopkins

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The permanent lie is our deadliest threat

Chris Hedges discusses the need for action to fight the wave of corporate totalitarianism that is rapidly taking over society

The most ominous danger we face does not come from the eradication of free speech through the obliteration of net neutrality or through Google algorithms that steer people away from dissident, left-wing, progressive or anti-war sites. It does not come from a tax bill that abandons all pretence of fiscal responsibility to enrich corporations and oligarchs and prepares the way to dismantle programmes such as Social Security. It does not come from the opening of public land to the mining and fossil fuel industry, the acceleration of ecocide by demolishing environmental regulations, or the destruction of public education. It does not come from the squandering of federal dollars on a bloated military as the country collapses or the use of the systems of domestic security to criminalise dissent. The most ominous danger we face comes from the marginalisation and destruction of institutions, including the courts, academia, legislative bodies, cultural organisations and the press, that once ensured that civil discourse was rooted in reality and fact, helped us distinguish lies from truth and facilitated justice.

Donald Trump and today's Republican Party represent the last stage in the emergence of corporate totalitarianism. Pillage and oppression are justified by the permanent lie. The permanent lie is different from the falsehoods and half-truths uttered by

politicians such as Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. The common political lie these politicians employed was not designed to cancel out reality. It was a form of manipulation. Clinton, when he signed into law the North American Free Trade Agreement, promised "NAFTA means jobs, American jobs and good-paying American jobs." George W. Bush justified the invasion of Iraq because Saddam Hussein supposedly possessed weapons of mass destruction. But Clinton did not continue to pretend that NAFTA was beneficial to the working class when reality proved otherwise. Bush did not pretend that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction once none were found.

The permanent lie is not circumscribed by reality. It is perpetuated even in the face of overwhelming evidence that discredits it. It is irrational. Those who speak in the language of truth and fact are attacked as liars, traitors and purveyors of "fake news." They are banished from the public sphere once totalitarian elites accrue sufficient power, a power now granted to them with the revoking of net neutrality. The iron refusal by those who engage in the permanent lie to acknowledge reality, no matter how transparent reality becomes, creates a collective psychosis.

"The result of a consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth is not that the lie will now be accepted as truth

The permanent lie is not circumscribed by reality. It is perpetuated even in the face of overwhelming evidence that discredits it. It is irrational. Those who speak in the language of truth and fact are attacked as liars, traitors and purveyors of "fake news"

Corporate Control

The merger of the corporatists with the Christian right is the marrying of Godzilla to Frankenstein

and truth be defamed as a lie, but that the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world – and the category of truth versus falsehood is among the mental means to this end – is being destroyed,” Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

The permanent lie turns political discourse into absurdist theatre. Donald Trump, who lies about the size of his inauguration crowd despite photographic evidence, insists that, in regard to his personal finances, he is “going to get killed” by a tax bill that actually will save him and his heirs more than \$1-billion. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin claims he has a report that proves that the tax cuts will pay for themselves and will not increase the deficit – only there never was a report. Sen. John Cornyn assures us, countering all factual evidence, that “this is not a bill that is designed primarily to benefit the wealthy and the large businesses.”

Two million acres of public land, meanwhile, are handed over to the mining and fossil fuel industry as Trump insists the transfer means that “public lands will once again be for public use.” When environmentalists denounce the transfer as a theft, Rep. Rob Bishop calls their criticism “a false narrative.”

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, after ending net neutrality, effectively killing free speech on the internet, says, “[T]hose who’ve said the internet as we know it is about to end have been proven wrong. . . . We have a free internet going forward.” And at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, phrases such as “evidence-based” and “science-based” are banned.

The permanent lie is the apotheosis of totalitarianism. It no longer matters what is true. It matters only what is “correct.” Federal courts are being stacked with imbecilic and incompetent judges who serve the “correct” ideology of corporatism and the rigid social mores of the Christian right. They hold reality, including science and the rule of law, in contempt. They seek to banish those who

live in a reality-based world defined by intellectual and moral autonomy. Totalitarian rule always elevates the brutal and the stupid. These reigning idiots have no genuine political philosophy or goals. They use clichés and slogans, most of which are absurd and contradictory, to justify their greed and lust for power. This is as true on the Christian right, which is filling the ideological vacuum of the Trump administration, as it is for the corporatists who preach neoliberalism and globalisation. The merger of the corporatists with the Christian right is the marrying of Godzilla to Frankenstein.

“The venal political figures need not even comprehend the social and political consequences of their behaviour,” psychiatrist Joost A.M. Meerloo wrote in *The Rape of the Mind: The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide, and Brainwashing*. “They are compelled not by ideological belief, no matter how much they may rationalise to convince themselves they are, but by the distortions of their own personalities. They are not motivated by their advertised urge to serve their country or mankind, but rather by an overwhelming need and compulsion to satisfy the cravings of their own pathological character structures. The ideologies they spout are not real goals; they are the cynical devices by which these sick men hope to achieve some personal sense of worth and power. Subtle inner lies seduce them into going from bad to worse. Defensive self-deception, arrested insight, evasion of emotional identification with others, degradation of empathy – the mind has many defense mechanisms with which to blind the conscience.”

When reality is replaced by the whims of opinion and expediency, what is true one day often becomes false the next. Consistency is discarded. Complexity, nuance, depth and profundity are replaced with the simpleton’s belief in threats and force. This is why the Trump administration disdains diplomacy and is dynamiting the State Department. Totalitarianism, wrote novelist

and social critic Thomas Mann, is at its core the desire for a simple folk tale. Once this folk tale replaces reality, morality and ethics are abolished.

“Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities,” Voltaire warned.

The corporate elites, who even in the best of times stacked the deck against people of colour, the poor and the working class, no longer play by any rules. Their lobbyists, bought-and-paid-for politicians, pliant academics, corrupt judges and television news celebrities run a kleptocratic state defined by legalised bribery and unchecked exploitation. The corporate elites write laws, regulations and bills to expand corporate looting and plunder while imposing a crippling debt peonage on the public, including college graduates burdened by huge loans. They ram through austerity measures that dismantle state and municipal services, often forcing them to be sold off to corporations, and slash social programmes, including public education and health care. They insist, however, that when we have grievances we rely on the institutions they have debased and corrupted. They ask us to invest our energy and time in fixed political campaigns, petition elected representatives or appeal to the courts. They seek to lure us into their schizophrenic world, where rational discourse is pitted against gibberish. They demand we seek justice in a system designed to perpetuate injustice. It is a game we can never win.

“Thus all our dignity consist in thought,” wrote Pascal. “It is on thought that we must

depend for our recovery, not on space and time, which we could never fill. Let us then strive to think well; that is the basic principle of morality.”

We must pit power against power. We must build parallel institutions and organisations that protect us from corporate assault and resist corporate domination. We must sever ourselves as much as possible from the vampire state. The more we can create self-contained communities, with our own currencies and infrastructures, the more we can starve and cripple the corporate beast. This means establishing worker-run cooperatives, local systems of food supply based on a vegan diet and independent artistic, cultural and political organisations. It means obstructing in every way possible the corporate assault, including the blocking of pipelines and fracking sites, and taking to the streets in sustained acts of civil disobedience against censorship and the attack on civil liberties. And it means creating sanctuary cities. All of this will have to be done the way it has always been done: by building personal, face-to-face relationships. We may not ultimately save ourselves, especially with the refusal by the elites to address the ravages of climate change, but we can create pods of resistance where truth, beauty, empathy and justice endure. **CT**

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Chris Hedges has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for The Christian Science Monitor and The New York Times, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years. This essay was first published at www.truthdig.com

The corporate elites seek to lure us into their schizophrenic world, where rational discourse is pitted against gibberish. They demand we seek justice in a system designed to perpetuate injustice. It is a game we can never win

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We can't keep eating like this

George Monbiot says the question everyone should be considering is this: Where is the food for an expanding planet going to come from?

Because they tend to use more labour, grow a wider range of crops and work the land more carefully, small farmers, as a rule, grow more food per hectare than large ones

Brexit; the crushing of democracy by billionaires; the next financial crash; a rogue US president: none of them keeps me awake at night. This is not because I don't care – I care very much. It's only because I have a bigger question on my mind. Where is the food going to come from?

By mid-century there will be two or three billion more people on Earth. Any one of the issues I am about to list could help precipitate mass starvation. And this is before you consider how they might interact.

The trouble begins where everything begins: with soil. The UN's famous projection that, at current rates of soil loss, the world has 60 years of harvests left, appears to be supported by a new set of figures. Partly as a result of soil degradation, yields are already declining on 20 percent of the world's croplands.

Now consider water loss. In places such as the North China Plain, the central United States, California and north-western India – among the world's critical growing regions – levels of the groundwater used to irrigate crops are already reaching crisis point. Water in the Upper Ganges aquifer, for example, is being withdrawn at 50 times its recharge rate. But, to keep pace with food demand, farmers in South Asia expect to use between 80 and 200 percent more water by 2050. Where will it come from?

The next constraint is temperature. One

study suggests that, all else being equal, with each degree Celsius of warming the global yield of rice drops by three percent, wheat by 6 percent and maize by seven percent. This could be optimistic. Research published in the journal *Agricultural & Environmental Letters* finds that 4°C of warming in the US Corn Belt could reduce maize yields by between 84 and 100 percent.

The reason is that high temperatures at night disrupt the pollination process. But this describes just one component of the likely pollination crisis. Insectageddon, caused by the global deployment of scarcely-tested pesticides, will account for the rest. Already, in some parts of the world, workers are now pollinating plants by hand. But that's viable only for the most expensive crops.

Then there are the structural factors. Because they tend to use more labour, grow a wider range of crops and work the land more carefully, small farmers, as a rule, grow more food per hectare than large ones. In the poorer regions of the world, people with less than five hectares own 30 percent of the farmland but produce 70 percent of the food. Since 2000, an area of fertile ground roughly twice the size of the United Kingdom has been seized by land grabbers and consolidated into large farms, generally growing crops for export rather than the food needed by the poor.

While these multiple disasters unfold on

land, the seas are being sieved of everything but plastic. Despite a massive increase in effort (bigger boats, bigger engines, more gear), the worldwide fish catch is declining by roughly one percent a year, as populations collapse. The global land grab is mirrored by a global seagrab: small fishers are displaced by big corporations, exporting fish to those who need it less but pay more. Around three-billion people depend to a large extent on fish and shellfish protein. Where will it come from?

All this would be hard enough. But as people's incomes increase, their diet tends to shift from plant protein to animal protein. World meat production has quadrupled in 50 years, but global average consumption is still only half that of the UK – where we eat roughly our body weight in meat every year – and just over a third of the US level. Because of the way we eat, the UK's farmland footprint (the land required to meet our demand) is 2.4 times the size of its agricultural area. If everyone aspires to this diet, how do we accommodate it?

The profligacy of livestock farming is astonishing. Already, 36 percent of the calories grown in the form of grain and pulses – and 53 percent of the protein – are used to feed farm animals. Two-thirds of this food is lost in conversion from plant to animal. A graph produced last month by Our World in Data suggests that, on average, you need 0.01m² of land to produce a gram of protein from beans or peas, but 1m² to produce it from beef cattle or sheep: a difference of 100-fold.

It's true that much of the grazing land occupied by cattle and sheep cannot be used to grow crops. But it would have sustained wildlife and ecosystems. Instead, marshes are drained, trees are felled and their seedlings grazed out, predators are exterminated, wild herbivores fenced out and other life forms gradually erased as grazing systems intensify. Astonishing places – such as the rainforests of Madagascar and Brazil – are laid waste to make room for yet more cattle.

Because there is not enough land to meet

both need and greed, a global transition to eating animals means snatching food from the mouths of the poor. It also means the ecological cleansing of almost every corner of the planet.

The shift in diets would be impossible to sustain even if there were no growth in the human population. But the greater the number of people, the greater the hunger meat eating will cause. From a baseline of 2010, the UN expects meat consumption to rise by 70 percent by 2030 (this is three times the rate of human population growth). Partly as a result, the global demand for crops could double (from the 2005 baseline) by 2050. The land required to grow them does not exist.

When I say this keeps me up at night, I mean it. I am plagued by visions of starving people seeking to escape from grey wastes, being beaten back by armed police. I see the last rich ecosystems snuffed out, the last of the global megafauna – lions, elephants, whales and tuna – vanishing. And when I wake, I cannot assure myself that it was just a nightmare. Other people have different dreams: the fantasy of a feeding frenzy that need never end, the fairytale of reconciling continued economic growth with a living world. If humankind spirals into societal collapse, these dreams will be the cause.

There are no easy answers, but the crucial change is a shift from an animal to a plant-based diet. All else being equal, stopping both meat production and the use of farmland to grow biofuels could provide enough calories for another 4 billion people and double the protein available for human consumption. Artificial meat will help: one paper suggests it reduces water use by at least 82 percent and land use by 99 percent.

The next Green Revolution will not be like the last one. It will rely not on flogging the land to death, but on reconsidering how we use it and why. Can we do this, or do we – the richer people now consuming the living planet – find mass death easier to contemplate than changing our diet? **CT**

World meat production has quadrupled in 50 years, but global average consumption is still only half that of the UK – where we eat roughly our body weight in meat every year – and just over a third of the US level

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George Monbiot's latest book, *How Did We Get Into This Mess?*, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the *Guardian* newspaper. Monbiot's web site is www.monbiot.com

No more silence about the torture of animals

There is a disconnect between the way we embrace our pets as family while allowing others to live miserable lives on factory farms, writes **Linda McQuaig**

At the root of our numbness to animal suffering is the notion – unwittingly accepted by lifelong meat-eaters like myself – that animals don't feel emotions like we do

At a giant pet store in west-end Toronto recently, people loaded up on gifts and stocking stuffers for their pets, and posed with them for a “family Christmas photo.”

This cheerful scene highlighted the odd disconnect between the way we embrace our pets as family while allowing animals that are similarly sweet and endearing to live miserable lives on factory farms – and to endure horrific deaths (more on that in a minute).

Indeed, only a stone's throw from that Petsmart shop – where you can buy a cute pair of fuzzy antlers for your dog – are two slaughterhouses where a daily stream of trucks arrive carrying cows, calves and sheep. We've all seen such trucks on the highway, probably caught a glimpse of animal snouts and eyes through the narrow slats. But no one driving on the highway seems alarmed, making it easy to conclude everything is fine, that the animals aren't suffering and that their deaths will be swift and painless.

I've recently come to believe that none of these comforting thoughts is true. At the root of our numbness to animal suffering is the notion – unwittingly accepted by lifelong meat-eaters like myself – that animals don't feel emotions like we do. But Joseph Stookey, a veterinary professor at the University of Saskatchewan, maintains that a

cow's love for her offspring pretty much resembles that of a human mother: “I can't see any difference,” he notes.

In recent years, scientists have come to see remarkable similarities between animal and human behaviour. “Farm animals feel pleasure and sadness, excitement and resentment, depression, fear and pain,” writes the renowned ethologist Jane Goodall. “They are far more aware and intelligent than we ever imagined.”

Activists gather for vigil

A group of activists calling themselves “Toronto Cow Save” gathers every week for a vigil in front of those two Toronto slaughterhouses to comfort the animals and to “bear witness” to their suffering. The group is an offshoot of Toronto Pig Save, which captured widespread attention after activist Anita Krajnc was charged for providing water to thirsty pigs being transported on a hot June day in 2015. Her case – and eventual acquittal – prompted a wave of public support, spawning the creation of like-minded groups, now numbering more 200 across North America and as far away as Brazil and Hong Kong.

To get a look for myself, I took part in a Toronto Cow Save vigil. As each truck slowed to enter the loading dock, we could briefly reach through the slats and pat the animals, who were skittish and trembling;

some were stomping. One cow eagerly licked an activist's hand.

What happens next has been captured in a powerful video filmed last summer by Toronto activist Len Goldberg through an open window at the back of the Ryding-Regency slaughterhouse. One expects the scenes to be unpleasant. This is a slaughterhouse, not a petting zoo. Still, the video is shocking and difficult to watch.

Previously unreleased, the video clearly shows a large brown cow thrashing about on the floor, trying to get up, as blood gushes out of a gaping wound on her neck. A black-and-white cow similarly struggles on the floor, while a worker bends over and cuts her throat. Cows hoisted upside down, dangling from one leg, appear to be still moving while workers tear off their skin with knives. Blood is everywhere.

Armaiti May, a California-based veterinarian who watched the video, commented: "I was horrified to see fully conscious, alert cows writhing and flailing in agony as the blood drained from their slit throats."

The suffering visible in the video makes an eloquent case for not eating meat. Then there's the fact that the livestock industry – processing billions of animals globally each year – generates massive greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to global warming.

But meat-eating is deeply embedded in our culture and the multi-billion-dollar cattle and dairy industries are powerful and politically connected, making change difficult. At the very least, however, our systematic, largely invisible mistreatment of animals deserves much more scrutiny in the media and in Parliament than it currently gets.

After the vigil, I wander back to Petsmart, trying to return to the spirit of Christmas. I buy a nice warm coat for my dog, and struggle to put out of my mind the sweet face of a calf I petted, minutes before the truck delivered her for slaughter. **CT**

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Linda McQuaig is an author and journalist whose column appears monthly in the Toronto Star. You can follow her on twitter @LindaMcQuaig

● Watch the video at www.dropbox.com/s/uc0fnc0vwq4wdbe/RYPING%20MEDIA%20REVISED.mp4?dl=0

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Allen captures the spirit and fortitude of residents of the most deprived areas of Baltimore, his camera highlighting the deep complexities of ghetto life





The rage that incensed a proud ghetto

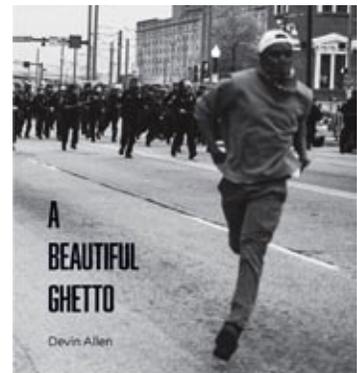
Devin Allen's images show city's reaction to the death of a young man at the hands of the police

On April 18, 2015, the US city of Baltimore erupted in mass protest in response to the brutal death of Freddie Gray at the hands of six policemen. Amateur photographer Devin Allen was present at the riots, his iconic images of the uprising becoming a viral sensation, after one of his photographs of a young man dashing down the street pursued by police officers in riot gear, made the cover of Time magazine. It was just the third time the work of an amateur photographer had featured on the magazine's front page.

Allen, a self-taught cameraman, documented the peaceful protests and chaotic unrest during that disturbing time, posting his images on an Instagram page dedicated to Gray, who died after suffering three fractured vertebrae, injuries to his voice box, and his spine 80 percent severed at his neck after being arrested by police officers who drove him around the city at high speed in a police van.

In **A Beautiful Ghetto**, his book of images taken before and after the death of Gray, Allen captures the spirit and fortitude of residents of the most deprived areas of Baltimore, his camera highlighting the deep complexities of ghetto life.

But, most of all, Allen's camera finds hope and resilience as the most marginalised members of society take on a system that sows desperation and fear, with bold and angry resistance to the unrelenting pressures of racism and poverty in 21st-century American.



A BEAUTIFUL GHETTO

Devin Allen

Haymarket Books

www.haymarketbooks.org

Hardcover: \$24.95



In The Picture

“This book is to challenge the stigma, to show the beautiful side of the ghetto, and hopefully to inspire others to love, respect, and invest in our communities”

Photograph © EJ Hughes



Devin Allen

In his introduction to the photographs, Allen explains his driving dynamic: “When you’re documenting moments like the uprising, you don’t have the time to think about yourself or your well-being. I get a certain type of adrenaline rush when I’m in the mix of everything. I shot the majority of my images on a 35mm prime lens and my zoom was my feet. I was tear-gassed, pepper-sprayed, and hit with

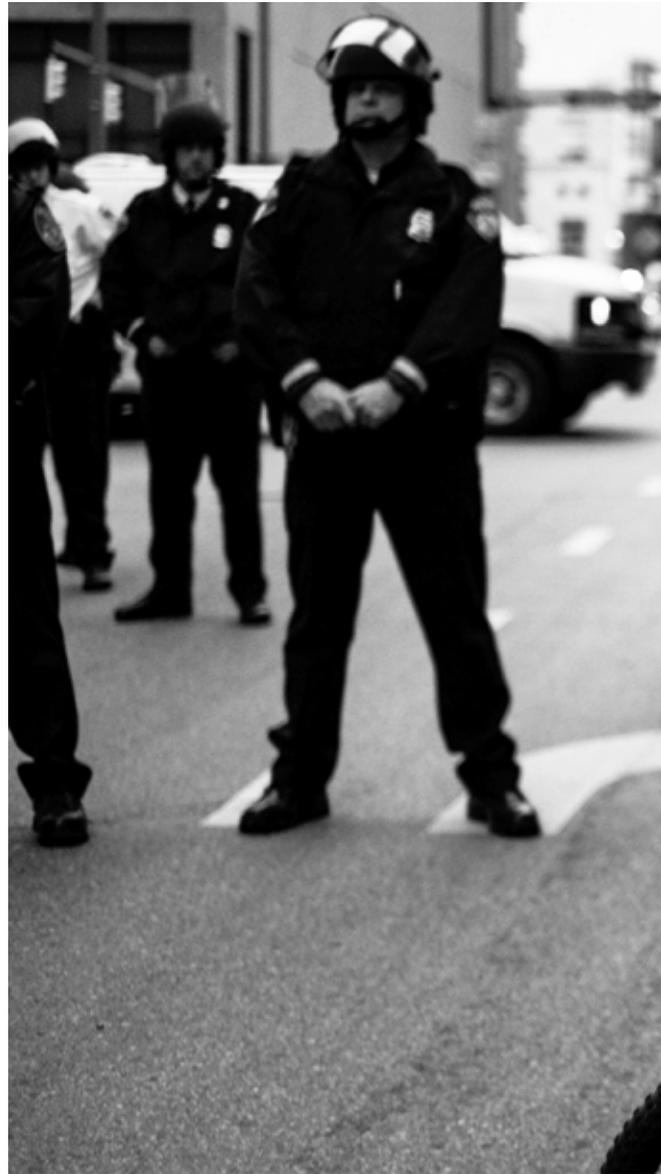
shields while capturing these images. My focus was just on capturing each moment and making sure every image was timeless, real, and authentic.

“Young people created and fuelled the uprising. They made sure the world heard their voice and felt their pain. Some referred to them as thugs, but I just see my brothers and sisters who took up arms and became soldiers.

“This book is a visual story of the uprising. It’s also the story of Baltimore, Freddie Gray, and so many countless others who grow up, work, and raise their families in places like Baltimore. This book is to challenge the stigma, to show the beautiful side of the ghetto, and hopefully to inspire others to love, respect, and invest in our communities.

“This book is for you.”

Tony Sutton





Year of the Headless Liberal Chicken

CJ Hopkins looks back on a year when the ruling classes exposed liberal Americans as a flock of self-indulgent, frightened and confused fools

It was pretty much the end of everything. America was facing nothing less than a descent into “racial Orwellianism,” “Zionist anti-Semitism,” and “the bottomless pit of Fascism” itself

According to the Chinese zodiac, 2017 has been the Year of the Rooster. Myself, I’ve decided to designate it the Year of the Headless Liberal Chicken. I don’t mean that to be insulting . . . or, all right, I guess I do, a little. But my heart goes out to liberals, seriously. At this point, the amount of utterly baseless, contradictory propaganda, mass hysteria, and just flat out insanity the ruling classes have demanded they swallow is more than any human mind, no matter how medicated, could possibly handle. Is it any wonder so many of them of lost it and started seeing Nazis and Russians coming out of the woodwork? Just consider what the average liberal has been forced to try to cognitively reconcile since the tragic events of last November . . .

First came the overwhelming shock of Hillary Clinton’s loss to Trump, a repulsive, word salad-babbling buffoon with absolutely no political experience, whom the media had been portraying as the Second Coming of Adolf Hitler. This was a candidate, let’s recall, who jabbered about building a “beautiful wall” to protect us from the hordes of “Mexican rapists” and other “bad hombres” who were invading America, and who had boasted, like a prepubescent sixth grade boy, about grabbing women “by the pussy”. While he had served as a perfect foil for Clinton, and had provided hours of entertainment in a comic-book-villain kind of

way, the prospect of a Donald Trump presidency was inconceivable in the minds of liberals. So, when it happened, it was like the Martians had invaded.

Mass hysteria gripped the nation. There was beaucoup wailing and gnashing of teeth. Liberals began exhibiting irrational and, in some cases, rather disturbing behaviours. Many degenerated into dissociative states and just sat there with their phones for hours obsessively reloading the popular vote count, which Clinton had won, on FiveThirtyEight. Others festooned themselves with safety pins and went out looking for defenceless minorities with whom they could “demonstrate solidarity.” The Guardian’s Owen Jones flew in from London to join his colleague Steven Thrasher, who was organising a guerilla force to resist “the normalisation of Trump” and the global race war he was about to launch, which “not all of us were going to get out of alive.”

Age of Darkness

In the weeks immediately following the election, the mainstream media inundated liberals with pronouncements of the advent of an “Age of Darkness” and the “Triumph of White Supremacy” over the beneficent values of Globalism. Yes, it was pretty much the end of everything. America was facing nothing less than a descent into “racial Orwellianism,” “Zionist anti-



TRUMP AS HITLER: No to Racism/No to Trump protest rally at the US embassy in London just hours after the US result was announced. Photo: Bethan Pridmore

Semitism,” and “the bottomless pit of Fascism” itself. Liberals, who by then had dispensed with the safety pins, immediately set about terrorising their children with visions of the impending holocaust, which would be carried out by the genocidal, racist monsters who had voted for Trump.

At that point, the media had been hammering hard on the Trump-is-Hitler narrative for months, so they had to stick with that for a while. It had only been a few weeks, after all, since the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, Guardian, and numerous other establishment publications, had explained how Trump was using special fascist code words such as “global elites,” “international banks,” and “lobbyists” to signal his virulent hatred of the Jews to the millions of Americans who, according to the media, were secretly Hitler-loving fascists.

This initial post-election propaganda was understandably somewhat awkward, as the plan had been to be able to celebrate the “Triumph of Love over the Forces of Hate,” and the demise of the latest Hitlerian bogey-

man. But this was the risk the ruling classes took when they chose to go ahead and Hitlerise Trump, which they wouldn’t have done if they’d thought for a moment that he had a chance of actually winning the election. That’s the tricky thing about Hitlerising people. You need to be able to kill them, eventually. If you don’t, when they turn out not to be Hitler, your narrative kind of falls apart, and the people you’ve fear-mongered into a frenzy of frothing, self-righteous fake-Hitler-hatred end up feeling like a bunch of dupes who’ll believe anything the government tells them. This is why, normally, you only Hitlerise foreign despots you can kill with impunity. This is Hitlerisation 101 stuff, which the ruling classes ignored in this case, which the left poor liberals terrified that Trump was actually going to start building Trump-branded death camps and rounding up the Jews.

Russian propaganda

Fortunately, just in the nick of time, the ruling classes and their media mouthpieces rolled out the Russian Propaganda

That’s the tricky thing about Hitlerising people. You need to be able to kill them, eventually. If you don’t, when they turn out not to be Hitler, your narrative kind of falls apart, and the people you’ve fear-mongered into a frenzy of frothing, self-righteous fake-Hitler-hatred end up feeling like a bunch of dupes

All Confused

Now, Putin had Trump by the short hairs and was forcing him to staff his Manchurian cabinet with corporate CEOs and Goldman Sachs guys, who probably had also been videotaped by the FSB in Moscow hotels paying hookers to pee on furniture, or performing whatever other type of seditious, perverted kink they were into

story. The Washington Post (whose owner's multimillion dollar deal with the CIA, of course, has absolutely no effect on the quality of its professional journalism) led the charge with a McCarthyite smear job, legitimising the baseless allegations of some random website and a think tank staffed by charlatans such as Clint Watts, a former US Army officer, who claims to be a Russian expert, although he appears not to speak a word of Russian or have any other "Russia expert" credentials, but is available both for television and Senate Intelligence Committee appearances. Numerous similar smear pieces followed. Liberals breathed a big sigh of relief . . . that Hitler business had been getting kind of scary. How long can you go, after all, with Hitler stumbling around the White House before somebody has to go in there and shoot him?

In any event, by January, the media were playing down the Hitler stuff and going balls-out on the "Russiagate" story. According to the Washington Post (which, let's remember, is a serious newspaper, as opposed to a propaganda organ of the so-called US "Intelligence Community"), not only had the Russians "hacked" the election, but they had hacked the Vermont power grid as well! Editorialists at the New York Times were declaring that Trump "had been appointed by Putin," and that the USA was now "at war" with Russia. This was also around the time when liberals first learned of the Trump-Russia Dossier, which detailed how Putin was blackmailing Trump with a video the FSB had shot of Trump and a bunch of Russian hookers peeing on a bed in a Moscow hotel in which Obama had allegedly slept.

This nonsense was reported completely straight-faced, and thus liberals were forced to take it seriously. Imagine the cognitive dissonance they suffered. It was like that scene in 1984 when the Party abruptly switches enemies, and the war with Eurasia becomes the war with Eastasia. Suddenly, Trump wasn't Hitler anymore; now he was

a Russian sleeper agent who Putin had been blackmailing into destroying democracy with this incriminating "golden showers" video. Putin had presumably been "running" Trump since Trump's visit to Russia in 2013 to hobnob with "Russia-linked" Russian businessmen and attend the Miss Universe pageant in Moscow. During the ensuing partying, Trump must have got loaded on Diet Coke and got carried away with those Russian hookers. Now, Putin had him by the short hairs and was forcing him to staff his Manchurian cabinet with corporate CEOs and Goldman Sachs guys, who probably had also been videotaped by the FSB in Moscow hotels paying hookers to pee on furniture, or performing whatever other type of seditious, perverted kink they were into.

Before the poor liberals had time to process this, the ruling classes launched "the Resistance." You remember the Pussyhat People, don't you? And the global corporate PR campaign which accompanied their historic "Women's March" on Washington? Do you remember liberals like Michael Moore shrieking for the feds to arrest Donald Trump? Or publications like the New York Times, Salon, and many others, and even State Satirist Stephen Colbert accusing Trump and anyone who supported him of treason . . . a crime, let's recall, that is punishable by death? Do you remember folks like William Kristol and Rob "the Meathead" Reiner demanding that the "deep state" launch a coup against Trump to rescue America from the Russian infiltrators?

Premature backlash

Ironically, the roll-out of this "Russiagate" hysteria was so successful that it peaked too soon, and prematurely backlashed all over itself. By March, when Trump had not been arrested, nor otherwise removed from office, liberals, who by that time the corporate media had teased into an incoherent, throbbing state of anticipation were . . . well, rather disappointed. By April, they were

exhibiting all the hallmark symptoms of clinical psychosis. This mental breakdown was due to the fact that the media pundits and government spooks who had been telling them that Trump was Hitler, and then a Russian sleeper agent, were now telling them that he wasn't so bad, because he'd pointlessly bombed a Syrian airstrip, and dropped a \$314-million Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb on some alleged "terrorist caves" in Afghanistan.

As if liberals' poor brains weren't rattled enough, the corporate media then switched back to, first, the Russian Propaganda narrative (which they expanded into a global threat), then, the Hitler stuff again, but this time Trump wasn't actually Hitler, because Putin was Hitler, or at least he was fomenting Hitlerism throughout the West with his legions of fascist hacker bots who were "influencing" unsuspecting consumers with their blitzkrieg of divisive "fake news" stories. Oh, yeah, and now Putin had also done Brexit, or Trump and Robert Mercer had, but they were working for Putin, who had also hacked the French election that he hadn't hacked, or . . . whatever . . . this was no time to worry about what had or hadn't actually happened. The peace and prosperity President Obama had reestablished throughout the West by incessantly bombing the Greater Middle East and bailing out his pals at the Wall Street banks was being torn asunder by Vladimir Putin, who at some point had apparently metamorphosed from a ruthless, former KGB autocrat into a white supremacist megalomaniac.

Right on cue, on the weekend of August 11-12 in Charlottesville, Virginia, "where there had never been any history of racism", a "national gathering" of approximately 500 tiki torch-bearing neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan types, and other white supremacists, many of them barking Nazi slogans, marched into the pages of history. Never before have so few fascists owed so much to the mainstream media, which showered them with overwrought coverage, triggering

a national Nazi panic. Liberals poured into the streets, tearing down Confederate monuments, and otherwise signalling their total intolerance of the racism they had tolerated until a few days earlier. People named after Robert E. Lee, and horses named after General Lee's horse, went into hiding until the panic subsided. This was wise, as by then the so-called anti-fascists were showing up in force at anything resembling a right-wing rally and stomping the living Hitler out of Nazis, and Trump supporters, and journalists, and . . . well, anyone they didn't think looked quite right. This totally preemptively self-defensive, non-violent type of violent behaviour, naturally, shocked and horrified liberals, who are strongly opposed to all forms of violence that aren't carried out by the US military, or the police, or someone else wearing a uniform. Unsure as to whom they were supposed to condemn, the Nazis or the Antifa terrorists, they turned for guidance to the corporate ruling classes, who informed them it was time to censor the Internet.

This made about as much sense as any of the other nonsense they'd been spoon-fed so far, so liberals decided to get behind it, or at least look the other way while it happened. Facebook, Google, Amazon, Twitter (and all the other corporations that control the Internet, the media, Hollywood, the publishing industry, and every other means of representing "reality") surely have people's best interests at heart. Plus, they're only censoring the Nazis, and the terrorists, and the Russian "fake news" disseminators, and, OK, a lot of leftist publications, and award-winning journalists, and anyone else espousing "divisive," anti-American, or anti-corporate, "extremist" views.

Suppressing a little leftist dissent

Look, I know what you're probably thinking, but it isn't like liberals don't actually care about fundamental liberal values such as freedom of the press and speech and all that. It's just that they desperately need the

They're only censoring the Nazis, and the terrorists, and the Russian "fake news" disseminators, and, OK, a lot of leftist publications, and award-winning journalists, and anyone else espousing "divisive," anti-American, or anti-corporate, "extremist" views

All Confused

They want to force Russia to return to the kind of “cooperation” it engaged in during the 1990s, when it was run by an incorrigible drunkard and the Goldman Sachs boys and their oligarch pals were looting the country for all it was worth

Democrats to take back the House and the Senate next year, so they can get on with impeaching Trump, and if they have to stand by while the corporations suppress a little leftist dissent, or, you know, transform the entire Internet into a massive, mind-numbing echo chamber of neo-McCarthyite corporate conformity . . . well, sacrifices have to be made.

This can't go on forever, after all. This level of full-blown mass hysteria can only be sustained for so long. It's all fine and good to be able to whip people up into a frenzied mob, but at some point you need to have an endgame. The neoliberal ruling classes know this. Their endgame is actually fairly simple. Their plan is to:

(a) make an example of Trump to discourage any future billionaire idiots from screwing with their simulation of democracy, and

(b) demonise anyone deviating from neoliberal ideology as a fascist, racist, or anti-Semite, or otherwise “abnormal” or “extremist.”

Their plan is not to incinerate the entire planet in a war with Russia. We're not on the brink of World War III, despite how many Twitter likes or Facebook shares it might get me to say that. Yes, eventually, they want to force Russia to return to the kind of “cooperation” it engaged in during the 1990s, when it was run by an incorrigible drunkard and the Goldman Sachs boys and their oligarch pals were looting the country for all it was worth . . . but that has little to do with all this.

Time for more hopey-changey

No, the corporate ruling classes' end game here is to reestablish neoliberal “normality,” so we can get back to the War on Terror (or whatever they'll be calling it by then), and put this neo-nationalist revolt against neoliberalism episode behind us. To do that, they will need to install some sort of hopey-changey, Obama-like messiah, or at least somebody who can play the part of POTUS like a normal person and not sit around

the Oval Office gobbling McDonald's and retweeting racist memes by random British fascists.

The way things are going, that might take a while, but rest assured they'll get there eventually. Now that Robert Mueller has proved that Trump colluded with Vladimir Putin by obstructing an investigation by Comey into Michael Flynn's lying to the FBI about not colluding with the Russian ambassador on behalf of Israel at Kushner's behest, the dominoes are surely about to fall. Once they all have, and Donald Trump's head has been mounted on a spike on the White House lawn as a warning to any other potential usurpers, all this Russia and Nazi hysteria that has the poor liberals running around like headless chickens will disappear. Russia will go back to being Russia. The North American Nazi Menace, deprived of daily media coverage, will go back to being a fringe phenomenon. Liberals will go back to ignoring politics (except identity politics, naturally) and obediently serving the global capitalist ruling elites that are destroying the planet, and the lives of millions of human beings, in order to increase their profit margins. Sure, there'll be a brief emotional hangover, once the adrenaline rush wears off and they look back at their tweets and Facebook posts, which in hindsight might convey the impression that they spent the better part of a year parroting whatever insane propaganda the corporate media pumped out at them, and otherwise behaving like Good Americans . . . but then, that's what the “delete” key is for. **CT**

CJ Hopkins is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) and Broadway Play Publishing (USA). His debut novel, ZONE 23, is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant. He can be reached at www.cjhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org

ColdType Insights

A tale of two blockades: New York and Yemen

Jailed after a peace protest in New York, **Brian Terrell** wonders if the cops thought they might be arresting the wrong people

On December 11, in response to the growing humanitarian crisis in Yemen, more than 50 people including representatives of various peace, justice and human rights organisations and communities, gathered in New York City's Ralph Bunche Park, across First Avenue from the United Nations. Our message, which was communicated on signs and banners and by speakers addressing the rally, was simple and direct: end the war crimes being committed by the military of the United States along with Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners abetted by the US and end the blockade of Yemeni ports.

For more than two years, Saudi/US bombing has targeted hospitals, schools, factories, markets, funerals, sea ports, electrical power stations and water treatment facilities. US drone strikes and incursions by US Special Forces into Yemen have killed civilians as well. Armed

conflict has directly taken the lives of 12,000 people, but that tragic number is greatly exceeded by the number of those who are dying from a combination of malnutrition and otherwise easily preventable ailments and diseases such as

respiratory infections, measles, and cholera, including more than 1,000 children each week. 20 million of Yemen's population of 28-million people are hungry and few have access to clean drinking water. More than half of the hospitals in the country are not functioning.

Early in November, the blockade

of Yemen's ports was made practically total, prompting the United Nations Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs to warn that, unless the blockade of Yemen was fully lifted, "... there will be a famine in Yemen... It will be the largest famine the world has seen for many decades, with millions of victims."

On November 27, limited exceptions to the blockade were made for humanitarian aid shipments. The resulting tightly controlled deliveries have been decried as an empty and vastly insufficient gesture by humanitarian aid groups, who are calling for the ports to be opened to all humanitarian and commercial shipments. Under this pressure, President Trump issued a very brief statement calling on the Saudis to "completely allow food, fuel, water and medicine to reach the Yemeni people who desperately need it." Trump's uncharacteristically polite request was not backed by much at all, even less by a freezing of US arms sales to the Saudis, nor did it address the US's mid-air

refuelling of Saudi fighter jets or US drone strikes in Yemen.

Clearly more be done to counter this dire threat. Along with robust diplomatic efforts, there are legislative attempts to curtail arms sales to the Saudis. Fasts, vigils and protests were held in New York and other cities on December 11.

PRISONER MOVEMENT SLIP	
Arresting Officer: M17674846J	
A/O Name: MALIB	Possible DATE: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Arrest PCT: 17TH PREGINCT	Date/Time: 12/11/2017 13:02:00
CELL #:	Fax #: M0047207
Defendant: TERRELL, BRIAN	
Sex: MALE	Race: WHITE
DOB: 07/10/1956	Age: 61
Major Charges: PL 2402005: DIS/CON-OBSTRUCTING TRAFFIC PL 2402006: DIS/CON-REFUSING TO MOVE ON	
Co-Defendants: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Preferred Name:

PRISONER: Brian Terrell, the author.

Photo courtesy of NYPD

Insights

After speeches, songs and a powerful minute of silence, our rally moved up First Avenue to both the US and the Saudi Permanent Missions to the United Nations, led by a banner reading STOP US-SAUDI WAR CRIMES and LIFT THE BLOCKADE, followed closely by officers of the New York City Police Department.

Some of us felt compelled by conscience to stand in the doorway of the US Mission and, after a short time, we were arrested for violating the “obstructing vehicular or pedestrian traffic” provision of the New York law on disorderly conduct. Fifteen of us, carrying photos of Yemeni child victims, were taken into custody and transported to the cells of the 7th Precinct on the city’s Lower East Side.

I could not help but wonder, as we were handcuffed and loaded into vans, how those police officers could listen so impassively to the denunciations of crimes against humanity being committed and to the disclosures of a blockade that threatens the lives of millions, orchestrated from the buildings we stood before.

How could these officers, then, after hearing our pleas and the stories of starving children without reaction, move so decisively to remove our non-violent obstruction to the perpetrators of those crimes? Did they not wonder if they were arresting the wrong people?

The blockade of Yemen is a crime of the highest category, a violation of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international pacts. The US participation in the war on Yemen is a

violation of the war powers provisions of the United States Constitution, at the very least. The imposition of our modest blockade of the United States Permanent Mission to the United Nations, in contrast, threatened no one. No one got sick or died because we stood in that doorway.

In New York State, disorderly conduct is a violation, not even considered a crime. Still, the NYPD chose to expend its prodigious resources in arresting and prosecuting law abiding citizens who were demanding an end to the crimes against Yemen.

Our protest began in Ralph Bunche Park, named after one of the founders of the United Nations and the first black American to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950. Carved

into the stone pavement there are these words from Mr. Bunche that speak to the present crisis in Yemen and to the many conflicts in the world today: “

Peace, to have meaning for many who have known only suffering in both peace and war, must be translated into bread or rice, shelter, health, and education, as well as freedom and human dignity – a steadily better life. If peace is to be secure, long-suffering and long-starved, forgotten peoples of the world, the underprivileged and the undernourished, must begin to realise without delay the promise of a new day and a new life.”

CT

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Brian Terrell is a co-coordinator for Voices for Creative Nonviolence. He can be reached at: brian@vcnv.org

A single paragraph about insurance

Jeff Nygaard asks why insurance firms are allowed to net giant profits while we have to pick up the costs of ‘natural’ disasters

In the course of researching the latest issue of my publication Nygaard Notes I read many articles and papers about disasters, insurance and related matters. Out of all of that, a single paragraph has stuck with me. I want to analyse that paragraph because I think it’s remarkable in a number of ways, and has much to teach us.

The article that included the paragraph appeared in the finance and economics section of the September

9 edition of the Economist, the British weekly newspaper-that-looks-like-a-magazine. The headline read: Hurricane Harvey Has Exposed the Inadequacy of Flood Insurance; Flood Risk Is Tricky to Insure, and State Intervention Hinders as Much as it Helps.

The second paragraph was the one that caught my attention. I present it here, with all five sentences numbered so I can reference each in turn (NFIP is a program of

Insights

the federal government in the United States):

1. *“The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was set up in 1968, after a series of large losses led private insurers to pull back.*

2. *Those living within a 100-year floodplain (ie, with a one percent annual chance of a flood occurring), as defined by the maps of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and holding a government-guaranteed mortgage, are obliged to purchase NFIP coverage.*

3. *Others can buy it as an add-on, but few do.*

4. *The programme covers only about five-million properties in all of America.*

5. *In Houston much of the damage occurred outside the floodplain, so many properties may be completely*

uncovered, and left relying on ad hoc federal relief.”

The first remarkable thing is that a British newspaper is running an article on a federal programme in the United States. Imagine a US newspaper running a similar article about a British programme. And we learn so much from what’s actually IN this paragraph. Every sentence tells us something important, or at least hints at something important.

Let’s begin with sentence 1: Right off the bat we learn that NFIP was set up after “large losses led private insurers to pull back.” In other words, the more private insurance is needed the less available it is. That’s the System at work.

Later in the article, the Economist explains that “for political reasons, NFIP charges low premiums,”

which “means its income does not cover all losses, and it is forced to borrow from American taxpayers.”

The second sentence talks about those “100-year floodplains.” And here are two relevant headlines from the Washington Post: On August 29, the headline read, “Houston Is Experiencing its Third ‘500-year’ Flood in 3 Years,” while the head on August 31 said, “Harvey Is a 1,000-year Flood Event Unprecedented in Scale.” The news service New Jersey Real-Time News reported on October 25 that “Massive 500-year floods could inundate the region as often as every five years after 2030, according to a new study from Rutgers researchers.”

And yes, each article makes it clear that climate change is behind a lot of this. As the Post reported, “the

The Sisterhood of the Eel

Contributor Thomas S. Harrington sent us the following translation of the poem, L’Anguilla by Eugenio Montale, following the publication in the last issue of ColdType of Tony Sutton’s review of Stuart Freedman’s latest photobook, *The Englishman and the Eel*.

The Eel

The eel, the siren
of cold seas leaves the Baltic
to arrive in the Mediterranean,
in our estuaries, in our rivers,
returns deep down, against the current,
from branch to branch and then
from capillary to capillary, ever thinner,
deeper and deeper, ever onward into the core
of the rock, infiltrating
slimy rills until one day
a light fired from chestnut trees

ignites a flicker in the stagnant puddles,
in the ravines that descend
from the cliffs of the Apennines to the Romagna;
the eel, flickering flame, whip,
the earthbound arrow of Love
that only our Italian gullies or dried-up
Pyrenean streams lead back
to paradises of spawning;
the green spirit that searches
for life where there’s only
grinding drought and desolation,
the glint that says
everything starts where everything seems
incinerated, a buried stump;
fast-fading rainbow, twin
to the iris framed by your eyelashes
shining out, pristine, among the sons
of Man - immersed in your own mud, can you
not see her as your sister?

climate is changing and precipitation events have become more intense in recent decades, so what constitutes different return frequencies (100-year, 500-year, 1,000-year and so forth) is probably changing.” Probably! This is a subtle form of climate disruption denial: It’s happening, there’s nothing “probably” about it. So who will be “obliged to purchase NFIP coverage” by 2030?

Sentence 3: “Others can buy it as an add-on, but few do.” The entire floodplain concept is misunderstood and out-of-date, as we’ve just seen, and taxpayers will step in, so the fact that “few” choose to pay premiums for an event the likelihood of which is unknown should not surprise anyone. In fact, that second dynamic is well-understood in the insurance world, which has a term for it: “Charity Hazard,” which is defined as “the tendency of individuals not to insure themselves against possible natural disasters because they believe help will be available, eg. from friends, family, the municipality, charities or state emergency programs.” Or NFIP.

Sentence 4: “The programme covers only about five-million properties in all of America.” Hurricane Harvey alone “affected 13-million people from Texas through Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky,” according to the financial website the Balance. And, with 500-year floods occurring every few years, this five-million figure is more evidence that the System is failing us.

Sentence 5: Given the numbers and what we know about the increasing risk, why do we have an “ad hoc” system for dealing with natural disasters? That should be

the focus of our public discussion in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

The private online financial information site Investopedia has a dictionary of common business-related words and phrases. The relevant phrase here is “Privatizing Profits and Socializing Losses,” which Investopedia defines: “Privatizing profits and socializing losses refers to the practice of treating firms’ earnings as the rightful property of their shareholders, while treating losses as a responsibility that society as a whole must shoulder, for example through taxpayer-funded subsidies or bailouts.”

Now let’s return to the headline in the Economist, which tells us that Flood Risk Is Tricky to Insure

and State Intervention Hinders as Much as it Helps. As we can see, the dynamic that explains it all is the “Privatizing of Profits and the Socializing of Losses.”

The problem is, as long as we deny the reality of climate disruption and the parasitic nature of private insurance, the losses to the public will increase in proportion to the increases in profits in the private sector. What is needed is not “state intervention,” but a replacement of our current disaster insurance system with something else entirely. **CT**

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Jeff Nygaard is editor of Nygaard Notes – www.nygaardnotes.org – where this article originally appeared.

Picking my way through the neighbourhood

Denis Beckett needs a pickaxe, but he can’t remember to whom he lent it. He recounts his journey to find another . . .

Someone owes me a pick. I remember, now. I remember surprise. A pick! Who borrows a pick? I remember scratching and hauling through the shed to find it. I remember the borrower wasn’t a neighbour: he came in a grey 4x4, full of thanks and promises of its return tomorrow.

What I don’t remember is who the borrower was. Until Saturday, I’d remembered nothing. Which I bet is not the case for him. Every time he enters his shed he sees this

gatecrasher pick and he’ll wonder, “Who did I borrow it from?”

But on Saturday, Geoff, our weekly gardener, put in overtime. He comes on Tuesdays usually, but there’s a heavy digging job at hand. Geoff is a doer, more than an asker. He answers all questions that begin, “Can you . . . ?” with “Yes,” and when he needs tools he doesn’t have, he makes a plan.

So I was surprised when he asked for a pick. More surprised to learn that, on Tuesdays, Phineas,

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next-door's gardener lends him his. And, frequently, Geoff lends Phineas our saw. This is an uplifting discovery, my tools contributing to neighbourly collaboration I never knew of. But today is Saturday and Phineas is absent. His employer Chester, could supply his pick, but he's out. After leaving a message on his voice mail, I think: There's no knowing if he'll come back in five minutes or in five hours, so I'd better spread the net. I ring neighbours. Dirk is on voice mail. Andy? Voice mail.

Hmm, maybe neither has a pick, anyway. So I try Dorothy. But she's also on voice mail. I stretch my sights, phoning Lynn, who is a whole five-minute walk away. Lynn answers, yes, she has a pick. I start walking, while sending cancel messages to Chester, Dirk, Andy and Dorothy.

I'm barely past Andy's gate, stabbing at phone-buttons, when his name pings: "pick ready and waiting." I reply "60 seconds." I start a

quick SMS to relieve Lynn. Then Dorothy's name pops up. Her gardener/collaborator Kaillet is bringing me a pick.

Priority switches to relieving Kaillet. I hear Pete's voice – he's walking up the road clutching a pick. Huh? Where did Pete come into this? He says, "Your message to Dirk reminded him to remind me that I have his pick. Return it direct to him, will you?"

I zoop home and leave Dirk's pick behind my gate. I rush to Andy, who must be wondering if I've lost my way. I'm ten steps short, stabbing out half-messages to Lynn and Dorothy, when Kaillet arrives. I take delivery, put his pick behind my gate, then resume my hurtle to Andy, meeting Lynn's husband Vince walking down the road with the pick I'm supposedly collecting.

Neighbour Mzwandile pulls up in his unique little bubble-car, Ferrari red with speed-stripes, asking what I'm up to. I mumble about a

mission to borrow a pick. "A pick," he says, half-hearing, "Easy, right here in my garage." I assure him the offer is appreciated though not needed.

Behind my gate is a pick warehouse. I pick the solidest one and take it to the far corner, where I find Geoff swinging an energetic pick on the second of today's pick-holes. All is well, he says, Phineas has reappeared and passed his pick over the fence.

To the person who never returned my pick, thanks. You've put me in more touch with my neighbourhood and given me more affection for it, a place of householders and employees getting on in contentment and cooperation. Only one problem – getting the right picks back to the right owners. Perhaps it'd be best if they just come over and take their pick . . . **CT**

.....
Denis Beckett is an author and newspaper columnist in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Days of hypocrisy

London's Daily Mail newspaper seems more demented by the day. Take these two front pages, from Dec 13 and Dec 14. In the first, the paper condemns the "persistent, vile and shocking abuse" suffered by Conservative MPs online, demanding action against "web giants," which "fuelled poll abuse of Tory MPs." A day later, the paper launches its own front-page abuse of . . . Tory MPs: "11 self-contained malcontents," whose votes against Brexit legislation, "betray their leader and . . . increase the possibility of a Marxist in No.10." So, let's get it straight: it's evil if MPs are criticised on Facebook and Twitter, but not when the Mail does it? – **Tony Sutton**



CONFUSING TIMES: Daily Mail front pages from Dec 13 (left) and Dec 14.

Katherine Graham and the Post: the real story

The Post is another blockbuster movie that will provide a deceptive picture of media history, writes **Norman Solomon**

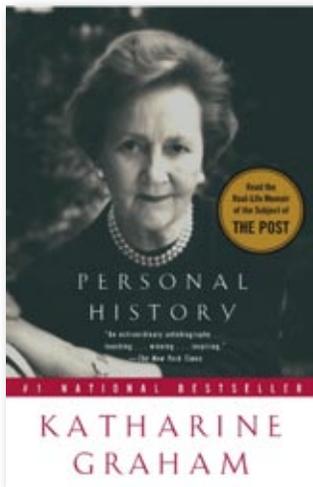
Movie critics are already hailing *The Post*, the film directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Meryl Streep as Washington Post publisher Katharine Graham. Millions of people will see the film in early winter, but the real-life political story of Graham and her newspaper is not a narrative that's headed to the multiplexes.

The *Post* comes 20 years after Graham's autobiography, *Personal History*, appeared to enormous praise. Read as a memoir, the book is a poignant account of Graham's long quest to overcome sexism, learn the newspaper business and gain self-esteem. Read as media history, however, it is deceptive.

"I don't believe that whom I was or wasn't friends with interfered with our reporting at any of our publications," Graham wrote. However, Robert Parry – who was a Washington correspondent for *Newsweek* during the last three years of the 1980s – has shed some light on the shadows of Graham's reassuring prose. Contrary to the

claims in her book, Parry said he witnessed "self-censorship because of the coziness between *Post-Newsweek* executives and senior national security figures."

Among Parry's examples: "On one occasion in 1987, I was told that my story about the CIA funnelling anti-Sandinista money through



Katherine Graham's biography: "Exudes affection for US architects of war."

Nicaragua's Catholic Church had been watered down because the story needed to be run past Mrs Graham, and Henry Kissinger was her house guest that weekend. Apparently, there was fear among the top editors that the story as written might cause some consternation." (The 1996 memoir of former CIA Director Robert Gates confirmed that Parry had the story right all along.)

Graham's book exudes affection for Kissinger as well as Robert McNamara and other luminaries of various administrations who remained her close friends until she died in 2001. To Graham, men like McNamara and Kissinger – the main war architects for Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon

– were wonderful human beings.

In sharp contrast, Graham devoted dozens of righteous pages to vilifying *Post* press operators who went on strike in 1975. She stressed the damage done to printing equipment as the walkout began and "the unforgivable acts of violence throughout the strike." It is a profound commentary on her outlook that thuggish deeds by a few of the strikers were "unforgivable" – but men like McNamara and Kissinger were lovable after they oversaw horrendous slaughter in Southeast Asia.

Graham's autobiography portrays union stalwarts as mostly ruffians or dupes. "Only a handful of [Newspaper Guild] members had gone out for reasons I respected," she told readers. "One was John Hanrahan, a good reporter and a nice man who came from a longtime labor family and simply couldn't cross a picket line. He never did come back. Living your beliefs is a rare virtue and greatly to be admired."

But for Hanrahan (whose Republican parents actually never belonged to a union) the admiration was far from mutual. As he put it, "The Washington Post under Katharine Graham pioneered the union-busting 'replacement worker' strategy that Ronald Reagan subsequently used against the air-traffic controllers and that corporate America – in the Caterpillar, Bridgestone/Firestone and other strikes – used to throw thousands of workers out of their jobs in the 1980s and the '90s."

The Washington Post deserves credit for publishing sections of the Pentagon Papers immediately after a federal court injunction in mid-

Insights

June 1971 stopped the New York Times from continuing to print excerpts from the secret document. That's the high point of the Washington Post's record in relation to the Vietnam War. The newspaper strongly supported the war for many years.

Yet Graham's book avoids any semblance of introspection about the Vietnam War and the human costs of the Post's support for it. Her book recounts that she huddled with a writer in line to take charge of the editorial page in August 1966: "We agreed that the Post ought to work its way out of the very supportive editorial position it had taken, but we couldn't be precipitous; we had to move away gradually from where we had

been." Vast carnage resulted from such unwillingness to be "precipitous."

Although widely touted as a feminist parable, Graham's Pulitzer Prize-winning autobiography is notably bereft of solidarity for women without affluence or white skin. They barely seemed to exist in her range of vision; painful realities of class and racial biases were dim, faraway specks. Overall the 625-page book gives short shrift to the unrich and unfamous, whose lives are peripheral to the drama played out by the wealthy publisher's dazzling peers. The name of Martin Luther King Jr. does not appear in her star-studded, history-drenched book.

Katharine Graham's decision to

publish the Pentagon Papers was indeed laudable, helping to expose lies that had greased the wheels of the war machinery with such horrific consequences in Vietnam. But the Washington Post was instrumental in avidly promoting the lies that made the Vietnam War possible in the first place. No amount of rave reviews or Oscar nominations for The Post will change that awful truth. **CT**

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Norman Solomon is the coordinator of the online activist group www.RootsAction.org and the executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. He is the author of a dozen books including "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death."

BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib



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