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**OVERWHELMED BY PROPAGANDA** | *Caitlin Johnstone*  
**SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES** | *George Monbiot*  
**PLAYING GAMES WITH PRISON LIFE** | *Alan MacLeod*

ISSUE 210

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

Mid-July 2020



## The place where Heaven meets Hell

*On the path from Mt. Hood to Portland / Joe Allen*

## Turdblossom freaks out

*Our second excerpt from Greg Palast's new book, **How Trump Stole 2020***

## Undercover patriots

*Trump's Tulsa rally highlights the rise in military dissent / Danny Sjursen*



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Issue 210 Mid- July 2020

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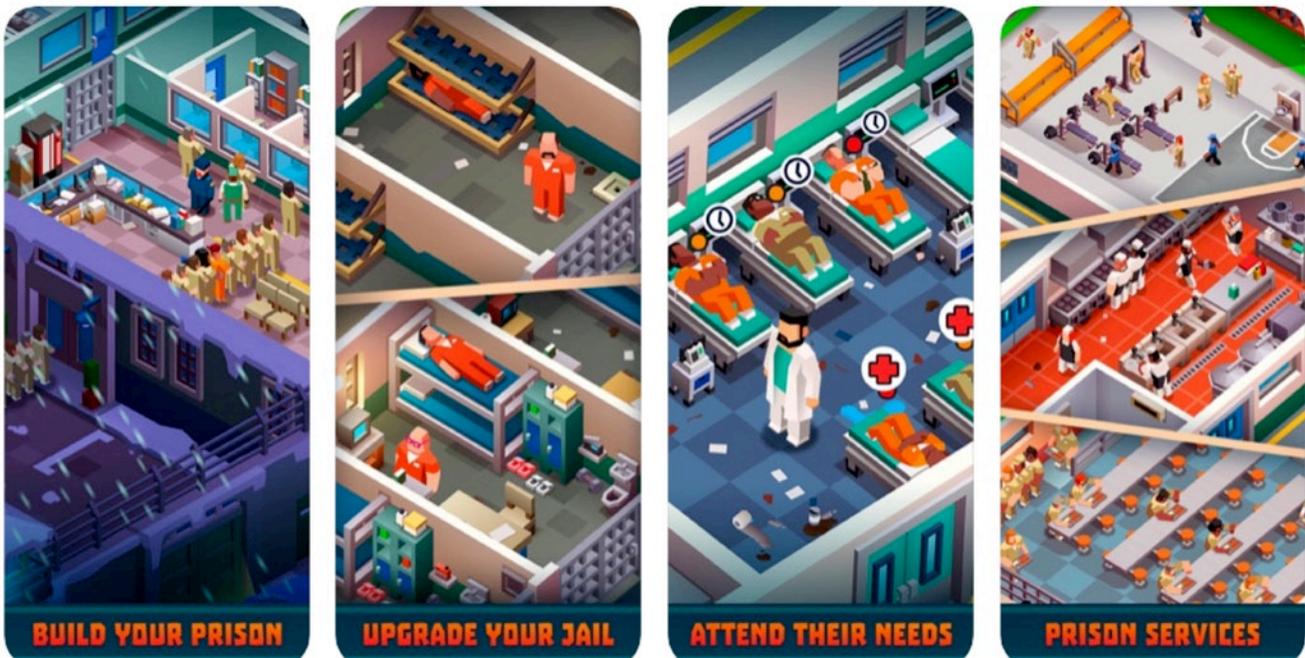
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News | Views | Opinions

# Insights

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CRIME PAYS: Screenshot shows a series of images from the computer game *Private Prison Tycoon*.

Alan MacLeod

## Playing games with life behind bars

A new game called *Prison Empire Tycoon* is going viral. Released in late May, it has become the current number one strategy game in Apple's App Store and has been among the top 20 most popular games overall since its launch,

with at least three-million downloads to date. In line with many other popular business simulation games such as the *Railroad Tycoon* and *Rollercoaster Tycoon* series, where users create huge transport networks or design and run their own theme parks, the point of *Prison Empire Tycoon* is

to make money running a private American prison.

During the tutorial at the start, a baton-wielding guard instructs you, telling you that “the state pays us good money” to manage the “lowlifes” they send your way. “It’s a perfect business”, he says, as he shows you how to send inmates to solitary confinement, something that is near-universally described as torture.

The game is undeniably well put together, with a clear, functioning world and appealing, chunky graphics. And judging from the extremely positive

# Insights

reception the game has received, users see nothing wrong with its content either.

Indeed, the biggest complaints in the negative reviews left online are that it has a number of bugs, has a tendency to crash, and features a lot of annoying ads and in-app purchases.

With almost 2.3-million people locked up across a sprawling network of thousands of facilities, the United States has by far the highest incarceration rate in the world, significantly worse than brutal dictatorships in Africa, Latin America or Central Asia. The US imprisons its citizens at more than ten times the rate of European countries such as Denmark or Sweden, and over seventeen times that of Japan. Three-quarters of people held in jails have not been convicted of anything.

For-profit private prisons are a growing phenomenon. Since 2000, the number of people incarcerated in them has increased by 39.3 percent, compared to an overall rise of 7.8 percent. Some states have seen their private prison industry explode. Arizona's private prison population, for example, has grown nearly sixfold over the last 20 years. Indiana and Ohio's have quadrupled, while Florida's has tripled.

Private prison corporations have a clear and perverse incentive to keep their charges in their custody for as long as possible and to make sure they return. In 2010, a federal grand jury

convicted Pennsylvania judges of taking \$2.6-million in bribes from for-profit juvenile detention facilities in exchange sending thousands of children to jail, often over the protestations of their probation officers.

Writer and prison critic Chris Hedges, who has taught at a number of penitentiaries, called prisoners the ideal American worker: they do not receive any benefits or pensions, are not paid overtime, cannot organize or go on strike, have no vacations or sick days, never show up late to work, cannot complain, and if they try to protest they can be beaten or tortured in solitary confinement. As such, he concludes, prisons "are models for what the corporate state expects us all to become". According to a 2017 study by the Prison Policy Initiative, incarcerated workers in non-industry prison jobs are paid between \$0.86 and \$3.45 per day, a significant decline from previous years.

These wages are used as a battering ram against wages across society. Right now, California is facing a critical shortage of firefighters to tackle the summer forest fires, precisely because the state has relied on prison labour, rather than unionised firefighters. California's prison population is currently on lockdown after particularly severe COVID-19 outbreaks across the state's correctional facilities.

While many people are working to change or abolish the institution altogether, the massive prison population and terrible

conditions found inside have become so accepted that Chelsea Manning's jailer is running a successful campaign for Congress in Alabama, as a Democrat.

Video games are also used to sanitise other inherently violent institutions. Among the most popular genres of games are hyper-realistic first-person shooters like the *Call of Duty* franchise, where players play as American troops gunning down huge numbers of faceless Arabs.

The US Army has its own eSports team which it uses to groom suggestible teenagers into joining the military. Indeed, the Air Force has a recruitment tool game on its own website which allows you to drone bomb Iraqis and Afghans. Players who perform well are prompted whether they would like to do this in real life.

The fact that the reception to "Prison Empire Tycoon" has been overwhelmingly positive, with few people remarking on its problematic content, goes to show how normalised the prison industrial complex has become and how few people recognise the dystopian depths that society has sunk to. **CT**

*Alan MacLeod is a staff writer for MintPress News. After completing his PhD in 2017 he published two books: Bad News From Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News and Misreporting and Propaganda in the Information Age: Still Manufacturing Consent. This article first appeared at [www.mintpressnews.com](http://www.mintpressnews.com)*

# Insights

George Monbiot

## Something wicked this way comes

Facing inequality and exclusion, poor wages and insecure jobs, people are persuaded by the newspapers billionaires own and the parties they fund to unleash their fury on immigrants, Muslims, the EU and other “alien” forces.

From the White House, his Manhattan tower and his Florida resort, Donald Trump tweets furiously against “elites”. In Britain, Dominic Cummings hones the same message as he moves between his mansion in Islington, with its library and tapestry room and his family estate in Durham. Clearly, they don’t mean political or economic elites. They mean intellectuals: the students, teachers, professors and independent thinkers who oppose their policies. Anti-intellectualism is a resurgent force in politics.

Privileged grievance spills from the pages of the newspapers. Opinion writers for the *Telegraph* and the *Spectator* insist they are oppressed by a woke mafia, by the rise of Black Lives Matter and other cultural shifts. From their national newspaper

columns and slots on the Today programme, they thunder that they have been silenced. The president of the United States portrays himself as a martyred hero, the victim of oppressive liberalism. This politics of resentment is taken up by the foot-soldiers of the nascent far right on both sides of the Atlantic.

Photo: Shealah Craighead, White House



Photo: Wikipedia



**WHERE'S THE TRUST? Donald Trump and Dominic Cummings hone the same messages against the “elites”.**

Myths of national greatness and decline abound. Make America Great Again and Take Back Control propose a glorious homecoming to an imagined golden age. Conservatives and Republicans invoke a rich mythology of family life and patriarchal values. Large numbers of people in the United Kingdom regret the loss of empire.

Extravagant buffoons, build-

ing their power base through the visual media, displace the wooden technocrats who once dominated political life. Debate gives way to symbols, slogans and sensation. Political parties that once tolerated a degree of pluralism succumb to cults of personality.

Politicians and political advisers behave with impunity. During the impeachment hearings, Donald Trump’s lawyer argued, in effect, that the president is the nation, and his interests are inseparable from the national interest. Dominic Cummings gets away with blatant breaches

of the lockdown. Robert Jenrick, the UK housing secretary, with his attempted special deal for a property developer who then gave money to the Conservative Party. With every unpunished outrage against integrity in public life, trust in the system corrodes. The ideal of democracy as a shared civic project gives way to a politics of dominance and submission.

Political structures still stand, but they are hollowed out, as power migrates into unaccountable, undemocratic spheres: Conservative fundraising dinners, US political action committees, offshore trade tribunals, tax havens and secrecy regimes. The bodies supposed to hold power to account, such as the Electoral Commission and the BBC, are attacked, disciplined and cowed.

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Politicians and newspapers launch lurid attacks against Parliament, the judiciary and the civil service.

Political lying becomes so rife that voters lose the ability to distinguish fact from fiction. Conspiracy theories proliferate, distracting attention from the real ways in which our rights and freedoms are eroded. Politicians create chaos, such as Trump's government shutdowns and the no-deal Brexit Boris Johnson seems to be engineering, then position themselves as our saviours in troubled times.

Donald Trump shamelessly endorses nativism and white supremacy. Powerful politicians, like the congressman Steve King, talk of defending "western civilisation" against "subjugation" by its "enemies". Minorities are disenfranchised. Immigrants are herded into detention centres.

Do these circumstances sound familiar? Do they pluck a deep, resonant chord of apprehension? They should. All these phenomena were preconditions for – or facilitators of – the rise of European fascism during the first half of the 20th-Century. I find myself asking a question I thought we would never have to ask again. Is the resurgence of fascism a real prospect, on either side of the Atlantic?

Fascism is a slippery, protean thing. As an ideology, it's almost impossible to pin down: it has always been opportunistic and confused. It is easier to define

as a political method. While its stated aims may vary wildly, the means by which it has sought to grab and build power are broadly consistent. But I think it's fair to say that though the new politics have some strong similarities to fascism, they are not the same thing. They will develop in different ways and go by different names.

Trump's politics and Johnson's have some characteristics that were peculiar to fascism, such as their constant excitation and

Photo: Wikimedia



SAVIOUR? Boris Johnson.

mobilisation of their base through polarisation, their culture wars, their promiscuous lying, their fabrication of enemies and their rhetoric of betrayal. But there are crucial differences. Far from valorising and courting young people, they appeal mostly to older voters. Neither relies on paramilitary terror, though Trump now tweets support for armed activists occupying state buildings and threatening peaceful protesters. It is not hard to see some American militias mutating into paramilitary enforcers if he

wins a second term, or, for that matter, if he loses. Fortunately, we can see no such thing developing in the UK. Neither government seems interested in using warfare as a political tool.

Trump and Johnson preach scarcely-regulated individualism: almost the opposite of the fascist doctrine of total subordination to the state. (Though in reality, both have sought to curtail the freedoms of outgroups). Last century's fascism thrived on economic collapse and mass unemployment. We are nowhere near the conditions of the Great Depression, though both countries now face a major slump in which millions could lose their jobs and homes.

Not all the differences are reassuring. Micro-targeting on social media, peer-to-peer texting and now the possibility of deep-fake videos allow today's politicians to confuse and misdirect people, to bombard us with lies and conspiracy theories, to destroy trust and create alternative realities more quickly and effectively than any tools 20th-century dictators had at their disposal. In the EU referendum campaign, in the 2016 US election and in the campaign that brought Jair Bolsonaro to power in Brazil, we see the roots of a new form of political indoctrination and authoritarianism, without clear precedents.

It is hard to predict how this might evolve. It's unlikely to lead to thousands of helmeted stormtroopers assembling in public squares, not least because

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# Insights

the new technologies render such crude methods unnecessary in gaining social control. As Trump seeks re-election, and Johnson prepares us for a likely no deal, we can expect them to use these tools in ways that Hitler and Mussolini could only have dreamt of. Their manipulations will expose long-standing failures in our political systems, that successive governments have

done nothing to address.

Though it has characteristics in common, this isn't fascism. It is something else, something we have not yet named. But we should fear it and resist it as if it were. **CT**

*George Monbiot is a columnist for the Guardian, where this article first appeared. His website is [www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com).*

is dominated by Netanyahu and settler leaders, Kushner has had to weigh wider pressures. It is Kushner who is fielding anxious calls from Arab and European leaders about annexation.

Trump's attention, meanwhile, is focused on other pressing matters, such as how to stop a dangerous fall in his popularity as the pandemic runs wild with potentially catastrophic consequences for the US economy.

Nonetheless, according to a report in the Israeli daily newspaper *Haaretz*, Netanyahu and Friedman's position may slowly be winning out. Kushner is reportedly less in Trump's favour after recent disagreements on domestic policy matters.

Annexation has already served Netanyahu's immediate needs. It was a large carrot that incentivised his voting base to keep turning out in three inconclusive elections over the course of a year. It has distracted from his current corruption trial, as well as from his failure to maintain a grip on the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some have speculated that he may no longer feel the need to go through with annexation. Although backed by many Israelis, it is low on their list of priorities as they grapple with disease and recession.

Nonetheless, Netanyahu would struggle to forego it.

This is in part because he made too much of it – and of his special relationship with Trump

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Jonathan Cook

## Israel Annexation threat far from over

Annexation by Israel of occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank was never likely to happen on July 1, as many observers assumed. The date was not a deadline; it was a window opened by the Israeli government to carry out annexation before US President Donald Trump leaves office.

Unhappily for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, that window could slam shut in a matter of months, if current polling trends continue and Trump loses the presidential election in November.

Certainly, the fact that no dramatic move took place at the beginning of July does not indicate that annexation is off the table. Indeed, following meetings in

Israel with US officials last week, Netanyahu's office suggested that a US announcement on annexation could soon happen.

The dithering, according to the Israeli media, reflects divisions inside the US administration – despite the fact that its so-called Middle East “peace plan”, published earlier in the year, approved Israel's annexation of as much as a third of Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank.

Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and the architect of that plan, has reportedly been at loggerheads with David Friedman, the US ambassador to Israel, over the timing and scale of annexation.

Both are fervent supporters of the settlements. But while Friedman's circle of intimates

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# Insights

– during the election campaigns. He will not be forgiven by many on the right should he fail to capitalise on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to grab the title deeds to occupied Palestinian land with US blessing.

Furthermore, Netanyahu's own vanity should not be discounted. This is his chance to take his place in Israel's history books – not as Israel's first prime minister to stand trial while in office, but as the leader who secured recognition of the settlements and killed off any chance of a viable Palestinian state.

The question for Netanyahu is how much of a concession he seeks to extract from the White House. The answer may depend on whether Trump looks likely to win a second term.

Israeli media reports suggest that Netanyahu may settle for a two-stage annexation. In this view, Israel would quickly annex the larger settlements around Jerusalem, cementing the loss to the Palestinians of their future capital. That would be the effective sequel to Trump's decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem two years ago. It would also presumably play well once again with the Christian evangelicals on whose vote Trump relies.

The more remote settlements and the Jordan Valley might follow, but possibly only if Trump wins in November, when he can protect Netanyahu from the likely backlash.

There are advantages – for the Israeli government – to a staged annexation.

It would diminish the threat of destabilising neighbouring Jordan, which has a large population of Palestinian refugees.

It may also mitigate the danger of the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, effectively Israel's security contractor in the West Bank. The Israeli army is reportedly worried about whether it can absorb the burden of again policing the West Bank's cities directly, especially if they are in foment.

It would let the Europeans cling a little longer to the fig leaf of a moribund peace process, one that has provided a pretext for inaction against Israel for so long.

It has been revelatory watching European governments, even that of Britain's go-it-alone Boris Johnson, suddenly rediscover the importance of international law when faced with annexation and the formal death of the two-state solution.

But whether Netanyahu gets his annexation – all of it or some of it – the Israeli right will emerge strengthened once again in their battle against the Palestinian national movement.

Since the Oslo accords were signed more than a quarter of a century ago, there has been a continual erosion of language and principles, to the detriment of the Palestinian cause.

In those days, the international community's focus was on ending the occupation, dismantling Israel's settlements and developing a Palestinian state in the territories vacated by Israel. In his first term as prime minister, in the

late 1990s, Netanyahu was forced to cede control of small parts of the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority.

Later, the debate shifted: to where the borders of a future state should be drawn and which settlement "blocs" were too indispensable for Israel to be expected to give them up.

Now a conceptual shift is occurring again. The diplomatic conversation is about how to stop annexation, or at least which parts of annexation cannot be allowed to proceed.

The occupation and the settlements – and the terrible toll they have inflicted on the lives of Palestinians – are no longer the international community's red line. Annexation is.

As international observers try to stop Israel's formal annexation of the West Bank, they are again losing sight of the incremental thefts of land and displacements of Palestinians taking place on a daily basis.

This kind of concrete annexation – that slowly eats away at Palestinian hopes of dignity and self-determination – will continue apace whatever President Trump decides over the coming days. **CT**

*Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His books include "Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East" and "Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair". His website is [www.jonathan-cook.net](http://www.jonathan-cook.net).*

# Insights

Rory O'Connor

## Winona wins Danny Schechter award

Mainstream media analysts have suddenly decided that objectivity is bad and advocacy good. “With the country in turmoil over racial injustice, a public health crisis and devastating job losses,” *Washington Post* media writer Margaret Sullivan recently asked, “What’s a journalist supposed to be now – an activist?” To Sullivan, the “core question” is: “What journalism best serves the real interests of American citizens?” *New York Times* media writer Ben Smith also weighed in, citing an “irreversible” shift in America’s “biggest newsrooms” from a tradition of neutrality to a belief “that fairness on issues from race to Donald Trump requires clear moral calls”.

Better late than never... Years ago, when pioneering journalist Danny Schechter made “moral calls” on topics like apartheid and human rights abuses around the world, it led to his being branded with a metaphoric scarlet letter – A for Advocate.

Schechter often faced scorn for combining journalism with advocacy and activism in support of causes for the social good while at CNN, ABC News, and later as my partner in the independent production company Globalvision



Photo: Kerri Pickett

**REMEMBERING:** Winona LaDuke, winner of this year’s DANNY Award in memory of journalist/activist Danny Schechter, the *News Dissector*.

Sadly, the legendary “News Dissector” died in 2015. But each year, his life and work is honored in the form of the DANNY Award, given to those who best emulate Schechter’s practice of combining excellent journalism with committed social activism. The award, given by the board of The Global Center, a non-profit educational foundation dedicated to developing socially responsible media, includes a \$3,000 grant to support the honoree’s work.

Native American leader Winona LaDuke is this year’s recipient. An environmentalist, economist, author and activist, LaDuke has already published six non-fiction books and has a

new one, *To be A Water Protector*, coming out this fall. The Harvard graduate has long worked in Native and community-based organising, helping to establish the Indigenous Women’s Network, and then, with the proceeds of a human rights award, founding the White Earth Land Recovery Project to help the Anishinaabeg Indians regain possession of their land.

LaDuke also was Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader’s running mate in both the 1996 and 2000 elections. Today she is the executive director of Honor the Earth, a Native environmental advocacy organisation she co-founded in 1993 with the folk-rock duo, the Indigo Girls. The organisation played an active role in the Dakota Access Pipeline protests and remains a key opponent to proposals by the Canadian multinational corporation Enbridge to bring more tar sands to the United States.

Previous DANNY Award winners include Jose Antonio Vargas, Patrice O’Neill, the reporters and editors of the *Eagle Eye*, the student newspaper of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. **CT**

*Rory O’Connor is Board Chair of the non-profit educational foundation The Global Center. He is also an award-winning author, journalist and filmmaker whose work has aired on leading networks in more than 100 countries.*

Joe Allen

# The place where Heaven meets Hell

*Our lone hayseed indulges a spell of promiscuous anthropomorphism on the path from Mt. Hood to Portland, looking for faces in the clouds*

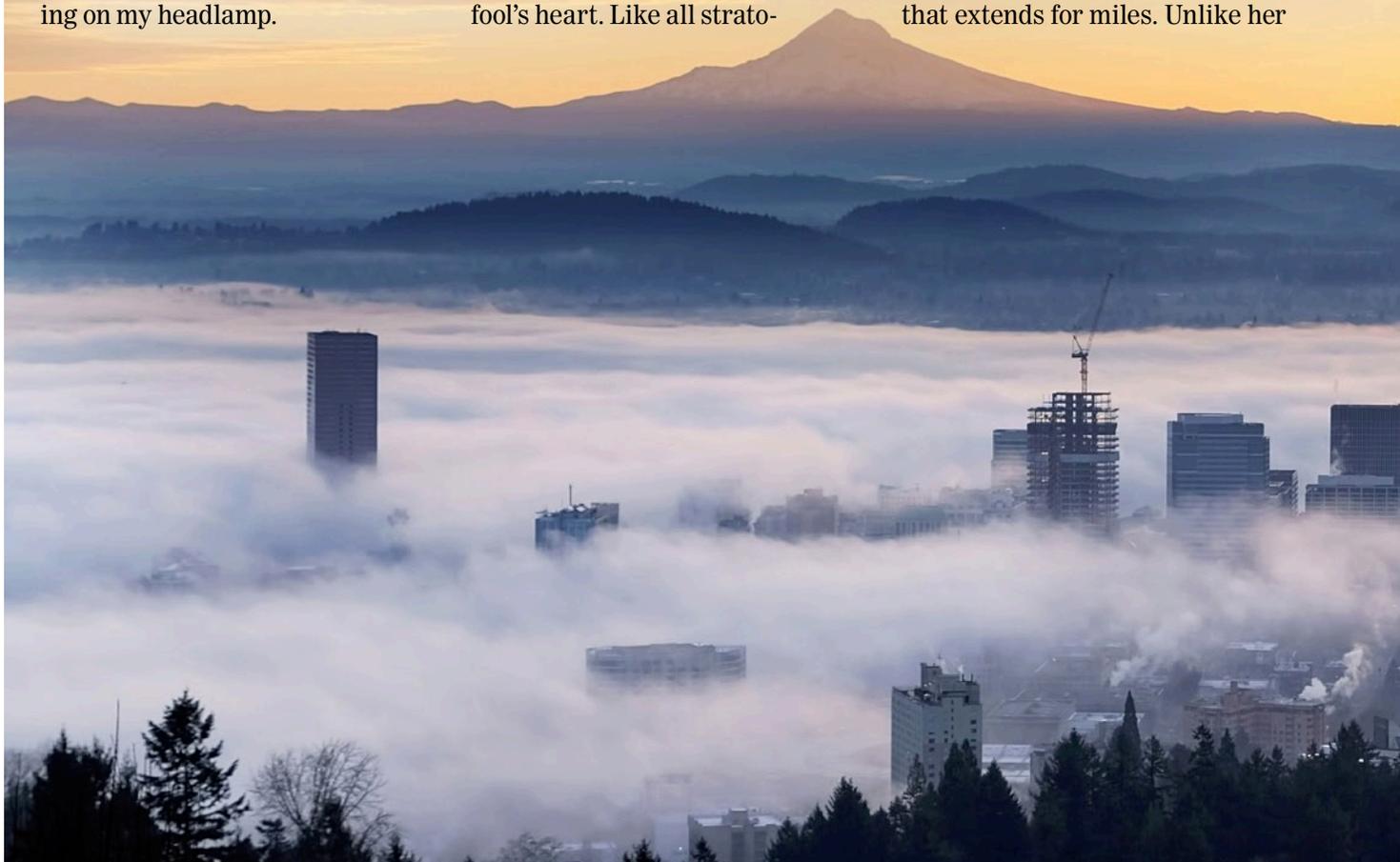
The Fourth of July brought clear skies. A full moon had gleamed overhead since midnight – trailed by Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars in an eastward arc – allowing me to ascend some 5,000ft of snow and talus without ever turning on my headlamp.

The meaning of the mountain, I told myself faithfully, lies somewhere up ahead. There must be some connection between her world and ours.

Mt. Hood was cold and beautiful that morning, like an aloof lover who's managed to capture some fool's heart. Like all strato-

volcanoes, her jagged peak cast a symmetrical triangle that stretched out across a sea of clouds lit pink by the sunrise.

As with any perfect visage, this sharp Platonic form is an optical illusion, created by the vanishing point of a lumpy, elongated shadow that extends for miles. Unlike her



misshapen siblings, however, most of whom crouch like hunchbacks along the Cascade Volcanic Arc, something of Hood's true essence is revealed by this idealised shape. Approached from a distance, her elegant body really does resemble a snow-covered pyramid rising up from the Oregonian conifers.

It was half past 5am by the time I'd reached Crater Rock, just shy of 11,000ft. A second wind surged through my limbs. As I climbed toward the sulphur-stained rocks of the Pearly Gates, the eggy taste of Hood's morning breath touched my lips. Above my head, heavy ice formations the colour of Scandinavian eyes were clinging to the stone.

Two blackened fumaroles – active volcanic vents that still whisper threats to passersby – belched vapour like the jaws of Hell some

two hundred feet below. If you slipped down that icy chute into one of those holes, you'd either boil to death or slowly suffocate on the noxious fumes. That's what makes this fun.

As I scaled up the frozen snow between the Pearly Gates, staving my ice axe's pick into the slick 40° slope and digging my crampons into the shallow steps of predecessors long gone, I realised I'd never felt so alone. There was no sound but my own desperate breath and the violent crunch of my tools tickling the volcano.

What did this amoral goddess think of my frantic efforts? She grinned, but didn't giggle. Then again, she's always grinning.

Clearly, few endeavours are more self-indulgent than a solo climb. It gives you the thrilling

sensation of fighting for survival – not because Nature has turned against you, but because you've tempted Her wrath for the hell of it. Jelly legs, unsated lungs, strained arms, aching feet, a nasty fall just behind you, a godlike panorama over the next rise – mountaineering is a waking dream.

At the top, it seems like you can see everything. In reality, you know next to nothing. Somehow, the illusion of omniscience holds real satisfaction.

### **The Holy Mountain**

The myth of the cosmic mountain is as old as wanderlust. Its slopes are inhabited by wise men, they say, while its peak is the gods' abode. Even if we limit ourselves to a purely naturalistic view, humans appear to have



**WHERE HEAVEN MEETS HELL: A foggy sunrise over the city of Portland, Oregon. Mt Hood stands majestic guard over the scene.**

evolved an innate desire to scale the heights – even in our dreams. It’s as if the naked ape was made to climb as well as to fight.

The allure of high places pervades the work of Aleister Crowley – that sly black-magician, beloved prophet of personal liberty, opiate-addicted sex fiend, accomplished mountaineer, and alleged British intelligence asset – who joined the first Himalayan expedition to K2 at the turn of the 20th-century. For Crowley, mountain-climbing was a form of meditation – a way to get out of your head.

In his paradoxical *Book of Lies*, published in 1913, he includes a verse called “The Mountaineer”:

*Consciousness is a symptom of disease.*

*All that moves well moves without will.*

*All skillfulness, all strain, all intention is contrary to ease.*

*Practice it a thousand times, and it becomes difficult; a thousand thousand, and it becomes easy; a thousand thousand times a thousand thousand and it is no longer. Thou that doeth it, but It that doeth itself through thee. Not until then is that which is done well done.*

*Thus spoke FRATER PERDURABO as he lept from rock to rock of the moraine without ever casting his eyes upon the ground.*

If you read between the lines, it’s obvious the guy’s talking about getting laid. Or brainwashing tech-



Mt. Hood’s Platonic shadow in the sunrise.

## A few miles down from Mt. Hood in Portland, Oregon, you’ll find Crowley’s disciples in the Ordo Templi Orientis

niques. Or both.

Incidentally, a few miles down from Mt. Hood’s timberline, in the swingin’ city of Portland, Oregon, you can still find Crowley’s disciples in the Ordo Templi Orientis – one of many non-traditional sex magic clubs in town. Every Sunday they hold a heretical Gnostic Mass (lockdown orders notwithstanding). It’s sort of like a home church service, complete with special outfits, except they also offer a pre-transubstantiated Eucharist that contains human blood.

According to the O.T.O website’s FAQ\*: “The sacrament consists of a small goblet of red wine (non-alcoholic alternative avail-

able) and a small wafer called a ‘Cake of Light’. The cake is composed of wheat meal or another grain, honey, wine leavings, Abramelin oil, olive oil, and either food grade animal blood or human blood, typically from the priestess, that has been reduced to ash. If you are sensitive to gluten or are a vegan concerned about consuming blood and honey, you are welcome to bring your own cake to the ceremony”.

Talk about a taste of Portland. “Do what thou wilt” – now with non-alcoholic and gluten-free options. But back to our laboured ascent.

In cultures the world over, the gods are said to dwell on a holy mountain. In the Western tradition, it was on Mt. Sinai (or Mt. Horeb, depending on who tells it) that a jealous storm god dictated the Ten Commandments (or 613, or whatever). Later on, his divine son expounded upon this Law from a Judean mountaintop, teaching conditional forgiveness and other tactics of spiritual warfare. Over in ancient Greece, a pantheon of lusty, capricious deities ruled the cosmos from Mt. Olympus. To this day, Shiva’s blazing third eye still gazes down from the Himalayan peak of Mt. Meru, where he dreams of dissolving the universe.

A profound, if tragic meditation on the peaks comes from French novelist René Daumal, who basi-

\*Also in the O.T.O FAQ: “[W]e are not formally associated with ... Rev. Hoeller’s (Gnostic) church.”

cally died mid-sentence while writing *Mount Analogue: A Tale of Non-Euclidean and Symbolically Authentic Mountaineering Adventures*. He scratched the final comma in April of 1944, when tuberculosis overcame him. SPOILER ALERT: There's no ending.

Echoing the occultists under which he studied, Daumal sketched out the cosmic mountain: "Its highest summit touches the sphere of eternity, and its base branches out in manifold foothills into the world of mortals. It is the path by which humanity can raise itself to the divine and the divine reveal itself to humanity." But this image of the otherworldly, he laments, has become an outmoded symbol. Even by Daumal's time, every physical peak on the planet had been conquered, with its topography mapped and its slopes pimped out to snotty Europeans.

In response, Daumal envisioned another, more mystical "path uniting Heaven and Earth" – *Mount Analogue* – a theoretical peak whose "summit must be inaccessible, but its base accessible to human beings as nature has made them. ... The gateway to the invisible must be visible". Through hilarious characters and elaborate logical puzzles, Daumal embarked on a new approach to the holy mountain – pursuing an imaginary goal forever out of reach – only to succumb to lung-hungry microbes before his climbing team could reach the summit.

## **Yin and Yang**

Looking south from the top of Hood, you see Mt. Jefferson stabbing up from the landscape. Just beyond, the misty Three Sisters hover in the distance.

## **In an orgy of goofy mating displays and ravenous predation, the living will dance on the bones of the dead**

To the north is a sullen Mt. Adams, looking serious about something. The bulbous Mt. Rainier eyes Seattle hungrily. Off to the west side of this long, crooked line, what's left of Mt. St. Helens lurks like an outcast. Her body is a crumbling monument to the violence of these monsters. It's also a living laboratory for the study of rebounding forests.

The eruption of Mt. St. Helens showed America that volcanoes mean business. At the time, she looked a lot like Hood, all snow-covered, dainty, and ready for fun. But St. Helens was never content to be just another pretty face. Then, on May 18, 1980, she lost her shit, blasting lava and white hot ash out of her northern flank with the force of 10-million tons of dynamite. With zero remorse, she killed 60 people, flattened whole forests, and made a 232-square mile mess of rural Washington. From her crater rim, you can still see a film of rotting tree trunks choking Spirit Lake like a mass grave no one bothered to cover.

As always, life is undaunted. Exhibiting the steady, long-suffering patience of eager organisms with nothing better to do, the plants and animals of the surrounding forests immediately began to creep back onto the devastated area. Prai-

rie lupine – a pea-like wildflower with bright violet petals – was among the first to venture onto the pumice plain two years after the eruption.

Science writer Rhonda Mazza tells their story in PNW's *Science Findings*:

"Each lupine plant created a microhabitat that was hospitable to several other plants. Like other legumes, lupine chemically improves the soil ... by 'fixing' atmospheric nitrogen. The lupine plants physically trap other wind-blown debris and attract insects, many of which ultimately die on or around the plant. As these bits of organic matter decompose, they also enrich the soil. ... Within a few years, the lupine patches ... became biological hotspots facilitating the colonisation of other plant species and attracting numerous insects, birds, and small mammals, in what had been a barren landscape."

Over hundreds of thousands of years, this rejuvenation has occurred countless times up and down the Cascade Volcanic Arc. With each succession, these mountains come to host flourishing populations of shrews, voles, and ground squirrels; Douglas fir, western hemlock, and noble fir; elk, cougar, and coyote; corvids, ospreys, and eagles; and more recently, REI-outfitted bipedal apes whose double trekking poles clack on the trail like carbon fibre beetle legs. With each eruption, the story starts over again.

So, in a never-ending orgy of goofy mating displays and ravenous predation – punctuated by long spells of farting around – the living will dance on the bones of the dead.



**FUN, FIRE AND COPS:**  
Fourth of July weekend  
in Portlandia

## ***Real 'Muricans vs. the Rainbow Whites***

I have a theory for why the Pacific Northwest is so fucking weird – Cascadia is where Heaven and Hell meet. Built up over the millennia from igneous lava flows and coated with glaciers, its stratovolcanoes are the means by which the Earth's molten core touches the clouds. This coupling is a form of geological tantra. You can feel the erotic charge in the air. Climb up there and tell me I'm wrong.

My personal research, aided by magical thinking, suggests that these wacky vibes flow down into the cities like radioactive snowmelt. Judging by recent observations, a massive pulse descended on the Fourth of July weekend.

Despite the cancellation of Portland's fireworks display, the

## ***Each of those fireballs had been touched by a Communist labourer in some Chinese boomstick factory***

city's Rainbow Whites enjoyed a spirited Independence Day, as did the many 'Muricans who live in the outlying regions. So did I, for that matter. After my long descent from Hood's summit, I spent a pleasant evening on a multifamily polyamorous farm – a lovely community of Rainbow 'Muricans – just downstream of the timberline.

With a great friend beside me and an oatmeal stout in hand, I watched ten thousand fireworks explode over the countryside in

rapid succession. For the armies of 'Muricans setting them off, this imitation carpet-bombing represents their liberty to celebrate the freedom to be free, and it commemorates the heroes who were free to either kill or enslave the enemy.

At some point in the recent past, each of those fireballs had been touched by a Communist labourer in some Chinese boomstick factory. You know that one or two were smiling as they stuffed gunpowder into those cardboard tubes, happy that a few 'Muricans out there would have a good time.

The same brands of fireworks were going off in downtown Portland on the Fourth, but in a different spirit. These incendiaries were launched at government buildings by BLM activists – BLAM! BLAM! – and applauded by the city's Rainbow Whites hidden away in neo-

Lego condos. As in Hong Kong, the fuddy dud cops were not as amused.

While lockdowns were lifted, the revolution was being televised. Across the country, from Baltimore to San Francisco, bronze statues of 'Murican heroes were torn down with cameras rolling. Pissed off cops were thrashing protesters, young and old. In cities like Chicago and Atlanta, the police nearly ran out of crime scene tape as black children lay bleeding in the streets.

The nation's Rainbow Whites cheered the movement on from safe spaces, hiding their eyes during the scary parts. Real 'Muricans decompressed by doing some ammo shopping.

When I arrived in downtown Portland the next night, there were hardly any 'Muricans left. I saw so many homeless encampments, though, arranged in such elaborate configurations, you'd think city planners had been sold on a retro Barter Town aesthetic. A few dozen militarised feds formed a wall against a mob of black-clad protesters. Behind the police, the Portland Justice Center was covered in graffiti an inch thick: "ACAB" – "WE ARE OUR ANCESTORS" – "COPS=KKK" – "FUCK 12" – "KILL COPS" – "OINK YOUR LAST" – "COPS ARE TERRORISTS" – "WHEN INJUSTICE BECOMES LAW RESISTANCE BECOMES DUTY" – "ALABAMA CRAB DANGLE" – "WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?"

Here and there you'd see car-

**Nature moves.  
Entities conflict.  
Pressure builds.  
The world explodes.  
Everything's quiet.  
Nature moves again**

toon pigs drawn with X's over their eyes. The actual cops looked mean enough, I guess, but because many held toy-like paintball guns (loaded with pepperspray balls), the whole scene had a comical, irreverent air. The black-clad rebels were just kids, anyway. Many had surely been spawned by 'Murican parents, then got woke by the Rainbow Whites. Most were just old enough to fantasise about real violence.

Eventually a rowdy crew built a bonfire where the bronze Elk had once stood. Soon, two pretty black girls were dancing on the statue's empty pedestal. Smartphone bass thumped through a bullhorn. A selfie or two got snapped. Down front, a few emotive types screamed in the cops' faces. It was as if they were performing some cathartic ritual whereby many personal nightmares could be transmuted into one all-encompassing utopia.

A pale Army vet with a keffiyeh over his face waved an inverted US flag and taunted the cops. He said the brown people he served with overseas could ice any pig in

front of him. A fit blonde woman in tights, screaming through her designer PPE, scolded the policemen who chose not to wear a mask during a pandemic. These demonstrators had tapped into the dark side of the Rainbow, each one climbing the New Normal's fluid social hierarchy in his, her, or their own way.

Off to the side, an Hispanic kid implored a black officer, "I just want justice for my friends, man!" The cop shook his head and fingered the trigger guard, looking bored. These two didn't strike me as a true Rainbow White or a hardcore 'Murican. But there they were, facing off on opposite sides of the same trembling volcano, feeling the heat of that tectonic friction. Without warning, another Chinese rocket went BLAM! in the sky.

Whether you're observing continental subduction zones, the dance of predator and prey, or the fault-lines between civilisation and its discontents, universal processes can be discerned. A unifying spirit lies beneath.

Nature moves. Entities conflict. Pressure builds. The world explodes. Everything's quiet. Nature moves again. Survival means knowing when to move with Her, when to strike back, when to climb up, and when to take cover. **CT**

*Joe Allen writes about race, robots, and religion. These days, he's based out of a survivalist bunker on wheels. His website is [www.joebot.xyz](http://www.joebot.xyz).*

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Danny Sjursen

# Undercover patriots

*The faithful rally to cheer Trump, but Tulsa also highlights the rise in US military dissent*

It was June 20 and we antiwar vets had travelled all the way to Tulsa, Oklahoma, in the midst of a pandemic to protest President Trump's latest folly, an election 2020 rally where he was to parade his goods and pretend all was well with this country.

We never planned to go inside the cavernous arena where that rally was to be held. I was part of our impromptu reconnaissance team that called an audible at the last moment. We suddenly decided to infiltrate not just the perimeter of that Tulsa rally, but the BOK Center itself. That meant I got a long, close look at the MAGA crowd there in what turned out to be a more than half-empty arena.

Our boots-on-the-ground coalition of two national antiwar veteran organisations – About Face and Veterans for Peace (VFP) – had thrown together a risky direct action event in coordination with the local activists who invited us. We planned to climb the three main flagpoles around the arena and replace an Old Glory, an Oklahoma state flag, and a Tulsa one with Black Lives-themed banners. Only on arrival, we found our-

selves stymied by an eleventh-hour change in the security picture: new gates and unexpected police deployments. Hopping metal barriers and penetrating a sizable line of cops and National Guardsmen seemed to ensure a fruitless trip to jail, so into the under-attended indoor rally we went, to – successfully it turned out – find a backdoor route to those flagpoles.

Once inside, we had time to kill. While others in the group infiltrated and the flagpole climbers donned their gear, five of us – three white male ex-foot soldiers in America's forever wars and two Native American women (one a vet herself) – took a breather in the largely empty upper deck of the rally. Nervous joking then ensued about the absurdity of wearing the Trump “camouflage” that had eased our entrance. My favourite disguise: a Hispanic ex-Marine buddy's red-white-and-blue “BBQ, Beer, Freedom” tank top.

The music irked me instantly. Much to the concern of the rest of the team, I'd brought a notebook along and was already furtively



scribbling. At one point, we listened sequentially to Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*, The Beatles' *Let It Be*, and Queen's *We Are The Champions* over the arena's loudspeakers. I couldn't help but wonder how that black man of, let's say, complicated sexual orientation, four outspoken British hippies, and a gay AIDS victim (Freddie Mercury) would feel about the way the Trump campaign had co-opted their songs. We can guess though,

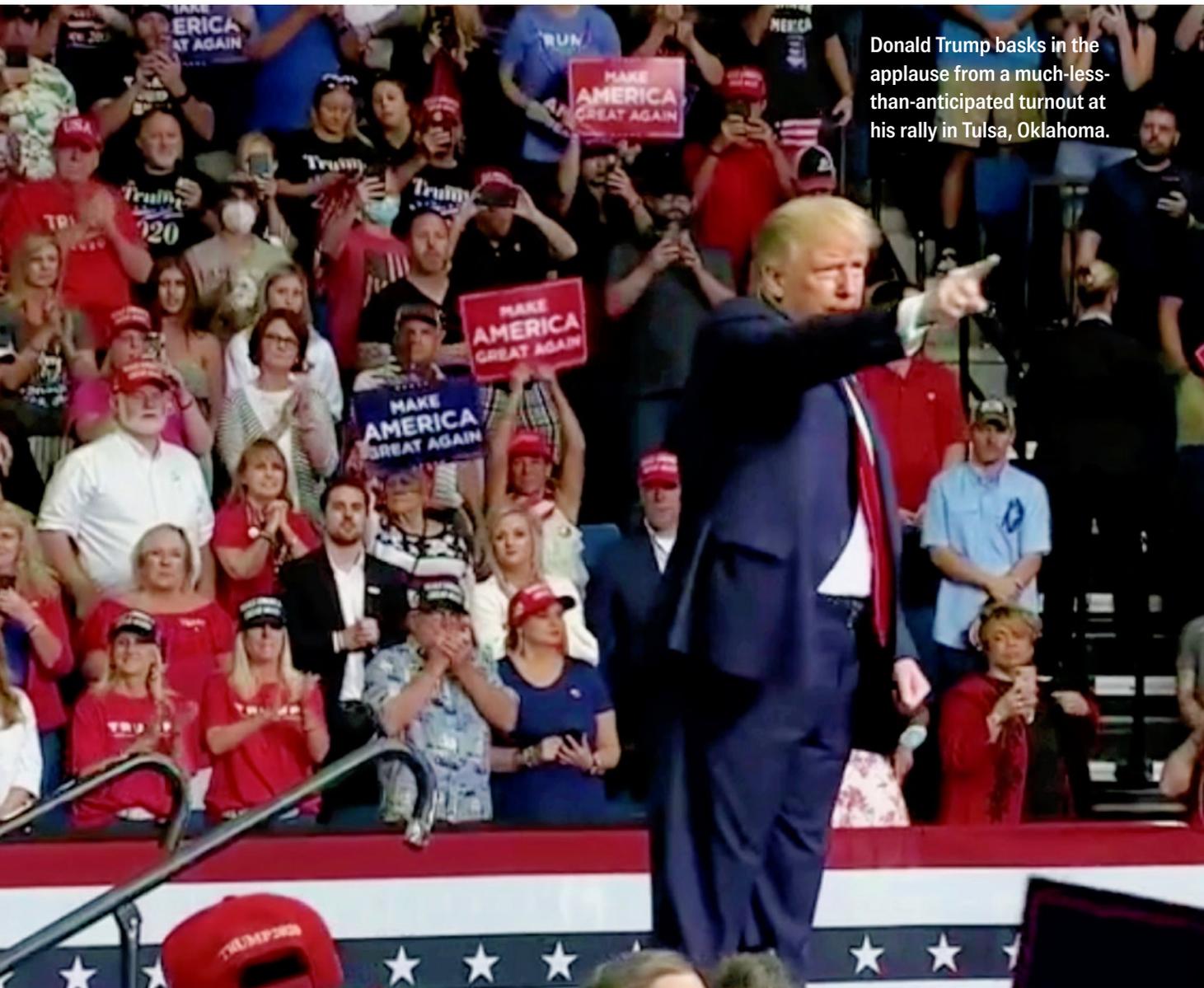


Photo: TV/ screenshot

Donald Trump basks in the applause from a much-less-than-anticipated turnout at his rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

since the late Tom Petty’s family quickly denounced the use of his rock song *I Won’t Back Down* at the rally.

I watched an older white woman in a “Joe Biden Sucks, Nancy Pelosi Swallows” T-shirt gleefully dancing to Michael Jackson’s falsetto (“But the kid is not my son!”). Given that *Billie Jean* blatantly describes an out-of-wedlock paternity battle and that odds were this woman was a pro-life proponent of

“family values”, there was something obscene about her carefree shimmy.

And then, of course, there was the version of patriotism on display in the arena. I’ve never seen so many representations of the Stars and Stripes in my life, classic flags everywhere and flag designs plastered on all manner of attire. Remember, I went to West Point. No one showed the slightest concern that many of the red-

white-and-blue adaptations worn or waved strictly violated the statutes colloquially known as the US Flag Code (United States Code, Title 4, Chapter 1).

That said, going undercover in Trumplandia means entering a universe in which it’s exceedingly clear that one political faction holds the flag hostage. They see it as theirs – and only theirs. They define its meaning, its symbolism, and its proper use, not to speak of

whom it represents. The crowd, after all, was vanilla. (There were more people of colour serving beers than cheering the president.)

By a rough estimate, half of the attendees had some version of the flag on their clothing, Trump banners, or other accessories, signalling more than mere national pride. Frequently sharing space with Old Glory were images of (often military-grade) weaponry, skulls (one wearing an orange toupee), and anti-liberal slogans. Notable shirts included: the old Texas War of Independence challenge “Come And Take It!” above the sort of AK-47 assault rifle long favoured by America’s enemies; a riff on a classic Nixonian line, “The Silent Majority Is Coming”; and the slanderous “Go To Your Safe Space, Snowflake!”; not to mention a sprinkling of the purely conspiratorial like “Alex Jones Did Nothing Wrong” (with a small flag design on it, too).

The banners were even more aggressive. “Trump 2020: Fuck Your Feelings” was a fan favourite. Another popular one photo-shopped The Donald’s puffy face onto Sylvester Stallone’s muscle-bound physique, a machine gun at his hip. That image, of course, had been lifted from the Reagan-era, pro-Vietnam War film *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, a fitting accompaniment to Trump’s classically plagiarised Reaganesque rallying cry “Make America Great Again”. Finally, a black banner with pink lettering read “L G B T”. Above the letters, also in pink, were logos depicting, respectively, the Statue of Liberty, a Gun (an M16 assault rifle), a Beer mug, and a profile bust of Donald Trump. Get it?

For our small group of multi-

## **Our combat tours didn't save our nonviolent team from the instant, distinctly physical rancour of the police**

war/multi-tour combat veterans, it was hard not to wonder whether many of these flag-and-weaponry enthusiasts had ever seen a shot fired in anger or sported Old Glory on a right-shoulder uniform sleeve. Though we were all wearing standard black veteran ball-caps and overtly Trump-friendly shirts, several of us interlopers feared the crowd might somehow guess what we actually were. Yet tellingly, the closest we came to outing ourselves – before later pulling off our disguises to expose black “About Face: Veterans Against The War” shirts – was during the national anthem.

Nothing better exemplified the contrast between what I’ve come to think of as the “pageantry patriotism” of the crowd and the more complex “participatory patriotism” of the dissenting vets than that moment. At its first notes – we were still waiting in the arena’s encircling lobby – our whole team reflexively stood at attention, removed our hats, faced the nearest draped flags, and placed our hands upon our hearts. We were the only ones who did so – until, at mid-anthem, a few embarrassed passers-by followed our example. Most of the folks, however, just continued to scamper along, often chomping on soft pretzels, and sometimes

casting quizzical glances at us. Trumpian patriotism only goes so far.

Our crew was, in fact, rather diverse, but mostly such vets groups remain disproportionately white and male. In fact, one reason local black and native communities undoubtedly requested our attendance was a vague (and not unreasonable) assumption that maleness, whiteness, and veteran’s status might offer their protests some semblance of protection. Nevertheless, my old boss on West Point’s faculty, retired Colonel Gregory Daddis, summed up the limits of such protection in this phrase: “Patriotic” Veterans Only, Please. And just how accurate that was became violently apparent the moment we “unmasked” at the base of those flagpoles.

Approximately three-dozen combat tours braved between us didn’t save our nonviolent team from the instant, distinctly physical rancour of the police – or four members of our group from arrest as the climbers shimmied those flagpoles. Nor did deliberately visible veteran’s gear offer any salvation from the instantly jeering crowd, as the rest of us were being escorted to the nearest exit and tossed out. “Antifa!” one man yelled directly into a Marine vet’s face.

Truthfully, America’s “thanks for your service” hyper-adulation culture has never been more than the thinnest of veneers. However much we veterans reputedly fought for “our freedom”, that freedom and the respect for the First Amendment rights of antiwar, anti-Trump vets that should go with it evaporates with remarkable speed

in such situations.

Still, the intensity of the MAGA crowd's vitriol – as suggested by the recent hate mail both About Face and I have received – is partly driven by a suspicion that Team Trump is losing the military's loyalty. In fact, there's evidence that something is indeed astir in both the soldier and veteran communities the likes of which this country hasn't seen since the tail end of the Vietnam War, almost half a century ago. Today's rising doubt and opposition has three main components: retired senior officers, younger combat veterans, and – most disturbingly for national-security elites – rank-and-file serving soldiers and National Guardsmen.

The first crew, those senior officers, have received just about the only media attention, even though they may, in the end, prove the least important of the three. Many of the 89 former defence officials who expressed “alarm” in a *Washington Post* op-ed over the president's response to the nationwide George Floyd protests, as well as other retired senior military officers who decried President Trump's martial threats at the time, had widespread name recognition. They included former Secretary of Defense and retired Marine Corps General Jim (“Mad Dog”) Mattis and that perennial late-comer, former Secretary of State and Joint Chiefs Chairman Colin Powell. And yes, it's remarkable that such a who's-who of former military leaders has spoken as if with one voice against Trump's abhorrent and inflammatory recent behaviour.

Still, a little caution is in order before canonising a crew that,

## ***It's remarkable that so many former military leaders have spoken against Trump's recent behaviour***

lest we forget, has neither won nor opposed a generation's worth of unethical wars that shouldn't have been fought. Recall, for example, that Saint Mattis resigned his post not over his department's complicity in the borderline genocide underway in Yemen or pointlessly escalatory drone strikes in Somalia, but in response to a mere presidential suggestion of pulling US troops out of the quicksand of the Syrian conflict.

In fact, for all their chatter about the Constitution, oaths betrayed, and citizen rights violated, anti-Trumpism ultimately glues this star-studded crew together. If Joe Biden ever takes the helm, expect these former flag officers to go mute on this country's forever wars waged in Baghdad and Baltimore alike.

More significant and unique is the recent wave of defiance from normally conservative low-to mid-level combat veterans, most, though not all, a generation junior to the attention-grabbing ex-Pentagon brass and suits. There were early signs of a shift among those post-9/11 boots-on-the-ground types. In the last year, credible polls showed that two-thirds of veterans believed the wars in Afghanistan,

Iraq, and Syria “were not worth fighting,” and 73 percent supported full withdrawal from the Afghan War in particular. Notably, such rates of antiwar sentiment exceed those of civilians, something for which there may be no precedent.

Furthermore, just before the president's controversial West Point graduation speech, more than 1,000 military academy alumni signed an open letter addressed to the matriculating class and blatantly critical of Trump's urge to militarily crack down on the Black Lives Matter protests. Mainly ex-captains and colonels who spanned graduating classes from 1948 to 2019, they briefly grabbed mainstream headlines with their missive. Robin Wright of the *New Yorker* even interviewed and quoted a few outspoken signatories (myself included). Then there was the powerful visual statement of Marine Corps veteran Todd Winn, twice wounded in Iraq, who stood for hours outside the Utah state capitol in the sweltering heat in full dress uniform with the message “I Can't Breathe” taped over his mouth.

At the left end of the veterans' community, the traditional heart of antiwar military dissent, the ranks of the organisations I belong to and with whom I “deployed” to Tulsa have also swelled. Both in that joint operation and in the recent joint Veterans for Peace (largely Vietnam alumni) and About Face decision to launch a “Stand Down for Black Lives” campaign – encouraging and supporting serving soldiers and guardsmen to refuse mobilisation orders – the two groups have taken real steps toward encouraging multi-generational opposition to systemic militarism. In fact, more

than 700 vets publicly signed their names (as I did) to About Face's provocative open letter urging just such a refusal. There were even ex-service members among the far greater mass of unaffiliated veterans who joined protesters in the streets of this country's cities and towns in significant numbers during that month or more of demonstrations.

Which brings us to the final (and most fear-inducing) strand of such dissent: those in the serving military itself. Their numbers are, of course, impossible to measure, since such resistance can range from the passive to the overt and the Pentagon is loathe to publicise the slightest hint of its existence. However, About Face quickly received scores of calls from concerned soldiers and Guardsmen, while VFP reported the first mobilisation refusals almost immediately. At a minimum, 10 service members are known to have taken "concrete steps" to avoid deployment to the protests and, according to a *New York* magazine investigation, some troops were "reconsidering their service", or "ready to quit".

Finally, there's my own correspondence. Over the years, I've received notes from distraught service members with some regularity. However, in the month-plus since George Floyd's death, I've got nearly 100 such messages from serving strangers – as well as from several former West Point students turned lieutenants – more, that is, than in the preceding four years. Last month, one of those former cadets of mine became the first West Point graduate in the last 15

## ***I don't pretend to know whether such protests will last or military dissent will augor real change of any sort***

years to be granted conscientious objector status. He will complete his service obligation as a non-combatant in the Medical Service Corps. Within 36 hours of that news spreading, a handful of other former students expressed interest in his case and wondered if I could put them in touch with him.

In a moment of crankiness this January, using a bullhorn pointed at the University of Kansas campus, I decried the pathetic student turnout at a post-Qasem Soleimani assassination rally against a possible war with Iran. And it still remains an open question whether the array of activist groups that About Face and Veterans for Peace have so recently stood in solidarity with will show up for our future antiwar endeavours.

Still, the growth across generations of today's antiwar veterans' movement has, I suspect, value in itself – and part of that value lies in our recognition that the problem of American militarism isn't restricted to the combat zones of this country's forever wars. By standing up for Black lives, pitching tents at Standing Rock Reservation to fight a community-threatening pipeline, and similar solidarity actions, this generation

of antiwar veterans is beginning to set itself apart in its opposition to America's wars abroad and at home.

As both the Covid-19 crisis and the militarisation of the police in the streets of American cities have made clear, the imperial power that we veterans fought for abroad is the same one some of us are now struggling against at home and the two couldn't be more intimately linked. Our struggle is, at least in part, over who gets to define patriotism.

Should the sudden wave of military and veteran dissent keep rising, it will invariably crash against the pageantry patriots of Chickenhawk America who attended that Tulsa rally and we'll all face a new and critical theatre in this nation's culture wars. I don't pretend to know whether such protests will last or military dissent will augor real change of any sort. What I do know is what my favourite rock star, Bruce Springsteen, used to repeat before live renditions of his song *Born to Run*: "Remember, in the end nobody wins, unless everybody wins". **CT**

**Danny Sjursen** is a retired US Army major and former history instructor at West Point. He served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, and now lives in Lawrence, Kansas. He has written a memoir of the Iraq War, *Ghost Riders of Baghdad: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Myth of the Surge*. His latest book, *Patriotic Dissent: America in the Age of Endless War*, will be published in September. Follow him on Twitter at @SkepticalVet. This essay first appeared at [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com)



**PEACEFUL PROTEST:** Harold C. Frazier, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and lawyers filed a lawsuit against eminent domain, pointing to the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, in an attempt to block the pipeline's path onto sacred, sovereign lands. This land was temporarily known as North Camp.

*John Willis*

# Without water, there is no life

*Any leak from the Dakota Access Pipeline would go into the drinking-water supply for the Standing Rock reservation and millions of people living downriver. So it had to be stopped ...*

In the introduction to *Mni Wiconi – Water is Life*, a weighty volume packed with images, stories, historical artefacts, timelines, and poems, in addition to his superb photographs, author John Wilkins tells how he became involved in the protest movement that led to a massive stand-off at the Standing Rock reservation in North and South Dakota against the 1,200 mile long Dakota Access Pipeline crude oil project.

“I had heard about resistance movements, led by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and supported by non-native allies, against the Energy Transfer Partners project

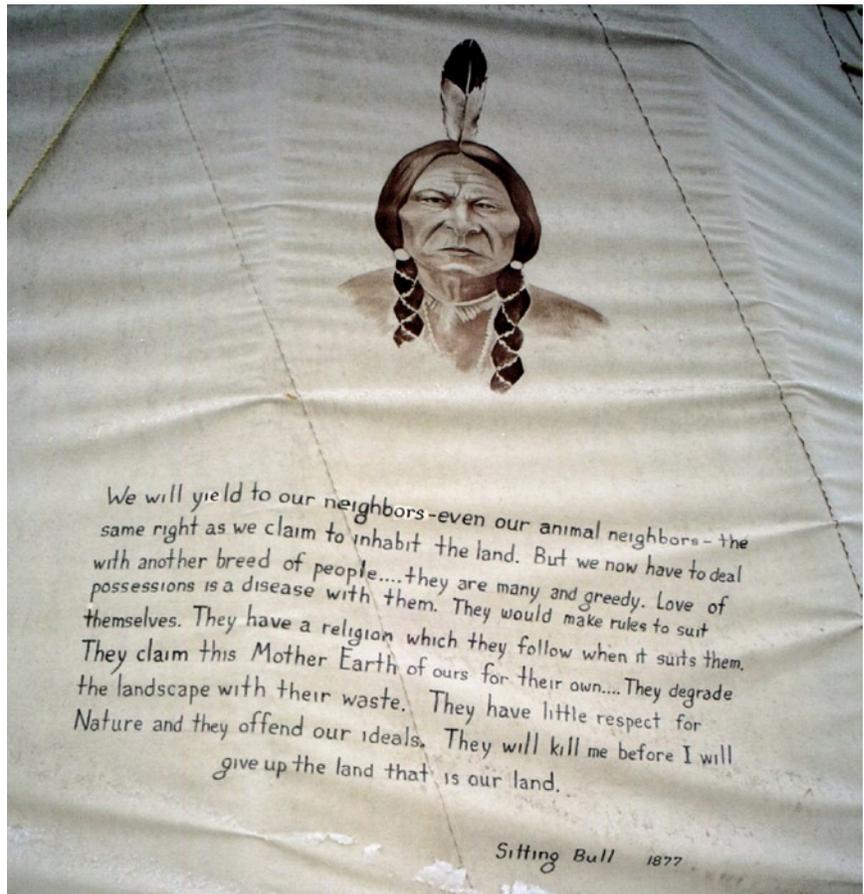


**READY FOR WINTER CONFLICT.** The upside-down American flag was frequently seen throughout the camps. Flying the union upside down is officially recognised by the United States Flag Code as a serious distress call.

to build an oil pipeline through the Dakotas, across Iowa, and into Illinois. In early September 2016, I headed west to witness the efforts of the resisters, or Water Protectors, as they chose to be called. Drawn to their dedication, I went to the Oceti Sakowin (“Seven Council Fires”) Camp in North Dakota, one of three camps set up to accommodate the resisters and their allies.

“The 1,172-mile-long Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL)”, writes Willis, “would pass beneath the Missouri River just above the Standing Rock Indian Reservation’s northern border: sovereign land. The tribe objected because any oil leak would go directly into the drinking-water supply for both the reservation and millions of people living downriver and because the location of DAPL threatened tribal burial grounds and other sacred sites in the area”.

Willis adds that “The Standing



**OUR LAND:** Quote from Chief Sitting Bull on one of the tepees at the encampment.



Road signs at the camp in December 2016.



## **MNI WICONI Water Is Life**

**JOHN WILLIS**

Published by  
George F. Thompson Publishing

US\$45

Rock Sioux filed suit in court to stop the US Army Corps of Engineers from building the pipeline until a full environmental impact study could be done. When this and other efforts failed, the Mni “Wiconi (“Water Is Life” in the Lakota language) and NoDAPL grassroots resistance movements grew up”.

Approaching Standing Rock, I encountered a National Guard roadblock with guardsmen carrying M16 rifles behind cement and razor-wire barriers. Their purpose, they said, was to let travellers know there was a protest camp ahead.

“Another security team, with neither weapons nor barriers, welcomed all visitors to the camp and let them know that no guns, drugs, or alcohol were permitted; the camps were for nonviolent resistance through prayerful ac-



**OUR LIVES MATTER:** Pleading with police officers in Mandan to consider water for the health of their children, grandchildren, and all future generations.

tion. They requested that visitors check in at the media tent to learn the protocol, if any of us intended to use any kind of camera, video, or other media. They told us where to find the volunteer resource tent, kitchens, medical tent, and donations area”.

Willis, who made six trips to North Dakota between September and December 2016, and spent a total of eight weeks living out of a car at the Oceti Sakowin Camp, adds, “All of the photographs in this book were made during those visits. I only wish I could have been on site for the Camp’s duration. When I first arrived, there were estimated to be 500–700 supporters. On later trips, I saw the camp’s size ebb and flow. At its peak around Thanksgiving, there

were said to be 12,000–15,000 Water Protectors on site. It is said that representatives from more than 300 native tribes and many thousands of people from around the world came in solidarity.

“Around the camp’s sacred fire circle, people shared their reasons for travelling to support the cause. People gave examples of fishing tribes whose waters became so polluted they could no longer eat the fish. Others told of communities that could no longer drink the water from their land after allowing corporations or the government to use their natural resources for fossil-fuel or similar extractive industries.

“The call from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to resist the Dakota Access Pipeline from being located on

its sovereign and sacred lands was a call for humanity to recognise that indigenous lands, reservation lands, are sovereign lands and the natural world is not an endless resource to be stripped without consequences from our actions.

“We must prioritise finding ways to live in harmony for the benefit of all, including the generations yet to come”.

**CT**

*John Willis is Professor of Photography at Marlborough College and Exposures Cross Cultural Youth Photography Program. His other books are Recycled Realities, a collaboration with photographer Tom Young, and Views From the Reservation. His website is [www.jwillis.net](http://www.jwillis.net)*



**JOINING THE FIGHT:** Native and non-native military veterans defend the Water Protectors in response to police action at the Backwater Bridge.



**VETS JOIN IN:** Ex-US military veterans stand with protesters in the winter freeze.

### *Footnote*

## **Court orders shutdown of Dakota Access Pipeline**

**A** Washington DC court ordered that the Dakota Access Pipeline should be shut down and emptied of oil by August 5. The decision, on Monday July 6, came after four years of litigation by the Standing Rock Sioux, Cheyenne River Sioux, and others against the US Army Corps of Engineers. – *Common Dreams*

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Caitlin Johnstone

# We're overwhelmed by propaganda

*Remember that the public yelling that someone has shit opinions is different from media-controlling plutocrats deciding who does and does not get a voice*

If you want more of something, apply capitalism; if you want less of something, apply socialism. Capitalism is great for making a ton of stuff, but for making less stuff it's shit, whether that be making less illness, less pollution, less ecocide, less war, less prisoners, etc. Right now we live in a world that needs a great reduction of a great many things, and there's just no way to get there as long as human behaviour is driven by profit.

This is obviously true of things like healthcare, where actually eliminating illness kills demand. But it's also true of other things such as charity programmes, where if you actually fix the problem people are throwing money at then a lot of professionals lose their income sources. You've got to incentivise people to get rid of problems, but capitalism doesn't have an effective way of doing that. Instead, it incentivises people to perpetuate them.

This is just common sense business practice that anyone who's ever run a business should understand. If you make products, your goal is to create and sell as many

products as possible. If you sell services, your goal is to create as many clients as possible. So if your business is war machinery, you will necessarily be incentivised to lobby for as many wars as possible. If your business is medicine, you will be incentivised to keep as many sick people around as possible. As long as we're motivated by profit, such things persist. Trying to consume our way out of our current predicament is like trying to eat your way into weight loss.

Propaganda is so advanced that members of the public will openly cheerlead their government's imprisonment of Julian Assange so that their government can continue to lie to them.

Our focus shouldn't just be on bad things done by individual plutocrats – Gates did X, Bezos did Y etc. The primary focus should be on how we shouldn't have a system which allows any individual to have that much power over our world. No individual should have that much power to do that much harm.

You couldn't create a more perfect

profit-generating scheme than war. Entire civilisations can be streamlined into the task of cranking out top-of-the-line, name-brand killing machines at the drop of a false flag. War will continue as long as human behaviour is driven by profit.

“That's not real capitalism!” is not an intelligent response to leftist criticisms of our current approach to money and profit as a motivator of human behaviour, it's just playing pedantic word games. Nobody cares if you feel like your pet word is being mistreated. Address the damn argument.

In the debate about “cancel culture” it's important to remember that the rank-and-file public yelling that someone has shit opinions is completely different from powerful media-controlling plutocrats deciding who does and does not get a voice. These two separate things should not be conflated.

If cancel culture could keep John Bolton from ever having a job more prestigious than cleaning bathrooms I would embrace it with all my heart.



I don't like talking about this, but what the hell is the point of the US Green Party if it's going to run candidates that aren't disruptive to mainstream establishment narratives? It looks like the whole strategy this year is to avoid confrontation and controversy at all cost.

If you actually want to be the party of change, you must not only be unafraid of controversy and conflict, you must actively seek it out. Nothing about the status quo deserves to be coddled or left undisrupted. The whole machine

needs to be forcibly exposed in front of everyone.

Obviously Howie Hawkins, the Green Party's presidential candidate, will be overall better on policy than anyone else on the ballot. I'm not disputing that. He will also refuse to aggressively attack the mainstream candidates and force himself into the mainstream conversation. He'll play a small target and let them ignore him.

Liberals often say "Have you read the Mueller report?" as a way of arguing that there was some le-

gitimacy to the Russian collusion narrative. Funny thing is they themselves have never read it, or they'd know that narrative had no legitimacy. They just read the bullshit pundits said about it.

Liberals hate leftists because leftists are a constant reminder that liberals aren't what they pretend to be.

I feel like in all the fuss about Jesus we too often overlook the fact that the empire which became the backbone of western culture was so sociopathic and sadistic that it had a policy of nailing dissidents to pieces of wood and leaving them to die slow, torturous deaths.

The Catholic Church getting corporate welfare is the most 2020 thing ever.

The most important job of a parent is to help their child make their mistakes as safely, as quickly, and with as little trauma as possible.

Anyone who's done real inner work knows it's seldom comfortable when subconscious things become conscious. There's a reason that stuff was kept out of consciousness in the first place. This is true of large-scale movements into consciousness as well. It's awkward, and it ain't pretty.

My pet conspiracy theory is that the world is conspiring to awaken the human species into a healthy relationship with its newly evolved capacity for abstract thought. **CT**

*Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian political blogger. Her website is [www.caitlinjohnstone.com](http://www.caitlinjohnstone.com)*

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Greg Palast

# Turdblossom freaks out

In our second excerpt from his new book **How Trump Stole 2020**, Greg Palast returns to Ohio and finds a long wait for ... absentee ballots

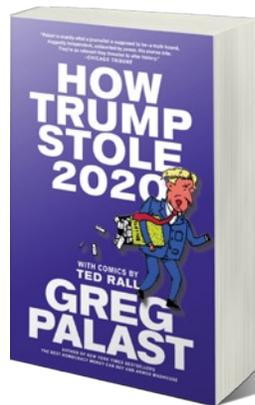
**T**urdblossom was freaking out. A full stuttering tantrum-fit on Fox TV.

You know Turdblossom. That's the name George W. Bush gave his Senior Counsellor, Karl Rove. Turdblossom Rove is that pudgy guy you see all the time on Fox, with the little soft hands and wet lips. He was also known as "Bush's Brain."

It was close to midnight at the end of Election Day 2012, and Fox News had just called Ohio – the swing state of swing states – for Obama. Obama, said Fox, had been re-elected President.

And Rove was going berserk, refusing to accept Obama's Ohio win. The Fox hosts, though deep Republican red, could not understand why Turdblossom would not just give up.

But Rove knew what they didn't: that Obama's re-election could be reversed by one last, quite brilliant, ballot game. Rove tried to explain: "Here's the thing about Ohio. A third of the vote in Ohio is cast early. That's won overwhelmingly by the Democrats. It's counted first and then you count the Election Day".



## HOW TRUMP STOLE 2020

GREG PALAST

With comics by Ted Rall

Signed copies available at <https://www.gregpalast.com/how-trump-stole-2020>

Published by Seven Stories Press

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What was he babbling about? This: About 70% of Black voters in Ohio had cast their ballots on early voting days. But why would that matter? A ballot's a ballot, right?

Not in Ohio, it ain't.

Rove knew that these hundreds of thousands of Black early voters were not given regular ballots. Instead, they were all given ballots

that could be disqualified.

For the first time in Ohio history, just days before the election, the Republican Secretary of State had secretly ordered a ballot switch for early – ie, Black – voters.

But our chief investigator, Leni Badpenny, had already gotten the tip, four days earlier. The tip-off was important enough for her to slog across Manhattan during a power black-out to find a signal to relay the info to me. (Our Long Island office had been washed away by Storm Sandy and our files in New York were floating in two feet of water.)

An Ohio voter had sent her a message that early voters were not allowed to vote on regular ballots or on voting machines. Instead, they were handed an absentee mail-in ballot.

This was a Big Deal. But to make sure this was not a BS tip, I immediately called Professor Fit-rakis, dean of voting rights experts in Ohio. He said, "That would be really, really bad" if they handed out absentee ballots.

But, the attorney assured me, this was impossible, "the state *can't* do that."



Above: Palast surveys the five-hour line of more than 1,000 Black voters at Dayton, Ohio. Below: But there is no line-up at the white polling centre.



But I'm suspicious by trade and training. So, despite the reassurance that this could not happen, I drove through the night to Dayton, Ohio, where, in the morning, I found the Freedom Faith Baptist Church.

The church, a tiny white clapboard structure on a street of foreclosed homes, had advertised it was hosting a "Souls to the Polls" convoy. Most Ohio African-Americans vote on the Sunday before Election Day, after attending church, because they can't get off work, or they need a ride in a church van to get to the voting

station.

"Souls to the Polls" began after the 2004 election when John Kerry lost the presidency by a few votes in Ohio. Kerry would have been president except that Black voters, some waiting 7 or 8 hours in the rain, found polling station doors closed in their faces at the 7:30 pm cut-off. It was safer to vote on Sunday after church.

At Freedom Faith Baptist, Souls to the Polls organizer Terra Williams, who didn't know me from Adam, invited me in for gospel and Sunday supper: chicken, square-cut blocks of macaroni and cheese,

collard greens.

Pastor Frederick Hayes, with an electric guitar, was rocking the church. "This little light of mine ... I'm gonna let it SHINE!"

After the chicken, we loaded into the church van and headed to the lone early voting station in Dayton, and waited.

And waited.

Five hours. The line of more than a thousand voters snaked through the parking lot, all waiting in the skin-numbing Ohio November cold.

Check out these two photos: Here I am walking the Dayton line. Now, take a look at the second photo. In it, I am checking out the voting line in a white suburb of Toledo, Ohio. Or, to be accurate, there was no line. Zero wait. And to warm the Caucasian voters after their run from SUV to doorway, poll workers put out cookies and coffee.

Then weird turned weirder.

When the Souls at the Polls got to the end of the five-hour line, inside the county clerk's office, they found the voting machines covered with what looked like bedsheets. Instead of access to the voting machines, instead of a ballot, each voter was handed a form to request an absentee ballot. Why? They weren't absent, they were right in the polling station, but blocked from using voting machines.

The man in charge, the County Clerk, was miserable. He told me that the Secretary of State's last-minute edict to hand out absentee ballots was adding hours to the wait for early voters. The Secretary of State was Republican Jon Husted, as in *Husted v. APRI*, purge pro.

Husted knew that impossibly

long lines in Black precincts had been crucial to Bush's victory in 2004.

So, Husted worked hard to make them longer. He cut early voting hours, and only a Court order stopped him from shutting down Souls to the Polls Day altogether.

Dayton was ugly, but in Cleveland, Rev. Jesse Jackson was reporting a wait of seven hours.

This was the result of Husted's *pièce de résistance*. He allowed each county, no matter its size, to have only one early polling station – just to be “fair.” But that meant that Cuyahoga County, the home of Cleveland, with over a million residents, a majority of them Black, would have one voting station, same as Vinton County, with fewer than 14,000 residents, including cows, all Republicans. Moo.

After five hours, the voters were handed a number on a card and an Application for an Absentee Ballot.

We were hustled through wide doors, and I thought we'd walked into a bingo game. A skinny white guy in a white short-sleeve shirt was calling out numbers,

“Number 175 through 195, please line up behind Frank in the green shirt.”

When a voter's number came up in a half hour or so, they got in another line to hand in their Application for an Absentee Ballot, got the ballot, filled it out, filled out the envelope to hold the ballot and “mailed” it in a box set up in front of the actual voting machines white folk would use on Tuesday.

I asked the County Clerk why voters were going through this mad rigmarole to get “absentee” ballots when *they weren't absent*.

He said, “Because absentee bal-

## ***I asked why voters were going through this mad rigmarole to get “absentee” ballots when they weren't absent***

lots can be disqualified.”

*What?*

I grabbed an absentee ballot and application and headed off to Columbus, Ohio.

By the time I got to Professor Fitrakis's home, it was past midnight. An ordinary guy would have slammed the door in my face. But Fitrakis is extraordinary, committed to voting rights law 24/7.

I flashed the “impossible” absentee ballot forms and he directed me to his substantial law library. Despite the hour, the professor gave me a lesson on why absentee ballots have never been given out at voting stations – and the dangers to these votes from Dayton:

“You vote absentee, they can pick through the absentee and say, ‘They didn't fill this out all the way, they didn't sign here, they didn't initial there,’ and thus toss the absentee. Essentially they're treating the absentee like a second-class provisional ballot. None of that can be done in regular early voting”.

Husted had thought of everything. What if Black folk withstood frostbite waiting over five hours? They did. I did not see a single voter abandon the line. But Husted had prepared for their persistence. That explained why he barred these voters from using the voting machines.

Because, once a vote is cast on a machine, the vote is instantly counted. But when a vote is cast on paper, especially an “absentee” ballot, the chance of it getting counted is, well, as Professor Fitrakis said, a crapshoot.

Turdblossom Rove knew – even if his Fox News buddies didn't – that if Husted disqualified about 20% of the early-voting “absentee” Black ballots on technical grounds, Rove would realise his last, best hope of defeating Obama (and defeating the voters).

Fitrakis went to court, I went on air, and the mass disqualification of Ohio votes – which worked the trick in 2004 – failed in 2012. Barely.

**W**hy am I talking about Ohio 2012? Republicans are conservatives. They find new ways to block voters, but they conserve the old tricks too.

In November 2016, I returned to Freedom Faith Missionary Baptist. Back in the van with the Souls to Polls.

The line was down . . . to three hours. And at the end of the wait, once again, “absentee” ballots for the Souls.

Trump won Ohio Congratulations. And in 2020 . . . ? **CT**

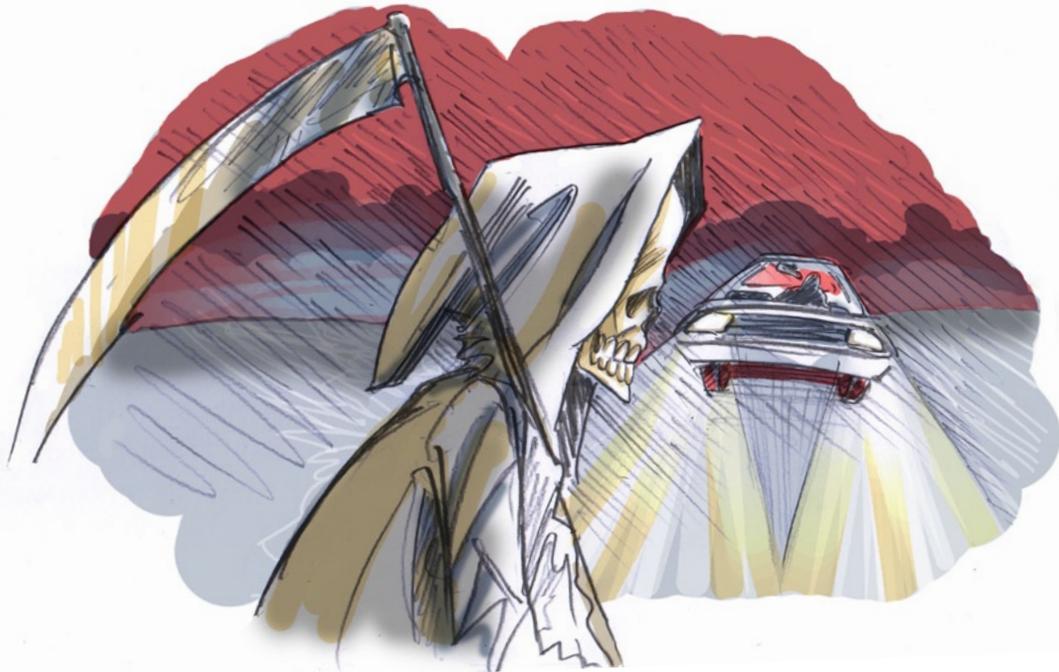
*Greg Palast is the investigative reporter for the Guardian, BBC Television, Democracy Now!, and Rolling Stone who broke the story of how George Bush stole Florida in 2000 by purging thousands of innocent Black voters. He is the author of four New York Times bestsellers including The Best Democracy Money Can Buy and Billionaires & Ballot Bandits.*

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*The road had a reputation as an accident black spot;  
maybe more accurate to call it a deadly rash than a single spot,  
given the multiple mortalities and injuries*

# *The Journey*

A Short Story by **Trevor Hoyle**



**I**t was that last stretch of the A38 – from Buckfastleigh to Plymouth – that Don Weaver dreaded most. Even though he'd driven the route so many times he'd lost count, he always felt apprehensive and a bit queasy. The road had a reputation as an accident black spot; maybe more accurate to call it a deadly rash than a single spot, given the multiple mortalities and injuries. Switching from fast dual carriageway to constipated two-lane traffic and back again every few miles was a temptation too great to resist for overtaking drivers who met their fate head on. Compounding the risk were slow lumbering farm vehicles, and this

was a bad time of year for them.

At the moment the traffic was light, the weather fine and clear. Don had left Bristol a few minutes after one o'clock. His appointment with the manager of Stubble Manor, Ian Pocklington, was at three, which was cutting it fine. Over the phone Ian had come across as a laid-back, agreeable sort of bloke, so maybe it wasn't worth breaking his neck to be punctually on the dot. Ian had even suggested an overnight stay with dinner, gratis, if Don could spare the time.

Unbidden and unwelcome, Janet's voice wormed its way into his head. "Why do you leave everything to the last minute, Donald? Working in the travel in-

Art: David Anderson / [www.dandersonillustration.com](http://www.dandersonillustration.com)

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## *He rummaged in the bag for his favourite liquorice allsort, the round one with speckles. Periods like this made you pause and reflect ...*

dustry you'd imagine schedules and timetables were important. With you they don't seem to matter ... or you're just plain lazy. I don't know which."

You don't know anything, Don answered her in his mind. I do plan ahead. My life is one long tedious plan.

"That Audi Quattro's clapped out for a start," she went on, undeterred. "The battery's dodgy and there's bald patches on both front tyres. I noticed them weeks ago."

Good for you, Stirling Bleedin' Moss. His hands tightened on the wheel. Let it go, he thought. If you don't respond she'll disappear down the dark tunnel to blessed oblivion ...

In an effort to distract himself (and cease fretting about the road ahead), Don had the radio on. He'd already tried Classic FM, until it started lulling him to sleep, and jabbed buttons, seeking something less soporific. On Radio 4 he came across a talk or discussion; it might have been a science documentary, he wasn't sure.

*... deaths in hospitals, care homes, private homes and hospices show that 6035 people died as a result of suspected or confirmed infection in England and Wales in the week ending 1st May, a decline of 2202 from the previous week. Although the number of deaths has fallen for the second week in a row ...*

**B**efore the offer of a freebie, Don had been seriously pissed off at having to drive all the way down to Plymouth. He could have checked out Stubble Manor as a wedding venue just as effectively by video, as he patiently explained to the snotty know-it-all son and heir of the agency's owner. Who wasn't the patient type as it turned out. Words were exchanged – or would have been if Don hadn't held his tongue. He'd had to do a lot of that recently, now that the old man was taking a back seat. The personal visit was to display some *enthusiasm*, he was lectured at, as if he was a damn rookie; to make an *impression* and drive home how keen they were to secure the business.

Don got the message. Yes sir, no sir, three farts in

the wind, sir.

It was true that 2019 had been a leanish year, due mainly to the uncertainty over Brexit. But things were looking up, now the second referendum had settled it once and for all and they were staying in the EU. Bookings were buoyant once again. Spain and Portugal looked set to break records, and they weren't even halfway through the year. And the Olympic Games in Shanghai in July and August would be the fat, juicy Maraschino cherry on top of the cake. There was really nothing to worry about, Don kept telling himself. Except he couldn't shake off the nagging fear that thanks to Snotty Sonny Boy's interference the agency might decide to throw the old-timers under a bus in favour of fresh blood and new ideas.

A low point had been reached when during quiet periods in the afternoon he started surreptitiously scanning job vacancies on the travel websites – and got caught at it. He might have known it would be Steph, Pete Shaw's secretary, the one who glided around the office like a slinky cat. She made him jump out of his skin when a husky murmur close to his ear inquired petulantly: "Not leaving without saying by-byes, are we, Mr Weaver? What about that weekend in Brighton you promised me?"

Don sat bolt upright and slammed the laptop shut in such a funk of guilt it made Steph muffle her snort of laughter with both hands.

Not that he wanted to quit his job or indeed leave the area. While Bristol wasn't his native city, ten years was a long time; he was settled and established, as happy here – or as miserable – as he was likely to be anywhere else.

(Along with his son Eliot he'd even become a season ticket holder at Bristol Rovers, down there in lowly League 1. His son was actually a Man United fan, and El and his mates at school were over the moon at having won the Premiership title with eleven clear points above Liverpool!)

He rummaged in the bag for his favourite liquorice allsort, the round one with speckles. Periods like this made you pause and reflect, halt in mid-stride as it were, and look at yourself, so to speak, in your mental mirror. Being brutally honest, Don supposed he led rather a boring and uneventful life, though tonight

## **“What was it, a pole dance type show? Were they totally nude, the women, or partially clothed? I suppose you felt chuffed at being ‘one of the boys’”**

might be the exception that proved the rule.

*... the government is looking to enforce a 14-day quarantine period on those entering the UK.*

*“I’m really sorry for that, and we do understand the sacrifices everyone’s having to make,” the foreign secretary said. Dominic Raab also confirmed the government is aiming to get primary school children back into school within a month of the end of the summer term. However, he emphasised this would not begin until the 1st of June at the earliest ...*

Literally out of the blue several huge plops smacked the windscreen with flat, loud retorts, bringing a shake of the head and an inward groan. No, it wasn’t fair, not today, a rainstorm sweeping down over the bleak wastes of Dartmoor. The weather this year had been exceptionally fine and dry: no April showers to speak of, and hardly a drop of real rain in the past fortnight.

“What did I say? What did I tell you?” Janet was back from oblivion. “You never make allowances for the unexpected. Always pushing your luck, forever on the last minute. You’ll be late for your own funeral!”

I won’t be late for yours, Don retorted, helping himself to another allsort. What had happened to the pair of them? Where had this rancour come from and what was its cause? What had turned his wife into such a bitter and mean-mouthed tormentor? It was as if her mission in life was to mock him and find fault – any excuse to twist the knife with a kind of malicious, sadistic glee.

Like the time she’d been rooting through his pockets and pounced on a book of matches emblazoned with “Platinum Gold Gentlemen’s Club” in silver lettering and the silhouette of a naked woman.

“Going to pretend these aren’t yours?” Janet threw the matches onto the table with a contemptuous gesture. “Invent a story that you ‘found them’ in a pub somewhere?” she added sarcastically.

Don knew he was trapped. “They’re from Pete Shaw’s birthday bash last month. He reserved a table for eight of us –”

“And you didn’t get in till well gone half-past two

as I recall.” Her tone was acid. “What was it, a pole dance type show? Were they totally nude, the women, or partially clothed?”

Don shrugged wearily. “Does it matter?”

“I suppose you felt chuffed at being ‘one of the boys’, sitting back glugging whisky, telling dirty jokes.” Janet’s voice was scathing. Her face went stiff. “And what’s with *matches* anyway? You weren’t *smoking*, I hope ... with your chest.”

“I haven’t smoked in years. You know that.” He’d smoked two cigars, but reluctantly, without pleasure. It was Pete Shaw’s fault. “So what’s it matter if you do go home smelling of smoke? You wear the trousers in your house, don’cha Donny boy? Or does the wife make you wear a pinny?”

Everybody had laughed, including Don. So then he had no choice but to accept a cigar and puff away as if he enjoyed it. After the first he couldn’t refuse a second, which with the beer, wine and whisky made him turn green and dash to the toilet. The laughter round the table was hysterical. That was the night, Don remembered, he had met slinky Steph in the midnight taxi queue. She had been distressed over the state of him, and seemed genuinely concerned for his welfare; it was her idea to share a cab. On the way Steph had been most sympathetic, and Don’s gratitude humble and heart-felt. So much so that they’d gone back to her flat for another helping of heart-felt gratitude and concerned sympathy.

*... up to 30% of patients who are seriously ill with coronavirus are developing dangerous blood clots, according to medical experts. Severe inflammation in the lungs – a natural response of the body to the virus – is behind their formation. Patients affected worldwide by the pandemic are prone to many medical complications, some of which can be fatal ...*

The sign for Buckfastleigh flashed by, which to Don might have read DANGER ZONE AHEAD in glowing red neon. Automatically he checked the time: 2.10pm. No chance he was going to make the appointment with Ian Pocklington, not unless he really put his foot

## He could also see a tractor chugging rings of blue smoke into the rainswept air while hauling a lop-sided silage tank spattered with pig manure

down. More heavy spots smeared themselves on the windscreen. The rain resembled teeming pencil rods, slanting right to left across the dual carriageway. He tried to recall how much further the dual carriageway extended before it narrowed to the two-lane black spot. Otherwise known as the Suicidal Death-trap.

Did other people have those same thoughts? Surely they must do – tempted by a quick and easy and permanent exit. Just pull out blindly from behind the vehicle blocking your way and overtake without bothering to look ahead. Within seconds it would all be over. Peace at last.

It jogged his mind back to the news flash only this morning, while shaving in the bathroom, which reported that the prime minister had been admitted to hospital after suffering a minor stroke. Although Don hadn't voted for the man, he hoped the PM would recover and regain his health. There was an interview a bit later on TV in which Mrs Corbyn had thanked the many well-wishers praying for her husband's recovery. Having just visited him in hospital, she reported that Jeremy was "on the mend" and "in good spirits".

However, this raised the possibility that the prime minister might have to cancel his trip to America to meet President Clinton, who was gearing up already to run for her second term of office in November.

The daft sci-fi fantasy he'd been half-listening to about viruses, blood clots, global pandemics and other far-fetched nonsense finally came to an end, thank god. Some writers had really warped imaginations. He switched the radio off, letting his thoughts dwell on the evening ahead: the intimate candle-lit dinner at Stubby Manor with slinky Steph, and then spending the night together in a king-size bed. She was taking the train down after work and Don had arranged to pick her up at the station.

Coming up fast, less than a quarter of a mile away, he could see the end of the dual carriageway. He could also see a tractor chugging rings of blue smoke into the rainswept air while hauling a lop-sided silage tank spattered with pig manure. Don calculated there was a slim to even chance of overtaking the tractor before the road narrowed. Too risky or should he take a gamble? It required an instant decision. Firmly and deliberately, Don pressed down on the accelerator. What the hell, he thought, twisting the wheel. For once in a lifetime, take a risk and gamble. **CT**

*Trevor Hoyle is a writer and novelist based in Lancashire, England. His most recent novel is the environmental thriller *The Last Gasp*, published by Jo Fletcher Books (Quercus). His website is [www.trevorhoyle.com](http://www.trevorhoyle.com)*



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VICTIM: Janet Leigh, the star of the film, exits dramatically at the 45-minute mark.

*Ben McCann*

# Psycho turns 60

*Alfred Hitchcock's famous fright film broke all the rules as it started Hollywood's fascination with serial killers and slasher movies*

It's November 1959. Film director Alfred Hitchcock is at his commercial and critical peak after the successes of *Vertigo* (1958) and *North by Northwest* (1959). So what does he do next? A black-and-white made-for-TV movie hastily shot, with no big-name actors and a leading actress who takes a shower, and ... well, we'll come to that.

*Psycho* (1960) remains Hitch-

cock's most celebrated film. But it is really two films, glued together by the most iconic scene in cinema history.

Part one is a run-of-the-mill morality tale. Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) steals \$40,000 from her Phoenix employee, and goes on the run. Guilt-stricken, she pulls into a deserted motel and chats with the owner, Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins).

He seems friendly enough – he makes her sandwiches and talks fondly about his mother – and Marion resolves to return the money.

Part two is a whodunnit. Marion's sister (Vera Miles) and her lover (John Gavin) investigate her disappearance, and trace her steps back to the motel. Soon, they begin to have suspicions about Norman.

A few years earlier, Hitchcock had watched Henri-Georges

Clouzot's 1955 psychological masterpiece *Les Diaboliques* and sought out a similar project – a horrific thriller with a twist ending. He read Robert Bloch's novel *Psycho* – itself inspired by the real-life Wisconsin killer Ed Gein – and optioned the film rights.

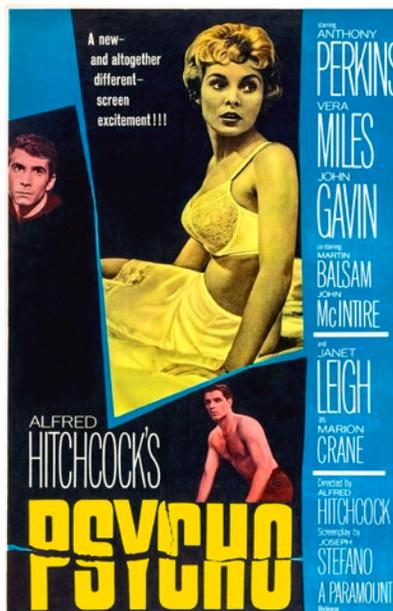
Audiences saw things in *Psycho* that had never been shown before on screen. A toilet flushing. A murderer who goes unpunished. A post-coital Leigh, lying on a bed, dressed only in white underwear, while Gavin stands topless over her.

All of Hitchcock's trademark obsessions are on show: voyeurism, the dominant matriarchal figure, the blonde heroine, the untrustworthy cop.

Over his career, Hitchcock had always flouted Hollywood's Production Code, those rigid rules that had been in place since the 1930s that prohibited on-screen nudity, sex and violence. Nowhere is Hitchcock's brazen censor-defying clearer than in *Psycho*'s "shower scene".

Hitchcock, the master of suspense, never actually shows knife slicing flesh. Everything is implied, through liberal doses of chocolate sauce, hacked watermelons, Bernard Herrmann's screeching violins, and Leigh's blood-curling screams.

**NO LATECOMERS:** Posters warned cinemagoers that they should see *Psycho* from the very beginning, or they wouldn't be allowed in.



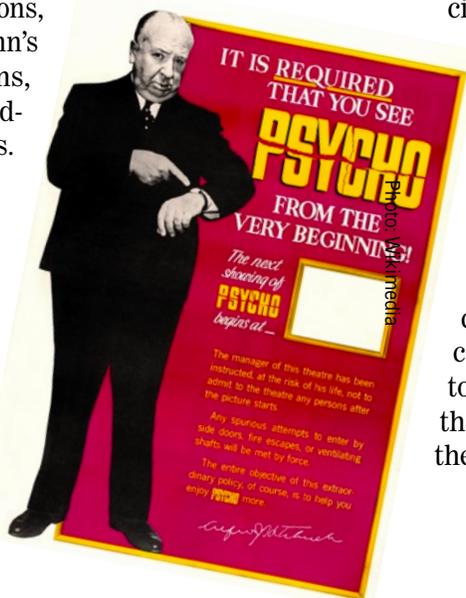
SCARY: The original poster for *Psycho*.

In one 60-second scene, Hitchcock shatters all the rules. It's the most famous of all bait and switches: you expect one thing, but get another. Up to that point, no film had killed off its lead character so early in the story (nowadays, such an audacious twist shows up everywhere, from *The Lion King* to *Games of Thrones*). As Leigh slides down the blinding white tiles, arm outstretched, a new kind of cinema is born: twisted, shocking, primal.

Hitchcock famously ordered cinemas to not

let any latecomers into screenings of *Psycho*, to keep the element of surprise.

Previously, cinema-goers could wander into a film midway through, watch the last half, and



then stick around for the restart to catch up on what they had missed. When your leading lady is butchered 45 minutes in, the film makes little sense if you arrive late – hence Hitchcock's decree.

While the reviews at the time of its cinema release were lukewarm, cinema as an "event", as a communal experience shared by hundreds of people in the dark, began. There were queues around the blocks in cities across America as word of mouth grew. Grossing US\$32 million (equivalent to A\$468 million today) off a budget of US\$800,000 (A\$12 million today), *Psycho* made Hitchcock a very wealthy man.

Other elements contributed to *Psycho*'s enduring influence. Saul Bass's opening credits, all intersecting lines and sans-serif titles, anticipate the film's fixation with duality and overlap.

Budget constraints meant that Bernard Herrmann could only rely on his orchestra's string section. Even people who have never seen the film instantly recognise his score.

And Anthony Perkins, typecast forever after as the nervous mother's boy with a dark secret, crafts a performance that is both sweetly disarming and deeply unsettling.

Its reputation has only grown since 1960. Critics and audiences remain transfixed by *Psycho*'s storytelling verve and its queasy tonal shifts (murder mystery to black comedy to horror).

Douglas Gordon's 24 *Psycho* (1993) video installation pays homage to every frame of the film.

Academics have had a field day too, from Raymond Durnat's lengthy micro-analysis to Slavoj Žižek's reading of Bates's house as

Photo: Wikimedia

Photo: Wikimedia

Photo: Wikimedia

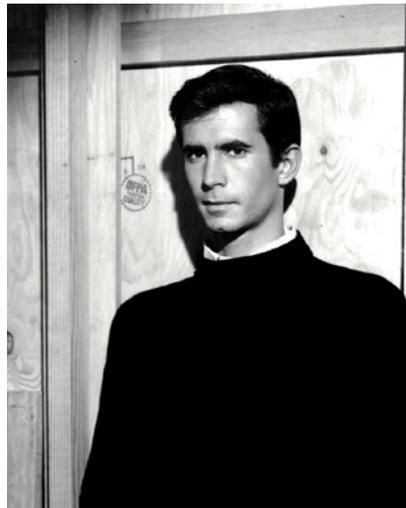
an illustration of Freud's concept of the id, ego and superego.

Three progressively sillier sequels were made, as well as a colour shot-for-shot remake by Gus van Sant in 1998. Brian De Palma's entire back catalogue pays homage to Hitchcock, with whole sections of *Sisters* (1972) to *Dressed to Kill* (1980) reworking *Psycho*'s delirious excesses.

*Psycho*'s box office success undoubtedly contributed to Hollywood's abiding fascination with true-crime stories, serial killers, and slasher films.

More recently, the TV prequel series *Bates Motel* ran for four seasons, deepening Norman's relationship with his mother and tracking his developing mental illness.

That series provides a set up for



**DANGEROUS:** Anthony Perkins in a publicity still from *Psycho* (left), and Freddie Highmore, who plays the Norman Bates role in the *Bates Motel* TV prequel.

the events at the Bates Motel. Sixty years on, the setting for *Psycho* continues to exert such a pulsating thrill, even as we watch from behind the sofa.

**CT**

*Ben McCann is Associate Professor of French Studies, at the University of Adelaide. This article first appeared at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)*

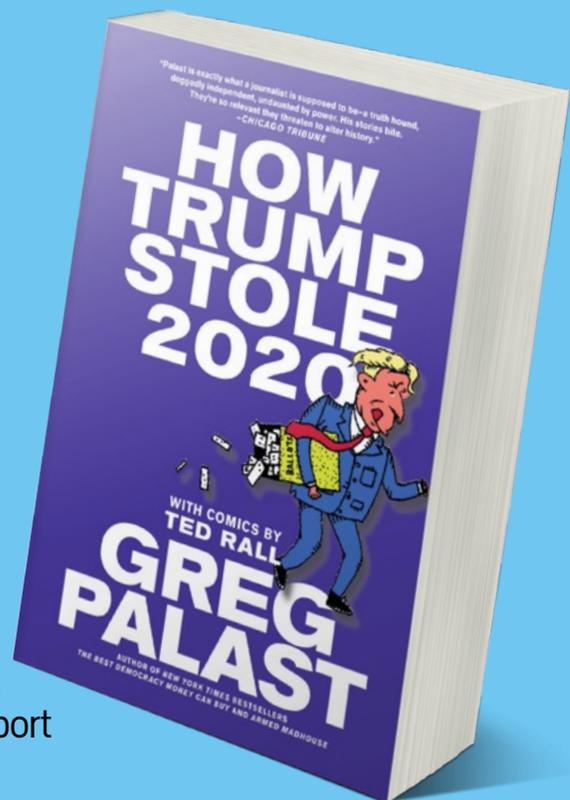
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# HOW TRUMP STOLE 2020

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Vijay Prashad

# The international wrecking ball crews

*The United States and the UK have demonstrate their disregard for international institutions and for international law*

On January 9, 2020, Ambassador Karen Pierce – the United Kingdom’s permanent representative to the United Nations – spoke at a meeting on the UN Charter. “Nobody could accuse the founding members of a lack of ambition when they drafted the Charter”, Ambassador Pierce said, “But at times, the United Nations has often suffered from an almost unbridgeable gap between the power of its central vision and the actual actions it has been able to carry out”. Ambassador Pierce said that she did not just mean that the United Nations’ agencies had failed, but that the member states had failed as well. The 1945 charter, she said, “makes very clear the emphasis on states to cooperate, to harmonise actions to attain common ends”.

Ambassador Kelly Craft, US ambassador to the UN, spoke at the same meeting. She praised the charter and called upon the member states of the UN to bring its values into the world. However, Ambassador Craft said, “On far too many occasions, we have seen nations that are parties to the

Charter suppress human rights, undermine the sovereignty of their neighbours, harm their own citizens, and even deny the right of other nations to exist”.

These are powerful words from Ambassadors Pierce and Craft, but they are hollow. They mean nothing. Over the past few decades, Western countries – such as the United Kingdom, but more so the United States of America – have flouted international laws and failed to even try to uphold the high-minded principles of the charter. Most recently, the United States has attempted to muzzle the International Criminal Court (ICC) as it has pursued a perfectly reasonable investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan; and the United Kingdom has denied Venezuela its sovereign right to gold held in the Bank of England. In both cases, the US and the UK have undermined the sovereignty of nations and mutilated international law. The lawlessness of the governments of Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Donald Trump are better explored through their actual practices than through the high-minded speeches

of their ambassadors to the United Nations.

## **Suffocation of the International Criminal Court**

In March, the International Criminal Court gave permission to ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda to proceed with an investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan (committed by all sides, including the United States). The United States government was furious. In June, Trump issued Executive Order 13928 on “Blocking Property of Certain Persons Associated With the International Criminal Court”. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Adviser Robert O’Brien, Defense Secretary Mark Esper, and Attorney General William Barr announced that the US government would target ICC officials involved in the inquiry. Visas for the United States would be denied not only to these officials, but to their families as well.

The UN special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers – Diego García-Sayán (a former Peruvian minister) – released a sharp statement defending the ICC. “The implementation

of such policies by the US has the sole aim of exerting pressure on an institution whose role is to seek justice against crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression”, he said. The US attack on the ICC prosecutors was so aggressive that García-Sayán said that this was a “further step in pressuring the ICC and coercing its officials in the context of independent and objective investigations and impartial judicial proceedings”. In other words, the United States was using its power to suffocate the ICC.

Earlier, in May 2020, Secretary of State Pompeo condemned the ICC, saying it was a “political body, not a judicial institution”. That was in light of the ICC move to investigate Israel for its violations of international law regarding the occupation of Palestine. If the ICC proceeds with any such investigation, Pompeo said, the United States will “exact consequences”. This is gangland talk.

### **Suffocation of Venezuela**

Venezuela’s Central Bank has \$1.8-billion in gold in the Bank of England. This money is owned by the government of Venezuela; this is not contested by anyone. When Venezuela sought access to its gold, the Bank of England refused to honour the request. In May 2020, the government of Nicolás Maduro took the Bank of England to court, asking the British judicial system to honour the contract it made with the Central Bank of Venezuela. President Maduro said that his government wanted to sell the gold and send the funds to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which would buy necessary supplies for the country

to fight COVID-19. The UK High Court has now ruled that Venezuela cannot access its own gold.

The finding is entirely political. Judge Nigel Teare, on behalf of the UK High Court, says that the government of the United Kingdom does not recognise President Maduro, but instead the UK government had “unequivocally recognised opposition leader Juan Guaidó as president”. This was exactly the argument made in March by the International Monetary Fund – pressured by the US Treasury Department – to deny Venezuela’s request for emergency financing. Further, Judge Teare said there is “no room for recognition of Mr. Guaidó as *de jure* president and of Mr. Maduro as *de facto* president”. This last point is essential, because it means that even if Maduro controls the institutions of the presidency – as he does – the United Kingdom will not extend this to provide Maduro with legal recognition. But how the court decided to endow Guaidó with *de jure* or legal recognition is not self-evident.

Juan Guaidó has never contested the post of the presidency in any election, nor has he received a mandate to be the president; he anointed himself in January 2019. Guaidó’s claim was hastily recognised by the United States, which has long played a role in trying to unseat Maduro from the presidency and roll back the gains made by the Bolivarian Revolution inaugurated by Maduro’s predecessor Hugo Chávez. It is true that about 50 countries around the world – most of them US allies – have said that they recognise Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela, although these are a minority among the 193 United Nations member

states; most countries in the world recognise Maduro as president.

Judge Teare’s statement implies that the UK High Court recognises a head of government based on the policy of the UK government. In other words, the UK government – which has no official role in the election of the Venezuelan president – has the power to control who is the president of a sovereign country, namely Venezuela. What decision the UK government makes, therefore, is far more important than the views of the people of Venezuela.

It is an odd business. The Venezuelan ambassador to the UK is Rocío del Valle Maneiro, who has been appointed by President Maduro. This should be enough proof that the UK sees the government of President Maduro as the legitimate government; but this was not enough for Judge Teare.

In both the case of the sanctions against the ICC and the theft of Venezuela’s gold, the United States and the UK demonstrate their disregard for international institutions and for international law. This kind of lawlessness is precisely the opposite of everything Ambassadors Pierce and Craft said about the UN Charter, a document of immense gravity. Better to follow the charter than talk about it with empty words. **CT**

*Vijay Prashad is an historian, editor and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at Globetrotter, a project of the Independent Media Institute, which produced this article. Prashad is the chief editor of LeftWord Books and the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.*

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C. J. Hopkins

# Welcome to the new totalitarianism

*It isn't traditional totalitarianism, with a dictator and a one-party system, and so on. It is subtler and more insidious than that*

It was always going to come to this ... mobs of hysterical, hate-drunk brownshirts hunting down people not wearing masks and trying to get them fired from their jobs, “no mask, no service” signs outside stores, security staff stopping the mask-less from entering, paranoid pod people pointing and shrieking at the sight of mask-less shoppers in their midst, goon squads viciously attacking and arresting them ...

Welcome to the Brave New Normal.

And it isn't just the Maskenpflicht-Sturmabteilung. The new official narrative is omnipresent. The corporate media are pumping out hysteria about “Covid-19 hospitalisations” (ie, anyone admitted to a hospital for anything who tested positive for the coronavirus) and “major incidents” (ie, people at the beach).

Police are manning makeshift social-distancing-monitoring watchtowers in London. There are propaganda posters and billboards everywhere, repeating the same neo-Goebbelsian slogans, reinforcing the manufactured mass hysteria. Dissent and nonconformity are

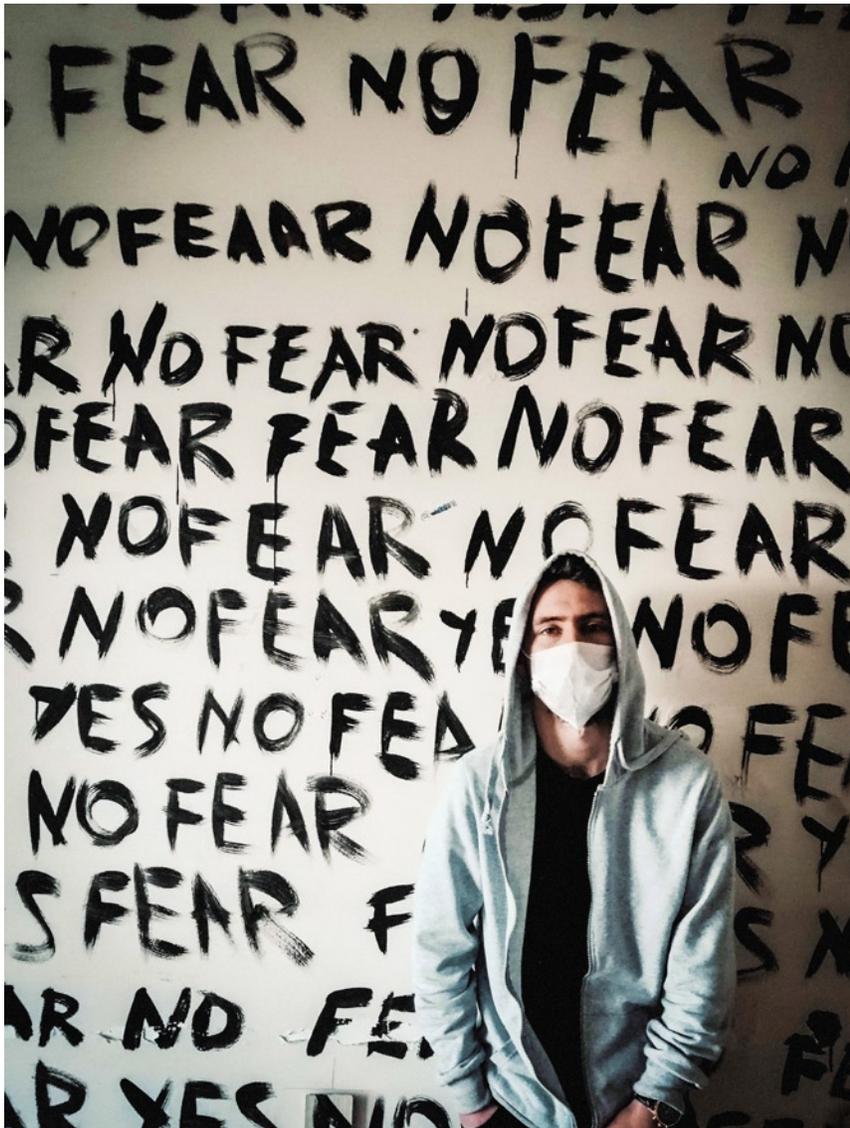
being pathologised, “diagnosed” as psychopathy and paranoia. Mandatory vaccinations are coming.

You didn't think they were kidding, did you, when they started introducing the Brave New Normal official narrative back in March? They told us, clearly, what was coming. They told us life was going to change ... forever. They locked us down inside our homes. They ordered churches and synagogues closed. They ordered the police to abuse and arrest us if we violated their arbitrary orders. They closed the schools, parks, beaches, restaurants, cafés, theatres, clubs, anywhere that people gather. They ripped children out of their mother's arms, beat and arrested other mothers for the crime of “wearing their masks improperly”, dragged mask-less passengers off of public buses, gratuitously beat and arrested people for not “social-distancing” on the sidewalk, shackled people with ankle monitors, and intimidated everyone with robots and drones. They outlawed protests, then hunted down people attending them and harassed them at their homes. They started tracking everyone's

contacts and movements. They drafted new “emergency” laws to allow them to forcibly quarantine people. They did this openly. They publicized it. It's not like they were hiding anything.

No, they told us exactly what was coming, and advised us to shut up and follow orders. Tragically, most people have done just that. In the space of four months, GloboCap has successfully imposed totalitarianism – pathologised totalitarianism – on societies all across the world. It isn't traditional totalitarianism, with a dictator and a one-party system, and so on. It is subtler and more insidious than that. But it is totalitarianism nonetheless.

GloboCap could not have achieved this without the approval (or at least the acquiescence) of the vast majority of the masses. The coronavirus mass hysteria was a masterstroke of propaganda, but propaganda isn't everything. No one is really fooled by propaganda, or not for long, in any event. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari noted in the opening of *Anti-Oedipus*:



“The masses were not innocent dupes. At a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they wanted fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for.”

I am not going to try to account for the “perversion of the desire of the masses” here in this essay, but I do want to dig into the new pathologised totalitarianism a little bit.

Now, I’m going to assume that you understand that the official “apocalyptic pandemic” narrative

is predicated on propaganda, wild speculation, and mass hysteria, and that by now you are aware that we are dealing with a virus that causes mild to moderate symptoms (or absolutely no symptoms at all) in 95 percent of those infected, and that over 99.5 percent survive ... thus, clearly, no cause for widespread panic or justification for the totalitarian “emergency measures” that have been imposed. I am also going to assume that you watched as GloboCap switched off the “deadly pandemic” to accom-

modate the BLM protests, then switched it back on as soon as they subsided, and that you noted how their propaganda shifted to “cases” when the death count finally became a little too embarrassing to continue to hype.

So, I won’t waste your time debunking the hysteria. Let’s talk pathologised totalitarianism.

The genius of pathologised totalitarianism is like that old joke about the Devil ... his greatest trick was convincing us that he doesn’t exist. Pathologised totalitarianism appears to emanate from nowhere, and everywhere, simultaneously; thus, technically, it does not exist. It cannot exist, because no one is responsible for it, because everyone is. Mass hysteria is its lifeblood. It feeds on existential fear. “Science” is its rallying cry. Not actual science, not provable facts, but “Science” as a kind of deity whose Name is invoked to silence heretics, or to ease the discomfort of the cognitive dissonance that results from desperately trying to believe the absurdities of the official narrative.

The other genius of it (from a GloboCap viewpoint) is that it is inexhaustible, endlessly recyclable. Unlike other official enemies, the “deadly virus” could be any virus, any pathogen whatsoever. All they have to do from now on is “discover” some “novel” microorganism that is highly contagious (or that mimics some other microorganism that we already have), and wave it in front of people’s faces. Then they can crank up the Fear Machine, and start projecting hundreds of millions of deaths if everyone doesn’t do exactly as

they're told. They can run this schtick ... well, pretty much forever, anytime the working classes get restless, or an unauthorised president gets elected, or just for the sheer sadistic fun of it.

Look, I don't mean to be depressing, but seriously, spend an hour on the Internet, or talk to one of your hysterical friends that wants to make mask-wearing mandatory, permanently. This is the mentality of the Brave New Normal ... irrationally paranoid and authoritarian. So, no, the future isn't looking very bright for anyone not prepared to behave as if the world were one big infectious disease ward.

I've interacted with a number of extremely paranoid corona-totalitarians recently (just as a kind of social experiment). They behave exactly like members of a cult. When challenged with facts and basic logic, first, they flood you with media propaganda and hysterical speculation from "medical experts." Then, after you debunk that nonsense, they attempt to emotionally manipulate you by sharing their heartbreaking personal accounts of the people their therapists' brother-in-laws' doctors had to helplessly watch as they "died in agony" when their lungs and hearts mysteriously exploded. Then, after you don't bite down on that, they start hysterically shrieking paranoia at you ("JUST WAIT UNTIL THEY INTUBATE YOU!" ... "KEEP YOUR SPITTLE AWAY FROM ME!") and barking



## After all, it's just a harmless piece of cloth ...

orders and slogans at you ("JUST WEAR THE GODDAMN MASK, YOU BABY!" ... "NO SHOES, NO SHIRT, NO MASK, NO SERVICE!")

Which ... OK, that would be kind of funny (or terribly sad), if these paranoid people were not just mouthpieces echoing the voice of the official power (ie, GloboCap) that is transforming what is left of society into a paranoid, pathologised, totalitarian nightmare right before our eyes. They're kind of like the "woman in red" in *The Matrix*. When you are talking to them, you're not talking to them. You're talking to the agents. You're talking to the machines. Try it sometime. You'll see what I mean. It's like talking to a single algorithm that is running in millions of people's brains.

I can't lie to you. I'm not very hopeful. No one who understands the attraction (ie, the seduction) of totalitarianism is. Much as we may not like to admit it, it is exhilarating, and liberating, being part of the mob, surrendering the burden of personal

autonomy and individual responsibility, fusing with a fanatical "movement" that is ushering in a new "reality" backed by the sheer brute force of the state ... or the transnational global capitalist empire.

It is irresistible, that attraction, to most of us. The chance to be a part of something like that, and to unleash one's hatred on those who refuse to go along with the new religion ... to publicly ridicule them, to humiliate them, to segregate them from normal society, to hunt them down and get them

fired from their jobs, to cheer as police abuse and arrest them, to diagnose them as "abnormal" and "inferior," these social deviants, these subhuman "others," who dare to challenge the authority of the Party, or the Church, or the State, or the Reich, or Science.

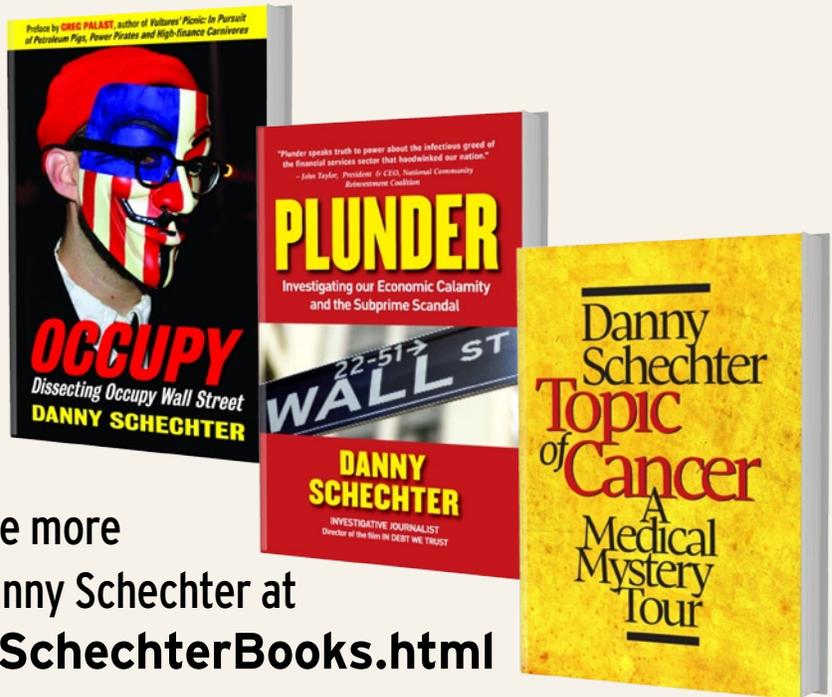
Plus, in the eyes of GloboCap (and its millions of fanatical, slogan-chanting followers), such non-mask-wearing deviants are dangerous. They are like a disease ... an infestation. A sickness in the social body. If they refuse to conform, they will have to be dealt with, quarantined, or something like that.

Or they can just surrender to the Brave New Normal, and stop acting like babies, and wear a goddamn mask.

After all, it's just a harmless piece of cloth ... **CT**

*C. J. Hopkins is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. He can be reached at [www.cjhopkins.com](http://www.cjhopkins.com) or [www.consentfactory.org](http://www.consentfactory.org).*

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*John W. Whitehead*

# America, you've been blacklisted!

*How McCarthyism has been refashioned for a new age*

For those old enough to have lived through the McCarthy era, there is a whiff of something in the air that reeks of the heightened paranoia, finger-pointing, fear-mongering, totalitarian tactics that were hallmarks of the 1950s.

Back then, it was the government – spearheaded by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee – working in tandem with private corporations and individuals to blacklist Americans suspected of being communist sympathisers.

By the time the witch hunts carried out by federal and state investigative agencies drew to a close, thousands of individuals (the vast majority of them innocent any crime whatsoever) had been accused of communist ties, investigated, subpoenaed and blacklisted. Regarded as bad risks, the accused were blacklisted, and struggled to secure employment. The witch hunt ruined careers, resulting in suicides, and tightened immigration to exclude alleged subversives.

Seventy years later, the vitriol, fear-mongering and knee-jerk intolerance associated with McCa-

rthy's tactics are once again being deployed in a free-for-all attack by those on both the political Left and Right against anyone who, in daring to think for themselves, subscribes to ideas or beliefs that run counter to the government's or mainstream thought.

It doesn't even seem to matter what the issue is anymore (racism, Confederate monuments, Donald Trump, COVID-19, etc): modern-day activists are busily tearing down monuments, demonising historic figures, boycotting corporations for perceived political transgressions, and using their bully pulpit to terrorise the rest of the country into kowtowing to their demands

All the while, the American police state continues to march inexorably forward. This is how fascism, which silences all dissenting views, prevails. The silence is becoming deafening.

After years of fighting in and out of the courts to keep their 87-year-old name, the NFL's Washington Redskins have bowed to public pressure and will change

their name and team logo to avoid causing offense. The new name, not yet announced, aims to honour both the military and Native Americans.

Eleanor Holmes Norton, a delegate to the House of Representatives who supports the name change, believes the team's move "reflects the present climate of intolerance to names, statues, figments of our past that are racist in nature or otherwise imply racism [and] are no longer tolerated".

Present climate of intolerance, indeed.

Yet it wasn't a heightened racial conscience that caused the Redskins to change their brand. It was the money. The team caved after its corporate sponsors including FedEx, PepsiCo, Nike and Bank of America threatened to pull their funding

So much for that US Supreme Court victory preventing the government from censoring trademarked names it considers distasteful or scandalous. Who needs a government censor when the American people are already doing such a great job at censoring themselves and each other, right?

Now there's a push underway to boycott Goya Foods after its CEO, Robert Unanue, praised President Trump during a press conference to announce Goya's donation of a million cans of Goya chickpeas and a million other food products to American food banks as part of the president's Hispanic Prosperity Initiative.

Mind you, Unanue – whose grandfather emigrated to the US from Spain – also praised the Obamas when they were in office, but that kind of equanimity doesn't carry much weight in this climate of intolerance.

Not to be outdone, the censors are also taking aim at *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about Atticus Finch, a white lawyer in the Jim Crow South who defends a black man falsely accused of rape. Sixty years after its debut, the book remains a powerful testament to moral courage in the face of racial bigotry and systemic injustice, told from the point of view of a child growing up in the South, but that's not enough for the censors. They want to axe the book– along with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* – from school reading curriculums because of the presence of racial slurs that could make students feel “humiliated or marginalised”.

Never mind that the N-word makes a regular appearance in hip-hop songs. The prevailing attitude seems to be that it's okay to use the N-word as long as the person saying the word is not white. Rapper Kendrick Lamar “would like white America to let black people exclusively have the word”.

Talk about a double standard. This is also the overlooked part



**TRUTH TO POWER:** Newsman Ed Murrow warned of the damage McCarthy was doing to the American people.

of how oppression becomes systemic: it comes about as a result of a combined effort between the populace, the corporations and the government.

McCarthyism worked the same way. What started with Joseph McCarthy's headline-grabbing scare tactics in the 1950s about Communist infiltrators of American society snowballed into a devastating witch hunt once corporations and the American people caught the fever.

McCarthyism was a contagion, like the plague, spreading like wildfire among people too fearful or weak or gullible or paranoid or greedy or ambitious to denounce it for what it was: an opportunistic scare tactic engineered to make the government more powerful.

The parallels to the present movement cannot be understated.

The contagion of fear that McCarthy helped spread with the help of government agencies, corporations and the power elite is still poisoning the well, whitewashing our history, turning citi-

zen against citizen, and stripping us of our rights.

What we desperately need is the kind of resolve embodied by Edward R. Murrow, the most-respected newsman of his day.

On March 9, 1954, Murrow dared to speak truth to power about the damage McCarthy was inflicting on the American people. His message remains a timely warning for our age: “We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine; and remember that we are not descended from fearful men. Not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate, and to defend causes that were for the moment unpopular”.

America is approaching another reckoning right now, one that will pit our commitment to freedom principles against a level of fear-mongering that is being used to wreak havoc on everything in its path.

The outcome rests, as always, with “we the people.” As Murrow said to his staff before the historic March 9 broadcast: “No one can terrorise a whole nation, unless we are all his accomplices.”

Take heed, America.

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, this may be your last warning. **CT**

*John W. Whitehead, a constitutional attorney, is the author and founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His new book Battlefield America: The War on the American People is available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Whitehead can be contacted at [johnw@rutherford.org](mailto:johnw@rutherford.org).*

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Lee Camp

# Connecting dates on the road from peace

*Either these landmark stories that destroy every chance of peace are false, or peace has exceedingly, ridiculously, laughably, bad timing*

This is not a column defending Donald Trump. Across my career I have said more positive words about the scolex family of intestinal tapeworms than I have said about Donald Trump. (Scolex have been shown to read more.)

No, this is a column about context. When the *New York Times* reports anonymous sources from the intelligence community say Russia paid Taliban fighters to kill American soldiers, context is very important.

Some of that context is that Mike Pompeo said, “I was the CIA director – We lied, we cheated, we stole. We had entire training courses”. So we know for certain that US intelligence agencies lie to you and me. We saw it with WMD, and we might be seeing it again now.

*But that’s not the context I’m referring to.*

We could talk about the context of the fact that the Taliban does not need to be paid to kill American soldiers because their entire goal for the past 20 years has been to kill American soldiers. Paying them a bounty would be like offering the guy sleeping with your wife

20 bucks to sleep with your wife.

*But that’s not the context I’m referring to.*

We could talk about the fact that the US has been funding the Taliban for years! Yes, we fund them, sometimes arm them, and then fight them. This is barely a secret. So for all intents and purposes, the US does the same thing our corporate media is now accusing Russia of doing (with no proof).

*But that’s not the context I’m referring to.*

No, the context I’m referring to is how our military industrial complex (with the help of our ruling elite and our corporate media) have stopped Trump from pushing us toward the brink of peace. ... Yes, the brink of peace.

Now, I’m not implying Trump is some kind of hippy peacenik. (He would look atrocious with no bra and flowers in his hair.) No, the military under Trump has dropped more bombs than under Obama, and that’s impressive since Obama dropped more bombs than ever before.

However, in certain areas of the world, Trump has threatened to create peace. Sure, he’s doing it for his own ego and because he thinks his base wants it, but whatever the reason, he has put forward plans or policies that go against the military industrial complex and the establishment war-hawks (which is 95 percent of the establishment).

And each time this has happened, he is quickly thwarted, usually with hilarious propaganda. (Well, hilarious to you and me. Apparently believable to people at the *New York Times* and former CIA intern Anderson Cooper.)

I know four things for sure in life. Paper beats rock. Rock beats scissors. Scissors beat paper. And propaganda beats peace. All one has to do is look at a calendar.

Trump has essentially threatened to create peace or pull US troops out of a war zone in three countries – North Korea, Afghanistan, and Syria. Let’s start with Syria.

**April 4, 2018:** President Trump orders the Pentagon to plan to withdraw US troops from Syria.

This cannot be allowed because it goes against the US imperial



**WHERE IT BEGAN:** President Ronald Reagan meets Afghan freedom fighters in the Oval Office on February 2, 1983, to discuss what action should be taken against Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan.

plan. So what happens within days of Trump's order?

**April 7, 2018:** Reports surface of a major chemical weapons attack in Douma, Syria.

What are the odds that within days of Trump telling the Pentagon to withdraw, Bashar al-Assad decides to use the one weapon that will guarantee American forces continue attacking him? Assad may not be a chess player, but I also don't think he ate that many paint chips as a kid. And sure enough, over the past two years we've now heard from four whistleblowers at the Organization for The Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) saying the so-called chemical at-

tack didn't happen. (Notice that the number "four" is even bigger than the numbers "one", "two", and "three".)

But establishment propaganda beats peace any day and twice on Sunday. The false story succeeded in keeping America entrenched in Syria.

Let's move on to North Korea. As you surely know, Donald Trump "threatened" to create peace with the hermetic country. Simply saying he would attempt such a thing sent weapons contractor stocks tumbling – one of the many reasons peace had to be stopped.

**Feb 27, 2019:** Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un meet in Vietnam.

The summit fails, and reports begin emerging that Mike Pompeo and John Bolton succeeded in napping any progress.

**March 15, 2019:** Pompeo and Bolton deny derailing North Korea nuclear talks.

From the *Nation*, "There were reports from South Korea that the presence at the talks of John Bolton, Trump's aggressively hawkish national-security adviser, helped torpedo the talks".

But just destroying the peace talks wasn't enough. The American people needed some good, sol-

id propaganda to reassert the idea that Kim Jung Un was a dastardly bloodthirsty dictator.

**March 30, 2019:** The *New York Times* reports North Korea executed and purged their top nuclear negotiators.

Yes, apparently Kim Jung Un must've fed his top diplomats to his top alligators. Then, two months later we learn...

**June 4, 2019:** The fate of the North Korean negotiator "executed" after the failed summit "grows murkier" with new reports that he's still alive.

One would have to say that his being alive does indeed make the report that he's dead "murkier". Within the next day or two it becomes quite clear the diplomat is very much in the land of the living. But the propaganda put forward by the *New York Times* and many other outlets has already done its job.

Far more people saw the reports that the man had been murdered than saw the later retraction. And to this day, the *Times* has not removed the initial article saying he was executed. Exactly how wrong does propaganda have to be, to warrant an online deletion? Dead versus alive is a pretty binary designation.

**A**nd now we get to the outrage du jour, and it's a bombshell!

Bounties!

**May 26, 2020:** Pentagon com-

## ***One would have to say that his being alive does indeed make the report that he's dead "murkier"***

manders begin drawing up options for an early Afghanistan troop withdrawal, following Trump's request.

**June 16, 2020:** "President Donald Trump confirmed in public for the first time his administration's plans to cut the US military troop presence in Germany from its current level of roughly 35,000 to a reduced force of 25,000." – ForeignPolicy.com

**June 26, 2020:** The *New York Times* reports Russia paid the Taliban to attack US troops. (According to anonymous sources from an intelligence community that proudly admits they lie to us all the time, sometimes just to amuse themselves.)

When this story first came out, I thought, "You know, Trump has been stopped from withdrawing troops in the past by ridiculous propaganda that seems to land like a giant turd right after he announces his intentions. Maybe I'll check what happened in the days preceding this jaw-dropping story",

So, just days after Trump goes against the military industrial complex and against the ruling establishment by announcing he'll be withdrawing about a third of our troops from Germany, and just weeks after announcing an early withdrawal from Afghanistan, a seemingly mind-blowing story drops about Russia paying the Taliban to kill American troops.

This serves to remind everyone what a threat Russia is (so we better put more troops in Germany!) and serves to keep us in Afghanistan (because screw those Russian-funded Taliban!).

Look, I'm not saying Trump is a hero or a great guy or even a man who wants peace. I'm not even saying he's a man. He very well may be a giant blood-sucking leech in a human skin suit. (A poorly tailored human skin suit.) All I'm saying is the timing doesn't add up. Either these landmark stories that destroy every chance of peace are false (in fact we've already proven two out of three of them are false), or peace has exceedingly, ridiculously, laughably, bad timing. **CT**

**Lee Camp** is the host of the hit comedy news show "Redacted Tonight." His new book "Bullet Points and Punch Lines" is available at [LeeCampBook.com](http://LeeCampBook.com) and his stand-up comedy special can be streamed for free at [www.LeeCampAmerican.com](http://www.LeeCampAmerican.com).

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# Andrew Fischer's Random Thoughts

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## Clickbait

In the never-ending quest for advertising revenue, websites have offered small images with accompanying incongruous text. Some are so outrageous that the urge to click on them is irresistible. They even affect me – “Mr. Impervious to Advertising.” Sometimes I just have to see what nonsense lies behind one. How will the clickbait tie its photo to the caption? Here are a few:

**Picture this:** a photo of a young woman dipping a plate in a swimming pool. The caption reads: “All She Did Was Drag Her Plate Across the Pool. What Happened Next Blew My Mind”. I could hardly wait to see what exactly blew the copywriter’s mind! The anticipation, the excitement! What could it be!?... Drum roll, please... trumpets.... Who would have guessed? It turns out she created vortices and shadows in the water – and they moved!... Okay, it’s a mildly interesting physics demonstration, but mind-blowing? Only if your mind was already half blown away, I’d argue.

**Here’s another:** a picture of an obviously pregnant young woman on a hospital bed, flanked by two nurses. The caption: “This Girl Didn’t Know What’s Inside Her, Not Until They Cut Off Her Pants!” Shocking!” I can take a guess, but let’s see what really was inside her.... It’s a... wait for it... it’s a...

it’s a giant tapeworm! Just pulling your leg, dear reader, it was actually a baby. Apparently the girl skipped school the day they studied the facts of life. Or maybe she thought she was only “wrestling” with her boyfriend. Too bad they couldn’t save the pants.

**One more:** a man holds a heavy-looking rock in his hands. The caption: “He Thought It Was Bigfoot’s Skull, But Then Experts Told Him THIS!” What could it be? A 70-pound potato? Nope, it was just a rock, according to a university professor of geoscience. The Bigfoot enthusiast’s reply? “When you actually see it, you can’t help but see that it’s a face”. Interestingly, I had the same thought when I first saw the man in the moon.

Now I’m off to find out “What Prince George Is Called at Preschool!” Could it be... gasp!... “George”?

## Toothy subject

Why do we need so many varieties of toothpaste? Colgate alone has 52 on its website as of June 10. A small sampling of variations: Zero (with nothing artificial, unlike their other offerings), Charcoal (of dubious value), Hemp Seed Oil (the new “hot” additive), Deep Clean, Daily Repair, Enamel Health, Max Fresh Knockout, Max Fresh Shockwave, Max Clean Smartfoam, Max Fresh with Mini Breath Strips, Max

White with Mini-Bright Strips and Triple Action. Since the main ingredients are always the same – fluoride and abrasives – I wonder if the small amounts of other ingredients actually have much of an effect. If they do, why not combine Deep Clean, Daily Repair and Enamel Health? I think I’ll stick with Ultrabrite. Oops, that’s one of Colgate’s products, too.

## Bad humour

Some recent “comedy” found on the web suggests homo sapiens is doomed. Ready? “The irony of a sign stating ‘No thumbtacks in wall’ while being hung up with thumbtacks is just too funny! And what’s even funnier is that it seems like the person who posted the original sign is absolutely clueless of the irony. So, they followed up with a ‘No sticky notes on signs’ in aggressive ALL-CAPS letters, when someone tried to point out their own paradox. Yikes! But then, the office trolls just couldn’t hold back, so poked even more fun at the irony with their follow-up sticky notes. Talk about satire!” <https://everydaykoala.com/the-office-can-be-wild> **CT**

*Andrew Fischer’s a collection of short stories, Purgastories, is available at amazon.com. He also designs board games, which can be downloaded at no charge from [www.boardgamegeek.com](http://www.boardgamegeek.com).*

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