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*Magazine*

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**Gun Control**

**Abortion Wars**

**Millennial Burnout**

**Long Beach Cafe Scene**

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ISSUE 72  
NUMBER 4  
VOLUME 23



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# AMASS

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# AMASS

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"CITIZEN SHAYNE"

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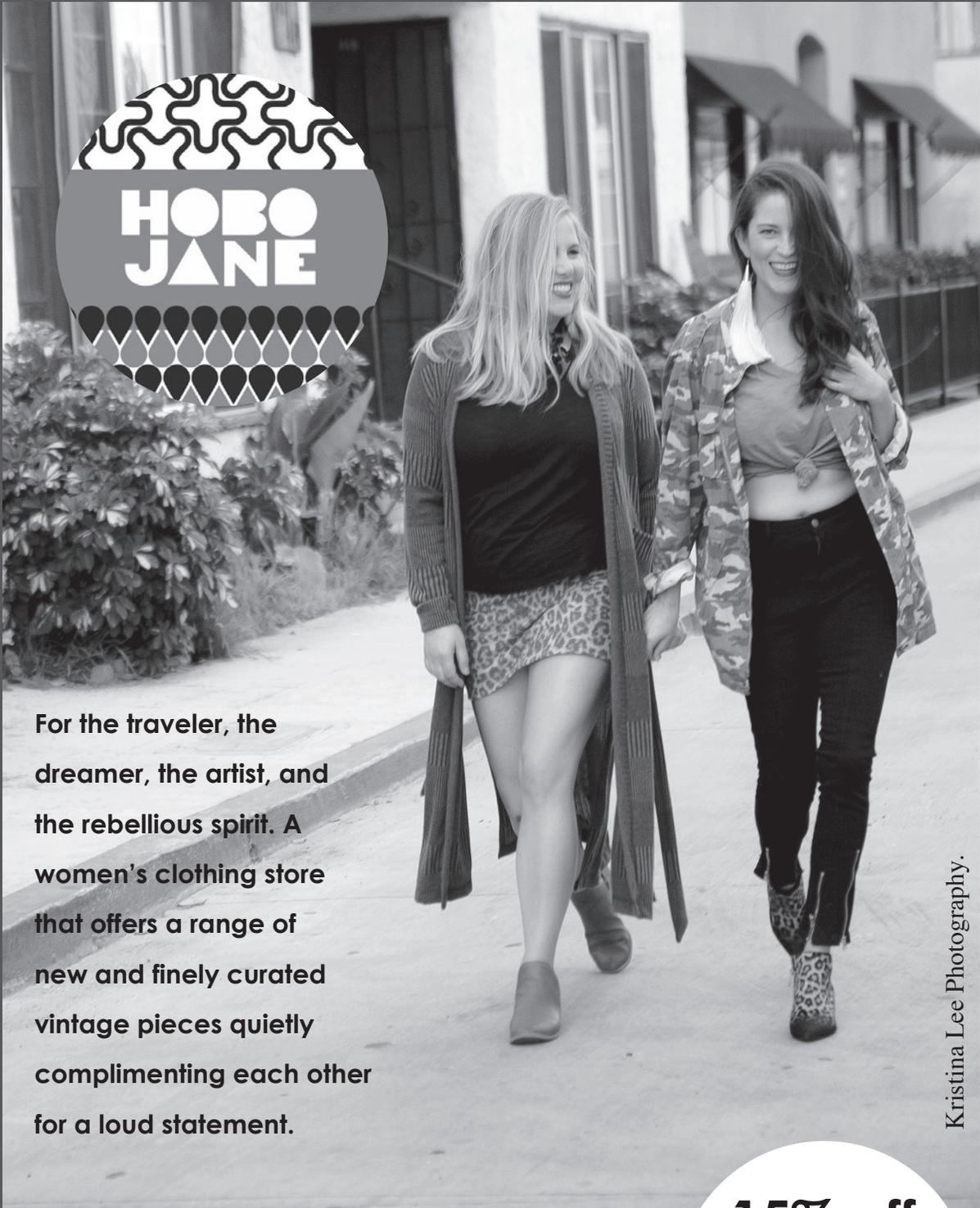


## "Citizen Shayne"

Illustration by Caroline Quach. Cover design by Heli Swensson

The Colonial Bakery and Donuts is on the corner of 4th and Pacific just across from the train tracks, the border between east and west Long Beach, the last stop before downtown transitions to a checkered maze of re-designed eateries and boutiques. The remaking of downtown over the past several years has transformed gathering places into hubs for chatting about dinner plans and the best shopping deals, making cafes in some older sense where locals commune to spout the wisdom of the day---like the Birdcage Café, a mere stone's throw from the Colonial---nearly extinct. Given a dearth of such throwback spaces, it seems only natural that other ones have taken over their function. A contingent of locals arrives early at the Colonial most every day to mull over the banalities of existence. The conversation is muted for the most part but yeasts with the events of the day at the initiative mostly of Al Shayne who's lived in the same building a few blocks away for twenty years. He doesn't remember much about the political waves of the late 1960s---his political consciousness erupted in the mid-to-late 1980s---but his take on the foibles of the contemporary world is largely shaped by that era.

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Kristina Lee Photography.

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## CITIZEN SHAYNE

JOHN O'KANE

The May 1968 French "revolution" began on a University of Paris campus with students jawing over croissants about the outdated curriculum, and this time it might very well start in a Long Beach donut shop where the children of that era gobble up the lore about our misdirected society over glazed donut holes.

The Colonial Bakery and Donuts is on the corner of 4th and Pacific just across from the train tracks, the border between east and west Long Beach, the last stop before downtown transitions to a checkered maze of re-designed eateries and boutiques. The remaking of downtown over the past several years has transformed gathering places into hubs for chatting about dinner plans and the best shopping deals, making cafes in some older sense where locals commune to spout the wisdom of the day---like the Birdcage Café, a mere stone's throw from the Colonial---nearly extinct. Given a dearth of such throwback spaces, it seems only natural that other ones have taken over their function.

A contingent of locals arrives early at the Colonial most every day to mull over the banalities of existence. The conversation is muted for the most part but yeasts with the events of the day at the initiative mostly of Al Shayne who's lived in the same building a few blocks away for twenty years. He doesn't remember much about the political waves of the late 1960s---his political consciousness erupted in the mid-to-late 1980s---but his take on the foibles of the contemporary world is largely shaped by that era. I first met Al a few years ago when he approached me with comments about a story we printed from Tom Hayden about the 2016 election. He was engaged about its content and began contacting the author. We've been breezing about the state of things ever since.

Though approaching his 88th birthday, Al is as insightful and articulate as any citizen in their thirties. He evokes the enthusiasm and wisdom of one who's directly experienced the contradictions of our world---not gaining his awareness solely through books first---and is privy to its workings. His background as a laborer and craftsman,

as well as electronics inspector for the LA County Department of Parks and Recreation, speaks to this. His perspectives on the world grew through this experience and led to his profession as a free-lance writer, which began in the late 90s. He's a citizen in the great American tradition consummated by Walt Whitman: an insightful critic of our institutions but a passionately patriotic believer in their potential. He served extended stints in both the Navy and Air Force.

On this day Al's inner circle is present, strung out along a table in the corner: Bob Miller, Chuck Terry, Bob Dziejewit, and Simon. Al sits against the western wall, his familiar roost, and feeds us provocative morsels. Jennifer tends the doughbar, her warm welcome unsullied by a touch screen.

"The whole problem we're having now...the whole problem with the system is greed, the money that the political scientists have and use to control us," he blurts in response to my opening volley.

"You mean the power brokers...those who really run the system, not just the politicians from each party?"

"Yeah...those behind the scenes with the power and the money who pull the strings."

"Not the politicians?"

"No...they're only their pawns."

"You mean something like the 'deep state'... the career technical and political class that's always influencing decisions?"

"Yes, but it's those outside of government... in the private sector who everyone has to answer to."

"Like the Robber Barrons in the old days, the Rockefellers and others from that era...or today the Koch brothers or...Sheldon Adelson or...George Soros?"

"And...many more we

don't know about."

"Most of these are sympathetic with the Republicans, the right...when Obama was in office the Koch brothers spent a lot of money trying to block him."

"Yes, but more and more the party in power doesn't matter. I've been a Democrat my whole life but things have really changed."

"It seems the Democrats aren't the party they used to be. They're mostly funded by the same interests."

"They've all been hijacked by greed!"

"What do you mean by this? Greed it seems has always been an issue in this country. Those who have so much never seem to get enough. But are you saying that

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building a few blocks away  
for twenty years.**

— John O'Kane

this is a moral problem? The greedy would just say they're successful and the system returns many material rewards to those who work hard."

"Definitely a moral issue...it's just not right that there's so much wealth at the top while so many in the country struggle."

"So the issue for you is that their gain has something to do with others' losses? Their power and position allows them to take from others or...exclude them from positions?"

"Yes...yes...that's the problem. Greed has to be controlled. It's like some sort of drug that addicts people."

"Nice way to put it. Materialism as a drug that never really satisfies them so they have to have more?"

"They're junkies!"

"And junkies are blind to most everything around them. How long has this been your view? This seems like what the Occupy movement talked about seven years ago. They were camped out just down the street. They got the discussion going about greed and the 1% and how much wealth and power they wield. My book, *A People's Manifesto*, is about the Occupy events here in Long Beach."

"I've been interested in the issue of greed for much longer than that. I remember when that happened. Lots of people around that time started to get interested in this issue and I put together a book, *Follow the Money*, in 2014. My interest in greed goes back to my youth...I've always been concerned with injustice but it's our wars that are behind it, our domination and control over other societies to benefit our own."

"The military gets too many resources for its ventures and this causes many to lose things here, at home?"

"It's been getting too much since WWII...especially since the Korean War."

"And from there Vietnam, the Mideast and..."

"...yes, Vietnam...that was an even bigger blunder...that whole decade. We were so afraid of the commies, spent so much on this 'enemy' instead of working for world peace."

"Exactly what Tom Hayden believed."

"He did. And all of our conquests have really been about resources, especially oil, to satisfy our greed. I published a pamphlet, *Petrolimania*, in 2017, about this."

"It was about oil in our next venture too...our new enemies in the Mideast, the Afghanis and the Iraqis."

"That period, the late 80s and early 90s, was when I really started to get interested in these issues and...to look back at history."

"We were very direct about our oil interests in these recent wars."

"We backed Kuwait and marched into Iraq and...the start of the war that can't be completed. We're still fighting it!"

"It seemed that the war was over in 1991, especially since it was pretty quiet through the rest of the decade."

"But we were working behind the scenes to get



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## L B C A F E S C E N E

the oil, doing a lot of damage, stepping on a lot of toes.”

“That contributed to 9/11, right?”

“Absolutely! We got more aggressive in the Mideast because the Soviet empire collapsed, giving us more freedom to expand our interests, and a lot of people weren’t very happy about that.”

“So you support Chalmers Johnson’s idea of ‘blowback’?”

“Yes. The more we push into countries and impose our will the more resistance builds up and...”

“...now it looks like we’re threatening to invade Venezuela, which has the world’s largest oil reserves.”

“We need to stop grabbing other countries’ resources...let them develop their own way and pursue their destiny.”

“But the greedy aren’t going to just stop being greedy, are they?”

“No.”

“So it will take some catastrophe to reverse course? Is that what you mean in your pamphlet, *The Stepping Stones to the Apocalypse*?”

“Yes...we’re headed toward a catastrophe for sure if something doesn’t help us change course.”

“We just have to wait it out...nothing we can do?”

“Humanity must endure a painful evolutionary process.”

“Before finding a new course? Won’t that mean there’ll be a lot of innocent victims...that evil will reign?”

“Our only hope is a world government that will control nationalism and racism and religious craziness and make us freer and more democratic.”

“You mean something like benevolent globalization? Do you see that evolving?”

“No, not...really. We have to stop making enemies

of our neighbors like we did with the communists. Now I guess Russia---no longer communist---is one of our new enemies.”

“Trump wanted to be friends with Russia, at least...but he’s mostly making enemies.”

“That’s why we need new leadership to turn this around.”

“The next election then is very important. Which Democratic candidates do you think will offer the best hope?”

“Sanders, but he’s too old.”

“Barely older than Trump and Biden, who’s ahead in the polls.”

“They’re all too old. We need a new generation. Harris, Warren...maybe Beto.”

“They’re exciting candidates for sure. What do you think they’ll offer?”

“Hopefully they’ll at least start small and get money out of politics.”

“And maybe help develop some new habits for our nation that will lead to the elimination of greed?”

“Without that there’s no hope.”

“You seem very...utopian. Maybe that’s why you like Hayden so much. His movement, SDS, was considered very utopian. You aspire toward some pretty big positive changes but...I also noticed you seem resigned to the fact they won’t soon arrive. Historically, those who believe in these extremes seem prime candidates for a drop out life, or at least one fairly far removed from a mainstream existence. You mentioned you built cabins for many years in the Mojave and that seems very consistent with this.”

“I was up there from 1972 until 2005, in a lot of different places...Joshua Tree, Oak Hills, Johnson Valley, Lucerne Valley. I built and sold cabins and made a good living.”

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“So you were a...businessman...a capitalist?”

“Well...my background is in construction. I was a carpenter and an electrician. So I was interested in building quality and affordable cabins for people to live in. I wouldn't call myself a capitalist exactly. I made money but not that much. I sold them at a fairly cheap price.”

“You made a profit but a moral one?”

“I was only interested in a fair return on my labor and the satisfaction the work gave me in contributing to the growth of these communities.”

“That sounds socialist. Do you consider yourself a socialist?”

“I've never been part of any movement or party but I believe in the fair exchange of value to help in small ways to get rid of greed. The only complete way to do this would be to stop using money and begin to exchange goods and services through barter.”

“That's the only way to expunge exploitation according to that famous German philosopher. And the only way to really put that into practice would seem to be in small communities. The high desert area you worked in is famous for experiments like this. It's full of cults, dropouts, and utopian groupings. There was a famous utopian experiment over a hundred years ago at Llano del Rio. Its ruins are still there. Aldous Huxley lived near there for a while and wrote about that place. Is that the answer to our ills, returning to small scale human experiments? Huxley also wrote about this idea in *Brave New World Revisited*.”

“That would be the best solution...it would give more people a chance to control their lives...and especially the greed and special interests. Democracy would work better.”

“That's what the Founding Fathers believed in, decentralization and local control. Thomas Jefferson, a hero for Tom Hayden and SDS, went even further and stressed that the people themselves should directly participate and control the government, bypassing representatives. Think the mayor has reserved an outreach space in our shiny new government buildings for raising the consciousness of Long Beach residents about Democracy? Maybe the first cell of a retro form of Direct Democracy will sprout in this neighborhood!”

“Hopefully by the end of summer!”

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★★★★★ 5/21/2018

Excellent service and amazing vibe! We are always looking for a place to relax and watch sports. This place has fair prices, comfy seating, and tons of screens to watch sports. The staff is amazing and makes you feel right at home. It's hard to find a place that is affordable, comfortable, and fun. This place is our new favorite spot to watch sports, work, socialize, and hang out. It feels like a casual neighborhood bar that is much needed in DTLB!

★★★★★ 5/21/2018

Bar is right across the street from my home. I love this bar. Great people, great atmosphere and great food. Nice, big screen TV's, outside area for smokers. High class bar with a home town/hole in the wall feel. Come down!!

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# SAVE THE DATES!

**JULY**

★★ Members FREE ◆ FREE, but donations always appreciated

## July 5 Friday 8:00pm THE MASON'S NOISE PARLOUR

The quarterly presentation of L.A.'s best young talent is curated by local singer-songwriter MASON SUMMIT. Regular admission. ★★

## July 7 Sunday 2:00pm BEYOND BAROQUE POERTY CONTEST WINNERS!

Winners of the 9th annual Beyond Baroque Poetry Contest will read from their work. ◆

## July 7 Sunday 5:00pm FIRST SUNDAY OPEN READING

Our popular monthly open reading. Features this month, TBA. Hosted by Steve Goldman. Sign ups begin at 4:45 PM. Five-minute limit. FREE but donations always appreciated. In the Scott Wannberg Bookstore 7 Poetry Lounge. ◆

## July 7 Sunday 5:00pm DUENDE NIGHTS OPEN READING

Hosted by Antonietta Villamel. FREE. In the theater. ◆

## July 12 Friday 8:00pm PELEKINESIS PRESS PRESENTS

Tim Kirk, Tim Davis, and Rob Zabrecky present stories set in a Los Angeles

where "The Feral Boy Who Lives in Griffith Park" exists. Regular admission. ★★

## July 13 Saturday 8:00pm SPECIAL MULTIMEDIA FESTIVAL

Check the website for more information: <http://beyondbaroque.org/calendar.html>.

## July 14 SUNDAY SUMMER DELIGHT!

Public Works Improvisational Theatre presents an evening of lively variety arts programming - celebrating talented writers, storytellers, poets, musicians and comics. Every month, we explore topical themes for your pleasure and enjoyment! Hosted by Eric Vollmer. Regular Admission. ★★

## July 19 Friday 8:00pm WILLIAM BENTON

William Benton received his early training in music and worked as a jazz piano player before becoming a writer. His poetry has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, and many other magazines. He is the author of several books of poetry, most recently *Backlit*. His newest book is *Eye Contact*. He lives in New York City. Regular admission. ★★

## July 20 SATURDAY THE LIT SHOW

14th annual celebration of song and literature starring LA's Diva Deluxe & Brad Kay, who perform songs based

on words by TOLKIEN, OSCAR WILDE, Hafitz, Kurt Vonnegut, Edna St Vincent Millay, J.D. Salinger, Raymond Chandler, Truman Capote, Vladimir Nabokov, Rudyard Kipling and more. "Suzy's voice is vibrant and lusty...great gusto and bold emotion." - Nat Hentoff. Special Admission \$20.00

## July 21 Sunday 5:00pm SALIENT SUNDAY OPEN READING

Hosted by Radomir Luza & Patricia Murphy. FREE, but donations are always welcome. ◆

## July 21 Sunday 8:00pm KEROUAC, CASSADY & CO.

A Beat Prankster Party with Brian Hassett, George Walker, & S.A. Griffin Kerouac, Cassidy & Kesey brought to life on stage; their 1964 final night together recreated; On The Road and On The Bus in one night. Regular admission. ★★

## July 25 Thursday 8:00 ALLISON & TIFFANY ANDERS

Music journalist Pat Thomas in conversation between filmmaker Allison Anders, her daughter, musician/music supervisor Tiffany Anders. Regular admission. ★★

## July 26 Friday 8:00pm SATURDAY POET KEVIN HEARLE

Kevin Hearle is an author, an editor, a

poet, and a lecturer. He holds degrees from Stanford University, the University of Iowa, and the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is the author of *Each Thing We Know Is Changed Because We Know It* and *Other Poems* and served as an editor for *The Grapes of Wrath: Text and Criticism*, *Beyond Boundaries: Rereading John Steinbeck*, and *The Essential Mary Austin*. Regular admission. ★★

## July 27 Saturday 3:00pm ANNE BUXIE & JEAN COLONOMOS

Ann Buxie and Jean Colonomos will share UNMOORED and HINGED, the last two episodes of their poetry collection. Regular admission. ★★

## July 28 Sunday 2:00pm THE NEBRASKA GIRLS OPEN READING

Sign-ups at 1:30 PM. Hosted by Wyatt Underwood. FREE but donations gratefully accepted. ◆

**AUGUST**

Please check the website for more information

## August 2 Friday 8:00 THE PUNK MUSEUM PRESENTS!

Films, music, photos of the Los Angeles Punk scene its heyday. Regular admission. ★★

## August 4 Sunday 5:00pm FIRST SUNDAY OPEN READING

Sign-ups at 4:30 PM. Hosted by Steve Goldman. FREE but donations gratefully accepted. In the Scott Wannberg Poetry Lounge. ◆

## August 4 Sunday 5:00pm DUENDE NIGHTS OPEN READING

Hosted by Antonietta Villamel. FREE. In the theater. ◆

## August 9 Friday 8:00pm TANYA KO-HONG

"As an immigrant of the Korean diaspora, I know what it feels like being invisible, voiceless, and powerless. Writing poems has been a long process: even allowing myself to write certain words felt like an impossible transgression. At times I was sick at heart, in pain and angry, but something magical was happening. I was able to expose my own wound through new symbols and images." Regular Admission. ★★

## August 11 Sunday 7:30pm MELVILLE THE MARINER

Come join our literary Celebration of Herman Melville's 200th Birthday! Public Works Improvisational Theatre

presents an evening of lively variety arts programming - featuring a tribute to Venetian Ray Bradbury's adaptation of Melville's classic work *MOBY DICK*. Every month, we explore topical themes for your pleasure and enjoyment! Hosted by Eric Vollmer Regular admission. ★★

## August 23 Friday 8:00pm NEBRASKA GIRLS OPEN READING

Sign-ups at 1:30 PM. Hosted by Wyatt Underwood. FREE but donations gratefully accepted. ◆

## August 24 Saturday 7:00pm

## 7 DUDELY CINEMA

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your thighs are a temple of questions  
I will never answer

my armpits are an odd symphony  
that mumble lunar rhapsody

amorous beavers covet your wooden shoes  
and I would like to see you walking barefoot  
in a glass factory

death is a skateboard without surprise

the president is masturbating in front of the public library  
and I hate to be the bearer of fake news  
but all the pages of history have been glued shut  
and the law books are pleading the fifth

America, waving behind your striped and starry mask  
you cannot erase memory

I cannot recall the perfect body of your mind  
or the perfect wisdom of your heart  
and there's something heartbreaking about a harmonica  
doing blue somersaults in your ear

electric sheep litigate the future with artificial intelligence  
using smart phones on speed dial

I can hear the icebergs melting in your drink

last call, lover

what's your  
poison?

- S.A. Griffin

- S.A. Griffin, author of *Dreams Gone Mad With Hope*, and editor  
of *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*.

## THESE DAYS

I move forward  
one moment in front of  
the other

I put my days on one leg at a time

the big picture slipped on an electric banana  
and landed right on its me too

the truth cries wolf  
it's winter in America

every dictator dog  
has his day  
in people's  
court

God bless America  
the greatest show  
on Earth

- S.A. Griffin

- S.A. Griffin, author of *Dreams Gone Mad With Hope*,  
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# MILLENNIALS HOW MILLENNIALS BECAME THE BURNOUT GENERATION

ANNE HELEN PETERSEN

*Part 1 of this article was published in the last issue, #71*

One thing that makes that realization sting even more is watching others live their seemingly cool, passionate, worthwhile lives online. We all know what we see on Facebook or Instagram isn't "real," but that doesn't mean we don't judge ourselves against it. I find that millennials are far less jealous of objects or belongings on social media than the holistic experiences represented there, the sort of thing that prompts people to comment, *I want your life*. That enviable mix of leisure and travel, the accumulation of pets and children, the landscapes inhabited and the food consumed seems not just desirable, but balanced, satisfied, and unafflicted by burnout.

And though work itself is rarely pictured, it's always there. Periodically, it's photographed as a space that's fun or zany, and always rewarding or gratifying. But most of the time, it's the thing you're getting away from: You worked hard enough to enjoy *life*.

The social media feed — and Instagram in particular — is thus evidence of the fruits of hard, rewarding labor and the labor itself. The photos and videos that induce the most jealousy are those that suggest a perfect equilibrium (work hard, play hard!) has been reached. But of course, for most of us, it hasn't. Posting on social media, after all, is a means of narrativizing our own lives: What we're telling ourselves our lives are like. And when we don't *feel* the satisfaction that we've been told we should receive from a good job that's "fulfilling," balanced with a personal life that's equally so, the best way to convince yourself you're feeling it is to illustrate it

for others.

For many millennials, a social media presence — on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter — has also become an integral part of obtaining and maintaining a job. The "purest" example is the social media influencer, whose entire income source is performing and mediating the self online. But social media is also the means through which many "knowledge workers" — that is, workers who handle, process, or make meaning of information — market and brand themselves. Journalists use Twitter to learn about other stories, but they also use it to develop a personal brand and following that can be leveraged; people use LinkedIn not just for résumés and networking, but to post articles that attest to their personality (their brand!) as a manager or entrepreneur. Millennials aren't the only ones who do this, but we're the ones who perfected and thus set the standards for those who do.

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— Anne Helen Petersen

"Branding" is a fitting word for this work, as it underlines what the millennial self becomes: a product. And as in childhood, the work of optimizing that brand blurs whatever boundaries remained between work and play. There is no "off the clock" when at all hours you could be documenting your on-brand experiences or tweeting your on-brand observations. The rise of smartphones makes these behaviors frictionless and thus more pervasive, more standardized. In the early days of Facebook, you had to take pictures with your digital camera, upload them to your computer, and post them in albums. Now, your phone is a sophisticated camera, always ready to document every component of your life — in easily manipulated photos, in short video bursts, in constant updates to Instagram Stories — and to facilitate the labor of performing the self for public consumption.

But the phone is also, and just as essentially, a tether to the "real" workplace. Email and Slack make it so that employees are always accessible, always able to labor, even after they've left the physical workplace and the traditional 9-to-5 boundaries of paid labor. Attempts to discourage working "off the clock" misfire, as millennials read them not as permission to stop working, but a means to further distinguish themselves by being available anyway.

"We are encouraged to strategize and scheme to

find places, times, and roles where we can be effectively put to work,” Harris, the *Kids These Days* author, writes. “Efficiency is our existential purpose, and we are a generation of finely honed tools, crafted from embryos to be lean, mean production machines.”

But as sociologist Arne L. Kalleberg points out, that efficiency was supposed to give us more job security, *more* pay, perhaps even *more* leisure. In short, better jobs.

Yet the more work we do, the more efficient we’ve proven ourselves to be, the worse our jobs become: lower pay, worse benefits, less job security. Our efficiency hasn’t bucked wage stagnation; our steadfastness hasn’t made us more valuable. If anything, our commitment to work, no matter how exploitative, has simply encouraged and facilitated our exploitation. We put up with companies treating us poorly because we don’t see another option. We don’t quit. We internalize that we’re not striving hard enough. And we get a second gig.

All of this optimization — as children, in college, online — culminates in the dominant millennial condition, regardless of class or race or location: burnout. “Burnout” was first recognized as a psychological diagnosis in 1974, applied by psychologist Herbert Freudenberger to cases of “physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress.” Burnout is of a substantively different category than “exhaustion,” although it’s related. Exhaustion means going to the point where you can’t go any further; burnout means reaching that point and pushing yourself to keep going, whether for days or weeks or years.

What’s worse, the feeling of accomplishment that follows an exhausting task — passing the final! Finishing the massive work project! — never comes. “The exhaustion experienced in burnout combines an intense yearning for this state of completion with the tormenting sense that it cannot be attained, that there is always some demand or anxiety or distraction which can’t be silenced,” Josh Cohen, a psychoanalyst specializing in burnout, writes. “You feel burnout when you’ve exhausted all your internal resources, yet cannot free yourself of the nervous compulsion to go on regardless.”

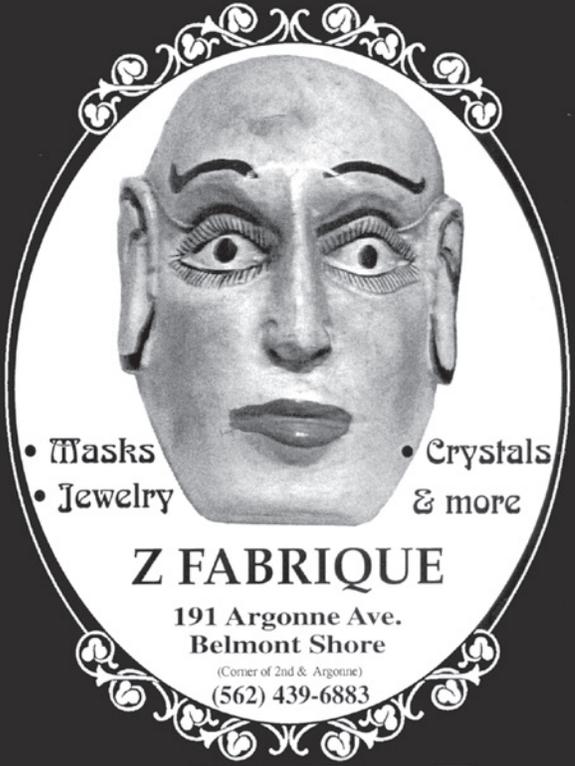
In his writing about burnout, Cohen is careful to note that it has antecedents; “melancholic world-weariness,” as he puts it, is noted in the book of Ecclesiastes, diagnosed by Hippocrates, and endemic to the Renaissance, a symptom of bewilderment with the feeling of “relentless change.” In the late 1800s, “neurasthenia,” or nervous exhaustion, afflicted patients run down by the “pace and strain of modern industrial life.” Burnout differs in its intensity and its prevalence: It isn’t an affliction experienced by relatively few that evidences the darker qualities of change but, increasingly, and particularly among millennials, *the* contemporary condition.

People patching together a retail job with unpredictable scheduling while driving Uber and arranging child care have burnout. Startup workers with fancy catered lunches, free laundry service, and 70-minute commutes have burnout. Academics teaching four adjunct classes and surviving on food stamps while trying to publish research in one last attempt at snagging a tenure-track job

have burnout. Freelance graphic artists operating on their own schedule without health care or paid time off have burnout.

One of the ways to think through the mechanics of millennial burnout is by looking closely at the various objects and industries our generation has supposedly “killed.” We’ve “killed” diamonds because we’re getting married later (or not at all), and if or when we do, it’s rare for one partner to have the financial stability to set aside the traditional two months’ salary for a diamond engagement ring. We’re killing antiques, opting instead for “fast furniture” — not because we hate our grandparents’ old items, but because we’re chasing stable employment across the country, and lugging old furniture and fragile china costs money that we don’t have. We’ve exchanged sit-down casual dining (Applebee’s, TGI Fridays) for fast casual (Chipotle et al.) because if we’re gonna pay for something, it should either be an experience worth waiting in line for (Cronuts! World-famous BBQ! Momofuku!) or efficient as hell.

Even the trends millennials have popularized — like athleisure — speak to our self-optimization. Yoga pants might look sloppy to your mom, but they’re efficient: You can transition seamlessly from an exercise class to a Skype meeting to child pickup. We use Fresh Direct and



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This is why the fundamental criticism of millennials — that we're lazy and entitled — is so frustrating: We hustle so hard that we've figured out how to avoid wasting time *eating meals* and are called entitled for asking for fair compensation and benefits like working remotely (so we can live in affordable cities), adequate health care, or 401(k)s (so we can theoretically stop working at some point before the day we die). We're called whiny for talking frankly about just how much we do work, or how exhausted we are by it. But because overworking for less money isn't always *visible* — because job hunting now means trawling LinkedIn, because "overtime" now means replying to emails in bed — the extent of our labor is often ignored, or degraded.

The thing about American labor, after all, is that we're trained to erase it. Anxiety is medicated; burnout is treated with therapy that's slowly become normalized and yet still softly stigmatized. (Time in therapy, after all, is time you could be working.) No one would've told my grandmother that churning butter and doing the wash by hand wasn't *work*. But planning a week of healthy meals for a family of four, figuring out the grocery list, finding time to get to the grocery store, and then preparing and cleaning up after those meals, while holding down a full-time job? That's just motherhood, not labor.

Millennial burnout often works differently among women, and particularly straight women with families. Part of this has to do with what's known as "the second shift" — the idea that women who've moved into the workplace do the labor of a job and then come home and perform the labor of a homemaker. (A recent study found that mothers in the workplace spend just as much time taking care of their children as stay-at-home mothers did in 1975.) One might think that when women work, the domestic labor decreases, or splits between both partners. But sociologist Judy Wajcman found that in heterosexual couples, that simply wasn't the case: Less domestic labor takes place overall, but that labor still largely falls on the woman.

The labor that causes burnout isn't just putting away the dishes or folding the laundry — tasks that can be readily distributed among the rest of the family. It's more to do with what French cartoonist Emma calls "the mental load," or the scenario in which one person in a family — often a woman — takes on a role akin to "household management project leader." The manager doesn't just complete chores; they keep the entire household's schedule in their minds. They remember to get toilet paper because it'll run out in four days. They're ultimately responsible for the health of the family, the upkeep of the home and their own bodies, maintaining a sex life, cultivating an emotional bond with their children, overseeing aging parents' care, making sure bills are paid and neighbors are greeted and someone's home for a service call and holiday cards get in the mail and vacations are planned six months in advance and airline miles aren't expiring and the dog's getting exercised.

Women have told me that reading Emma's cartoon, which has gone viral many times over, brought them to tears: They'd never seen the particular work that they do described, let alone acknowledged. And for millennials, that domestic work is now supposed to check a never-ending number of aspirational boxes: Outings should be "experiences," food should be healthy and homemade and fun, bodies should be sculpted, wrinkles should be minimized, clothes should be cute and fashionable, sleep should be regulated, relationships should be healthy, the news should be read and processed, kids should be given personal attention and thriving. Millennial parenting is, as a recent *New York Times* article put it, *relentless*.

The media that surrounds us — both social and mainstream, from Marie Kondo's new Netflix show to the lifestyle influencer economy — tells us that our personal spaces should be optimized just as much as one's self and career. The end result isn't just fatigue, but enveloping burnout that follows us to home and back. The most common prescription is "self-care." Give yourself a face mask! Go to yoga! Use your meditation app! But much of self-care isn't care at all: It's an \$11 billion industry whose end goal isn't to alleviate the burnout cycle, but to provide further means of self-optimization. At least in its contemporary, commodified iteration, self-care isn't a solution; it's exhausting.

"The modern Millennial, for the most part, views adulthood as a series of actions, as opposed to a state of being," an article in *Elite Daily* explains. "Adulting therefore becomes a verb." "To adult" is to complete your to-do list — but everything goes on the list, and the list never ends. "I'm really struggling to find the Christmas magic this year," one woman in a Facebook group focused on self-care recently wrote. "I have two little kids (2 and 6 months) and, while we had fun reading Christmas books, singing songs, walking around the neighborhood to look at lights, I mostly feel like it's just one to-do list superimposed over my already overwhelming to-do list. I feel so burned out. Commiseration or advice?"

That's one of the most ineffable and frustrating expressions of burnout: It takes things that should be enjoyable and flattens them into a list of tasks, intermingled with other obligations that should either be easily or dutifully completed. The end result is that everything, from wedding celebrations to registering to vote, becomes tinged with resentment and anxiety and avoidance. Maybe my inability to get the knives sharpened is less about being lazy and more about being too good, for too long, at being a millennial.

There are a few ways to look at this original problem of errand paralysis. Many of the tasks millennials find paralyzing are ones that are impossible to optimize for efficiency, either because they remain stubbornly analog (the post office) or because companies have optimized themselves, and their labor, so as to make the experience as arduous as possible for the user (anything to do with insurance, or bills, or filing a complaint). Sometimes, the inefficiencies are part of the point: The harder it is to submit a request for a reimbursement, the less likely you

are to do it. The same goes for returns.

Other tasks become difficult because of *too* many options, and what's come to be known as "decision fatigue." I've moved around so much because of my career path, and always loathed the process of finding family practitioners and dentists and dermatologists. Finding a doctor — and not just any doctor, but one who will take your insurance, who is accepting new patients — might seem like an easy task in the age of Zocdoc, but the array of options can be paralyzing without the recommendations of friends and family, which are in short supply when you move to a brand-new town.

Other tasks are, well, boring. I've done them too many times. The payoff from completing them is too small. Boredom with the monotony of labor is usually associated with physical and/or assembly line jobs, but it's widespread among "knowledge workers." As Caroline Beaton, who has written extensively about millennials and labor, points out, the rise of the "knowledge sector" has simply "changed the medium of monotony from heavy machinery to digital technology. ... We habituate to the modern workforce's high intensity but predictable tasks. Because the stimuli don't change, we cease to be stimulated. The consequence is two-fold. First, like a kind of Chinese water torture, each identical thing becomes increasingly painful. In defense, we become decreasingly engaged."

My refusal to respond to a kind Facebook DM is thus symptomatic of the sheer number of calls for my attention online: calls to read an article, calls to promote my own work, calls to engage wittily or defend myself from trolls or like a relative's picture of their baby.

To be clear, none of these explanations are, to my mind, exonerating. They don't seem like great or rational

reasons to avoid doing things I know, in the abstract, I want or need to do. But dumb, illogical decisions are a symptom of burnout. We engage in self-destructive behaviors or take refuge in avoidance as a way to get off the treadmill of our to-do list. Which helps explain one of the complaints about millennials' work habits: They show up late, they miss shifts, they ghost on jobs. Some people who behave this way may, indeed, just not know how to put their heads down and work. But far more likely is that they're bad at work because of just how much work they do — especially when it's performed against a backdrop of financial precariousness.

In recent years, new scientific research has demonstrated the "massive cognitive load" on those who are financially insecure. Living in poverty is akin to losing 13 IQ points. Millions of millennial Americans live in poverty; millions of others straddle the line, getting by but barely so, often working contingent jobs, with nothing left over for the sort of security blanket that could lighten that cognitive load. To be poor is to have very little mental bandwidth to make decisions, "good" or otherwise — as a parent, as a worker, as a partner, as a citizen. The steadier our lives, the more likely we are to make decisions that will make them even steadier.

But steadiness isn't a word we use to describe contemporary American life. And depending on your religion, immigration status, ethnicity, and sexual identity, chances are that the election of Donald Trump has only made one's future, and safety, and employability, less stable. Health care and coverage of preexisting conditions is seemingly always in question and/or in peril, as are women's reproductive rights. War with North Korea looms. We've never recognized social media and smart-



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phones as more toxic and more necessary. Our primary concern with the incredibly volatile stock market is how its temperament affects our day-to-day employment. The planet is dying. Democracy is under serious threat. American adults report being 39% more anxious than a year ago, and what is anxiety if not the condition of trying to live under these conditions?

Pundits spend a lot of time saying “This is not normal,” but the only way for us to survive, day to day, is to normalize the events, the threats, the barrage of information, the costs, the expectations of us. Burnout isn’t a place to visit and come back from; it’s our permanent residence.

In his writing about burnout, the psychoanalyst Cohen describes a client who came to him with extreme burnout: He was the quintessential millennial child, optimized for perfect performance, which paid off when he got his job as a high-powered finance banker. He’d done everything right, and was continuing to do everything right in his job. One morning, he woke up, turned off his alarm, rolled over, and refused to go to work. He never went to work again. He was “intrigued to find the termination of his employment didn’t bother him.”

In the movie version of this story, this man moves to an island to rediscover the good life, or figures out he loves woodworking and opens a shop. But that’s the sort of fantasy solution that makes millennial burnout so pervasive. You don’t fix burnout by going on vacation. You don’t fix it through “life hacks,” like inbox zero, or by using a meditation app for five minutes in the morning, or doing Sunday meal prep for the entire family, or starting a bullet journal. You don’t fix it by reading a book on how to “unfu\*k yourself.” You don’t fix it with vacation, or an adult coloring book, or “anxiety baking,” or the Pomodoro Technique, or overnight fucking oats.

The problem with holistic, all-consuming burnout is that there’s no solution to it. You can’t optimize it to make it end faster. You can’t see it coming like a cold and start taking the burnout-prevention version of Airborne. The best way to treat it is to first acknowledge it for what it is — not a passing ailment, but a chronic disease — and to understand its roots and its parameters. That’s why people I talked to felt such relief reading the “mental load” cartoon, and why reading Harris’s book felt so cathartic for me: They don’t excuse why we behave and feel the way we do. They just describe those feelings and behaviors — and the larger systems of capitalism and patriarchy that contribute to them — accurately.

To describe millennial burnout accurately is to acknowledge the multiplicity of our lived reality — that we’re not just high school graduates, or parents, or knowledge workers, but all of the above — while recognizing our status quo. We’re deeply in debt, working more hours and more jobs for less pay and less security, struggling to achieve the same standards of living as our parents, operating in psychological and physical precariousness, all while being told that if we just work harder, meritocracy will prevail, and we’ll begin thriving. The carrot dangling in front of us is the dream that the to-do

list will end, or at least become far more manageable.

But individual action isn’t enough. Personal choices alone won’t keep the planet from dying, or get Facebook to quit violating our privacy. To do that, you need paradigm-shifting change. Which helps explain why so many millennials increasingly identify with democratic socialism and are embracing unions: We are beginning to understand what ails us, and it’s not something an oxygen facial or a treadmill desk can fix.

Until or in lieu of a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system, how can we hope to lessen or prevent — instead of just temporarily staunch — burnout? Change might come from legislation, or collective action, or continued feminist advocacy, but it’s folly to imagine it will come from companies themselves. Our capacity to burn out and keep working is our greatest value.

While writing this piece, I was orchestrating a move, planning travel, picking up prescriptions, walking my dog, trying to exercise, making dinner, attempting to participate in work conversations on Slack, posting photos to social media, and reading the news. I was waking up at 6 a.m. to write, packing boxes over lunch, moving piles of wood at dinner, falling into bed at 9. I was on the treadmill of the to-do list: one damn thing after another. But as I finish this piece, I feel something I haven’t felt in a long time: catharsis. I feel *great*. I feel *something* — which is not something I’ve really felt upon the completion of a task in some time.

There are still things to tackle after this. But for the first time, I’m seeing myself, the parameters of my labor, and the causes of my burnout clearly. And it doesn’t feel like the abyss. It doesn’t feel hopeless. It’s not a problem I can solve, but it’s a reality I can acknowledge, a paradigm through which I can understand my actions.

In his writing on homelessness, social psychologist Devon Price has said that “laziness,” at least in the way most of us generally conceive of it, simply does not exist. “If a person’s behavior doesn’t make sense to you,” they write, “it is because you are missing a part of their context. It’s that simple.” My behavior didn’t make sense to me because I was missing part of my context: burnout. I was too ashamed to admit I was experiencing it. I fancied myself too strong to succumb to it. I had narrowed my definition of burnout to exclude my own behaviors and symptoms. But I was wrong.

I think I have some of the answers to the specific questions that made me start writing this essay. Yours are probably somewhat or substantially different. I don’t have a plan of action, other than to be more honest with myself about what I am and am not doing and why, and to try to disentangle myself from the idea that everything good is bad and everything bad is good. This isn’t a task to complete or a line on a to-do list, or even a New Year’s resolution. It’s a way of thinking about life, and what joy and meaning we can derive not just from optimizing it, but living it. Which is another way of saying: It’s life’s actual work.

Anne Helen Petersen writes for *BuzzFeed* and other publications.

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# ELDER CARE HOMES BAKE IN PROFITS

JENNIFER GOLLAN

She alights from a black Ferrari convertible, her Christian Louboutin stilettos glinting in the sunlight. The lid of her black lacquer grand piano is propped open in the living room of her plush Beverly Hills home.

"I own a chain of elderly care facilities," she says into the camera on Bravo's reality television show "The Millionaire Matchmaker." "My net worth is \$3 to \$4 million, probably."

Stephanie Costa was 30 and enjoying a lifestyle supported in part by six board-and-care homes she owned in California's Central Valley. But half of that fortune was threatened when she and her company initially were cited for about \$1.6 million for labor violations, including wage theft - not paying 11 employees for working much of 24 hours a day, six days a week.

Costa, who declined to be interviewed for this story, is a rare public face of a burgeoning multibillion-dollar elder care industry that is enabling operators to become wealthy by treating workers as indentured servants. Across the country, legions of these caregivers earn a pittance to tend to the elderly in residential houses refurbished as care facilities, according to an investigation by Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting. The profit margins can be huge and, for violators of labor laws, hinge on the widespread exploitation of thousands of caretakers, many of them poor immigrants effectively earning \$2 to \$3.50 an hour to work around the clock. The federal hourly minimum wage is \$7.25.

Reveal interviewed more than 80 workers, care-home operators and government regulators and reviewed hundreds of wage theft cases handled by California and federal labor regulators, workers and local district attorneys. The investigation found rampant wage theft has pushed a vast majority of these caregivers into poverty.

Workers are left feeling desperate and trapped. Many caregivers say they rise before daybreak to cook meals, shower residents and scrub toilets. At night, they are deprived of sufficient sleep because they have to wake to change adult diapers, dispense painkillers, return wandering dementia residents to their beds and shift the bedridden every two hours to thwart bedsores.

Workers describe sleeping in hallways and garages, on couches and the floor. Some care homes deduct \$25 a day from caregivers' paychecks for "lodging."

Exploited caregivers rarely are allowed a day off; even then, they often must pay their substitutes. Two caregivers recounted having miscarriages after their bosses refused to allow them time off or to stop lifting heavy residents.

Because these workers often live where they work, they are under the watchful eye of their bosses. They are bullied into not cooperating with investigators. In some cases, care-home operators have threatened to report undocumented workers to authorities.

Human trafficking --- in which workers, particularly Filipinos, are coerced, manipulated and exploited --- also is not uncommon, according to prosecutors and attorneys. For example, several family members were charged last year with human trafficking and labor abuse in a case involving caregivers in San Mateo County, California, south of San Francisco.

"It's a classic tale of human greed," said Tia Koonse, legal and policy research manager at the UCLA Labor Center. "Their entire business model is predicated on not making payroll. It relies on people

being willing to work for 24 hours a day for less than a dollar an hour. Only trafficked people will put up with that."

The growth of board-and-care homes in neighborhoods across the United States is tied to medical advances, enabling aging baby boomers to live longer despite debilitating illnesses. This has resulted in an increasing number of gravely ill people or their family members seeking an alternative to costly nursing home care. There were about 29,000 residential care communities nationwide and about 300,000 full-time caregivers in 2016, according to the most recent federal figures available. About two-thirds are smaller facilities with four to 25 residents, many with dementia. California leads the nation with more

**Stephanie Costa  
provides  
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breaking  
labor laws and  
circumventing  
full punishment.**

— Jennifer Gollan

than 7,300 residential care facilities licensed by the state.

Stephanie Costa provides a case study in exploiting workers, getting caught breaking labor laws and circumventing full punishment.

In 2013, 11 workers brought wage theft claims after providing around-the-clock care in the care homes Costa owned. They changed adults' diapers, comforted the dying and hoisted infirm residents into bed. They worked six days a week and subsisted on meager wages, according to interviews and court documents. The workers said they risked being fired if they left the facilities and had no off-duty rest breaks during the day. Costa's care homes promoted 24/7 care for frail clients.

"We knew we were being underpaid," said Juliet Delos Reyes, 60, a former caregiver employed by Costa. "But we were helpless. We didn't know our rights. How could we leave?" Reyes said she was not allowed to leave the home without permission when clients were present.

In many cases, workers in the industry fall into jobs that become increasingly abusive. A substantial number are working in the U.S. without authorization or applying to remain legally in the country. They are paid less than they're promised, isolated and restricted to the facilities.

Residents in these care homes typically are more than 60 years old. The annual national median cost for each resident is about \$48,000. Dementia residents often pay more. Some owners tack on extra charges for those who are incontinent or desire more than two showers a week.

Over the last decade, care-home operators across the nation broke minimum wage, overtime or record-keeping laws in at least 1,400 cases, federal data shows. About 35 percent of them were in California. Data obtained by Reveal through a California Public Records Act request shows senior care facilities in the state have pending wage theft claims against them or have been ordered to pay back wages and penalties in more than 110 additional cases.

Three months after Costa's star turn on Bravo in 2013, the state labor commissioner's office ordered Costa and her company, Bedford Care Group, to pay about \$1.6 million for unpaid wages and penalties. That's when she changed tactics.

Papers were then filed with the state to create two new residential care-home companies called Clear View Retirement Group LLC and Copper River Retirement

Group LLC. Costa's mother, Alice Hayes, is secretary, one of two officers, of these companies, according to licensing records. Hayes declined to comment.

These new companies then received licenses from the state to run the six former Bedford care homes. But Hayes assured residents that the structure and administrative staff in the care homes would remain the same. In December 2014, following an appeal, the amount owed for the labor violations was reduced to \$665,000. But around the same time, Costa's Bedford Care Group filed for bankruptcy, a legal maneuver that allowed her to effectively slash the amount she owed workers by settling the case for about \$200,000, which she paid.

Three weeks after Costa's care-home business filed for bankruptcy, her father registered a new company with the state called Property Investment Housing LLC. The company then took over as the new owner of Costa's six care homes. Her father did not return a call seeking comment. Stephanie Costa is the company's chief executive, records show.

Stephanie Costa represents a rare case in which an operator paid up, if only a partial amount of the original fine. Residential care facilities for the elderly receive among the largest wage theft judgments of any industry. Yet Reveal found that some facility owners caught cheating their workers are able to evade fines and judgments.

Many companies play shell games by not keeping money or real estate holdings in the name of the company against which judgments or fines are entered. They simply abandon their company names --- and the judgments against those named entities --- rendering the penalties and wage theft judgments meaningless.

Across the country, states are charged with regulating board-and-care facilities. In California, the state labor commissioner's office and U.S. Department of Labor, in addition to some local governments, are charged with investigating wage theft. State and federal regulators say privately that they need many more investigators and lawyers to chase down scofflaws and force them to pay.

The Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division declined to make top officials available for an interview. But in a written statement, a Labor Department spokesman said: "Last year the division recovered a record-setting \$304 million in back wages for workers

## E L D E R C A R E

and conducted a record-setting 3,600 outreach events to provide information to employers, employees, and other stakeholders about the requirements of the law.”

The agency noted that in California, it has conducted investigations and “extensive outreach” to care-home operators “ensuring that they pay their workers the wages they have legally earned.”

At least 20 companies providing care for the elderly, disabled and mentally ill in California continue to operate illegally --- many of them under their original names --- after ignoring judgments for back wages and penalties totaling more than \$1.4 million, Reveal found. A 2016 law barred companies with outstanding wage theft judgments from conducting business in the state. But the state Department of Social Services’ Community Care Licensing Division, which is in charge of licensing facilities for the elderly and disabled, has not followed through.

Pat Leary, acting director of the Department of Social Services, declined through spokesman Michael Weston to be interviewed. But in an email, Weston wrote that while the law allows his agency to deny a new license or not renew an existing one, the agency can take these steps only if it finds residents’ health and safety have been threatened.

For her part, Costa’s former employee Juliet Delos Reyes desperately needed the total back pay she was owed before the bankruptcy of Costa’s company. She now cares for her husband, who is on dialysis. His medical bills are crushing.

“We didn’t save anything. It affected us badly,” Reyes said through tears. “I just hope that someday the government will look at how caregivers are treated.”

In mid-2016, the California Social Services Department banned Costa from the assisted living business for life after finding multiple health and safety violations. Among the violations: caregivers working without required criminal background checks; caregivers lacking the proper skills to test the glucose of a diabetic resident whose hands had been amputated; taking in hospice patients without the state’s permission; and arguing with the friend of a resident who was sent to the hospital, prompting staff there to ask her to leave.

Costa ignored the ban and continued to hire and fire workers at the care homes. So state licensing officials in April 2017 had Costa’s mother sign a declaration promising Costa would not be involved in “any capacity” with the companies --- Copper River Retirement Group and Clear View Retirement Group --- that operate the care homes she once ran.

But even after that meeting, records show, Costa listed herself as a managing member of Clear View Retirement Group. Costa’s name has since been removed from the most recent business filings received by the state.

A representative for the care-home industry readily acknowledged wrongdoing but blamed thin profit margins for necessitating the practice of underpaying workers.

“Are there problems? There are lots of problems,” said Ronald Simpson, a founding director of 6Beds Inc., a lobbying and advocacy organization that represents more

than 1,000 operators of small residential care facilities for seniors in California. “Elderly people aren’t able to pay what they’d need to pay for these homes to be compliant.” Still, for workers earning anemic pay, “it’s possible they’re happy, too,” he added.

Simpson then lashed out at Reveal for investigating wage theft in the industry. “What you’re doing is not a service to the industry,” he said. “It makes the whole industry look like they’re getting rich and ripping people off.”

As he spoke, Simpson was busy organizing one of the group’s all-day workshops for care-home operators on labor laws, which the 6Beds website promised would give them a key bit of advice: how to “minimize labor costs.”

For four years, Sonia Deza rose every morning at 5 a.m. to cook, clean, and wash and medicate her charges at Scienn Hail Home Care IV in Antioch, California, a city of about 100,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area. She could not sit down again to rest until 10 p.m., after she tucked residents into bed and organized their prescriptions for the next day.

A long night still lay ahead; some wandering dementia residents needed help back to bed, and others had to be shifted every two hours. Deza rarely took a day off, as she would need to pay her substitute. She earned about \$2 an hour. She worried she would be fired if she complained.

Then in 2013, federal regulators ordered Deza’s bosses, Glenda and Rommel Publico, to pay Deza and 21 other workers more than \$133,000 in back wages for violating federal minimum wage and overtime laws.

The Publicos wrote Deza two checks totaling more than \$17,700 in back wages. But instead of letting her deposit the checks, Rommel Publico demanded the money back, claiming it was his, Deza said in an interview. She said she was frightened he would fire her if she refused. So she served her residents lunch and then took a rare break on two afternoons in July 2013. Rommel Publico picked her up from work and drove her to two different banks.

“I took the checks into the banks, then returned to the car and gave him the cash,” said Deza, 66. “Oh my goodness, that’s my money. I worked so hard for it. I really needed that money. It’s big money for me.” Publico let her keep \$1,000. He called it a bonus, she said.

Three of Deza’s co-workers said in interviews that they also were forced to return the back wages. According to federal Labor Department records, the Publicos submitted false documents to labor investigators purporting to show they’d paid the back wages. Still other workers never received a check in the first place. They still are waiting.

Prosecutors from the Contra Costa County district attorney’s office have charged the Publicos with multiple felonies, including grand theft and tax fraud. The case is pending.

In a phone interview, Rommel Publico defended the treatment of his caregivers and said the charges against him “hurt my feelings.” “When we ran the business, we were like a family,” Publico said through tears. “My caregivers, I treat them like my mom. I’ve never been like, ‘I’m the boss.’”

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“Every time I turn around, I have problems,” he said of the pending case against him. “It breaks my heart. I cry.”

Another Publico employee who was not paid back wages is Normita Lim. She worked around the clock as a caregiver in one of their care homes for nearly a decade, earning about \$2 an hour. Rarely allowed a day off, she kept working, afraid she would be fired if she complained. On Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays, her three children visited her in the cramped room she lived in down the hall from the residents.

“I’m still struggling,” said Lim, 75. “I needed that money for my medications and food, but he got away with murder by not having to pay. I’m angry, but what can we do?”

In late 2017, the Publicos sold the care home where Lim worked. She said she stayed on as a caregiver for just a month under the new owner. She earned about \$600 that month to work around the clock, seven days a week, for less than a dollar an hour. A man at the care home said the facility is now called Elizabeth Care Homes 2. But the property still is licensed to Glenda Publico, records show.

“I thought, ‘This is worse,’ so I quit,” Lim said.

Workers often fear reporting their mistreatment to authorities. They routinely are harassed and fired if they report abysmal pay or overtime violations, according to interviews and court documents. Reveal found 90 caregivers in California who said their bosses intimidated them, threatened to report them to immigration authorities or blacklist them in the industry.

In 2014, federal investigators caught Lake Alhambra Center in Antioch cheating its workers --- for a second time. When an investigator visited, an employee put him on the phone with Mehrangiz Sarkeshik, who owned the home with her husband. She excoriated the investigator for the intrusion: “You didn’t tell me you were coming. Leave right now!”

Then the investigator overheard Sarkeshik shout at the worker over the phone: “You need to get him out of there or you will be fired!” She called the police and upon arriving at the home, she again threatened to fire any workers who cooperated with the investigator, according to a court document. When the investigator tried to follow up, workers told him that they were too scared to talk. Soon afterward, the facility changed hands and now operates under a different name. No wage theft fines have been issued to this operator to date.

Precilla San Miguel, an owner of San Miguel Homes for the Elderly, which operates three facilities in Union City, near Silicon Valley, kept timesheets that showed caregivers worked eight hours a day, even though their employment manual required them to be available 24 hours per day, seven days a week to seniors.

She went as far as fabricating evidence to cover up her wage theft, court documents show. Workers said she offered them bribes to falsify timesheets and required them to sign agreements not to sue her. She also installed surveillance cameras in her care homes to monitor caregivers, workers said. The court ordered the defendants

to pay \$425,000 in back wages and damages.

Last year, four members of a family were charged with various felonies, including human trafficking and labor abuse, in San Mateo County, south of San Francisco. State prosecutors say Gamos family members preyed on Filipino immigrants and “enslaved” some in their Rainbow Bright facilities. Family members forced some to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and some caregivers had their passports withheld, prosecutors say.

In court filings, prosecutors allege that some workers slept on mattresses on the floor and in garages and were prohibited from leaving the facilities, where they cared for children, the disabled and some seniors. Some workers who were injured on the job were told to lie to emergency room doctors about how they were maimed. They also were forced to pay their medical bills, according to the court documents.

Even as his family cheated workers out of more than \$9 million in wages from 2009 through 2018, Joshua Gamos, one of the facilities’ owners, collected a fleet of cars, including a Lamborghini and a Ferrari, prosecutors allege in court documents. Gamos also is charged with raping a caregiver. She was 21 when she began working for the facilities shortly after arriving from the Philippines. Joshua, Noel and Carlina Gamos are in jail awaiting trial. A fourth defendant, Gerlen Gamos, pleaded guilty to two felony charges, including wage theft, and is awaiting sentencing. Her attorney declined to comment.

Attorneys for Joshua and Carlina Gamos said no workers were forced to work at the facilities. An attorney for Noel Gamos did not return calls seeking comment.

“Those allegations are false,” said David Cohen, an attorney for Joshua Gamos. “People wanted to work because they wanted the money. It is true that these charges have been brought, but when you actually look at the evidence and the statements that were made, it’s a completely different story.”

Meanwhile, Reveal learned of cases in which workers suffered abuse with devastating consequences. Two caregivers reported having miscarriages after lifting heavy residents and being denied time off. One of them was Julie Riduta, 45, of Concord. More than a decade ago, she arrived from the Philippines to work as a caregiver in a care home in Contra Costa County. She earned \$2 an hour to work 24 hours a day.

The work was grueling, but she needed the pay to educate her daughter, left behind in the Philippines, from the age of 8. For the first three years, Riduta slept on a thin piece of foam on the floor next to the residents. When they needed help, she said they kicked her awake. “I told my daughter I struggled so much,” Riduta recalled. “I feel abused.”

Then one day in the summer of 2014, she found out she was pregnant. Overjoyed, she and the baby’s father, a co-worker with whom she is in a relationship, posted the news on Facebook. She also was overcome with morning sickness and was concerned about having to lift heavy residents. But when she begged her boss for two days off, Riduta said she refused. “Go to the mirror and look at

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yourself,” Riduta recalled her boss saying. “Ask if you’re allowed to complain.”

Riduta had a miscarriage two weeks later. The cause was unknown. The fetus was nine weeks old. “I was crying all night,” Riduta said. “I still have this dream that there’s a baby crying all the time. They treated us like animals.”

While some are unsure how to pay their workers properly, care-home owners are certain about one thing: There is money to be made. Entrepreneurs on YouTube urge people to jump into the real estate end of the business by buying single-family homes and converting them into care facilities. One man explains how “to turn a single-family home into a cash flow machine.” Another calls care homes “America’s untapped business opportunity...This business is very profitable.”

Jesse Quezada used to flip houses with his wife. When the market cooled, he said, they looked into opening a care home after a friend told them they could make thousands a month. “Coming from our background, we thought, ‘\$3,500 a month? Wow. Would people actually pay that?’ But the demand is there. People are living longer and they’re sicker.”

Quezada and his wife enrolled in a course required by California to run a home. In just two long weekends, they were qualified. They now operate several care homes. “When you have multiple homes, you can literally make \$20,000 profit a month,” he said.

Training requirements for care-home administrators and staff in California are feeble. Administrators must undergo an initial 80-hour program and pass an open-book exam comprising 100 questions. Those overseeing small facilities with 15 or fewer residents must be 21 and have a high school diploma or the equivalent. Staff in assisted living facilities need not be nurses or have any medical expertise. In fact, manicurists in California require more training.

Quezada was among more than 200 care-home owners, many of whom arrived in BMWs and Teslas, for a daylong seminar at a Southern California community hall last October. Among the presenters were labor regulators and attorneys who took questions from the crowd. Attendees sought advice on proper pay practices and other labor issues and were advised by the presenters to follow the law.

Then George Kutnerian, senior vice president of public policy and legislation for the 6Beds group, took the stage as one of the last speakers. Operators should slash costs by leveraging labor laws to their advantage, Kutnerian urged them. For example, owners do not need to hire two caregivers when they could get away with one, Kutnerian said. “There is no staffing ratio. A lot of people think, ‘I can’t have one caregiver alone.’ That’s not true,” he advised.

“You gotta learn how to use one caregiver,” he said. Plus, there’s a “nice exception” in state law, Kutnerian continued. Care homes with just one caregiver on duty can require that worker to stay for rest and meal breaks, he

noted, adding: “If you have two caregivers there, they have to be able to leave. It’s more efficient, OK? What this is getting you out of is the penalty,” Kutnerian boomed over the microphone. “That’s the trick. How do you keep them on the premises for rest and meal breaks?”

For owners who treat their workers properly, the market pressure is intense. While there are operators who comply with the law and turn a profit, some care homes charge less to attract residents searching for affordable care.

“It’s frustrating to be undercut,” said Jose Umana, who runs Premiere Cottages, which operates several care homes in Long Beach and Huntington Beach. “It’s hard to stay in the market when you’re competing with other homes that have lower rates. The caregivers are bearing the brunt.”

William Murphy, a prosecutor with the Alameda County district attorney’s office in the San Francisco Bay Area who has handled a dozen wage theft cases involving care homes in the last five years, says the business model depends on squeezing workers. He summed it up in two brief sentences: “It’s extreme greed by the owners. The workers are treated horribly.”

Jennifer Gollan writes for Associated Press and other publications. Melissa Lewis contributed to this story.

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# THE BANKERS' "POWER REVOLUTION"

ELLEN BROWN

The U.S. federal debt has more than doubled since the 2008 financial crisis, shooting up from \$9.4 trillion in mid-2008 to over \$22 trillion in April 2019. The debt is never paid off. The government just keeps paying the interest on it, and interest rates are rising.

In 2018, the Fed announced plans to raise rates by 2020 to “normal” levels — a fed funds target of 3.375 percent — and to *sell* about \$1.5 trillion in federal securities at the rate of \$50 billion monthly, further growing the mountain of federal debt on the market. When the Fed holds government securities, it returns the interest to the government after deducting its costs; but the private buyers of these securities will be pocketing the interest, adding to the taxpayers’ bill.

In fact it is the interest, not the debt itself, that is the problem with a burgeoning federal debt. The principal just gets rolled over from year to year. But the interest must be paid to private bondholders annually by the taxpayers and constitutes one of the biggest items in the federal budget. Currently the Fed’s plans for “quantitative tightening” are on hold; but assuming it follows through with them, projections are that by 2027 U.S. taxpayers will owe \$1 trillion annually just in interest on the federal debt. That is enough to fund President Donald Trump’s trillion-dollar infrastructure plan *every year*, and it is a direct transfer of wealth from the middle class to the wealthy investors holding most of the bonds.

Where will this money come from? Crippling taxes, wholesale privatization of public assets, and elimination of social services will not be sufficient to cover the bill.

**Bondholder Debt Is Unnecessary**

The irony is that the United States does not need to carry a debt to bondholders at all. It has been financially sovereign ever since President Franklin D. Roosevelt took the dollar off the gold standard domestically in 1933. This was recognized by Beardsley Ruml, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, in a 1945 presentation before the American Bar Association titled “Taxes for Revenue Are Obsolete.”

“The necessity for government to tax in order to maintain both its independence and its solvency is true for state and local governments,” he said, “but it is not true for a national government.” The government was now at liberty to spend as needed to meet its budget, drawing on credit issued by its own central bank. It could do this until price inflation indicated a weakened purchasing power of the currency.

Then, and only then, would the government need to levy taxes — not to fund the budget but to counteract inflation by contracting the money supply. The principal purpose of taxes, said Ruml, was “the maintenance of a dollar which has stable purchasing power over the years. Sometimes this purpose is stated as ‘the avoidance of inflation’.”

The government could be funded without taxes by drawing on credit from its own central bank; and since there was no longer a need for gold to cover the loan, the central bank would not have to borrow. It could just create the money on its books. This insight is a basic tenet of Modern Monetary Theory: the government does not need to borrow or tax, at least until prices are driven up. It can just create the money it needs. The government could create money by issuing it directly; or by borrowing it directly from the central bank, which would create the money on its books; or by taking a perpetual overdraft on the Treasury’s account at the central bank, which would have the same effect.

**The “Power Revolution”**

The Treasury could do that in theory, but some laws would need to be changed. Currently the federal government is not allowed to borrow directly from the Fed and is required to have the money in its account before spending it. After the dollar went off the gold standard in 1933, Congress could have had the Fed just print money and lend it to the government, cutting the banks out. But Wall Street lobbied for an amendment to the Federal

**Where will this money come from?  
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– Ellen Brown

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Reserve Act, forbidding the Fed to buy bonds directly from the Treasury as it had done in the past.

The Treasury can borrow from itself by transferring money from “intragovernmental accounts” — Social Security and other trust funds that are under the auspices of the Treasury and have a surplus — but these funds do not include the Federal Reserve, which can lend to the government only by buying federal securities from bond dealers. The Fed is considered independent of the government. Its website states, “The Federal Reserve’s holdings of Treasury securities are categorized as ‘held by the public,’ because they are not in government accounts.”

According to Marriner Eccles, chairman of the Federal Reserve from 1934 to 1948, the prohibition against allowing the government to borrow directly from its own central bank was written into the Banking Act of 1935 at the behest of those bond dealers that have an exclusive right to purchase directly from the Fed. A historical review on the website of the New York Federal Reserve quotes Eccles as stating, “I think the real reasons for writing the prohibition into the [Banking Act] ... can be traced to certain Government bond dealers who quite naturally had their eyes on business that might be lost to them if direct purchasing were permitted.”

The government was required to sell bonds through Wall Street middlemen, which the Fed could buy only through “open market operations” — purchases on the private bond market. Open market operations are conducted by the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), which meets behind closed doors and is dominated by private banker interests. The FOMC has no obligation to buy the government’s debt and generally does so only when it serves the purposes of the Fed and the banks.

Rep. Wright Patman, Chairman of the House Committee on Banking and Currency from 1963 to 1975, called the official sanctioning of the Federal Open Market Committee in the banking laws of 1933 and 1935 “the power revolution” — the transfer of the “money power” to the banks. Patman said, “The ‘open market’ is in reality a tightly closed market.” Only a selected few bond dealers were entitled to bid on the bonds the Treasury made available for auction each week. The practical effect, he said, was to take money from the taxpayer and give it to these dealers.

### **Feeding Off the Real Economy**

That massive Wall Street subsidy was the subject of testimony by Eccles to the House Committee on Banking and Currency on March 3-5, 1947. Patman asked Eccles, “Now, since 1935, in order for the Federal Reserve banks to buy Government bonds, they had to go through a middleman, is that correct?” Eccles replied in the affirmative. Patman then launched into a prophetic warning, stating, “I am opposed to the United States Government, which possesses the sovereign and exclusive privilege of creating money, paying private bankers for the use of its own money. ... I insist it is absolutely wrong for this committee to permit this condition to continue and saddle the taxpayers of this Nation with a burden of debt

that they will not be able to liquidate in a hundred years or two hundred years.”

The truth of that statement is painfully evident today, when we have a \$22 trillion debt that cannot possibly be repaid. The government just keeps rolling it over and paying the interest to banks and bondholders, feeding the “financialized” economy in which money makes money without producing new goods and services. The financialized economy has become a parasite feeding off the real economy, driving producers and workers further and further into debt.

In the 1960s, Patman attempted to have the Fed nationalized. The effort failed, but his committee did succeed in forcing the central bank to return its profits to the Treasury after deducting its costs. The prohibition against direct lending by the central bank to the government, however, remains in force. The money power is still with the FOMC and the banks.

### **A Model We Can No Longer Afford**

Today, the debt-growth model has reached its limits, as even the Bank for International Settlements, the “central bankers’ bank” in Switzerland, acknowledges. In its June 2016 annual report, the BIS said that debt levels were too high, productivity growth was too low, and the room for policy maneuver was too narrow. “The global economy cannot afford to rely any longer on the debt-fueled growth model that has brought it to the current juncture,” the BIS warned.

But the solutions it proposed would continue the austerity policies long imposed on countries that cannot pay their debts. It prescribed “prudential, fiscal and, above all, structural policies” — “structural readjustment.” That means privatizing public assets, slashing services, and raising taxes, choking off the very productivity needed to pay the nations’ debts. That approach has repeatedly been tried and has failed, as witnessed for example in the devastated economy of Greece.

Meanwhile, according to Minneapolis Fed President Neel Kashkari, financial regulation since 2008 has reduced the chances of another government bailout only modestly, from 84 percent to 67 percent. That means there is still a 67 percent chance of another major systemwide crisis, and this one could be worse than the last. The biggest banks are bigger, local banks are fewer, and global debt levels are higher. The economy has farther to fall. The regulators’ models are obsolete, aimed at a form of “old-fashioned banking” that has long since been abandoned.

We need a new model, one designed to serve the needs of the public and the economy rather than to maximize shareholder profits at public expense.

This article is excerpted from the author’s new book, *Banking on the People: Democratizing Money in the Digital Age*, available June 1.

Ellen Brown is an attorney, founder of the Public Banking Institute, and author of thirteen books. She also co-hosts a radio program on PRN.FM called “It’s Our Money.” [EllenBrown.com](http://EllenBrown.com).



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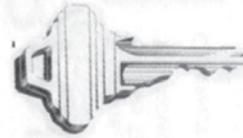
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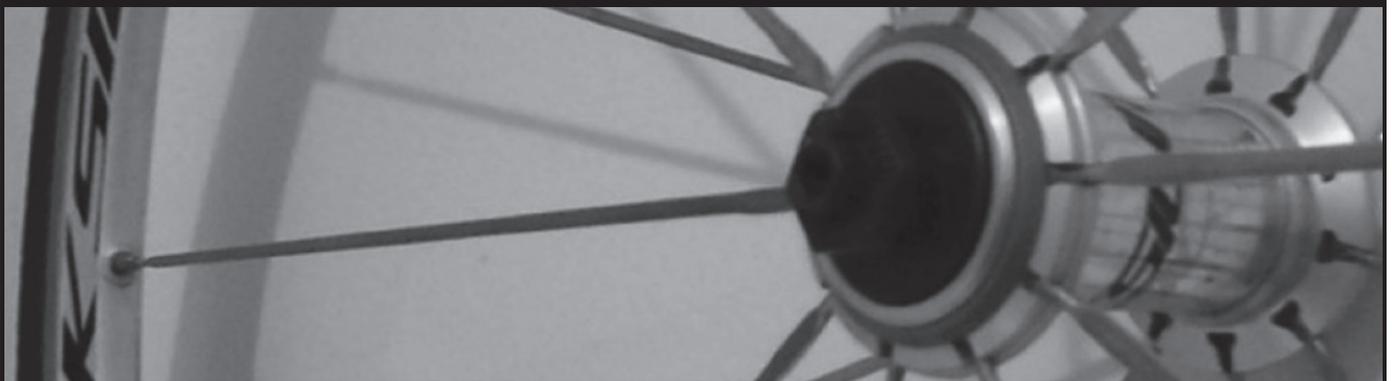
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# “THE GOOD GUY WITH A GUN”

S U S A N N A L E E

**A**t the end of May, it happened again. A mass shooter killed 12 people, this time at a municipal center in Virginia Beach. Employees had been forbidden to carry guns at work, and some lamented that this policy had prevented “good guys” from taking out the shooter. This trope – “the good guy with a gun” – has become commonplace among gun rights activists. Where did it come from?

On Dec. 21, 2012 – one week after Adam Lanza shot and killed 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut – National Rifle Association Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre announced during a press conference that “the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.”

Ever since then, in response to each mass shooting, pro-gun pundits, politicians and social media users parrot some version of the slogan, followed by calls to arm the teachers, arm the churchgoers or arm the office workers. And whenever an armed citizen takes out a criminal, conservative media outlets pounce on the story.

But “the good guy with a gun” archetype dates to long before LaPierre’s 2012 press conference.

There’s a reason his words resonated so deeply. He had tapped into a uniquely American archetype, one whose origins trace back to American pulp crime fiction. Other cultures have their detective fiction. But it was specifically in America that the “good guy with a gun” became a heroic figure and a cultural fantasy.

## “When I Fire, There Ain’t No Guessing”

Beginning in the 1920s, a certain type of protagonist started appearing in American crime fiction. He often wore a trench coat and smoked cigarettes. He didn’t talk much. He was honorable, individualistic – and armed.

These characters were dubbed “hard-boiled,” a

term that originated in the late 19th century to describe “hard, shrewd, keen men who neither asked nor expected sympathy nor gave any, who could not be imposed upon.” The word didn’t describe someone who was simply tough; it communicated a persona, an attitude, an entire way of being.

Most scholars credit Carroll John Daly with writing the first hard-boiled detective story. Titled “Three Gun Terry,” it was published in *Black Mask* magazine in May 1923.

The May 1934 issue of *Black Mask* features Carroll John Daly’s character Race Williams on the cover (Abe Books). “Show me the man,” the protagonist, Terry Mack, announces, “and if he’s drawing on me and is a man what really needs a good killing, why, I’m the boy to do it.”

Terry also lets the reader know that he’s a sure shot: “When I fire, there ain’t no guessing contest as to where the bullet is going.”

From the start, the gun was a crucial accessory. Since the detective only shot at bad guys and because he never missed, there was nothing to fear.

Part of the popularity of this character type had to do with the times. In an era of Prohibition, organized crime, government corruption and rising populism, the public was drawn to the idea of a well-armed, well-meaning maverick – someone who could heroically come to the defense of regular people. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, stories that featured these characters became wildly popular.

Taking the baton from Daly, authors like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler became titans of the genre. Their stories’ plots differed, but their

protagonists were mostly the same: tough-talking, straight-shooting private detectives. In an early Hammett story, the detective shoots a gun out of a man’s hand and then quips he’s a “fair shot – no more, no less.”

In a 1945 article, Raymond Chandler attempted to define this type of protagonist: “Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid...He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it.”

As movies became more popular, the archetype

**By the end  
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cultural hero.**

– Susanna Lee

bled into the silver screen. Humphrey Bogart played Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade and Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe to great acclaim.

By the end of the 20th century, the fearless, gun-toting good guy had become a cultural hero. He had appeared on magazine covers, movie posters, in television credits and in video games.

### Selling a Fantasy

Gun rights enthusiasts have embraced the idea of the "good guy" as a model to emulate – a character role that just needed real people to step in and play it. The NRA store even sells T-shirts with LaPierre's slogan, and encourages buyers to "show everyone that you're the 'good guy'" by buying the T-shirt.

The problem with this archetype is that it's just that: an archetype. A fictional fantasy.

In pulp fiction, the detectives never miss. Their timing is precise and their motives are irreproachable. They never accidentally shoot themselves or an innocent bystander. Rarely are they mentally unstable or blinded by rage. When they clash with the police, it's often because they're doing the police's job better than the police can. Another aspect of the fantasy involves looking the part. The "good guy with a gun" isn't just any guy – it's a white one.

In "Three Gun Terry," the detective apprehends the villain, Manual Sparo, with some tough words: "'Speak English,' I says. I'm none too gentle because it won't do him any good now."

In Daly's "Snarl of the Beast," the protagonist,

Race Williams, takes on a grunting, monstrous immigrant villain.

Could this explain why, in 2018, when a black man with a gun tried to stop a shooting in a mall in Alabama – and the police shot and killed him – the NRA, usually eager to champion good guys with guns, didn't comment?

### A Reality Check

Most gun enthusiasts don't measure up to the fictional ideal of the steady, righteous and sure shot. In fact, research has shown that gun-toting independence unleashes much more chaos and carnage than heroism. A 2017 National Bureau of Economic Research study revealed that right-to-carry laws increase, rather than decrease, violent crime. Higher rates of gun ownership are correlated with higher homicide rates. Gun possession is correlated with increased road rage.

There have been times when a civilian with a gun successfully intervened in a shooting, but these instances are rare. Those who carry guns often have their own guns used against them. And a civilian with a gun is more likely to be killed than to kill an attacker. Even in instances where a person is paid to stand guard with a gun, there's no guarantee that he'll fulfill this duty.

Hard-boiled novels have sold in the hundreds of millions. The movies and television shows they inspired have reached millions more. What started as entertainment has turned into a durable American fantasy. Maintaining it has become a deadly American obsession.

Susanna Lee teaches at Georgetown University.

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# TRADITIONAL MEASURES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

MARK PAUL

**W**e've heard it countless times in recent media accounts: The economy is at "full employment." The most recent jobs numbers, out the first week in May, show the official unemployment rate, and applications for unemployment benefits are at a 50-year low. The last time a recovery was able to push the unemployment rate to these levels was in 1969, when my mom was just entering elementary school and the United States was in the heyday of the "Golden Age" of capitalism.

But economists are puzzled. Despite low unemployment (the current rate is just 3.6%), significant wage increases remain elusive. In other words, workers aren't benefiting much. This is deeply troubling in an era of unprecedented inequality, driven in large part by decades of a falling wage share. The size of our economic pie may be getting bigger, but the wage share, or the share of the economic pie going to workers, has been contracting. Furthermore, a lack of wage growth isn't allowing for the true recovery that Main Street so desperately needs.

There could be a number of things at work which may explain the fact that wages aren't rising much, despite a low unemployment rate. For one, perhaps the relationship between wages and unemployment isn't as clear as economists previously thought. Many have criticized the Phillips Curve—a graph, or family of graphs, that supposedly shows an inverse relationship between the

unemployment rate and the inflation rate—arguing that it may have been a good model at one point in history, but no longer describes our current economy.

But maybe the puzzle isn't a puzzle at all. In economics, mainstream theory claims that a tight labor market will lead to rising wages, with the largest benefits going to those at the poorly compensated end of the labor market. Rather than this relationship being broken, it's plausible that the labor market

period. Importantly, this leaves out large swaths of people that should be counted among the unemployed, including people who are marginally attached to the labor force and people who are only working part-time despite wanting to work full-time.

These mainstream measurements create an artificially low unemployment number. Importantly, the unemployment number is a critical indicator that informs policies across the government, including at the Federal Reserve. A misleading unemployment rate can have profound implications for the economy. For instance, if the Fed thinks the economy is at or near full employment, they may start tapping the brakes, as we saw numerous times in 2018. But broader indicators of unemployment show us this is still premature.

Alternative measures of labor market tightness, such as the *employment-to-population ratio* for workers in their prime working age (25–54), still haven't recovered to pre-recession levels. Other indicators, like the *labor force participation rate*, are more than 4% below the rate that was reached

during the economic boom in the late 1990s. While some economists point to an aging population, this accounts for only about half of the decline. Yet another alternative measure is the U-6 unemployment rate, which accounts for workers marginally attached to the labor force and workers forced to work part-time due to economic reasons. This indicator shows that there is still significant slack in the labor market, with the BLS's U-6 unemployment rate (which adds the underemployed and workers who have given up looking for work to the U-3 rate) hovering around 7.3%.

The failure of the official

**The size of our economic pie may be getting bigger, but the wage share, or the share of the economic pie going to workers, has been contracting.**

– Mark Paul

isn't actually that tight. Perhaps there's still a sizable reserve army of unemployed that would work if there were a decent paying job actually available.

Official unemployment, measured by the U-3 rate from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), is the percentage of individuals who are not employed at all but are currently looking for and available for work, as a percentage of the civilian labor force—excluding individuals who are incarcerated, institutionalized, or in the armed services. To be counted as unemployed, the person must have applied for a job within a four week

## UNEMPLOYMENT

unemployment rate to function as an adequate indicator of labor market strength is even catching the attention of economists at the White House. In the recent 2019 Economic Report of the President, economists started to question how we have long defined what it means to be “out of the labor force.” Traditionally, if someone is out of the labor force, they’re not counted as unemployed—and therein lies the problem.

For decades, roughly 55–65% of people who were starting new work came from outside of the labor force; today, that number is approaching 75%. That’s telling us

three out of four people who are just starting to work again weren’t counted as unemployed before. With few new hires coming from the pool of the unemployed, it’s clear that our traditional measure is not measuring true labor market slack.

Policymakers need credible indicators to inform their decisions as they attempt to fine-tune the valves which help govern the economy. Looking across a broad span of labor market data, it’s clear that many people remain on the sidelines, ready and willing to work if a decent paying job were available. The relationship between unemployment and wages

hasn’t totally broken, but the same can’t be said for our measure of unemployment.

Mark Paul teaches economics at the New College of Florida.

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employment Population Ratio: 25–54 years,” Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, May 2019 ([fred.stlouis.org](http://fred.stlouis.org)); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate,” Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, May 2019 ([fred.stlouis.org](http://fred.stlouis.org)); Jason Furman, “Trends in Labor Force Participation,” Council of Economic Advisers, August 2015; “Economic Report of the President,” Marcy 2019 ([whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov)).

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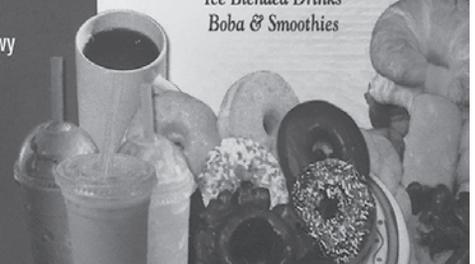
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# AUTOMATION NEW AUTOMATION PLAN AND THE LA PORT

ILWU DISPATCHER

**B**eing one of the nation's largest and most efficient ports has long been a source of pride, good jobs, and prosperity for working-class communities surrounding the mega-port complex of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Despite hard work that set cargo-handling records for the last three years in a row, corporations continue proposing automation projects to replace dockworkers with robots.

## Automation at APM/ Maersk

The latest controversy involves a plan by the world largest shipping company – Maersk – to automate their gigantic APM Terminal 400 at the Port of Los Angeles. The fear is that hundreds of jobs will permanently disappear and hurt surrounding communities where families, businesses, service providers and charities depend on good-paying port jobs.

## Massive Community Response

The automation plan at Terminal 400 would be the third, though of a much larger scale, during the past five years to trade jobs for robots. The prospect of more automation pushed thousands of concerned community members to take action on March 21. The day began with an early-morning rally in San Pedro, followed by a march through the streets that led to a massive public hearing with LA's Port Commission. The Port's large headquarters couldn't handle the huge crowd, so arrangements were made

ahead to meet in the nearby Cruise Terminal baggage tent, where most of the 1750 chairs were filled during nearly four hours of testimony and debate.

## Port Commission Hearing

Automation was on the agenda because Local 13 President Mark Mendoza appealed what Port staff described as the routine approval of an environmental permit at a January 24 Commission meeting. Approving that permit would have cleared the way for automation work to proceed at Terminal 400. The basis for the union's

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– ILWU Dispatcher

appeal, and requests for approval by APM/Maersk officials, their attorney, and the PMA employer group, quickly developed into a broader discussion about the impact of automation on the community.

## Strong Union Support

Local 13 Vice President Gary Herrera set the stage by focusing debate on how job losses would impact people and businesses from surrounding communities. He said that the ILWU/PMA contract issues involving

automation should be addressed between the union and employers – not Port Commissioners – as the union's focus is community-based. Initial testimony from union leaders included strong statements by Local 91 President Danny Miranda, Local 63 President Joe Gasperov, Pensioner President Greg Mitre, along with Local 13 members Mark Jurisich and Ray Familathe. A contingent of Teamsters were on hand to lend their support, as were representatives from the California Nurses' Association (CNA) and several staffers from the community-labor support group, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE).

## Political Leaders Weigh-In

Elected officials added their unanimous support for good jobs, including Councilmember Joe Buscaino who said he may bring the issue before LA's City Council. County Supervisor Janice Hahn criticized the company for cloaking their automation plan with claims of environmental concern because they plan to use electric vehicles. "We don't have to decide between good jobs and clean air," she said. "We can have both."

Long Beach Community College Board member Vivian Malauulu's testimony was followed by statements of support read from

two Congressmembers and more than a dozen state legislators, including Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon.

Small business owners testified that automation and the loss of good jobs will hurt local businesses and the customers they serve. John Bagakis of Big Nick's Pizza told Commissioners about the donations and support he now provides to families and workers in need, something he said would be hard to continue if he loses business from dockworkers. Sandra Marchioli of Godmother's Saloon made a similar point.

**Mayor Could Play a Role**

Perhaps the most important statement read at the meeting came from LA Mayor Eric Garcetti, who asked Port Commissioners to consider delaying any action until mid-April. He also offered to mediate discussions in the meantime and encouraged both sides to look for compromises. Commissioners seemed receptive to the Mayor’s offer.

**Commissioners Weigh-In**

Response and comments from Port Commissioners ranged from cool diplomacy to expressions of support and solidarity for the plight facing workers and the community. Commissioner Diane Middleton, recently appointed by Mayor Garcetti to fill the seat held by former ILWU President David Arian until his untimely passing in early January, posed some of the sharpest and most effective questions.

She was joined by Commissioner Anthony Pirozzi, Jr., who asked if automation might encourage a “race to the bottom” and said a “transition plan” might be needed to help workers. He also asked a question that was on the minds of many: “Why can’t we clean the air by having people drive electric vehicles on the docks?”

**Surprising Study Finding**

One of the most important facts to emerge at the hearing came from an unexpected source: a 2018 report by McKinsey & Company – a premier global management consulting firm. Their report titled, “The Future of Automated Ports,” concluded that companies shouldn’t expect to recover automation costs that were unlikely to pay for themselves. The report indicated that companies may lose money in the short run. Even more important were the opinions of port executives who were interviewed by the study’s authors, concluding that fully automated ports are generally not as productive as ones operated by humans.

This could be disappointing news for the Ports of LA and Long Beach who invested heavily and provided generous subsidies for two previous terminal automation projects – based on claims that productivity and through-put would exceed human operations. This means present investments may not be justifiable from a market standpoint, in addition to humanitarian concerns.

**Concluding Arguments**

The final appeal for Commissioners to reject the company’s permit application and automation effort was presented by Local 13 Vice President Gary Herrera – who

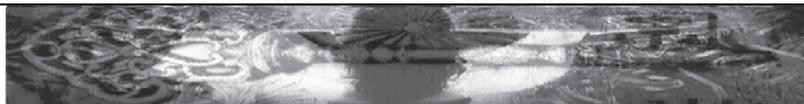
approached the podium surrounded by ILWU officers, including International President Willie Adams, Vice President Bobby Olvera, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris, Coast Committeemen Frank Ponce De Leon and Cam Williams, ILWU Canada President Rob Ashton, Local 13 President Mark Mendoza, Local 63 President Joe Gasperov, Local 94 President Danny Miranda and Local 13 LRC Rep Mike Dimon.

“The issue of automation is bigger than the ILWU-PMA contract,” said Herrera, “it’s about the community, the economy and ultimately the future of the middle class.” He continued with a line that hit a chord with most in the room: “Robots do not pay taxes, robots do not shop in our communities, robots do not pay rent, they don’t buy homes, they don’t lease office space, they don’t deposit money, robots do not vote.”

**Voting For More Time**

The meeting concluded with Commissioners embracing Mayor Garcetti’s offer to mediate and search for different approaches. What those might be wasn’t clear as The Dispatcher went to press, but future issues will update this important story.

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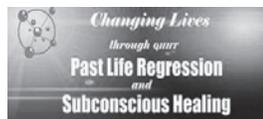
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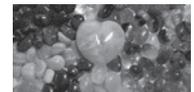
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## A WALL TOO FAR

JOHN HYDE BARNARD

A wall is a physical statement that declares to all who encounter it, “This is as far as you go.” However, in that same instant, it establishes without equivocation, “This is as far as I go.”

What is a wall? A demarcation that restricts the horizon line into a limited view and, in turn, curtails forward progress. A monument that establishes a high-water mark. From its location, the ascension of both physical and mental exploration reaches an apex until expectations begin to diminish into an inexorable realization: “It is all downhill from here.”

Those societies who so strongly proclaimed their territorial prerogative by establishing a wall also designated the time and place of the beginning of their decline. This fact has been repeated frequently in history, from the Sumerian wall of the Amorites to the infamous Berlin Wall of the Soviet Empire.

The explorer questions the status quo, while the wall builder establishes a status quo that perpetuates conformity. As a substitute for forward progress, a systemic philosophy takes root that promotes an inward self-realization that replaces the desire to explore what is beyond the horizon. Instead of conclusions based on individual observations, trial and error, and exploration, the substitution of pseudoscience, superstition, and religion promotes the societal demand of “we” rather than the individual “I.” No longer celebrated is the individual’s propensity to seek answers that question authority. Instead, authority becomes supreme and infallible.

History teaches us that it was the wanderers that shook down the walls of Jericho, and the seafarers, from the Phoenicians to the royal navy of Pax Britannica that advanced civilization, while those who sought protection behind a wall stagnated into decay, defeat, and death.

When, for the first time in all of humanity’s existence, man set foot on a sphere outside of planet

borders is a paramount consideration for the integrity and security of a nation. However, a wall will never rectify the problem of intrusion. Did Rome build a wall against Carthage? Did England build a wall against Napoleon? Did the North build a wall against the South in the American Civil War? Did Russia build a wall against Germany?

No, they went to the source and eliminated the problem, salting the grounds of Carthage, Trafalgar and Waterloo, Appomattox, and Berlin.

On September 2, 1945, in Tokyo harbor, the surrender of Japan ended the hostilities of WWII. The surrender agreement was not signed at or near a wall, but was signed on a ship, the USS Missouri. From that moment to the present, the majority of the world’s commerce and business has been carried on in English, attributable in large part to the fact that England went to sea.

Granted, England is an island, which, in Shakespeare’s immortal words, “serves it in the office of a wall.” Yet, history reveals that England was the recipient of numerous invasions—by Romans, Norsemen, Scots, and William the Conqueror. The fact remains that England did not establish Pax Britannica until it went to sea and established its rule over the oceans of the world.

We have arrived at a similar place in our history where we must make a choice: Do we build a wall against perceived threats, or do we go to the source and find a means to rectify the problem? Should we cease to go beyond our borders and explore, investigate, conquer, and address threats, or do we “man the ramparts” and become an established target as we wait for

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— John Hyde Barnard

earth, the event was not proclaimed in the language of wall builders (the Chinese, the Roman emperor Hadrian, the Russians...) but instead was simply spoken in the language of a society that went to sea.

*“That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.”*

No doubt, securing national

the problem to come to us? Will Ebola stop at the wall? Will global warming fail to breach the obstacles we put in its path? Will unwanted and dangerous elements turn away from a barrier?

Presently, those who hold the reins of power boldly proclaim, "We are going to have a real border, because we're going to have a wall." - President Donald J. Trump.

However, a reminder from

the recent past provides a different point of view: "We choose to go to the moon and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are **unwilling** to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and others too."- President John F. Kennedy.

A wall built out of fear and panic is not who we are. We are limitless without limits.

John Hyde Barnard is an LA-based writer, historian, and musician. His article "Parallel Institutions: Oil and Slavery" appeared in *AMASS* #68.



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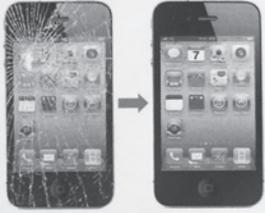
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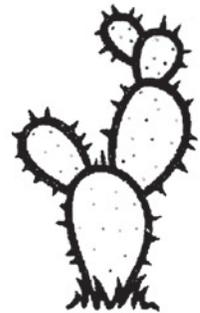
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# ABORTION "UNCONSCIONABLE" ABORTION BANS

JULIA CONLEY

Calling a series of recent anti-choice laws in a number of states "unconscionable" and unconstitutional, more than three dozen state attorneys general and local prosecutors said a few weeks ago that they would not enforce the new legislation.

In a statement by the law enforcement coalition Fair and Just Prosecution, 42 elected prosecutors said enforcing "deeply concerning" laws recently passed in Georgia, Alabama, and other states would erode their communities' trust in the justice system and traumatize patients who would be unable to access medical care that has been legal in the United States for more than 40 years.

"As elected prosecutors, we took an oath to uphold both the U.S. Constitution and the Constitutions of our individual states," wrote the officials. "As some elected prosecutors have noted, the broad restrictions in the laws passed by these states appear to be unconstitutional under *Roe v. Wade*. Many of us share those legal views, but our commitment to not prosecute women who obtain abortions and health care professionals who provide treatment is not predicated on these concerns alone."

The statement comes after 11 state legislatures passed extreme restrictions on abortion rights since the beginning of the year, including several laws which would deny women the right to an abortion after six weeks of pregnancy and once which bans the procedure throughout pregnancy, even in cases of rape or incest.

Among the prosecutors who signed the statement were district attorneys from Alabama and Georgia, which passed some of the most extreme bans. Officials from New York and Massachusetts, which have recently passed laws to guarantee abortion rights in case of further attacks on *Roe*, also signed, as well as prosecutors from traditionally red

rape or minors who are the victims of incest.

"These recent enactments by and large ignore the reality and suffering of victims," wrote the prosecutors. "It is a prosecutor's obligation to protect and seek justice on behalf of all members of our community, including victims who are often the most vulnerable and least empowered."

"Laws that re-victimize and re-traumatize victims are unconscionable," they added.

The newly-passed laws, according to the statement, are so vague that prosecutors could ostensibly be expected to criminally charge patients who obtain abortions, doctors, and virtually anyone who helped the patient to obtain the procedure.

Enforcing such legislation would "deeply erode" communities' trust in their local law enforcement officials, the prosecutors wrote.

**"As elected prosecutors, we took an oath to uphold both the U.S. Constitution and the Constitutions of our individual states," wrote the officials.**

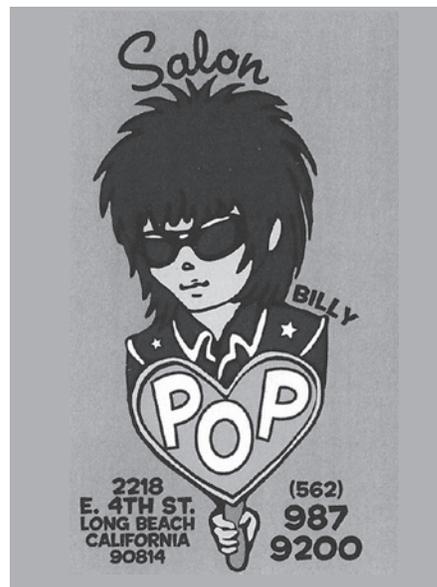
— Julia Conley

Julia Conley writes for Common Dreams and other publications.

states like Utah and Kansas.

"Not all of us are in states where women's rights are threatened by statutes criminalizing abortion," the statement reads. "What brings us together is our view that as prosecutors we should not and will not criminalize healthcare decisions such as these—and we believe it is our obligation as elected prosecutors charged with protecting the health and safety of all members of our community to make our views clear."

The prosecutors and attorneys general shared their especially strong objection to the laws passed in Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Mississippi, which include no exceptions for victims of





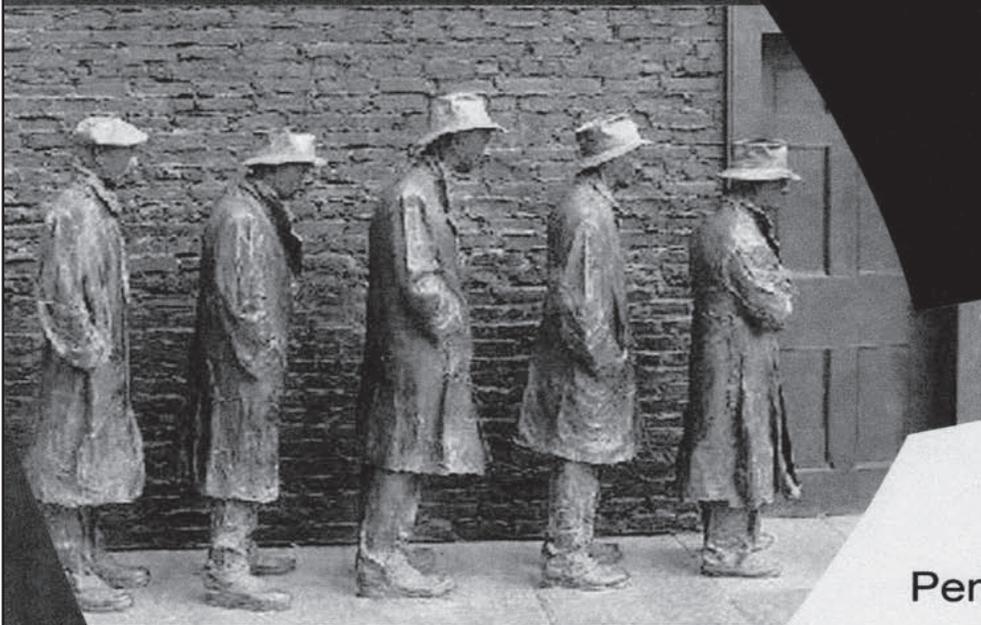
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