

AMASS

Magazine

**Millennial
Burnout**

**Amazon's
Welfare**

Electric

**Cambodian
Long Beach**

**Green New
Deal**

Energy

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**ISSUE 71
NUMBER 3
VOLUME 23**



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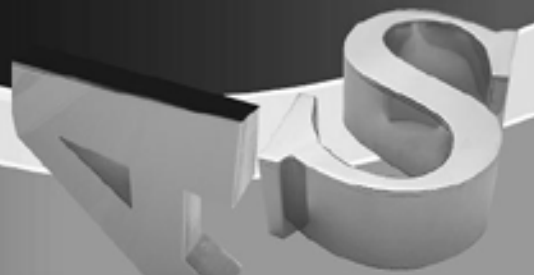
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AMASS

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COVER:

"MELTING POT'S SPIRITS"

PHOTO BY JOHN O'KANE



"Melting Pot's Spirits"

Photo by John O'Kane. Cover design by Heli Swensson

Long Beach is home to the largest community of Cambodians outside of the Southeast Asian nation. A potentially unintended consequence of the Trump Administration's War on Immigration has been the targeting for deportation of Cambodians who have run afoul of the law since their forced immigration to the US in the wake of the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror that led to the 1984 film, *The Killing Fields*, which chronicled the massacre of nearly half of the nation's population when communist leader Pol Pot sought to nationalize the peasant farming society overnight. US Cambodian residents who were born in refugee camps outside of Cambodia have been ordered deported to a country they have never lived in. Former Gov. Jerry Brown may have given a handful of potential deportees a reprieve when he pardoned their crimes while in the US. Still, this disruption to Long Beach's Cambodian community of more than 50,000, and another Cambodian enclave near Stockton only adds insults to decades old injury. A 2005 study involving roughly 500 local Cambodian residents found 99% of them lost family or knew someone that perished in Pot's purge of former government officials, the wealthy, and college-educated. The associated story demonstrates how Trump's passion for a southern border wall has put virtually all foreign nationals in the US at risk of deportation.

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MILLENNIALS HOW MILLENNIALS BECAME THE BURNOUT GENERATION

ANNE HELEN PETERSEN

“I tried to register for the 2016 election, but it was beyond the deadline by the time I tried to do it,” a man named Tim, age 27, explained to *New York Magazine* last fall. “I hate mailing stuff; it gives me anxiety.” Tim was outlining the reasons why he, like eleven other millennials interviewed by the magazine, probably wouldn’t vote in the 2018 midterm election. “The amount of work logically isn’t that much,” he continued. “Fill out a form, mail it, go to the specific place on a specific day. But those kinds of tasks can be hard for me to do if I’m not enthusiastic about it.”

Tim goes on to admit that some friends had helped him register to vote, and he planned to probably make it happen for the midterms. But his explanation — even though, as he noted, his struggle in this case was caused in part by his ADHD — triggered the contemporary tendency to dunk on millennials’ inability to complete seemingly basic tasks. *Grow up*, the overall sentiment goes. *Life is not that hard*. “So this is the way the world ends,” *HuffPost* congressional reporter Matt Fuller tweeted. “Not with a bang but with a bunch of millennials who don’t know how to mail things.”

Explanations like Tim’s are at the core of the millennial reputation: We’re spoiled, entitled, lazy, and failures at what’s come to be known as “adulting,” a word invented by millennials as a catchall for the tasks of self-sufficient existence. Expressions of “adulting” do often come off as privileged astonishment at the realities of, well, *life*: that you have to pay bills *and* go to work; that you have to buy food and cook it if you want to eat it; that actions have consequences. Adulting is hard because life is hard — or, as a *Bustle* article admonishes its readers,

“everything is hard if you want to look at it that way.”

Millennials love to complain about other millennials giving them a bad name. But as I fumed about this 27-year-old’s post office anxiety, I was deep in a cycle of a tendency, developed over the last five years, that I’ve come to call “errand paralysis.” I’d put something on my weekly to-do list, and it’d roll over, one week to the next, haunting me for months.

None of these tasks were that hard: getting knives sharpened, taking boots to the cobbler, registering my dog for a new license, sending someone a signed copy of my book, scheduling an appointment with the dermatologist, donating books to the library, vacuuming my car. A handful of emails — one from a dear friend, one from a former student asking how my life was going — festered in my personal inbox, which I use as a sort of alternative to-do list, to the point that I started calling it the “inbox of shame.”

It’s not as if I were slacking in the rest of my life. I was publishing stories, writing two books, making meals, executing a move across the country, planning trips, paying my student loans, exercising on a regular basis. But when it came to the mundane, the medium priority, the stuff that wouldn’t make my job easier or my work better, I avoided it.

My shame about these errands expands with each day. I remind myself that my mom was pretty much always doing errands. Did she like them? No. But she got them done. So why couldn’t I get it together — especially when the tasks were all, at first glance, easily completed? I realized that the vast majority of these tasks shares a common denominator: Their primary beneficiary is me, but not in a way that would actually

drastically improve my life. They are seemingly high-effort, low-reward tasks, and they paralyze me — not unlike the way registering to vote paralyzed millennial Tim.

Tim and I are not alone in this paralysis. My partner was so stymied by the multistep, incredibly (and purposefully) confusing process of submitting insurance reimbursement forms for every single week of therapy that for months he just didn’t send them — and ate over \$1,000. Another woman told me she had a package sitting unmailed in the corner of her room for over a year. A friend admitted he’s absorbed hundreds of dollars in clothes that don’t fit because he couldn’t manage to return them.

**Life has
always been hard,
but many millennials
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ways in which
it’s become
hard for us.”**

— Anne Helen Petersen

Errand paralysis, post office anxiety — they're different manifestations of the same affliction.

For the past two years, I've refused cautions — from editors, from family, from peers — that I might be edging into burnout. To my mind, burnout was something aid workers, or high-powered lawyers, or investigative journalists dealt with. It was something that could be treated with a week on the beach. I was still working, still getting *other* stuff done — of course I wasn't burned out.

But the more I tried to figure out my errand paralysis, the more the actual parameters of burnout began to reveal themselves. Burnout and the behaviors and weight that accompany it aren't, in fact, something we can cure by going on vacation. It's not limited to workers in acutely high-stress environments. And it's not a temporary affliction: It's the millennial condition. It's our base temperature. It's our background music. It's the way things are. It's our lives.

That realization recast my recent struggles: Why can't I get this mundane stuff done? Because I'm burned out. Why am I burned out? Because I've internalized the idea that I should be working all the time. Why have I internalized that idea? Because everything and everyone in my life has reinforced it — explicitly and implicitly — since I was young. Life has always been hard, but many millennials are unequipped to deal with the particular ways in which it's become hard for us.

So what now? Should I meditate more, negotiate for more time off, delegate tasks within my relationship, perform acts of self-care, and institute timers on my social media? How, in other words, can I optimize myself to get those mundane tasks done and theoretically cure my burnout? As millennials have aged into our thirties, that's the question we keep asking — and keep failing to adequately answer. But maybe that's because it's the wrong question altogether.

For the last decade, "millennials" has been used to describe or ascribe what's right and wrong with young people, but in 2019 millennials are well into adulthood: The youngest are 22; the oldest, like me, somewhere around 38. That has required a shift in the way people within and outside of our generation configure their criticism. We're not feckless teens anymore; we're grown-ass adults, and the challenges we face aren't fleeting, but systemic.

Many of the behaviors attributed to millennials are the behaviors of a specific subset of mostly white, largely middle-class people born between 1981 and 1996. But even if you're a millennial who didn't grow up privileged, you've been impacted by the societal and cultural shifts that have shaped the generation. Our parents — a mix of young boomers and old Gen-Xers — reared us during an age of relative economic and political stability. As with previous generations, there was an expectation that the next one would be better off — both in terms of health and finances — than the one that had come before.

But as millennials enter into mid-adulthood, that prognosis has been proven false. Financially speaking, most of us lag *far* behind where our parents were when they were our age. We have far less saved, far less equity, far



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less stability, and far, far more student debt. The “greatest generation” had the Depression and the GI Bill; boomers had the golden age of capitalism; Gen-X had deregulation and trickle-down economics. And millennials? We’ve got venture capital, but we’ve also got the 2008 financial crisis, the decline of the middle class and the rise of the 1%, and the steady decay of unions and stable, full-time employment.

As American business became more efficient, *better* at turning a profit, the next generation needed to be positioned to compete. We couldn’t just show up with a diploma and expect to get *and keep* a job that would allow us to retire at 55. In a marked shift from the generations before, millennials needed to optimize ourselves to be the very best workers possible.

And that process began very early. In *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials*, Malcolm Harris lays out the myriad ways in which our generation has been trained, tailored, primed, and optimized for the workplace — first in school, then through secondary education — starting as very young children. “Risk management used to be a business practice,” Harris writes, “now it’s our dominant child-rearing strategy.” Depending on your age, this idea applies to what our parents did or didn’t allow us to do (play on “dangerous” playground structures, go out without cell phones, drive without an adult in the car) and how they allowed us to do the things we did do (learn, explore, eat, play).

Harris points to practices that we now see as the standard means for “optimizing” children’s play, an attitude often described as “intensive parenting.” Running around the neighborhood has become supervised playdates. Unstructured day care has become pre-

preschool. Neighborhood Kick the Can or pickup games have transformed into highly regulated organized league play that spans the year. Un-channeled energy (diagnosed as hyperactivity) became medicated and disciplined.

My childhood in the late ’80s and early ’90s was only partially defined by this kind of parental optimization and monitoring, largely because I lived in a rural town in North Idaho, where such structured activities were scarce. I spent my recess time playing on the (very dangerous!) teeter-totters and the merry-go-round. I wore a helmet to bike and skateboard, but my brother and I were the only kids we knew who did. I didn’t do internships in high school or in college, because they weren’t yet a standardized component of either experience. I took piano lessons for fun, not for my future. I didn’t have an SAT prep class. I took the one AP class available to me, and applied to colleges (on paper, by hand!) based on brochures and short write-ups in a book of “Best Colleges.”

But that was the beginning of the end of that attitude — toward parenting, toward children’s leisure time, toward college selection. And not just among bourgeois, educated, stereotypical helicopter parents: In addition to “intensive parenting,” millennial parents are also characterized by “vigilante” parenting behaviors, where, as sociologist Linda M. Blum describes, “a mother’s unyielding watchfulness and advocacy for her child [takes] on the imperative of a lone moral quest.”

Recent research has found that “vigilante” behaviors cut across race and class lines. Maybe an upper-class suburban family is invested in their child getting into an Ivy League school, while a mom in Philadelphia who didn’t get a chance to go to college herself is invested in her daughter becoming the first in the family to make

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it to college. The goals are somewhat different, but the supervision, the attitude, the risk assessment, and the campaign to get that child to that goal are very similar.

It wasn't until after college that I began to see the results of those attitudes in action. Four years post-graduation, alumni would complain that the school had filled with nerds: No one even parties on a Tuesday! I laughed at the eternal refrain — *These younger kids, what dorks, we were way cooler* — but not until I returned to campus years later as a professor did I realize just how fundamentally different those students' orientation to school was. There were still obnoxious frat boys and fancy sorority girls, but they were far more studious than my peers had been. They skipped fewer classes. They religiously attended office hours. They emailed at all hours. But they were also anxious grade grubbers, paralyzed at the thought of graduating, and regularly stymied by assignments that called for creativity. They'd been guided closely all their lives, and they wanted me to guide them as well. They were, in a word, *scared*.

Every graduating senior is scared, to some degree, of the future, but this was on a different level. When my class left our liberal arts experience, we scattered to temporary gigs: I worked at a dude ranch; another friend nannied for the summer; one got a job on a farm in New Zealand; others became raft guides and transitioned to ski instructors. We didn't think our first job was important; it was just a job and would eventually, meanderingly lead to The Job.

But these students were convinced that their first job out of college would not only determine their career trajectory, but also their intrinsic value for the rest of their lives. I told one student, whose dozens of internship and fellowship applications yielded no results, that she should move somewhere fun, get any job, and figure out what interests her and what kind of work she *doesn't* want to do — a suggestion that prompted wailing. “But what'll I tell my parents?” she said. “I want a cool job I'm passionate about!”

Those expectations encapsulate the millennial rearing project, in which students internalize the need to find employment that reflects well on their parents (steady, decently paying, recognizable as a “good job”) that's also impressive to their peers (at a “cool” company) and fulfills what they've been *told* has been the end goal of all of this childhood optimization: doing work that you're passionate about. Whether that job is as a professional sports player, a Patagonia social media manager, a programmer at a startup, or a partner at a law firm seems to matter less than checking all of those boxes.

Or at least that's the theory. So what happens when millennials start the actual search for that holy grail career — and start “adulthood” — but it doesn't feel at all like the dream that had been promised?

Like most old millennials, my own career path was marked by two financial catastrophes. In the early 2000s, when many of us were either first entering college or the workforce, the dot-com bubble burst. The resultant financial rubble wasn't as extensive as the 2008 crisis,

but it tightened the job market and torpedoed the stock market, which indirectly affected millennials who'd been counting on parents' investments to get them through college. When I graduated with a liberal arts degree in 2003 and moved to Seattle, the city was still affordable, but skilled jobs were in short supply. I worked as a nanny, a housemate worked as an assistant, a friend resorted to selling what would later be known as subprime mortgages.

Those two years as a nanny were hard — I was stultifyingly bored and commuted an hour in each direction — but it was the last time I remember *not* feeling burned out. I had a cell phone, but couldn't even send texts; I checked my email once a day on a desktop computer in my friend's room. Because I'd been placed through a nanny agency, my contract included health care, sick days, and paid time off. I made \$32,000 a year and paid \$500 a month in rent. I had no student debt from undergrad, and my car was paid off. I didn't save much, but had money for movies and dinners out. I was intellectually un-stimulated, but I was good at my job — caring for two infants — and had clear demarcations between when I was on and off the clock.

Then those two years ended and the bulk of my friend group began the exodus to grad school. We enrolled in PhD programs, law school, med school, architecture school, education master's programs, MBAs. It wasn't because we were hungry for more knowledge. It was because we were hungry for secure, middle-class jobs — and had been told, correctly or not, that those jobs were available only through grad school. Once we were in grad school, and the micro-generation behind us was emerging from college into the workplace, the 2008 financial crisis hit.

The crisis affected everyone in some way, but the way it affected millennials is foundational: It's always defined our experience of the job market. More experienced workers and the newly laid-off filled applicant pools for lower-and entry-level jobs once largely reserved for recent graduates. We couldn't find jobs, or could only find part-time jobs, jobs without benefits, or jobs that were actually multiple side hustles cobbled together into one job. As a result, we moved back home with our parents, we got roommates, we went back to school, we tried to make it work. We were problem solvers, after all — and taught that if we just worked harder, it would work out.

On the surface, it *did* work out. The economy recovered. Most of us moved out of our parents' houses. We found jobs. But what we couldn't find was financial security. Because education — grad school, undergrad, vocational school, online — was situated as the best and only way to survive, many of us emerged from those programs with loan payments that our post-graduation prospects failed to offset. The situation was even more dire if you entered a for-profit school, where the average total debt for a four-year degree is \$39,950 and the job prospects post-graduation are even bleaker.

As I continued through grad school, I accumulated more and more debt — debt that I rationalized, like so many of my generation, as the only means to achieve the end goal of 1) a “good” job that would 2) be or sound



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cool and 3) allow me to follow my “passion.” In this case, full-time, tenure-track employment as a media studies professor. In the past, pursuing a PhD was a generally debt-free endeavor: Academics worked their way toward their degree while working as teaching assistants, which paid them cost of living and remitted the cost of tuition.

That model began to shift in the 1980s, particularly at public universities forced to compensate for state budget cuts. Teaching assistant labor was far cheaper than paying for a tenured professor, so the universities didn’t just keep PhD programs, but expanded them, even with dwindling funds to adequately pay those students. Still, thousands of PhD students clung to the idea of a tenure-track professorship. And the tighter the academic market became, the harder we worked. We didn’t try to break the system, since that’s not how we’d been raised. We tried to *win it*.

I never thought the system was equitable. I knew it was winnable for only a small few. I just believed I could continue to optimize myself to become one of them. And it’s taken me years to understand the true ramifications of that mindset. I’d worked hard in college, but as an old millennial, the expectations for labor were tempered. We liked to say we worked hard, played hard — and there were clear boundaries around each of those activities. Grad school, then, is where I learned to work like a millennial, which is to say, all the time. My new watchword was “Everything that’s good is bad, everything that’s bad is good”: Things that should’ve felt good (leisure, not working) felt bad because I felt guilty for not working; things that should’ve felt “bad” (working all the time) felt good because I was doing what I thought I should and needed to be doing in order to succeed.

In my master’s program, graduate students’ labor was arguably exploited, but we were unionized and compensated in a way that made emerging from the program without debt possible. Our health insurance was solid; class sizes were manageable. But that all changed in my PhD program in Texas — a “right to work” state, where unions, if they existed at all, have no bargaining power. I was paid enough to cover a month’s rent in Austin with \$200 left for everything else. I taught classes as large as 60 students on my own. The only people in my cohort who didn’t have to take out loans had partners in “real” jobs or family money; most of us were saddled with debt for the privilege of preparing ourselves for no job prospects. Either we kept working or we failed.

So we took those loans, with the assurance from the federal government that if, after graduation, we went to a public service field (such as teaching at a college or university) and paid a percentage of our loans on time for 10 years, the rest would be forgiven. Last year — the first in which eligible graduates could apply for forgiveness — just 1% of applications were accepted.

When we talk about millennial student debt, we’re not just talking about the payments that keep millennials from participating in American “institutions” like home ownership or purchasing diamonds. It’s also about the psychological toll of realizing that something you’d been

told, and came to believe yourself, would be “worth it” — worth the loans, worth the labor, worth all that self-optimization — isn’t...

Part 2 will be published in the next issue, #72.

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Sunday, March 10, 1:00pm
JACK GRAPES & RICHARD JONES

Jack Grapes is an award-winning poet, playwright, actor, teacher, and the editor and publisher of ONTHEBUS, one of the top literary journals in the country. He has won several publishing grants and Fellowships in Literature from the National Endowment for the Arts. Jack will be reading from his new book. Richard Jones's prodigious volume travels the wide arc of a lifetime in detail. He has published eleven books of poetry and his poems have been featured on NPR's "All Things Considered." He is the founder and editor of Poetry East, and he teaches at DePaul University in Chicago, where he lives with his family.

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Sunday, March 10, 2:00pm
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Sunday, March 10, 4:00pm
JIM NATAL & DOROTHY BARRESI

Jim Natal debuts *Spare Room*, his new collection of poetry in haibun form. He is the author of four previous collections, including *52 Views Memory and Rain*. He is joined by American Book Award-winning poet Dorothy Barresi, whose most recent collection is *What We Did While We Made More Guns*. ★★

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Saturday, March 16, 8:00PM
OVERPOPULATION & ART

Join S.A. Griffin, family and friends as he celebrates his 65 birthday at Beyond Baroque with a performance of *Overpopulation & Art* by American composer, music theorist, conceptual artist, poet and performance artist John Cage. No admission, however, there will be a submission charge of \$6.50 for anyone attempting to leave the performance early. ♦

Friday, March 22, 8:00PM
ROBBIE NESTER: NARROW BRIDGE

Robbi Nester reads from her new collection of poems, *Narrow Bridge* (Main Street Rag, 2019). Sonia

Greenfield says of this book: "Nester's poems in *Narrow Bridge* are either huge in scope as they needle at the very meaning of existence or they're faded snapshots sharpened by language into clear renderings of a girl's life. Once you read a Nester metaphor, you can't imagine any other way to see a thing..." ★★

Sunday, March 24, 7:00 PM
7 DUDLEY CINEMA

Experimental films with fiery discussion & live music. Free admission, donations appreciated. Laughtears.com. Gerry Fialka host. ♦

Sunday, March 31, 4:00 PM
LAUREL BLOSSOM & PATRICK DONNELLY

Longevity, Laurel Blossom's sixth book, which Per Contra called "one of the important book-length poems of the 21st century," is a book-length narrative prose poem, a story about sisterhood told, in fragments and in the heightened language of poetry. Patrick Donnelly reads from his fourth book of poems, which Ilya Kaminsky called "a book of revelations of what it means to be human, to be hurt, to be awed, to be stunned by our world." ★★

APRIL

Please check the website for more information

Saturday, April 6, 8:00pm
POETRY IN MOTION

Special General Admission - Advanced tickets \$15 on Eventbrite; \$20.00 at the door, \$10.00 Students/Seniors; Members \$8.00

Sunday, April 7, 5:00pm
FIRST SUNDAY OPEN READING ♦

Friday, April 12, 8:00pm
INNERSEXION ♦

Saturday, April 13, 4:00pm
TAMRACKS ANTHOLOGY ★★

Saturday, April 13, 7:00pm
EMBRACING THE FERAL BEAUTY OF LOS ANGELES ★★

Sunday, April 14, 7:00 pm
LETTERS TO MY CITY ★★

Saturday, April 20, 4:00pm
JUDITH PACTH & B.H. FAIRCHILD ★★

Saturday, April 20, 8:00 PM
SOLACE ★★

Sunday, April 21
EASTER SUNDAY CLOSED

Thursday, April 25, 8:00pm

A CELEBRATION OF SHAKESPEARE ★★

Friday, April 26, 8:00pm
LOS ANGELES PRESS NATIONAL POETRY MONTH ★★

Sunday, April 28, 4:30pm
EARTH DAY CABERET ★★

MAY

Please check the website for more information

Friday, May 3, 8:00pm
MARSHA DE LA O & DAVID ST. JOHN ★★

Saturday, 4, 8:00pm
POETRY IN MOTION

Special General Admission - Advanced tickets \$15 on Eventbrite; \$20.00 at the door, \$10.00 Students/Seniors; Members \$8.00.

Sunday, May 5, 5:00pm
FIRST SUNDAY OPEN READING ♦

Friday, May 10, 8:00pm
PHOEBE MACADAMS & MARK EDWARDS RHODES ★★

Saturday, May 11, 8:00pm
NARRATIVES OF THE SOUTHWEST LA TIMES BOMB ★★

Sunday, May 12, 2:00pm
MOTHER'S DAY: SOAP BOX POETS OPEN READING ♦

Sunday, May 12, 7:00pm
LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP! ★★

Friday, May 17, 8:00pm
ARPINE GRENIER & ALEX FRANKEL ★★

Saturday, May 18, 8:00pm
SEXTON TO SEXTON ★★

Sunday, May 19, 4:00pm
SALIENT SUNDAY OPEN READING

Friday, May 24
FINE ARTS FILM FESTIVAL

The Festival is dedicated to presenting the finest new films about art in the western capital of the art world. The full line up of films will be announced in April 2018. Tickets will be available starting March 15 at veniceica.org and other outlets. Check the FAFF website for details: <http://www.thefineartsfilmfestival.com/>

Saturday, May 25, 10:00am
FINE ARTS FILM FESTIVAL

The Festival is dedicated to presenting

the finest new films about art in the western capital of the art world. The full line up of films will be announced in April 2018. Tickets will be available starting March 15 at veniceica.org and other outlets. Check the FAFF website for details: <http://www.thefineartsfilmfestival.com/>

Sunday, May 26, 7:00pm
7 DUDLEY CINEMA ♦

Friday, May 31, 8:00pm
WALT WHITMAN BICENTENNIAL: LEAVES OF GRASS



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coming from inside the Lincoln Bedroom

flat on her back Liberty is doing all that she can to fend off
an unsteady Trump Daddy drunk with power

he has an executive hand over her mouth
while his other fat fingers climb up her garments
desperately attempting to find their way past her port of entry
and into her sunset gates, "C'mon, Liberty baby –
lemme smack that sweet huddled ass of yours
yearning to breathe free. You know you want it!"

the Donald's aerodynamic pomp quacks and achieves liftoff
cutting manic shadows into the bedroom walls as he
smashes his tiny Trump thing into Liberty's weakening flesh

Uncle Sam is catching all the action standing sentry
behind home plate in front of the locked door
the old wizened white beard waving his hot dog wildly about
shouting, "Uncle Sam wants you to play ball!"

outside in the Rose Garden
Congress is making hay with the gerrymandered vote
holding hands kumbaya like for the cameras
singing Citizens United and it feels so good

Emma Lazarus rises from the grave on the shoulders of
uncountable millions upon millions of wounded women roaring
ME TOO across the crowded centuries

President Great Again deaf to their declaration
continues ripping away at Lady Liberty's tattered gown

the ghost of Emma Lazarus
breaks down the door of the Lincoln Bedroom
shattering the supreme darkness
as the colossus of angry women comes rushing in behind her

they will not be denied

it's the Donald's Waterloo

not even Putin can save him

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



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★★★★★ 5/21/2018

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

★★★★★ 5/21/2018

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

★★★★★ 5/23/2018

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QE FOREVER: THE FED'S DRAMATIC ABOUT-FACE

ELLEN BROWN

“Quantitative easing” was supposed to be an emergency measure. The Federal Reserve “eased” shrinkage in the money supply due to the 2008-09 credit crisis by pumping out trillions of dollars in new bank reserves. After the crisis, the presumption was that the Fed would “normalize” conditions by sopping up the excess reserves through “quantitative tightening” (QT) – raising interest rates and selling the securities it had bought with new reserves back into the market.

The Fed relentlessly pushed on with quantitative tightening through 2018, despite a severe market correction in the fall. In December, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said that QT would be on “autopilot,” meaning the Fed would continue to raise interest rates and to sell \$50 billion monthly in securities until it hit its target. But the market protested loudly to this move, with the Nasdaq Composite Index dropping 22% from its late-summer high.

Worse, defaults on consumer loans were rising. December 2018 was the first time in two years that all loan types and all major metropolitan statistical areas showed a higher default rate month-over-month. Consumer debt – including auto, student and credit card debt – is typically bundled and sold as asset-backed securities similar to the risky mortgage-backed securities that brought down the market in 2008 after the Fed had progressively raised interest rates.

Chairman Powell evidently got the memo. In January, he abruptly changed course and announced that QT would be halted if needed. On February 4th, Mary Daly, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, said they were considering going much further. “You could imagine executing policy with your interest rate as your primary tool and the balance sheet as a secondary tool, one that you would use more readily,” she

said. QE and QT would no longer be emergency measures but would be routine tools for managing the money supply. In a February 13th article on *Seeking Alpha* titled “Quantitative Easing on Demand,” Mark Grant wrote:

“If the Fed does decide to pursue this strategy it will be a wholesale change in the way the financial system in the United States operates and I think that very few institutions or people appreciate what is taking place or what it will mean to the markets, all of the markets.”

The Problem of Debt Deflation

The Fed is realizing that it cannot bring its balance sheet back to “normal.” It must keep pumping new money into the banking system to avoid a recession. This naturally alarms Fed watchers worried about hyperinflation. But QE need not create unwanted inflation if directed properly. The money spigots just need to be aimed at the debtors rather

than the creditor banks. In fact regular injections of new money directly into the economy may be just what the economy needs to escape the boom and bust cycle that has characterized it for two centuries. Mark Grant concluded his article by quoting Abraham Lincoln:

“The Government should create, issue, and circulate all the currency and credits needed to satisfy the spending power of the Government and the buying power of consumers. By the adoption of these principles, the taxpayers will be saved immense sums of interest. Money will cease to be master and become the servant of humanity.”

The quote is apparently apocryphal, but the principle still holds: new money needs to be regularly added to the money supply

to avoid an overwhelming debt burden and allow the economy to reach its true productive potential. Regular injections of new money are necessary to avoid something economists fear even more than inflation – the sort of “debt deflation” that took down the economy in the 1930s.

Most money today is created by banks when they make loans. When overextended borrowers pay down old loans without taking out new ones, the money supply “deflates” or shrinks. Demand shrinks with it, and businesses lacking customers close their doors, in the sort of self-feeding death spiral seen in the Great Depression.

As Australian economist Steve Keen observes, today the level of private debt is way too high, and that is

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– Ellen Brown

why so little lending is occurring. But mainstream economists consider the rate of growth of debt to be irrelevant to macroeconomic policy, because lending is thought to simply redistribute spending power from savers to investors. Conventional economic theory says that banks are merely intermediaries, re-circulating existing money rather than creating spending power in their own right. But this is not true, says Prof. Keen. Banks actually create new money when they make loans. He cites the Bank of England, which said in its 2014 quarterly report:

“Banks do not act simply as intermediaries, lending out deposits that savers place with them, and nor do they ‘multiply up’ central bank money to create new loans and deposits. . .”

In the modern economy, most money takes the form of bank deposits. But how those bank deposits are created is often misunderstood: the principal way is through commercial banks making loans. Whenever a bank makes a loan, it simultaneously creates a matching deposit in the borrower’s bank account, thereby creating new money.

Loans create deposits, and deposits make up the bulk of the money supply. Money today is created by banks as a debt on their balance sheets, and more is always owed back than was created, since the interest claimed by the banks is not created in the original loan. Debt thus grows faster than the money supply. When overextended borrowers quit taking out the new loans needed to repay old loans, the gap widens even further. The result is debt deflation – a debt-induced reduction in the new money needed to stimulate economic activity and growth. Thus the need for injections of new money to fill the gap between debt and the money available to repay it.

However, the money created through QE to date has not gone to the consuming public, where it must go to fill this gap. Rather, it has gone to the banks, which have funneled it into the speculative financialized markets. Nomi Prins calls this “dark money” – the trillions of dollars flowing yearly in and around global stock, bond and derivatives markets generated by central banks when they electronically fabricate money by buying bonds and stocks. She writes, “These dark money flows stretch around the world according to a pattern of power, influence and, of course, wealth for select groups.” She shows graphically that the rise in dark money is directly correlated with the rise in financial markets.

QE has worked to reverse the debts of the banks and to prop up the stock market, but it has not relieved the debts of consumers, businesses or governments; and it is these debts that will trigger the sort of debt deflation that can take the economy down. Keen concludes that “no amount of exhorting banks to ‘Intermeditate’ will end the drought in credit growth that is the real cause of The Great Malaise.” The only way to reduce the private debt burden without causing a depression, he says, is a Modern Debt Jubilee or People’s Quantitative Easing.

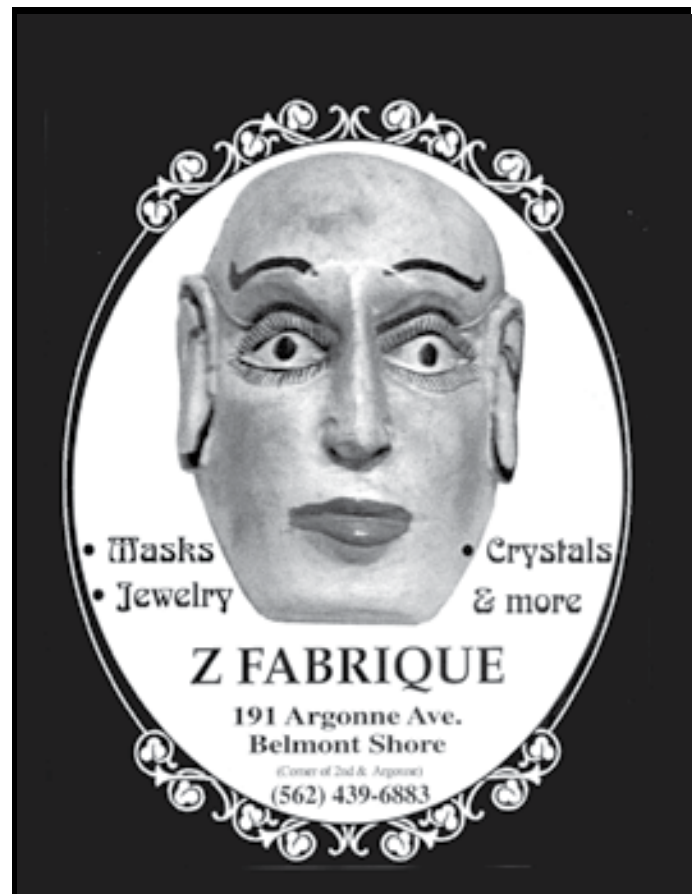
QE-Funded Debt Relief

In antiquity, as Prof. Michael Hudson observes,

debts were routinely forgiven when a new ruler took the throne. The rulers and their advisors knew that debt at interest grew faster than the money supply and that debt relief was necessary to avoid economic collapse from an overwhelming debt overhang. Economic growth is arithmetic and can’t keep up with the exponential growth of debt growing at compound interest.

Consumers need that sort of debt relief today, but simply voiding out their debts as was done in antiquity will not work because the debts are not owed to the government. They are owed to banks and private investors who would have to bear the loss. The alternative suggested by Keen and others is to fill the debt gap with a form of QE dropped not into bank reserve accounts but digitally into the bank accounts of the general public. Debtors could then use the money to pay down their debts. In fact Keen says it should go first to pay down debts. Non-debtors would receive a cash injection.

Properly managed, these injections need not create inflation. Money is created as loans and extinguished when they are paid off, so the money used to pay down debt would be extinguished along with the debt. And the cash injections not used to pay down debt would just help fill the gap between real and potential productivity, allowing demand and supply to rise together, keeping prices stable.



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A regular injection of money into personal bank accounts has been called a “universal basic income,” but better would be to call it a “national dividend” – something all citizens are entitled to equally, without regard to economic status or ability to work. It would serve as a safety net for people living paycheck to paycheck, but the larger purpose would be as economic policy to stimulate demand and productivity, keeping the wheels of industry turning.

Money might then indeed become a servant of humanity, transformed from a tool of oppression into a means of securing common prosperity. But first the central bank needs to become a public servant. It needs to be made a public utility, responsive to the needs of the people and the economy.

Ellen Brown is an attorney, founder of the Public Banking Institute, and author of twelve books including *Web of Debt* and *The Public Bank Solution*. *Banking on the People: Democratizing Finance in the Digital Age*, is due out soon. EllenBrown.com.

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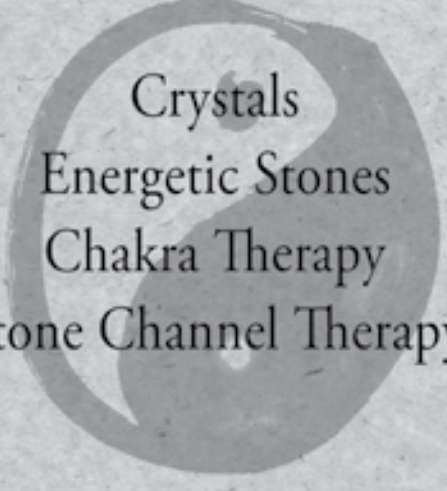


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IMMIGRATION TRUMP'S WAR ON IMMIGRATION

SPARKY BALDWIN

While the media and national gaze are fixed on the manufactured crisis at the U.S. southern border, some of the collateral damage of the Trump Administration's War on Immigration and Naturalization is far less obvious, although no less tragic.

Think of it like all war, as a *double bind*. Not only do Trump initiatives short shrift outside *others*, they also have significant domestic consequences.

One recent consequence is the downturn for the second year in international student enrollments at the nation's colleges and universities. International students contributed \$39 billion to the U.S. economy in 2018, according to NAFSA.org. That's almost triple the combined revenue of the 32 National Football League franchises and all of their associated merchandise sales, according to a 2016 Huffington Post report.

Higher-ed scholars warn that a continued down trend may have serious consequences for many institutions that have come to depend on international student tuition due to variability in more traditional state and federal funding.

Fewer international students generally translates into fewer academic jobs, less state and federal revenue, and less diverse thought production.

Further, this loss of diversity in thought, values, worldview, sense of self, spirituality, and relationship to nature is not insignificant. Depriving U.S. students of exposure to the widest possible international community while in college only serves to minimize their competitiveness and acumen in the global marketplace.

Not since Reagan has a president so vividly revived racial animus within and outside the country using a legislative and public works agenda aimed to oppress. Reagan's War on Drugs particularly targeted domestic black communities, resulting in one third of African American males between the ages of 20 and 29 falling under some form of supervision by the criminal justice

system.

Trump's War on Immigration, on the other hand, has cast a far wider net, conspicuously *targeting* all communities of color inside and outside the U.S., as well as those with different religion, abilities, ethnicity, and shore of origin. In short, in Trump's America there is nothing so misleading as the words inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty: "*Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free... Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.*"

Even groups long ago traumatized by invasion and granted asylum here are vulnerable to threats against their continued residency. Between 1975 and 2000, the US accepted 145,000 Cambodians in the aftermath of Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot seeking to nationalize and centralize the peasant farming society virtually overnight. That regime change was inadvertently aided by carpet bombing campaigns carried out by the Nixon Administration that generated greater support for Pot.

Unfortunately, Pot's push for an agrarian communism and the elimination of all things western led to the death of more than 1.7 million and as many as 3 million Cambodian nationals, according to various reports. Upwards to nearly half of the national population at the time. The 1984 British film, *The Killing Fields*, documented the story of a Cambodian national and an American journalist who reported on the atrocities associated with Pot's regime after encountering one of the killing fields where thousands were murdered, often with pickaxes to save bullets.

The U.S. subsequently granted asylum to

Cambodian refugees, some of whom never lived in or remember Cambodia. They were born in refugee camps or elsewhere.

From 1970 to 1974, Cambodia was besieged by civil war. At the same time, the Khmer Rouge grew in influence and by 1975 commenced a five-year reign of terror that ended in 1980 with invasion by Viet Nam.

Leap forward forty years to Long Beach, which has the largest Cambodian community in the U.S. Roughly 13 percent of Long Beach's 470,000 residents are Asian and more than 50,000 are Cambodian, most of whom had family or someone they knew lost in the killing fields.

Today, this community, along with a similar though smaller enclave near Stockton, has been besieged

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— Sparky Baldwin

by ICE raids and arrests, and increasing numbers facing deportation. Some of these deportations are based on not complying with the naturalization process while others are related to criminal convictions, many of which are minor or have been pardoned.

Since 2016, Cambodian deportations have been on the rise, from a low of 27 in 2017 to more than 100 in 2018. More than 70 former Cambodian nationals were deported in 2016, the New York Times reported at the end of 2018. But as the U.S. has increased Cambodian deportations, Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Cambodian government has pushed back, refusing to cooperate with rising deportations that “inhumanely” separate families.

Similar to ICE activities at the US-Mexican border, Cambodian families are often broken up and one or some members are deported while others are allowed to stay. For many who escaped the Khmer Rouge’s reign of terror, the ICE raids and deportations are a grim reminder of how they found their way to the U.S. On April 17, it will be 44 years since the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital. Residents there were told they must leave the city but would be able to return later. Few, if any, ever saw the capital again.

Pot’s vision of an agrarian nation was premised on ridding the country of its intelligentsia, anyone connected to the former government, and all things western. Stories are legion of residents denying their education and ability to read as a way to save their lives. Those that didn’t were murdered. A 2005 study of 490 Cambodian refugee adults in Long Beach found that 99 percent had suffered near-death starvation, and more than half reported having been tortured. Despite the passage of time, deep scars remain.

Cambodian elders are twice as likely to live in poverty as others their age of another nationality. More than one-third of all residents of Cambodia Town live in poverty. Cambodian students also have one of the lowest graduation rates among Asian Americans, and only recently has the number of students of Cambodian descent to earn a bachelor’s degree risen to 14 percent, up from 6 percent in 1990.

When pressed, residents of Cambodia Town as well as interested observers note that many in the community still suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

One refugee, Sam Keo, now a clinical psychologist, treats many of the survivors of the killing fields who live in Long Beach. John Phelan, who was executive director of the International Institute of Los Angeles from 1975 to 1984, helped organize the resettlement of 22,000 Cambodians, many of whom landed in Southern California.

He believes the trauma isn’t over.

“It’s not broadly spoken of,” Phelan told reporters on the fortieth anniversary of the siege of Phnom Penh. “The ghosts of Cambodia still haunt the people.”

That may explain why former Gov. Jerry Brown pardoned a handful of Cambodian Americans in April and December of last year. Brown faced criticism for pardoning Cambodians who had committed crimes and served their sentences, and in one case the California Supreme Court blocked his pardon.

Virtually all of those pardoned had never lived in Cambodia or were too young to remember being there. Brown’s pardons were attacked by President Trump, who took to the Twittersphere to ask, “Is this really what the great people of California want?”

The fact remains that the largest community of Cambodians outside of Cambodia can be found in Long Beach, and that community has yet to be made whole. First generation Cambodian Americans tell stories about asking parents and grandparents to explain what happened so long ago, and those questions are most often met with silence. More than likely, until that silence is broken, wounds from the killing fields will remain unhealed.



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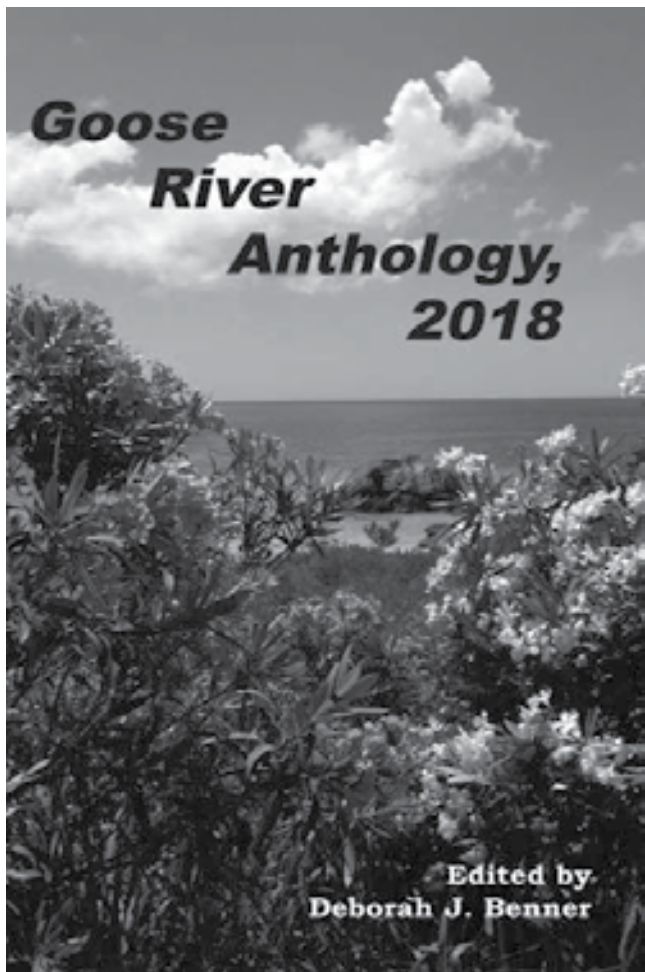


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JOHN O'KANE

“How'd you hear about us, Mr. Berkoff?” asks the sixtyish, silver-haired woman behind the desk.

“I...don't remember exactly. I think it was...”

“Mr. Berkoff...Mr. Berkoff...you okay?”

“I...sure...I was just thinking about...something.”

His tentative tone frames his dilating eyes.

“How'd you hear about us?”

“From my...this woman over at the café on... she said she had this old boyfriend whose brother was here and...” He stops and gawks off to the right where two males are painting the walls, and returns with a mottled grin.

“Good...we love to get referrals from satisfied customers!”

“And I...think my ex might...be here...or was here when...” He gazes off to his left and lasers the movements of a woman racing down the hallway in a wheelchair, hollering something in some private language.

“What's her name?”

“Well, she used to go by...but she changed that when she went to...guess that was another friend who went into the convent and then...”

“Maybe you'll recognize her tomorrow when you come back for your next session. You can have brunch with us. Would you like that?”

“I'm...not sure if...I can but...if I can I would like...”

“Mr. Berkoff, you okay? Do you wanna lay down for a while? Can I get you a water?”

“No...no, no I think I need to leave. Maybe I can come back later.”

“Something bothering you, Mr. Berkoff? You look like you've seen a ghost.”

“Nothing that I...this place makes me feel...funny. I feel like I've been here before and something bad happened.”

“Here? We've only been here for a short while. I don't remember ever seeing you here. Are you sure you have the right place?”

“Oh...I don't know...I just feel funny. Who was here before?”

“I don't know for sure...think it was a mission at one time.”

“Oh...really? I kinda re...member that...but...I never went to...places like that so...”

“...you're probably confusing this place with somewhere else.”

“When I was a young...I think I used to come somewhere around here. Maybe the building that used to be here was...”

“Was what, Mr. Berkoff?”

“Maybe it was a café back...”

“Back when, Mr. Berkoff?”

“I can't remember for sure. I think it was when...”

“When, Mr. Berkoff?”

“When that guy was President who...”

“Who was that, Mr. Berkoff?”

“I...don't know. Who was that...lady in the wheelchair?”

“That someone you remember from when we had this President?”

“I don't...she looks like someone who used to be at that club over on... Washington...the Rig or something and...but maybe that was somebody...else.”

“Well, we'd love to have you be part of our family if it's the right place for you and if you...qualify. Can I get some information from you, Mr. Berkoff?”

“What do...you mean?”

“We wanna make sure you will feel at home here.”

“At home?”

“We wanna make you feel like you're part of our community and will stay until...well, we don't wanna see you unhappy.”

“Oh...okay.”

“How do you feel about other people, Mr. Berkoff? Are there any people you don't like being around?”

“Well...there's those people who are always making all that noise up by the

Center who...but I like just about everyone else I...think.”

“What about girls...I mean women?”

“I like the...to sit on the bench by the pagoda and peek at them as they go down to the water.”

“Sure, that's only natural, Mr. Berkoff. But do you enjoy being around them and...interacting with them?”

“Inter...yeah, yeah...I like to...I ran into Sophie last month at the Center and we had a nice chat about...”

“About what, Mr. Berkoff?”

“About some of the good times we had when we...”

“Well, I'm sure you'll find some good companionship here too, Mr. Berkoff, and maybe even renew some old acquaintances.”

“I think I would...like that.”

“Do you like to share with people and participate in

**“It looks so...
Freudian!”
spouts a
portly woman with
a cane, sputtering
a laugh while pivoting to
the male near her who's
squinting like he's trying
to bring the image
into clearer focus.**

— John O'Kane

activities, Mr. Berkoff?"

"I like to help other people and..."

"And what, Mr. Berkoff?"

"And...I like to get back something when I deserve it."

"That's...pretty normal, Mr. Berkoff. And do you like to join activities with people you don't know very well?"

"As long as...I like to do new things with some but..."

"But what, Mr. Berkoff?"

"But...not with..."

"Well, you think about that and we'll revisit it. What's your financial situation like?"

"I have a bank account at the...coop over on..."

"Sure...the coop. Do you have documentation of your net worth?"

"Net...worth?"

"Yes, like your recent tax returns?"

"I think I have that...it's over at..."

"Try to find that information and bring it to us as soon as you can. We don't accept applicants who are independently wealthy. We have a cap on the amount of income and assets you can own. All your needs are taken care of here so you'll have no worries. You'll be relieved of the burden of having to manage your finances. Those things are a burden...they'll interfere with your dedication to quality values, those of equality and human fairness."

"I value..."

The building has no name on it but workers are busy

painting the front, suggesting that one may soon appear. It's a formula façade familiar along the Boardwalk for retail businesses, stretching nearly a hundred feet wide and rising about ten feet high, likely put up hastily to satisfy or subvert zoning codes. There's a structure behind it that juts up about four stories. It's clearly older, perhaps dating from the sixties, but other workers are in the process of doing a mild retrofit. The whole structure stands out from the surrounding one-story structures that cater to the whims of wandering tourists. Off to the right there's a large, discolored wooden arch hewn with indentations and markings erected in a plot of grass, suggesting it's possibly an artifact from this or a nearby site. Two women with long gray ponytails have just finished planting a tall slender pole in the center of the arch with the help of one of the workers. Secured, the women begin to stroke the pole and giggle.

Several others begin to spill through the front door and gather around the arch, admiring it like it's a just-unveiled work of art at the local museum.

"It looks so...Freudian!" spouts a portly woman with a cane, sputtering a laugh while pivoting to the male near her who's squinting like he's trying to bring the image into clearer focus.

"You mean like...oh, the shrink, but..." His face blanches as one of the ponytails creeps up behind him and massages his mid-section. He stumbles into the woman next to him and smirks.

"It looks real familiar," lofts a voice from the group. "But where did they get it...why did they put it here?"

"This could be our logo," says a woman with granny

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glasses. She's tall and very thin, her baggy clothes obscuring what was likely a model's body. "We could put it on tees and caps and...."

"...and what?" asks a voice two bodies away, a rusty-haired sixtyish woman busting out of a string bikini.

"And we could...I don't know, let's just go in and get ready for..."

"...bed!" spurts an unidentified source. A concordance of chuckles suffuses the crowd as it disperses toward the front door of the building and files inside.

The giddy mood presses into the lobby, sparking surprised looks from those schmoozing at a few tables. The entrants spread to the various clusters and begin to mingle, the mood now modulating. A few others, sitting alone on the sofas, gawk at the spectacle. A florid, loquacious cue-tip jerks up from a table and waddles to a sofa, bending over directly in front of a man who's staring at a space off to the right. She turns and sees the apparent object of his vision, the woman busting out of the string bikini.

"Do you know her?" asks the cue-tip, pulling her gaze away from her, unable to break his trance. "That's Lisa...she used to be a stripper over at the...somewhere over on...Washington I think. She still likes to show off her silicone. Are you the new arrival?"

"I...I just got here....a while ago and my...name's...Andre...Andre...Berkoff. I..."

"Yes...you what?" He turns to look at the cue-tip and snaps out of his trance, but jerks his head back like he's seen a ghost, forcing her to step away from him. He shuffles away and alights on another sofa across the room, crosses his legs and stares aloft.

"Charming the new male residents again, Clara!" exhorts a lanky woman wearing a slightly-oversized, draping tie dyed tee from one of the nearby tables. She rises and saunters over to the sofa, sporting a quizzical smile. Lisa also begins to creep over to the sofa, apparently quite curious about this new male who seems obsessed with her appearance. Andre now appears more relaxed. Clara remains on the periphery with a perplexed look on her face like she's totally confused about Andre's reaction. As if he might be feeling the force of her confusion, Andre flashes a glimpse of Clara but pulls away abruptly as if he's received a shock.

"I'm Jane," offers the tie dyed tee, edging her body onto the sofa. She has an unflinching smile that exudes life-and-people-are-beautiful but giggles periodically and at the very edge of each eruption her expression becomes blank, like a subliminal flash threatens to dissolve her upbeat mood, before returning to form.

"You must be Mr. Berkoff, our new member," she continues. Andre is in the process of forming a syllable when Lisa drops onto the sofa from the other side, jerking his attention a few inches in her direction but quashing his verbal efforts.

"You're the guy everybody's been talkin' about!" spurts Lisa, drawing Andre's gaze closer to her, but he flinches from direct contact like he's deep in thought.

"Not much to talk about cuz..."

"...cuz why, Andre?" asks Jane, drawing his gaze halfway toward her.

"Cuz I haven't talked to anybody about much...yet and..." He peeks over and spies Clara's gaze sandwiched between two animated cue-tips but quickly turns back, this time urging his frame toward Jane. He now looks at her directly but the flickering of his eyes seems to suggest he acted to avoid Lisa's penetration from the other side.

"Maybe your reputation precedes you," blurts Lisa. "You must've lived around here before. You do look kind of familiar."

"Yeah, I used to live down..."

"Down?"

"Down...somewhere around the...guess maybe that was a long...time ago." He now turns to her full-faced but quickly swivels away before jerking back, locking on her gape like he's under some kind of spell, his expression of fright tempering like the object of his fear is withdrawing from him, or morphing into something very familiar. He's now fascinated by the area around her neck, inclining his head imperceptibly lower and then quavering nervously from side-to-side, fixing on her necklace for an instant.

"Hey, Andre, what's so fascinating about my neck?" Lisa interrupts, nudging him graciously, but he merely squints and resumes his inspection, now below the necklace in a swatch of crepey freckles that points like an arrow to the deep valley cleaving her fleshy masses.

"Andre, what're you...doing?" she manages, her eyes like flames combusting from a smoldering fire. She reaches behind her back and undoes the strap of her bikini top. It slips down slightly while pulsing her countenance.

"Lisa, what are *you* doing?" interjects Jane, who is now on her feet and peering at the spectacle. "It isn't 1975 over at the..."

Andre meanwhile inspects the new terrain, his penetrating gaze seeming to firm up her skin which now reveals a misshapen mole. He ponders it like it might be some sort of talisman. Clara shuffles toward the action, stopping at the fringe.

"That's...the room was full of...the light was..." Lisa curls her lips ever so slightly and flashes a caustic smile but abruptly screams at a very high pitch. She could be mistaken for testing the upper ranges of her vocal chords if the outburst was occurring somewhere else. Its prolonged intensity could suggest she's trying to withdraw the smile, neutralize its existence by shielding it through the excesses of another sensual register. Clara steps behind Lisa and fastens her strap, covering the mole and terminating the scream.

Lisa jerks around as Clara scampers across the room. Andre's gaze remains fixed on the same spot like he's mesmerized by the afterimage of a flashing neon light.

An electronic, genderless voice reverberates from the ceiling.

"Attention everyone...attention! We're gathering in the auditorium for our five minutes of peace and love at the top of the hour. Please don't be late!"

As if the sound secretes an invisible chemical through the room, everyone's movements slow, their expressions becoming pensive but expectant. They fall into single file and march methodically through the door. Andre, nonplused, scans the ephemera pulsing from the wall....



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WHO'S AFRAID OF THE GREEN NEW DEAL?

K A T E A R O N O F F

For years, the terms of the debate about climate change in the United States have been clear. One side — flush with fossil fuel cash — cast doubt on whether the problem existed at all, spreading disinformation and calling global warming an elaborate hoax to bring about socialism. For the most part, they were Republicans. On the other side were those who believed the science and usually rallied around some call for climate action, however vague. The conversation around the Green New Deal has brought those sides together, as politicians on both sides of the aisle scramble to cobble together a third way.

That Republicans being paid by the fossil fuel industry have come out against a plan for the United States to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 is hardly surprising. That they're being joined by prominent Democrats in casting doubt on the idea is a signal for how old tribalisms around climate change are starting to radically shift.

"The Anti-Green New Deal Coalition," a new report from the Public Accountability Initiative, or PAI, attempts to map these evolving allegiances.

Unsurprisingly, a common bipartisan thread in Green New Deal opposition is fossil fuel donations.

Raking in 81 percent of all oil and gas donations since 1990, today's GOP "operates as a de facto wing of the fossil fuel industry," the report's authors write. The exclusively white, male, and Republican leadership of the Congressional Western Caucus is a prime example. In the last election cycle, it accepted \$837,480 from political action committees linked to the energy and natural resources industry, a fraction of the \$4.3 million that same group has taken in from fossil fuel PACs over the course of its career. On Wednesday, the caucus hosted a "policy forum" on the Green New Deal — a "Green Pipe Dream," as they call it — flanked by a who's who of the country's most prominent climate deniers, including the Competitive Enterprise Institute's Myron Ebell to ClimateDepot founder Marc Morano. Ceremoniously,

Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, ate a hamburger.

Yet Democrats — and those ambivalent or hostile to the Green New Deal, in particular — have accepted their share of coal, oil, and gas money too. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., is a longtime supporter of fossil fuel interests, which have donated prolifically to his campaigns over the years. Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J. — who was instrumental in killing Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's resolution to create a Select Committee on the Green New Deal — has taken in hundreds of thousands of dollars from polluting industries. (Pallone chairs the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and many credited territorial concerns for his opposition to the creation of a select committee.)

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — who famously called the Green New Deal the "green dream or whatever" — is also backed by the fossil fuel industry. E&E News found that Pelosi and four of her top allies have collected \$790,000 from fossil fuel interests, and that either they or their spouses

have "tens of thousands of dollars invested in a fossil-fuel-powered electric utility, a natural gas infrastructure company and several funds with significant fossil fuel assets."

So far, 89 House and 11 Senate Democrats have signed on to the Green New Deal resolution, introduced by Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Ed Markey earlier this month, which leaves many still on the sidelines. *HuffPost's* Alex Kaufman calculated that senators opposed to the Green New Deal accepted an average of seven times more money in donations from fossil fuel companies than the resolution's co-sponsors.

"With this report, we're not trying to dogmatically condemn different people," report co-author Derek Seidman told me. "You have

on the one end, a very powerful part of this coalition that wants to completely crush the Green New Deal, and that's the fossil fuel industry and the Republican Party," Seidman says. In the middle, he adds, are individuals and organizations with "real and professed commitments to doing something about the climate crisis. But [the Green New Deal] is in tension with their economic and policy ideology, their donor bases, or the gradualist, incrementalist ways in which they're used to doing politics, which you see now really contrasted with people like Ocasio-Cortez."

The report includes examples of some surprising people and groups who are committed to fighting climate change — to an extent. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., for example, is a vocal climate hawk who's nonetheless

**House Speaker
Nancy Pelosi — who
famously called
the Green New Deal
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or whatever" — is
also backed
by the fossil fuel
industry.**

— Kate Aronoff

been cool to calls for a Green New Deal. A few Republicans, including GOP Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick and Francis Rooney, have broken ranks to support policies like a carbon tax and acknowledge the reality of global warming, but none have crossed the aisle for a Green New Deal.

Business-friendly environmental groups like the Environmental Defense Fund and Natural Resource Defense Council — which share ties to the oil and gas industry — are also included in the PAI report, though both have issued vaguely worded statements in support of the Green New Deal.

There are also those, Seidman told me, “trying to dilute the Green New Deal and make it into something that’s more aligned with the status quo or moving a little more slowly.” *The Washington Post* editorial board’s self-styled proposal for a Green New Deal-but-not, which leans heavily on market-based mechanisms like carbon pricing, is an example of that.

The editorial board joins a growing number of establishment economists backing a modest carbon tax as an explicit alternative to the Green New Deal, namely in the form of a proposal brought by former Bush and Reagan-era cabinet officials. That plan — brought by the Climate Leadership Council, or CLC — has received the hearty support of fossil fuel companies, who are among its founding sponsors. The lobbying arm for the CLC plan is a group called Americans for Carbon Dividends, which is led by former Republican senators and current Squire Patton Boggs lobbyists Trent Lott and John Breaux, bolstered by \$1 million in support from Exxon Mobil. Joe Crowley, who lost his primary fight to Ocasio-Cortez last June, recently joined Lott and Breaux on Squire Patton Boggs’s public policy arm as a lobbyist.

Matthew Miles Goodrich, New York state director for the Sunrise Movement — one of the key groups pushing for the Green New Deal — said his group’s approach “emphasizes the sweeping nature of the program and forces everyone to play on our turf. It makes climate denial look so untenable that it actually forces some of our staunchest opponents to support a carbon tax. It shifts the Overton window.”

As the report authors make clear, this loose new anti-Green New Deal coalition is hardly working in lockstep, and the derision cast on the proposal from the likes of the Western Caucus looks a good deal different than that coming from Pelosi and company. “Not all centrist Democrats who express objections to a bold Green New Deal are equivalent in their skepticism or opposition, and it’s possible that Green New Deal supporters could bring some closer to their camp,” they note.

To help provoke such shifts, Sunrise is working to get fossil fuel money out of politics by helping to circulate the No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge, which calls on candidates to reject donations from fossil fuel industry-linked PACs and donations from industry employees over \$200. After being confronted by young activists over the weekend, in part for violating that pledge, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., agreed to give back donations from the oil companies Tesoro and Phillips 66.

The report names other people and groups whose

opposition to the Green New Deal, like that of congressional Republicans, is par for the course. Michael Bloomberg, billionaire, erstwhile Republican, and perennially rumored presidential candidate, has called the plan “pie in the sky,” despite his attempts in the last several years to cast himself as a climate hero. While he’s given amply to the Sierra Club’s fight against coal, he’s long been a supporter of natural gas and fracking as a so-called bridge fuel to renewable energy, and is himself an investor in oil and gas companies.

Another billionaire and rumored 2020 presidential hopeful, Starbucks founder Howard Schultz, has chided the Green New Deal despite trying to boost his and his company’s green credentials.

Rounding out PAI’s list is the leadership of conservative building trades unions like the Laborers’ International Union of North America, or LIUNA. The union’s top brass have long fought environmentalist efforts to stop the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines, and came out explicitly this month against the Green New Deal with a statement parroting several right-wing myths about the resolution.

Unlike LIUNA, Democrats wary of the Green New Deal tend to frame their opposition as a difference of opinion over means, not ends. But none have put out an alternative plan that would accomplish the goals of the Green New Deal, for decarbonization at the speed and scale necessary to avert widespread catastrophe.

“Among Democrats, the Green New Deal has really pushed the party to grapple seriously with the U.N. report rather than ignore it or pretend it doesn’t exist, or put forward market-based solutions that won’t actually move us quickly enough over the next 10 years,” said Justice Democrats Communications Director Waleed Shahid, referring to last fall’s report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change about what it would take to keep warming below catastrophic levels.

There may be no issue that lends itself better to a “which side are you on”-style politics than the climate crisis — that is, do we do everything necessary to avoid the worst or not? Scientists rarely stutter about the scale of change needed, which many have likened to the Allies’ economy-wide mobilization for World War II. In the eleventh hour to preserve a habitable planet, simply believing climate change is real isn’t enough.

Kate Aronoff writes for *Huffpost*, *The Intercept* and other publications.

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ELECTRIC CARS SHOULD YOU BUY AN ELECTRIC CAR?

ADAIR TURNER

Electric motors are inherently more efficient than internal combustion engines. And, provided the electricity used has a carbon intensity below about 800 grams per kilowatt-hour, electric cars reduce carbon emissions.

Passenger cars account for only 8% of total global carbon dioxide emissions, and if you charge an electric vehicle (EV) with electricity generated by inefficient coal power plants, the immediate effect will be increased CO2 emissions compared with driving a modern gasoline or diesel car. So it's important to stress, as Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, did at Davos in January, that electric cars alone will not avert catastrophic climate change. But vehicle electrification is nonetheless crucial to reducing emissions. If you care about the climate, the next car you buy should be electric.

Electric motors are inherently more efficient than internal combustion engines: while a gasoline or diesel engine typically wastes more than 70% of the energy it uses as unwanted heat, an electric motor turns all but 5% into kinetic energy. And once battery costs fall below \$100 per kilowatt-hour – which Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) expects to occur by 2024 – electric cars will not only be cheaper to run, but also cheaper to buy. So EVs will eventually dominate – and far sooner than many projections suggest – whether we care about the climate or not.

Provided the electricity used has a carbon intensity below about 800 grams per kWh, electric cars

reduce carbon emissions. In France (with average intensity of about 80 grams), the United Kingdom (about 250 grams and falling fast), the United States (about 400 grams) and even high-carbon Germany (still around 500 grams), electric cars will undoubtedly reduce emissions, provided users avoid charging them at times when marginal intensity is highest.

In China and India, by contrast, with average electricity carbon intensity around the break-even point of 800 grams, very rapid EV growth could have an adverse

transport electrification to reduce CO2 emissions is far greater than the 8% figure suggests. An additional 8% of emissions come from trucks and buses, and the future is electric for these vehicles, too. Here, the pace of electrification will partly reflect how many people choose to buy electric cars. Massive investments in battery innovation and manufacturing scale, driven by expected EV purchases, are delivering cost reductions and energy-density increases which make battery-powered electric buses and short-haul trucks increasingly competitive. For

long-distance trucking, hydrogen fuel cells may be key to adequate range, but the engines will be electric, delivering dramatic improvements in urban air quality and reducing CO2 emissions (if electricity comes from lower-carbon sources). Battery or hydrogen electric technologies will also play a significant role in shorter-distance shipping and aviation.

At the same time, battery innovations initially driven by EV growth will reduce the cost of power de-carbonization. BNEF estimates that battery prices could fall to \$62 per kWh by 2030, enabling the utility sector to deploy total battery systems at less than \$150 per kWh, with batteries

providing cost-efficient overnight storage in electricity systems that increasingly depend on solar and wind sources. That, in turn, will deliver the lower carbon intensity required to make EVs good for the planet.

Other technologies, apart from electricity, batteries, and hydrogen fuel cells, are of course vital to reduce emissions. In the harder-to-abate industrial sectors such as steel, cement, and chemicals, bio-energy sources and carbon capture will also be required. In aviation, batteries will be far too heavy to power intercontinental flight unless dramatic and currently

Battery or hydrogen electric technologies will also play a significant role in shorter-distance shipping and aviation.

– Adair Turner

effect initially. But what matters is the carbon intensity of electricity used throughout the vehicle's life. The optimal strategy is therefore to encourage auto electrification while also rapidly de-carbonizing power generation, which the collapsing cost of renewables now makes possible. As recent reports from the Energy Transitions Commission show, India could reduce its electricity carbon intensity to 550 grams per kWh by 2030, while doubling electricity consumption – and at no cost to consumers.

Moreover, the potential for

unforeseeable improvements in battery energy density – six times or more – can be achieved. Synthetic jet fuel produced from low-carbon electricity may become economic, and biofuels are also likely to play a significant role.

But while a combination of technologies will be needed, all feasible scenarios for achieving the objectives of the Paris climate agreement show that a massive increase in the role of electricity is essential. The recently published Shell “Sky Scenario” estimates that electricity will account for more than 60% of final energy demand by late this century, up from around 20% today. If we don’t electrify as much of the economy as possible, and de-carbonize electricity production as rapidly as

possible, we have no hope of avoiding severely harmful climate change.

Of course, EVs come in different types and sizes, and the bigger the electric car you buy, and the more you show off its superior acceleration, the greater the danger that the immediate impact of going electric will be an increase in emissions. Unfortunately, current EV offerings are skewed toward larger cars and SUVs, with fewer small and mid-size models, which will eventually deliver the biggest emissions reductions. This reflects the car companies’ profit incentives, the difficulties of achieving adequate range with smaller batteries, and the lack of sufficiently widespread

charging infrastructure. But the charging infrastructure can and must be built, and a wider range of auto sizes will increasingly be available.

So, if you care about the climate, your next car should be electric, preferably a size or two smaller than the one you first thought about. And to ensure that you really are helping to save the planet, you should combine your personal purchase decision with political support for policies to drive rapid electricity de-carbonization and investment in widespread charging infrastructure. Buying EVs alone cannot save the planet, but doing so is a powerful lever for the broader changes that can.



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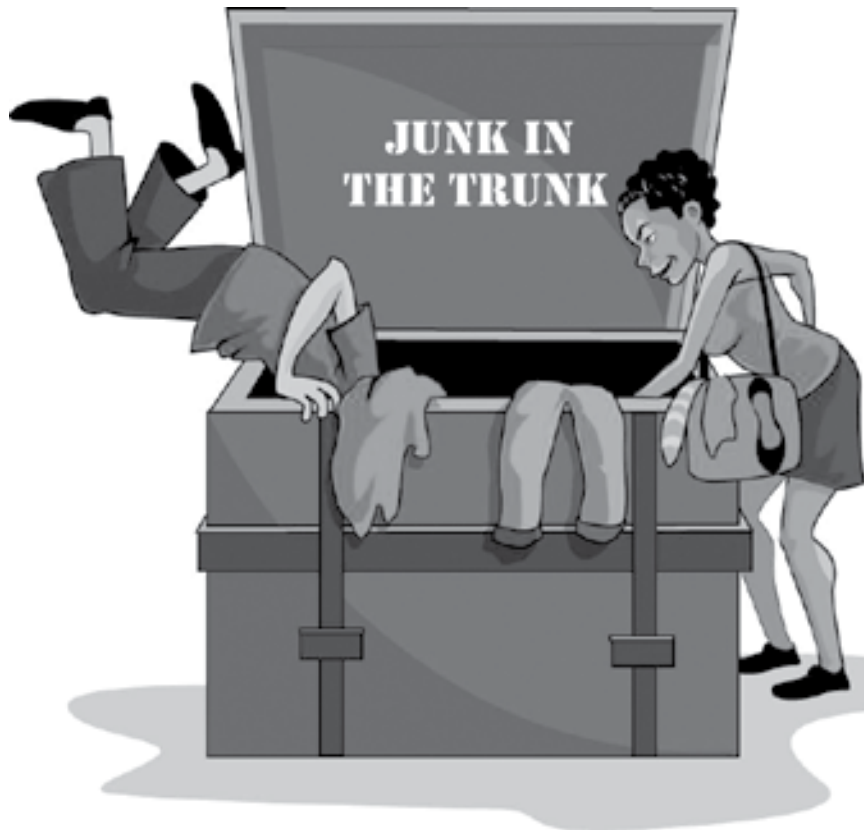


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NUKIN' IT OUT AT DIABLO CANYON

HARVEY WASSERMAN

Is the bankrupt federal felon Pacific Gas & Electric desperately hiding something very deadly at its Diablo Canyon Power Plant? Will we know soon when the company wants to restart Unit One, which is currently shut for refueling? Hopefully Governor Gavin Newsom and other officials will inspect that reactor before it can restart!

In 2010, PG&E blew up a neighborhood in San Bruno, killing eight people. In 2018, it helped burn down much of northern California, killing more than eighty people. The company has now admitted its culpability in starting that infamous Camp Fire and has questioned its own ability to continue to operate. On February 6, it incinerated five buildings in San Francisco.

The company is bankrupt. It has been convicted of numerous federal felonies. It actually has a probation officer.

But the real terror comes at its Diablo Canyon nuclear reactors, nine miles west of San Luis Obispo on the central California coast.

The reactors are embrittled. They may be cracked. As with the gas pipes in San Bruno and the power poles in northern California, PG&E's maintenance at these huge reactors has been systematically neglected.

But the company does NOT want the public to inspect them. WHY?

Right now, Diablo Unit One is shut for refueling. Critical inspections for embrittlement, cracking and deferred maintenance could be easily and cheaply done. Public discussions could also be held on vulnerability to

earthquakes, waste management, and corporate competence.

The public does not need Diablo's power, which often overloads the grid, forcing the shutdown of cleaner, safer wind and solar capacity. Reopening a cracked reactor would turn the fuel assemblies on-site into high-level radioactive waste, converting a multi-million-dollar asset into a huge fiscal liability.

Diablo Unit One is in particular danger because it was designed in the 1960s. Its original blueprints did not account for

the state has extraordinary power right now. Normally such issues are pre-empted by the feds.

But at this time the governor, state agencies, the California Public Utilities Commission, and the courts have the right to demand these inspections. Certainly the public has a legitimate expectation to be protected.

The downwind consequences of a major accident are beyond comprehension. Diablo is less than 200 miles upwind from Los Angeles. A radioactive cloud from a likely disaster would threaten the lives of millions. Damage to property and the natural ecology, including some of the world's most productive farmland, would be essentially impossible to calculate.

US Representative Salud Carbajal (D-San Luis Obispo) has already questioned PG&E's competence to run these two huge reactors. A number of Hollywood stars, along with State Senator Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica), San Luis Obispo Mayor Heidi Harmon, and numerous towns and party organizations, have already joined with more than a thousand grassroots activists to ask the governor to require these critical tests and to subject the findings to public scrutiny.

Given PG&E's bankruptcy and criminal convictions, and the

extreme vulnerability of reactors as old as those at Diablo Canyon, we must seriously wonder why the company would now ask to be exempt from a simple set of inspections.

To protect the health, safety, economy and ecology of our state, the governor, regulatory agencies, CPUC, and the courts must step in to demand these aged reactors be immediately subjected to painstaking public scrutiny. There is no good reason not to do this, and no excuse for PG&E

Reopening a cracked reactor would turn the fuel assemblies on-site into high-level radioactive waste, converting a multi-million-dollar asset into a huge fiscal liability.

— Harvey Wasserman

the dozen earthquake faults since discovered nearby. Copper used in key welds is now known to be inferior. Older reactors like those at Diablo are susceptible to embrittlement and cracking, which could be catastrophic.

In 1991 the Yankee Rowe Reactor in Massachusetts was forced to shut because of embrittlement. It was younger then than Diablo One is now.

Because PG&E is in bankruptcy and on federal probation,

to be asking for an exemption from a simple, long-overdue inspection.

The last thing California can afford is a radioactive replay of what has happened with that pipeline explosion in San Bruno or those

catastrophic fires in what's left of the northern forests.

Next month marks the 40th anniversary of the accident at Three Mile Island, and the release of *The China Syndrome*, which told a

terrifying tale we also do not want to see repeated.

Harvey Wasserman's California Solartopia is broadcast at KPFK-Pacific, 90.7 fm, Los Angeles. His *Life & Death Spiral of US History: From Deganawidah to Trump to Solartopia* will soon be at www.solartopia.org.

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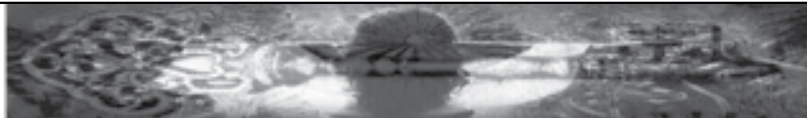
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AMAZON WHY CITIES SHOULD STOP PLAYING AMAZON'S GAME

AMIHAI GLAZER

New York City should count its blessings. Amazon's decision to walk away from its plan to build a new headquarters in Queens stunned city and state officials, who had promised \$3 billion in incentives in exchange for some 25,000 jobs. They had never questioned whether the promised jobs and economic stimulus would actually appear.

In my own research as an economist studying corporate welfare, I have found and reviewed much evidence on the effectiveness of tax and other incentives. My conclusion: Incentives just don't work.

Corporate 'Downsizing'

That's in part because companies aren't obligated to follow through on their promises. Just ask Boston.

In February, around the same time Amazon walked away from its NYC plans, General Electric announced it will cut back on jobs and investment in its new headquarters in Boston. Only three years ago, the company's plan to relocate from Connecticut in exchange for \$25 million in tax breaks was touted as a big deal for Boston.

Or consider General Motors, which in 2012 said it would build a new electric vehicle facility in White Marsh, Maryland, after receiving a subsidy of \$105 million from the U.S. Department of Energy, \$6 million in grants from Baltimore County and \$4.5 million in state grants for economic development and job training. This past November, the automaker announced it will shut down the plant as part of a restructuring effort.

Or Foxconn. In 2017,

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker announced that the electronics giant would build a new factory in the state. The \$10 billion investment was supposed to create as many as 13,000 jobs housed on a high-tech campus the size of 11 Lambeau football fields. Walker, who was described, during the announcement, as "a picture of grinning, fist-pumping excitement," offered more than \$4 billion in tax incentives in return.

With only 178 jobs created as of January, now the plans for a large factory to build large TV screens

aren't all that great.

A 2016 study by economist Carlianne Patrick compared counties that won large new factories with those that lost out during the bidding process. She found that they typically did not generate more revenue for the local government than it spent on incentives, even if they did induce small increases in economic activity.

Another study by Patrick found that making it easier for local governments to offer aid to companies reduced employment in rural counties. And in 2018, the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research concluded that factories and offices that received an incentive had employment growth 3.7 percent slower than those that didn't receive the inducement.

More than that, a review of 30 different studies by the Upjohn Institute found that incentives actually influence a company's decision to invest in less than a quarter of cases. In other words, most of the time, a company would have made the investment with or without the tax break or other incentive.

Incentives Fail

In my own study, I collected data on 82 companies that invested in new plants and factories across the U.S. from 1982 to 1993 and then tracked them for a couple of decades. I also collected data on the various tax incentives and other inducement

policies each state offered.

As of 2010, when the last data were available, 52 were still in operation. Twenty-four of them closed. I couldn't find data on the other six.

The point of providing companies with tax incentives and other subsidies is that they are supposed to lead to economic growth and make a facility more viable. On the contrary, I found that the plants

**In February,
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— Amihai Glazer

are in doubt. Instead, Foxconn said it plans to work on a research and development facility in the state. President Trump, Gov. Walker and Foxconn Chairman Terry Gou broke ground in 2018, when the company's plans were still supposed to go ahead as promised.

Business as Usual

And for those that do stay, the benefits to the city or region

in states with higher tax incentives were actually slightly more likely to have gone out of business by 2010.

What is going on here?

My theory, based on other research I've conducted, is that a company that is offered a large incentive package is incentivized to build a plant or office early rather than doing sufficient due diligence to ensure the decision is the best one.

Another possibility is tied to politics: The company wants to ink the deal and secure the subsidy while the governor who offered the

deal is still in office. That appears to have happened in Wisconsin, where Walker lost his re-election the year after he offered Foxconn the large subsidies.

Economic Realities

It is striking that Amazon, in announcing its cancellation of the New York headquarters, didn't signal it was reopening the bidding process for one of its new headquarters.

Nowhere did it say that it would still hire the 25,000 workers it had said it would in New York City,

though it still plans to create that many jobs in Virginia.

While Amazon said it pulled out because of political opposition, another reason may be that the lure of the subsidies blinded Amazon to economic realities and that it's second-guessing its investment. In which case, perhaps Amazon should count its blessings as well.

Amihai Glazer teaches economics at UC, Irvine.



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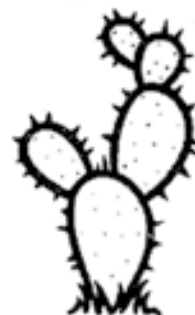
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DALE COLEMAN

Could this be the year that meat grown in vats rather than taken from animals reaches our plates? In the summer of 2017, San Francisco-based food company Just (formerly Hampton Creek), announced plans to put meat grown in vats on the market by the end of 2018. The firm's slick promotional video featured people eating nuggets grown from the cells of a chicken that walked past them as they ate, and stressed the potential for this meat to have a lower environmental impact.

Fifteen months later, the company has said this will take the form of paid-for consumer taste tests of its chicken meat product at a small number of restaurants. But, with the clock ticking, Just maintains it will have the world's first commercially available cell-based meat ready before the year is out.

This isn't the only reason to think this year could prove to be a turning point in the development of this cell-based meat. Alongside Just, there has been a recent explosion in the number of start-up companies working to make commercially viable products. Many are located in the San Francisco Bay area, including Mission Barns, Wild Type, and the bluefin tuna-focused Finless Foods. Others are found elsewhere, including Israel's SuperMeat, the UK's Higher Steaks, and the Netherlands-based Meatable.

Meanwhile, the debate around the regulation of cell-based meat has stepped up significantly. This is particularly the case in the US where government bodies are soon due to decide who should control the rules around the technology, an important step on the road to commercialization. Perhaps most interestingly, we have also seen the first organized swipes at the fledgling sector from groups questioning its merits, showing

the new industry is being taken increasingly seriously.

What's in a Name?

Many of the issues in the debate can be found in the argument over what to call this new type of meat. Even those producing it can't seem to agree. A lot has changed since the first burger grown in a laboratory was tasted in 2013 – and these products have since been referred to variously as “cultured meat,” “clean meat” and, most recently, “cell-based meat.” Some outside the sector argue that it shouldn't be called meat at all.

Could this be the year that meat grown in vats rather than taken from animals reaches our plates?

– Dale Coleman

In fact, the public debate on the regulation of cell-based meat really started in February 2018, when the US Cattlemen's Association petitioned the government to limit the terms “meat” and “beef” only to products “derived directly from animals raised and slaughtered.” This definition intentionally excluded meat grown from cells, and was the first professionalized attack on the technology.

The name of the product matters, not least because two US government bodies, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA), have been disputing under whose remit cell-based meat should fall, with both asserting their

right to take control. A recent summit between the two bodies could prove to be the start of an amicable end to a heated debate and a move towards creating proper regulation for the sector.

At times, the disagreement has been framed as an us-versus-them situation between farmers, believed to be backing the USDA, and the companies creating the meat, believed to favor the FDA. By the time of the recent meeting, most participants seemed to accept that FDA and USDA would each have a role, but the debate shifted to which should be the primary driving force.

During the process of public consultation, groups such as start-up Memphis Meats argued their produce was already legally meat and should be known as such. The companies believe the produce's status as meat is essential to delivering its environmental and ethical promise because it will encourage more people to shift from traditional meat than if it were marketed as a specialist vegan product. Denying its “meatness” could deny its potential success. Farmers, meanwhile, have taken particular exception to the phrase “clean meat” to describe the product, because it implies meat from livestock is unclean.

But in August, Memphis Meats and the North American Meat Institute made a reconciliatory move in a shared letter to president Donald Trump calling for USDA and FDA to take joint action and introducing the term “cell-based meats” to describe the product. In September around 20 start-up companies agreed to adopt “cell-based” as their preferred name and to start a trade association under the banner (although others still prefer “clean” or “cultured”).

A second organized swipe against the sector also came over the summer when Friends of the Earth published a report questioning the environmental credentials of cell-based meat and noting that claims it was more sustainable haven't been proven.

It has been known for some time that Friends of the Earth are skeptical about the technology, but it's telling that the group has now gone as far as issuing a public report. As cell-based meat is being taken more seriously, those who remain concerned put more effort into making their case.

Despite the controversy, proponents of cell-based meat are running high on optimism. New companies seem to be announced almost every month, while existing firms are expanding. Mosa Meats, for example, recently

announced new funding and plans for a pilot "meat brewery." Equally, the transformative potential is being discussed by governments and food businesses alike, including in the most recent report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).


However, as my colleagues and I recently argued, many technical and political challenges remain. And, as 2018 has shown, the increasing seriousness with which cell-based meat is taken could lead to more deliberate attacks on the technology. This could occur at

a time when the initial venture capital funding for some companies starts to dwindle, and some of the first wave of companies may fail.

The sector needs to be braced for these challenges ahead. It seems possible that while the past five years have seen a new food-tech community in formation, the coming years may see an outward-looking community celebrating hard-won successes – and ruing hard-lost fights.

Dale Coleman writes for *The Conversation* and other publications.


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