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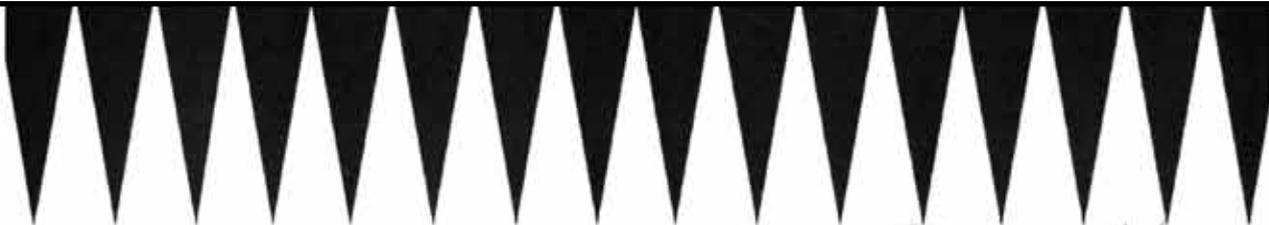
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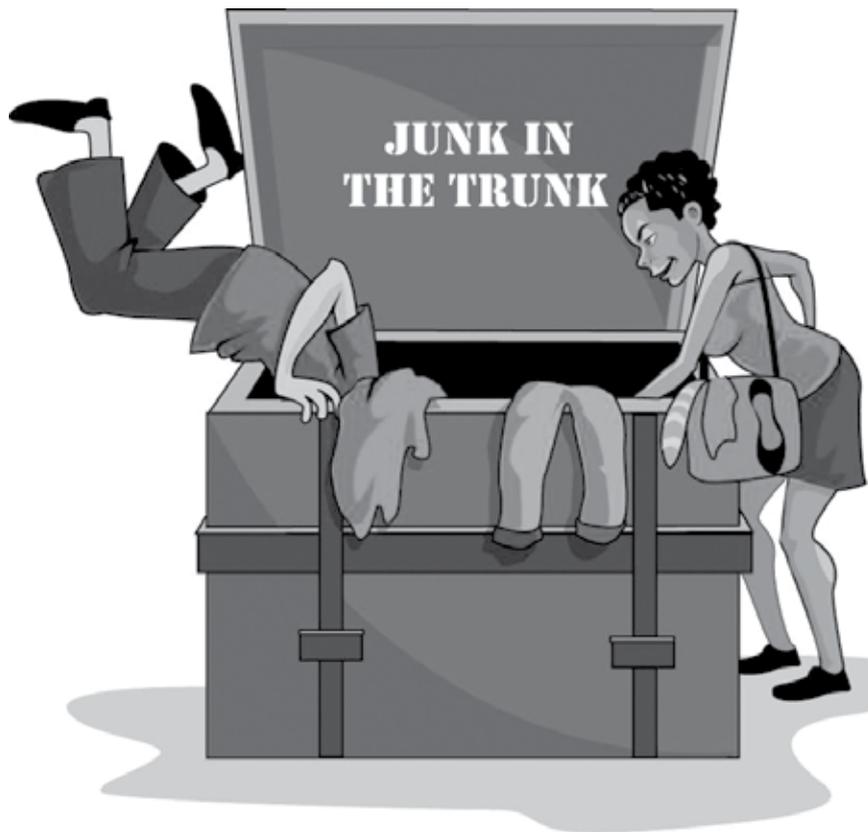


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"AMERICA FIRST"

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## "America First"

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# STEERING TRUMP BACK TO ENDLESS WAR

DANIEL LAZARE

**W**ell, that didn't take long, did it? The Trump administration hadn't even reached its two-week mark when it surrendered a major portion of its independence and fell in behind the reigning Washington orthodoxy. The turning point came at the United Nations Security Council a few weeks ago when Ambassador Nikki R. Haley blasted Russia for the upsurge of violence in the eastern Ukraine.

Haley's statement could hardly have been stronger. She not only assailed Russia for its "aggressive actions," but described them as "a replay of far too many instances over many years" when it has behaved the same. She called for a "clear and strong condemnation," declared that the crisis would not end "until Russia and the separatists it supports respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," and demanded the return of Crimea as well.

"Crimea is a part of Ukraine," Haley said. "Our Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns control over the peninsula to Ukraine."

This must be disappointing news for *New York*

*Times* columnist Paul Krugman, among others, who has long bashed Trump as a "Siberian candidate" and on Friday accused him of stirring up trouble with everyone except puppeteer Putin. "The war with China will, it seems, have to wait," he wrote. "First comes Australia. And Mexico. And Iran. And the European Union. (But never Russia.)" Thanks to Haley's stirring call to arms, it looks like Moscow is now in America's sights as well.

What does it mean? Simply that Trump's foreign policy has already lost an engine before it has gotten off the ground. The man is a bully, a xenophobe, and more than a bit crazy to boot. But despite all that – or perhaps because of it – he has shown an ornery streak in some of his thinking about foreign policy that placed him sharply at odds with Washington's vast pro-war establishment. He favored a rapprochement with Russia, for example, as

well as a new approach in Syria in which the problem of Bashar al-Assad would be put off in order to concentrate on fighting ISIS and Al Qaeda.

As he told the *Times* last March: "Well, I thought the approach of fighting Assad and ISIS simultaneously was madness and idiocy. They're fighting each other and yet we're fighting both of them. You know, we were fighting both of them. I think that our far bigger problem than Assad is ISIS, I've always felt that. Assad is – you know I'm not saying Assad is a good man, 'cause he's not, but our far greater problem is not Assad, it's ISIS."

This was not very different from what Bernie Sanders was saying about the dangers of U.S.-imposed regime change in Syria, but utterly at odds with Hillary Clinton's insistence that Assad had to go because he was somehow aiding ISIS and Al Qaeda when in fact he was engaged in a life-or-death struggle with both entities.

## One Slim Reed

So amid all the bluster and braggadocio, there was one slim reed to hold onto: Trump seemed to be capable of at least a modicum of realism when it came to one or two trouble spots around the globe.

But then came the post-election back-tracking. On Nov. 18, Trump named Michael Flynn, a former chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency, as his national security adviser even though Flynn is renowned for his fierce anti-Russian views. Two weeks later, he named the no-less-hawkish James Mattis as his Secretary of Defense. At his confirmation hearing, Mattis described Russia as a "principal" threat to U.S.

interests and declared that the U.S.-led world order was "under the biggest attacks since World War II from Russia, terrorist groups, and China's actions in the South China Sea."

After once predicting that Clinton's proposal for a Syrian no-fly zone would "end up in World War III," Trump also vowed to fix "what's going on in Syria" by building "safe zones ... so people can have a chance." Then recently he telephoned King Salman of Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of neighboring Abu Dhabi to obtain their political and financial support.

"The President requested and the King agreed to support safe zones in Syria and Yemen," a White House statement said, "as well as supporting other ideas to help the many refugees who are displaced by the ongoing con-

**Trump seemed  
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realism when it came  
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trouble spots  
around the globe.**

– Daniel Lazare

flicts.” Where Hillary Clinton had called for just one no-fly zone, Trump was now committing to two.

As if that wasn’t bad enough, Trump also gave the go-ahead for the disastrous raid on a reputed Al Qaeda hideout in southern Yemen that ended with one American commando killed along with as many as 30 civilians, including the eight-year-old daughter of Anwar al-Awlaki, the Al Qaeda propagandist and U.S. citizen who was eliminated in a drone strike in 2011.

Trump allowed Flynn – whose resemblance to Brigadier General Jack D. Ripper, a character in “Dr. Strangelove,” grows ever more striking – to announce that the administration was “officially putting Iran on notice” for conducting a ballistic missile test and for backing Houthi rebels who a day earlier had fired a guided missile at a Saudi warship off the coast of Yemen.

In other words, Washington was returning to its usual disastrous ways as the administration took aim at all

the usual suspects and dealt in the same self-serving half-truths that have long characterized Official Washington.

**Not Making Sense**

But none of it made any more sense than it did before the election. Consider comments on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

“Safe zones will not make Syria safer. To the contrary, they could well emerge as safe havens for jihadists and their families and come under attack by other rebel factions or by government forces. U.S. forces would have no choice but to respond and would thus find themselves drawn into another Middle East ground war.”

“They would require the U.S. to secure the skies to prevent air attacks. This means taking out Syria’s sophisticated air defense system, an effort that, as Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman at the time of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the White House in early 2012, would require



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as many as 70,000 American military personnel and cost as much as \$1 billion a month – and that was before Syria upgraded its defenses by adding advanced S-400 Russian anti-aircraft missiles.”

“A safe zone in Yemen is even more bonkers. In August, the U.N. Human Rights Council reported that 84 percent of civilian deaths were due either to Saudi-backed ground forces or Saudi-led air strikes, strikes that the U.S. enables by providing Saudi Arabia with advanced weaponry, targeting data, and midair refueling. So what’s the point of a U.S.-backed safe zone if the problem is U.S.-backed air assaults?”

“As for the botched raid in Yemen, the U.S. government again is in a contradictory situation because the Houthi rebels who were fighting Al Qaeda’s local affiliate have lost ground to the terror group because of the U.S.-backed Saudi intervention against the Houthis. In a recent report, the International Crisis Group found that Al Qaeda ‘is thriving in an environment of state collapse, growing sectarianism, shifting alliances, security vacuums, and a burgeoning war economy.’”

In “Yemen Under Siege,” a PBS documentary aired last May, journalist Safa Al Ahmad filmed Al Qaeda units fighting side by side with forces backed by the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates. So, why battle Al Qaeda with one hand while aiding it with the other? Again, the U.S. has gotten itself into the bizarre position in which Al Qaeda is simultaneously its enemy and an ally of its best friend. [For more, see Consortiumnews.com’s “The Secret Behind the Yemen War.”]

As for the flare-up in the eastern Ukraine, a dispatch by Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty – of all outlets – made it clear as to who is responsible: Ukraine.

As RFE wrote: “Frustrated by the stalemate in this 33-month war of attrition, concerned that Western support is waning, and sensing that US President Donald Trump could cut Kyiv out of any peace negotiations as he tries to improve fraught relations with Moscow, Ukrainian forces anxious to show their newfound strength have gone on what many here are calling a ‘creeping offensive’...”

“Since mid-December, Ukraine’s armed forces have edged farther into parts of the gray zone in or near the war-worn cities of Avdiivka, Debaltseve, Dokuchaievsk, Horlivka, and Mariupol, shrinking the space between them and the separatist fighters. In doing so, the pro-Kyiv troops have sparked bloody clashes with their enemy.”

Indeed, Republican Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham visited the front late last month along with Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota to urge the offensive on.

“Your fight is our fight,” Graham told one group of fighters. “2017 will be the year of offense...Enough of Russian aggression. It is time for them to pay a heavier price.” Added McCain: “The world is watching because we cannot allow Vladimir Putin to succeed here, because if he succeeds here he will succeed in other countries.”

**Haley’s False Claims**

So the offensive that Nikki Haley denounced was not the work of Russia but of Ukraine with encouragement

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from two leading U.S. advocates of confrontation. The target was not only to bloody pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine but to mess up rapprochement with Russia in the West. The goal was not only to force Putin “to pay a heavier price,” but to checkmate Trump by presenting him with a case of cooked-up aggression that he wouldn’t dare deny amid Washington’s feverishly pro-war climate.

A savvy politician might have seen through the maneuver and turned tables on the hawks. But Trump is not savvy. Rather, he’s a failed real-estate man with little idea of how the world – beyond his narrow focus – works. He may be nonpareil on the campaign trail, but in Washington he’s easy prey for a couple of experienced operators like McCain and Graham.

What next? Maybe Trump has a card up his sleeve or is engaging in some arcane maneuver too subtle for ordinary observers to follow. Or maybe his young administration is beset with chaos from competing factions that Trump has been unable to bring under control.

Otherwise, it’s hard to see how he can avoid being locked into a policy of renewed confrontation. “The fog of war” may have given way to “the fog of policy,” as Anna Nemtsova observes in the right-of-center *Daily Beast*.

But the rough outlines are beginning to emerge of an on-going showdown in Ukraine and a renewed alliance with Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states. This means deepening U.S. intervention in Yemen and Syria on the pro-Saudi side and hence tacitly in alliance with Al Qaeda. It means more fighting, more chaos, and more refugees. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

Some will blame what’s known as the Deep State. It’s not the President or Congress who rules, they will argue, but a vast sprawl consisting of the Pentagon, the arms industry, and 17 intelligence agencies employing hundreds of thousands. All are deeply invested in a pro-war policy and will therefore have their way.

This is true. But it’s also worth pointing out that foreign policy is never just an idea. It’s a system of interlocking military alliances based on long-term strategic planning. The U.S. is partners with Riyadh not because it necessarily likes the Saudis’ extreme version of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism, but because they sit on top of a fifth of the world’s proven fossil fuel reserves, a prize that the United States has controlled since World War II and one that it will not easily relinquish.

Just as the U.S. built up the Saudi oil industry from scratch, it similarly built up NATO and will not easily walk away from that alliance either. The international architecture is not completely unchangeable, but it will take more than a single loud-mouthed businessman to do it, particularly one as reactionary and confused as Donald Trump.

Daniel Lazare is the author of several books including *The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy* (Harcourt Brace).

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**ALEC EXPOSED**NICK SURGEY AND  
CALVIN SLOAN

**T**he Center for Media and Democracy has learned that AARP has joined ALEC, and that it isn't exactly hiding its new financial relationship, at least to ALEC legislators. ALEC exists to help its corporate funders advance their lobbying agenda through pushing bills that ALEC peddles as national "model" legislation. As CMD has documented in numerous ways, ALEC is a pay-to-play operation.

Since CMD launched ALEC Exposed in 2011, more than 100 corporations have quit the group, with many echoing Eric Schmidt of Google who told NPR as his company quit ALEC: "I think the consensus within the company was that that was some sort of mistake and so we're trying to not do that in the future."

Here are just five (of the many) ways ALEC has acted against the interests of retirees and AARP members:

1. For more than a decade ALEC peddled a proposal to privatize key tax revenue for Social Security, which would undermine this crucial insurance program. When it comes to social security, ALEC has cried wolf about the financial soundness of social security, proclaiming as recently as June 2016 that "leadership to reduce the debt must take place soon to prevent Social Security's insolvency in fewer than 20 years."

Such hyperbole is typical of ALEC, which fails to acknowledge that such "insolvency" could easily be fixed by lifting the Social Security Payroll tax earnings cap, currently set at \$118,500. ALEC's go-to solution to future potential shortfalls has been to privatize a portion of the tax revenue that would otherwise fund Social Security Insurance by putting it into private accounts. In its "Resolution Urging Congress To Modernize the Social Security System With Personal Retirement Accounts (PRA's)," which corporate lobbyists voted on with legislators on its

task force in secret in May 2000, ALEC claimed that "Social Security tax revenues alone will be insufficient to pay current benefits as early as the year 2015."

Yet as of 2016, despite these prognostications, social security remains healthy, solvent and wildly popular with the American public. It's no wonder that ALEC quietly has sought to distance itself from this long-standing "model" resolution by removing it from its website.

However, ALEC has done nothing to get that deeply flawed Resolution which was embraced by ALEC legislators revoked in state legislators. And ALEC has done nothing to educate its legislators that its privatization scheme for removing revenue streams from the Social Security trust fund was and remains a terrible idea.

Such privatization schemes have been promoted by ALEC's billionaire funders, the Koch Brothers.

Charles Koch began attacking Social Security way back in the 1970s through his Cato Institute and David Koch ran on that policy in 1980. Koch-backed groups like ALEC have sought to privatize Social Security in a variety of ways.

ALEC has spread propaganda about Social Security to thousands of state legislators over several years, including through its proposal to take significant tax revenue out of the Social Security system as a means to save it, which would actually collapse the program. But AARP is now funding ALEC!

2. ALEC has pushed bills that limit retirement security for public workers by attacking defined benefit pension plans in favor of riskier retirement options. Particularly, ALEC's "Defined Contribution Pension Reform Act" would push more workers away from negotiated retirement benefits to 401(k) plans that pose greater risks to pensioners' income security and can in-

clude more private fees to manage. Meanwhile, ALEC has assailed socially responsible investing efforts.

ALEC has used straw man arguments like claiming that the bankruptcy of Detroit was primarily caused by public pension insolvency and "should serve as a lesson" for lawmakers about pension agreements. But as documented by DEMOS and others, "Detroit's bankruptcy was caused by a decrease in tax revenue due to a population

**Yet as of 2016,  
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– Nick Surgey and Calvin Sloan

decline and long-term unemployment, not an increase in the obligations to fund pensions.”

As with its history of peddling of myths about Social Security along with its laughably inaccurate economic state “report cards,” ALEC routinely uses *bad math* to shill for the agenda of its bankrollers, like the extremist billionaire Koch Brothers, an approach predicated on the organization’s obedience to its pledge to never raise taxes, particularly on wealthy individuals and corporations (who not coincidentally fund ALEC).

3. ALEC has sought to amend the Constitution to pass a “Balanced Budget Amendment,” which would destroy our economy and result in drastic cuts to discretionary government programs that help people’s lives. ALEC has dedicated significant resources to passing a Balanced Budget Amendment (BBA), peddling amendments, handbooks, and more to “educate” ALEC legislators.

As noted by CMD, the passage of such an amendment would constitute a *massive* threat to fiscal stability. Economists like Dean Baker warn that a balanced budget amendment would radically alter Social Security and Medicare, and would fundamentally limit the federal government’s ability to respond to economic challenges and opportunities.

4. ALEC bills would undermine Medicare and it continues to attack the Affordable Care Act, despite its protections for millions of Americans including Americans with pre-existing conditions, like AARP members who are not yet retirement age.

As noted by the healthcare industry whistleblower and CMD Fellow Wendell Potter in 2011, “ALEC has been at work for more than a decade on what amounts to a comprehensive wish list for insurers: from turning over the Medicare and Medicaid programs to them – assuring them a vast new stream of revenue – to letting insurers continue marketing substandard yet highly profitable policies while giving them protection from litigation.”

5. ALEC seeks to restrict limits on drug price gouging and aids its big donor, Big Pharma, in other ways. Time and again, ALEC has supported model policies that benefit the bottom lines of pharmaceutical companies, like the organization’s “Drug Liability Act [10],” which would exempt drug makers from any punitive damages liability

for the potential harms caused by their products if those products were previously approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration. Similarly, ALEC has opposed efforts to give Americans access to more affordable medications from Canada.

ALEC has even supported limits on non-pecuniary damages when a corporation is liable, meaning that someone who is retired and cannot show lost income can receive lesser damages for pain and suffering. ALEC’s bill on this was applied by ALEC legislators in Wisconsin to lawsuits against nursing homes to limit their payouts to victims of nursing home neglect or mistreatment who prove that the skilled nursing industry’s practices harmed them or their beloved parents or grandparents.

These are just a few of the many ways ALEC legislation hurts Americans, in addition to its legacy of making it harder for Americans to vote and thwarting efforts to address climate changes that are harming our planet and our families and future.

Nick Surgey is CMD’s Director of Research and an investigative reporter. Calvin Sloan is a researcher and multimedia specialist with CMD. CMD’s Lisa Graves contributed to this report.

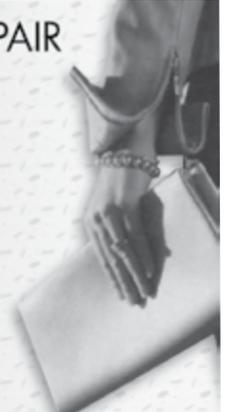
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# FAN-OWNED GREEN BAY PACKERS ARE AMERICA'S TEAM

HARVEY WASSERMAN

All too rare is the sporting event that qualifies as a great work of art. And even rarer is the professional sports team that belongs to the public. The transcendent Green Bay Packers have now entered the Pantheon for both.

By way of disclosure, I am a part owner (two shares) of the Packers, which is part of the point. The team, from the tiniest media market in American sports, is owned by the public. Back in 1922, the team hit hard times due to some bad rainouts. To save the franchise, local business leaders established a nonprofit to take up the slack. Nearly a century later, the franchise and the stadium are still owned by the community. Praise be!!!!

The Packers have been extremely successful, compiling one of the very best records in all major league sports. And they just won as great a football game as anyone has ever seen or could even invent. But more on that after this anti-commercial message:

American professional sports is now a sinkhole of cynical corruption. Except for the Packers, our football, baseball, basketball, and hockey teams are owned almost exclusively by a bunch of Trumpish billionaires. There's Donald Sterling, former owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, whose racist epithets and public jealousies of Magic Johnson were beyond unbearable. And Dan Snyder, current owner of the football team in our nation's capital with the blatantly racist anti-indigenous nickname he has vowed to keep forever. And, there's the management of baseball's Cleveland Indians, who may or may not be phasing out the most vile, racist logo in all of sports.

Worse is the grinding corporate grayness with which these franchises are manipulated as owners ma-

nipulate the fans' love for their teams by blackmailing billions in tax breaks, stadium subsidies, and outrageous ticket prices to gouge every last cent they can get.

The most recent travesty involves the double-move of the St. Louis Rams and San Diego Chargers to Los Angeles—which would be far better off without either of them. In both cases, decades of loyal hometown fan devotion has counted for nothing. Nor have the billions the host communities have poured into those teams, only to be left holding very large municipal stadiums and other financial bags now absurdly empty.

If those teams had been owned by those towns, like the Packers, this would not be happening.

Of course the NFL cartel HATES the Packers. The combine now has on its books an actual law banning further community ownership of any NFL franchise. But the Packers themselves will not be moving to a bigger media market. Nor will they be enriching some yacht-riding, cognac-guzzling fat cat, or the bottom line of some faceless mega-corp.

Several years ago, the Packers management decided to offer shares in the team for public sale. I snapped up two. There are zero benefits beyond bragging rights and a certificate. No discounts for seats. No dividends. No accretion in value for re-sale. No free dinners with the players.

When I asked the main office about deeding one of my shares to a nephew who wants to be a sportscaster, I was told I could not sell or pass on the shares beyond immediate family.

A few years ago, there was a women's basketball team in Columbus called the Quest. It had a great star named Katie Smith and won the first two championships in its nascent league. But then the team ran out of money. At the second championship game, I begged the owner to sell the franchise to the city.

He looked at me like I was a cross between a conspiracy theorist and a Commie terrorist. The league went out of business. Columbus no longer has a professional women's basketball team. Nice work, former Quest owner.

Given the choice, most NFL owners and network moguls would probably love to see the Packers go out of business, out of Green Bay, and into the control of fact cats. But, as a stockholder, I say all major sports teams should be owned by their host communities.

Which gets me to their recent game. The Pack-

**The most recent  
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—Harvey Wasserman

ers began the season with four wins and six losses, having suffered a series of major injuries. They seemed to be going nowhere. But transcendent quarterback Aaron Rodgers predicted the Pack would “run the table” and win all six upcoming games and make the playoffs. It seemed like a throwaway line.

But Rodgers is arguably the sport’s greatest quarterback, a terrific passer and an amazing scrambler with a brilliant football mind. He owns the on-field presence of a zen master. He has also been scandal free and signed a petition to recall Wisconsin’s right-wing governor Scott Walker.

The Packers did run the table, then won their seventh straight game, beating the New York Giants in the playoff wild card game.

Then they faced the powerful Dallas Cowboys (13-3 in the regular season), with a brilliant rookie quarterback from Mississippi State and a dominant rookie running back from Ohio State. Dallas has a whole history of its own. That includes the obnoxious marketing assertion that it is “America’s Team” even though it’s owned by a highly reactionary corporate elite.

The Packers took an early lead only to have the Cowboys come from behind to tie the game in the final quarter. With just minutes to go, the Packers retook the lead with an astounding 56-yard field goal. The Cowboys then tied the game again with another brilliant drive and

not-quite-as-long field goal.

With less than a minute left, it seemed like we were headed for overtime. And the Pack has a sorry history of losing big games at the last minute. On the other hand, Rodgers has a history of pitching high, long “Hail Mary” passes that somehow get caught.

Bottom line: With time for just one play to get in field-goal range, Rodgers rolled left and pitched a perfect right-armed strike thirty-six yards down the sidelines to Jared Cook, who made a spectacular catch that will be forever embedded in NFL lore.

The Packers’ kicker, Mason Crosby, then converted another fifty-plus-yard field goal to win the game. Except that the Cowboys called time-out just before he got it off. So he did it a third time!

The Pack didn’t make it to the next level, but they’re an exemplar for what a professional sports team can be. All these franchises should be publicly owned, so they can stay in places like Green Bay and St. Louis, San Diego and Columbus. Where we home fans have secure community ownership, and can wholeheartedly embrace fantastic triumphs like this amazing run from the fabled Pack.

Harvey Wasserman once played many sports, and was captain of his high school tennis team. Like most former athletes, he finds that the older he gets, the better he was.

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# FORGE OF LONG BEACH

S P A R K Y B A L D W I N

It shouldn't come as much surprise that an online fantasy game played by millions all over the world can be an instructive metaphor to evaluate the wisdom and vision of *real* local government. *Forge of Empires*, created by Germany's Innogames, may be such a game, and Long Beach, a city desperately attempting to rebrand itself, the municipality dead set on breaking the rules, at nearly any cost.

Long Beach, for more than a decade, has been trumpeting growth in its downtown core. Once a vibrant byproduct of The Pike amusement park and a significant Navy presence, downtown has been in a state of transition since the 1990s – from a seedy *Carney* atmosphere to a melange of coffee shops, personal gyms, and late night eateries. To get there, large high-density housing projects were all the rage in the 2000s, in an effort to revitalize the city core. When the recession hit in 2008, many of the projects stalled, leaving buildings in transition, boarded up or abandoned. However, a majority of projects have since been completed, and increasingly occupied, and the uptick in density is evident in parking availability, congestion, higher rents, and displaced low-income turned homeless street people.

For you non-gamers, *Forge of Empires* is the latest in a series of civilization building games. Touted as a free game, *FoE* doesn't require but certainly encourages players at every opportunity to invest real dollars in the game, and to benefit from the faster development of their civilization when they do so. In effect, spending money is a shortcut and shortcuts can be expensive, especially if you rely on them.

Players start out in the Stone Age, and through gathering supplies, creating products, warring, and maintaining *happiness* in their cities – or buying them with “diamonds,” the game equivalent of dollars –, move through the Bronze and Iron ages, the low, middle and high Middle Ages, and so on toward modern day. Along the way, they acquire new skills and techniques for improvements

in housing, production, maintaining and increasing happiness. Maintaining a level of happiness among the populations a key goal of the game and depends on a player's calculus in meeting the needs of housing, jobs, natural and other resources for productivity, public spaces and land for expansion. Oftentimes, there are not sufficient resources for a city to expand, so existing “buildings” must be sold and the new, more profitable, more efficient, more happiness-creating buildings constructed on the same site. Each new building and each new era has new costs, new benefits, and new demands on the public. Now back to Long Beach.

After that sharp increase in downtown housing units, a new courthouse was conceived. The argument was that the nearly 60-year-old existing courthouse was seismically unfit, inefficient, the oldest in the region, and an eyesore. Given the state of the economy after the recession, and a resulting shortage of public funds, a first-

time in California “public-private” partnership was conceived, and the \$360 million courthouse project was underway. That partnership was one of two such funding arrangements in the state at relatively the same time. The other was the Park Presidio Transit project in San Francisco. Both projects ultimately ran over budget. The Long



Photo By Sparky Baldwin

Beach Courthouse cost more than \$500 million – the most expensive courthouse in the state.

Despite the novel sound of public-private partnership, there is little real difference in the outcome from a financing standpoint; although, there may be fewer safeguards for the public entity. With a PPR, a group of private organizations, not banks, pay for construction of a project, in exchange for commercial space or other amenities, and once occupied, a city repays the full construction costs to the private group over time using taxpayer dollars. This group may consist of city “Fathers,” businesses, banks, and others whose interests align with the city, or who encourage the city to align its interests with theirs. The real difference with a PPR is the private partners, at least in the two California examples cited, were given greater sway than their public counterparts in building outcomes, ancillary uses, etc. That disproportionate oversight resulted in \$160 million in cost overruns on the courthouse project alone, all of which will be shouldered by local taxpayers.

How different would the outcome be in *FoE*, an

online game that generated \$130 million in 2016 and has more than 150 million players worldwide?

To construct such a large public building requires having complete plans, full cost and needed supplies in advance, as well as the support of the public. Once a project is begun, the coins and supplies are collected and no benefits to the player or anyone else accrue until the building is completed. Dependent on its purpose, when completed the building produces supplies, goods, coins or good will, all of which benefit the player. However, if the “public” toll is too high – residents are displaced, revenue too small –, then happiness suffers, and happiness directly links to productivity throughout the community. An unhappy community produces less, takes longer to build or change, and suffers from diminished returns.

So, what is the *happiness* factor of a \$500 million courthouse? And whose happiness are we measuring? It doesn't produce supplies, goods, or good will, and the coins it generates are always at someone's expense. Across the street from the court entrance, a realtor sign boasts the corner is the busiest in Long Beach, with more than 7,000 pedestrians passing daily. This may be good news for fast food outlets, but not for local residents. Many of those pedestrians are parking in the neighborhood a block or two away and walking to the courthouse, adding to congestion and parking frustrations. Then there's the big picture. While some of the \$160 million budget overrun will be gnawed at by inflation, Long Beach residents will still pay nearly 50 percent more than they were originally quoted for a public building that produces *no happiness*, and that's before taking into account interest on principal. Despite this financial *faux pas*, the city has entered into another public-private partnership for the development of a \$513 million [Revised upward once already] Civic



Photo By Sparky Baldwin

Center, the main features of which are a 270,000 square foot City Hall, a 237,000 square foot Port of Long Beach headquarters, a 92,000 square foot library and a 72,000 square foot Civic Plaza.

*Forge of Empires* is popular because it is diverse and evolving: players advance across eras and achievements, different seasons prompt different features or events, and major holidays are month-long opportunities to purchase themed ornaments that produce vast sums of your current game desire on a regular basis. Unlike other aspects of the game, these ornaments cannot be earned. They must be *paid* for – with real money. As a result, you need to plan when you “build” and where you build these specialty ornaments. They cannot be moved or sold. If demolished, there is no refund, unlike any other game

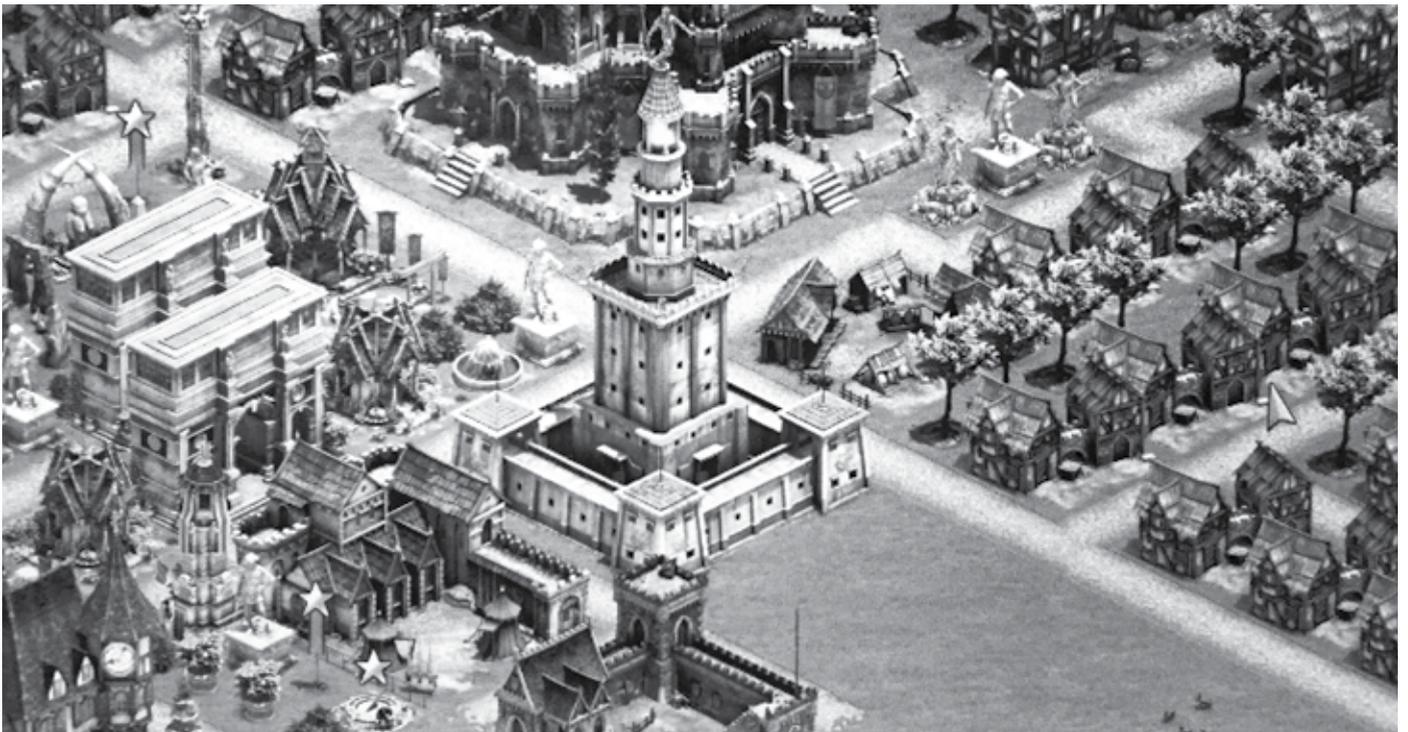


Photo By Sparky Baldwin

buildings.

The Long Beach Civic Center Project grew out of the rationale that Long Beach residents were yearning for a downtown core they could be proud of, a public ornament. While “downtown core” and “proud” likely need more precision in definition, let’s assume the intent here was to create a set of public spaces that benefit, well, you know, the public. The Civic Center Project has a library and an outside public venue for small-to medium-sized events. Yet, again, the bulk of resources allocated to the Civic Center Project are for development of city and port office spaces, both of which provide little or no direct benefit to the general public relative to their cost to the public. Instead, a downtown core to be proud of might include a link of parkways from downtown to The Pike, museums, or a *piazza*. To its credit, the Civic Center Project supports a single 4.9-acre park as part of the development, along with nearly 600 more residences, and underground parking for less than 500 cars. In short, this one-half billion dollar public expense likely will contribute to already well-established and growing problems associated with increasingly higher density in downtown Long Beach. It also is emblematic of increasing privatization of public assets and services.

There are also collateral consequences: When demolition began for the Civic Center Project, the hundreds of homeless living in Lincoln Park, which is included in the new project, had to disperse. While living in a public park with hundreds of other homeless people is not the safest of havens, what are the likely outcomes of being further displaced? Couldn’t a public-private partnership have proposed a way to establish a downtown core to be proud of while involving those already living there, those who Zygmunt Bauman refers to, as wasted lives? Those



Photo By Sparky Baldwin

who’ve lost work, their homes, their youth and their health, and now in many minds are nothing more than urban blight, yet still among us and part of us, nonetheless?

Between the new courthouse and the Civic Center project, Long Beach residents have been saddled with more than \$1 billion in debt for the almost-singular purpose of aggrandizing local government, and those persons or organizations fortunate enough to have proximity to the public-private partnership that will receive hundreds of millions of dollars from Long Beach residents for the next half century. There are many ways a billion dollars in public investment could have materially changed the lives of Long Beach residents, enriched the downtown core, and avoided the obvious nod to power and authority insinuated here.

However, what is truly amazing is Long Beach has found a way around the normal safeguards and obligations of municipal funding and contracting that essen-



Photo By Sparky Baldwin

tially places no limits on developers while piling greater risk on taxpayers. In this instance, *Forge of Empires* provides more safeguards than real life. The only way to skip requirements or other steps in *FoE* is to spend diamonds and literally buy your way through the game.

Sparky Baldwin is the pseudonym of a longtime investigative journalist whose career spans nearly four decades in five Western states.



Photo By Sparky Baldwin

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# TIME TO QUIT FACEBOOK?

E . A L E X J U N G

**W**hen researchers from Facebook and Cornell University published their findings on emotional contagion among Facebook users recently, they did so in the matter-of-fact language of social scientists: “The experiment manipulated the extent to which people were exposed to emotional expressions in their News Feed.” The Internet was beside itself. Critics blasted the study as irresponsible, unethical and creepy. Users, after all, didn’t know their moods were being influenced by selected content. Moreover, how could the scientists appear so cavalier about their methodological ethics?

Facebook data scientist Adam Kramer, one of the authors of the study, responded: “The reason we did this research is because we care about the emotional impact of Facebook and the people that use our product.” What they found was that happier posts lead to more engagement — sadder posts, less. The optimization argument is similar to another announcement Facebook made a while ago (to much less grumbling) that it would begin mining users’ browsing histories for the sake of “making ads better and giving people more control over the ads they see.” The two announcements, while triggering vastly different responses, speak to the same corporate logic that is concerned with how user engagement affects profit margins.

The problem with the emotional contagion study, in other words, wasn’t that Facebook was doing something different but rather that it made it impossible for us to forget what we tacitly acknowledge each time we log on: Our feelings, relationships and personal preferences make Facebook money.

Each time we use Facebook, we perform labor, which is to say that we create value. There is no material product, but what we do produces cultural knowledge, shapes opinion and ultimately directs the flow of capital. Facebook has taken our relationships with one another and monetized it, turning our interactions into advertising opportunities. It relies on us to provide content, in the form

of videos we shoot, articles we like, screeds we write, places where we check in and comments we post. Without our labor, it has no value; nor would it make any money (hence why Facebook includes the number of new and active users in each quarterly report). Which leads to the great deception of Web 2.0: We aren’t Facebook’s clients; corporations are.

## From Tears to Dollars

The implicit social contract of Facebook (never mind its pesky terms of service) hinges on the fallacy that we are receiving a service for free. But Facebook’s revenue streams underscore that the real clients are the ones that can pay \$100 million dollars to hawk their products. In 2015, Facebook brought in \$7.87 billion in revenue — a 55 percent increase from 2014. In the latest quarter, it beat analysts’ projections, pulling in a cool \$2.91 billion.

The vast majority of its revenue comes from advertisements — in the most recent quarter 92 percent, or \$2.68 billion, of which mobile ads made up 62 percent. In terms of pricing, generally, the more seamlessly an ad is integrated — both in terms of placement (newsfeed versus sidebar) and target — the more expensive it is: An ad for Tough Mudder, a popular obstacle course for well-educated professionals looking to reclaim their masculinity, that lands in the newsfeed of a type A, outdoorsy 28-year-old, for instance, hits the jackpot.

But even then, the work of proliferating this ad is actually ours. An advertisement is successful because we click on it and share it. We also provide the information necessary for Facebook to sell advertisers on its micro-advertising strategy. At one of its publishing garage branding workshops, for instance, Facebook was trying to figure out how to make a decidedly unsexy product — MegaRed,

a krill oil capsule — more appealing. It organized the campaign, aimed at women over 45 — such as “Agnes,” a 65-year-old grandmother who plays golf and does yoga and Zumba — around the tagline “What makes your heart beat?” One advertisement in particular — a picture of a grandfather pushing his grandson with a stylized EKG line — garnered more than 18,000 likes within weeks.

It was, in Facebook-speak, a thumbstopper. The campaign increased user engagement threefold over a previous attempt, and the likelihood of someone’s buying MegaRed went up 2 percentage points. MegaRed now

**The initial debate about Facebook and other social media tended to revolve around questions of legitimacy — that is, was this an authentic way of communicating with another person?**

– E. Alex Jung

plans to spend at least \$100 million dollars with Facebook over the next few years. As Kevin Roose, of *New York Magazine*, wrote of the campaign: “Coaxing tears out of people’s eyes, it turned out, was tantamount to coaxing dollars out of their wallets.”

In addition to this careful ad targeting, Facebook recently began to limit the organic reach of its pages function — the frequency that posts of pages you are a fan of will appear in your newsfeed — to a meager 1 to 2 percent. This doesn’t mean much for deep-pocketed brands such as Nike and Starbucks, but it has had profound implications for individuals and small organizations that need a more democratic platform. Writing for *Valleywag*, under a pseudonym, B. Traven described the strangulating effect this algorithm shift has had on nonprofits that don’t have the advertising budgets to pay to reach their followers. Other writers, from cookbook author Stephanie Stiavetti to *New York Times* technology reporter Nick Bilton, found their readership dropped unless they were willing to pony up a requisite \$7. Under this new world order, individuals and small organizations that required the horizontality of the Internet must pay to survive. Facebook is like the crack dealer who gave you the first rock for free. Now that you’re hooked, it’s time to pay up.

**The Revolt**

Last summer Facebook unveiled another step on its quest for total control: a “buy” button that allows users to instantly purchase, say, that cool-looking rainbow chevron watch without leaving the comfort of their screens. Facebook claims that the test is currently limited to a few “small and medium-sized businesses in the U.S.,” but if it’s successful, expansion seems inevitable. When a reporter at TechCrunch asked whether businesses would be charged to add this feature in the future, Facebook said that “it was not disqualifying that option.”

The initial debate about Facebook and other social media tended to revolve around questions of legitimacy — that is, was this an authentic way of communicating with another person? But the conversation must now shift to the more pressing dynamics between capital and our social selves. What does it mean for our social media to monetize our preferences, relationships and feelings? Does the emotional contagion study mean that posts about depression, anxiety and self-doubt will be filtered out in favor of cheerier posts that will encourage user engage-

ment? After all, a happy worker is a productive worker, right?

A number of writers defended the study on the grounds that this was precisely what it has been doing all along; it was a social-scientific spin on otherwise everyday business practices. Some peddled the argument that such studies will improve Facebook for the user. Others waded into how Facebook makes its bucks but ultimately dismissed concerns around that as superficial. The argument: It’s just capitalism, duh.

But how are we supposed to exist without Facebook? That being on or off Facebook raises such existential anxieties speaks to how ingrained the platform is in our social selves. Sure, it’s easy to say that this is just the grinding inertia of capitalism and lament those early, idealistic days when we, perhaps shortsightedly, thought of social networks as utopian playgrounds of free exchange and communication. Or maybe we can think of an alternative that doesn’t make our relationships with other people secondary to profit. It might be time to turn away from questions like “How do I protect my privacy?” and simply ask, “Is it time to quit Facebook?”

E. Alex Jung is a writer who lives in New York. He has written for *Salon*, *Dissent* and *ColorLines*, among other publications.

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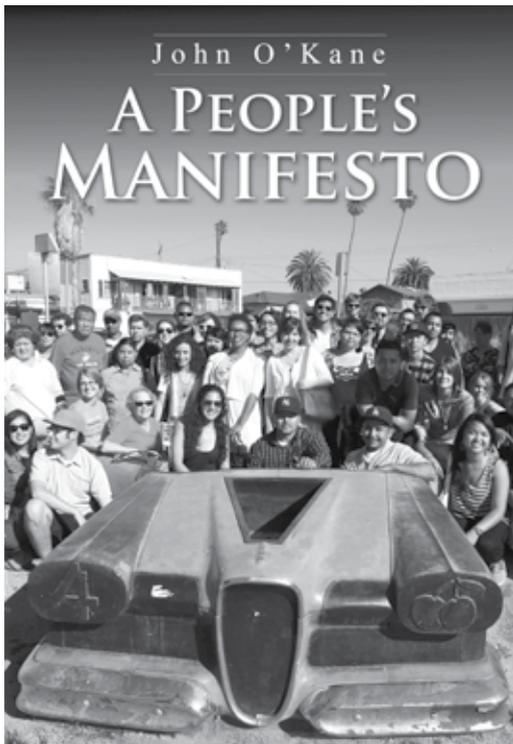


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## Publisher of *AMASS* Magazine Releases *A People's Manifesto*

2015-05-13 [www.everythinglongbeach.com/publisher-of-amass-magazine-releases-a-peoples-manifesto/](http://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 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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“I think I’ve been using it too much but...putting up a new shot soon.”

“Where’d you go to high school?”

“Hollywood High.”

“So did I! When did you graduate?”

“89.”

“88! We must’ve met some time.”

“That’s a big place...like a good size town.”

“Hmmm. Did you ever go to that gallery on Melrose? One of Alex’s favorite hangouts...big scene.”

“You mean that place by Pink’s on La Brea?”

“Yeah, that’s it...called the 01 Gallery. Had lots of great openings and parties...full of celebs...a hot place in the early nineties.”

“Founded by this guy from Cape Cod with...help from David Lee Roth?”

“Yeah, that’s the place. Full of rockers...lots of punks.”

“What’d you look like then? Who were you usually with?”

“Little over six feet tall, shoulder-length hair, mustache. Was with different mates at first...but usually went for the action...the trust funds.”

“Doesn’t ring a bell.”

“Was with Alex a lot.”

“So was I!”

“Who else were you with? What did you look like?”

“Probably with Alex or...can’t remember guys I was dating then. There mostly with my girlfriends at first. We’d dress up a lot, change our hair and style. We wanted

to look like those punks from the eighties.”

“You mean Exene and...that scene? The moment we missed! Were you tall and had a slim model’s build and red hair?”

“No...medium height and...a little out of proportion. Not that kind of model material. My natural color’s a secret!”

“Oh...okay...did you know Hope? Can’t remember her last name.”

“No...that doesn’t...was she short with dark hair?”

“No...she was...must’ve been somebody else.”

“Oh, you’re that guy who rode a Harley and parked it next to the back door and talked to that guy a lot who lived upstairs in the loft. Older guy.”

“Never driven one...had an old four-door Toyota. I did talk to...the guy’s name was...Curly!”

“Yeah...yeah, great ole guy...always angry, but heart of gold and had some great stories. I talked to him a lot too.”

“We must’ve seen each other if we both talked to Curly a lot.”

“Yeah, we must’ve. Tall with shoulder-length hair, huh?”

“Yeah, that’s...well I did have it cut shorter there for a while.”

“Did you read poetry there?”

“I wasn’t too...literary. Was trying to get discovered...get into the industry. Were lots of stars hanging around there...but I blew it one night when I walked up to Nicholas Cage and asked him if he was an actor!”

“What happened?”

“He just turned and walked away. They don’t look the same when they’re out among the normal folks

slumming it. But he was so short!”

“I know what you mean. I was always misrecognizing stars there. Do you remember the night of a Timothy Leary opening when Sally Kirkland showed her implants in the back room?”

“I remember seeing her around the gallery and talking to her but...missed that!”

“That was an amazing moment...she was so cool! She gave me these great referrals and hooked me up with an agent and I started getting some small roles in indie films.”

“What ones?”

**“But I kinda  
blew it one night  
when I  
walked up to  
Nicholas Cage  
and asked him  
if he was  
an actor!”**

– John O’Kane

“Nothing you probably ever heard of. But I kept getting more while I worked part time at Circus of Books.”

“You worked...there? At that...adult store?”

“Yeah, for a couple years...until I got married. I shouldn't say this but I checked out a video of a film I was in to a guy and we got friendly and...never told him I was in the film though. Luckily I was wearing a disguise in it.”

“When was this?”

“Mid-nineties.”

“What's your last name?”

“Oh, it's Geary...but it's my married name. I just got divorced again. My first name is from one of my

roles.”

“Mine's an alias from one of my writing projects. Do you remember the name of the movie?”

“Why? Oh, I think it...It was ‘The Merry Maids.’”

“You said you had been working at the public library for several years before we met!”

“What do...it's you? It's not what...I didn't... I'll...say hi to the kids for you!”



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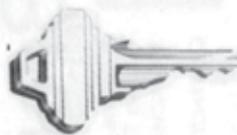
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# WHY STUDENTS CAN'T GOOGLE THEIR WAY TO THE TRUTH

SAM WINEBURG AND  
SARAH MCGREW

**D**id Donald Trump support the Iraq War? Hillary Clinton says yes. He says no. Who's right?

In search of answers, many of us ask our kids to "Google" something. These so-called digital natives, who've never known a world without screens, are the household's resident fact-checkers. If anyone can find the truth, we assume, they can. Don't be so sure.

True, many of our kids can flit between Facebook and Twitter while uploading a selfie to Instagram and texting a friend. But when it comes to using the Internet to get to the bottom of things, Junior's no better than the rest of us. Often he's worse.

In a study conducted by Eszter Hargittai and her colleagues at Northwestern University, 102 college students went online to answer questions about things that matter to them—like how to advise a female friend who's desperate to prevent pregnancy after her boyfriend's condom broke. How did students decide what to believe? One factor loomed largest: a site's placement in the search results. Students ignored the sponsoring organization and the article's author, blindly trusting the search engine to put the most reliable results first.

Research we've conducted at Stanford University supports these findings. Over the past 18 months, we administered assessments that tap young people's ability to judge online information. We analyzed over 7,804

responses from students in middle school through college. At every level, we were taken aback by students' lack of preparation: middle school students unable to tell the difference between an advertisement and a news story; high school students taking at face value a cooked-up chart from the Minnesota Gun Owners Political Action Committee; college students credulously accepting a .org top-level domain name as if it were a Good Housekeeping seal.

One task asked students to determine the trustworthiness of ma-

minutes examining content on both sites. Students could stay on the initial web page, click on links, Google something else—anything they would normally do to reach a judgment.

"For every political question swirling in this election, there are countless websites vying for our attention."

More than half concluded that the article from the American College of Pediatricians, an organization that ties homosexuality to pedophilia and which the Southern Poverty Law Center labeled a hate group, was "more reliable." Even students who preferred the entry from the American Academy of Pediatrics never uncovered the differences between the two groups. Instead, they saw the two organizations as equivalent and focused their evaluations on surface features of the websites. As one student put it: "They seemed equally reliable to me... They are both from academies or institutions that deal with this stuff every day."

Ironically, many students learned so little because they spent most of their time reading the articles on each organization's site. But masking true intentions and ownership on the web has grown so sophisticated that to rely on the same set of skills one uses for print reading is naive. Parsing digital information before one knows if a site can be

trusted is a colossal waste of time and energy.

This became clear to us when we gave our tasks to professional fact-checkers. Three strategies separate checkers from the rest of us:

**Landing on an Unfamiliar Site, the First Thing Checkers Did Was to Leave it.**

If undergraduates read *vertically*, evaluating online articles as if they were printed news stories, fact-

**But when we turn to our screens for information and answers, we need to get a lot smarter about how we decide what's true and what's not.**

— Sam Wineburg and Sarah McGrew

terial on the websites of two organizations: the 66,000 member American Academy of Pediatrics, established in 1930 and publisher of the journal *Pediatrics*, vs. the American College of Pediatricians, a fringe group that broke with the main organization in 2002 over its stance on adoption by same-sex couples. We asked 25 undergraduates at Stanford—the most selective college in the country, which rejected 95 percent of its applicants last year—to spend up to 10

checkers read *laterally*, jumping off the original page, opening up a new tab, Googling the name of the organization or its president. Dropped in the middle of a forest, hikers know they can't divine their way out by looking at the ground. They use a compass. Similarly, fact-checkers use the vast resources of the Internet to determine where information is coming from before they read it.

**Fact-checkers Know it's Not About "About."**

They don't evaluate a site based solely on the description it provides about itself. If a site can masquerade as a nonpartisan think tank when funded by corporate interests and created by a Washington public relations firm, it can surely pull the wool over our eyes with a concocted "About" page.

**Fact-checkers Look Past the Order of Search Results.**

Instead of trusting Google to sort pages by reliability (which reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of how Google works), the checkers mined URLs and abstracts for clues. They regularly scrolled down to the

bottom of the search results page in their quest to make an informed decision about where to click first.

None of this is rocket science. But it's often not taught in school. In fact, some schools have special filters that direct students to already vetted sites, effectively creating a generation of bubble children who never develop the immunities needed to ward off the toxins that float across their Facebook feeds, where students most often get their news. This approach protects young people from the real world rather than preparing them to deal with it.

After the vice presidential debate, Hillary Clinton's campaign tweeted, "Unfortunately for Mike Pence and Donald Trump, Google

exists (and we aren't stupid)." Yes, Google puts vast quantities of information at our fingertips. But it also puts the onus for fact-checking on us. For every political question swirling in our political universe, there are countless websites vying for our attention—front groups and fake news sites right next to legitimate and reliable sources.

We agree with the tweet from the Clinton campaign. We're not stupid. But when we turn to our screens for information and answers, we need to get a lot smarter about how we decide what's true and what's not.

Sam Wineburg is a professor in the Stanford University Graduate School of Education. Sarah McGrew is pursuing her doctorate in curriculum and teacher education at Stanford.



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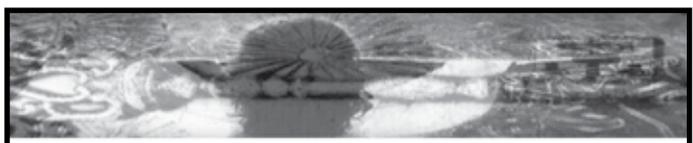


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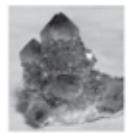
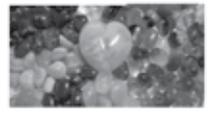
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**REINVENTING  
THE WAY MEAT  
IS MADE**

JOE CASTALDO

**I**f Isha Datar has her way, steaks will soon be made without cows and producing eggs will no longer require chickens.

Making meat and other animal food products that look and taste the same, but don't necessitate the use of living creatures is the mission of New Harvest, a New York-based non-profit where the Canadian serves as CEO. "We look for products that are inspiring, promising or groundbreaking," says Datar.

New Harvest has emerged as the leading proponent of a nascent field called cellular agriculture, a new method of protein production in which animal tissue is grown from cells in a lab. Datar became interested in the field while studying molecular biology at the University of Alberta. A course in agriculture opened her eyes to the environmental impacts of factory farming and introduced her to the concept of growing food from cell cultures. Datar eventually connected with Jason Matheny, a former Oxford University professor who founded New Harvest in 2004. The organization was a side project for Matheny, but Datar, now 28, turned it into a full-time gig. Currently, tissue engineering primarily supports medical applications; it's difficult for scientists to find funding for exploring its use in food production. A lot of Datar's time is spent fundraising—New Harvest has more than 400 individual donors—and assessing and backing research applications.

Datar also helps connect re-

searchers in the disparate community. Two years ago, she suggested two New Harvest volunteers get together and form a company to produce milk from yeast cultures—no cows necessary. The resulting venture, San Francisco-based Perfect Day, has raised more than \$2 million in funding and aims to have market-ready products next year. Originally a co-

from slaughterhouses—defeating the purpose of the exercise. In response, New Harvest is building an open-source cell library to provide scientists with the building blocks of food and setting up a space for them to pursue research outside academia.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization forecasts that food consumption of meat will hit 45.3

kilograms per capita by 2030 (up from 30.7 kilograms a head in the mid-1980s). Trying to fill that demand with traditional animal farming methods would be environmentally and economically disastrous—livestock already eat and drink too much of the world's grain and fresh water.

Datar—who's refreshingly averse to hype—is at pains to point out that the field of cellular agriculture is still in its infancy. "I have to play both sides, and talk about how transformative this research could be but stay realistic about how long it'll take," she says. Likewise, she isn't promising to entirely upend traditional agriculture. "It would be nice to say we can live in a world where we don't have to rely on factory farming," she says. Instead, Datar says she thinks of cellular agriculture as part of a "portfolio approach" to "reducing our reliance on the more negative methods of producing food."

**Currently,  
tissue engineering  
primarily  
supports medical  
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scientists to find  
funding for  
exploring  
its use in  
food production.**

— Joe Castaldo

founder, Datar has turned over her stake to New Harvest. "In the event Perfect Day is successful, it'll actually be New Harvest that benefits, instead of me personally," she says.

New Harvest also supports Clara Foods, which is producing egg whites from cell cultures, as well as three different researchers exploring novel ways to grow meat. Cultured steak is currently particularly challenging to produce because the raw material must effectively be sourced

from slaughterhouses—defeating the purpose of the exercise. In response, New Harvest is building an open-source cell library to provide scientists with the building blocks of food and setting up a space for them to pursue research outside academia.

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# THE NEW NUTRITIOUS VEGETABLE- POWDER

WOLFGANG MORITZ

**M**oringa is one of those “new” foods that you may or may not have heard about – a dried leaf that is becoming more and more popular in our everyday diet. It is initially from north-western India and was consumed there for millennia as food. Today it grows all over the tropics, after its benefits were quickly recognized and spread around the world. It is a natural vegetarian food that contains a healthy mix of nutrients.

Moringa first gained recognition in Europe when the English went to India. They missed horseradish as spice for their food, and to replace it found moringa, as the taste of moringa roots resembles that of horseradish; so the plant was consequently named horseradish-tree. Another name for moringa is drumstick-tree, after the long, thin fruits of the plant that are eaten as vegetables. When a botanist looked at it, he or she originally gave it the name *Moringa oleifera*, probably based on the Tamil word for the fruit “*murungai*.” A good oil can be pressed from the ripe seeds, which explains the botanical name “*oleifera*” – the oil-bearing moringa.

## Great Uses for Moringa

Moringa has found its way into many different recipes. It can be used like a herb – as a wonderful hot or cold tea, with a full flavor, rich in antioxidants and without caffeine. Vegetable-smoothies and soups further benefit from moringa, as it adds a unique color and a spicy taste. Morin-

ga can also be used in salad-dressings, bakery products, and even vegetarian cereal bars.

## So What Are the Benefits?

By drying it, the nutrients are concentrated by a factor of 4, so that in recipes, small quantities can add significant amounts of nutrients to a food. Nutrient-dense ingredients are wanted in times where processing and refining of foods have often brought tasty but nutrient-poor diets.

Nutritionists around the

**Besides the classic nutrients such as proteins, minerals and vitamins, moringa also contains several groups of secondary plant metabolites that are studied for their positive effects.**

– Wolfgang Moritz

world recognize that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables contributes to a healthy lifestyle. 6 g of dried moringa leaf powder (the typical consumption amount) can be produced from a good handful of fresh leaves thus contributing to a wholesome diet in a convenient way. Though drying will lead to a loss in some nutrients and fresh products are key to balanced nutrition, the leaf-powder is still a very valuable food.

## What Makes it a Healthy Product?

Besides the classic nutrients such as proteins, minerals and vita-

mins, moringa also contains several groups of secondary plant metabolites that are studied for their positive effects. Moringa also contains glucosinolates that give it its slightly sharp taste. These substances are also found in watercress or mustard and are researched for their protecting effect. Moringa also has a wide spectrum of polyphenols of the groups of flavonoids and phenolic acids. Polyphenols are the substances that give tea its astringent taste and brown color. Like tea, moringa gets its high antioxidant activity from these polyphenols. Research points to antioxidants as an important element in lowering inflammations, stabilizing blood sugar and lowering oxidative stress. The third major group of secondary plant metabolites is carotenoids. The most prominent here are lutein and  $\beta$ -carotene. Carotenes are additional antioxidants and support healthy vision.

## The Big Picture

Moringa has further positive benefits beyond nutrition. Today, moringa is grown by specialist producers all over the world. Most of these producers are relatively small and use manual labor to produce the best quality moringa, frequently sold on local markets. Development-organizations also help promote its benefits. Even the FAO supports moringa. Its sale in Europe offers an important source of income to farmers in producing countries. The cooperation between producers and users also helps raise the quality of the products. Finally, as a plant that is specialized to grow on poor soils in dry, hot climate, it can help to regenerate depleted soils and thereby has an excellent ecological value.

Wolfgang Moritz is head of Quality Control, Product and Quality Management at Vitarbo AG.



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# HUMANS HAVE ALTERED THE CLIMATE FASTER THAN NATURAL FORCES

NIKA KNIGHT

**M**As the Trump administration and Republicans in power in Congress set to work destroying environmental regulations, scientists have added urgency to the resistance with a simple new equation that shows the staggering effect human activity has had on the climate.

Their findings? Humans have altered the climate 170 times faster than natural forces. In fact, the equation revealed that industrial societies pack the same climate punch as an asteroid strike.

Prof. Will Steffen of the Australian National University and Owen Gaffney of the Stockholm Resilience Centre devised the “Anthropocene equation” and published their findings in *The Anthropocene Review* a few weeks ago.

The equation demonstrates that while natural forces dominated the climate for 4.5 billion years, in only the past six decades, humans have become the main drivers of climate change. Perhaps the researchers’ most frightening conclusion was that at a time when top Trump aides refer to climate activism as a “threat,” the equation shows that the actions of industrialized societies during the next several years may impact the planet for millennia to come.

Gaffney explained his and Steffen’s findings in an op-ed in *New Scientist*:

“Homo sapiens now rivals

the great forces of nature. Humanity is a prime driver of change of the Earth system. Industrialized societies alter the planet on a scale equivalent to an asteroid impact. This is how the Anthropocene—the proposed new geological period in which human activity profoundly shapes the environment—is often described in soundbites.”

But is it possible to formalize such statements mathematically? I think so and believe doing this creates an unequivocal statement of the risks industrialized societies are taking at a time when action is vital.

**...while natural forces dominated the climate for 4.5 billion years, in only the past six decades, humans have become the main drivers of climate change.**

— Nika Knight

Following the maxim of keeping everything as simple as possible, but not simpler, Will Steffen from the Australian National University and I drew up an Anthropocene equation by homing in on the rate of change of Earth’s life support system: the atmosphere, oceans, forests and wetlands, waterways and ice sheets and fabulous diversity of life.

“For four billion years, the

rate of change of the Earth system (E) has been a complex function of astronomical (A) and geophysical (G) forces plus internal dynamics (I): Earth’s orbit around the sun, gravitational interactions with other planets, the sun’s heat output, colliding continents, volcanoes and evolution, among others,” Gaffney added.

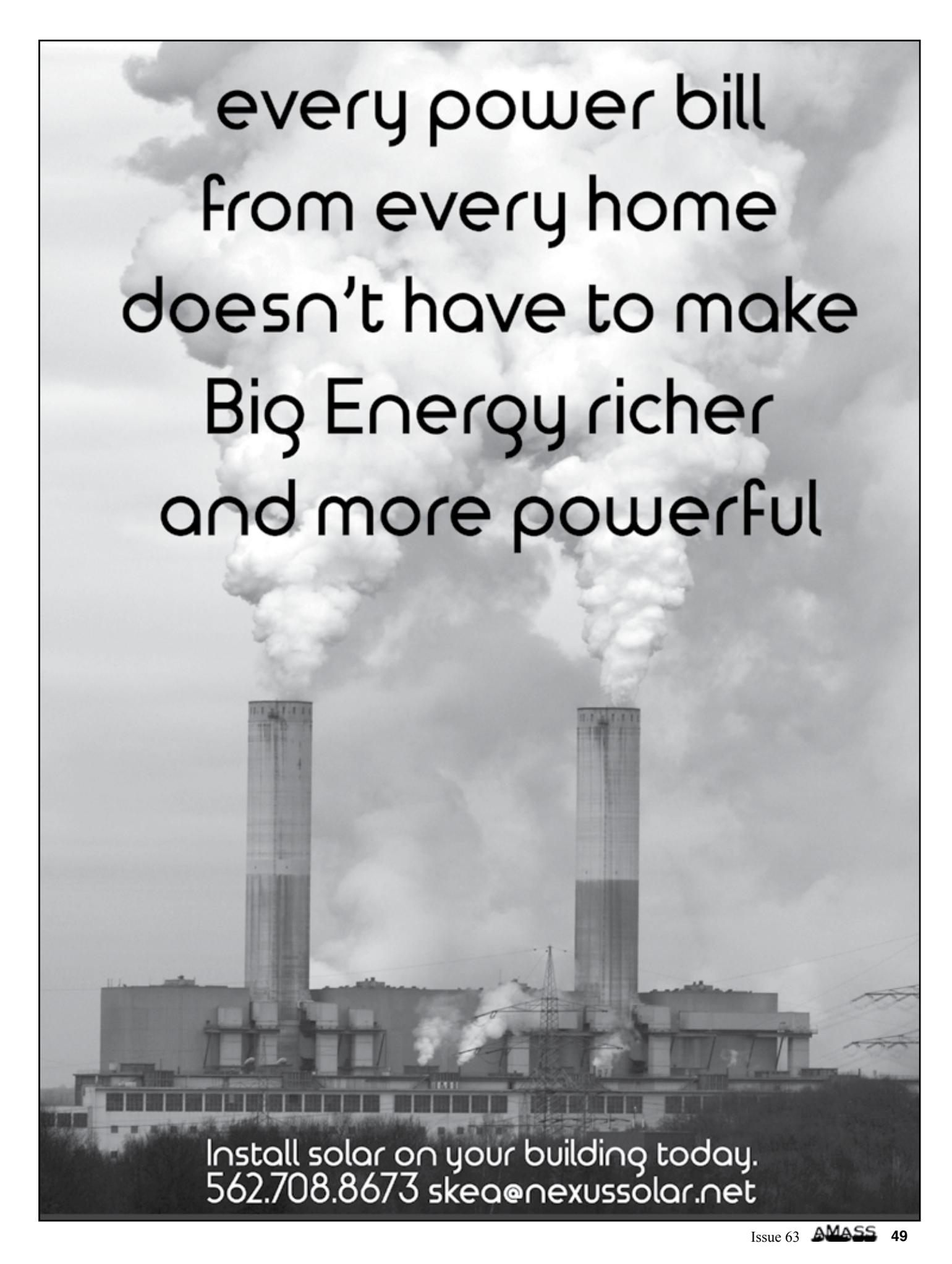
The rate of change of the Earth system (E) over the last 40 to 50 years is a purely a function of industrialized societies (H),” wrote Gaffney.

The equation warns of huge risks for human society, Gaffney argued and that warning comes at a time when the U.S. government seems most prepared to ignore those risks entirely.

As author and journalist Cynthia Barnett observed in the *Los Angeles Times*: “Regardless of alternative facts, fake news or scientific censorship, nature tells the truth.”

“While the rate of change of the Earth system needs to drop to zero as soon as possible, the next few years may determine the trajectory for millennia,” wrote Gaffney. “Yet the dominant neoliberal economic systems still assume Holocene-like boundary conditions—endless resources on an infinite planet. Instead, we need ‘biosphere positive’ Anthropocene economics, where economic development stores carbon not releases it, enhances biodiversity not destroys it and purifies waters and soils not pollutes them.”

“While it would seem imprudent to ignore the huge body of evidence pointing to profound risks, it comes at a challenging time geopolitically,” Gaffney continued, “when both fact-based world views and even international cooperation are questioned. Nowhere has this been clearer than in the U.S. in recent weeks.”



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