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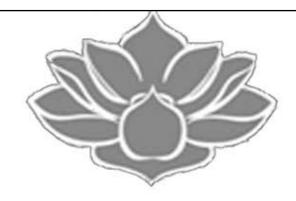
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Number 1



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A R R I E

Laurie B U D G A R

S M A L L B U S I N E BATTLE OF THE BEHEMO

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COVER:

"Greater Than Fear"
Shepard Fairey
Courtesy of *We the People*



"Greater Than Fear"

Cover: Shepard Fairey Courtesy of We the People

Slobodan Dimitrov is a photographer based in the Long Beach/Los Angeles Harbors. His 20 year long project on the Piledrivers can currently be seen in the lobby of Local 2375, Wilmington CA. He was selected for the Los Angeles Public Library Neighborhood Project to document the community of San Pedro for the public archives in 2000. In 2008 he received another commission from the Los Ange- les Public Library to document industrial Los Angeles in the Port of LA. In July 2010, the Artist Portrait series was exhibited at Angels Gate Cultural Center. To date he has had over 130 exhibits, nation- ally and internationally. He has been a contributing photographer for *The Dispatcher, LA Weekly, The Building Trades News, Random Lengths.* His work has appeared in *The Nation, Carpenter, Solidar- ity, SEIU, UNITE, Machinists Int., America at Work, The Progressive, Los Angeles Magazine*, and *The Economist*, among many labor publications and newspapers.

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HOW IDENTITY BECAME A WEAPON AGAINST THE LEFT

Briahna Joy Gray

aving an "identity politics" is incredibly benefiNcial. Identity politics, which emphasizes the unique concerns of different communities and demographic groups, shows how historical inequities have been distributed across

different races, genders, religions, abilities, sexualities. In doing so, it allows us to better understand how to critique and reform the systems that replicate those inequities. It reveals how the foreclosure crisis disproportionately hurt black home owners, how health issues manifest differently across populations, and how various forms of "hidden taxes" penalize women in professional life. To ignore identity to ignore injustice. Yet there are risks to viewing the world through the prism of identity. If people are defined by their characterdemographic istics, they can be reduced to those characteristics in a way that obscures differ-

ences within groups. If "identity" becomes synonymous with "perspective," dissenting members within the identity group risk having their viewpoints erased and their humanity diminished. And when used cynically, as a political weapon, a simplistic view of identity can allow people of a particular political faction to wrongly imply that they speak for all members of their racial or gender group.

Kamala Harris is black. She is a lot of other things, too: a person of South Asian descent, a woman, a former prosecutor and state Attorney General, a sitting Senator, and, according to Barack Obama, "the best looking attorney general in the country." Out of nearly 2,000 senators in the country's history, Harris is one of only ten black Americans and two black women to have held the position. Her personal characteristics and

political accomplishments, together with the intelligence and tenacity that propelled her to the Senate, have made her a highly visible prospect for the 2020 presidential race. Already, influential Democrats have shown a strong interest in Harris, with prominent former Clinton donors meeting privately with Harris in the Hamptons. *The San Francisco Chronicle* called her the Democrats' "Great Blue Hope," and a Guardian writer suggested that the combination of Harris's race and her centrist platform "could be the party's solution to its identity crisis."

But certain parts of Kamala Harris's political résumé have led to skepticism from the left. As California's Attorney General, with responsibilities for overseeing the second largest prison population in the country, Harris's professional obligation to put people behind bars was seen as being in direct tension with the goals of Black Lives Matter, perhaps the most prominent progressive movement of our time. Harris touted a reform-minded

Identity is, at best, a loose proxy for a person's political commitments, and individual identity groups contain incredibly diverse perspectives.

Briahna Joy Gray

"smart on crime" approach in her prosecutorial role, that one encouraged education and reentry programs for ex-offenders, and in the Senate, she has co-sponsored legislation to improve prison conditions for women. Yet she has also come under heavy criticism from activists for, among other things: defending the state against court orders to reduce its prison population, declining to take a public stand on sentencing reform proposals, attempting to block a court decision requiring the state to provide transgender inmate with gender reassignment surgery, opposing a measure require independent inquiries into police uses of force, and obstructing

efforts by federal judges to hold California prosecutors accountable for an "epidemic" of misconduct. Harris has been a zealous prosecutor (at times, she said, she has been "as close to a vigilante as you can get"), and certain of her policies—like bringing criminal charges against parents whose children miss school—conflict with the efforts of groups like BLM to reduce the reach of the criminal justice system into people's lives.

Harris has also drawn scrutiny over the crimes she wasn't tough on. While serving as Attorney General of California, Harris failed to prosecute now-Treasury Secretary Steven "Foreclosure King" Mnuchin after his OneWest Bank engaged in a notoriously aggressive pattern of home foreclosures. Under Mnuchin, OneWest was a "foreclosure machine" that did everything it could to seize people's houses, inflict misery on homeowners

while failing to properly review foreclosure documents. Harris's consumer law division found that OneWest had engaged in "widespread misconduct" in its treatment of borrowers; the investigators urged Harris to "conduct a full investigation of a national bank's misconduct and provide a public accounting of what happened." Instead, Harris closed the case, not even pursuing the compromise measure of a civil penalty. As David Dayen writes, this "watered-down version of public accountability was seen as the best possible outcome, and Harris didn't even go for that." In failing to hold the bank accountable, Dayen emphasizes, Harris was far from alone among state law enforcement officials. Harris was, however, the only Democratic senatorial candidate to whom Steven Mnuchin felt compelled to give a campaign donation.

There are therefore both principled and pragmatic reasons why people on the left might be skeptical of a Harris candidacy. There's a serious question about IDENTITY POLITICS

whether Harris can be counted on to advance progressive values when doing so might require political sacrifices. But there's also a question of strategy: from a leftist perspective, it's unwise to run yet another presidential candidate whose ties to banks could make them "untrustworthy" in an era of low public trust in elected officials. Given the crushing defeat of November 2016 (which was all but predicted by certain insightful progressives), it would seem obviously beneficial for the Democratic Party to listen to progressive criticism early and adapt candidates and their messaging accordingly.

Yet progressive critiques of Harris were met with swift and unyielding hostility. After a Mic article documented the lack of left-wing enthusiasm for a Harris candidacy, investigative journalist Victoria A. Brownsworth suggested that a better headline for the article would be: "Kamala Harris, biracial senator and former Attorney General of the most populous state, faces misog-







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ynist white men defaming her." (This despite the fact that every critic quoted in the piece was female, and one was a woman of color.) Center for American Progress president Neera Tanden, a close Clinton ally and frequent defender of the Democratic Party, declared she found it "odd" that "these folks" (meaning Bernie Sanders supporters) "have [it] in for Kamala Harris and Cory Booker" in particular. "Hmmmm," she said, implying that criticisms of Harris and Booker were racially motivated. MSNBC host Joy Ann Reid said the Mic article simply reported the opinions of "3 alt-left activists," "alt-left" being a term used to brand leftists as racist analogues of the neo-Nazi alt-right. In Cosmopolitan, Brittney Cooper wrote that the left in general, but in particular the "Sanders Left," "has a black-woman problem," a charge I've addressed elsewhere. Cooper said that those criticizing Harris "think that black women who care about establishment politics lack vision" and that the debate "isn't about Harris, but about the emotional and political labor that black women are expected to do to save America's soul." "Angry white Sanders voters," she said, must "get off [Harris's] back." In large part, responses to skepticism about Harris have simply dismissed the substance of the analysis, instead suggesting a "targeting" of Harris because of her gender and/or race.

By wielding identity to neutralize political pushback, these commentators were continuing a trend. Throughout the 2016 campaign season, criticism of Hillary Clinton was frequently deflected with claims that her critics were motivated by sexism. And certainly, there were a lot of sexist attacks. Allusions to her husband's

sexual exploits, scrutiny of her appearance, and a perception of the candidate as "untrustworthy" were all rooted, in part, in gender bias. No one can credibly deny that Clinton's gender has affected the public's perception of her since the very beginning of her career, including the early political hostility she faced in Arkansas when she refused to give up her maiden name, and the time in 1992 when she was publicly pressured into proving that she liked to bake cookies.

But writing off Clinton's leftist critics as necessarily motivated by gender bias was sexist in itself. It reduced Clinton to her gender and implied that she had no agency in her own decision-making. Some people had perfectly defensible grounds for seeing Clinton as "untrustworthy," such as her shifting positions on subjects like the TPP, welfare "reform," and NAFTA. Others disapproved of Clinton for her hawkishness, her insistence that single-payer would "never ever happen, her ties to Wall Street, or myriad other legitimate reasons. Those who raised these concerns, however, were often dismissed as either "Bernie Bros" or un-persuadable "deplorables" motivated by bigotry.

The "Bernie Bro" narrative, which attempted to paint Sanders supporters as disproportionately sexist (and Sanders himself as borderline bigoted) was deeply pernicious and effective. Sanders was vulnerable to this kind of attack: in a world in which personal identity has become a shorthand for "progress," and "white man" has become an epithet, Bernie's identity was an easy target. His unflinching support of women's issues, his history of advocacy for racial justice, his record of support for

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civil rights and LGBT issues, even his Jewishness were all made secondary to his image as an "angry white male." Sanders was accused of downplaying the political concerns of people of color. Even now, when 73% of African Americans view Sanders favorably (as compared with 52% of white people), he is still treated as having a race problem.

Since more allies are generally made by engaging one's critics than dismissing them as biased deplorabros, the heckling approach was not a politically savvy one. Just as importantly, though, the "bro" stereotype entirely erased the perspectives of countless women and people of color who did not share the center-left political position. The "Bernie Bro" mythology-that progressives are almost exclusively white, male, and young—







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will not die, no matter how often women and people of color try to speak up to disprove it. In all the words spilled about the uninterrupted whiteness of Sanders supporters, prominent "Bros" like Rosario Dawson, Ben Jealous, Pramila Jayapal, Eddie Glaude, Spike Lee, Killer Mike, Cornel West, and Nina Turner went largely unmentioned. Hillary supporters were appalled that leftists challenged civil rights hero John Lewis's commitment to Clinton, but it seems civil rights legend Harry Belafonte was considered less sacrosanct-his endorsement of Bernie Sanders was whited-out of the public discourse along with the perspectives of Michelle Alexander and Ta-Nehisi Coates—both of whom are generally considered among the most respected liberal thought leaders. One of the most powerful pro-Black Lives Matter messages heard during the entire campaign was a Sanders video featuring Erica Garner talking about her father, but Garner was an inconvenient figure for the narrative. As black progressive Leslie Lee III said in March 2016:

"Me, myself, and many other POC, people of color, who support Bernie Sanders, feel like we don't get to be a part of the conversation. We get ignored. We get erased. It's assumed that the black vote, the Hispanic vote, and everyone is all behind Hillary Clinton and none of us really get Bernie Sanders or like Bernie Sanders."

In March of 2016, exasperated Sanders-voting POC even employed the hashtag #BernieMadeMeWhite, joking that a love of the band Journey and pumpkin spiced lattes would accrue with our new race status. Other, more sardonic, tweeters celebrated the immunity from police violence their newfound caucacity might bring. Ironically, whiteness—when attributed to blacks—became a punishment rather than a privilege.

Twitter has been an especially revealing host forum to this ugly friction between identity and ideology: there, unapologetically leftist people of color and women are routinely shouted down, called race traitors, self-hating women, or, incredibly, are accused of being white—even by people with white-presenting avatars. Twitter is where you can find a liberal Democrat referring to Our Revolution president Nina Turner as "Bernie's Omarosa." It's disorienting to see white (and black) liberals calling leftists of color sellouts, Uncle Toms, "coons," house-slaves, and well, white people, all in the name of anti-racism. But the Bernie Bro framework tells us that all the racists are at the fringes of the political spectrum, while the middle remains pure. Progressive women or leftists of color therefore present a kind of glitch in the matrix. The solution? Deny our existence. Leftists of color are regularly told-by white liberals!—that we are white and/or secretly racist. And while stories about the sexism Clinton supporters faced online are familiar, the racism and sexism directed by the center against the left are ignored. Purported anti-racist Democrats stayed largely silent as an Islamophobic smear campaign was waged against progressive black Muslim Representative Keith Ellison, one of the ugliest instances of bigotry to come out of the Democratic Party

in recent history.

The same kind of hypocrisy could be seen in Gloria Steinem's inane quip that young women who supported Bernie must be in it for "the boys." A feminist icon struggled so much to make sense of the inconvenient fact that a majority of young women supported Sanders that she fell back on the same basic gender stereotypes she has been fighting since the 1960s. But this is the dissonance created by a certain conception of identity: if we believe that Hillary Clinton is "the candidate of women and people of color," and "women and people of color" are defined entirely by those identities, it becomes impossible to understand how anyone who shares the identity could reject the candidate. Once the distinction between perspective and identity is erased, voters of color become an undifferentiated hive mind incapable of political independence.

It's strange that we're at the point where this needs to be said: a black politician is not necessarily the best politician to promote black interests, and a female politician will not necessarily serve women's interests better than a man would. Race produces a set of lived experiences that inform our political perspective, but identity cannot be used as a mitigating factor for political shortcomings. A glance at the unusually diverse 2016 Republican primary field illustrates as much. If we believe that a political candidate's identity overrides their substantive beliefs and policy prescriptions, then a Ben Carson/Carly Fiorina ticket would have been a progressive dream. Brittney Cooper of Cosmopolitan, in her defense of Harris, makes a good point here: Cooper says that, despite a history of performing the role, black people should not be cast as "the conscience of the nation." The burden is too heavy for any group, and it certainly exceeds the capacity of any single politician. Belonging to a protected class does not immunize a politician from error, nor should it insulate her from criticism.

During the 2012 presidential race, Cory Booker went on *Meet The Press* and defended—of all people— Mitt Romney against criticism of Romney's work for Bain Capital. Booker, evincing more sympathy for the financial industry than for the disproportionate number of black people affected by the financial industry's bad acts, told voters to "stop attacking private equity." Booker was wrong to do so. During the 2016 primary, Representative John Lewis unfairly impugned Bernie Sanders' character, implying that because Lewis hadn't personally seen Sanders in the crowd of hundreds of thousands at the 1963 March on Washington, Sanders was probably lying about having gone. Lewis, likewise, was wrong to do so. Democrats defending Hillary Clinton's support of the 1994 Crime Bill relish pointing out that two-thirds of the Congressional Black Caucus voted in favor of it. But those members, too, were wrong—despite being black. The other members of the CBC, the ones who opposed the bill, were right. Likewise, the contemporary equivalent of that dissenting third—the black voters who supported Bernie Sanders in the primary—should

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not be erased because other quantities of black people disagree. Any statement about what "black people" think or support automatically discounts the perspective of very large numbers of us, because—as is often said but rarely internalized—black people are not a monolith. Identity is, at best, a loose proxy for a person's political commitments, and individual identity groups contain incredibly diverse perspectives. Failure to recognize that fact can result in dangerous consequences: it can lead us to support policies contrary to the best interests of a community simply because of optics, and it can turn us into a "firewall" to lean on, rather than a constituency to be won.

Even worse, because the optics are improved, it can actually become harder to combat the harm posed by in-group bad actors: a black-run police force can be just as harmful to a black community as one headed by whites, but the optics of equal representation can obscure the reality of systemic racism. Hillary Clinton was widely accepted as the best candidate for what are considered "women's issues," such as protecting the right to choose and ensuring access to reproductive care, even though Bernie Sanders had a nearly-identical track record. Yet even though Clinton almost automatically received endorsements from Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and other women's organizations, she chose as her Vice Presidential nominee a senator who had historically been a staunch opponent of abortion rights. As governor of Virginia, Tim Kaine had advocated for adoption over abortion, pushed for abstinence-only education, and even supported a law requiring that minors seeking to end their pregnancies get parental approval. This history would ordinarily have caused outrage among reproductive rights advocates, who see abortion as a non-negotiable issue. (Witness the trouble Sanders got into after giving a speech supporting an anti-abortion mayoral candidate in Nebraska.) But Clinton's gender insulated her from scrutiny with respect to women's issues. Those who challenged Clinton's VP choice on the grounds that it demonstrated a lack of commitment to feminist principles were-ironically-dismissed as "bros," regardless of our gender. In short: the interest in Hillary as a woman candidate trumped interest in having the best candidate for women.

The recent backlash to rumors about Kamala Harris's potential 2020 candidacy shows how this bizarre and cynical version of "identity politics" continues to be used as a weapon to derail progressives whose record of commitment to racial justice, gender equality, and LGBT issues has historically eclipsed that of the Democratic Party itself. Using identity this way is harmful to the interests of progressive politics. Leftists, particularly leftists of color, are invested in ensuring that the Democratic Party learns from its mistakes. To that end, we are committed to helping the party put forward candidates who are less vulnerable to the types of attacks which dogged Hillary – that she was a corporatist, that she was owned by Wall Street, that she could not be trusted. That is why we question candidates like Kamala Harris, Cory

Booker, and Deval Patrick - all floated as 2020 possibilities in recent weeks. Though each of them has at least one black parent, it is intellectually dishonest to pretend it is that quality, rather than their corporatism, which draws criticism from the left. (And with Nina Turner emerging

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

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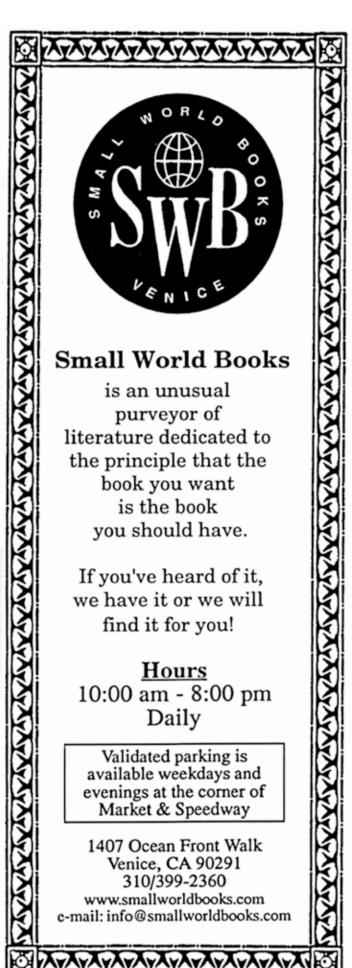
as the presumptive heiress to Bernie's progressive leadership, it is increasingly difficult to credibly contend otherwise.) It is natural to be skeptical of an out-group member's views about a subject important to members of that group—especially when certain race or gender-based factions have historically been in conflict. But the inquiry into whether to listen to a particular critic cannot stop at that critic's identity.

Of course, identity still matters, and prejudice operates in subtle and pervasive ways. On one level, my instinct is to agree with those who say all Harris's critics are racist: the truth is that everyone is racist. But our culture's conscious and unconscious biases won't be resolved before 2020, and until they are, we must rely on something more than mere identity to determine the legitimacy of political criticism. It's fair to ask of a critic: are you able to articulate a reason why you are wary of a candidate? Do, they, for instance, cite the candidate's conservative "tough on crime" approach to criminal justice, or do they trade in gendered stereotypes, dog-whistles, or vague statements of "feeling" that suggest an ulterior motive? This analytical step is crucial: a critic should not be impugned on the basis of a candidate's identity, but on the soundness of the critique itself. Nor should a critic be ignored because of their own identity, without anything more. After all: biology is not (political) destiny.

Harris, Booker, Patrick, Biden, Warren: all deserve scrutiny. So does any other potential candidate. That scrutiny should be applied evenly, in proportion to a candidate's likelihood of success and the quality of their record. It's not an act of racism to question whether the Democratic Party should select as its presidential nominee a career prosecutor with a controversial record on misconduct issues. Pretending that these candidates are criticized solely on the basis of race or gender is, in itself, a lesser form of prejudice: it erases their flaws, and flattens their humanity. Treating people as people requires acknowledgment of their imperfections. To err, after all, is human.

Briahna Joy Gray writes for *Current Affairs* and other publications, and co-hosts the SWOTI podcast: https://www.swotipod.com.







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MATHEMATICIANS WHO WANT TO SAVE DEMOCRACY

CARRIE ARNOLD

eaning back in his chair, Jonathan Mattingly swings his legs up onto his desk, presses a key on his laptop and changes the results of the 2012 elections in North Carolina. On the screen, flickering lines and dots outline a map of the state's 13 congressional districts, each of which chooses one person to send to the US House of Representatives. By tweaking

the borders of those election districts, but not changing a single vote, Mattingly's maps show candidates from the Democratic Party winning six, seven or even eight seats in the race. In reality, they won only four — despite earning a majority of votes overall.

Mattingly's election simulations can't rewrite history, but he hopes they will help to support democracy in the future in his state and the nation as a whole. The mathematician, at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, has designed an algorithm that pumps out random alternative versions of the state's election maps — he's created more than 24,000 so far — as part of an attempt to quantify the extent and impact of gerrymandering: when voting districts are drawn to favor or disfavor candidates certain political parties.

Gerrymandering has a long and unpopular history in the United States. It is the main reason that the country ranked 55th of 158 nations — last among Western democracies — in a 2017 index of voting fairness run by the Electoral Integrity Project, an academic collaboration between the University of Sydney, Australia, and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Although gerrymandering played no part in the tumultuous 2016 presidential election, it seems to have influenced who won seats in the US House of Representatives that year.

"Even if gerrymandering affected just 5 seats out of 435, that's often enough to sway crucial votes," Mattingly says.

The courts intervene when gerrymandering is driven by race. Last month, for example, the Supreme Court upheld a verdict that two North Carolina districts were drawn with racial composition in mind. But the courts have been much less keen to weigh in on partisan gerrymandering — when one political party is favored over another. One reason is that there has never been a clear and reliable metric to determine when this type of gerrymandering crosses the line from acceptable politicking to a violation of the US Constitution.

Mattingly and several other mathematicians hope to change that. Over the past five years, they have built algorithms and computer models that reveal biases

in district borders. And they're starting to be heard. In December 2016, a Wisconsin court considered a statistical analysis when ruling against partisan gerrymandering. And Mattingly will serve as an expert witness in a case this summer in North Carolina.

Although such fights have begun to crop up in other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Australia, the stakes are particularly high in the United States. Lawsuits fighting partisan gerrymandering are pending around the country, and a census planned for 2020 is expected to trigger nationwide redistricting. If the mathematicians succeed in laying out their case, it could influence how those maps are drawn.

"This is what the courts have been waiting for," says Megan Gall, a social scientist with the Lawyers'

Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington DC. "This is our way to stop it," she says.

Although gerrymandering played no part in the tumultuous 2016 presidential election, it seems to have influenced who won seats in the US House of Representatives that year.

- Carrie Arnold

Draw the Line

In 1812, Massachusetts governor Elbridge Gerry signed a bill that redrew some voting districts to benefit his party. One odd-looking district wrapped around the city of Boston in the shape of a salamander. Political satirists dubbed the new district the 'Gerry-mander'. Since then, this strategy has become a staple of US politics as state legislators redraw voting blocs with tortuous creativity.

The two predominant approaches to gerrymandering are often referred to as packing and cracking. In packing, legislators from the party drawing the map try to pack likely opposition voters into as few political districts as possible. Cracking divides supporters of the rival party into several districts, reducing their ability to elect a representative, and ensuring victory for the party in power.

The Supreme Court historically has not intervened, as long as districts meet four criteria: they are continuous; they are compact; they contain roughly the same number of people; and they give minority groups a chance to elect their own representatives in accordance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In the 1986 case Davis v. Bandemer, the court agreed that it had the power to intervene in cases of partisan gerrymandering, but it declined to do so because it lacked a clear measure to indicate when this had occurred.

As a specialist in statistics and probability, Mattingly had never given much professional thought to the issue. But his general interest in the political process led him to attend a public meeting in 2013, where he heard a speaker rail against North Carolina's 2012 election outcomes. For about a decade the state had had a relatively even split in its 13 electoral districts. Sometimes Democrats took six seats, sometimes seven. But Republican redistricting before the 2012 election packed Democrats into three districts, putting the party at a severe disadvantage. Even though its candidates won 50.3% of the votes, the party captured only four seats.

Mattingly was struck both by the passion of the rant and the puzzle it posed. "If it really was unfair, there should be a way to show that mathematically," he says. "I wanted to move beyond 'he said, she said' and create something more objective." Reading around the issue, he realized he had a chance to create the metric that judges had been looking for.

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Packing and cracking result in some telltale signs of interference: the opposition party tends to win by a landslide in packed districts, but lose by a narrow margin in cracked ones. And heavily gerrymandered districts are more likely to be geographically spread out and of unusual shape. With a student, Christy Graves, Mattingly got to work to combine these measures into a single, quantitative Gerrymandering Index for North Carolina.

The duo began with the state's 2012 election districts and public data that broke down voting by neighborhood. They then made thousands of tiny shifts to the boundaries of the districts, essentially testing every iteration that would meet the four Supreme Court criteria.

Ensuring continuity — and that each district varied in population size by only 0.1% — was relatively straightforward. So was guaranteeing that the map included a representative number of African American and Hispanic-majority districts to comply with the Voting Rights Act.

But evaluating compactness was a challenge. One problem was that it's difficult to analyze mathematically whether a district meets a rather vague written criterion of being 'compact'. For another, mathematicians have more than 30 different ways to calculate a shape's compactness,



A L G O R I T H M S

each of which gives slightly different results. There is no consensus on which is the best for voting districts. Mathematician Moon Duchin at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, has spent the past few years trying to devise a compactness metric for gerrymandering. "But the field is a giant mess," she says.

Complicating the issue even further, many districts have odd shapes owing to rivers and other natural boundaries. Mattingly and Graves developed a compactness score calculated as the length of a district's perimeter squared divided by its area, a version of what's known as the Polsby–Popper measure. A circle has the lowest ratio of perimeter to area; but as borders meander to include and exclude specific areas, the perimeter expands, giving a higher ratio.

With thousands of maps and their resulting voting outcomes in hand, Mattingly and Graves could begin to analyze just how gerrymandered the North Carolina voting districts were. Three of the 13 districts for the 2012 elections were more than three-quarters Democrat, much more packed than in any of the team's randomly drawn maps, even for their bluest-of-blue Democratic districts. More telling, however, was the impact on election outcomes. Using the randomly drawn maps, 7.6 seats went to Democrats on average, compared with the 4 they actually won. "The more you learn, the more infuriating it gets," Mattingly says.

Their analysis of data from other states revealed a partisan gerrymander in Maryland perpetrated by the Democrat-controlled legislature to freeze out its conservative rivals. States such as Arizona and Iowa, which have independent or bipartisan commissions that oversee the creation of voting districts, fared much better. In a separate analysis, Daniel McGlone, a geographic-information-system data analyst at the technology firm Azavea in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ranked each state's voting districts for compactness as a measure of gerrymandering, and found that Maryland had the most-gerrymandered districts. North Carolina came second. Nevada, Nebraska and Indiana were the least gerrymandered.

Measuring Up

In the summer of 2016, a bipartisan panel of retired judges met to see whether they could create a more representative set of voting districts for North Carolina. Their maps gave Mattingly a chance to test his index. The judges' districts, he found, were less gerrymandered than in 75% of the computer-generated models — a sign of a well-drawn, representative map. By comparison, every one of the 24,000 computer-drawn districts was less gerrymandered than either the 2012 or 2016 voting districts drawn by state legislators, which Mattingly, Graves and their colleagues reported in April 2017.

"This is the result that I hope gets traction," Mattingly says. "It shows that the election results really didn't represent the will of the people." When representatives from Common Cause, a pro-democracy advocacy group based in Washington DC, saw the work, they asked Mattingly to serve as an expert witness in a North Carolina

partisan-gerrymandering case coming up this summer. The question for researchers and judges, however, is whether Mattingly's approach is the best.

Mathematicians in other states have also been developing methods for evaluating gerrymandering. At the University of Illinois Urbana—Champaign, political statistician Wendy Tam Cho has designed algorithms to draw district maps that use the criteria mandated by state law, but do not include partisan information such as an area's voting history. By altering the importance of the compactness score, or how equal the different populations in each district need to be, she can generate a new set of districts. Cho measures how closely a state's existing legislative districts line up with billions of non-partisan maps drawn by her supercomputing cluster. If they diverge significantly, then the people who drew the districts probably had partisan motives for placing the lines where they did, Cho says.

Cho's approach creates more maps than Mattingly's, which she says gives it an advantage. But Mattingly argues that his algorithms are more transparent and so can be used to calculate a score that judges might prefer. Both strategies are highly technical and require professional expertise to implement and interpret, says Sam Wang, a neuroscientist at Princeton University, New Jersey, who analyses elections and voting in his spare time at the blog Princeton Election Consortium. "The Supreme Court has said it is looking for a 'manageable' standard. For constitutional questions, judges might find it more manageable to avoid having to call upon outside experts," Wang says.

Political scientist Nicholas Stephanopoulos at the University of Chicago, Illinois, takes a much simpler approach to measuring gerrymandering. He has developed what he calls an "efficiency gap," which measures a state's wasted votes: all those cast for a losing candidate in each district, and all those for the victor in excess of the proportion needed to win. If one party has lots of landslide



victories and crushing losses compared with its rivals, this can be a sign of gerrymandering. The simplicity of this metric is a strength, says Wang.

But Duchin argues that methods that analyze only one aspect of gerrymandering, whether it's lopsided wins or low compactness scores, are less than ideal. She favors a metric, such as Mattingly's, that incorporates the variety of factors that contribute.

Michael McDonald, a political scientist at the University of Florida in Gainesville, questions the validity of all these quantitative metrics, however, because they rely on creating a random sample of all possible voting districts. It is impossible to calculate how random a sample they are looking at, he argues. "There are more ways to draw voting districts in the US than there are quarks in the Universe"

Accusations of gerrymandering have also cropped up in the United Kingdom. Until 20 years ago, the creation of voting districts by the independent Boundary Commissions was a largely apolitical process, according to geographer Ron Johnston at the University of Bristol, UK. In the 1990s, supporters of the Labor party, then in opposition, realized that they could influence the creation of parliamentary constituencies by submitting their own maps to the Boundary Commissions for consideration, which opened the door to all parties jockeying for power, Johnston says. An overhaul of UK constituencies currently under way could cut the number of Members of Parliament by 50; the final result of the Boundary Commissions' review is expected in 2018. Political parties are expected to try to shift the results in their favor, but quantitative solutions could help to depoliticize the process.

Solution in Sight

US legislators have been reluctant to embrace a mathematical solution to gerrymandering. But current court cases show that pressure to do so is mounting, Gall says. In the Wisconsin case *Whitford v. Gill*, federal judges used the efficiency gap to rule that the state's voting districts represented an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander. The case could end up before the Supreme

Court Later This Year.

If judges are to accept a mathematical test for gerrymandering, they will need testimony from expert witnesses such as Mattingly to explain how and why these tests work. But the handful of mathematicians researching the subject will not be enough for the country's pending lawsuits. Even if the courts settle on a standard metric, judges might need an expert in each case. That's why Duchin is organizing a week-long summer camp to help mathematicians learn the underlying subtleties of the various gerrymandering models and how to apply and explain them. Duchin expected 50 people to sign up; more than 1,000 have applied. "The response blew us out of the water," she says, and several camps will now be held

Mattingly and his model will have their day in court this summer. Even if his algorithms don't become the standard, Mattingly hopes that the judicial system will find a way to curb gerrymandering and restore his faith in the electoral system. "I'm a citizen, too," he says.

Carrie Arnold writes for Nature and other publications.

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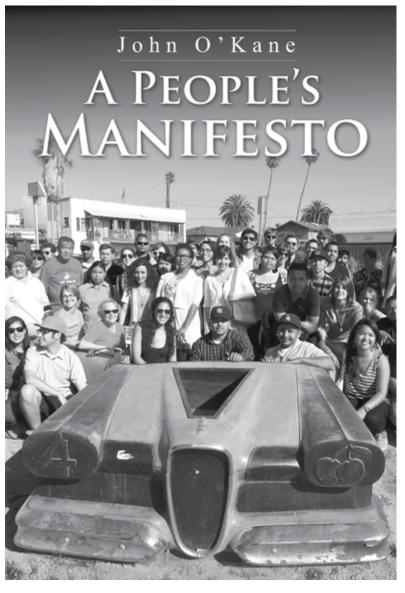
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Publisher of AMASS Magazine Releases A People's Manifesto



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-tograsp 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 longtime 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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SAVING ILLINOIS: GETTING MORE BANG FOR THE STATE'S BUCK

Ellen Brown

llinois is insolvent, unable to pay its bills. According to Moody's, the state has \$15 billion in unpaid bills and \$251 billion in unfunded liabilities. Of these, \$119 billion are tied to shortfalls in the state's pension program. On July 6, 2017, for the first time in two years,

the state finally passed a budget, after lawmakers overrode the governor's veto on raising taxes. But they used massive tax hikes to do it -- a 32% increase in state income taxes and 33% increase in state corporate taxes -- and still Illinois' new budget generates only \$5 billion, not nearly enough to cover its \$15 billion deficit.

Adding to its budget woes, the state is being considered by Moody's for a credit downgrade, which means its borrowing costs could shoot up. Several other states are in nearly as bad shape, with Kentucky, New Jersey, Arizona and Connecticut topping list. US public pensions are underfunded by at least \$1.8 trillion and probably more, according to expert estimates. They are paying out more than they are taking in, and they are falling short on their projected returns. Most funds aim for about a 7.5% return, but they barely made 1.5% last year.

If Illinois were a corporation, it could declare

bankruptcy; but states are constitutionally forbidden to take that route. Ignoring any moral implications, the state could follow the lead of Detroit and cut its public pension funds, but Illinois has a constitutional provision forbidding that as well. It could follow Detroit in privatizing public utilities (notably water), but that would drive consumer utility prices through the roof, devastating

citizens -- especially those who could least afford a basic human right that has been commodified. And taxes have been raised about as far as the legislature can be pushed to go.

The state cannot meet its budget because the tax base has shrunk. The economy has shrunk and so has the money supply, triggered by the 2008 banking crisis. Jobs were lost, homes were foreclosed on, and businesses and people quit borrowing, either because they were "all borrowed up" and could not go further into debt or, in the case of businesses, because they did not have sufficient customer demand to warrant business expansion. And today, virtually the entire circulating money supply is created when banks make loans. When loans are paid down and new loans are not taken out, the money supply shrinks. What to do?

Quantitative Easing for Munis

If Illinois were a corporation, it could declare bankruptcy; but states are constitutionally forbidden to take that route.

- Ellen Brown

There is a deep pocket that can fill the hole in the money supply -- the Federal Reserve. The Fed had no problem finding the money to bail out the profligate Wall Street banks following the banking crisis, with short-term loans totaling \$26 trillion. It also freed up the banks' balance sheets by buying \$1.7 trillion in mortgage-backed securities with its "quantitative easing" tool. The Fed could do something similar for the local governments that were victims of the crisis. One of its dual mandates is to maintain full employment, and we are nowhere near that now, despite some biased figures that omit those who have dropped out of the workforce or have had to take low-paying or part-time jobs.

The case for a "QE-Muni" was made in an October 2012 editorial in *The New York Times* titled "Getting More Bang for the Fed's Buck" by Joseph Grundfest et al. The authors said Republicans

and Democrats alike have been decrying the failure to stimulate the economy through needed infrastructure improvements, but shrinking tax revenues and limited debt service capacity have tied the hands of state and local governments. They observed:

"State and municipal bonds help finance new infrastructure projects like roads and bridges, as well as pay for some government salaries and services. . . [E]very Fed dollar spent in the muni market would absorb a larger percentage of outstanding debt and is likely to have a greater effect on reducing the bonds' interest rates than the same expenditure in the mortgage market. . . [L]owering the borrowing costs for states, cities and counties should not only forestall tax increases (which dampen individual spending), but also make it easier for local governments to pay for police officers, firefighters, teachers and infrastructure improvements."

The authors acknowledged that their QE-Muni proposal faced legal hurdles. The Federal Reserve Act prohibits the central bank from purchasing municipal government debt with a maturity of more than six months, and the beneficial effects expected from QE-Muni would require loans of longer duration. But Congress was then trying to avoid the "fiscal cliff," so all options were on the table. Today the fiscal cliff has come around again, with threats of the debt ceiling dropping on an embattled Congress. It could be time to look at "QE for Munis" again.

Getting More Bang for the Pensioners' Bucks

Scott Baker, a senior advisor to the Public Banking Institute and economics editor at OpEdNews, has another idea. He argues that the states are far from broke. They may not be able to balance their budgets with taxes, but a search through their Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFRs) shows that they have massive surplus funds and rainy day funds tucked away around the state, most of them earning minimal returns. (Recall the 1.5% made by the pension funds collectively last year.)

The 2016 CAFR for Illinois shows \$94.6 billion in its pension fund alone, and well over \$100 billion if other funds are included. To say it is broke is like saying a retired couple with a million dollars in savings is broke because they can earn only 1.5% on their savings and cannot live on \$15,000 a year. What they need to do is to spend some of their savings to meet their budget and invest the rest in something safe but more lucrative.

So here is Baker's idea for Illinois: Make an iron-clad pledge by law, even in the State Constitution if they can get quick agreement, to provide for pension payouts at the current level and adjusted for inflation in the future. Liquidate the current pension fund and maybe some of the other liquid funds too to pay off all current debts. This will leave them with a great credit rating. Put the remaining tens of billions into a new State Bank, partnering with the beleaguered small and community banks. Finally, use that money to finance state and local businesses and individuals instead of Wall Street schemes and high fund manager fees that will no longer be necessary or advisable, saving the state hundreds of millions a year.

The Public Bank could be built roughly on the model of the hugely successful Bank of North Dakota example, one of the country's greatest banks, measured by Return on Equity, and scandal-free since its founding in 1919.

The Bank of North Dakota (BND), the nation's only state-owned bank, has had record profits every year for the last 13 years, with a return on equity in 2016 of 16.6%, twice the national average. Its chief depositor is the state itself, and its mandate is to support the local economy, partnering rather than competing with local banks. Its commercial loans range from 2.4% to 7.5%. The BND makes cheaper loans as well, drawing on loan funds for special programs including infrastructure, startup businesses and affordable housing. Its loan income after deducting allowances for loan losses was \$175 million in 2016 on a loan portfolio of \$4.7 billion. (2016 BND CAFR, pages 28-29.) That puts the net return on loans at 3.7%.

Illinois could follow North Dakota's lead. Looking again at the Illinois CAFR (page 45), the net sum paid out for pension benefits in 2016 was only \$1.833 billion, or less than 2% of the \$94.6 billion pool. An Illinois state bank could generate that much in profit, even after paying off the state's outstanding budget deficit.

Assume Illinois guaranteed its pension payouts, as Baker recommends, then liquidated its pension fund and withdrew \$10 billion to meet its current budget shortfall. This would significantly improve its credit rating, allowing it to refinance its long-term debt at a reduced rate. The remaining \$85 billion could be put into the state's own bank, \$8 billion as capital and \$77 billion as deposits. At a loan to deposit ratio of 80%, \$60 billion could be issued in loans. At a return similar to the BND's 3.7%, these loans would produce \$2.2 billion in interest income. The remaining \$17 billion in deposits could be invested in liquid federal securities at 1%, generating an additional \$170 million. That would give a net profit of \$2.37 billion, enough to cover the \$1.8 billion annual pensioners' payout, with \$570 million to spare.

The salubrious result: the pension fund would be self-funding; the state would have a bank that could create credit to support the local economy; the pensioners would have money to spend, increasing demand; the economy would be stimulated, increasing the tax base; and the state would have a good credit rating, allowing it to borrow on the bond market at low-interest rates. Better yet, it could borrow from its own bank and pay the interest to itself. The proceeds could then go to its pensioners rather than to bondholders.

Where there is the political will, there is a way. Politicians and central bankers will take radical, gamechanging steps in desperate times. We just need to start thinking outside the box, a Wall Street-imposed box that has trapped us in austerity and economic servitude for over a century.

Ellen Brown is an attorney, president of the Public Banking Institute and author of 12 books including the best-selling Web of Debt. See the blogs: *Web of Debt*, Public Banking Solution, and Public Banking Institute.

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

LIBERALS STRIKE BACK AGAINST SINGLE PAYER

MICHAEL LIGHTY

ith the explosive growth of the movement for single payer healthcare, it should not be a surprise to see the Empire Strike Back. In the name of political reality, some liberal pundits, politicians and policy wonks are scolding progressives to give up on Medicare for All. There are many ways to achieve "universal coverage," we're

told. "Overhauling" the entire system is too hard, healthcare is too big a part of the economy, and politicians will not take out the health insurance companies.

Yet, the alternative approaches to reform pose the same political problems: the insurance industry is likely to fight the elimination of their profits (Dutch and German health insurers, for example, are non-profit), and the severe reductions in executive compensation, elimination of shareholder dividends, and rate setting, all of which go away under European-style health insurance. The benefits and rates are government mandated, the companies are essentially payment administrators.

Either this regulated system of private health plans lowers prices through government—by setting rates and negotiations—or it fails to do so and costs

shift to individuals. But it is still the government role as rate setter/price negotiator that matters. Wouldn't it be more straightforward and simpler to improve and expand Medicare?

Still, the pundits say it's best to search for incremental reform of the insurance-based system, and live (or not!) with the results. In other words, the best health reform we can do is a version of what we have. Worse, it props up and reinforces a profit-focused system that is antithetical to the very concept of healing. Advocates of Medicare for all, and other non-reformist reforms, are looking to solve problems immediately, not accommo-

dating the status quo.

Progressives are badly served by shallow political advice from the likes of Paul Krugman. It obscures the reality working people actually face and undermines the fight for our values and program.

Our health is not a commodity—it doesn't belong in the "market"—it is a human right. Those who advise us to settle for models of national health systems in other countries are missing the fundamental difference from the broken U.S. scheme. What Australia, the Netherlands and Switzerland all have in common is they do not conflate "coverage" with healthcare. Those countries guarantee healthcare.

Having health insurance in America doesn't prevent medical bankruptcy or denied care. In the U.S., employer based healthcare creates great uncertainty for

Ironically,
healthcare
reform efforts
have sought to
"improve and expand"
every element of the
present system,
except the program
that is popular and
works best:
Medicare.

- Michael Lighty

workers, as premiums and out of pocket costs increase, reflecting costs shifted from the company to workers to fund the profits of the insurance companies.

Only 55 percent of employers offer coverage. Why would we try to buttress a system that is failing workers, hurting business, and shrinking? From 60 to 70 percent of healthcare spending comes from taxes. We're just not getting our monies worth. We are wasting 20 cents on the dollar when we pay for private health insurance, wasting huge resources that could go to higher wages, child care, and pensions.

Alternatively, single payer is the reform that establishes health security and enables greater equality and freedom—values worth fighting for.

Ironically, healthcare reform efforts have sought

to "improve and expand" every element of the present system, except the program that is popular and works best: Medicare. The Clintons tried to expand HMOs, Obama expanded private health insurance and Medicaid, the GOP tried to expand "individual purchase," so we'd all be on our own when dealing with insurance companies, drug companies and hospital corporations.

It is precisely profit-focused healthcare industry that has caused the problems of escalating costs and restricted access. Rising premiums pay for rising prescription drug costs, which hospital corporations pass on to patients and drive up their own rates as they leverage

30 AMASS

their market share. As a result, each sector's revenues and profits increase. The industry imperative of revenue and profits has replaced caregiving as the basis of healthcare in the US (see Elizabeth Rosenthal's book, American Sickness).

We are not "starting from scratch," as Krugman contends (which he did not in 2005) but instead there exists a model in the U.S. for how single-payer financing could work: Medicare—which if improved and expanded to all—could confront the industry, contain prices and restore the values of caring, compassion and community to our healthcare system.

Alternative approaches to universal coverage (though even with the Affordable Care Act, 28 million people remain uninsured) depend on using huge tax subsidies to enable individuals and businesses to buy insurance coverage. Without those subsidies—in California alone they amount to over \$100 billion health insurance is a failed business model. Taxpayers prop up the insurers profits for the honor of paying \$2000 in deductibles and potentially under the ACA over 9.5 percent of our income in out of pocket costs. In California, this means 15 million people are uninsured or underinsured.

Truly controlling costs requires eliminating the waste and inefficiency of the private payers – Medicare administrations cost 4-5 percent compared to up to 12 percent for insurance companies (before profits). The inherently wasteful insurance company bureaucracy

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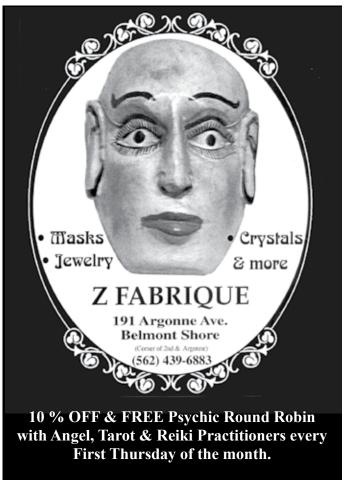
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doesn't go away when everybody has to buy one of their health plans.

Ultimately, what we must face is an issue of power. Can we collectively organize a healthcare system without the imperatives of revenue and profit? Only if we build a movement for health justice that demands guaranteed healthcare for all as a human right. Only collectively through government do we as a society have the resources and standing to secure that right. Only through an Improved Medicare for All can we achieve health security, not subject to the market power of healthcare corporations.

Michael Lighty is the Director of Public Policy for National Nurses United, where he has worked since its founding in 2009, and for the California Nurses Association since 1994.







CHICO: Hey, whatsa you name?

GROUCHO: Rufus T. Trump.

CHICO: What kinda name is that?

GROUCHO: Why that's a very good name. That's an American name.

CHICO: I'm-a name-a Chico. Atsa American name too.

GROUCHO: Chico doesn't sound so American to me. It sounds...uh...Mexican.

CHICO: Mexican? Nah. I'm-a from the Bronx.

GROUCHO: Mexican, eh. Are you sure you're not an illegal immigrant.

CHICO: I'm-a don't know. My parents they never mentioned it. They were too busy crossing the border into Brooklyn.

GROUCHO: Well, it's something your parents should have discussed with you.

CHICO: Hey, where are you from?

GROUCHO: I'm from Queens, NY.

CHICO: Queens! We no got a queen in America. That sounds-a pretty foreign to me. Maybe you are a immlegal illigrant.

GROUCHO: A immlegal illigrant?

CHICO: Atsa right. I think I better call a cop. Oh, here's-a one now.

HARPO appears.

GROUCHO: This is a cop?

CHICO: Well, he's sort of a cop. He's a airport official. He's a gonna put you on a plane. He's a gonna show you what-a we do with immlegal illigrants.

HARPO laughs silently. He is wearing a policeman's cap.

GROUCHO: Listen. He's got no authority here.

CHICO: Are you-a kiddin'? He wrote a lotta books. He's a great big authority. Show him.

HARPO produces pages and pages and pages. He tosses them into the air.

CHICO: What-a you do for a livin'?

GROUCHO: I'm a quizmaster on the television.

CHICO: That's-a what I thought. We no want-a the quiz master. We got rid of the masters and-a the slaves a long while ago. Show him your power.

HARPO produces a huge hammer.

CHICO: That's-a what I call power!

HARPO scowls and threatens GROUCHO with the hammer.

GROUCHO: Hey, he's dangerous.

CHICO: That's-a what I said.

HARPO swings mightily with the hammer. He misses GROUCHO and hits CHICO instead. CHICO falls down.

CHICO arises. Hey, you supposed to hit-a him.

HARPO looks sad and begins to cry.

CHICO: It's-a ok, it's-a ok. Next time aim a little better.

HARPO begins to swing again.

Hey wait a minute, says GROUCHO. I tell you what. Let's hold an election instead.

CHICO: You wanna hold an election?

Sure, says GROUCHO. I have the votes right here.

GROUCHO reaches into his pocket and pulls out a number of pieces of paper.

GROUCHO: Let's count them.

OK, says CHICO, only I don't-a count so good.

GROUCHO: Let me do it for you.

GROUCHO counts the votes carefully and puts them back in his pocket.

GROUCHO: Just as I thought. I won.

CHICO: I guess-a that's the American way.

GROUCHO: Yes, it is. Fair and square.

CHICO: OK, you the president.

GROUCHO: Yep, that's me. Thanks, fellas.

CHICO: Hit him anyway.

HARPO does.

GROUCHO falls to the ground. HARPO and CHICO drag his body into a near-by plane. The plane has a destination written in large letters across its windshield. It says NOWHERE.

That's-a good, says CHICO. It looks-a like that's-a where

we all going.

HARPO begins to cry again.

Suddenly GROUCHO awakens and begins to sing, "Hooray for Captain Spaulding, the African explorer." Let's appoint him to the Supreme Court! HARPO hits GROUCHO again.

The theme song from *You Bet Your Life* fills the air. They all get in the plane. The plane flies off to its destination.

I awake saying, "Hmmmmm, was that a dream?"

Jack Foley has published 15 books of poetry, 5 books of criticism, a book of stories and sketches, and a two-volume "chronoencyclopedia," Visions & Affiliations: California Poetry 1940-2005.







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EAT THE FUUD VOUTRUST

ROY MANUELL

healthy society is built on the cornerstone of trust. Our everyday relationships are centred around trust. Trust is everywhere. When we drive to work, we trust that our cars are not going to fall apart despite the fact that most of us have only a simplistic idea as to how they operate. We trust that traffic lights will function correctly so as to avoid large-

scale accidents. We trust the teachers of our children; our partners; our parents.

So do we trust the food that keeps us alive and well?

Consumer trust in the food industry is on the decline in light of scandals such as the inescapable European horse meat incident in 2013 and melamine milk incident in China. These are two examples of what we call food fraud. Food fraud is sinister, vastly profitable and a very real occurrence - and you won't find evidence of it by picking up a product and checking its label. Following New Food's inaugural Food Fraud conference held Manchester at which industry leaders gathered to discuss the challenges that the reality of food fraud presents today's society, we take a look at the lessons learned from the event both on a UK and global level.

"Food fraud is a global issue," Professor Chris Elliott of Queen's University Belfast, asserted as he opened the event. From

Professor Elliott's opening statement, an internationally-known leader in food integrity, it became clear that we criminally under-appreciate the scale of the threat posed by food fraud and the extent to which it occurs and touches each aspect of the supply chain.

Why Is Food Fraud So Dangerous?

While food fraud might conceptually appear selfexplanatory, it is worth considering the variety of real ways in which it impacts upon our society and supply chain. Food fraud is much like other varieties of fraud in the ways in which it operates. Its impact however, is of an altogether different nature.

Here are the five empirical and very real ways in which fraud is currently diluting the integrity of the food industry.

1. Health threat. If a food product whose label claims that it contains no trace of peanuts, when in fact at some point in the supply chain the ingredients have been contaminated for whatever reason and peanuts have entered into the product, this has the potential to be fatal. It doesn't take a genius to work out why deliberate contamination has the potential to be fatal for certain individuals with intolerances or allergies. "Fraud financially cripples

the individual or company," Chris Elliott explained. "Food fraud kills."

Environmental 2. Fraudsters damage. have little space in their hearts for environmental conscience. The stripping of the ocean's rare fish that are cheaper than tuna then proceeding to claim that the products subsequently made are comprised of tuna represents an example of how food fraudsters champion economic gain over sustainable development.

3. Ethical implications. The imperative of ensuring that halal and kosher products remain so has no price for those it affects. Once again, fraudsters have no interest as to whether or not halal or kosher laws are adhered to when creating the products, but if exposed, you cannot place a value on the spiritual hurt felt by the respective religious communities affected.

4. Human slavery. We see examples of

modern day slavery associated with fraudulent practice. As fraudulent activity is by definition illegal, the ways in which it is carried out have no necessary regard for regulation or legislation or for the protection of its workers. Consequently, many workers are paid next to nothing for backbreaking work in developing nations so that corrupted products can be enjoyed in the developed world for unrealistically low prices.

5. The economic disruption to the food supply chain. Overall, food fraud, introduces and perpetuates an

While food fraud might conceptually appear self-explanatory, it is worth considering the variety of real ways in which it impacts upon our society and supply chain.

- Roy Manuell

unsustainable, unjust imbalance in the food industry that affects each and every one of us – from farm to fork.

We must remember that the overarching aim of food fraud is not to cause physical hurt, though not out of a moral or ethical imperative on the part of the fraudulent.

"The business model is not to do harm as this is easier to detect," Professor Elliott explained. "I often say: criminals are stupid and generally get caught. The fraudulent are clever and often avoid capture."

Listening to the high caliber of speakers that followed Professor Elliott, it became clear that food fraud is a highly organized, profitable and very real, criminal activity and becoming more and more integrated within organized crime networks across all continents, much in the same way as drug trafficking or smuggling. Food fraudsters operate along more or less exactly the same geographical traffic routes as the conventional streams of organized crime but is far less frequently detected.

As Peter Overbosch, former Vice President at Metro AG explains: "We often under-estimate the professional nature of fraudsters." This is very worrying.

Be it the infiltration of the dairy industry in India; or the involvement of the Italian mafia in the trafficking of oregano; or perhaps highlighted by the ongoing criminal activity in South America exemplified by Brazil's current meat scandal, food fraud is an intrinsically global issue and society seems to be unaware of the extent of the threat.

It is difficult to precisely estimate the global worth of the industry, but the food sector is indisputably towards the top of the league table in terms of its economic value. So precisely what slice of this extremely expensive proverbial pie is associated with fraudulent practice?

Case Study – British Pepper & Spice

At Food Fraud 2017, we were fortunate enough to be presented with a diversity of speakers offering different angles into the issue. One of these was provided by John Hill, Technical Director at British Pepper & Spice who detailed a case study of the herb and spice supply chain, one of the most profitable and infiltrated supply chain threads. If we briefly return to the automobile analogy of the introduction, Mr. Hill made allusion to the circumstances surrounding Volkswagen as he argued that a loss of consumer trust is inextricably linked to the economic progress of a company. It's plain to see that the spot at which the share price fell for Volkswagen was a moment that directly correlated to a loss of consumer trust in the company. The emissions scandal that affected Volkswagen transformed one of the world's best respected companies - a bastion of German efficiency and engineering excellence – into one of the most mistrusted household names. Volkswagen admitted following the incident that they had "broken the most important part in our vehicles."

The share prices plummeted accordingly and have not recovered since. Trust has financial value for business. The food industry must learn from this. How is this applicable to the herb and spice industry?

To detail how food fraud is affecting the spice industry, John Hill directed us towards the pepper industry.

Once spread across Malaysia and most of Southeast Asia, the industry is now predominantly based in Vietnam. Often the production centers in which the peppers are stored and dried resemble basic shacks erected in rural Vietnam and Mr. Hill explained, before showing us video evidence, that this stage at which the grinding process takes place remains the most susceptible to contamination. Chickens are seen in the footage to be running around while grinding, storing and drying is taking place.

"What Do Chickens Carry?"

This is an example of how accidental fraud in the herb and spice industry might take place. Deliberate fraud might then occur when cheaper ingredients or dust are added by criminal gangs to the ground up pepper and then shipped across the world. We are then shown the picking process as it takes place in India in footage that depicts several women picking the plants, stooped breaking their backs in the sweltering heat. The footage then cuts back to Vietnam and an alarming scene in which peppers are bleached in mass with Hydrogen Peroxide which looks like a cement mixer.

"It's real and it's happening," Mr. Hill finally warned. "We need a simplified supply chain that validates, knows and uses reputable suppliers."

The Oregano Issue

Oregano is another herb frequently manipulated by fraudsters. Professor Elliott opened by describing the lessons learned from the findings of a study of 25 counties of which 23 were found to be handling imperfect oregano to varying degrees, begging the question: Why are some countries 100% pure and others are not? Much like food fraud in general, the answers are exceptionally complex. The mere fact that 1 ton of red meat equates to around £10,000 in market value whereas that of 1 ton of oregano is worth £100,000 gives us an idea as to the true scope of the opportunity for mass-scale corruption in the herb and spice industry. Practically speaking, it's a lot easier and more profitable to corrupt than beef for example.

Why do we have to go and make things so complicated? In short, the food industry and its supply chain is grossly over-complicated and complex and most speakers advocated a simplification of the system at large.

"The greater the number of links in the chain, the more points there are available for penetration," Kieran Kelly, CEO at arc-net, pointed out. The UK alone imports 40% of all food. The sheer complexity of the supply chain is exacerbated by the complication inherent in the export/import process. It once again stems back to trust. As consumers, do we trust manufacturers? Do manufacturers in turn trust their suppliers?

"Why is it that for so many food products we are not paying the market price?" Mr. Kelly reiterated. Reaction is needed. That is why Food Fraud 2017 felt so necessary.

Solving the Problem

This subheading is itself misleading as there are no black and white solutions. Fraud will always

FOOD FRAUD

exist, it's more important that we as an industry align our goals rather with ensuring that it is as decentivized and discouraged as far as possible. There is "no magic bullet," Kieran Kelly outlined. Blockchain, he argued, is the answer. Perhaps there is no one definitive answer but blockchain as described would most certainly offer a technological solution to the issue.

"Lego for the digital generation," as Kieran coined it, might help to simplify the transnational processes within the food supply chain and ensure that each link in the chain has a digital footprint with which the consumer could theoretically trace a product from farm to fork. "The transparency blockchain offers to the food industry is invaluable. It provides consumers with the tools to track each stage of the process. "Blockchain connects the product to the consumer and as blockhain is a cryptographic phenomenon available to all, it has the potential to connect all parties in order to necessarily legitimize relationships...The assets and borders thus become digital and we all have access as everyone seems to now use phones and interact via smart technology in the supermarket."

Is this the engagement with consumers that the food industry needs? Certainly there is an argument that food consumers are placed in the peripheral too frequently. Is this the transparency that will ultimately restore consumer trust in the industry... and in the digital age, should this not be provided in digital terms? Though no one solution exists, blockchain might well offer a means of empowering consumers with the information and subsequent transparency they seek.

"No Silver Bullet"

Food fraud is a fundamentally complex criminal activity which necessitates that the solution be equally multi-dimensional. Collaboration between parties within the industry will play an unequivocally significant role. At Food Fraud 2017, Marks & Spencer, a leading British retailer, spoke about a project with which they are cooperating entitled the Food Industry Intelligence Network (FIIN). The theory behind the project is that the UK industry works with itself, each party able to engage in anonymous data sharing in order to find collective solutions to ensuring food integrity and fighting food

fraud. The project has seen almost all of the major UK retailers: TESCO, Sainsbury's, Aldi and many more, join the network which signals an extremely positive sign of future intra-industry progress.

"It was amazing how the horse meat scandal changed opinion," said Paul Willgoss of M&S, who co-chairs FIIN with Helen Sissons of Greencore. "Nobody wins out of a food scare and the industry – certainly in the UK – is beginning to sit up and take notice of this."

FIIN ultimately unites both government and the industry encouraging communication between parties. In essence, we all have the same aim: ensuring the safety and integrity of our food. We must now focus on providing an environment within which this fundamental point becomes clear and communicable. "There is nothing like FIIN anywhere in the world," Chris Elliott lauded, voicing the general panel consensus that the UK is probably leading the way with respect to initiatives that fight for food integrity. There is still much to be done and many questions remain unanswered. Inscatech called for a greater collaboration between law enforcers and the industry.

"This is not a one country problem. If the food industry does not communicate with law enforcement then law enforcement is left clueless and powerless to act. Inscatech went on to explain the all too frequent, dangerous proximity between the universes of audit and industry. Sometimes, the auditors of food products themselves are employed by those they are auditing and in this situation we must ask: How can an effective quality analysis occur if the audited is also the auditor?

Elsewhere, questions were raised by the audience with respect to how we precisely "speak truth to power?" This essentially challenges the notion that the technical world may not stand a chance against the commercial. How can science go about confronting those accountable for profit? One of the main lessons learned from Food Fraud 2017 was that we must provide the necessary platforms for science to fight back which at the end of the day stems back to the need for communication and closer relationships between all members of the supply chain. Initiatives such as FIIN theoretically provide the space within which to communicate but we need to see more of these, not just in the UK but across Europe and

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the entire world. As previously mentioned, food fraud is a global issue and therefore our approach must be of an international nature.

So who is going to drive this, the regulator, consumer or the industry? Ultimately, though all parties are undoubtedly implicated, this needs to be industry-driven, as the expert panel and audience agreed. In order to restore relationships within the industry, be it consumer to manufacturer; manufacturer to supplier; or industry to regulator, each party must work together. Trust is a

two-way conversation and will only work if both sides are communicating with one another clearly and transparently.

The final question remains therefore one that New Food poses to the food industry at large: How do we translate the rhetoric and lessons learned from Food Fraud 2017 into tangible action? I suppose we'll have to wait until Food Fraud 2018 to answer that one!



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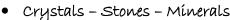
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VEGANISMON THERISE

Laurie Budgar

ady Gaga may feel great wearing a meat dress, but millions of Americans aren't comfortable wearing—or eating—any animal products. "The number of vegetarians in the United States has roughly doubled since we started looking at this in 1994," and now hovers around 7 million Americans, or 3 percent of the adult

population, says John Cunningham, consumer research manager for the Vegetarian Resource Group. "But as a segment of the larger vegetarian population, the number of vegans is growing much more rapidly." Vegans—those who eschew dairy, eggs and honey, in addition to meat and seafood-now make up nearly a third of all vegetarians.

Counted among them are business mogul Russell Simmons, talk show host Ellen DeGeneres, actor Woody Harrelson and, yes, even boxer Mike Tyson, who once famously bit an ear off a mammal-who happened to be human. "Any time [a celebrity] does something that's considered not traditional, it tends to get a lot more coverage. It heightens people's awareness of what veganism is and what it means," says Stephanie Redcross, managing director Vegan Mainstream, a San Diego-based marketing

firm that targets the vegan and vegetarian community.

While celebrity influence may spark a person's initial interest in veganism, it takes a lot more for that person to commit to the lifestyle. "The decision to become vegan and stick with it is pretty fundamental to a person's core beliefs," Cunningham

says. Some do it because of concerns for animal and planet welfare, while others are drawn by veganism's documented health benefits—it's associated with lower risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity, as well as lower overall cancer rates, according to a 2009 position paper by the American Dietetic Association. For those reasons, Cunningham and others believe it's not just a fad.

Emerging Flavors

How long a given individual remains vegan depends in part on

While celebrity influence may spark a person's initial interest in veganism, it takes a lot more for that person to commit to the lifestyle.

- Laurie Budgar

how well he eats. It's a matter of realizing that good meat alternatives are available, and "not so much about living like a monk and depriving yourself," says Bob Burke, principal at Natural Products Consulting in Andover, Mass.

Manufacturers have been stepping up to the plate to make that

epiphany possible. No longer is the vegan world dominated by brown rice, leafy greens and "chik'n;" brands like Petaluma, Calif.-based Amy's Kitchen and Turners Falls, Mass.-based Lightlife have been quietly introducing vegan burritos, "sausages" and pizzas for years. More recently, nondairy "cheeses" from Daiya, based in Vancouver, and Chicago Soydairy's Teese Vegan Cheese have exploded onto the vegan marketplace as the first true contenders with the flavor and melting characteristics of real cheese. At Natural Products Expo West this year,

coconut-based frozen desserts; hemp milks and yogurts; quinoa burgers; and soy "calamari" made a splash.

Redcross thinks gourmet vegan foods aren't far behind, noting that restaurants with high-end vegan fare are already popular in most major cities. "To be vegan for the sake of being vegan might appeal to a small section of the population," Burke adds, "but for everyone else, taste, freshness and quality ingredients are important."

Even products that weren't quite to start with are now going the extra mile. "There's greater sensitivity and awareness about it," Burke says. "If companies can eliminate one ingredient [from their product] and call it vegan as opposed to just natural, they're doing that" so they don't alienate a whole segment of potential customers.

Retail Strategies

Some companies, on the other hand, are reluctant to call out their product as vegan, even if it meets the criteria without any fiddling around. "It may turn off [mainstream] consumers who think, 'Oh, great. It's going to taste like cardboard,'" Redcross says. Manufacturers know that truly committed consumers will pore over

the Nutrition Facts panel, looking esting vegan products, and to further for hidden animal ingredients like casein or gelatin, so some producers compromise by putting vegan claims vegan lasagna,' or some other food on the back, Burke says.

But Redcross says vegans dairy or meat." aren't the only ones buying these products; people with food allergies recognize that while many people have also embraced them, as have turn to veganism for health reasons, friends and family members who want to share a meal with their foodrestricted loved ones. So natural products retailers may need to help less aware consumers identify vegan products.

who aren't vegan can see that it's an alternative. Take it to the streets," Redcross says. Burke suggests also Hmm, maybe it's time for a dairy-free using shelf talkers to identify inter- cupcake dress, Gaga?

highlight those products in newsletters. "Say, 'We've got a great recipe for that might commonly be made with

Retailers should also it's hard to give up comfort food. "The things that make the most buzz among the vegan community are snacks and desserts," Cunningham says. If you can offer vegan versions of these foods, you'll generate consid-"Sample these foods so people erable customer goodwill and loyalty." "Vegans feel very passionately about their desserts," Cunningham says.

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BATTLE OF THE BEHEMOTHS

JAMES HOWARD KUNSTLER

s the empire deliquesces into a fetid slurry of economic failure, we stand ankle deep in the rising swamp waters witnessing the futile battle of the giants, Walmart and Amazon.

Neil Howe, co-author of *The Fourth Turning*, wrote this week that

"[t]he Amazon-Walmart rivalry will determine the future of retail." Well, it seems that way, perhaps, and I understand why a lot of people would imagine it, but I would draw some different conclusions. What we're seeing is more like the battle between Godzilla and King Kong, two freaks of nature produced by a toxic culture, fixing to finish each other off.

The condition that will flavor events going forward is scale. Everything organized at the giant scale is going to fail. We have made all the systems of daily life too large and they will not function in the long emergency (and the fourth turning), an age characterized by universal contraction.

This is true of corporations, institutions, schools, hospitals, farms, governments, virtually all organized enterprise. Retail is currently just the most visible example at the moment, since it is a commercial battleground that doesn't enjoy public subsidies. The organisms on that field are exquisitely sensitive to economic reality, and the salient reality these days is the impoverishment of their customers, the former middle class.

This has been a sensational year for retail failure so far with a record number of brick-and-mortar store closings. But it is hardly due solely to Internet shopping. The nation was vastly over-stored by big chain operations. Their replication was

based on a suicidal business model that demanded constant expansion, and was nourished by a regime of ultra-low interest rates promulgated by the Federal Reserve (and its cheerleaders in the academic econ departments). The goal of the business model was to enrich the executives and shareholders as rapidly as possible, not to build sustainable enterprise. As the companies march off the cliff of bankruptcy, these individuals will be left with enormous fortunes — and the American landscape will be left with empty, flat-roofed, throwaway

What you're seeing now is a very short term aberration, the terminal expression of the cheap oil economy that is fumbling to a close.

James Howard Kunstler

buildings unsuited to adaptive re-use. Eventually, the empty Walmarts will be among them.

Just about everybody yakking in the public arena assumes that commerce will just migrate to the web. Think again. What you're seeing now is a very short term aberration, the terminal expression of the cheap oil economy that is fumbling to a close. Apart from Amazon's failure so far to ever show a corporate profit, Internet shopping requires every purchase to make a journey in a truck to the customer. In theory, it might not seem all that different from the Monkey Ward model of a hundred years ago. But things have changed in this land.

We made the unfortunate

decision to suburbanize the nation, and now we're stuck with the results: a living arrangement that can't be serviced or maintained going forward, a living arrangement with no future. This includes the home delivery of every product under sun to every farflung housing subdivision from Rancho Cucamonga to Hackensack. Of course, the Big Box model, like Walmart, has also recruited every householder in his or her SUV into the company's distribution network, and that's going to become a big problem, too, as the beleaguered middle-class

finds itself incrementally foreclosed from Happy Motoring and sinking into conditions of overt peonage.

The actual destination of retail America is to be severely downscaled and reorganized locally. Main Street will be the new mall, and it will be a whole lot less glitzy than the failed gallerias of yore, but it will represent a range of activities that will put a lot of people back to work at the community level. It will necessarily entail the rebuilding of local and regional wholesale networks and means of distribution that don't require trucking.

If you think we're just going to switch the trucking industry over to electric vehicles

or engines that run on bio-fuels, hydrogen, compressed air, or natural gas, you will be disappointed. Ain't going to happen. We're going to have to come up with something else, starting with the basic idea of the walkable community. This implies that we're going to have to revive the existing towns and small cities that fit that description. And it also implies that a great deal of American suburbia will have to be abandoned. The capital will not be there to reform it. In any case, commerce later on in this century is not going to be anything like the Blue Light Special orgy of recent decades. And the transition will get underway with a speed that will make your head spin.

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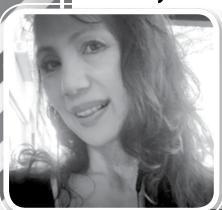
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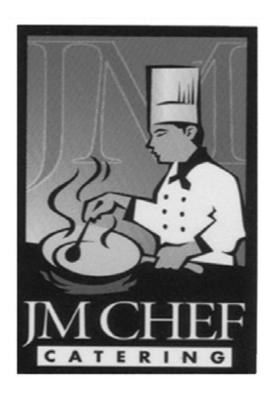
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TIME TO SOLVE THE STUDENT DEBT CRISIS

GEORGE LAKOFF

that education will set them free. If you get an education, the doors of opportunity will open wide. The world will be your oyster and your life will be better. Yet for millions of

Americans, the opposite is true. For them, education has not been the key to a brighter future. Instead, it's burdened them with crushing, lifelong debt.

And unlike the debt accrued by Wall Street fat cats and people like Donald Trump who declared bankruptcy four times – ordinary Americans can't declare bankruptcy to get out from under the debt. The debt will follow them for life because the debt collector is none other than the US government. What's worse is the fact that the government farms out the job of collecting student debt to private corporations like Navient.

According to an investigation by Reuters, Navient appears to have cheated many poor student debt holders. It did this by failing to inform them of income-based repayment programs that could have kept them from defaulting. Instead, herded Navient these eligible Americans into other programs to drive up the interest costs and

fees. These unscrupulous practices have added \$4 billion to the amount of student debt owed by Americans, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB).

Confronted by the CFPB in a lawsuit, Navient responded: "There

is no expectation that the servicer will act in the interest of the consumer." Wait a minute here. Navient was hired by the federal government to collect student debt from American citizens. American democracy is government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Shouldn't Navient, as a servant of the government, have a moral responsibility to act in the best interests of the American people? Holders of student debt are American citizens who are trying to improve their lives and improve our country.

According to an investigation by Reuters. **Navient** appears to have cheated many poor student debt holders.

- George Lakoff

Shouldn't we do better by them? Instead, the student debt crisis is crushing Americans. It keeps them from buying homes, getting married, and living fulfilled lives. It directly robs them of their freedom, their opportunity, and their pursuit of

happiness. And this is not just a problem for young people. Student debt hurts entire families. In fact, the US government is currently garnishing the Social Security checks of 173,000 Americans. Companies like Navient even go after the disability checks of people in wheelchairs.

Our nation is long overdue for a conversation about the student debt crisis. It is a direct threat to the freedom and opportunity of a whole generation of young Americans. It is

> also completely unfair, because for decades public education the United States was basically free. Now. the rules have changed. For at least 44 million Americans, the college diploma came with the ball and chain of serious debt

> As we might expect, Donald Trump is doing everything he can to make the problem worse. In fact, his Administration is considering handing over ALL student debt accounts to the unscrupulous Navient! Democrats haven't done much better, offering tepid proposals to help "refinance" outrageously structured loans. They treat this crushing debt like a business deal rather than the fundamental issue of freedom, fairness, and opportunity that it is.

This is the kind of issue that progressives should aim to solve. I think it's time to end the student debt crisis once and for all. How has student debt affected your

life or the life of someone you know? What do you think should be done about it?

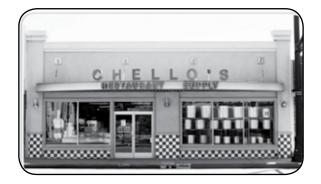
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We only work with the best in order to serve you the best! Take a look at our manufacturers and distributors and browse through our short list of happy and satisfied customers. We gladly service large and small businesses, as well as the everyday individual! *Come on in today and browse our store!*



Visit Us

Monday - Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Se habla Español

Yes! We are open to the public!

Our Store
16548 Bellflower Blvd,
Bellflower, CA 90706
Tel. 562.860.7072 | Fax. 562.263.3450
www.chellosrestaurantequipment.com

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We also have vegetarian, vegan and gluten free dishes, fruit smoothies / Boba Drinks and Mango Sticky Rice dessert. Recipe's by Chef Tui.

www.spicysugarlongbeach.com

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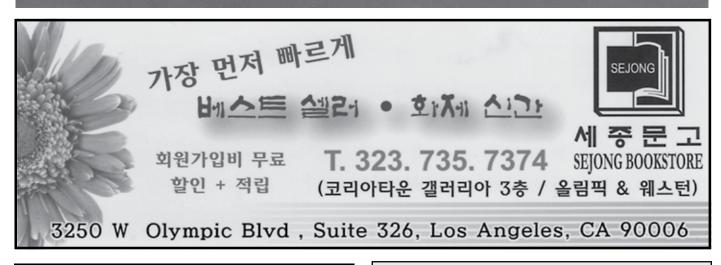
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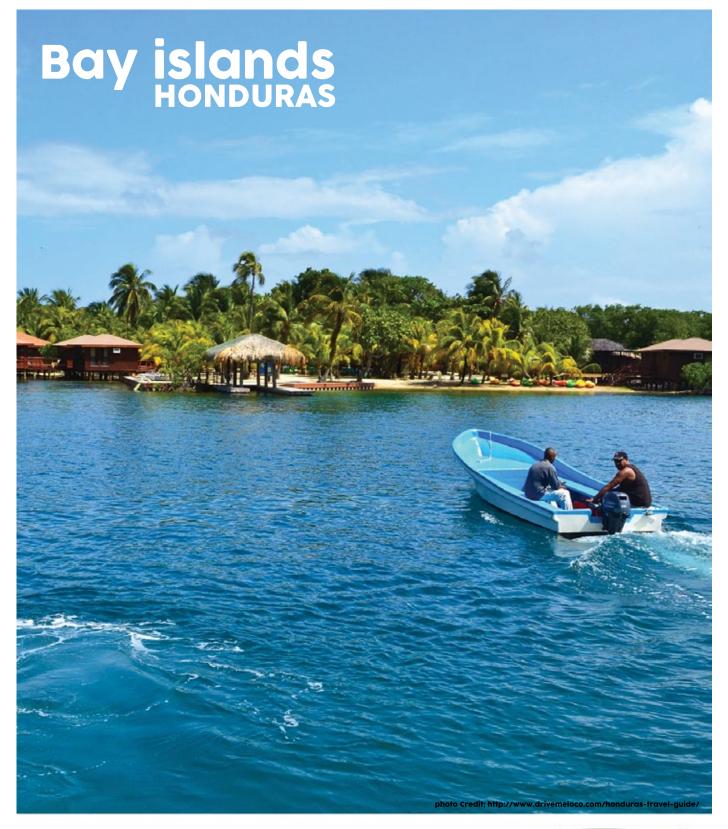


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