

ASSATA SHAKUR - LIVE LIKE HER!

Assata Shakur: Open Letter to the Pope (1998)
https://www.democracynow.org/2025/9/29/death_legacy_assata_shakur

My name is Assata Shakur and I was born and raised in the United States. I am a descendant of Africans who were kidnapped and brought to the Americas as slaves. I spent my early childhood in the racist segregated South. I later moved to the northern part of the country, where I realized that Black people were equally victimized by racism and oppression.

I grew up and became a political activist, participating in student struggles, the anti-war movement, and, most of all, in the movement for the liberation of African Americans in the United States. I later joined the Black Panther Party, an organization that was targeted by the COINTELPRO program, a program that was set up by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to eliminate all political opposition to the U.S. government’s policies, to destroy the Black Liberation Movement in the United States, to discredit activists and to eliminate potential leaders.

Under the COINTELPRO program, many political activists were harassed, imprisoned, murdered or otherwise neutralized. As a result of being targeted by COINTELPRO, I, like many other young people, was faced with the threat of prison, underground, exile or death. The FBI, with the help of local police agencies, systematically fed false accusations and fake news articles to the press accusing me and other activists of crimes we did not commit. Although in my case the charges were eventually dropped or I was eventually acquitted, the national and local police agencies created a situation where, based on their false accusations against me, any police officer could shoot me on sight. It was not until the Freedom of Information Act was passed in the mid-’70s that we began to see the scope of the United States government’s persecution of political activists.

At this point, I think that it is important to make one thing very clear. I have advocated and I still advocate revolutionary changes in the structure and in the principles that govern the United States. I advocate self-determination for my people and for all oppressed people inside the United States. I advocate an end to capitalist exploitation, the abolition of racist policies, the eradication of sexism, and the elimination of political repression. If that is a crime, then I am totally guilty.

To make a long story short, I was captured in New Jersey in 1973, after being shot with both arms held in the air, and then shot again from the back. I was left on the ground to die and when I did not, I was taken to a local hospital where I was threatened, beaten and tortured. In 1977 I was convicted in a trial that can only be described as a legal lynching.

In 1979 I was able to escape with the aid of some of my fellow comrades. I saw this as a necessary step, not only because I was innocent of the charges against me, but because I knew that in the racist legal system in the United States I would receive no justice. I was also afraid that I would be murdered in prison. I later arrived in Cuba where I am currently living in exile as a political refugee.

The New Jersey State Police and other law enforcement officials say they want to see me brought to “justice.” But I would like to know what they mean by “justice.” Is torture justice? I was kept in solitary confinement for more than two years, mostly in men’s prisons. Is that justice? My lawyers were threatened with imprisonment and imprisoned.

Is that justice? I was tried by an all-white jury, without even the pretext of impartiality, and then sentenced to life in prison plus 33 years. Is that justice?

Let me emphasize that justice for me is not the issue I am addressing here; it is justice for my people that is at stake. When my people receive justice, I am sure that I will receive it, too. ...

I ask nothing for myself. I only ask you to examine the social reality of the United States and to speak out against the human rights violations that are taking place.

On this day, the birthday of Martin Luther King, I am reminded of all those who gave their lives for freedom. Most of the people who live on this planet are still not free. I ask only that you continue to work and pray to end oppression and political repression. It is my heartfelt belief that all the people on this earth deserve justice: social justice, political justice, and economic justice. I believe it is the only way we will ever achieve peace and prosperity on this earth. I hope that you enjoy your visit to Cuba. This is not a country that is rich in material wealth, but it is a country that is rich in human wealth, spiritual wealth and moral wealth.

Respectfully yours, Assata Shakur, Havana, Cuba
TTT note: Sister Assata passed to the ancestors in Cuba last month. Our condolences to her family and comrades.



Climate Change and Colonialism

by Nick Bernards, Assoc Prof of Global Sustainable Development, University of Warwick

<https://theconversation.com/colonialism-and-climate-risk-are-connected-evidence-from-ghana-and-senegal-263931>

Note from TTT: This article is worth reading, but it assumes, except for one sentence, that “colonialism” is a thing of the past, with a “legacy”, as opposed to a continuing crime against humanity, mainly but not exclusively in the form of neo-colonialism and imperialist military and economic domination (as well as settler colonialism). As a result it reaches the false conclusion in the final paragraph: “[Western climate debts] are probably incalculable and unpayable.” They are calculable, ongoing, and can and must be repaid, through a global economic and political transformation, including the decolonization and socialist unification of Africa, debt forgiveness by Western banks and institutions, and various other forms of reparations. --Ed.

The experience of colonialism led to economies and societies being re-arranged in ways that have had far-reaching consequences.

As a researcher interested in colonial histories and their impacts on present-day development, I recently explored aspects of these legacies through a comparative analysis of Senegal and Ghana, based on previous archival research.

I explore connections between key colonial export crops and the everyday forms of climate vulnerability experienced in the two countries. I show how forms of exploitation that emerged in the context of colonial capitalism are linked to the form and uneven distribution of climate hazards in the present. These histories have profoundly shaped how people are exposed to record high temperatures and unpredictable rainfall patterns.

There is growing recognition that the breakdown of the global climate, and vulnerability to its effects, are deeply rooted in histories of colonialism. This recognition has even made its way into official policy circles. The 2022 Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change, the UN’s climate science arm), for instance, acknowledges that vulnerability to climate change is “often made more complex by past developments, such as histories of colonialism.” My research adds to this picture by starting to show just how complex and embedded these impacts are.

Uneven distribution

The people who are most at risk from the climate crisis are often those who’ve done the least to create it. As a region, Africa contributes about 4% of global CO₂ emissions. Indeed, some estimates show that only in the last decade has Africa collectively emitted more carbon than it stores in various ecosystems.

According to the World Meteorological Organization,

temperatures in Africa are increasing faster than the global average. Recent estimates suggest that losses due to heat alone amounted to 8% of GDP in much of Africa between 1992 and 2013.

Colonial powers extracted wealth in the trillions from colonized peoples and territories. They have continued to do so after the formal end of colonial rule. Rich countries have burned well more than their fair share of fossil fuels in the process. This has meant that colonized countries, left with underdeveloped infrastructures and impoverished citizens, have less capacity to withstand and respond to increasingly severe weather.

But the connections between colonialism and climate vulnerability don’t end with these big picture measures of money and carbon emissions.

The damage done by colonial-era economic models

In my paper I show how the specific everyday ways that people are exposed to climate hazards in formerly colonized countries also have a lot to do with the way that colonial economies were organized.

Colonial economies in Senegal and Ghana were dominated by French and English merchant companies. These merchants dramatically reshaped economies, especially in the last decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth.

Among the strategies British and French merchants used was to take control of the trade in commodities – peanuts in Senegal, cocoa from Ghana – through chains of debts. Working through complex networks of brokers and traders, colonial merchants advanced agricultural inputs and survival goods to farmers against expected crops. This system largely protected European businesses from the risks inherent in farming, such as bad weather and pests.

The system also meant that local farmers incurred higher and higher levels of debt. Where people needed to borrow money or goods in order to plant crops and survive the wait until harvest, this tended to lock farmers into producing the same crops for export year after year.

In both countries, this meant that farmers’ productivity tended to fall over time because of problems with pests and soil depletion. Often, the only response available to farmers, who in many instances had already sold their crops in advance, was to plant more intensely.

In turn, this deepened both indebtedness and vulnerability to ecological hazards. Indebted farmers were more exposed to crop failures and farm yields were often eroded, and they needed to spend more and more on inputs. Intensified planting also sped up soil erosion and the spread of pests.

The colonial system also limited investments that might have improved productivity or provided greater protection against climate hazards. In Senegal, for instance, colonial peanut cultivation mainly relied on rainfall for water. Officials from the colonial government balked at proposals to build irrigation systems, and merchant firms not directly involved in cultivation had little incentive to invest either.

Postcolonial economies have changed in significant respects, but important elements of the merchant system from the colonial era have nonetheless remained in place. Major export crops in both countries continue to be cultivated by many small producers, and many people’s livelihoods remain heavily reliant on cash crops.

Most important, the form of climate vulnerability closely mirrors the hazards that emerged in the colonial era. The unpredictable availability of water, for instance, remains one of the most pressing forms of climate vulnerability in peanut growing regions. This is particularly the case in Senegal as peanut cultivation remains overwhelmingly reliant on rainfall for water. The result, as one study has shown, is that levels of poverty in peanut growing regions remain very closely correlated with rainfall levels.

Next steps

The story doesn’t look the same everywhere. One of the legacies of colonialism is that it created new patterns of uneven and unequal development within as well as between colonies. In places like Kenya and South Africa colonization entailed European settlement. African people and communities were displaced to make way for plantations and mines. Struggles over access to water, to name one example, remain strongly shaped by these histories.

The point is that the imprint of colonialism on the climate crisis is far-reaching and complex. Colonialism didn’t just extract wealth and resources. It profoundly transformed societies, economies, and the ways that people relate to the natural world.

This means that the climate debts that rich countries owe the rest of the world go beyond just the value of wealth that’s been extracted or the volume of carbon emitted. They’re probably incalculable and unpayable.

TTT after-note: The ‘climate debt’ of the West/Global North is calculable and must be paid in the form of bank debt forgiveness, reparations, particularly to Africa, and a global reorganization of production, distribution and consumption. Start by ending the exploitation, land theft, expropriation and dumping!

The Video Circulating on X and What It Reveals: Political Violence and a Government Obsessed with Punishing Trans People

By Jannelle Spencer

Download. The attack against conservative activist Charlie Kirk, which occurred during an event in Utah and was disseminated on social media, is a serious symptom of a sick democracy. I condemn the violence without qualification. But while the country needs answers to combat polarization and insecurity, the White House spends its political capital on culture wars: executive orders and guidelines that curtail the rights of trans people and disrupt healthcare and education systems.

What happened and why it matters

The video that went viral on X shows the moment Charlie Kirk was shot during an event at Utah Valley University. The national press confirmed the attack and later his death; authorities are investigating, and the case is ongoing. Regardless of who is responsible, the incident fits into a pattern of escalating political violence that demands responsible responses, not more ideological fuel.

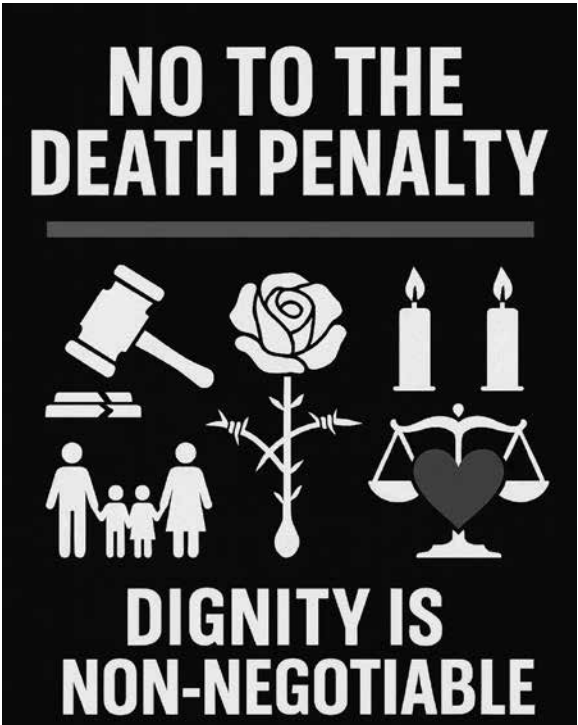
A country with open wounds... and a government that prioritizes punishing a minority

In parallel, since day 1 of his second term, President Donald Trump signed executive orders whose stated purpose is to “restore biological truth” and redefine the federal government to recognize only “two sexes.” This architecture has translated into attempts to cut civil protections, discipline teachers who teach transgender students, and dismantle health data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), crucial for designing serious policies.

This isn’t rhetoric: various agencies have issued memoranda and proposed changes that affect health, education, and employment. Legal and civil rights organizations are pursuing legal action against these orders due to their impact and potential constitutional violations.

Education: The Laboratory of Fear

While schools need resources for safe living, media



literacy, and bullying prevention, the administration is pushing changes that reopen Title IX battles and confuse entire districts about which rules to apply. Instead of clear guidelines that protect the entire school community, uncertainty becomes the norm.

The cost of “spectacle politics”

Every institutional hour dedicated to turning transgender people into a problem that “needs to be fixed” is an hour not dedicated to curbing political violence, improving surveillance of mass events, strengthening community mental health, or protecting information integrity from coordinated campaigns. This obsession also legitimizes stigma and creates hostility in the streets, classrooms, and public spaces.

You don’t have to share Charlie Kirk’s agenda to state the obvious: no one should be the target of an attack. But you don’t have to be an LGBTQ+ activist to understand that using state power against a minority doesn’t make the country safer: it makes it more fragile and more unjust.

The urgent and the possible

1. De-escalate the culture war. Revoke or suspend executive orders that fail to meet the standard of public necessity and non-discrimination; prioritize policies against political violence and misinformation.
2. Return to the evidence. Restore SOGI data collection in health and federal programs; without data, there is no serious public policy.
3. Safe schools for all. Regulatory clarity in Title IX, investment in school climates, anti-bullying protocols, and inclusive bathrooms that provide privacy and reduce conflict.
4. Secular state and democratic coexistence. Respect for faith as an individual right; rejection of imposing dogma by decree. (See litigation and guides from specialized legal organizations.) (The National LGBTQ+ Bar Association <https://lgbtqbar.org/programs/trump-executive-order-tracker/>).

Close ranks for democracy

The Utah video is a brutal reminder: political violence is here. The answer cannot be scapegoating a minority or governing by spectacle. Let us demand that the presidency and Congress protect everyone: invest where it saves lives, legislate with evidence, and honor the plurality that defines the United States.

Meanwhile, to those on the front lines of attacks by hate groups, I say: stay visible, organize, document, and resort to the law.

Dignity is not negotiable.

TPUSA TARGETED PROFESSORS

TTT Note: Ta-Nehisi Coates among others have cited all the vile racist, sexist, transphobic and anti-Muslim words uttered by Charlie Kirk, and decried the way corporate media and corporate-owned politicians have falsely painted him as a paragon of free speech. Trump et al are using his death to call him a martyr and to justify assaults and repression against the left as “enemies” of Christianity and civilization. We would add that Kirk’s campus forays were part of a strategy to normalize and legitimize anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, misogynoir, and to propagate his effort to silence and intimidate left voices in academia, provoking threats of violence through “civil debate.”

Testimony from George Yancey, one such professor:

In 2016, TPUSA produced an online list titled “Professor Watchlist,” a site designed to identify professors who purportedly “discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom.” I don’t “teach leftist propaganda in the classroom,” and I never discriminate against conservative students, but I was nevertheless placed on the list soon after its creation in 2016, apparently because I am a

philosopher who examines the complex ways in which white people are socially and psychologically complicit in the perpetuation of anti-Black racism in the United States.

There’s no way for me to know whether or to what extent my placement on the Professor Watchlist extended or intensified the ongoing avalanche of racist threats and slurs that I had already started receiving after I published an open letter in The New York Times in 2015 titled “Dear White America” — a letter that sought to challenge the racist “innocence” of white people and was the source that Turning Point USA cited as grounds for placing me on their watchlist. But being placed on the Professor Watchlist undoubtedly magnified the feelings of trepidation and outrage created by the racist invective constantly pouring down on me throughout that time.

In response to “Dear White America,” I received an ongoing series of hate messages via email, voice message, and postal mail such as: “Dear N***** Professor... You’re a f***ing smug N*****. You are uneducated with education. You are a f***ing animal. Just like all Black people in the United States of America.”

A-I is Fueling Violent Threats against Women Judges

by Candice Norwood [Excerpts]

<https://19thnews.org/2025/09/ai-women-judges-threats-deepfakes-doxxing/>

Two years have passed, but Judge Jennifer Johnson cannot erase the death threat from her mind. The violent, 3-minute video appeared on TikTok in September 2023 — a frightening example of how the expansion of AI technology has led to growing threats against women in public office.

Johnson, who oversees cases in Dixie County, Florida, spoke publicly about the threat for the first time last week, showing a 40-second clip during a forum that gathered women state judges to discuss security concerns. The video imitates the popular game Grand Theft Auto, which has been widely criticized for more than two decades for allowing players to beat women and sex workers.

In the clip, an animated man wearing a red, white and blue face mask can be seen following a woman on the street before he attacks her with a hatchet. After several blows from the weapon, he then draws a gun and shoots her multiple times in the head while onlookers scream in the background.

“Judge Johnson, let’s bury the hatchet,” a voiceover states, as the explicitly violent attack plays out.

“That video is still difficult to watch, especially thinking about my children that saw that on social media,” Johnson

said during the forum, hosted by Speak Up for Justice, a group formed to advocate for judicial independence and security.

Johnson went on to add that in the full video “he named me. He talked about my divorce, my remarriage, my name change, my children, where I live and where I work. And so it was a very scary time for me and my family.”

There’s no data capturing how AI is affecting women judges specifically, but one study published last year by The American Sunlight Project (ASP) sheds light on how this is affecting women in Congress. Their team identified tens of thousands of sexually explicit AI-generated images and videos depicting 26 senators and members of Congress, according to the report.

Other research suggests that the growth of AI technology has led to rising threats against public figures at all levels. This includes creating “deepfake” images, videos, or audio that have been manipulated to imitate a person’s likeness and be passed off as real. AI software can also be used to track people’s social media activity or scan for personal phone numbers or home addresses.

The federal Take It Down Act, signed into law in May, enacts criminal penalties for “the nonconsensual online publication of intimate visual depictions of individuals, both authentic and computer-generated.” However, it’s

unclear how existing federal law applies to AI-generated threats like what Johnson received, which did not appear to be sexual.

Federal judges have their own specific legal protections and security benefits like the U.S. Marshals Service, which employs officers providing a range of security support, including courthouse and residential safety measures, as well as personal surveillance when threats are identified. The Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2021 — named after the son of Judge Esther Salas, who was murdered in 2020 — prohibits federal agencies and private businesses from publicly posting certain personal details like the home addresses of federal judges.

But state judges like Johnson do not have access to the U.S. Marshals Service. State law also determines the law enforcement response to the threats they receive and whether personal information like addresses and phone numbers can be shielded from the public.

Johnson said she immediately reported her death threat to the FBI, her local sheriff and to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. “The response that I got was ‘Judge, it’s usually the ones that bark, don’t bite,’” she recalled. She connected with friends who knew several retired U.S. Marshals who helped her develop a safety plan to keep her family safe.

Live Like the World is Dying Podcast:

Michael Novick on Surviving by Overcoming Fascism and Ecocide

<https://www.liveliketheworldisdying.com/s1e84-michael-novick-on-antifascist-struggle/>
(Part Two - continued from last issue - lightly edited for clarity)

Inmn: Welcome to Live Like the World is Dying, your podcast for what feels like the end times. I’m your host Inmn Neruin and I use they/them pronouns. This week we are talking about something that is very scary and, in terms of things we think about being prepared for, something that is far more likely to impact our lives than say, a zombie apocalypse. We’re already being impacted by this. It is actively killing us. But the monster of this week is fascism. However, there’s a really great solution to fascism…antifascism. And we have a guest today who has spent a lot of their life thinking about and participating in antifascism.

I have with me today writer and organizer Michael Novick, a co-founder of the John Brown Anti Klan Committee, People Against Racist Terror, Anti-Racist Action Network, the TORCH Antifa Network, and of White People For Black Lives in Los Angeles.

Michael: [I want to talk about anti-fascism and also anti-imperialism.] A lot of people in the anti-imperialist movement think, “Oh, there’s a sort of a national bourgeoisie that also doesn’t like the Empire and wants to exert itself. And we have to ally with them.” And a lot of people in antifascist movements have thought, “Oh, well, there’s bourgeois democrats and liberals who also hate fascism, [and we have to ally with them.]” I think that those class collaborationist alliances have been weaknesses historically. Also the contradiction between people who concentrate mostly on antifascism, and the people who concentrate mostly on anti-imperialism, has weakened people’s movements. I think [we need] kind of [an] overarching understanding that fascism is rooted in Empire, particularly in settler colonialism, and that there isn’t a contradiction between anti-fascism and anti-imperialism, but a need for different kind of both combined.

We have to find the forces of popular resistance that will overturn both fascism and imperialism…and capitalism. To do that we have to have a self determined struggle for decolonization and recognize people’s self determination in their own struggles and their own capacity to live in a different way and to begin to create a different future. You know, in the song solidarity forever, we say, “Build a new world from the ashes of the old.”

I think that in terms of my own work, I’ve tried to—although, you might think I’m aging out at this point, but I’ve been involved at every point that there’s an upsurge in struggle. I tried to participate in that as part of Occupy LA. And more recently, I’ve been involved with some of the dual power organizing that’s going on. I don’t know how much your people are familiar with that, but it is a conception related to Cooperation Jackson, in Mississippi, where they’re trying to figure out ways of organizing themselves economically and also resisting the power of the State. I was at the Dual Power Gathering that took place in Indiana and there was one on the West Coast in the Portland area.

Inmn: Yeah, could you explain what—for our listeners—what is dual power?

Michael: Dual power is the concept that we have power and we can exercise that power. Even within the framework of this contemporary society, which is so destructive, we can begin to generate and exercise that power. There’s a kind of dialectic between the power of the people and the power of the State and the corporations, or the power of the fascists, and that the different pre-figurative elements of the kind of society we want to live in, in the future, can be created now. [They fear OUR power.]

As we exercise that power, it weakens the power of the State. It weakens the power of the bourgeoisie and the power of the imperialists. I went to that Dual Power Gathering in Indiana—I mean, it’s not my bio region, but I did used to live in Chicago—and I felt some affinities with it. I went there to talk about the idea of the relationship between dual power and our three-way fight, with a different conception with what the three-way fight is, that we are having to contend with two different enemies, these fascists from below and the fascist from above, the State, and corporate power, and then also right-wing elements.

I think that in terms of both of those, we have to understand what are the powers that we do have, to organize ourselves, to apply our generative and regenerative powers so that people have a sense of what they’re fighting for. It’s not just anti-this and anti-that.

So for example, the newspaper I’ve worked on for

many years, “Turning the Tide,” originally, we called it the “Journal of Anti-Racist Action, Research & Education,” and then we changed the subtitle a few years ago to, “The Journal of Intercommunal Solidarity,” in the sense that you have to say what you’re fighting for.

What are we trying to build? What are we trying to create? What are we creating? And how does that give us the capacity to continue to resist and continue to shape the future, not just react always to what they’re doing but actually have a proactive, generative stance.

People’s creative cultural expressions, people’s capacity to do permaculture in urban environments or many other things like that, we want to restore biological diversity. We want to restore the capacity of the soil. We want to restore the clarity of the water and the air in the process of struggling for our own liberation.

Those are things that can happen and must [begin to] happen now. We can’t wait for some revolution that will happen in the future in which we’ll create a better world. We have to start in the context and the interstices of the system in place where people are being pulverized. In Los Angeles, people are involved in various kinds of mutual aid work and working with the homeless, working with people being evicted to take over homes and restore them. People are working on cooperatives and a solidarity economy with formerly incarcerated people.

All those manifestations, that’s the question of dual power there. We’re looking at the incapacity of the people ruling this society to actually meet basic human needs and we’re trying to figure out how to meet them. So, I think that’s where it coincides with this question of preparedness, [in] a sense that people have to rely on their own resources, their own energies, and understanding that there’s a contradiction between the system, the way it functions, and its implications and impact on us. And its incapacity, its powerlessness, to really protect people from the kinds of calamities that it’s creating, whether it’s flooding, or firestorms, or all the other manifestations of this global crisis of the Earth system that is growing out of capitalism. We have to deal with that now. We can’t wait till sometime in the future when we have, “power,” quote unquote, you know? We have the power now to start to deal with it.

Inmn: Yeah, I feel like there have been different ways that people have tried to do exactly that in the past. I’m thinking of a lot of the stuff that the Black Panthers were doing, like creating communities, declaring that they had power and that they had the power to build the communities that they wanted and to preserve those communities. And then they faced an incredible amount of repression, like, as much for arming themselves as for giving kids lunch and breakfast. And I’m wondering, in what ways does the State try to or in what ways has the State tried to destabilize dual power movements in the past? And what can we kind of expect them to do now? Or what are they doing now? Does that make sense?

Michael: I think there’s always a two-pronged approach by the state. Sometimes it’s referred to as, “The carrot and the stick.” You know, it’s co-optation and coercion. They always attempt both to control [or] modify people’s thinking and try to create bourgeois alternatives to liberatory thinking and liberatory organizing. And then simultaneously, they have the repressive aspects, the criminalization of those efforts.

So in relation to the Black Panther Party, for example, they were simultaneously pushing what they called Black Capitalism, and saying, “Oh, yes, we’ll give you “opportunity,” we’ll find the sector of the Black community that can integrate into the system.” And then, along with that, they were carrying out COINTELPRO, which was a war strategy of creating contradictions inside Black Liberation organizations, setting one against the other, trying to execute and/or incarcerate people who were not willing to compromise their principles.

I think we have to be aware that you’re seeing the same thing go on around policing issues. You know, they constantly want to put forward different reforms and accountability measures and ways that people can participate in civilian oversight mechanisms that really don’t do anything. And at the same time, they’re attacking people who are doing Copwatch or groups like the Stop LAPD Spying Network, which has exposed a lot of stuff about this, and is constantly being targeted. [Or the Stop Cop City effort.]

So, I think that the two-pronged approach by the State is something we have to be very aware of. It’s not only coercion and criminalization and repression, but it’s also co-optation and giving people individual solutions and mechanisms that are system compliant…they call it the nonprofit industrial complex, you know, this whole mechanism of structures that are set up to get people involved in grant writing and looking to philanthropists to somehow support them in their work.

You know, one of the things the Black Panther Party did was it had its own self generated funding by going to the base community they were trying to organize in, talking to small shopkeepers, and talking to churches, and trying to integrate that into these liberatory efforts.

Looking at that model, when I started doing People Against Racist Terror, there were a lot of small anti-racist groups around the country and a lot of them ended up going the route of looking for grants and looking for nonprofit organizations that they could fold themselves into, and I think that kind of denatured them.

They became…As opposed to being grassroots, they became board and staff organizations, and individuals would create careers out of it. I think that mechanism of transforming popular movements into nonprofit organizations or nongovernmental organizations that accommodate themselves to existing power structures, existing economic realities, is one of the things that we need to try to avoid happening in this current period.

Inmn: That makes that makes a lot of sense. Yeah, it’s, it’s funny, because I feel like I’m seeing a lot of groups involved in mutual aid, who are, I think, taking that lesson of the nonprofit industrial complex but are also trying to access larger swaths of money than the communities that they’re part of can provide, like this model of, it’s important to involve your community base in those things and to generate those things ourselves, but there is this problem sometimes of like, you’re passing the hat and the same 20 people are kicking into the bail fund.

I think maybe this is just me being hopeful, but I’m seeing a lot of mutual aid groups kind of dip into grant writing or dip into utilizing nonprofit statuses more so than structures in order to access funding and things like that. But what I’m seeing is people coming at it from like, hopefully, what is a different perspective of taking these lessons of the past and being like, “Well, we don’t want to become some horrifying, large nonprofit, but we do want the State to give us 10 grand so that we can build infrastructure. Like I guess my question is, are there ways to responsibly interact with that? Or is this a trap?

Michael: I guess I’d have hear more details. I think it’s imperative that it has to come from below and from the grassroots. I’ve been involved with, for example, Pacifica Radio, and Pacifica is listener sponsored radio and is in a constant struggle about how much can we accept Corporation of Public Broadcasting funding. They cut us off some years ago and some are trying to get it back. Or, there’s struggles about trying to get some underwriting from businesses or foundations.

It depends on who you’re accountable to for the money that you’re getting. Are you accountable primarily to the funder? Are you accountable primarily to the people who are using that money and the people who are self organizing for community power and community sustainability, and some of the things we’re talking about, of self determined strategies and struggles.

I do think that what happened to a lot of the 60s movements is that there was an ebb in the mass movement. And then people made their separate peace. People were like flotsam and jetsam as the tide of people’s power movements were negatively impacted because of white supremacy, male supremacy, COINTELPRO, and an inadequate response to deal with it. Then, you know, people ended up in labor unions where they were doing some good work, but basically they became part of a labor bureaucracy; or where they ended up in government social services. They were doing some good work, but they became part of that mechanism. So, I think the critical thing is trying to keep control of what’s going on in the hands of the people who are actually organizing themselves and their communities.

Inmn: Yeah, that makes sense. What are strategies that we should be embracing for countering this current escalation in fascist tendencies?

Michael: I’ve done a lot of work over the years, and as I say, “*Turning the Tide*” is a newspaper, we send a couple of thousand copies almost every issue into the prisons and we’re in touch with a lot of stuff that’s going on in the prisons. I think that’s a critical place to look for some understanding about how to deal with [fascism], because we do see under what are essentially very naked fascist conditions of domination inside the prisons, which are very hierarchical.

There’s a lot of negative activity within the prisons themselves. There’s the power of the guards and the wardens in the system and yet you find struggles going on against racism, against sexism, for solidarity against the solitary confinement of people who have been victims of torture who are organizing themselves. I think that understanding that capacity, those are some of the leading struggles in the United States. There have been hunger strikes, there have been labor strikes, the Alabama Prisoners Movement [Free Alabama Movement] and here in California and elsewhere.

I think that sense that people under the most severe repression are actually capable of making human connections among themselves and beginning to actually, in a self critical way, look at how they incorporated toxic masculinity and racism into their own approach to reality, and by beginning to purge themselves of those things, they can begin to create multiracial solidarity among all prisoners to actually resist the conditions of incarceration and resist enslavement. So I think that that’s very important to look at.

I think that here in Los Angeles, there are organizations like LA CAN, Community Action Network, that are working among homeless people and with homeless people to organize themselves to have street watches. They have a community garden on the roof of a building. They have cultural expression. They have theatrical groups…choral groups… You know, it’s like all those things connect people’s love and rage, as I say, people’s ability to generate creative cultural expression and to use that to strengthen their solidarity and their unity and their ability to resist the coercive power of the State or the police sweeps or to expose what’s going on and begin to put out a challenge to the way that society is organized.

I think that having the capacity to defend ourselves, both physically and also legally is very important. I think that if you look at stuff like the Stop Cop City struggle, that the escalation of repression and the use of charges of terrorism on people that are obviously not terrorists indicates that the State sees this as a very, very serious threat and is trying to eradicate it and is trying to intimidate people. To the extent that we can turn that around and use it to say to people, you know, “Is this the kind of State you want to live in? Is this the kind of society you want to have?” is a way to begin to change minds and hearts of people who have

Continued on next page

Live Like the World is Dying Podcast: Michael Novick on Surviving by Overcoming Fascism and Ecocide

...Continued from previous page

been going along with the system. [Again, repression is a sign that the oppressors fear our power.]

I lived through a whole period where we freed many political prisoners. We freed Bobby. We freed Huey. We freed Angela. Even the Panther 21 in New York, the jury met for about 30 minutes and acquitted them all, because the power of those organized forces affected the consciousness of the jurors. I think that understanding that we actually have the power to begin to shape not just own consciousness, to ways that struggle with people, to decide, “Which side are you on?” and to give people a sense that there is a side that they can identify with and become part of, and transform their own lives, and transform society in the process of doing that.

So, for example, the stuff around preparedness is vital. We’re living in a world in which there are incredibly destructive wildfires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and it’s very clear that the state is incapable of even dealing with it after the fact, let alone preventing it. I think that gives us an opening to talk to very wide sectors of the population in cities and in rural areas as well.

For example, Anti-Racist Action Network in its heyday had hundreds of chapters around the country in small towns because young people were, in their own high schools and music scenes, suddenly faced with this threat of fascism from Nazi boneheads and said, “Hey, we have to get organized.”

I think that we need to see these [crises] as opportunities to really very massively begin to engage with people and begin to offer an alternative way of thinking about the world that gives some hope and some prospect of dealing not just with the crises and the repression, but a way forward for people.

Inmn: We’ve had this phrase come up lot with Cindy Milstein, who we’ve interviewed on the podcast before and who we’ve published their newest book last year, “Try Anarchism For Life,” and they talk a lot about pre-figurative organizing and pre-figurative spaces. And I think this kind of ties into what you’re talking about, but I was wondering if you could kind of give us your take on the importance of building pre-figurative spaces?

Michael: I think that we have to find ways to bring people together and to give people a sense of our own power and our own creative and generative capacity. I think that that says that whether it’s free schools, or free clinics, or it’s breakfast for children, or any of the things that the Black Panther Party did and that many other people of color movements did in a certain period are here at our disposal.

For example, there’s a crisis in childcare and child rearing that’s going on, and so organizing people into childcare collectives and people jointly taking responsibility for each other’s children and creating trust relationships that make people feel comfortable with that would be one example of that. In food deserts, organizing people to break up some sidewalks and grow some food...

One of the things that I’ve come to understand from doing this work for a long time is we live in a kind of fractal or holographic world in which the same contradictions are shot all the way through the system. It’s at any level of magnification in fractals. If you look at the coast of Norway, something in the fjords, you know, it’s the same pattern is reproduced at every level from the microscopic to the geological.

And, you know, in a holographic image, any piece of the hologram has the whole hologram in it. So, I think that any area that people want to choose to struggle in, as long as they understand that they’re struggling against the entirety of the system in that area and that there’s an enmity built into that relationship between the system and what they’re trying to do, I think that’s the critical understanding.

So if people are engaged in community gardens, as long as they understand that that’s a piece of a larger struggle to create a world in which nature has space to reassert itself, and that people can eat different food and better food.

And any area that you know of, whether it’s the struggle over transgender, nonbinary, people or anything else, once people see that it’s the same system throughout that they’re struggling with, it lays a basis for solidarity, for unity, and for a struggle on many fronts simultaneously that says, you know, sort of the “War of the Flea,” [A book on guerrilla warfare] the system is vulnerable in a million places because the system is in all those places simultaneously. They have a lot of money, a lot of power to deal with, and they’re organized in these systems of command and control and artificial intelligence and all the rest of it, to keep track of everything, but we’re also in all those places simultaneously as well, because we’re everywhere. And trying to coordinate those things, I think, is very important.

Inmn: This is a little bit of a backup that I remembered that I wanted to ask you about it. So, like, we’re currently seeing like a pretty horrific and intense wave of legislation against trans people and against queer people, and nonbinary people. I’m wondering what your take on that is as a kind of indicator, if we have to imagine like fascism as a spectrum of where we could be going, like what is that kind of legislation and repression an indicator of?

Michael: I think that obviously fascism always tries to target the people they think are the most vulnerable. They want to create what they see as wedge issues that they can use to divide people and segment people off. To the extent that we can reverse that and we can try to unite people around a different conception, that’s in our favor.

One of the things that struck me is that you saw that they had this victory with controlling the courts and overturning Roe v. Wade, for example. What that revealed was actually how narrow that really was, the forces that were pushing for that. Because then, you know, Nebraska and Kansas and these various states suddenly had electoral reinforcement of abortion rights happening. I think the same thing can happen here. I think that there’s so many families who are concerned about their own kids and their parental rights to get their kids the care they need. It reveals that these fault lines go through the whole system.

What I’m trying to say is all of their power is based on



repression and exploitation, and to the extent that people begin to see that and how it impacts on them, it opens up the vistas of possibility to say, if you’re concerned about your child’s right to get the medical assistance they need, why is the State coming in to prevent you from doing that? And what are the interests that are trying to protect and pick this as a threat to the stability of their control over society?

Inmn: Yeah.

Michael: Since every crisis is an opportunity, the other thing I did want to talk about was the whole Covid pandemic, you know, going back to the prepper thing. I think you saw, again, you know, a lot of right-wing exploitation of that issue. I think that to the extent that we can get out ahead of that and look at for example, in a society like Cuba, which had a completely different relationship to this because they’re organized in a different way and they actually have a public health system and they actually created their own vaccines, not the ones from big pharma here in this country, and begin to get people to think about that and why Cuba is stigmatized by this society? Why are they embargoing Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, all these countries? You know, the connection to a global sense of what are the possibilities in the world?

What are the pre-figurative formations that are happening inside imperialism by countries that are actually resisting it? If you look at the medical care system in Cuba, for example, they have...Every neighborhood has a doctor that lives in the neighborhood—and nursing staff and other people—and [the doctor] works door to door with the people in that neighborhood to be concerned about their health and their well being not just responding to a particular medical crisis, and they have that systematized ...So in that context, they were able to vaccinate people, not through coercive measures but through trusted people that were part of their community that could reassure them about the fact that they developed the vaccines themselves and that the Cuban pharmaceutical industry came out of their effort to deal with chemical and biological warfare by the United States.

The US was putting in swine fever as a way to destroy pigs that every family in Cuba had their own little pig to raise and supplement their food. So they developed animal vaccines first to protect those animals and then they work their way up from there.

I had a good friend recently who passed away from complications of diabetes and the Cubans have developed treatments for diabetes and to prevent amputation of limbs. And all of that is unavailable to us because of the US imperialist embargo on Cuba and blockade. Giving people a sense that, you know, there actually are people living in the world in much better conditions.

The United States is number one in incarceration, number one in many social ills, number one in overdose deaths, and on and on and on...number one in evictions. We can begin to really give a sense to people that this system has nothing to offer them but destruction and that we have the capacity to create something different.

Inmn: Thanks. I have only to say that...yes. Yes to all of that. We are nearing the end...of the recording, not of the world. [Said as a dry joke.] Are there any last things that you want to say before—I’ll ask you to plug anything that you want to plug at the end—I mean, that was such a beautiful wrap up, I feel like. But, if there’s anything else you want to talk about, that we haven’t talked about?

Michael: Years ago, I was part of a group in Berkeley that took over the California College of Arts and Crafts to create an anti-war poster-making facility during the Vietnam War. And out of that group, there was a singing group called the Red Star Singers, and they had a song called “The Power of the People is the Force of Life.” And I think we really have to have that sense. It’s, you know, it is a dialectic.

The main thing I want to try to convey is that, to the extent that we can build the people’s power, it actually weakens that system. All the power that they have is actually derived from their exploitation and oppression of people. And that’s our power, you know, they manifest that against us. And if we take our power back, it actually does weaken them and increases our possibilities of struggling for a different world.

I actually wanted to sort of break the story here. I’m looking for a collective that will take over “*Turning the Tide*.” I’ve been putting it out for a long, long time. You can reach me at antiracistaction_la@yahoo.com.

I want I want to see the paper become, in some way or shape, institutionalized, to continue to meet, you know, send out the 1700-1800 copies to prisoners. So, if anybody’s interested in taking over that project and fulfilling that commitment, I’d love to hear from them. And then, as I say, I have a chapter in “¡No Pasarán!: Antifascist Dispatches from a World in Crisis” edited by Shane Burley from AK Press. I contributed a lot of material archival stuff and was interviewed extensively for “We Go Where They Go: The Story of Anti-Racist Action” from PM Press. Two really, really important books and well worth reading. I self published and co-authored “The Blue Agave Revolution: The Poetry of the Blind Rebel” with Oso Blanco, Byron Shane Chubbuck, the Indigenous political prisoner.

Inmn: Wonderful, in “The Blue Agave Revolution,” is that where we can find your short story about the three-way fight between vampires, zombies and humans?

Michael: It’s a kind of a novella. There’s about seven chapters of a longer thing. And there’s also a shorter one about a group of teenage mutants called Black Bloc, that they have these kind of minor powers. [Two are siblings,] Jackpot and Crackpot. Crackpot can find the weak point of anything and Jackpot can just affect the odds slightly in their favor and a bunch of other young people, Slingshot and Slipknot, non-binary and so on.

But there’s also some different essays of mine in there and a lot of poetry...Like the mathematics of the enormity of social economic inequality. People don’t understand exactly [that] essentially, about 40% of the US population has the equivalent of 50 cents in assets or less. People don’t understand the class divide and the contradictions inside the society. We’re duped into [identifying with] this as the richest country on the face of the Earth and the most powerful.

There’s an enormous, hidden social cost and pain behind that and we have to figure out how to galvanize that into the power that actually those people possess and the creativity that they have to build a better world in the future.

100X100 Campaign to Increase Publication Frequency of *Turning the Tide*

Over its 37+ year publishing history, *TTT* has been published in magazine format, as a 24-page tabloid, and from time to time on a bi-monthly basis, six issues a year. For the last few years, economic necessity has dictated that we guarantee four 8-page issues a year. To restore bi-monthly publication, we launched a fund-raising campaign we’ve dubbed “**100X100.**”

We are still looking for one hundred people who will donate \$100 a year, or \$10/mo, to make it possible for *TTT* to resume publishing six issues a year, and continue mailing about 1700 copies of each issue into the prisons. You can donate at http://ko-fi.com/anti_racist_action_la. Help it go viral!

Turning the Tide doesn’t print itself, or mail itself. Some prisoners who get the paper contribute a few stamps.. Often, they pass the copy of *TTT* that they received from hand to hand, cell to cell, or they send in the names and addresses of half-a-dozen or more other prisoners.**Prisoners, if you can find donors or subscribers outside prison to subsidize your sub, that would help a lot!**

If you’d like to see *Turning the Tide* more frequently, if you want to contribute to breaking down the walls of isolation and separation imposed by the prison system, please contribute. If you can’t manage \$100 all at once, you could donate \$10 a month. But any donation you make can help. Postage costs for a single issue of TTT are \$1000 and climbing. If you can’t donate yourself, please help spread the campaign via your social media, to your Facebook friends, X or Bluesky followers, and email contacts. Everything helps. Nobody makes a dime from working on *TTT*.

If the campaign is successful, we will resume publishing every other month in 2026. Postage is our biggest expense. Nobody gets paid at *TTT*. But the Postal Service is not so generous. We have a handful of people who are sustainers, making a monthly donation, a larger number of people who subscribe once a year or so. Right now, we are at about 10% of our goal. LA area supporters could set up house meetings, where the editor will pitch to your friends for support. The future of *Turning the Tide* is in your hands. Now, while you’re thinking about it, go to:

https://ko-fi.com/anti_racist_action_la

and donate, or use paypal to antiracistaction_la@yahoo.com if you prefer. Then share it with your contacts. With your help, *Turning the Tide* can step up to the “urgency of now” -- the necessity for radical organizing, educating and analyzing to respond to the growing crisis of the Empire -- endless war, police terror with impunity, mass incarceration, colonialism, ecological devastation that will shortly become irreversible.

If you think *TTT* is a useful tool in the struggle for people’s power and a new world, please donate today. If you wish, you can also just send cash, check or money order to

Anti-Racist Action, PO Box 1055, Culver City CA 90232.

Democracy Noir

Resistance to Viktor Orban’s Authoritarian, “Illiberal” Rule in Hungary

Democracy Noir, a film by Connie Field
Reviewed by Michael Novick

Democracy Noir is a powerful and moving documentary of contemporary affairs, covering the past decade and a half of Hungarian history. It focuses on the corruption and control of the media by the “illiberal” regime of Viktor Orban. He has become a role model for authoritarian far right forces internationally, including Trump’s MAGA movement in the US.

The film tells the story primarily through the lens of three women involved in various aspects of the resistance to those developments, struggling to defend or restore democracy in their country. One is a young street activist, dealing with repression of mass protest and the contrary attitude of her mother, an Orban supporter. The second is a lesbian journalist contending with an increasingly controlled media ecosystem and growing hostility toward LGBTQ and women’s rights. The third is a liberal parliamentarian representing an increasingly isolated district in the capital, Budapest (technically, twin cities Buda and Pest on the banks of the Danube), whose re-election takes place while most of the country is moving further right.

Tellingly, according to film-maker Connie Field, who spoke at a showing at the Laemmle Monica in Santa Monica, no media outlets in Hungary would make any footage available to them. But they were able to supplement their own shooting, and interviews with the three women, with footage from YouTube and from other media sources internationally. Despite those imposed limitations, the film is comprehensive and well edited in covering the period from Orban’s first election to the present. It shows his ability to change the country’s constitution, and his defiance of criticism from the European Union while taking full advantage of EU subsidies to finance developments that favored his cronies and family. He also uses those funds to institute social welfare and “family friendly” policies that cement his electoral base, especially in the more rural, Catholic and conservative countryside. He relies on rural voters and on prejudices, for example against the Roma (“gypsies”) and so-called “globalists”.

The counterpoint to these well-illustrated developments and Orban’s electoral victories while hollowing out democratic institutions, are the struggles of the three women, who spoke at length with the film-maker. They are filmed in their daily family life and are also shown in street protests, in on-air reportage, and in debates in the Hungarian parliament respectively. This brings home the costs and the contradictions of the “illiberal” system Orban has imposed in a personal, non-rhetorical and down-to-earth way. Film-maker Field and her husband, a Hungarian who lived through the period when Soviet tanks rolled in to Hungary to suppress an uprising in 1956, clearly care greatly about the country and the individuals whose lives they share with us.



Birds of a feather: Donald Trump & Viktor Orban use the same playbook.

There are two striking aspects and lessons for US audiences, as the parallels to Trump are clear. One is that Orban has been embraced as a role model not just by MAGA, but by the wider and more mainstream, business-oriented “conservative” movement. This is shown by proceedings of the US Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC), holding its meeting in Hungary and boisterously applauding Orban. (One difference is that Orban opted for state control of previous independent media; MAGA is all about privatization and control of public and social media by oligarchs, while using the power of the state to seek capitulation by private media and public and private academic institutions.)

The second lesson is that it makes clear that you cannot defeat fascism with liberalism. Orban portrays himself deceitfully as the “peace” candidate vis a vis the war in Ukraine, promising that no Hungarian troops will fight there, (something that neither Ukraine nor NATO ever called for). He promises to instead fund local economic development and support for mothers with children. The opposition relies on abstract appeals to “democracy.” It casts the election as a choice “between Europe and Putin,” relying on historic anti-communist sentiment about the former Soviet Union, and loses overwhelmingly in most of the country. The floundering in this country by the Dems, also wedded to anti-communism, NATO, and warnings about dictatorship, without offering an alternative vision for a green and peaceful transition to a more just society and economy, form a clear parallel. This underscores the need for a worker-oriented, ecosocialist effort to overcome “divide and conquer” with a strategy and practice to unite and liberate.

Upcoming Showings Around the Country:

Community Screenings:

New Milford, CT - Oct 9: ACT Local New Milford at the New Milford Public Library
5:30 pm Discussion, 6 pm Screening

Denver, CO - Oct 21: Colorado Friends of Democracy at Anchor Center
Doors at 6pm, Screening at 6:30pm, Virtual Q&A with director Connie Field to follow

Theatrical Presentations:

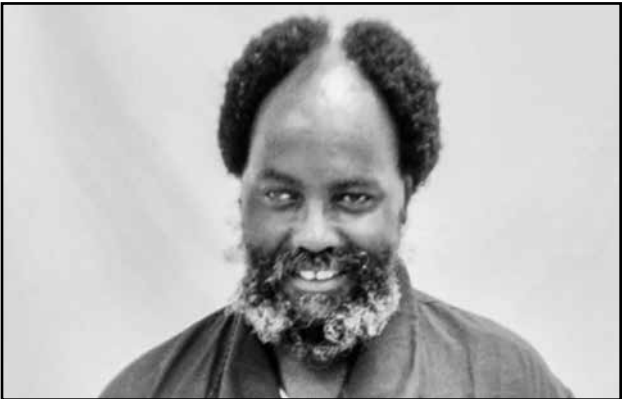
Rialto Cinemas Elmwood | Berkeley, CA |
October 1–2, 2025
Rialto Cinemas Cerrito | El Cerrito, CA |
October 4–5, 2025
Rialto Cinemas Sebastopol | Sebastopol, CA |
October 15–16, 2025
Pickford Film Center | Bellingham, WA | October 2025

The Grand Cinema | Tacoma, WA | October 28, 2025.
Tickets: <https://grandcinema.com/movie/democracy-noir/>

Setting Up a Screening:

If you are interested in hosting a screening of your own, email: democracynoir@redowlpartners.com.

MUMIA’S VISION: A MESSAGE FOR THE MOVEMENT



<https://www.prisonradio.org/commentary/mumia-vision-message-to-the-movements/>

Dear friends, brothers, sisters, comrades, supporters, and family – last but not least.

I have been reluctant to talk about my eye problems. The reasons may have eluded some, but I explain that, you know, in the context of being in prison any sign of weakness is to be avoided at all costs. These are, unlike many other institutions in society, heavily male, and therefore “gender conscious” in a way that society is not. Weakness brings predation.

So, I kept it quiet. And I kept it quiet simply because I wrongly believed that once I got examined and once it was clear that this was a real visual contextual problem that I would get a rather quick response. Boy, was I wrong! I was, as the saying goes, as wrong as two left feet. What I got was evaluation after evaluation after evaluation after evaluation – literally.

It was only when I went outside and those prior evaluations were repeated by a noted ophthalmologist that the ball began to roll. And even then the ball rolled exceedingly slowly.

I have been, for all intents and purposes, unable to read, unable to write, unable to see anything more than the masthead of a newspaper and not even its headlines;

blurry television burst of color. The “television” is my radio now.

I have been in that state for the better part of eight months and counting. I would never have guessed this, but this is where we are. And so, it took those kinds of conditions and the analysis of the evaluation I told you about, to move us, when we should have been moving

quicker, earlier. I apologize for my delay.

I thank you for your patience, but our patience is nearing an end. We are working, we are moving and we are trying to resolve the situation and hope, hope that it is not too late. Seven months, eight months of being in the shadows and in the darkness, is eight months too many.

With love, not fear, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

URGENT APPEAL

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Postage alone for this issue comes to over \$1000. We would like to increase the size and frequency of Turning the Tide, but we can only do it with your support. If you’re a prisoner and can send stamps or get someone outside the walls to subsidize your subscription, please do so. If you work with an info shop or other zine or record distro, please consider ordering a bundle of TTT to distribute; \$10 will get you 20 copies. And check out our 100X100 campaign elsewhere in this issue. If you live in L.A. or nearby, we can come to house meetings to speak and collect donations for the paper. Email antiracistaction_la@yahoo.com

MATT SEDILLO ON THE CRAFT OF CHICANO POLITICAL POETRY

Interviewed by Rey Rodriguez (Excerpts)

<https://chjournal.com/chapter-house-blog/2025/9/23/matt-sedillo-author-of-the-recently-published-mexican-style-gives-a-candid-interview-over-craft-the-current-state-of-chicano-poetry-and-many-more-insight>

Rey: **Matt, set the table for us about who you are and your story. How did you start? Why do you write?**

Matt: I started working (after high school), but things got pretty rough. I found myself in a bad situation. I was hopping from couch to couch, and I had a really bad alcohol problem. One day, I found myself in the same library that my mother had always taken me to as a child. I found myself deciding that I was going to dedicate myself to the workers’ struggle. But here I was in the situation. So I started reading these books about political economy. With this knowledge, I decided I was going to march back to Lowe’s, where I was working at the time, and I was going to organize the workers. They might not like me, but they’re going to respect me. I’d read this workbook that said that to earn respect, you had to be the most diligent worker.

There I was at Lowe’s hauling these bags as fast as I could, and my plan backfired. Everyone in the break room hated me because I was seen as kissing up to the bosses, [who said] “How come you don’t work hard like Sedillo?” Right? So it was not good advice. Oh, man, it was horrible!

The only good thing, I met my friend, Dave Romero. He was organizing to get USC to stop using sweatshop labor. And so we went to this May Day rally. Afterward, we went to this place with an open mic and dim lights. I saw people doing poetry, and someone even did a political poem. Immediately, when I heard it, I knew exactly how he did it. He started by introducing a concept. He developed it a little more, and then he brought us back to where we were.

So it was a basic 3-act structure, where it started with a pre-crisis, a crisis, a low point, and then finally a conclusion, which I didn’t have the words for at the time, but I knew exactly how to do what the guy had just done. So I was like, I’m gonna come back here and I’m gonna come back every week. I know how to write like that. And these people ain’t like me, but they’re gonna respect me. That was my attitude.

Rey: **And how old are you at the time?**

Matt: At this point. I’m 26.

Rey: **You’re 26, and where was the place again?**

Matt: Dim Lights in Pomona, California. So I started doing poetry there. The first week was pretty good. The second week was terrible because I went way over time, talking about these massacres and stuff, and everyone got bored and listless. And I got mad. I wasn’t going to do it anymore. But I was going to write one last poem. I was going to tell them they’re all idiots. And I did. And they loved it.

And basically, they’re looking at the person next to them. You are the idiot, not me. I was not talking about them, right? And so they loved it. And then I came back the next week and the next week, and I wrote a new poem, “I Remember the Alamo,” which was celebrated, and another entitled “Gangsters,” which was also celebrated.

Those first two poems are what the people cared about. And after that, I made a national slam team, and after that, I was in the newspapers.

Now, I’ve spoken in over 100 universities in the United States. I have spoken at Cambridge. I’ve spoken in 10 different countries at this point, and my poetry has been translated into six different languages. I have been invited to speak in seven countries just this last week. I just returned from the Medellin Poetry Festival, where I made a big splash and many opportunities emerged. At this point, I’m an internationally renowned touring poet.

Rey: **Well, what does it mean to be a poet now, especially a Chicano Poet?**

Matt: Well, to be a poet in these times (or at any time) is the opportunity to crystallize what it means to be alive. Songwriting is close as well, but to write the anthems and the exact words that match what’s going on is thrilling. So if you live in a historic moment where there’s just so much going on, then you have the opportunity to be a great poet. There’s a necessity to write poetry that’s strong and that speaks to the world as it is to change it. So I think right now is a great time. It’s a terrible time in many ways for many people. But the poets must step up and offer their gifts to the ongoing crisis. Whether it be Palestine, the US

Border, the Congo, or Yemen, any number of crises are going on in the world, or whether it be that the kids are still in cages because these things are still happening.

[At] the Medellin Poetry Festival, I performed a poem called “I Chicano,” which lays out all this history of Chicano poets and of Chicano people who have fought for social justice. It was important for me to be on this giant stage with 80 other poets from 40 different countries. It was important for me to represent Chicanismo on that stage. I’m the first person who has ever been on that stage referring to Chicano culture and art. I am very certain of that. I would not be able to do that if I were not a great poet. The simple fact that I have something important to say does not make me a great poet. It is my skill and my craft that make me great. And it is the message that makes it important.

Rey: **All poetry is political, in a sense. Other Latinos are writing poetry at the moment, but you’re much more forceful about writing political poetry.**

Matt: I think that’s true. Other people tend to write about their lives. They tend to write about their feelings on any given number of topics, and they write some incredible political stories because they’re very talented and they’re very thoughtful people. But I don’t think they’ve taken on the same kind of responsibility or mantle that I have. I take my craft very seriously, and I take my content very seriously. I end up talking more these days about craft than content with most people because I don’t feel like arguing with people anymore. I’m very interested in craft and how to craft a message. I’m known as this great political poet, but I don’t talk politics with too many people.

Rey: **Let’s talk about craft and how you have developed yours. How do you teach craft in the prisons?**

Matt: Right. So I teach in prisons. I show them a basic three-act structure, which is stretched to four acts. You have a pre-crisis, crisis, low point, and then a resolution. Now, a low point doesn’t necessarily have to be a low point. It is an emotional shift. So if your entire story is sad, your low point can be a ray of hope. And a crisis doesn’t necessarily mean that something bad is happening. A crisis simply means that it is a break from the routine. They could be drug addicts, and the crisis is trying to get clean. They’re going through something like that.

So that’s the way stories work. We see someone in the routine first, and that is how we learn about the character. It is how we get invested in the character. So that’s how basic stories work. So I show them that. In each one of these quadrants, if you haven’t answered these 4 questions in each one of these boxes, then you’re not through with the section.

Rey: **The students must love that structure.**

Matt: They do. The prisoners love it, but college students love it, people in public libraries love it, and high schoolers love it. Everybody loves it. Oftentimes, we’re taught to teach writing workshops as a form of therapy and healing. That’s not what I do. I’m going to teach you how to write better. I’m not a therapist. I’m not qualified to be a therapist. I’m qualified to teach you how to write well, and that is what I do.

I always have this feeling in me that quality is not something that exists within me, and it’s not something that exists within another person. Quality exists outside of both of us. It’s there like the mountain, and we climb the mountain and we reach the top of the mountain. It’s not something that’s within us. It’s something that’s outside of us, and it’s something that we attain and we reach. And, of course, we have our weird little ways of getting there. We have our techniques. But it’s something out there. There’s very little in this world that feels as rewarding as that.

Rey: **That’s great. Let’s come back to this structure.**

Matt: I’ve been doing this for 15 years now. I always tell them to develop a style, and then I tell them how they do that. Well, you study the masters. You study effective techniques to figure out how you can pull them off yourself and the techniques that made those masters’ works so masterful. And you come up with a combination of those techniques. But even more than studying the techniques

of others, study your own odd little neurological things that you do, and then sharpen them. And you become this mixed bag of all these different little tricks and techniques. They’re unique to you, and you develop them and get better. And that’s how you develop your style.

Then you turn that style into a discipline. Then, turn that discipline into a standard of excellence that you hold yourself to every time. Once you develop a style, turn it into discipline, and turn that discipline into a standard of excellence, you become the world’s leading expert on why you are excellent. You can never be discredited, and you will never seek validation, because you know better than anyone why you’re excellent.

This year, I had the opportunity to read with Jon Fosse, who was the 2023 Nobel Laureate in literature. I wrote a poem based on one of his poems, one of his novels, and one of his plays. My poem combined all of his elements. Afterward, we talked, and I got a chance to talk to him for about 5 minutes. He immediately asked me how I put the poem together, and we launched into a story about craft.

And so here I am, having this conversation about writing and techniques with a Nobel Laureate. And he was interested in how I did it in my process, and I was interested in asking him questions about his writing process. And we had this kind of conversation about process, writing, structure, and techniques. But here I am being validated by someone who won the Nobel Prize. I was happy because I wrote the poem for him, and I was happy that he received it well, but I didn’t need Jon Fosse to tell me that I’m a great writer. I knew that because I had done the work. That knowledge is what I want to inspire in other people.

Rey: **Poets are capturing the zeitgeist. But I feel like they are the only ones who are doing it. From a Chicano perspective, there’s this erasure of history and culture. The danger of the erasure is that there is a direct line from the 500 years of systemic racism towards Brown people to that moment when a man with an AK47 walks into a Walmart in El Paso and kills 23 men, women, and children. All of that is very easy if our humanity is not captured in art. From my perspective, the voice of the poet is even more important now than ever. How is it that you have a presidential candidate running who is mentioned in the [shooter’s] manifesto and opened this door to hate?**

Matt: Right. A presidential candidate who rose to prominence on the idea of calling Mexicans, drug dealers, and rapists. Whose main thing was to build the wall and Mexico would pay for it. He’s now running on the simple phrase of mass deportation. Now, how is that? Because every time people talk about Donald Trump as a racist it’s always tied to some historical trend.

But the fact of the matter is that the border politics are at the center of these things. The actual reality is that the centerpiece of Donald Trump’s politics is the Mexican border and there’s a denial of that basic fact even as it’s happening. And so, even most Chicano scholars and intellectuals wouldn’t say that. Yes. It’s about many things. But the cornerstone, the focal point, is the question of the Mexican border.

Rey: **Yes, I would go deeper. That’s even why I interview Chicano poets, because few are covering your work.**

Matt: Well, this is the reality. In this country, we are the most underrepresented group. We make up about 20% of the country, and we’re like 2% of children’s literature. We are about 4% of people on television. These numbers are staggeringly horrible. I’m always going to be relegated to some small thing.

So I decided to go South and look towards Latin America to become a more well-known person. Over the last four or five years, I have read at Casa de las Americas in Havana, Cuba, the most prestigious cultural center in the Americas. I’ve read at UNAM in Mexico City, the most prestigious university in all of Latin America. I’ve read at the Guadalajara Book Fair, one of the largest book fairs in the world. It ranks with Frankfurt. I’ve read at the Medellin Poetry Festival in Colombia. That’s the Big Four of Latin America, and I’ve done all that, and yet here in the United States I haven’t received the same recognition.

On-Line Resources for Turning the Tide & ARA-LA/PART:

You can find archives of *Turning the Tide* at www.antiracist.org that go back more than 35 years. In addition, there are several Facebook pages, such as facebook.com/tideturning, and facebook.com/intercommunalsolidarity. You can follow @ara_losangeles on Twitter, antiracistaction_la on Instagram, and the De-Colonize LA! blog at ara-la.tumblr.com.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH FOR WHOM? LESSONS FROM THE HOLY LAND THREE

by Mimi Rosenberg, Ida B. Wells Media Defense Network

While the public outcry to restore Jimmy Kimmel to the airwaves is important — and not to diminish the significance of that accomplishment — I want to raise a deeper concern. Too often, censorship only becomes recognizable when attached to great theatrical prominence - witness Steven Colbert and Jimmy Kimmel. Yet, beneath the surface of entertainment and celebrity, there runs a long and devastating history of silencing dissent, punishing liberatory struggles, and criminalizing voices of conscience.

We cannot forget that the “USA PATRIOT” Act, drafted well before 9/11 and waiting in the drawers of legislators, was quickly enacted by both parties to target Muslim communities. Its most brutal effect was felt in the destruction of the Holy Land Foundation, once the largest Muslim charity in the United States.

Established in Texas in the late 1980s, the Foundation raised tens of millions of dollars annually for disaster relief, refugee assistance, and humanitarian projects abroad, including for Palestinians living under siege and occupation. Its leaders — Shukri Abu Baker, Ghassan Elashi, Mufid Abdulqader, among others — were men long devoted to philanthropy, community work, and alleviating suffering.

After 9/11, the US government froze the Foundation’s assets and indicted its leaders on charges of providing “material support to terrorism.” No “Freedom of Expression” here. Their first trial ended in a hung jury — but the government retried them, this time leaning heavily on anonymous Israeli intelligence witnesses whose identities were concealed even from the defense. The court allowed secret testimony and hearsay evidence, breaking the very principles of due process.

In 2008, several of the men were sentenced to decades in prison, with Abu Baker and Elashi condemned to 65 years each — in effect, life sentences. Their “crime” was channeling humanitarian aid through charities that the U.S. would later allege had ties to Hamas. No evidence showed that money funded anything other than food, medicine, schools, and orphanages that were criminalized.

The case of the Holy Land Three is not simply a tragedy for those men and their families. It’s a chilling demonstration of how “national security” laws like the USA PATRIOT Act have been wielded to silence entire communities, criminalize solidarity, and destroy the infrastructure of support for Palestine. It is also a warning of how easily civil liberties can be suspended when political speech or humanitarian aid challenges US imperial interests.

This silencing has taken many forms: imprisonment, deportation, passport revocation, even denaturalization, firings, and the weaponization of laws like the Espionage Act — wielded against Julian Assange. Today, we see whistleblowers across government and civil society dismissed and blacklisted for exposing civil rights violations. We see Black activists targeted, as in the prosecution of the Uhuru Three, for refusing to bow before imperial orthodoxy. And we see how federal troops deployed in Los Angeles, DC and soon Portland serve as testing grounds for suppressing dissent, edging closer to martial law under the guise of “law and order.”

We must recognize this is not new. The repression of dissent in the US has deep roots: from the Palmer Raids and the congressional committees that legitimized them, to McCarthyism, which destroyed lives and careers; from the deportation of Emma Goldman to the stripping of Paul Robeson’s passport; from the FBI’s role in the slaughter of Fred Hampton to the quashing of antiwar movements that once shook the foundations of empire. The precedents were set long ago — lynching and Jim Crow were trial runs for fascistic rule, carried out to uphold white supremacy and crush the struggles of Black people and their allies.

Here Ida B. Wells herself must be remembered. In the late 19th century, she risked her life to document lynching, exposing it as not the product of “mob passions” alone, but as a political tool — an instrument of terror buttressed by police complicity, judicial sanction, and the silence of the mainstream press.

Her insistence that lynching was state policy in disguise gave depth to the understanding that repression is not merely cultural but institutional. She showed that the rope and the bullet were forms of censorship, just as much as gag laws and loyalty oaths — silencing communities, extinguishing dissent, and warning others against resistance.

Certainly, today speech that challenges capitalism, racism, and militarism — the three evils Dr. King named — remains the speech most viciously suppressed. Meanwhile, the right cloaks itself in the mantle of “free speech,” though it has rarely borne the brunt of state repression, and in fact attacks the speech and livelihoods

of media figures, academicians and office holders.. The reality is that freedom of speech in the US has always come with exceptions, workarounds, and exclusions when speech opposes empire and capitalism.

This is why our fightback against the Heritage Foundation, FCC ideologues like Brendan Carr, and propagandists like Stephen Miller must be historically grounded. To defend the Holy Land Three, to demand freedom for Assange, for Snowden, for the Uhuru Three, for political prisoners from Mumia Abu-Jamal to Kamau Sadiki, is to defend not only individuals but also the principle that liberatory speech must not be criminalized.

Beyond demanding their release, we must insist on lifting the stigma and restrictions imposed on them — to legally clear Julian Assange, to recognize Edward Snowden, who exposed the vast NSA surveillance dragnet against ordinary people, as a whistleblower, and to end the punitive policing of Leonard Peltier’s every move after decades of unjust imprisonment.

Yes, it is important to resist when comedians like Jimmy Kimmel push boundaries and face censorship. But let us remember Lenny Bruce, hounded to death for

Call for an International Army to Liberate Palestine and Defend Humanity

Colombia’s President Gustavo Petro has called on the global south to muster an international army to “liberate Palestine” and defend itself against “tyranny and totalitarianism” promoted by the United States and NATO.

In his speech before the United Nations’ General Assembly, Petro called on countries “that do not accept genocide” to muster “an armed force to defend the life of the Palestinian people.”

Petro declared, “We need a powerful army of the countries that do not accept genocide. That is why I invite nations of the world and their peoples more than anything, as an integral part of humanity, to bring together weapons and armies. We must liberate Palestine. I invite the armies of Asia, the great Slavic people who defeated Hitler with great heroism, and the Latin American armies of Bolivar.

“We’ve had enough words, it’s time for Bolivar’s sword of liberty or death,” said the president, stressing that “they will not just bomb Gaza, not just the Caribbean as they are doing already, but all of humanity that demands freedom.”

“Washington and NATO, they are killing democracy and help[ing] revive tyranny and totalitarianism on a global scale. We must raise the black and red flag of liberty or death that Bolivar raised without forgetting the white, which he raised together with the red and black, and is the color of peace and hope for life on earth and in the heart of humanity,” Colombia President Gustavo Petro stated in his UN speech.

Petro’s call for armed intervention in Palestine echoed a similar call by the President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto, who said that his country was willing to provide 20,000 soldiers for an armed force that could be deployed in Gaza. [It’s not clear if that offer was for a more typical UN “peacekeeping” force to separate parties. Malaysia has been more publicly in solidarity with Palestine than Indonesia.]

The United States delegation abandoned the General Assembly hall, in an apparent “walk-out” as a sign of protest against the Colombian president’s criticism on his US counterpart, Donald Trump.

Trump launches federal attack on so-called “domestic terrorism”, sends troops to Portland

It should be noted that although pundits have responded to Trump’s executive order declaring antifa a domestic terrorist that “antifa” is a loose political tendency, not an organization, Portland has an organized Rose City Antifa that was originally part of the ARA Network (along with ARA-LA/PART and other chapters), and is now part of the TORCH Antifa Network, along with antifa collectives in a number of cities. But Trump is likely to try to criminalize and prosecute any opposition to the left of MAGA.

Continuing his attacks on higher education, Trump launched an investigation into charges of antisemitism at all 22 campuses of the California State University system. In an email to the CSU community, Chancellor Mildred Garcia wrote that the feds had initiated a system-wide antisemitism complaint, and were reaching out to faculty and staff directly to discuss their experiences on campus.

Cal State L.A. said that the EEOC has subpoenaed the university to turn over the personal phone numbers and email addresses of all employees. Demonstrators there had erected a pro-Palestinian encampment at the university in spring 2024.

Meanwhile, protests have erupted over compliance with similar threats by the president of the UC system, who turned over personal information about 160 faculty and students to federal authorities without contesting the demand, and without offering the students or professors an opportunity to dispute the charges of antisemitism.

MAGA Pundits Rehabilitating Hitler

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2025/09/maga-hitler-anti-semitism/684078/>

Excerpt [story behind pay wall] : “The story we got about World War II is all wrong,” a guest told Tucker Carlson on his podcast. “I think that’s right,” replied Carlson. The guest, a Cornell chemistry professor named David Collum, then spelled out what he meant: “One can make the argument we should have sided with Hitler and fought Stalin.” Such sentiments might sound shocking to the uninitiated, but they are not to Carlson’s audience. In fact, the notion that the German dictator was unfairly maligned has become a running theme on Carlson’s show—and beyond.

Last September, Carlson interviewed a man named Darryl Cooper, whom he dubbed “the most important popular historian working in the US today.” Cooper’s conception of honest history soon became clear: He suggested that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill might have been “the chief villain of the Second World War,” with Nazi Germany at best coming in second. The day after the episode aired, Cooper further downplayed Hitler’s genocidal ambitions, writing on social media that the German leader had sought peace with Europe and merely wanted “to reach an acceptable solution to the Jewish problem.” He did not explain why Jews should have been considered a “problem”.

Teen school shooter in CO motivated by white supremacy, antisemitism online

Social media accounts tied to the 16-year-old who shot two classmates at Evergreen High School were littered with references to white supremacy, antisemitism and other mass shootings — signs the teen had been radicalized online before his attack, experts say.

But some of the references were enigmatic enough that they might appear innocuous to people unfamiliar with their meaning, which is why those experts say parents and teachers need to become aware of a new subculture that is developing online and exposing children and teens to violent extremism.

Feds charge three women with doxxing ICE agent

Two women from Southern California and one from Colorado face federal charges alleging they pursued an ICE agent by car through the streets of Los Angeles and posted the officer’s home address on social media, the Justice Department in late September. The women — Cynthia Raygoza, 37, of Riverside; Sandra Carmona Samane, 25, of Panaroma City; and Ashleigh Brown, 38, of Aurora, Colorado — have been charged with one count of conspiracy and one count of publicly disclosing the personal information of a federal agent.

daring to speak freely — and let us remember that the far harsher penalties have always been reserved for those who rise in opposition to U.S. power at home and abroad.

Let us hold fast to a deeper understanding: the struggle for freedom of speech is inseparable from the struggle for liberation — for a world beyond poverty, racism, and militarism. That is the history we inherit, and the fight we must continue. And it is why our fight for press expression goes beyond a mere proclamation of First Amendment rights — for history shows those rights alone have never guaranteed protection for dissent — and must instead demand the liberation of all silenced voices, including freedom for Mahmoud Khalil, now facing deportation for speaking out for a free Palestine, from the river to the sea.

Mimi Rosenberg is the producer of Equal Rights and Justice, and co-producer with Ken Nash of Building Bridges, which air on WBAI and other Pacifica stations and affiliates, and a people’s attorney in New York. She is a co-founder of the Ida B. Wells Media Defense Network.

(see <https://idabwellsmediadefense.org/>)

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 - ★ Oct 18 - No Kings Day - Say No to US Imperialism, Militarism & Racism
 - ★ Oct 25 - Defend Cuba 4p, Westwood Fed Bldg, 6:30p, Strategy & Soul Ctr.
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Volume 37 ★ Number 5 ★ ISSN 1082-6491 ★ Oct.-Dec. 2025

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