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ISSUE 57
NUMBER 1
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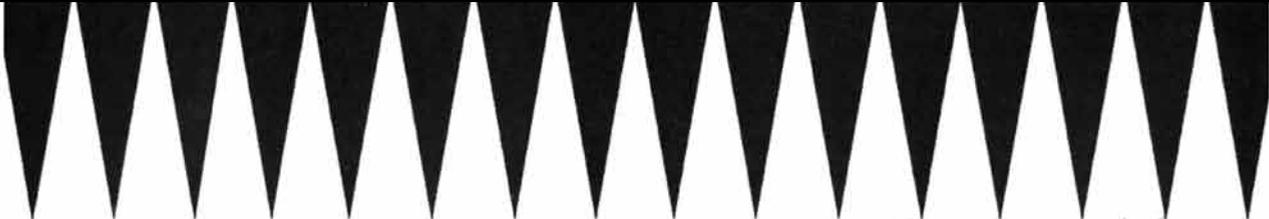


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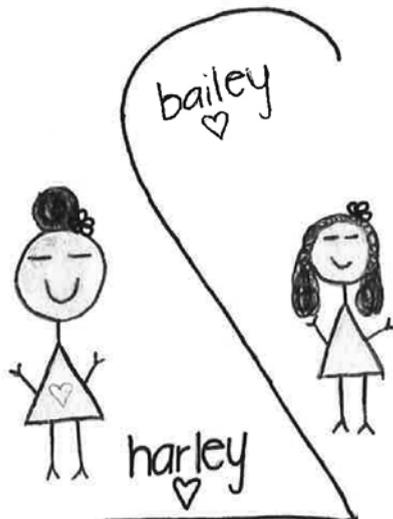
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“ASSUMPTION GREEK ORTHODOX
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“Assumption Greek Orthodox Ground Breaking”

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AMASS is published by the Society For Popular Democracy and AMASS Press, 10920 Wilshire Boulevard Suite 150, Los Angeles, CA 90024. Web: www.amassmagazine.com. Email: amassmag@aol.com. Subscriptions: \$16 for individuals within the US, \$20 outside these areas; \$50 for institutions within the US, \$60 outside. Single copy: \$4.95. Back issues available on website. Visuals furnished by the authors. Authority to reprint articles must be sought from publisher. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate and will not be returned without a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Editorial address: 1243 W. 13th Street, San Pedro, CA 90731. Thanks to Anne Kelly, Kristy Salsbury, and Caesar Sereseres for their support. Vb. AMASS, to cultivate, preserve, activate, gather together, socialize, cancel alienation. Distributed by Ubiquity, New York; Angel City, Santa Monica, CA; and Ingram. Member IPA. Indexed in MLA; Alternative Press Index; Ebsco; Cengage, ProQuest. Copyright © 2015 by Society For Popular Democracy. ISSN 0193-5798d

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BEWARE THE CLOWNS

LARRY BEINHART

Is the way to watch the Republican debates to set out a bowl of popcorn in the expectation that this conglomeration of candidates will produce truly memorable Comedy Central moments?

As Bill Schneider at Reuters put it, “Is 2016 the year of the Republican clown car?” Dana Milbank of *The Washington Post* was quick to answer, “Clown car.” *Politico*’s Roger Simon said the “clown car has become a clown van.”

Sen. Ted Cruz is frying bacon on a rifle barrel. Sen. Lindsey Graham put his cellphone in a blender. Former Fox News host and ex-Gov. Mike Huckabee is running as the candidate of “BubbaVille.” Gov. Chris Christie is doing a Tony Soprano imitation, but fatter. Gov. Scott Walker claims that it’s God’s plan for him to run for president.

The biggest clown of all has jumped into the lead.

But before we chorle and view it all as fodder for the new host of “The Daily Show,” we should take a longer and deeper look at Republican presidential politics.

In 1980 the very witty Gore Vidal said, “[Ronald] Reagan has no chance of being elected president. It is true that the United States is turning into Paraguay but not at that speed.” Reagan was elected twice.

By 1988, it was time for a change. The stock market crashed in 1987, “Black Monday,” the largest one day decline, still, in Wall Street history. The savings and loan crisis, the biggest set of bank failures since the Great Depression, was underway. Reagan’s tax cuts were supposed to generate more government revenue, even with the lower rates. Instead, the deficit tripled. Also, there was Iran-Contra.

Imagine if Barack Obama had been secretly selling missiles to Iran. The evidence against Reagan mount-

ed until he had to go on television and say, “A few months ago, I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that’s true, but the facts and evidence tell me it is not.”

That’s astonishing. The president admitted not merely that he preferred to live in his imaginary world but also that he was capable of doing so.

The money from selling arms to Iran was used for another illegal purpose: funding right-wing paramilitaries in Nicaragua.

Pat Moynihan, the highly esteemed Democratic senator from New York, took a look at the contenders for

the GOP nomination and said, “If we can’t beat these guys, we need to find another country.” Yet the Republican, George H.W. Bush, won.

In 1992, however, he lost to Bill Clinton. Clinton won re-election against the very well-respected Bob Dole.

After eight years of peace and prosperity, Clinton’s vice president, Al Gore, should have coasted to victory. Ronald Reagan’s son Ron Reagan summed up Gore’s opponent, George W. Bush, this way: “He’s probably the least qualified person ever to be nominated by a major party...What is his accomplishment? That he’s no longer an obnoxious drunk?”

If you’re a Republican and you want a candidate who can win, push for someone who lives in the fantasy world that you just saw advertised on Fox News. Yet Bush won and then won re-election.

In 2008, Obama beat John McCain, a war hero,

long-serving senator and statesman.

The Republican race of 2012 brought out the clowns: Gov. Rick Perry, who couldn’t remember the three federal agencies he would instantly shut down if elected. Rep. Michelle Bachman, who thought that America’s Founding Fathers abolished slavery, while the reality is that many of them owned slaves and that collectively they formalized slaves’ head count in the Constitution. Businessman Herman Cain, who said, “The more toppings a man has on his pizza...the more manly he is” and if he gets vegetables, it’s “a sissy pizza.” Sen. Rick Santorum, who was against contraception because “it’s a license to do things in a sexual realm that are counter to how things

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– Larry Beinhart

are supposed to be.” Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, a devout hypocrite, who declared, “I think one of the great problems we have in the Republican Party is that we don’t encourage you to be nasty.” And more.

But when the trolley trundled to a stop, the dignified Mitt Romney, a successful former governor of a blue state and an even more successful businessman, stepped out. And lost.

These 30 years reveal a very strange pattern. Sane, sober, qualified Republican candidates Romney, McCain and Dole all lost. The underestimated Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush were winners.

George H.W. Bush is the proof of the pudding, because he ran as two different characters. In order to win the nomination in 1988, he had to prove that he wasn’t a “wimp.” He did so by walking out of a TV interview. This may seem a strange way for a guy who won the Distinguished Flying Cross and flew 58 combat missions in World War II to prove his manhood to the electorate, but it is credited with having done the trick. To win the election, he attacked the Democrats as being soft on crime, specifically black criminals, and it carried him to victory.

As president, George H.W. Bush proved remarkably sane and sensible. He made sure his Gulf War was legal. He managed to have Arab states align against another Arab state to get the Israelis to keep their mouths shut, to stop when Iraq was kicked out of Kuwait and, to top it all off, got other countries to pay for it. The economic policies he inherited from Reagan continued to increase the deficit and had driven the country into a recession, so Bush raised taxes. At which point the economy reversed direction. That lost the support of his base and, as a conse-

quence, cost him re-election. Why?

We get a hint from Reagan’s Iran-Contra confession. True Republicans—not RINOs but the base, the enthusiasts, the foot soldiers—can be truly enthused only by reality deniers. When they get even a whiff that their guy recognizes facts and might act on them (such as that tax cuts don’t work, that torture doesn’t work, that compromise is necessary, that government has useful functions, that contraception prevents abortion, that climate change is scientific fact), they lose their enthusiasm. Then their candidate loses.

So if you’re a Republican and you want a candidate who can win, push for someone who lives in the fantasy world that you just saw advertised on Fox News. As for the rest of us, beware the clowns.

Larry Beinhart is the author of *Wag the Dog*.

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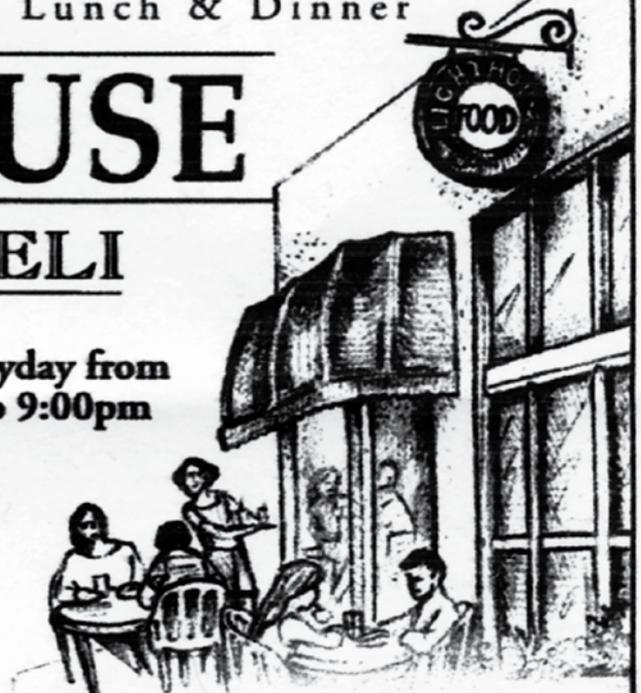
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THE EMERGENCE OF ORWELLIAN NEWSPEAK AND THE DEATH OF FREE SPEECH

JOHN W. WHITEHEAD

How do you change the way people think? You start by changing the words they use.

In totalitarian regimes— a.k.a. police states—where conformity and compliance are enforced at the end of a loaded gun, the government dictates what words can and cannot be used. In countries where the police state hides behind a benevolent mask and disguises itself as tolerance, the citizens censor themselves, policing their words and thoughts to conform to the dictates of the mass mind.

Even when the motives behind this rigidly calibrated reorientation of social language appear well-intentioned—discouraging racism, condemning violence, denouncing discrimination and hatred—invariably, the end result is the same: intolerance, indoctrination and infantilism.

It's political correctness disguised as tolerance, civility and love, but what it really amounts to is the chilling of free speech and the demonizing of viewpoints that run counter to the cultural elite.

As a society, we've become fearfully polite, careful to avoid offense, and largely unwilling to be labeled intolerant, hateful, closed-minded or any of the other toxic labels that carry a badge of shame today. The result is a nation where no one says what they really think anymore, at least if it runs counter to the prevailing views. Intolerance is the new scarlet letter of our day, a badge to be worn in shame

and humiliation, deserving of society's fear, loathing and utter banishment from society.

For those "haters" who dare to voice a different opinion, retribution is swift: they will be shamed, shouted down, silenced, censored, fired, cast out and generally relegated to the dust heap of ignorant, mean-spirited bullies who are guilty of various "word crimes."

We have entered a new age where, as commentator Mark Steyn notes, "we have to tiptoe around on ever thinner eggshells" and "the forces of 'tolerance' are intolerant of anything less than full-blown celebratory approval."

In such a climate of intolerance, there can be no freedom of speech, expression or thought.

Yet what the forces of political correctness fail to realize is that they owe a debt to the so-called "haters" who have kept the First Amendment robust. From swastika-

wearing Neo-Nazi marching through Skokie, Illinois, and under-aged cross burners to "God hates fags" protesters assembled near military funerals, those who have inadvertently done the most to preserve the right to freedom of speech for all have espoused views that were downright unpopular, if not hateful.

Until recently, the U.S. Supreme Court has reiterated that the First Amendment prevents the government from proscribing speech, or even expressive conduct, because it disapproves of the ideas expressed. However, that long-vaunted, Court-enforced tolerance for "intolerant" speech has now given way to a paradigm in which the government can discriminate freely against First Amendment activity that takes place within a government forum. Justifying such discrimination as "government speech," the Court ruled that the Texas Department of Motor Ve-

hicles could refuse to issue specialty license plate designs featuring a Confederate battle flag. Why? Because it was deemed offensive.

The Court's ruling came on the heels of a shooting in which a 21-year-old white gunman killed nine African-Americans during a Wednesday night Bible study at a church in Charleston, N.C. The two events, coupled with the fact that gunman Dylann Roof was reportedly pictured

Indeed, thanks to the rise of political correctness, the population of book burners, censors, and judges has greatly expanded over the years so that they run the gamut from left-leaning to right-leaning and everything in between.

— John W. Whitehead

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POLITICAL LANGUAGE

on several social media sites with a Confederate flag, have resulted in an emotionally charged stampede to sanitize the nation's public places of anything that smacks of racism, starting with the Confederate flag and ballooning into a list that includes the removal of various Civil War monuments.

These tactics are nothing new. This nation, birthed from puritanical roots, has always struggled to balance its love of liberty with its moralistic need to censor books, music, art, language, symbols etc. As author Ray Bradbury notes, "There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches."

Indeed, thanks to the rise of political correctness, the population of book burners, censors, and judges has greatly expanded over the years so that they run the gamut from left-leaning to right-leaning and everything in between. By eliminating words, phrases and symbols from public discourse, the powers-that-be are sowing hate, distrust and paranoia. In this way, by bottling up dissent, they are creating a pressure cooker of stifled misery that will eventually blow.

For instance, the word "Christmas" is now taboo in the public schools, as is the word "gun." Even childish drawings of soldiers result in detention or suspension under rigid zero tolerance policies. On college campuses, trigger warnings are being used to alert students to any material they might read, see or hear that might upset them, while free speech zones restrict anyone wishing to communicate a particular viewpoint to a specially designated area on campus. Things have gotten so bad that comedians such as Chris Rock and Jerry Seinfeld refuse to perform stand-up routines to college crowds anymore.

Clearly, the country is undergoing a nervous

breakdown, and the news media is helping to push us to the brink of insanity by bombarding us with wall-to-wall news coverage and news cycles that change every few days.

In this way, it's difficult to think or debate, let alone stay focused on one thing—namely, holding the government accountable to abiding by the rule of law—and the powers-that-be understand this.

As I document in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, regularly scheduled trivia and/or distractions keep the citizenry tuned into the various breaking news headlines and entertainment spectacles and tuned out to the government's steady encroachments on our freedoms. These sleight-of-hand distractions and diversions are how you control a population, either inadvertently or intentionally, advancing a political agenda without much opposition from the citizenry.

Professor Jacques Ellul studied this phenomenon of overwhelming news, short memories and the use of propaganda to advance hidden agendas. "One thought drives away another; old facts are chased by new ones," wrote Ellul.

Under these conditions there can be no thought. And, in fact, modern man does not think about current problems; he feels them. He reacts, but he does not understand them any more than he takes responsibility for them. He is even less capable of spotting any inconsistency between successive facts; man's capacity to forget is unlimited. This is one of the most important and useful points for the propagandists, who can always be sure that a particular propaganda theme, statement, or event will be forgotten within a few weeks.

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Already, the outrage over the Charleston shooting and racism are fading from the news headlines, yet the determination to censor the Confederate symbol remains. Before long, we will censor it from our thoughts, sanitize it from our history books, and eradicate it from our monuments without even recalling why. The question, of course, is what's next on the list to be banned?

It was for the sake of preserving individuality and independence that James Madison, the author of the Bill of Rights, fought for a First Amendment that protected the "minority" against the majority, ensuring that even in the face of overwhelming pressure, a minority of one—even one who espouses distasteful viewpoints—would still have the right to speak freely, pray freely, assemble freely, challenge the government freely, and broadcast his views in the press freely.

This freedom for those in the unpopular minority constitutes the ultimate tolerance in a free society. Conversely, when we fail to abide by Madison's dictates about greater tolerance for all viewpoints, no matter how distasteful, the end result is always the same: an indoctrinated, infantilized citizenry that marches in lockstep with the governmental regime.

Some of this past century's greatest dystopian literature shows what happens when the populace is transformed into mindless automatons. In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, reading is banned and books are burned in order to suppress dissenting ideas, while televised entertainment is used to anesthetize the populace and render them easily pacified, distracted and controlled.

In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, serious literature, scientific thinking and experimentation are banned as subversive, while critical thinking is discouraged through the use of conditioning, social taboos and inferior education. Likewise, expressions of individuality, independence and morality are viewed as vulgar and abnormal.

And in George Orwell's *1984*, Big Brother does away with all undesirable and unnecessary words and meanings, even going so far as to routinely rewrite history and punish "thoughtcrimes." In this dystopian vision of the future, the Thought Police serve as the eyes and ears of Big Brother, while the Ministry of Peace deals with war and defense, the Ministry of Plenty deals with economic affairs (rationing and starvation), the Ministry of Love deals with law and order (torture and brainwashing),

and the Ministry of Truth deals with news, entertainment, education and art (propaganda). The mottos of Oceania: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

All three—Bradbury, Huxley and Orwell—had an uncanny knack for realizing the future, yet it is Orwell who best understood the power of language to manipulate the masses. Orwell's Big Brother relied on Newspeak to eliminate undesirable words, strip such words as remained of unorthodox meanings and make independent, non-government-approved thought altogether unnecessary. To give a single example, as psychologist Erich Fromm illustrates in his afterword to *1984*:

"The word *free* still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as 'This dog is free from lice' or 'This field is free from weeds'. It could not be used in its old sense of 'politically free' or 'intellectually free', since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed as concepts...."

Where we stand now is at the juncture of Old-Speak (where words have meanings, and ideas can be dangerous) and Newspeak (where only that which is "safe" and "accepted" by the majority is permitted). The power elite has made their intentions clear: they will pursue and prosecute any and all words, thoughts and expressions that challenge their authority.

Having been reduced to a cowering citizenry—mute in the face of elected officials who refuse to represent us, helpless in the face of police brutality, powerless in the face of militarized tactics and technology that treat us like enemy combatants on a battlefield, and naked in the face of government surveillance that sees and hears all—we have nowhere left to go. Our backs are to the walls. From this point on, we have only two options: go down fighting, or capitulate and betray our loved ones, our friends and our selves by insisting that, as a brainwashed Winston Smith does at the end of Orwell's *1984*, yes, 2+2 does equal 5.

John W. Whitehead is an attorney and author who has written, debated and practiced widely in the area of constitutional law and human rights. Whitehead's concern for the persecuted and oppressed led him, in 1982, to establish The Rutherford Institute, a nonprofit civil liberties and human rights organization whose international headquarters are located in Charlottesville, Virginia. www.rutherford.org.

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NO SUCH THING AS FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NICHOLAS TAMPIO

For many politicians and economists, the way to raise America's standing in the global economy is to invest in workers' skills. One way to do that is to make America's community colleges "free" on condition that they adopt certain business-friendly reforms.

In January, for example, the White House announced that "Americans need more knowledge and skills to meet the demands of a growing global economy" and that the solution is "tuition-free community college for responsible students." Along the same lines, Congressional Democrats recently introduced the America's College Promise Act of 2015: The federal government would pay for approximately 75 percent of community colleges expenses, or about \$90 billion over 10 years, while states would finance the rest.

The idea for this plan originated in a paper on the free two year college option written by University of Wisconsin professors Sara Goldrick-Rab and Nancy Kendall. Goldrick-Rab and Kendall contend that the current financial aid system betrays the American dream. Too many poor and middle-class students take on heavy loans that must be paid back even if they don't graduate. This doesn't help them or society. The authors thus propose "redirecting all federal higher education grants and tax benefits" to cover the costs of two years of college that teach "the skills required to connect and innovate in a global economy."

Unfortunately, the Barack Obama free community college plan widens the gap between the kinds of education offered by private and public institutions of higher education. More precisely, the free community college plan cements an oligarchic educational system that Americans should oppose.

Investing in Human Capital

To understand the move to redesign America's community colleges to emphasize skills, we may turn to City University of New York urban education professor Joel Spring's new book, *Economization of Education*.

Spring details how powerful institutions such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, the World Education Forum and the Barack Obama administration all make the same recurrent claims about education. Education grows the economy. Education ends poverty. Education reduces economic inequality. And skills are at the heart of education.

According to proponents of the skills agenda, workers need "hard skills" such as literacy and numeracy and "soft skills" such as grit, perseverance and the ability to delay gratification. Only with such skills will students eventually find gainful employment in the global labor market. What students do not need much of, by contrast, is content knowledge of history, literature or philosophy — or a basis for thinking critically about the current political-economic order.

Spring traces the origin of the skills agenda to the Chicago School of Economics. Nobel Prize-winning economist Gary Becker expresses the core insight of this school in his book *Human Capital*: "The evidence is now quite strong of a close link between investments in human capital and growth. Since human capital is embodied knowledge and skills, and economic development depends on advances in technological and scientific knowledge, development presumably depends on the accumulation of human capital."

According to the skills agenda, the purpose of education is to create human capital. Governments must train

future workers so that they might be hireable by multinational corporations and contribute to economic growth. And if there is economic stagnation, it is because workers lack the requisite skills, not because of economic inequality. Don't bother with a global wealth tax or redistributing wealth in any form; just keep investing in skills until workers earn their share.

A higher educational system geared toward the liberal arts for children of privilege and workforce training for everyone else is not democratic.

The same people pushing the skills agenda would

**A higher
educational
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toward the liberal
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workforce training
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democratic.**

— Nicholas Tampio

like to redefine college as an industry that trains workers for the global economy. Might young adults spend a few years studying great works of art, literature and philosophy before they enter the workplace? Should college students follow their passions and interests, including in activities such as theater, sports or political activism that they will not pursue as a career? Should they even have a little fun in college?

For partisans of the skills agenda, the answer to these questions seems to be no. Or rather, these kinds of options should only be available for families that can afford them.

Liberal Arts For The Few

How else could the federal government spend money to help students go to college? One obvious answer is to augment the Pell Grant program that enables students to choose what kinds of schools they want to attend, including liberal arts colleges or research universities.

Goldrick-Rab and Kendall reject this plan, largely because it steers public money to private institutions that are not accountable to taxpayers. Their free two year college option, on the other hand, “will prioritize providers with the explicit, government-backed mandate to serve the public good.”

Though the America’s College Promise Act of 2015 does not go this far, and will not likely pass a Republican Congress, it is easy to envision the federal government spending more on community college and less on other institutions of higher education.

This is a problem, first, because the community college system will become standardized and geared exclusively towards preparing students to become workers

in the corporate economy. The America’s College Promise Act of 2015 specifies that states must adopt “promising and evidence-based institutional reforms,” “promote alignment between its public secondary school and post-secondary education system” and “reduce the need for remediation and repeated coursework.” These conditions signal that states must align their institutions of higher education with the Common Core State Standards and its emphasis on the skills of literacy and numeracy. Community college, in other words, will become the 13th and 14th grades of Common Core.

Furthermore, the gap between the kinds of education offered to rich and poor children will widen in this country. Students at private schools often study the liberal arts, participate in extracurricular activities, spend their junior year abroad and dedicate themselves full-time to their studies. The America’s College Promise Act of 2015 does not make that possible for community college students, the vast majority of whom do not come from wealthy families. In fact, the Act encourages “occupational skills training programs,” an option that few economic or political elites would choose for their own children.

To be clear, not every student has to go to a liberal arts college to lead a satisfying life. But a higher educational system geared toward the liberal arts for children of privilege and workforce training for everyone else is not democratic. It is oligarchic.

Nicholas Tampio teaches at Fordham University. He is the author of many articles and is writing a book on democracy and national education standards.

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GREECE IN LONG BEACH

GUS SVERKOS

Roughly every other summer since I was around 7 years old we have traveled to Greece to visit our family. My dad's family was from a tiny village outside the city of Argos, called Magoula. It was very small, no more than 12 houses, and this was the house my Grandfather bought and raised my father and all his siblings in. My grandfather was a dairy farmer; not like what you would think of in today's sense but the type that trudged out at 5 AM with a bucket, a stool, and milked the cow by hand. It was an arduous task that took place twice a day, every day, in the heat or in the rain, and even on Christmas.

My grandfather maybe owned 3 or 4 cows at his prime; not bad for living in 1940's Greece. The cows provided a lifeline for the family through fresh milk that could be sold, cheese that could be made, and of course meat for the winter. They could be considered well off just for the fact they had food to eat and a roof over their heads, but life was hard, and they worked even harder.

When I was thirteen I remember standing in the middle of the dairy farm, looking up at the hay bales stacked as high as an apartment building. I walked by these weird looking machines with claw-like mechanisms and over-sized tires. I heard the loud sputtering of the trac-



Photo by Gus Sverkos

tor from a distance. It was rusty Green, and had a yellow logo that read John Deere on the side of it. As it slowly made its way down this makeshift road through the farm it came to an abrupt stop right in front of me. My first cousin nodded his head at me and mumbled some words I could barely hear over the din of the tractor. It was Kosta, my first cousin, who at the time was probably not yet 15.

It's a very hot and dry day with the Greek sun bearing down on me; it's the kind of heat that exhausts you from merely walking 10 feet. Kosta reverses the tractor and lifts the giant fork attached to it, expertly maneuvering under the bales of hay. He jumps off the tractor like an athlete, hops quickly onto the fork holding a large wrapped bale, grabs it and pushes it off onto the ground

where it makes a loud thud when it strikes the grass. He repeats the same maneuver dozens of times per day, along with his other duties. The farm has grown to a size that can accommodate 75 cows, and they need to be milked, fed and watered every day. Kosta is wearing worn out sandals on his extremely tan feet, a tank top we got him from America that reads "California," and a stiff grin. He is a very skinny, actually wiry kid, but he is very strong, farm strong, getting his strength from becoming cross-fit from activities in the real world of work. It's so hot all I can think of is going to the beach. Kosta isn't going to the beach; he's going to work all day.

Today as I stand on the same farm, I am no longer a kid, but a grown man with a wife and a 7-month old baby that my wife and I are raising in Long Beach. I have come to Greece to baptize my son in the family Church in Kefalari. I watch my cousin Kosta pull up on an old motorcycle, one that's so old I'm not even sure of its brand. As he sputters up and releases the kick stand I can't help but think how he would be considered a hipster in Long Beach: his vintage bike, sandals, cut off shorts and cool looking tank top. But Kosta wouldn't know what a hipster is or what's "in." He's been working on the farm since he was thirteen, driving tractors, working the equipment and taking care of the cows, lacking the time and impulse for cultural experiment.

It's milking time and the cows need to be ushered into the barn, with everybody working in tandem. The milking is done by machine now but there is still a lot of work to do. The stench of the cow dung along with the heat makes it almost unbearable, yet Kosta hurriedly chains the cows to their stalls, grabbing feed and directing his two workers to make sure that no cow goes un-milked. As I try to make myself useful by grabbing some hay, I think about how long Kosta has worked here. He's 45 years old and has been working on the farm since at least the age of 13, but more likely 15. That's 30 years! If anybody deserves early retirement he does. When I hear people call Greeks lazy these days (all the rhetoric from northern Europe, and even here in the US, because of the ongoing budget crisis and declining economy), it irks me because I think of Kosta. He's not an exception in Greece, but an essential example! There are many, many like him in Greece. They work every single day, including Christmas.

This summer is quite different than most. Greece is facing economic collapse. The slow bank run has been



Olympic Cafe. Ocean Avenue.

going on for months but now has come to a head. President Tsipras has called a referendum Sunday and it's the topic of everybody's conversation. As I settle into my modern apartment in the heart of Argos I can't help but see all the "For Lease" signs up around the neighborhood. I walk down to what is called a "Periptero," a sort of combined liquor store and Newsstand housed in a very small hut-like



Assumption Exterior

structure. As I am grabbing some water and chips I see a gentleman walk up and grab a pack of cigarettes, telling the cashier, "We'll talk later; I don't have any money today." Not two minutes later I see another gentleman walk up and grab a pack of cigarettes and say "the banks are out of money, I'll pay you later." The best part of this interaction was that the cashier didn't even look up, just nodded and accepted the situation as normal. A bit dumbfounded, I take off down the road to the first ATM I see and insert my card to withdraw a 100 euros. Empty. I skip down the

street to another ATM nestled inside the Bank of Greece, punch in my pin, and the screen denies the transaction. I grab my cell phone and text my brother who is still in Long Beach but who is meeting me in a week. "BRING EUROS!"

Never before in my life have people asked me the question: "How's Greece?" I answer it only from my personal perspective and it's always the same: "Greece is fine!" Greeks have persevered from far worse tragedies and economic reversals, and this one, although very difficult, will not change the soul of this country. They live life through family, Church, music, food, and their love of hospitality. Austerity measures may have become the norm, but removing money and capital from the society won't keep them from enjoying an evening out with friends or from cooking a wonderful dinner with family. It won't keep them from working on the family business that spans generations. At night as I walk the streets of the beautiful neighboring town of Nauplio, the restaurants are fairly busy, the bars are serving cocktails, the "Platia" is full of families pushing strollers and little kids riding bicycles. One thing I know for sure is that whether I return next year or ten years from now, I know where Kosta will be when I get there!

Gus Sverkos is Greek, a member of the sizable Long Beach Greek community, and makes frequent trips to Greece to visit his extended family. He is an attentive follower of the recent events in Greece, as well as an active participant in the activities of the Greek community here. He is an influential organizer of the yearly Greek festival, held over Labor Day weekend. And he is the owner of KafeNeo, one of the finest Greek cafes in Long Beach.

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"It's pretty damn sad. There are so many mass shootings it isn't really news anymore."

"The news is skewed. Like, they never report how many people die everyday in car accidents. How many people are beaten to death every day?"

"I understand, but it's not the same thing. It's not sexy, not sensational enough. Everyone's been warped by what they think is reality. The news is a hamster on a wheel spinning the feed."

"Yeah but biased media is singling out guns."

"You're nuts. Some loony tune mowing down a dozen people at a movie theatre is a violation of public space. A person getting a beating in their front room or an accident on the interstate isn't."

"More people die every year on the roads than by guns."

"When somebody sprays a church or opens fire at a public school, it's terrorism. Rape."

"What about porn?"

"What about it?"

"There's so much porn now that people don't care."

"Hell, the only place you can find good porn these days would be in Congress."

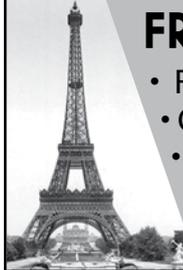
– S.A. Griffin, author of *Dreams Gone Mad With Hope*, and editor of *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*

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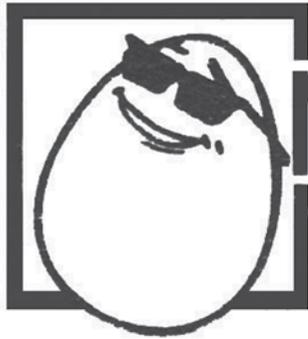
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THE GREEK COUP: LIQUIDITY AS A WEAPON OF COERCION

E L L E N B R O W N

In the modern global banking system, all banks need a credit line with the central bank in order to be part of the payments system. Choking off that credit line was a form of blackmail the Greek government couldn't refuse.

Former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis is now being charged with treason for exploring the possibility of an alternative payment system in the event of a Greek exit from the euro. The irony of it all was underscored by Raul Llargi Meijer, who opined in a July 27th blog:

"The fact that these things were taken into consideration doesn't mean Syriza was planning a coup...If you want a coup, look instead at the Troika having wrestled control over Greek domestic finances. That's a coup if you ever saw one."

Let's have an independent commission look into how on earth it is possible that a cabal of unelected movers and shakers gets full control over the entire financial structure of a democratically elected eurozone member government. By all means, let's see the legal arguments for this.

So how was that coup pulled off? The answer seems to be through extortion. The European Central Bank threatened to turn off the liquidity that all banks—even solvent ones—need to maintain their day-to-day accounting balances. That threat was made good in the run-up to the Greek referendum, when the ECB did turn off the liquidity tap and Greek banks had to close their doors. Businesses were left without supplies and pensioners without food. How was that apparently criminal act justified? Here is the rather tortured reasoning of ECB President Mario Draghi at a press conference on July 16:

"There is an article in the [Maastricht] Treaty that says that basically the ECB has the responsibility to pro-

mote the smooth functioning of the payment system. But this has to do with...the distribution of notes, coins. So not with the provision of liquidity, which actually is regulated by a different provision, in Article 18.1 in the ECB Statute: 'In order to achieve the objectives of the ESCB [European System of Central Banks], the ECB and the national central banks may conduct credit operations with credit institutions and other market participants, with lending based on adequate collateral.' This is the Treaty provision. But our operations were not monetary policy operations, but ELA [Emergency Liquidity Assistance] operations, and so they are regulated by a separate agreement, which makes explicit reference to the necessity to have sufficient collateral. So, all in all, liquidity provision has never been unconditional and unlimited." [Emphasis added.]

In a July 23rd post on *Naked Capitalism*, Nathan Tankus calls this "a truly shocking statement." Why? Because all banks rely on their central banks to settle payments with other banks. "If the smooth functioning of the payments system is defined as the ability of depository institutions to clear payments," says Tankus, "the central

bank must ensure that settlement balances are available at some price."

How the Payments System Works

The role of the central bank in the payments system is explained by the Bank for International Settlements like this:

"One of the principal functions of central banks is to be the guardian of public confidence in money, and this confidence depends crucially on the ability of economic agents to transmit money and financial instruments smoothly and securely through payment and settlement systems....[C]entral banks provide a safe settlement asset and in most cases they operate systems which allow for the transfer of that settlement asset."

Internationally before 1971, this "settlement asset" was gold. Later, it became electronic "settlement balances" or "reserves" maintained

at the central bank. Today, when money travels by check from Bank A to Bank B, the central bank settles the transfer simply by adjusting the banks' respective reserve balances, subtracting from one and adding to the other.

Checks continue to fly back and forth all day. If a bank's reserve account comes up short at the end of the day, the central bank treats it as an automatic overdraft in the bank's reserve account, effectively lending the bank

**In December 2014,
Goldman Sachs
warned the Greek
Parliament that
central bank
liquidity
could be cut off if
the Syriza Party were
elected.**

— Ellen Brown

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the money in the form of electronic “liquidity” until the overdraft can be cleared. The bank can cure the deficit by attracting new deposits or by borrowing from another bank with excess reserves; and if the whole system is short of reserves, the central bank creates more to maintain the liquidity of the system.

The most dramatic exercise of this liquidity function was seen after the banking crisis of 2008, when credit was frozen and banks had largely stopped lending to each other. The US Federal Reserve then stepped in and advanced over \$16 trillion to financial institutions through the TAF (Term Asset Facility), the TALF (Term Asset-backed Securities Loan Facility), and similar facilities, at near-zero interest. Toxic unmarketable assets were converted into “good collateral” so the banks could remain solvent and keep their doors open.

Liquidity as a Tool of Coercion

That is how the Fed sees its role, but the ECB evidently has other ideas about this liquidity tool. Whether a country’s banks are allowed to “access monetary policy operations” is seen by the ECB not as mandatory but as discretionary with the central bank. And as a condition of that access, if a country’s bonds are “below investment grade,” the country must be under an IMF program—meaning it must subject itself to forced austerity measures. According to ECB Vice President Constâncio at the same press conference:

“[W]hen a country has a rating which is below

the investment grade which is the minimum, then to access monetary policy operations, it has to have a waiver. And the waiver is granted if there are two conditions. The first condition is that the country must be under a program with the EU and IMF; and second, we have to assess that there is credible compliance with such a program.” [Emphasis added]

Liquidity is provided only on “adequate collateral”—usually government bonds. But whether the bonds are “adequate” is not determined by their market price. Rather, political concessions are demanded. The government must sell off public assets, slash public services, lay off public workers, and subject its fiscal policies to oversight by unelected bureaucrats who can dictate every line item in the national budget.

Tankus observes: “Europe now has a system where liquidity and insolvency problems can occur and can be deliberately generated (at least in part) by the central bank. Then the Troika can force that country into an “IMF program” if it wants to continue having a functioning banking system. Alternatively, the central bank can choose to simply “suspend convertibility” to the unit of account [i.e. cut off the supply of Euros] and force the write down of deposits [haircuts and bail-ins] until the banks are solvent again.”

Pushed to the Cliff by the Financial Mafia

Were liquidity and insolvency problems intentionally generated in Greece’s case, as Tankus suggests? Let’s review. First there was the derivatives scheme sold to Greece by



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Goldman Sachs in 2001, which nearly doubled the nation's debt by 2005. Then there was the bank-induced credit crisis of 2008, when the ECB coerced Greece to bail out its insolvent private banks, throwing the country itself into bankruptcy. This was followed in late 2009 by the intentional overstatement of Greece's debt by a Eurostat agent who was later tried criminally for it, triggering the first bailout and accompanying austerity measures.

The Greek prime minister was later replaced with an unelected technocrat, former governor of the Bank of Greece and later vice president of the ECB, who refused a debt restructuring and instead oversaw a second massive bailout and further austerity measures. An estimated 90% of the bailout money went right back into the coffers of the banks.

In December 2014, Goldman Sachs warned the Greek Parliament that central bank liquidity could be cut off if the Syriza Party were elected. When it was elected in January, the ECB made good on the threat, cutting bank liquidity to a trickle.

When Prime Minister Tsipras called a public referendum in July at which the voters rejected the brutal austerity being imposed on them, the ECB shuttered the banks.

The Greek government was thus broken Mafia-style at the knees, until it was forced to abandon its national sovereignty and watch its public treasures sold off piece by piece. Suspicious minds might infer that this was a calculated plot designed from the beginning to throw Greece's prized assets onto the auction block, a hostile

takeover and asset stripping for the benefit of those well-heeled entities in a position to purchase them, including the very banks, hedge funds and speculators instrumental in driving up Greek debt and destroying the economy.

No Sovereignty Without Control Over Currency and Credit

In the taped conference call for which Yanis Varoufakis is currently facing treason charges, he exposed the trap that eurozone countries are now in. It seems there is virtually no legal way to break free of the euro and the domination of the troika. The government has no access to the critical data files of its own banks, which are controlled by the ECB.

Varoufakis said this should alarm every EU government. As Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King warned in 1935: "Once a nation parts with the control of its currency and credit, it matters not who makes the nation's laws. Usury, once in control, will wreck any nation."

For a nation to regain control of its currency and credit, it needs a central bank with a mandate to serve the interests of the nation. Banking should be a public utility, serving the economy and the people.

Ellen Brown is an attorney, founder of the Public Banking Institute, and author of the best-selling book *Web of Debt*. Her latest book, *The Public Bank Solution*, explores successful public banking models historically and globally. EllenBrown.com.

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AWAKENING

JOHN O'KANE

She was always challenged to dress for the occasion but tonight's gathering is different. The crowd will include many unknowns so she must choose well. Perhaps a disguise is in order. Often it seemed people wore costumes anyway, their moods and personalities changing with the outfit. Once the naked truth of the birthday suit was layered and layered with trials, you might as well design your way back to transparency. She tried a tailor for a while, a fashion student who claimed to be able to discover the real her. And he might have if he hadn't disappeared one day into a crowd on the beach as they were strolling past a throng of body sculptures. She never saw him again. He left her hanging at a moment when she was beginning to see herself differently, though the picture was a bit blurry.

Someone told her that the woman host was known for putting together creative events that drew a variety of people, many on the edge and also artists, locals and even a few known quantities from outside the area, plus celebrities that could drop in on the spur of the moment. Sometimes, if it was an especially large gathering, unidentifiable groups would pass through the crowd that could either send it into a tribal tizzy or give the scene a different ambiance altogether. And according to her source this event was also a wake, not your typical one but a loose version of an Irish wake. The person apparently died a few weeks ago and some in the community wanted to celebrate a life.

How could she fit into all of that without being too conspicuous? She decides to dress as close as possible to what she imagines most everyone else will be wearing. She loves anticipating situations. Her struggling artist costume should do since it gives her flexibility and can be easily modified with a cosmetic makeover and a few items of clothing in her bag. With this costume as a starter, she could even dress down to look edgy, possibly down-and-out. But it must be mostly black. She has to figure how to look mournful and jubilant at the same time. She'll be ready with the birthday suit if there's any body painting.

She leaves her condo refreshed and full of anticipation. The walk to where the wake is taking place is a mere four blocks away and roughly parallel with the beach, but as she glides toward her goal the setting sun slits through the trees and she weaves through a few backyards to keep it in full view. When she slips into a cul-de-sac and the trees recapture it, she makes her way back to the street. A block or so later it appears again, but as she begins to veer left in pursuit of the glowing orb she comes face-to-face with two silvery ones lurking in the shadows of an adjacent building. She remains frozen in this sightline for a few seconds, curious about who would steal this moment and interrupt her flow. She feels violated, and breaks free without getting a full impression. After several rushed steps she can see a large crowd, much larger than she expected,

gathered on the corner a few blocks ahead. Perhaps the doors haven't opened yet. The crowd suddenly thins and she heads toward it, cuing slowly through the entry with eager bodies.

As she treads inside she feels like some force is editing her into a different space, or dimension. She tries to adapt to the change, but once across the plane she's hit with a noticeable reduction in light, like when entering a dark movie theater. The rise in temperature from the mass of bodies further disorients her, and she has a hard time recognizing anyone, especially since most everyone is dressed in black. Did she end up in the wrong place? It's not like any wake she's ever attended. And aside from the black dress there's not much evidence of mourning. Did she dress appropriately? The heat makes her want to peel away some clothing. Chance to modify her getup and adjust to the surroundings! She looks for an enclave,

closet door, bathroom, but there's only the dense press of barely-visible bodies, mostly alone and wanting to avoid the heat-seeking fields of others. The light paints a piece of face or other body part in flickering rhythm with their movement past the randomly placed wall strobes. She sees a nose-and-mouth pairing she thinks she recognizes, then a partial side profile of a woman who was always on the beach, but they vanish like an illusion from a magic theater.

As her eyes adjust more figures seem familiar. She joins a cluster of movements, feeling momentarily like she's been brought into a mime performance rehearsal un-

**She sees a
nose-and-mouth
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profile of a woman
who was always
on the beach, but
they vanish like
an illusion from a
magic theater.**

— John O'Kane

til she hears voices from further on, just shy of a band in the corner, and shuffles toward them. There's more light here, which is adjacent to several food tables, a feast mostly catered by the customers: casseroles, cheeses, chips, pizza, brownies, pies, cakes and gallons and gallons of jug wine. The musicians are constantly changing, and changing places, playing something that blends into something else but not always harmonically or rhythmically.

"I remember...you!" an attractive male voice intones, while circling around her so quickly that she can't get a fix on him. As he spins off into the performance she wipes the sweat from her brow and tries to follow him. She loses him in the darkness but spies what looks like a restroom nearby and makes her way there. In the anteroom a woman is giving a vigorous head massage to a lean young male wearing a Mohawk. She drops the massage and her head all in one motion as she passes by to the water closet. Once inside she washes her face with cool water and takes several very deep breaths, putting the color and aura back in her persona. She takes off her top, removes the bra, and covers herself with a black clingy wrap from her bag. After a few musses of her hair and chemical refreshers, presto, she's a not-so-struggling apprentice in the party arts. She feels awakened, and bounces back through the anteroom to a heavy-breathing body sculpture.

"Where they keepin the body, babes?" she asks.

"What body?" the surfacing Mohawk groans.

"The one that passed to the other side, the reason why everyone's here tonight," she responds.

"Did someone kick it?" the massager adds.

"Sure. It's a wake! Didn't you know? Isn't that

why just about everyone's wearing black?" she counters, beginning to be more attentive to their movements.

"We thought it was someone's birthday, the woman's who lives here," the Mohawk says. "Who died?"

"I don't know! Just heard it was a wake. You know, one of those Irish things where everybody forgets the past and looks ahead to the future," she adds.

"Sounds good to me!" he says.

"Say, you wanna join us? Lock the door and we'll massage each other into oblivion!" his partner says.

"Maybe some other time when there aren't so many around. I'd hate to get arrested!" she says as she makes her way back into the room, which is more congested and darker.

She circulates through the throng, feeling freer and cooler than before, still expecting to see evidence of mourning somewhere, but sees mostly those tuned into their own frequencies. No sign of the gorgeous encircler. In the corner near the entrance she thinks she sees those silvery orbs again, but they vanish as quickly as they seemed to appear.

Suddenly the lights come on and the music stops. A lanky male with long gray hair makes his way to the front of the room near the band and proceeds to welcome everyone to the service. As he speaks she notices the walls are full of photos, and there are a couple of moveable boards plastered with clippings and memorabilia from a person's life. Several voices erupt before the lanky male can pass the protocols to the participants. They interfere with each other momentarily and sort themselves out into what seems like a proper pecking order. The lanky male

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gives way and testimonials flow from various places within clusters of bodies. Only one comes up front. It's hard to trace the source or see who speaks. Each delivers a passionate commentary on an aspect of this person's novel life, blurbs from states of mind that seem to synchronize. She wishes she had known the person. Perhaps she did! She still doesn't know who it is, or what happened. She can't quite read the names on the visuals. Everyone's senses are awakening. She feels with a little boost she can get there too. They seem to be breaking out of their personal obsessions into a bonded group mind. It must have been an amazing human being who touched many lives.

The lights go back out and there erupts a string of indecipherable sounds, possibly chants, that don't even seem to be from the room, but perhaps they're piped in through speakers attached to the very high ceiling, or placed under the floor near a register. Maybe they're muffled through some archaic tech-toy recorder hidden in someone's bag. It could be sounds beamed from beyond in a bad go at suggesting the nether world like in a very low-budget erotic film.

Of course the subject could be speaking from the dead! She heard this site was haunted. It used to be some famous café from the 50s where lots of extravagant partying and even orgies took place, and where there had been several murders too, many of them unsolved from what she'd been told. For a very brief moment she does seem to feel a cold draft. Or did she just want that to finish off the

moment?

The sounds cease and she steps toward the other side of the room. Just beyond the restroom she sees a stairway, noticing a loft above. Perhaps that's where the noises came from. She wants to go up there but it appears dark, no signs of life. She turns around and smack into a face that's familiar, but she can't quite place it. His eyes could be those she saw along the beach, but he moves on too quickly for her to be sure. She begins to follow him, wanting to know who it is, but loses him in the crowd, which is now even more dense, and noisier. The whole scene begins to resemble an extended kin network.

A group of three whisks by her, chattering something about the honored guest, and heads up the stairs to the loft. She waits a minute and follows them, stopping before the top, listening carefully to their conversations, not wanting to crash the party, hovering momentarily near the edge.

To her surprise, there are already several in the space, which is quite large. The three newcomers have blended right in to what seems like a tribe within the kin network. She thinks she recognizes some of the voices.

"Last time I saw him...he was over at Angie's place by the canals...was tryin to get it together, and get enough scratch so he could make it back to..."

"...yeah he was always gonna make it back to somewhere but found his niche on the beach...just didn't know where all that was going!"

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A heated conversation below her muddles the rest of the sentence. As the responsible couple begins to amble up the stairs, she edges into the loft space just ahead of them, a spacious high-ceilinged room with skylights. It’s clustered with connections and apparent intimacies. Several of the occupants are hubs of touches and graces pumping conversations. The lights are quite low, befitting the occasion. There’s a whiff of sweetness, a distinctive smell that suggests several substances stewing. The effect, when combined with the low light, leaves her feeling languorous. The barely audible background music reinforces this feeling. It sounds like Robert Plant’s light-metal twanging of “Cashmere.”

She moves toward a cluster in the corner, and snaps out of it as the conversations begin a reverse cascade toward silence. In this brief moment everyone stares at her, like she has interrupted a private ceremony. They look around the room at each other like they’re preparing for a shootout. Just as quickly someone utters a few sounds and the conversations snowball back to chattering level, dissolving the tension. She weaves through bodies toward the corner, trying to fix on the faces. She notices that a few are partially covered or painted, and many have full disguises, like she’s wandered into a costume party. Many of them reference death but not in a familiar way.

One that jumps out at her is a skeleton face with a brightly-colored Jack-in-the-Box smile cleverly painted on it. A zombie comes out of the shadows adorned in reli-

gious icons and supporting a Cardinal’s crown. Another is noosed with a rosary sculpture that juts upward. A woman in a veil with only her eye slits showing, is topless. A couple wearing gauzy mummy wraps with loose ends inviting perusers to unwrap them, begins embracing everyone at random. She moves toward the veil, wanting to channel a kindred spiritress, when a woman approaches her. With help from one of those infomercial makeovers she could be her long-lost older sister.

“Do you know the master of ceremonies?” she asks.

“You mean the speaker downstairs?”

“The dearly departed whose ashes are with the sand crabs!”

“Never had the pleasure, but would...”

“...me neither but he was special, one of those beings you meet once in a lifetime that can give you pause about what it all means,” the woman with the veil says while nipping toward them.

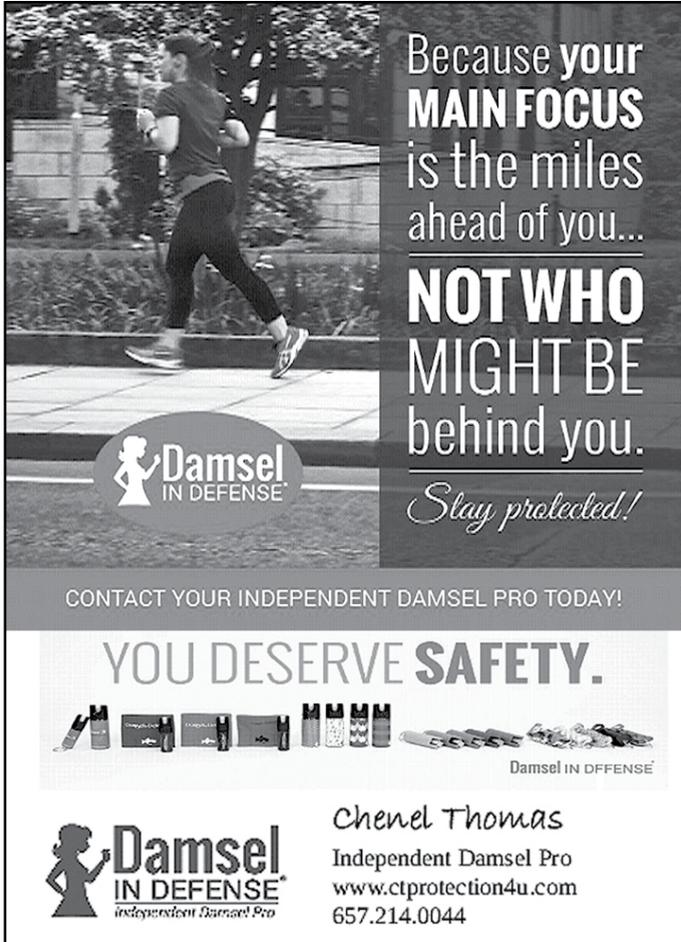
“He’s not gone...only transitioning to another place we’ll all be someday,” the older woman responds.

“I made love to him on the beach under the stars last night...he made the waves rise,” adds the veil.

“He’s only off to a place with other dead matter,” the younger woman interjects. “That religious stuff is...”

“...that doesn’t fit our celebration...it’s about life...the wake that forgets the negative about the specific person,” the older woman retorts. “And it especially encourages the awakening of the mind and senses for the participants...gives them practice in facing the meaning of death. Periodically we make up a deceased person and their history and hold a wake without telling the public they never existed. We also hold wakes for lost souls who are alive but not known very well locally. They like to see how people respond to them so they can change their behavior and have a more meaningful life...learn how to adapt their fantasies and desires to the wishes of their jury of peers. It’s kind of a layman’s execution of Cooley’s Looking Glass Self. Interested in applying?”

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CAN MARK BITTMAN COAX FOODIES TO THE PICKET LINES?

AMY B. DEAN

At a time when many of us check assiduously to make sure the food we eat is organic, grass fed and pesticide-free, we tend to pay less attention to whether the people who harvest, prepare and serve our food are treated fairly.

Advocates in the food justice movement have been working for decades to get people to do just that, and they have now found an influential ally in *New York Times* food columnist Mark Bittman.

Few writers have done more to popularize the food justice movement than Bittman, who wrote the best-selling tome *How To Cook Everything*. Through his weekly recipe column, “The Minimalist,” Bittman introduced millions of people to the idea that they don’t have to forsake their health for culinary pleasure. Since his move to the paper’s opinion pages, Bittman has become increasingly outspoken about the political issues that make it difficult for everyone, regardless of their economic background, to eat healthy food—and he has done a remarkable job of making connections between healthy eating and the larger movement for a more equitable society.

Food Activist

Bittman’s increasingly political writing has not come out of the blue. An active participant in the protest movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Bittman always believed that the different causes he supported—feminism, anti-war, black power

and the poor people’s movements—were all pointing to a larger critique of market-driven society.

“There’s a reason we all are involved in these different struggles, but the reason is a common reason,” says Bittman. “I worked in community organizing for a number of years. The job was to try to unify people who thought the environment was the most important thing with people who were anti-war, with women’s liberation people, with people who thought

him. “I cooked, but I didn’t think of food as a political subject,” he now recalls.

In his mid-twenties, Bittman worked as an organizer with the now-defunct Somerville Tenants Union. Then, after moving to New Haven with his wife and their newborn daughter, he quit politics to concentrate on cooking, cleaning and other chores to support his family. The skills he cultivated in the process assisted greatly in his transformation from restaurant critic of the alternative weekly *The New Haven Advocate* to renowned bestselling author.

Bittman has used his platform to call attention to the exploitation of farm laborers, the need for a universal basic income and the connections between healthy eating and higher wages.

After the success of his 1992 cookbook *Fish*, the *New York Times* came calling. “The Minimalist” debuted in 1997. From the beginning of Bittman’s writing career in 1980 through the opening years of the new century, his political sensibilities did not make a significant appearance in his work. It was only as leading food justice journalists such as Eric Schlosser and Michael Pollan began exploring the institutional and systemic causes of America’s dietary habits that Bittman realized he had more to say about food than recipes.

Shopping Our Way Out

Bittman’s current *New York Times* column clarifies the connections between eating well and activists’ efforts to strengthen the wages and workplace rights of the majority of Americans. Bittman has used this platform to call attention to the exploitation of farm laborers, the need for a universal basic income and the connections between healthy eating and higher wages.

Bittman argues that these battles cannot be won in our grocery stores alone. “We’re not going to

It was only as leading food justice journalists such as Eric Schlosser and Michael Pollan began exploring the institutional and systemic causes of America’s dietary habits that Bittman realized he had more to say about food than recipes.

— Amy B. Dean

alternative health was the most important thing.”

In 1969, when he was still a student activist, Bittman began cooking for himself out of necessity: The New York City native found the culinary options in his college town of Worcester, Massachusetts, to be distressingly limited. Although he took to cooking with gusto, he did not consider his new pastime’s place in the larger drama he saw unfolding around

shop our way out of this situation,” says Bittman. “To the extent people eat more fruits and vegetables and, especially, support local agriculture, they’re making a difference. But... unless we see one 200 million people behaving that way, I don’t think that’s the fastest or most efficient way to change the system.”

Instead, he argues, we need the kind of collective actions that gets people out of their homes, captures headlines, changes the media narrative and inspires politicians to act.

As an example of this kind of action Bittman recently held up the movement for a \$15 minimum wage and its steady advance in the nation’s largest cities as a cause that was shrugged off as unrealistic in 2013, but has now made a demonstrable difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

This movement’s successes are based in “having workers come off of work and march on a picket line,” says Bittman. “It’s visible and noisy and crowd-gathering, and that

works well. If consumers were to join striking fast food workers or Walmart workers on the picket lines, if [they] swelled from 200 people to 2,000 people, that would make a huge difference.”

Bittman also notes the effectiveness of boycotts waged by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. This alt-labor group won significant wage increases for farmworkers by harnessing direct action—in the form of work stoppages and hunger strikes—along with attention-grabbing boycotts that targeted specific corporations, such as Taco Bell, holding these brands accountable for the conditions in their supply chain.

“That was really innovative because [the campaigners] went directly to consumers and asked consumers to join them in boycotting,” says Bittman. “That led to the formation of an agreement between tomato workers and tomato growers in Florida, which profoundly changed the lives of the tomato pickers.”

Bittman has recently been

working with the Berkeley Food Institute to craft a wide-reaching message that will make the food justice movement more accessible. His work in California aims to find issues that will get people fired up and willing to take to the streets—or at least to call their local politicians.

As in his student days, Bittman argues that making connections is critical. “We need to have food that treats the earth, and treats labor, and treat eaters better,” he says. “We have to have an economic system that treats workers better. All of these things are true. Whether they’re possible or not remains to be seen, but the current situation is untenable. So we have to work for something better.”

Amy B. Dean is a fellow of the Century Foundation and a principal of ABD Ventures, a consulting firm that works to develop innovative strategies for organizations devoted to social change. She is a co-author, with David Reynolds, of *A New New Deal: How Regional Activism Will Reshape the American Labor Movement*.

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NIKE'S GIRL EFFECT

MARIA HENGEVELD

The sportswear brand Nike talks a big game about how economically empowered adolescent girls are the most potent weapon against poverty. The rationale behind the girl effect theory is that teen girls have the unique potential to stop poverty before it starts. As a Nike Foundation video explains, the answer to poverty should not be sought in government but in the earning power of impoverished adolescents.

This optimistic idea has been making the rounds since Maria Eitel launched the concept in her position at the helm of the Nike Foundation in 2008. Once a special assistant for media affairs for President George H.W. Bush, Eitel has become the world's leading authority on poverty reduction and gender equality. Even President Barack Obama has called her a pioneer in her field.

By funding and partnering with some of the world's most influential nongovernmental organizations and institutions—including USAID, Britain's Department for International Development, the World Bank and the United Nations—and promoting the theory on *The Huffington Post* and *The Guardian*, Eitel has turned the girl effect into common development sense. Today millions of dollars of development aid and corporate social responsibility budgets are spent on programs that implement girl effect principles, many of them in Africa. They're rooted in Eitel's belief that the world's biggest problems need to be tackled by young entrepreneurs who should keep existing systems intact and improve them from within.

The problem is that the girl effect is a myth. In fact, it funnels

girls and the NGOs that work for social change into a web of corporate dependency and away from the awareness and human rights education they need to challenge the issues that fuel poverty.

Invisible Girls

Girls, the story goes, are invisible, undervalued by their families and not yet recognized as economic actors. What makes them unique is that, compared with their allegedly more selfish brothers, educated girls

never learn that tax evasion—which more and more development experts and women's rights advocates recognize as one of the most destructive forces of corruption, exploitation and theft—is directly responsible for high levels of poverty, low education budgets and inadequate health services, particularly among women and girls. Corporations are widely seen as the main culprits here (and many NGOs say that if companies want to solve poverty, they should begin by paying income tax) because they often manipulate profits, pressure poor governments to grant them tax breaks and channel these untaxed profits to havens abroad.

Africa has the highest proportion of (private) assets held abroad, which is why some critics want to force corporations and other elites to pay their fair share. Contrary to Eitel, they believe that governments are best equipped to fix this injustice and that it is the responsibility of the state to provide health care and education.

Nike's girl effect is a corporate fable that keeps the system intact, turns girls into consumers, expands market power and diffuses blame.

Nike and Eitel can't possibly be unaware of the unique potential of corporations to unleash such a

tax effect. They have a rich history of abusing loopholes and tax holidays abroad and in the U.S. Without such tax strategies, it's unlikely that Nike could have made \$27.8 billion in revenue last year.

Self-empowerment

Labor rights and living wages aren't addressed in the foundation's girl effect program either. Nike's supply chain vividly illustrates how labor rights training can boost women's quality of life.

In the 1980s, it was largely due to the efforts of the Korean Women Workers Association that employ-

Nike's girl effect is a corporate fable that keeps the system intact, turns girls into consumers, expands market power and diffuses blame.

— Maria Hengeveld

reinvest nearly three times as much of their income into their communities and are willing to pay for their family's medical bills and school fees and, eventually, drive their countries' economic growth.

Eitel and her movement insist that helping girls become economically productive is smart economics and a matter of human rights. The girl effect's economic empowerment principles promote financial literacy education, business development training and access to credit and savings accounts.

However, there are significant blind spots in this program. Girls will

ees of Nike’s partner factories pushed up their wages, as women’s studies professor Cynthia Enloe wrote in her 2004 book *The Curious Feminist*. Nike and its contractors retaliated by moving much of their business to China and Indonesia, where wages were lower and workers were less likely to organize.

More recent studies suggest that high levels of labor rights awareness also helped thousands of Vietnamese Nike workers win better wages. Even though most of these workers still make less than the living wage and fare worse than their colleagues in state-led enterprises, without labor rights awareness, we probably wouldn’t have seen the five-year strike wave that spread across large factories in Vietnam from 2006 to 2011.

Instructing girls to pay for their families’ health and education with micro credit and pushing entrepreneurship and saving schemes on them without teaching them about living wages, labor rights and their rights to social services let governments off the hook.

That’s why the girl effect is a corporate fable that keeps the sys-

tem intact, turns girls into consumers, expands market power and diffuses blame.

To Eitel’s credit, the stereotypical unproductive girl is no longer invisible. Development elites are talking about her and pressuring NGOs to use Nike’s playbook to save her from her fate for the benefit of all.

Less visible are the corporate practices and untaxed offshore assets that impoverish people all around the world. The woman who has, as a result, fallen off the activist and media radars is the woman whose cheap labor pays for Eitel’s salary and her philanthropic ventures. Unlike 20 years ago, very few global women’s groups are talking about her.

Coincidence? Perhaps. It is nonetheless instructive to note that in 2011, two PR strategists who analyzed Nike’s communication strategies suggested that Eitel’s most important duty, after joining Nike in 1998, was to “reposition the company to the emotionally charged sweatshop controversy” by engaging with the media and with the lot of poor women in developing countries.

To protect Nike’s brand equity (after the anti-sweatshop campaigns), they argued, Eitel and her team emphasized “the company’s commitment to economically empowering individual women in underdeveloped countries and thus to respond indirectly to charges that it routinely tolerates the violation of its Asian female workers’ human rights.”

The girl effect addresses critical issues such as reproductive health, child marriage and access to school. Still, the dogmatic assumptions about female liberation on which it rests remain flawed. Girls are citizens, not consumers or entrepreneurs. Their equality should not rely on business logic, and the work of NGOs should not be constrained by the agendas of media-savvy corporations. If the conversation on women and poverty would talk less about whose investments pay off and more about who needs to pay up, we might finally see some substantial change.

Maria Hengeveld is a sociologist and researcher at Columbia. She blogs at *Africa Is A Country*.

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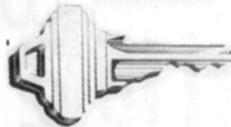
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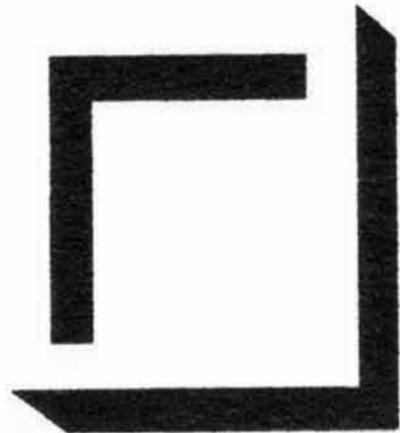
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MARRIAGE THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE OUR SOCIETY NEEDS

JOHN BORNEMAN AND
LAURIE KAIN HART

In a 2004 op-ed in *The Washington Post*, we anticipated that the U.S. Supreme Court would end up granting same-sex couples the right to marry nationwide. We argued that doing so would not destroy the essential principles of marriage but advance a shared value of inclusive civil rights and an ethics of care. Late last month, in *Obergefell et al. v. Hodges*, a majority of the Supreme Court justices came to the same conclusion.

The move makes good sense. Anthropological investigations over the last century have shown that marriage is an elastic institution. Its meaning and value not only vary greatly across societies but also evolve over time in response to new ethical challenges and social needs. The most consequential variable with regard to the institution of Western marriage has been the division of labor between the sexes. As women gained access to education, employment and civil status, they were no longer regarded as a fundamentally weaker and dependent sex.

This, in turn, undermined traditional assumptions about marriage as a heterosexual institution based in radical difference and inequality between the sexes. In the *Obergefell* ruling, the majority opinion wisely heeded that cue and displaced sexual difference from its anachronistic place in the legal construal of marriage, focusing instead on a central evolving constitutional matter: the extension of human rights to histori-

cally disenfranchised groups. “They [same-sex partners] ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law,” wrote Justice Anthony Kennedy in his opinion for the majority, invoking the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. “The Constitution grants them that right.” Dignity—a principle notably enshrined in the very first article of the postwar, post-Shoah German Constitution—affirms a concept of the individual beyond the reach of

marriage rooted in sexual difference and characterized by an allegedly “unvarying” profile across all millennia and civilizations—“the Kalahari bushmen and the Han Chinese, the Carthaginians and the Aztecs.” The dissenters, however, define marital union in the image of their selective idea of its core features, ignoring the ethnographic and historical facts of the diversity of marital forms. Certainly only a minority of human civilizations (chiefly Roberts’ own) sanction

monogamous heterosexual nuclear couples marrying autonomously for love. An anthropological perspective instead starts not with our own habits but with the total range of marriage forms, looking at the broader social context in which marriage functions and has meaning.

Traditionally, marrying outside the immediate family but within a restricted or preferred community has been the norm, but marriage has also been used to create broader alliances of kinship and to keep the peace or resolve disputes through the exchange of spouses between tribes, states and ethnic or kin groups. Today in the U.S., marriage establishes a social unit of singular and exclusive affective bonds. It connects that social unit to a limited network of kin. All this is accomplished by means of a ceremony—almost magical in its instant effects—that must be endorsed and registered by the state.

Homosexual and heterosexual relations will increasingly resemble each other in their problems and in their solutions.

Although with modernity kinship becomes a theoretically domestic, private matter and seems to have lost much of its alliance function, it is still also highly political. In conflict zones around the world, cross-group marriages now shrink or disappear

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— John Borneman and Laurie Kain Hart

social distinction and discrimination. Referring to dignity may be one of the more lasting effects of *Obergefell* because it distances the legal system from the enforcement of narrowly defined moral opprobrium.

By contrast, Chief Justice John Roberts’ dissent insists that the court must defer to a definition of

under political pressure. Principles of descent, another key function of kinship, are of acute interest to the state. They regulate inheritance, confer legitimacy and function as a tool for the consolidation of wealth among elites. In the European Middle Ages, the church—at the time the most powerful public institution—became highly interested in kinship, restricting the scope of whom one could marry, encouraging celibacy and attracting inheritances (especially those of widows). Today U.S. marriages have become increasingly stratified by class as the gap between the rich and poor widens; people tend to marry within their economic and educational niche, and elites lobby to consolidate wealth through favorable tax inheritance laws.

What men or women do in bed with each other is not, and never has been, particularly relevant to the social processes we have described above. The decision of Obergefell is, to be sure, the victory of a sexual emancipation movement, which, like the feminist movement, may now have achieved the dubious premature

pleasure of its dissolution. Sex haunts this decision, but it was not central in the legal text. If there is one constant to human history, it is that sexualities remain plural, polymorphous and resistant to political control.

Seen in the long run, same-sex marriages will now enter into a rapidly changing dynamic of kinship in which sex, love, procreation and child care are no longer linked by a single social logic. Extending marital rights to same-sex couples will not alter the waning social significance and statistical prevalence of marriage. We are still faced with the conundrum of how to order our intimate lives, how to conceptualize and act on our mortality, how to care for one another and specify what the public sphere has to do with it.

The majority decision acknowledges the already advanced break in the links among sex, procreation and marriage. Conservative ideology opposes this trend but, in its wish to re-establish a lost moral order based on exclusions, misses the real issue. Americans may still insist that marriage is about love, but love and

sex are subject to and manipulated by market norms justified by a voluntarist, libertarian ideology of free choice. Advertising turns sex into a commodity, and capitalism scrambles to market whatever sells. Young people learn how to imagine love and desire from the market, not from the family.

Same-sex marriages will therefore do little to solve the modern social problems of loneliness, isolation, the instability of the family and the marketing of sex. Homosexual relations and heterosexual relations will increasingly resemble each other in their problems and in their solutions.

In the future, we can expect the social recognition of greater diversity, with the male/female and straight/gay binaries becoming pluralized. But for now, the victory is more limited: a legitimization of homosexual marriage as an alternative form of love and care, deserving of legal protection and social support.

John Borneman teaches at Princeton. Kain Hart teaches at Haverford College.



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**ERIC HOLDER
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LEE FANG

After failing to criminally prosecute any of the financial firms responsible for the market collapse in 2008, former Attorney General Eric Holder is returning to Covington & Burling, a corporate law firm known for serving Wall Street clients.

The move completes one of the more troubling trips through the revolving door for a cabinet secretary. Holder worked at Covington from 2001 right up to being sworn in as attorney general in February 2009. And Covington literally kept an office empty for him, awaiting his return.

The Covington & Burling client list has included four of the largest banks, including Bank of America, Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase and Wells Fargo. Lobbying records show that Wells Fargo is still a client of Covington. Covington recently represented Citigroup over a civil lawsuit relating to the bank's role in Libor manipulation.

Covington was also deeply involved with a company known as MERS, which was later responsible for falsifying mortgage documents on an industrial scale. "Court records show that Covington, in the late 1990s, provided legal opinion letters needed to create MERS on behalf of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase and several other large banks," according to an investigation by Reuters.

The Department of Justice under Holder not only failed to pursue criminal prosecutions of the banks re-

sponsible for the mortgage meltdown, but in fact de-prioritized investigations of mortgage fraud, making it the "lowest-ranked criminal threat," according to an inspector general report.

For insiders, the Holder decision to return to Covington was never a mystery. Timothy Hester, the chairman of Covington, told the National Law Journal that Holder's return to the firm had been "a project" of his ever since Holder left to join the administration in 2009. When the firm moved to a new

people hugs and shaking hands." As Covington prepared for Holder's return, the firm continued to represent clients before the Department of Justice. For instance, Covington negotiated with the department on behalf of GlaxoSmithKline for a plea agreement in 2010.

Holder's critics charge that he made a career out of institutionalizing "Too Big to Prosecute" rules within the department. In 1999, as a deputy attorney general, Holder authored a memo arguing that officials should consider the "collateral consequences" when prosecuting corporate crimes. In 2012, Holder's enforcement chief, Lanny Breuer, admitted during a speech to the New York City Bar Association that the department may go easy on certain corporate criminals if they believe prosecutions may disrupt financial markets or cause layoffs. "In some cases, the health of an industry or the markets are a real factor," Breuer said.

Rather than face accountability for their failures, the incentive structure of modern Washington is designed to reward both men. Breuer left the department in 2013 to rejoin Covington. Holder is set to become among the highest-earning partners at the firm, with compensation in the seven or eight figures.

Lee Fang is a journalist with a longstanding interest in how public policy is influenced by organized interest groups and money. He was the first to uncover and detail the role of the billionaire Koch brothers in financing the Tea Party movement. Email: lee.fang@theintercept.com.

As Covington prepared for Holder's return, the firm continued to represent clients before the Department of Justice.

- Lee Fang

building last year, it kept an 11th-story corner office reserved for Holder.

James Garland, Holder's former deputy chief of staff, who rejoined Covington in 2010, told the Law Journal that when Covington's partners gathered to welcome Holder back four weeks ago, "He was so busy giving

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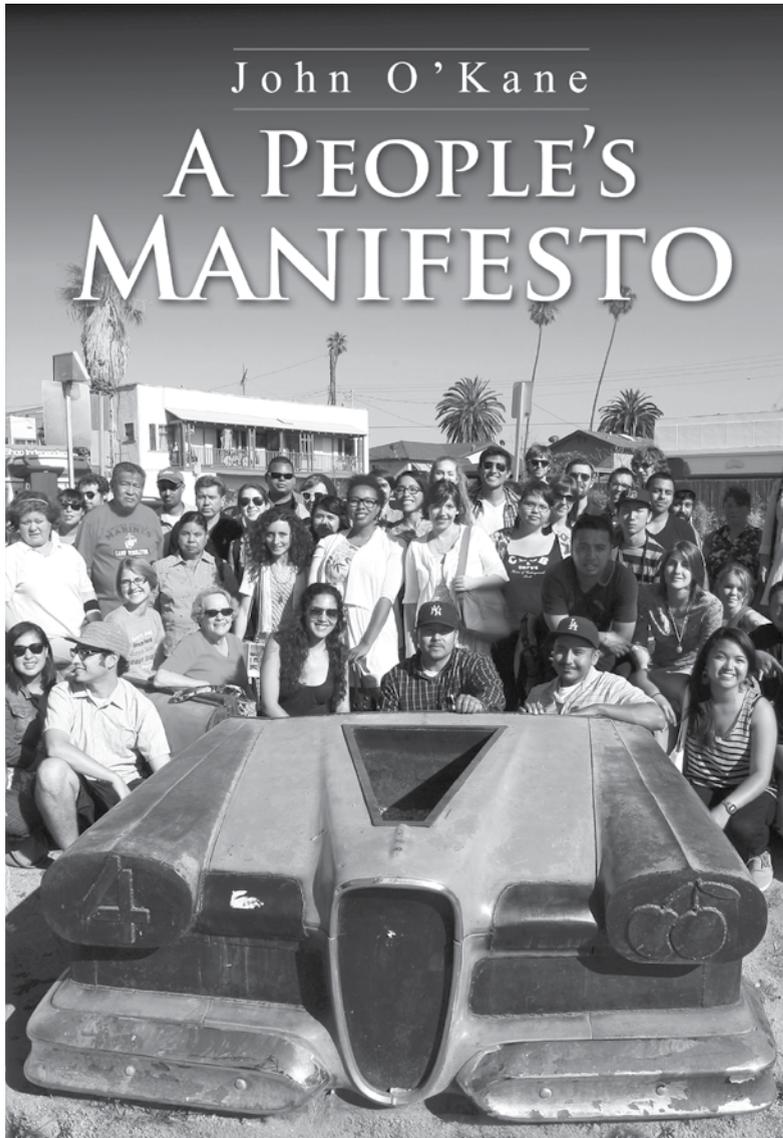


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Publisher of *AMASS* Magazine Releases *A People's Manifesto*

2015-05-13 www.everythinglongbeach.com/publisher-of-amass-magazine-releases-a-peoples-manifesto/



A People's Manifesto, by John O'Kane, editor and publisher of *AMASS* Magazine, is a new book just published by SPD Books. It focuses on the opinions and perspectives of the people, ordinary citizens, non-experts, outsiders, those without influence, about the state of American society over the past several years, especially since the Great Recession of 2008. More specifically, the author engages in a series of conversations with a diverse number of people from varying backgrounds on the issues: the economy and jobs, political polarization, campaign reform, the elite domination of political life, the Tea Party phenomenon, inequality, immigration, austerity and the ongoing budget crises, and foreclosures, among others.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part compiles these conversations in an easy-to-grasp journalistic style, at times reading like a novel. All of the conversations are with enlightened Long Beach citizens from differing lifestyles and political orientations. A significant part of these conversations includes a focus on Occupy Long Beach and its efforts to raise awareness about these issues above, as well as its relation to other activists in the area from a wide spectrum of age groups. The cover is a photo taken at Cherry and 4th streets of a group of local activists ranged around the remains of an Edsel (taken by long-time Long Beach photographer Slobodan Dimitrov). The second is a sampling of op-ed pieces from

Huffingtonpost and other publications over the course of the past six years or so about the issues that the citizens in part one discuss and react to. These are in chronological order and in response to the post-recession crisis as it evolved, and mostly left in their original form.

The book's tone and substance are shaped by a striking irony. Populism is all the rage these days. Bloggers and journalists from across the political spectrum are obsessed with speaking for the people, citizens who have become victims of the Great Recession of 2008. But these very-same citizens can rarely speak for themselves. One of the quite remarkable insights to come from all this is that citizens without access to insider "facts" can make sense of these times and pass along knowledge—not mere information—that motivate others to learn and act. And they can express their opinions through a variety of venues, especially op-ed writing.

The book is 200 pages long, and priced at \$24.95. It can be purchased at all fine bookstores, as well as online at Amazon and other sites.

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