

# *the* PROCG





# A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

Thank you for picking this up. This issue has been our most ambitious project yet, and the product you're holding represents a lot of change for the Prog.

This is the second of our print issues with themes. But perhaps most obvious of the changes: this is a trial of printing on newsprint. Our process is collaborative, and the outcome represents people and resources we can pool together at a given time. Planning this issue, we sought an aesthetic more reflective of what the Prog strives to be: newsprint for sincerity and democratized information; hand- (staff!) drawn illustrations beyond the cover manifest a product created with thought and care. Mostly, we've avoided much varnish to put forward instead that it's the eccentricities of all of our hands together that make the Prog, and nothing more.

But more newsworthy: this academic year brought new staff onto our team. With fresh energy, we're working to lay the groundwork for longevity. Because as we explored through our previous magazine focused on Princeton, sustained efficacy is the ultimate and elusive goal of a campus student organization.

For this issue, our focus is on war and conflict. Midway through a Spring semester (and the pressure that accompanies it), news from the outside can be difficult to absorb. The state of the world seems precarious, and a flow of worrying information makes our situation seem unprecedented. In some respects that may be true, but it can be hard to evaluate a historical

moment from within. Nevertheless, some issues feel too immediate to wait for historical perspective. Our minds are filled not only with headlines, but intractable moral (and mortal) dilemmas. What is to be done?

Because of the breadth and thorny nature of this theme, we've placed emphasis on the informative, over the analytical and polemical, in hopes that we can understand a little better the circumstances we're living in.

Our writers have researched aspects of the theme that are on their own minds, and the resulting articles are newer explorations of these problems. This issue's writers give us an international comparative perspective on the health effects of police brutality, dig into Karl Marx's articles and letters for historical perspective on the American Civil War, and pick the brains of a leading expert and activist for direction on all-too-nuclear questions about international security.

Yet analysis, however practical, is only part of an answer to these sorts of dilemmas. Our mutually-assured well-being asks us to stand with our communities, attending to the micro things that keep us going day-to-day. Because doing so will allow us to face up to—and ultimately and tackle—the macro. I hope you enjoy your read through this issue; hope you're caring for each other, too.

In love and solidarity,

Nora Schultz



# MASTHEAD

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF** NORA SCHULTZ '19  
**EXECUTIVE EDITOR** TAJIN ROGERS '20  
**MANAGING EDITOR** SEYITCAN UCIN '20  
**DESIGN EDITOR** BEATRICE FERGUSON '21  
**DIGITAL EDITOR** KATHERINE STEIFEL '20  
**STAFF WRITERS** SARAH BARNETTE '20  
ROHANA CHASE '21\*  
MASON COX '20\*  
BRADEN FLAX '21  
ALEC ISRAELI '21\*  
NATE LAMBERT '20  
SAVANNAH MCINTOSH '20  
REBECCA NGU '20\*  
CHRIS RUSSO '20  
JASON SEAVEY '21\*  
ROHAN SINHA '20  
NALANDA SHARADJAYA '21\*  
TÉA WIMER '19\*

\* = CONTRIBUTED EDITING

COVER ILLUSTRATION: ROHANA CHASE AND NORA SCHULTZ

LOGO DESIGN: MARIANA MEDRANO '17

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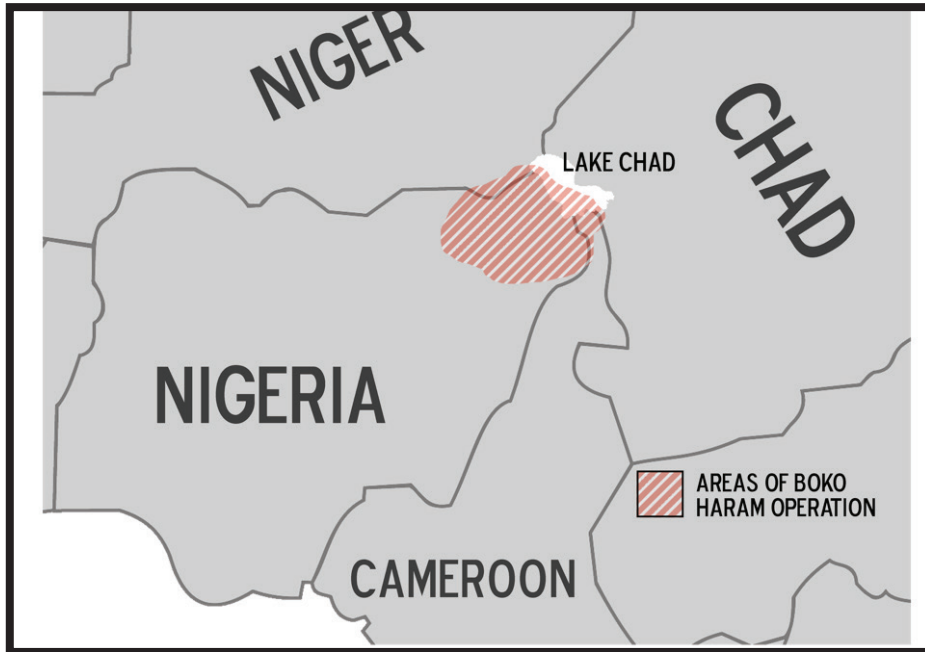
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# /DISPATCH SECTION/

## ON FOUR UNDERREPORTED CONFLICTS ABROAD



for the conflict, 2.4 million of seventeen million people are displaced, and the United Nations classifies eleven million as “in need.”

### /US INVOLVEMENT/

The Nigerian military has emphasized killing Boko Haram soldiers, but frequently detains and executes civilians without due process. This heavy-handed approach is one of the reasons former President Obama often opted to work with neighboring Chad, Cameroon and Niger in the conflict instead of Nigeria. The US government has provided millions of dollars in support to the aforementioned countries ever since adding Boko Haram to its list of foreign terrorist organizations in 2013. In January, 2017, Nigerian government forces bombed a refugee camp, killing more than one hundred refugees and volunteers. At the time, Nigerian President Buhari called the bombing “a regrettable operational mistake,” but this incident prompted Obama to delay the highly anticipated sale of twelve Super Tucano A-29 planes to Nigeria’s air force. In August, President Trump decided to go ahead with the deal despite ongoing human rights concerns. The particulars of Trump’s approach to the conflict remain to be seen.

Alex Thurston, professor of African Studies at Georgetown, summarizes the current state of the crisis in an article for World Politics Review:

Trends may point to Boko Haram’s decline, but Nigeria and its neighbors will continue to face more violence unless they shift their strategy. Abuses by the security services and other brutal military measures will stoke more backlashes, playing into Boko Haram’s hands. At the same time, the lack of long-term political, economic and humanitarian planning suggests that even if Boko Haram is completely defeated, the crisis will persist in a different form. ■

-Jason Seavey

### /NIGERIA/

#### /BACKGROUND/

Boko Haram is an Islamist militant group that operates in Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Northern Cameroon. According to the US State Department, “[Boko Haram] receives the bulk of its funding from bank robberies and related criminal activities, including extortion and kidnapping for ransoms. The group has also received funding from [Al Qaeda].” The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria briefly drew the attention of Western press when schoolgirls were abducted from Chibok, a town in the Nigerian Borno State in April, 2014. This sparked the hashtag #Bringbackourgirls trending on Twitter and even drew comment from then-First Lady Michelle Obama. Besides this brief cameo, the conflict has largely flown under the radar of the international press cycle.

#### /RECENT DEVELOPMENTS/

In 2009, Boko Haram declared a rebellion against the Nigerian state. Soon

after, the group’s founder, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed while in Nigerian police custody. He was succeeded by Abubakar Shekau. In 2015, Shekau affiliated Boko Haram with ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) with a pledge of allegiance. Since, the group split into factions over its direction. The most dramatic split occurred in August, 2016 when ISIL attempted to appoint a governor of Boko Haram, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, to replace Shekau’s leadership. Shekau rejected the ISIL appointment, leading to a fracture between pro-Barnawi and pro-Shekau forces.

Boko Haram seems to have been weakened by the split, but continues to carry out regular suicide bombings and attacks. As of January 2018, US-based think tank Council on Foreign Relations estimates a conservative 54,277 cumulative deaths as a result of the conflict. Civilians are often caught in the middle of clashes between Boko Haram and government forces, and can become targets for both sides. In the region of the Lake Chad Basin, ground zero





Graphic: Tajin Rogers

## /PERU/

### /BACKGROUND/

Sustaining a tradition of presence in Latin America, the US military is building a base in the Amazonas region of Peru. Representatives from the Amazonas government revealed plans for the center in December, 2016, and according to the schedule projected at the time of announcement, it will be complete by summer of this year.

The site is an initiative of the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), a military branch dedicated to covering Latin America and the surrounding waters south of Mexico. The facility will be one of several Regional Emergency Operation Centers (REOCs)—bases where military personnel are stationed reportedly for rapid response to natural and human-made disasters. However, numerous factors have caused Peruvians to come out in the last year as skeptical about the Center’s prem-

ise of humanitarian aid, and express concern about the greater access and control over the region that this site will grant the US and its military.

### /RECENT DEVELOPMENTS/

The US has a mutual defense pact with Peru since mid twentieth century, but SOUTHCOM has been noticeably building presence across Peru within the last decade.

Former Peruvian President Ollanta Humala made opposing foreign intrusion—particularly by the United States—into a campaign platform that helped him win his seat in 2011. His line appeared to soften during his term, however, and in September, 2015 he seemed to welcome the US when it sent planes, ships, and over three thousand armed troops through the country, some visiting, and others to stay for undefined lengths of time. Less than a year later, USSOUTHCOM inaugurated a

disaster response center (like the one being built in the Amazonas now) in La Libertad, a region midway up the Peruvian coast. Beyond building facilities and sending physical representations of power, the countries’ military forces regularly conduct joint drills. In 2016, the Peruvian government authorized a US-sponsored program that involves US officers training Peru’s special operations units. These events mark an increase in US presence in the country, and the construction of an Amazonas REOC comes on that backdrop.

### /US INVOLVEMENT/

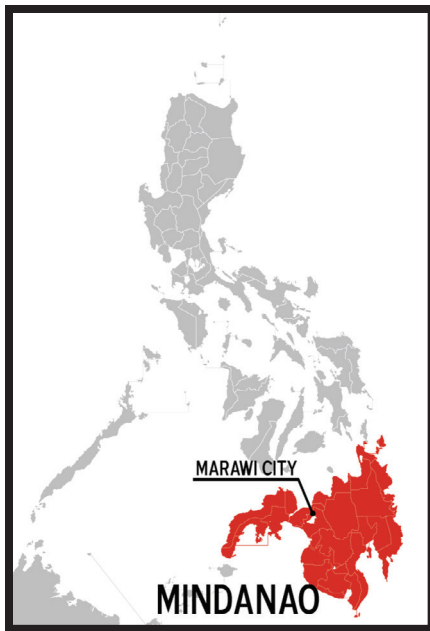
Responding to this array of events, analysts have written that any buildup of presence in Peru is likely an effort by the two governments to crack down on drug trafficking and related violence. However citizen protests broke out when US troops entered Peru in 2015, and reports by Peruvian journalists from the time quote demonstrators and objectors describing the event as a signal that the US is committed to protecting its political access to Peru’s natural resources, to the point of asserting military presence.

Commentators have looked at the REOC established in La Libertad together with the joint military exercises as a process of integrating the United States into Peru’s systems of security and defense. Many have written that US-sponsored disaster relief is a pretense in Latin America—that a SOUTHCOM Center is merely a paramilitary maneuver to the same aforementioned ends.

During the 2015 protests, Oscar Vidarte, a professor of political science at the Catholic University of Peru, expressed in an interview with Telesur that North American interventionism and maintaining sovereignty are the base concerns among those opposed to US military presence. Vidarte grounds those concerns in Latin American experience: “In light of its tumultuous historical record throughout the twentieth century, the truth is that the presence of North America in our country and the continent can generate a series of doubts,” he said.

As the US strengthens its military presence in the region, a new facility could reinforce Peruvians’ suspicions, and suggest that questioning the US’ intentions in the country be more pressing yet. ■

-Nora Schultz



Graphic: Tajjin Rogers

# /PHILIPPINES/

## /BACKGROUND/

Insurgency is nothing new in the Philippine archipelago. The Muslim population has occupied the southernmost islands—Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago—since the twelfth century. When the Spanish arrived in the sixteenth century, the Muslims resisted subjugation by waging jihad; they also picked up the label “Moro,” Spanish for “Moor.” Moros continued their rebellion against American colonization following the Spanish-American War. Between 1913 and 1969, the insurgency lull with the exception of Moros fending off the Japanese, who would occupy the islands during World War II. However, in 1968, dozens of Moro soldiers in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were killed during a clandestine military operation, called the Jabidah Massacre. Additionally, a resettlement program conducted by the Spanish in the 1870s and continued by the American administration of the islands’ governments following independence meant that by 1970, Christians outnumbered Moros in Mindanao. The factors fueled a beginning of the modern-day Islamic insurgency, led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the splinter group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Anti-imperialist frustrations also manifest in the activities of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and

its armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA), which subscribes to Maoism under the leadership of Jose Maria Sison. Since 1971, using a combination of the mass legal movement of its political wing, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), and the paramilitary operations of the NPA against Philippine military and police forces, the Maoists are combatting a Philippine government they see as serving US imperial interests over the interests of the working class and indigenous populations. From 1972 to 1981, the communists forced then-President Ferdinand Marcos to impose martial law, causing widespread human rights abuses throughout the archipelago. Following the lifting of martial law, sporadic clashes between the Philippine government and communist rebels and failed peace talks characterize the current status of the insurgency.

## /RECENT DEVELOPMENTS/

In 1989, the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao was established, and by 1996, the MNLF became a legal political organization in the region. Back from fighting against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, some members of MNLF were alienated by the legal organization and concessions given to the Philippine government. They formed Abu Sayyaf, former Al Qaeda-affiliate and current Islamic State-affiliate, seeking to take back their ancestral lands. Maute Group and Jemaah Islamiyah, among other Salafi jihadist groups also formed in this period along similar lines. MNLF and MILF allied with the Philippine government against the Salafists.

Hardliner Rodrigo Duterte became president in June, 2016, vowing to end crime by any means necessary. In May, 2017, Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao, culminating in the Battle of Marawi, a protracted siege in which AFP battled to take back the city of Marawi following capture by the Salafi jihadists from May to October, leaving 1.1 million people displaced. In December, 2017, the Philippine Congress granted a one-year extension of martial law following request by Duterte, and military operations continue against an unknown number of jihadists on the island.

During his campaign for the presidency, Duterte offered the CPP four positions in his cabinet and was praised by

Sison for his willingness to find a solution to the conflict. Upon taking office, CPP and Duterte began negotiating peace in a series of on-and-off talks. However, in November, 2017, Duterte unilaterally terminated the talks and resumed military operations against the Maoists. According to the CPP, “Duterte terminated peace talks amid the rising protest movement against rampant killings in his so-called war against drugs, political killings against activists, widespread death and destruction in the Marawi Siege, aerial bombings, shelling, militarization and all-out war in the countryside.” The conflict, which has taken over 30,000 lives, continues with both AFP and NPA mounting offensive operations.

## /US INVOLVEMENT/

The US has had continued interest in the Philippines for over a century. Its purchase of the Philippines from Spain in 1898 was motivated by interest in Asian markets, as multiple naval facilities were built on the archipelago to project American power in the Pacific. By 1991, Philippine public opinion swayed against US military presence. The Senate voted against the renewal of a treaty that sanctioned US bases on the archipelago and permanently closed them. Following 9/11, the Philippine government vowed to help the US in its fight against terrorism. US Special Operations Command-Pacific began operations with the AFP in 2002 under Operation Enduring Freedom against various jihadist groups, including Abu Sayyaf, Maute, and Jemaah Islamiyah. In the 2014, the ten-year Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement gave the US authority to build and maintain military facilities on Philippine military bases as well as deploy personnel. By early 2015, special operations forces withdrew from the Philippines, deeming the counter-insurgency operations successful. However in June, 2017, an unknown size of special operations forces were deployed again to the Philippines to assist AFP in combat operations against Abu Sayyaf and allies, most notably in the Battle of Marawi. Currently, US military facilities and personnel are present on five Philippine military bases. ■

-Seyitcan Ucin





Graphic: Tajin Rogers

## /YEMEN/

### /BACKGROUND/

In 2011, at the height of the “Arab Spring,” protests and violence in Yemen forced then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a longtime strongman, to resign and transfer power to his Vice-President, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. The following year, Hadi won a presidential election in which he ran unopposed. Though he made some moves toward reconciliation and democracy during his presidency, many actors remained discontent.

Among these was an insurgent group from Yemen’s mountainous north, where the capital, Sana’a, is located: the Houthi movement, named for a leader who was killed by government forces in 2004, had long waged an insurgent campaign against the previous Saleh government. After Hadi was elected, Houthi forces launched protests and attacks to expand their territorial control. By August of 2014, continued unhappiness with Hadi’s government prompted mass demonstrations that intensified after clashes with security forces. In early September of the same year, after a number of protesters were killed, Houthi forces launched a sudden takeover of Sana’a itself, and took just five days to gain control of the entire city. This shifted the political situation dramatically—the Houthis were now in control of

much of the north and west of the country, including major cities and ports.

A UN-backed ceasefire between the Hadi and the Houthis led to the formation of a new government. This didn’t entirely appease the Houthis, who continued to fight until they seized control of the presidential palace and parliament in early 2015, dissolving the legislature and placing Hadi under house arrest. A few weeks later, Hadi managed to flee Sana’a and travelled to Aden, on the south coast of the country. As the Houthis advanced south, Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia; within the month, the Gulf Cooperation Council (an organization of the Arab states on the Persian Gulf) announced its intervention into the conflict by request of the Hadi government.

Primarily led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, this coalition has supported anti-Houthi forces with arms, training, mercenaries, and air support. While the frontlines have remained frustratingly static, the Saudis have also brought their airforce to bear in a deadly bombing campaign. Though recently (and temporarily) suspended, they have even enforced a naval blockade of Yemeni shores beginning in 2015. These actions have been widely criticized for their effects on civilians. The air campaign has not only been marked by a lack of military progress, but by

allegations of indiscriminate targeting and reports of widespread civilian casualties. In 2015, Doctors Without Borders reported the complete destruction of one of their hospitals; a year later, some one hundred and forty people were killed in a strike on a funeral in Sana’a.

### /RECENT DEVELOPMENTS/

Since 2016, shifting political alliances have seen former enemies Saleh and the Houthis make common cause against the Saudi-led alliance, only for Saleh to be killed in December, 2017 after trying to switch his allegiance back to the coalition. In late January, 2018, the separatist Southern Transitional Council took control of Aden, overpowering Hadi-aligned forces in the de facto capital. However this development plays out, it represents another setback to the beleaguered Saudi intervention.

In the background, two large specters loom. The US has carried out airstrikes in Yemen against Sunni fundamentalists for years now, targeting Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and affiliates of ISIS in the mountainous, dry, and sparsely populated east of the country, where chaos has allowed them to take control of wide swathes of land. In 2017, the US launched one hundred and thirty-one such strikes, up from twenty-one in 2016, along with intermittent Special Forces raids. Yet AQAP remains a major force in the east, as it has for years.

Already the poorest country in the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen now faces a deadly humanitarian crisis, brought on by war and exacerbated by drought and famine, in part due to the blockade. The Red Cross announced one million cases of cholera in December, 2017—the largest outbreak in recent history. Diphtheria and other vaccinateable diseases have also seen a resurgence. Further, eight million Yemenis are completely dependent on food assistance, and at risk of starvation. The UN says the 16.4 out of twenty-seven million Yemenis lack adequate health care, and 15.7 million lack safe water and sanitation. The numbers go on, as does the conflict, with no end in sight. ■

-Tajin Rogers

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# HEARTS & HOSTILITY

## PUBLIC HEALTH IN CONFLICTS

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BY: KATHERINE STIEFEL

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The public health effect in warzones is more than a body count. Jammu and Kashmir, a region contested by Pakistan, India, and China, is one well-studied example of a region occupied by military forces, where both intranational independence movements and international territory disputes often bring violence. Psychiatrists in the Kashmir valley found their number of patients rising and, trying to understand, conducted a survey of some of the area's population. They discovered that about fifty percent of respondents were suffering from depression and hypertension. Of these respondents, eighty-five percent of men and eighty-nine percent of women with hypertension traced their condition back to the conflict. Here, "conflict" does not necessarily refer to active fighting, but instead a slow simmer of tensions often breaking out in violence.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip regions of Palestine occupied by Israel, a joint study by Khaled Qlalweh and Mohammed Duraidi of the Palestinian Statistics Bureau and Henrik Brønnum-Hansen of the University of Copenhagen found that from 2006 to 2010 the expected male lifetime without a chronic disease had decreased by an average of 1.6 years—particularly due to hypertension and diabetes. The expected female lifetime without a chronic disease increased by 1.3 years, though not necessarily without the aforementioned diseases. Citing "lifestyle factors and the impact of military occupation," the authors conclude that the gender-correlated differences point toward a gendered nature of the conflict rather than indicate that the diseases are not suitable for examining population health.

These areas' conflicts are vastly different and particular to their regions' histories. They share only a hostile presence of occupying forces, and there is a traceable trend: hypertension increases. Of the known risk factors for hypertension, including sleep apnea, high cholesterol, and poor diet, the intuitive candidate is stress. People who aren't physically injured in confrontations with these occupiers still live under great stress, in the form of mental and emotional traumas.

Abigail Sewell and Kevin Jefferson, sociologists at Emory University, used data from the New York City Community Health Survey and the NYC Stop, Question, and Frisk dataset to analyze

impacts of routine police presence and aggression on public health. They found that rather than death by the barrel of a gun, most police-enacted violence takes shape as a community-wide decline in health. The specific effects of heavy police presence on health indicators (diabetes, hypertension, heavier body weight, and asthma attacks) varies with socioeconomic and racial composition of a neighborhood; but what remains constant across neighborhoods is that likelihood of a stop culminating in a frisk correlates "positively and statistically significant[ly]" with presence of all indicators in neighborhood residents.

Simply put, the more intrusively police asserts its presence in a neighborhood, the worse the health in the area. Even when the New York researchers compared similar neighborhoods to control for complex variables like poverty, a high likelihood of frisking re-

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mained securely linked with an increase in hypertension cases. This correlation between hostile groups in power and hypertension cases in New York parallels the data from Kashmir and Palestine.

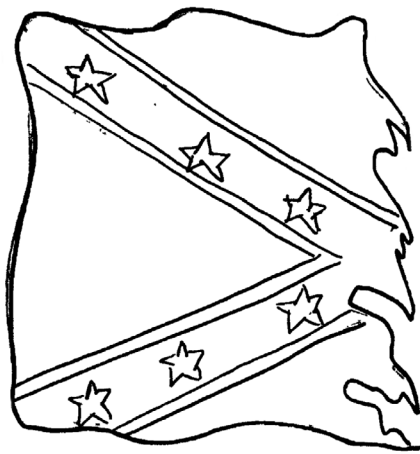
So how can we understand police presence as a similar stressor to occupation?

As agents of the state, police regulate society as they see fit. The slave patrol was a forerunner to the American police system, and racialized applications of the law display that legacy now. In an article written in the wake of a police officer's killing of Eric Garner in New York, Civil Rights Attorney Ron Kurby stated: "The NYPD does not care how frequently a police officer is sued or how many civilian complaints are justified or substantiated." Faced with pressure to push out the perpetrators of violent acts, they close ranks around their own instead of internalizing the grievances of the community they purportedly serve. Eugene O'Donnell, a former NYPD officer, phrases it differently: "People who do police work understand that it's very messy. Brutality is part of the police job." Here, O'Donnell analyzes the police job as absorbing a necessary evil: some people must be hurt in order to protect others. The Sewell and Jefferson study suggested that high stop rates in mixed-race neighborhoods are a protective factor for white residents, but a risk factor for non-white residents. If this tradeoff is inherent to policing, it represents a continuous and predictable damage to the people expended. The police becomes a hostile force.

We've found patterns between data from Kashmir, Palestine, and New York City, but this trend should not be unique to these locations. Data from other American cities could strengthen this correlation. Proving causation is difficult, but a strong correlation can warrant action in its own right. In the state of Tibet, many of whose people consider themselves occupied by China, a 2011 multi-hospital study uncovered an inexplicable clustering of hypertension among seemingly unrelated groups of people. If the pattern described here becomes established in the public health community, Tibetan researchers will have another avenue to explore: do the groups with hypertension more strongly feel the pressure of Chinese occupation?

These studies give weight to the specific factor of hostile occupation in poor community health, as distinct from other variables like generational poverty or access to healthcare. This analysis opens a scientific lens in the conversation evaluating the oppressive effects of policing, and pushes against mainstream tendencies to excuse the violence. ■





# THE RED SEA OF CIVIL WAR



## MARX, SLAVERY & AMERICA'S SEMINAL CONFLICT

BY: ALEC ISRAELI

The United States is experiencing a crisis of historical memory. The rise of Donald Trump has been paralleled by a greater collective awareness of ideological, class, and racial divisions, and prompted a national search for the source of this awareness and of the division itself. But thus far the search, though ostensibly focused on the history leading up to our Trumpian moment, has been remarkably ahistorical. American liberals are lost—pinning blame on repulsiveness of Trump himself, they fail to recognize that the divisions of which they are only now aware are inherent to the United States. Meanwhile, reactionaries (that is, broadly, political Rightists in their various forms) promote a constructed narrative of white victimization that has long held sway over much of the American psyche. After a brief retreat to covert influence over the past few decades, this narrative reasserted itself with Trump ascendant.

We can break down the reactionary narrative by tracing white victimization back to white supremacy, and white supremacy back to a social system of racial slavery. The defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War and the resulting abolition of slavery shook the edifice of white supremacy to its core (but by no means dismantled it), and laid the ground for white Americans to see themselves as victims despite—and in order to perpetuate—their position of supremacy. Reactionaries make this clear when they defend flying the Confederate flag (like the one at the South Carolina State House before it was taken down in 2015), when they protect monuments glorifying Confederate leaders (like the statues in Charlottesville, finally covered in 2017), and when they portray the Civil War as unnecessary and the Confederacy as an unwilling participant (which White House Chief of Staff John Kelly did when he stated in October 2017 that “the lack of an ability to compromise led to the Civil War”).

In opposition to this misremembering of the Civil War and the oppressive narrative it engenders, the Left must offer a more accurate memory of the conflict and a critical narrative of liberation conscious of its own limits. Karl Marx's writings on the War provide helpful source material for this project. As a German living in London who never visited the United States, Marx was but a distant, contemporary observer of the War and the events that

led up to it. But this apparent detachment gives his commentary a quality of profound universalism. Using his works as a guide, I first outline and refute dominant reactionary Civil War narratives; second, I examine how those narratives fit in a global historical context; third, I discuss the relationship between slavery, capitalism, and the limits of the narrative of liberation; fourth, I offer concluding thoughts informed by the current political climate.

### I. SLAVERY, "STATES RIGHTS," AND THE NARRATIVE OF LIBERATION

Our narrative should begin, naturally, with the beginning of the Civil War, and answer the fundamental question of its cause. The reactionary answer is that conflict between the federal government and Southern states' rights caused the war. This is incorrect and misleading. Conflict over states' rights was merely the immediate manifestation of the true root cause. *The Civil War was not a conflict over "states' rights."* It was a conflict over slavery. The centrality of slavery is clearly revealed by the history leading up to the wave of Southern secession in 1860 and 1861.

Republican Abraham Lincoln's victory in the 1860 presidential election, built on an anti-slavery platform, provided the main impetus for secession. He was not at that time pro-abolition, and indeed personally was a racially prejudiced man. But he opposed the expansion of slavery to new territories, and the slaveholding Southern elite saw this as enough of a threat to slavery. Marx summarizes why in a piece for the *New York Tribune* from October 25, 1861: “A strict confinement of slavery within its old terrain, therefore, was bound according to economic law to lead to its gradual extinction, in the political sphere to annihilate the political hegemony that the slave states exercised through the Senate [...] the Republicans therefore attacked the rule of the slaveholders at its root.” Slaveholders increasingly depended on the Senate for dictating national policy, because they could not keep up with Northern population growth in the House of Representatives. They needed more states, not more population, to remain in con-



trol. Moreover, more territory was necessary for ready access to fertile soil. In his October 25 piece, Marx points out the possibility of Southern cotton production remaining stationary due to soil exhaustion. Territorial expansion was absolutely essential to slave power.

Indeed, preserving slavery was an imperial project, with precedent in the Mexican-American War, during which the United States took much of its southern and western territories from Mexico with slaveholding interests in mind. In the 1854 Ostend Manifesto, members of President Franklin Pierce's administration called for the purchase of Cuba from Spain under threat of force, with the goal of making it a slave territory. Some slaveholders greedily eyed other Latin American territories. Effectively, international expansion was something of a back-up plan. Marx observes in a November 7, 1861 piece for Austrian newspaper *Die Presse* that the South saw border states (Missouri, Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky), along with all territory south of the line from northern Missouri to the Pacific Ocean, as its deserved land: "Thus what the slaveholders call 'the South' covers more than three quarters of the present area of the Union." "The South" was not a binding concept of culture or heritage, as many modern Confederate flag-wavers claim. No, "the South" was not even bound to a distinct geographic area. "The South" was a figurehead, a rallying cry, a pretext for slavery's expansion, wherever it may go.

**"THE SOUTH" WAS NOT A BINDING CONCEPT OF CULTURE OR HERITAGE... "THE SOUTH" WAS NOT EVEN BOUND TO A DISTINCT GEOGRAPHIC AREA. "THE SOUTH" WAS A FIGUREHEAD, A RALLYING CRY, A PRETEXT FOR SLAVERY'S EXPANSION, WHEREVER IT MAY GO**

Marx, in the same *Presse* piece, conjectures that if all land proposed to be "the South" were to fall into Southern hands, many of the remaining states would secede from the Union and join the new slave nation out of economic interest. At that point, almost all of the continental United States would be a slave nation, and Southerners would never have to worry about the national policy on slavery. Of course this never happened, nor was it necessarily explicit as a plan, but the Confederacy showed its expansionist intentions when it attempted to annex Missouri and Kentucky, both of which had pro-Union majorities and legitimate Union governments. Kentucky even proclaimed neutrality before Confederate forces invaded. Clearly the South cared more about territory than states' rights. Again in his *Presse* piece, Marx points out the "hollowness" of the states' rights pretext and provides a helpful summary: "The war waged by the Southern Confederacy is [...] not a war of defense but a war of conquest, aimed at extending and perpetuating slavery."

Therefore, slave power was not, as Confederate apologists seem to think, a force content to be left alone, threatened

by Northern big-government militarism. The Civil War was by no means a "War of Northern Aggression." The South was the aggressor because it was willing to do anything to preserve its system of racial slavery. But for a long time, this will to preserve slavery did not necessitate war. Up until the 1860 election, slave interests dominated the Federal Government. To the chagrin of Northern antislavery politicians, national policy repeatedly fulfilled Southern desires. In 1860, especially after Republicans' rejection of the Crittenden Compromise (which would have allowed slavery to continue untouched south of the 36° 30' latitude line, in current states and new territories), the South merely saw that the federal government had outlived its usefulness to slaveholders. It then made the calculated decision that, if it could not maintain slavery through the existing government, it would have to create its own.

But does Republican rejection of the Crittenden Compromise not prove John Kelly right, that the Civil War happened because of a lack of ability to compromise, especially on the part of Republican northerners? And were the compromises preceding the war—the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act—not proof that compromise could at least have been attempted? Well, no. It is not that, in 1860, there was suddenly a lack of ability to compromise; it is that all of the preceding compromises were not compromises in the first place, because compromise on the issue of slavery was, and is, impossible. Slavery exists, or it does not. And each of these supposed "compromises" either enshrined in law or posited the continued existence of slavery in the United States, regardless of which states were guaranteed to remain free. In an October 11, 1861 dispatch for the *New York Tribune*, Marx analyzes that this is a slavery dictatorship masquerading as a fair political back-and-forth: "The progressive abuse by the Union of the slave power [...] is, to say, the general formula of the United States history since the beginning of this century. The successive compromise measures mark the successive degrees of the encroachment by which the Union became more and more transformed into the slave of the slave-owner. Each of these compromises denotes a new encroachment of the South, a new concession of the North." Until 1860, the South was bullying the federal government into shape with the looming threat of secession hanging above. Slavery would trump any pretense of patriotic loyalty.

Furthermore, Southern dominance over the federal government was often exercised without the pretext of compromise. This was well demonstrated by the Southern imperial machinations discussed earlier, and also by pro-slavery interpretations of the Constitution in the courts. In the 1857 Supreme Court case *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's ruling (holding that the federal government could not regulate slavery in new territories) showed that slaveholders and their government representatives were even willing to reject the "compromises" that favored them in order to pursue bolder pro-slavery measures on the federal level—no "compromise" thus far had left all new territories in slave power's hands. Such actions definitively disprove the reactionary "states' rights" narrative of the Civil War; Southern leaders had no qualms curtailing other states' rights in the interests of slave power.

In fact, many in the North used language of states' rights in response to pro-slavery federal overreach. When challenged on the Fugitive Slave Act (part of the Compromise of 1850 holding



that escaped slaves were to be returned to their masters if captured, and compelled citizens even in free states to cooperate), the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled it to be unconstitutional, and state legal provisions in Vermont made it effectively unenforceable there. The Confederate government, in contrast, sought to avoid any questions of national authority on slavery, preserving slavery by law in Article I, Section IX of its constitution: “No [...] law denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves, shall be passed.” This wording reflected that of Southern states’ declarations of secession, which held as a central grievance what they perceived as Northern infringement on slaveholding. Mississippi’s declaration most brazenly proclaims: “Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world.”

Southern leaders had such obvious motives—considering their imperial ambitions, their manipulation of national policy, their new constitution, their declarations of secession—that it requires a tremendous level of willful ignorance for modern reactionaries to claim that the Civil War was not over slavery. Doing so, perhaps, is but a formality of our times, when overt racism is taboo. Reactionaries do recognize the racial element of the Civil War, but, having sympathies which are less than savory to the modern palate, must obfuscate them with benign, historical disagreements about the balance between federal and state power. This is what makes these reactionaries and their narrative so insidious. Behind a superficially innocent face lurks the demon of America’s racial past. Denying this past makes it all the more easy to deny the system of racial oppression that permeates the present. And denial of racial oppression makes it all the more difficult to combat.

**REACTIONARIES DO RECOGNIZE THE RACIAL ELEMENT OF THE CIVIL WAR, BUT, HAVING SYMPATHIES LESS THAN SAVORY TO THE MODERN PALATE, MUST OBFUSCATE THEM WITH DISAGREEMENTS ABOUT THE BALANCE BETWEEN FEDERAL AND STATE POWER**

In contrast, the aforementioned narrative of liberation—holding that the main cause of the Civil War was conflict over slavery, with the South fighting for the preservation of slavery and the rule of an oppressive elite, and Southern defeat implying abolition of slavery and the defeat of the oppressors—is an acknowledgment of America’s racial past, and is thus to a certain extent a constructive acknowledgment of its racial present. Now, the narrative of liberation is not without its problems (in truth, from a more critical Left perspective, its many problems), especially with regard to the Civil War’s goals and impacts. I will address those in Section III. But, unqualified as is, this narrative provides a more honest picture of the War’s causes than the opposing narrative of white victimization.

## II. TRANSATLANTIC REACTIONARIES: PAST AND PRESENT

Considering modern reactionaries’ dishonesty about the centrality of slavery to the Civil War, it is somewhat ironic that they invoke the imagery of the Confederacy, which was explicit about its defense of slavery. Perhaps reactionaries should look more to the Civil War-era British liberal elite, who better reflect their game of obfuscation. In his writings for the *New York Tribune*, Marx attacks the British liberal elite for making a show of not supporting slavery (by this period Britain was the foremost abolitionist power), while implicitly supporting the Confederacy. Marx points out that British bourgeois periodicals like *The Economist*, *The Examiner*, and *The Saturday Review* maintained that the War was not over slavery. One *Economist* piece quoted by Marx proposes that the North did not deserve support because of its economic complicity in the slave system. That may seem a principled stance, until one considers the relationship between the British textile industry and Southern cotton.

Across the English Channel, the British bourgeoisie had a friend in its reactionary politics: Emperor Louis Napoleon Bonaparte of France. He was less coy about his support for the slave system. Marx, in a *Tribune* piece from 1858, describes how Bonaparte perpetuated and enabled the slave trade (to the point of being chastised by British leaders), despite the French Second Republic’s abolition of slavery. Take note that this was after the coup he initiated in 1851, in which the Republic was destroyed and Napoleon established himself as emperor.

Indeed, support for slavery, in the context of the Civil War era, could be used as something of a litmus test for support of true democratic government. The slave system was undemocratic on all counts—one could oppose both slavery and democracy, but support of the former necessitates opposition to the latter. As Marx wrote in the above 1858 *Tribune* piece, “The slave-trade has become a battle-cry between the Imperialist and the Republican camps.” Those in favor of the slave system, like Louis Bonaparte, were very much not in the republican camp. The British capitalist elite, too, were hardly committed democrats. Parliamentarians, maybe, but not exactly friends of the common folk. And, while the new Confederacy did have the trappings of a republican government, it was in effect an oligarchy. A nation founded on the basis of preserving slavery had to be; only around 300,000 people in the South owned slaves at the time of the Civil War, out of a total Southern population of around 9,000,000 (3,500,000 of which were slaves). Secessionists are better viewed as an elite protecting their class interests, using slavery to preserve a system of racial domination and keep the restive white poor at bay, than as rebellious underdogs trying to protect their heritage.

And yet, in their denial of slavery’s role in the Civil War, modern reactionaries refuse to see secessionists as anything but underdogs. They follow the historical precedent of the British bourgeoisie. Granted, the reasons for obfuscation on the part of modern Confederate apologists and 19th century British capitalists are different, the former being a desire to avoid the label of “racist” in order to preserve racial privilege, and the latter being

their immediate class interests. In either case, however, there is still pretext for pro-Southern sentiment. This indicates a concerted effort to circumvent the issue of racial oppression, and thus allow its perpetuation (either in the form of slavery itself, or its haunting remnants). Moreover, modern deniers of slavery as the root of the Civil War mingle with the likes of fascists, neo-Nazis, and full-on Confederate sympathizers who have no qualms embracing their racist heritage. Thinly veiled comments about “compromise” from the Trump administration and white supremacist support of this regime demonstrate this symbiotic relationship between deniers and defenders of slavery’s past.

## SECESSIONISTS ARE BETTER VIEWED AS AN ELITE PROTECTING THEIR CLASS INTERESTS, USING SLAVERY TO PRESERVE RACIAL DOMINATION... THAN AS REBELLIOUS UNDERDOGS TRYING TO PROTECT THEIR HERITAGE

This relationship has historical precedent; the deniers are to British capitalists as the defenders are to Louis Bonaparte. Indeed, Bonaparte’s rise to power<sup>1</sup> bears an eerie resemblance to that of 20th century Fascist leaders, and to Trump’s today. Bonaparte, like current fascist supporters of Trump, like the Southern elite of his time, was reaction incarnate, a more forward corollary to British capitalists. It is no historical accident, then, that support for the slave system is a binding thread of the different strains of reaction found among French proto-fascists, British liberals, American slaveholders, and 21st century Confederate apologists (whether deniers or defenders of slavery).

### III. RACIAL CAPITALISM AND THE LIMITS OF THE NARRATIVE OF LIBERATION

While the South was explicit in its reasons for secession, and while conflict over slavery and the resulting historical processes drove the war, the Northern government was reluctant to acknowledge this background. Initially for Lincoln, it was about preserving the Union; not until his 1863 Emancipation Proclamation (which, indicative of Lincoln’s reluctance, only applied to slaves in the South, not the entire nation) did the administration officially acknowledge the true reasons for the War. Still, behind Lincoln was a faction of Radical Republicans that continued to push for abolition, despite having a steadfast moderate as the party’s public face. Furthermore, it is necessary to separate the apparent causes

of the War (i.e. slavery) from the way Lincoln and the Northern leadership engaged with them.

Unlike Lincoln, Marx saw the potentially liberatory nature of the War, and thoroughly criticized Lincoln for refusing to acknowledge it. In two successive pieces for *Die Presse*, Marx attacks Lincoln for catering to the needs of the slaveholding border states, and, summarizing a speech by radical abolitionist Wendell Phillips, states, “The [Northern] government [...] fights for the maintenance of slavery, and therefore it fights in vain [...] Even at the present time [Lincoln] is more afraid of Kentucky than of the entire North.” He also points out the apparent enthusiasm for a war of abolition in the North; there seems to have been a constant tension between Lincoln’s restrained statesmanship and the character of the war he faced.

Of course, Marx was much more interested in the historical processes at work than the individual leaders who slowed their progression. The Civil War, in his eyes, was one of liberation in two senses: the slaves would be freed, but so would wage workers. For Marx, in the context of the epochal stages of his historiography (slavery leads to feudalism leads to capitalism leads to socialism leads to communism), slavery in the United States was an outmoded form of production and social organization that hindered the growth and development of an industrial working class, on which socialist revolution and liberation were dependent. The fate of wage labor in the United States was inextricably intertwined with the fate of slaves; Marx notes that while elements of the British bourgeoisie favored the South, the British proletariat, in a show of solidarity, favored the North. The Civil War was to be a bourgeois revolution, overthrowing the last vestiges of an American landed aristocracy in order to pave the way for a proletarian revolution around the corner. Marx wrote in *Die Presse*, “The present struggle between South and North is thus nothing less than a struggle between two social systems: the system of slavery and the system of free labor [...] It can only be ended by the victory of one system or the other.”

Another passage from Marx’s writings on the Civil War, this one from an official address of the International Workingmen’s Association to Abraham Lincoln, is worth quoting at length to illustrate the apparent historical separation he created between the world of slavery and the world of capitalism, and the implications of both: “While the workingmen, the true political power of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned laborer to sell himself and choose his own master, they were unable to attain the true freedom of labor or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation, but this barrier to progress has been swept off by the red sea of civil war.”

A strict Marxist analysis of antebellum American society does call for such a historical separation between the coexisting, conflicting modes of production in North and South, and the above passage especially serves to demonstrate the function of race under capitalism as a tool to divide the lower classes. But a prescient comment by Marx himself, in an 1846 letter, outlines a source of weakness in his later analysis: “Direct slavery is as much the pivot

<sup>1</sup>As outlined by Marx’s 1852 *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*. This work presents a historical materialist class analysis of Bonaparte’s coup that serves as a helpful framework for the leftist study of fascism.

of our industrialisation today as machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery, no cotton; without cotton, no modern industry [...] Slavery is therefore an economic category of the utmost importance. Without slavery, North America, the most progressive country, would be turned into a patriarchal land.” In a word, slavery was essential to, and was part of, capitalism.

Preeminent black historian W. E. B. Du Bois explains in his book *Black Reconstruction in America*, “Black labor became the foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a world-wide scale; new cities were built on the results of black labor, and a new labor problem, involving all white labor, arose both in Europe and America.” The focus of Marx’s analysis—the “new labor problem” to which Du Bois refers—was in the context of a capitalism that was preceded by and continued to be predicated upon a racially exploitative global market.

Plus, as historian Walter Johnson points out in the *Boston Review*, slavery challenges Marx’s assumption that capital and labor are necessarily and dichotomously opposed under capitalism. Indeed, slaves were more than just a source of labor. As an investment for their owners, treated as property, they were capital too. They were sold as both worker and financial asset. They faced sexual abuse and forced reproduction to ensure both a steady labor force and capital accumulation. Their dual identity hinged on an ultimate, unified exploitation. Thus, in a capitalism of racial slavery, the dichotomy of capital and labor was only applicable to free and mostly white laborers.

Slaveowners also straddled two worlds in Marxian categorization, but in the position of oppressor: superficially existing as the landed aristocracy of a pre-capitalist system while effectively operating as capitalists. Slavery and land ownership did create a rather distinct, provincial social structure in the antebellum South,

## **IF WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE CIVIL WAR WAS FOUGHT OVER SLAVERY, BUT DID NOT CHANGE THE FUNDAMENTALLY RACIAL CHARACTER OF CAPITALISM, WE CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND THE TRUMP PHENOMENON**

but this slave system was not an isolated American phenomenon. It was dependent on a global market, and the cotton it produced was not so much a simple crop as it was a commodity.

In short, viewing the Civil War’s liberatory character as dependent on its launching of America into a new era of pure, deracialized capitalism is incredibly problematic. Capitalism existed before the war as a system involving racial slavery; after the war it continued to exist as such, but with racial slavery exported to colonies in a new age of brutal imperialism. And, though the war became one of abolition, true emancipation in a universal, complete sense was never achieved, nor was it an explicit goal. The

residue of the slave system remains as a permanent stain, from sharecropping to Jim Crow to the structural racial inequalities that exist today. The Civil War was never meant to prevent any of this. Abolitionists could be morally opposed to slavery, but stop short of racial equality. Such a combination enables dangerous posturing of the liberatory Civil War narrative as one of white saviorism.

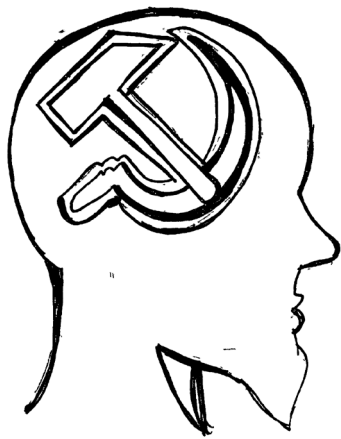
## **IV. CONCLUSIONS IN THE ERA OF TRUMPISM**

So, then, where does this leave, as I worded earlier, the Left’s “critical narrative of liberation conscious of its own limits?” It seems that addressing the limits has dismantled the entire project of a liberatory narrative. And perhaps, in a broad sense, it is fruitless—impossible from the start, even—to pursue this narrative of a war so steeped in the white supremacy of the nation over which it was fought. Still, the concept of a liberatory narrative, with the unqualified definition I provided earlier, is still useful for the Left on a smaller scale, countering individual instances of racist historical manipulation (the flying of the Confederate flag for “heritage,” the glorification of Confederate leaders, etc.), and thus keeping at bay the constructed white victimization those instances perpetuate.

The liberatory narrative with its flaws, the critical, more complete narrative which may not be liberatory at all, has use value, too. If we acknowledge that the Civil War was fought over slavery, but did not change the fundamentally racial character of capitalism, we can better understand the Trump phenomenon, and thus better fight against it. A narrative of white victimization was so appealing to many of Trump’s supporters—that ever-menacing “white working class”—because of their fall from economic comfort over the past three decades of neoliberalism. The Left must view the devastating neoliberal policies which led to white working class poverty with as much criticism as it views racist reaction. While they may be low on the ladder of class, many Trump voters were able to find recourse in white supremacy because of their place in white privilege on the ladder of race; lower class people of color do not necessarily have a place of social power with which they may associate themselves in hard times. Moreover, the relative economic comfort formerly enjoyed by so many of the white working class was only obtainable because of the color of their skin. As Walter Johnson puts it, “The history of white working-class struggle [...] cannot be understood separate from the privileges of whiteness, to which the white working classes of Britain and the United States laid claim in their demands for equal political rights.”

The complicated legacy of the Civil War thus presents the Left with the problem of how to engage with capitalism’s victims, divided by race, privilege, and history, in the Age of Trump, especially when many of these victims, due to their race, privilege, and history, support him. One answer takes the form of militant opposition to racism in all forms, and building an anti-capitalist economic message that appeals to all regardless of race, and which is, unlike other promises of economic equality in the past, accessible to and attainable by all regardless of race. This is by no means an easy project. But it begins with a Leftist solution to our American crisis of historical memory. ■

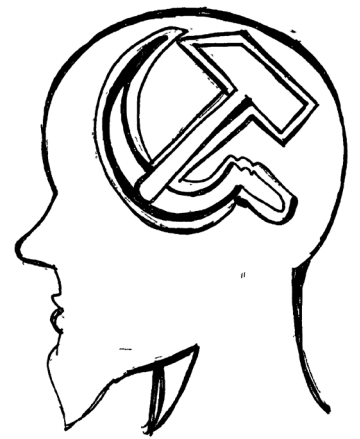




# A WAR TO END ALL (CLASS) WARS

LESSONS FROM THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

BY: BRADEN FLAX



Just over a century ago, a revolutionary event took a conflict-ridden world by storm, calling into question the orthodoxies that defined the political discourse of each society. The Russian Revolution, against all odds and in defiance of nearly universal expectations of the contrary, ushered in a society aspiring to abundance and characterized by institutional devotion to social progress. This event, a formative one in the course of human history, was presaged by a set of historical conditions that facilitated it. It would be unhelpful, in this instance, to add to the clamor of commentary that has grown with recognition of the Revolution's centennial, primarily consisting of scholars wrangling over the integrity of the Revolution as a working class movement. Likewise, it would be unhelpful to add to the recounting and explicating of its swift, devastating deterioration. Rather, it is of greater utility to focus on the events that set the stage for the Revolution, particularly World War I. This approach will afford us a look into conditions that we might take advantage of in the modern era to conduct further struggles, and to understand past failures.

World War I was the culmination of imperial tensions—colonial empires clashed mightily, as their resources were strategically mobilized to maintain their hegemonic spheres. Competing powers depended on support grounded in artificial and temporary alliance systems, but were nevertheless emboldened to confront their adversaries. These troops could not be depended upon to remain docile, obedient sheep—they'd been exploited for far too long, first as workers, second as soldiers. It was time for their dignity to be recognized. If no one else would bring about this change, then they would, from the front lines of battle or from the floors of the factories that produced the munitions, pieces of which could be found in their massacred comrades.

Russian socialist leader Vladimir Lenin, above all others, understood that the interests of the capitalist state were in opposition to those of the soldiers and laborers, and therefore understood that the primary objective of the working class had to be this state's overthrow. Accordingly, Lenin could not help but be shocked and dismayed at the unwillingness of other European leftists to lead their respective movements, a failure signaled first by their votes in support of the war effort. This incapacity to assert political independence rendered the proletariat vulnerable to social opportunism. This soon infected the working class' consciousness by directing workers' fervor against their fellow workers and, by extension, against their class allies in other nations. The Second International, the foremost international leftist organization of the

period, tragically dissolved at a point where organization of its type was indispensable. The workers had to turn elsewhere for solidarity and direction, but their desperate rotations were met, in most places, with a lack of revolutionary agitation. They were misled by leftists who defended the nation state. In practice, this translated into the squandering of one revolutionary opportunity after another. Every setback the workers' movement suffered allowed for further capitalist competition and exploitation.

This is not to assert that no leftists attempted revolutionary organization; Rosa Luxemburg in Germany and Eugene Debs in the United States afford us a towering examples. But the comparative immaturity that characterized class consciousness in these nations were crippling defects, and there was no viable party, as there was in Russia, to take and retain the reins of power. Ultimately, when socialists collaborated across class lines for the War, they secured the defeat of their ideal world. Racism in the United States was an especially toxic ingredient in the disaster that was the failed attempt to revolutionize American society; labor was crippled by this seemingly insurmountable division. Only leftists in Russia were able to meet and take advantage of conditions for their revolution, from the spirit of the working class to the discipline of a vanguard party.

Today, American leftists must learn from the failures of the Second International, because in many respects our circumstances parallel those of European powers during World War I. First parallel: the United States is a thoroughly militarized state. And, much of the American working class today is as hostile toward the major political parties and toward liberal institutions, as workers a century ago were toward the analogous structures of their time. Second, ruling ideologies and assumptions are now on the cultural chopping block as they were then. As such, an understanding of World War I is essential to the formation of a modern revolutionary movement. The leftists of a century ago, all over the world, ultimately advanced the interests of the capitalists they intended to undermine. Today, it is incumbent upon the class-conscious to cultivate and enhance the codependent forces of leadership and mass struggle, and do so with the unassailable conviction that their enemy is the behemoth of American capitalism. Failure to do this will direct fervor into reactionary outlets—as we can see in the uptick in fascist violence across the world perpetrated against the most vulnerable populations. An equally international response is necessary to seize opportunities that were missed in the past. ■

# OUR DUTY TO DIE: A CRITIQUE OF THE DRAFT

BY: SARAH BARNETTE

Imagine you stand before faceless men, and you are arguing to save your own life, but when you sound too much like you are arguing to save your own life, they stamp a red X on your papers. You have lost the right to remain alive.

There are seventeen million of you—barely men, mostly boys, and when the war is declared and the draft is reinstated in 2018, you sit in silence as you watch the news. Maybe it's winter break. You're home from college, and you can hear ceramic pots clanking in the kitchen sink, and somebody's socked feet are thumping on the floorboards overhead. You feel hot. Your hands sweat. The news anchors are speaking and speaking and speaking but their faces do not move. You silently recall everything you ever learned about Vietnam in history class.

Now imagine you have never killed someone. Imagine you are going to kill someone. Your mother calls your name, and as you get to your feet—are your feet even moving?—you think that no, you can't imagine what it's like. The person at the end of the barrel looks surprised, mouth forming a little 'o,' then there's the sound, or at least what you think is the sound, of a person dying. Blood seems much brighter in the movies. This is a face you will remember for years: the shape of surprise, how eyes look when someone realizes they will be dead soon, and no name, never a name, just the body

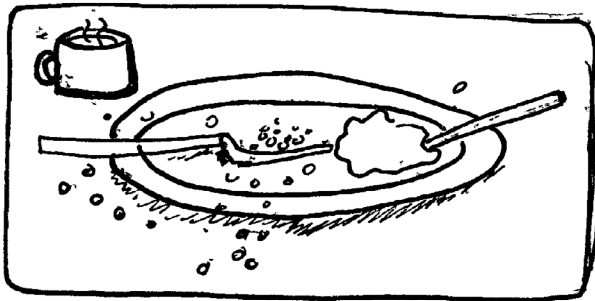


Illustration: Tëa Wimer

and blood of a child whose mother you will never meet.

You sit down in front of your dinner plate. While everybody else picks up their forks, you can see yourself dying. You are the person at the end of the barrel. Or maybe you don't see it coming, the shot comes from miles away, and the blood on your palm when it pulls away from your gut is warm. Or maybe you don't even know it happens. There are bombs. And grenades, and nuclear weapons; and people aren't hard to tear apart: it only takes a trigger, and you realize, finally, that you are afraid to die—you are only twenty and you are selfish for being afraid to die.

When you grow older—that is, if you survive this—they will love to remind you that you are a coward. First you will find the grocery store stares that drag, then there will be the underhanded murmur at a family reunion, maybe a disingenuous squeeze of the wrist, then your great-aunt praises your cousin, then your uncle

mourns your cousin, because your cousin was drafted and your cousin is dead, and you are standing there with a red Solo cup of ginger ale and a freshly pressed gingham shirt. Oh God. Somebody's asking why you ran away. Somebody's asking why you let people die. Somebody's—

Saying your name. You look up then. Your mother has been saying your name. Everyone at the dinner table is looking at you, and your sister's spoon spills peas, and your father's knife pauses mid-slice in the heart of his steak, red and wet and squelching. You feel sick.

You'll be fine, your mother promises, you're going to be just fine. There are so many of you. (But perhaps this is the scariest part—that there are so many of you.)

The letter comes in the mail weeks later anyway. It shouldn't be scary—just a crisp, off-white rectangle, and your thumbs wrinkle the edges slightly when you pull it out—but you feel like your father has just spooned out your heart with his steak knife. There one second, then a gaping hole the next. You read the induction notice once, lips slightly parted. Now you read it a second time. Your mouth has gone dry. You can hear your sister slamming the fridge door in the kitchen. There's the sound of orange juice gulping into a glass, then your mother yells something muffled from the upstairs office, maybe your sister's name, maybe yours. You fold the letter and try to slip it back into the envelope. Your hands are shaking though, and when your sister walks into the living room and asks what's wrong, carrying a half-full cup of orange juice, you cannot find the words to speak. After all, this is supposed to be the stuff of fiction.

It is 2018, and the government has decided you will die for them. In a sick repetition of Vietnam, you now have two options—die, or refuse to die. Say you think long and hard and decide you refuse to die at the age of twenty. This, however, brings you to the faceless men, the local Selective Service board, who you are standing in front of while wearing your father's dress coat and pants your mother starched creases into. They ask you questions you're not quick enough to answer. You start to slip. You feel like there's something you don't know. The rules to a game, maybe, that the kids in gym class refuse to tell you before they start pelting rubber balls, and you're suddenly overly aware that your mother is waiting for you outside, tapping her two-inch nude heels on the tile. You sweat through your father's dress coat and when it's done, when you've finished making your case, you know exactly what's going to happen.

Your mother stands up after you close the door. Her red lipstick reminds you of the red X. This reminds you of the fear rising thick and heavy in your throat, which reminds you that you might be dead soon, so you don't say anything. Words, after all, have yet to be on your side. In another world, our existences owe



the military nothing.

Regardless, the draft is a difficult concept to grapple with. While living as citizens, we are expected to give pieces of ourselves to the state in return for protection, laws, and other things that theoretically make our society flow smoothly. The act of coexistence demands a mutual relationship that keeps us moving in unbroken circles, and the draft, according to the government, a necessary manifestation of this relationship. Once again, this theoretically makes sense, and yet I am afraid for the erasure of the individual.

As it stands, we owe our lives to the government in the kind of life-pledge that could mean nothing but could also mean everything. The draft seems harmless because it is currently not in effect. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, all men on American soil—and women soon—must register with the Selective Service System, which administers the draft when necessary. The process is simple—some states automatically register you when you get your driver's license, and registration is offered online as well. So why fear it? The last man was inducted into the army in 1973. The year is 2018. We scratch our name into the lists of seventeen million and sleep easily at night.

Yet despite that the draft is currently inactive, the Selective Service System still dangles our lives above our heads—the legal structures that allowed Vietnam to happen have not shifted. We have a sense of security that the worst will never happen to us, that Vietnam will remain a high school history unit instead of reality. We forget what this life-pledge means because most of us have never lived through a draft. Registering with the Selective Service System now seems as harmless as going to the post office or filing taxes, as simple and boring as updating a license plate, and this is why the draft is insidious.

It is also virtually impossible to evade. Failure to register for Selective Service denies you access to federal financial aid, jobs, driver's licenses, and U.S. citizenship if you don't have it already; furthermore, if you want to opt out as a conscientious objector, or somebody who objects to military service on religious or ethical grounds, you aren't allowed to do so until the draft is actually activated. While we won't be walking around with draft cards tucked into our front pockets, there are still serial codes printed on our backs, and the government only has to fish a number out of a bingo cage before shipping us off.

Remember this when you register online after your eighteenth birthday.

Many think of the draft as an egalitarian method to secure enough people to protect the country in wartime. Many others think of it as a basic duty to the country. Perhaps my ideas are skewed, but randomly plucking young people from kitchens and classrooms and forcing them to partake in war is not a representation of equality. It is an expression of cruelty. It is the systematic destruction of an individual's ability to choose how to live in accordance with one's beliefs—simply by existing within America, you are expected to kill for America if she calls on you. And what is your duty regardless? Simple existence is not submission. This is a mutual relationship where both sides give and take, and the state cannot exist without the people, which means the people should—and must—challenge what the state demands of us.

The year is 2018 and the situation has worsened—the War on Terror has only emphasized the sense of military worship that

permeates American life. We don't question what a soldier has done when they return home from war. We thank them for defending us from what, and who, we don't understand. The military—and the draft as well—have become symbols of what it means to be an American citizen, and we are so indoctrinated to this idea that we rarely question the implications of registering with the Selective Service System. For a country that inflates and venerates democracy as much as the United States does, forcing human beings to take part in war is perhaps one of the most undemocratic, and inhumane, structures that exists here today.

Choice, and choice alone, is the core of the argument against the draft. In order for the draft to exist, we detach ourselves from the idea that humans are individuals with unique sets of values, but in no collective should individual lines be blurred. We often forget that people have the incredible ability to choose. When it comes to war, people should, above all else, have the right to choose how they are involved. They are not property to be shipped across the sea to kill or be killed. They are not chess pieces of the state—including those who choose to be soldiers, who are praised in parades yet remain nameless to the rest of us. They are people, like you and me, who love and hate and are often afraid.

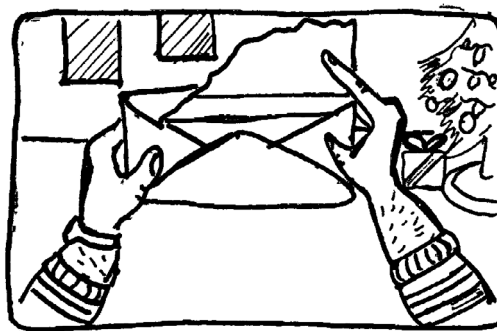


Illustration: Tea Wimer

We often forget the people who will be forced to go to war when the draft returns. They will lose a piece of themselves that cannot be salvaged. You'll lose a piece of yourself, too, when you reduce others to property. We've been here before with the Thirteenth Amendment—neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction. And though the state may have decided that the draft is not involuntary servitude, the state has been wrong before. Society should be ever-changing and constantly assess its widening cracks. The draft is a crack that, one day, we all just might fall into.

Forty-three years have passed since Vietnam ended, and in that time, any and all opposition to the draft has fallen silent. We feel comfortable. We don't think about how we comply with a legal system that has the constitutional right to force us to fight. And if we continue with our complacency, then we won't stand a chance when the draft returns.

I pretend I am pulling the envelope out of the mailbox. Maybe it would do you some good to pretend there's one waiting for you, too. Because no matter your morals, killing somebody—or being killed—is a transformative action. You only have so many years here. You only have so many replays in your brain of the boy you shot overseas. Dying is an irreversible bruise, and while I may have few concrete answers for things, I at least know that human life isn't light—human life is heavy. ■

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# UNDOING THE NUCLEAR OPTION

## AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. ZIA MIAN

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*The Prog's Chris Russo sat down with Dr. Zia Mian of Princeton's Program on Science and Security. A physicist by education, Dr. Mian has published books and articles on nuclear non-proliferation, with an emphasis on the science of nuclear technology. His published works include *Unmaking the Bomb: A Fissile Material Approach to Nuclear Disarmament* and *Out of the Nuclear Shadow* among others.*

**CR:** In your book *Unmaking the Bomb*, you talk about how the existence of nuclear energy might enable a country that has disarmed itself to quickly rebuild nuclear weapons using the existing infrastructure of power plants and reactors. Long-term, a world without nuclear weapons might necessitate a world without nuclear power. How do you balance the hazard of nuclear weapons with nuclear power as a fairly promising clean energy source?

ZM: The relationship between nuclear weapons and the use of nuclear power for electricity generation is actually as old as the bomb and older than nuclear energy. During the Manhattan Project, and even before, physicists realized that it was possible to try to control the chain reaction so that it could not only be explosive, but could be moderated to produce energy. In the first studies by physicists during World War II, most famously in the Franck report, led by Nobel Prize-winning physicist James Franck, it was argued that in a future where nuclear energy is allowed for states' peaceful uses, there would be risk of the diversion of civilian facilities and materials for military use in crisis. This was seen before the first civilian facilities [for energy generation] were

even built—all the facilities the US built during World War II were military facilities for a weapons program.

It was realized that any future nuclear structures could be available to states for making weapons. Physicists saw clearly that the technology was transferable and that in some cases materials were transferable—plutonium produced for civilian energy uses could be used to make weapons; facilities for enriching uranium to make fuel for nuclear reactors could be used to make material for weapons.

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**PHYSICISTS PROPOSED... THAT IN ANY FUTURE WORLD WHERE NUCLEAR WEAPONS WERE ABOLISHED, CIVILIAN NUCLEAR ENERGY SHOULD BE UNDER INTERNATIONAL CONTROL AND NOT UNDER THE CONTROL OF ANY PARTICULAR NATION-STATE**

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The argument the physicists proposed was that in any future world where nuclear weapons were abolished, civilian nuclear energy should be under international control and not under the control of any particular nation-state. The facilities in a state's territory would be owned internationally and not

by that particular government, making it much more difficult to divert people as well as materials and facilities for weapons purposes.

This effort to try to find a management solution rather than a technological solution to the proliferation risk inherent in the use of nuclear energy failed because of the Cold War. By the 1950s, the US shared and promised to share civilian nuclear technology with other countries in exchange for their loyalty to the West in the Cold War, and the Soviet Union eventually decided to do the same thing.

You have to remember that for the first sixty years of nuclear energy, its advocates never talked about climate change. It's only as nuclear energy has stalled and gone into decline, as neither claims of its economy or modernity have proven correct—arguments about how nuclear energy is going to be so cheap we won't have to meter it; it's so modern it will replace all these fossil fuel-burning technologies—that the nuclear energy community has fastened its hopes [for continued relevance] to climate change.

One can see a clear pattern where countries with a history in nuclear energy and in which energy markets are allowed to shape investment decisions—Germany, France, Japan—have already given up on nuclear energy. It's only in states where policy-making has been captured by the nuclear establishments, like in China and India, do you actually see continued significant investment in nuclear energy. You also see countries that come late to nuclear energy making the same arguments about the future of nuclear energy that the US and the UK made in the 60s and the 70s. It takes countries twenty years to realize this is not the way the world works.

In fact, for most of the world, economics suggests that large-scale renewable energy is coming in at costs significantly lower than those projected for nuclear energy. You can ramp up investment in solar and wind in ways that third-world societies can actually manage much more effectively in modular ways, and so I think that is where the energy markets are increasingly going around the world. As we make progress in managing grids and storage there really is going to be no case, economic or otherwise, for nuclear energy, regardless of the fact that in comparison to fossil fuels it's seen to be a low-carbon source of energy.

**CR: Realistically, the current administration is not interested in reducing our nuclear stockpile, and Trump has made tweets suggesting that it actually wants to increase it, which is pretty ridiculous, but he'll only be here for a limited amount of time. I'm more worried about how the current administration is not particularly interested**

**in participation in international institutions and agreements, is ostensibly more interested in using force with other countries, and is gutting our diplomatic core. Is the current administration going to weaken the means by which nuclear disarmament and ultimately prohibition would be achieved?**

ZM: The Trump administration marks a sharp break from the policies of the Obama administration on arms control and non-proliferation, but prior to the Obama administration, we had the Bush administration for eight years. In 2000, Bush actually had plans for a new generation of nuclear weapons, including deep earth penetrating “bunker busters” and low-yield tactical nuclear weapons, and for a buildup in nuclear capabilities; and they were relatively scornful of international agreements. John Bolton, US ambassador to the UN at the time, argued that you could actually just get rid of most [international institutions]. Seen from this larger historical perspective, many of the positions taken by the Trump administration are quite similar to those taken in the early years of the Bush administration.

**IT IS A STRUGGLE, BUT THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION IS NOT GOING TO GET ITS WAY BY SHEER FORCE OF WILL**

The Bush administration was not unique either. Back in the Reagan administration, similar arguments and policies were being put in place: large investments in new nuclear weapons capabilities, new nuclear technologies, and a contempt for international law, the international community, and non-proliferation agreements.

With Reagan and Bush and Trump, you see demands and pressures and sometimes decisions to increase spending on nuclear weapons, for new kinds of nuclear weapons and new postures and roles for nuclear weapons. All of these policies are basically the same—they reflect a strain in Republican thought about the role of nuclear weapons and the role of the US in the world with regard to the international community.

The interesting thing is that after a few years, in response to public pressure and the consequences of its own decisions,

the Reagan administration had to sit down and negotiate with the Soviet Union to find some basis for an agreement leading to far reaching arms control treaties. It took a huge amount of effort by the peace movement and by people of good will in Congress and by the international community, especially the Europeans, to get the US leadership to see sense.

Similarly, there was a lot of pushback against Bush administration's nuclear weapons policies. Midway into that administration, the Moscow Agreement reduced the number of deployed nuclear weapons and weapons in reserves. It's possible we will see a similar unfolding in the Trump administration. If the Democrats take control of Congress in 2018, funding for these programs becomes something of significant policy dispute and Congress can prevent the runaway policies that the Trump administration is trying to put in place.

The international community also plays an important role in eventually getting the US to see sense. No matter what the US wants to do, eventually it does need some kind of support and cooperation and legitimacy for its policies from other countries. A simple example: what can be done about North Korea or Iran?

The Trump administration wants to undo the Iranian Nuclear deal that was made under the Obama administration. This deal also has as parties Russia, China, and the European Union. These are the same powers the administration needs for support in dealing with North Korea. Without them, there is no basis for the US to get UN approval for new sanctions, new policies, new support, and new restrictions. They have already been telling the White House that they will not support this effort to roll back the Iran agreement. The increasing isolation of the US from key players in the international community, and the loss of legitimacy that brings, makes it harder for the US to get support and traction for all the other policies it does need approval for.

I think that's the process of learning that takes place in administrations. The harsh light of reality starts to teach people lessons about how the world works. I think this is the lesson the Trump administration will learn. It's a lesson that requires a lot of effort from everybody else to teach the White House and it doesn't happen by itself. It's going to require a lot of determination and leadership from countries around the world and by American citizens choosing sides about

what country they want to be and what kind of policy they want their government to pursue. The struggle is on. It is a struggle, but the Trump administration is not going to get its way by sheer force of will.

**CR: In *Unmaking the Bomb*, you talk about how we need to understand ourselves as global citizens and hold our governments responsible as members of the international community and accountable to the international agreements to which they are parties to achieve nuclear disarmament. Seeing the rise of xenophobia, populism, and nationalism in the West and elsewhere, do you think this task will be more difficult?**

ZM: Support for right wing nationalism, which is often xenophobic, if not directly racist, is in fact a response to the globalization and growing cosmopolitanism that has spread around the world, especially since the end of the Cold War. One should not overstate the significance of this backlash. These people are minorities; history is not on their side, and when one looks forward, there is no undoing the fact that you now have this integration of people and societies and economies and a sensibility of one planet that we share.

Secondly, a really interesting generation gap has opened up. All the evidence seems to suggest that younger people who have grown up in this period of global integration are much more sympathetic to a set of values where they see a common humanity and a common planet in terms of issues of environmental sensitivity and sustainability, of the need to address poverty, of the equality of all human beings. This seems to indicate that the next generation will actually pick up this process and move forward with it with a new sensitivity about how to deal with these reactionary sensibilities that have been stirred by right wing forces in some of these countries.

Scientists have played a fundamental role in this, especially when it comes to nuclear weapons issues. In the 1950s, Albert Einstein and the British philosopher Bertrand Russell produced the famous Russell-Einstein Manifesto, launching the scientists' organization Hogwash, which was an attempt to organize themselves to engage with people and citizens around the world about the dangers of nuclear weapons and war more broadly. They had this luminous sentence: "remember your humanity and forget the rest," This is the necessary



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condition for continued human existence and well-being in a world of nation-states where nuclear weapons are possible, because if you leave it to nation states who are able to go to war with nuclear weapons, the future of humanity will always be uncertain. I think we have huge strides to make in that direction, but the future is hopeful once we get past the difficult times that we're in.

**CR: What do we do as citizens, scientists, to try to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons? How do we inform the public about science, about the reality of nuclear weapons and their danger?**

ZM: When nuclear weapons were first brought into the world, they were created by scientists as part of a military project run by the US government in secret from its own legislative processes—Congress didn't know, and the American people didn't know. It was fundamentally an undemocratic process from the very beginning.

Einstein wrote was that it is only through the informed and insistent action by an aroused humanity that we can deal with the danger of nuclear weapons. In other words, educating people so that they can decide for themselves about how to think about nuclear weapons and allowing the democratic

process to play out is necessary.

As scientists, we have two identities—absolutely I am a scientist, but I am a citizen before I am a scientist. The idea of the citizen-scientist is one where you can fulfill your obligations to participate in the decision-making of your society so that your fellow citizens, too, are empowered to participate as fully as they possibly can and wish to do so. The first thing is to let them know so they can decide for themselves. Secondly, you have an additional obligation on top of just telling other people to put your expertise to make it available to society as a whole for the common good.

The idea that scientists can contribute and have a special responsibility, as scientists have for a long time recognized, is a core value of science, and certainly science in democratic societies. You can make contributions to science, but regardless of that, you rely on society to support you and give you the privilege to be able to devote your life to this enterprise. You owe them for that privilege, and one of the ways to repay this debt is not just to try to help humanity discover truths about ourselves and the world we live in, but to actually help people better navigate our existence in that world so that the world is actually a better place. ■

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**[SCIENTISTS] HAD THIS  
LUMINOUS SENTENCE:**

**"REMEMBER YOUR HUMANITY  
AND  
FORGET THE REST"**



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