

# THE PRINCETON PROGRESSIVE

Vol. 2  
Fall 2014

## BREAK THE BUBBLE

A Return to Local Politics  
Students Against Sexual Assault  
The Democrats' Neglected Base  
A Black Anarchist Speaks  
Dispatch from Tehran  
A Call for Reformed Rhetoric



# THE PRINCETON PROGRESSIVE



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## MASTHEAD

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MADHU RAMANKUTTY is a senior from Washington, D.C. in the Woodrow Wilson School and pursuing a certificate in Values and Public Life. When she is not obsessively re-tweeting Ezra Klein or being jealous of Amal Alamuddin, Madhu enjoys eating peanut butter out of the jar, writing and reading about the courts, and drawing straight lines.

### EDITORIAL BOARD

JOSHUA LEIFER is a sophomore studying economic history. He is particularly interested in issues of class, labor, and economic justice. Before enrolling in Princeton, he lived, learned, and taught for a year in Israel, where he was a member of All That's Left, an anti-occupation collective. He recently ran a coexistence and dialogue program from Israeli Jewish and Arab youths. In his free time, Josh enjoys playing the bass.

ASHESH RAMBACHAN is a sophomore from Minnesota with academic interests in economics and mathematics. He is particularly interested in development, health care, and macroeconomics. When not reading the latest from the econ blogosphere, he spends his free time daydreaming that he can dunk a basketball.

DANIEL TEEHAN is a sophomore from Brooklyn. He is extremely undeclared, with academic interests ranging from Cognitive Science to Arabic, Near Eastern Studies, Creative Writing, and Journalism. In his free time, he enjoys writing about reading, reading about rights, watching Fantasy TV, and fantasizing about social justice.

### DESIGN EDITOR

EMILY LEVER is a senior who has spent her time at Princeton learning about Comparative Literature, ethnocentric cultural hegemony, and the futility of all human endeavors. In her free time, she enjoys making jokes on the Internet. She would like to thank Andrew J. Sondern for teaching her everything she knows about layout and M.I.A. for teaching her how to live her life.



# A Return to the Local

By Joshua Leifer

Before it became an overused banality, “Act Locally, Think Globally” was radical statement of possibility and responsibility. It was an expression of the hope that fundamental, systemic political change could be enacted on an international level. And it was an acknowledgment of the West’s culpability for the violence, exploitation, and suffering of colonialism, capitalism, and environmental degradation. Though the phrase did not originate with the student protests of 1968, groups like the Situationists that were active during the uprising made it ubiquitous.

Cultural critic and historian Greil Marcus, in his book *Lipstick Traces*, wrote of Situationist Raoul Vaneigem and the changed meaning of the phrase:

*“He was contriving a prophecy of May ’68, when so many of the lines in his book would be copied onto the walls of Paris, then across France, and then, as the years went on and the words floated free of their source, when the book had been lost in the vagaries of publishing and fashion, around the world. ‘ACT LOCALLY, THINK GLOBALLY,’ I can read today on a bumper sticker in my hometown; Vaneigem wrote the words, though the person will never know it.”*

“Act locally, think globally” endured as an activist slogan for decades. The environmental movement embraced it, human rights groups embraced it, and anti-sweatshop groups embraced it.

Then, as Marcus hints at, something changed. The phrase has become just another marketing strategy in the playbook of multinational corporations. From McDonalds to BP, companies with dubious environmental and workers’ rights records have adopted the phrase as a means of making consumers feel good about their consumption. The practice of flattering consumers’ sense of

virtue is fully part of today’s economic climate, where “local” foods and “global responsibility” are ideas promoted by companies that show little regard for them in practice.

The idea that was once behind the phrase “Act Locally, Think Globally” has disappeared. It has been replaced with the market-oriented idea that changes in individual consumption habits can result in systemic changes. Theories of change that use the logic of the system they intend to alter are rarely successful. For all their popularity, movements like those for locally sourced food and socially responsible investing cannot bring down the vast economic apparatus that creates the problems they try to address. Eating

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*Climate change, income inequality, and institutional racism cannot be fought in the realm of personal consumption. Only collective action—politics—can address these crucial issues of justice.*

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tomatoes grown within 100 miles of one’s home and divesting from weapons manufacturing companies can only do so much.

The greatest political challenges of our time require political solutions. Climate change, income inequality, and institutional racism cannot be fought in the realm of personal consumption. Only collective action—politics—can address these crucial issues of justice.

And yet, left-wing activists, for the most part, have not found an idea to replace the one that corporate advertisers so skillfully co-opted. In many instances, when it comes to issues of climate, economic, and racial justice, we remain focused on the global when both our actions and our thoughts should aim at the local.

If there is any enduring lesson to learn

from the disastrous 2014 mid-term elections, it is that what happens on the local level matters more than we think. The Republicans kept control of the House of Representatives and took control of the Senate, not because the United States is an overwhelmingly conservative country where the majority agrees with the Republicans’ moral and ethical positions, but because the Republicans were better organized, better funded, and more effective in state and local elections that, at face value, seemed to matter very little. It is hard to care about a boring congressional race in a district where both Republican and Democratic candidates’ ideologies appear nearly indistinguishable. But wheth-

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*The elections for city council, county sheriff, or local school board, might seem inconsequential. But there are countless examples where those elections’ ramifications become matters of life and death—literally.*

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er we like it or not, those kinds of races are where important political decisions are made.

The elections for city council, county sheriff, or local school board, might seem inconsequential. But there are countless examples where those elections’ ramifications become matters of life and death—literally. In Ferguson, Missouri, where the white police officer Darren Wilson shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, the mayor, police chief, and five of the six council members are white. Around 70 percent of the city’s population is black. The political inequities that turned Ferguson into the ground zero of America’s race-relations crisis could have been lessened if the city had represented its residents better.

To be sure, a return to local politics will not be easy. The left’s power is dwarfed by the incredible sums of money that right wing groups can muster up. And many municipalities, like Ferguson, are plagued by such severe structural inequalities that it would take more than a “get-out-the-vote campaign” to change the political landscape. The American political system is rigged—this is not something new. Wealthy individuals and corporations almost always get their way. And tangled up with this system that perpetuates income inequality are the continued, systematic oppression that people of color face. But this does not mean that we can abandon the local political battles that are so important in shaping citizens’ every day lives. To the contrary, for the left that so often appeals to “the politics of the impossible” and insists on



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sibility of any kind of emancipatory political change, in the U.S. or abroad. But the alternatives, from prefigurative politics to “changing the discourse,” have not yielded the desired results. The Occupy movement managed to create an egalitarian encamp-

*“Thinking local” means being willing to put our bodies on the line to fight not only against injustices that take place overseas, but also against injustices that take place in our own backyards.*

ment in the middle of the capital of global capitalism, and while it changed the way Americans speak about income inequality, it did not result in any systemic political change. The left needs something more.

For many, a focus on the local seems reactionary, or perhaps provincial—that it is

too particularistic of an idea for those who are universally inclined to get behind. And it is true that from the early days of the republic, white supremacy and economic domination have been couched in the language of states’ rights and decentralization that “local” often seems to recall. But there does not have to be anything inherently reactionary about a return to local politics.

“Thinking local” means being willing to put our bodies on the line to fight, not only against injustices that take place overseas, but also against injustices that take place in our own backyards. It means demanding representation not only the macro-political level, but also on the most basic, municipal level. It means remembering the decision-making processes that effect our everyday lives should not be out of reach.

On the left, the overwhelming feeling is one of despair. Perhaps, by returning to local struggles, even the most depressing ones, we might find a few reasons for hope.

fighting injustice even if victory seems distant if not unforeseeable, the struggles that people face in places like Ferguson, Oakland, and the Bronx should be more than enough to light the flames of the righteous indignation that can lead to broader political action.

This does not mean ignoring the more distant struggles in places like Palestine; it means focusing on the local political processes as the roots of global injustice—what “Act locally, think globally” really used to mean. It means working to remove from power the local politicians who provide economic support for human rights abuses or environmental destruction.

Social media, technology, and globalized communication have made it easy to forget the inequities that occur close to home; we are incessantly inundated with images of violence and oppression from around the world. But the injustices we see are no more important than the ones we do not see. It is one of the perversities of contemporary society that it is far easier to get a sense of what is happening halfway across the world than it is to get a sense of what is happening twenty miles away. I have no doubt that a Princeton student could say far more about the civil war in Syria than he or she could about the food crisis in Trenton.

On the left, there is a kind of suspicion of the possibilities of electoral politics. And given the current moment, there is no shortage of reasons to be skeptical about the pos-



# The Democrats' Neglected Base

By Julio Castillo

The Democrats can blame whomever they want for their recent losses in the midterm elections. While they may blame President Obama's abysmal approval ratings, a nation scarred by a seemingly never-ending list of crises, a partisan Congress or a more cunning Republican Party, the culprits are the Democrats themselves. In the final months leading up to the elections, the Democratic Party attempted to play it safe by avoiding key issues. However, in doing so, they left themselves politically vulnerable to the anger and disillusionment that exists within Latino community. In particular, the president and the Democratic Party hurt their own prospects of retaining the Senate and regaining the House by holding off on immigration reform.

Immigration reform is ranked as the number one issue for Latino voters and in the past, the Democrats' support for reform has strengthened their popularity within the Latino community. For example, President Obama's support for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants helped him win 71% of Hispanic voters in 2012. Yet in the run-up to the 2014-midterm elections, he decided to delay executive action on immigration reform. For years, immigration activists have demanded that deportations be slowed down and stopped, particularly regarding non-criminal immigrants. They want undocumented immigrants brought as children to be given the chance to stay in the only country they know and for their parents to be protected as well. They demand that families not be separated. Even though he argued that later action would be more "sustainable," the president was implicitly claiming that inaction would help, or at least not hurt, the Democrats in the elections. The White House seemed to be more worried about a wave of Tea Party voters than a decline in Latino voter turnout. The day the president made this announcement was the day he asked the Latino community to trust his word over any actual action, and for many that was unacceptable.

Immigration activist groups were infuriated by the president's unwillingness to bravely act. The managing director of United We Dream, a national immigration rights organization, called the decision a "slap to the face of the Latino and immigrant community." A decision that was supposed to help the Democrats politically may have cost the party the votes it needed to retain the Senate. In fact, throughout the nation, Republicans were able to use this frustration with President Obama to attract Latino voters. In Georgia, according to exit polls, the Republican candidates won 42% and 47% of the Latino vote. In Kansas, Republican Pat Roberts won 46% to Independent Orman's 49%,

and in Colorado, Democrat Mark Udall won 71%, which shows a decrease from Obama's 87% and Michael Bennett's 81% in 2010. Udall lost by less 50,000 votes in a state where Latinos are 20% of the population. Latino voters switching parties doesn't seem to be the main problem at this point; instead, as the number of eligible Latino voters increases, the actual percentage of Latinos voting has remained the same for years. Democrats are losing their ability to excite and convince Latino voters to come out and vote.

However, this fall in support did not happen overnight. It is the culmination of six years of broken promises to the Latino community. The immigration system is still fundamentally broken. The Obama administration has deported more than 2 million individuals, far more than under any past administration. Moreover, President Obama consistently avoids this issue. In all, the Obama administration has created an environment in which Latinos are being forced to choose between the lesser of two evils and this will only decrease voter turnout. They are stuck between Republicans that only talk about opposing amnesty and Democrats are unable to commit itself to real change.

Courtney Perales '17, a student coordinator for the Princeton Dream Team, an immigrant rights advocacy group on campus, frankly said that the President's inability to act came as no surprise. She explained, "I am not surprised because of his history of empty promises and arbitrarily extending deadlines all of the time." She continued and suggested that the midterm election result "illustrates the faults of the Democrats politically in that they keep holding off on immigration." As a member of the Princeton Dream Team, Perales has witnessed first hand how this administration's failures have fostered a dangerous environment for the millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States. The work of the Princeton Dream Team in detention centers with undocumented students and immigrants has shown Perales and the rest of the Dream Team the countless challenges that are created by inaction at the federal level.

The 2014 elections were always going to be tough for the Democrats. Many of the states being contested were traditional red states before the 2008 Obama victory. Midterm elections are typically defined by low turnout overall and a higher proportion of older white voters. The Democrats went into these elections wounded by constant battle with the

GOP, but Latinos should not and cannot be lost to the GOP. Latinos are a growing community and as the largest minority group, ignoring their votes is unacceptable. Simply believing that Latinos will always vote Democrat will only also hurt the party. For instance, in Colorado, Senator Udall avoided the issue of immigration throughout his campaign to the point where voters did not even know the difference between him and the GOP nominee. By not acting on immigration reform, the Democrats are assuming that promises alone will deliver the votes. Eventually, the promises will be overshadowed by the President's track record. Latino voters will look to the other side to get the job done, and for at least the next two years Republicans have a real chance to make inroads with the Latino population by passing some form of comprehensive immigration reform. The Democrats dropped the ball on immigration and handed it straight into the hands of the GOP.

In recent days, it has been reported that President Obama will in fact release his new plan for immigration reform. Although the specifics of his plan is currently not specifically known, reports coming from different news outlets show that Obama is prepared to save up to 5 million undocumented immigrants from deportation. This much-needed action from this administration is a step in the right direction and will show the Latino community that the Democrats are committed to them. But, because of his failure to act earlier, President Obama will not only have to confront a furious GOP, but a GOP that controls both houses of Congress to protect his plan.

This midterm election was all about making a statement. Just as many Americans reacted against the Obama administration, so did Latinos. Latino voters used this election to voice their frustration with the administration. President Obama's final term was supposed to be about taking political risks. Instead, he is falling into a web of political games that are backfiring on his party and more importantly on his people. The president and his party can strengthen their ties to the Latino community simply by making every effort to pass immigration reform. The concerns of the Latino citizen are real and the Democrats cannot get away with taking this community's support for granted. President Obama can leave behind a legacy that involves tangible and realistic immigration reform but that involves leaving the politics of inaction behind.

# Tory-Watch

By Katie Cion

There are certain texts from which one can derive new meaning and value upon every occasion of reading and re-reading. There's the Declaration of Independence, The Great Gatsby, and the Bible. It is not surprising that one might encounter this sort of masterpiece during four years at Princeton. And lo and behold, in what was only my first week here, one was slipped under my door.

I have read the Princeton Tory's freshman welcome letter, "Greetings and welcome, Class of 2018," many times since that day, and I have found that I derive the most meaning and the most value from a sort of meta-reading of the article. Yes, the artful mastery of the written word that is demonstrated by the Tory in this instance taught me so much about writing as a craft, and also, about myself.

For those of you who did not have this issue delivered to your dorm, (1) my condolences but (2) I actually happen to have a few extra copies, as every time I brought one into my room, another was promptly left in its place—kind of like leaving a hotel towel on the floor to let the cleaning service know you want it washed, except a process more aggressive and less understood by both parties.

*Where was the apparent liberal cesspit? How big was it? Was it at all possible that the majority of students on campus were members? Is it on tap tonight? Is it PUID? Is it Terrace?*

But let me paint the scene for you. In this letter, the freshman class is welcomed to Princeton and encouraged to make a plan for their next four years. The plan suggested by the publisher? Carving out a path that will least challenge the conservative ideas that we freshman hold, and that will instead allow us to further develop an insular sense of moral and ideological superiority that one assumes our acceptance to Princeton was contingent upon in the first place.

This may sound simple enough, but there's much to learn from this argument and its how it is laid out. Take a look at the opening paragraph, for example.

"As I begin this letter, I fear that I will choke on all the standard welcome-to-campus clichés in this opening paragraph. To avoid platitudinal suffocation, let it suffice to say that we're all glad you're here, we look forward to meeting you, and, moreover, we hope that you will get involved with the Tory."



Immediately, I was the writer's clear sense of his audience. Very much a man of the people, he's not talking down to freshmen but just trying to give them what they want. Which, as any freshman will tell you, are such Microsoft-Word-spell-check-defying adjectives as "platitudinal." And the lessons continue from there.

Before this letter, I had never truly considered quotation marks to be rhetorical. But in non-discriminatingly applying punctuation marks, the author brings up many meaningful questions that words alone could never do. Why is "personal identity" in quotations? Why is "expand your horizons" in quotations? Seriously: why is "be tolerant" in quotations? Is the quotation key jammed on his keyboard, and did he decide to just roll with it?

The bounty of quotation marks is matched only by high-school vocabulary words. For example, the Tory wisely warns against letting faculty advisors advise too much, explaining that they might actually "obfuscate" the best course to a worthwhile education.

For anyone who forgets the meaning of "obfuscate"—am I using these correctly?—it is to make something unclear or unintelligible. You know, sort of like overly verbose writing does to mediocre ideas. Though, at the moment, no specific example comes to mind.

Using words like this make it clear that the author did very well on his SATs, establishing a strong appeal to ethos. Classic technique, extremely well-executed. Moreover, this level of mastery is undoubtedly intimidating. I admit, I was scared when I read this article for the first time. After the second time, I was terrified.

I wondered if everyone at Princeton was like this. Would I be able to keep up with this level of pretension? What if I erred from the recommended path of truth, and chose not to become a James Madison fellow, or worse, to take a Creative Writing class in place of "Fall of the Roman Empire?" Would these transgressions mean that I would be shunned by my peers, destined to spend

four years pursuing the mysterious folklore of progressivism at Princeton? Where was the apparent liberal cesspit? How big was it? Was it at all possible that the majority of students on campus were members? Is it on tap tonight? Is it PUID? Is it Terrace?

Obviously, these are dangerous and unfounded musings, best to be pushed to some irretrievable corner of the mind and replaced instead by the Anscombe Society's mission statement. And if such a repression is impossible, I guess I might as well walk out the FitzRandolph Gate now.

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# Will Princeton's New Sexual Assault Policy Be Enough to Fight the Campus Rape Culture ?

By Kelly Hatfield

Fog hung over campus early on the morning of November 12th, shrouding people and buildings in a haze that turned Princeton into a blurred version of itself. Two words, however, spray-painted in black on the wall just outside Tiger Inn, managed to break through the grey of Prospect Avenue. The phrase was scrubbed away, but its label remains imprinted faintly in the stone and starkly in the consciousness of the community. What was intended to single out T.I. as a "Rape Haven" has begun to speak more and more to campus culture as a whole, particularly in the wake of discussions of sexual assault that have recently sprouted up at colleges nationwide. Men and women across the country rally to "take back the night," to "carry the weight together," to "hollaback," but their efforts are in sharp contrast to the stories that emerge daily – stories that attest to the strength of rape culture in our society and universities' role in perpetuating that culture.

In the context of this fraught sexual climate, then, it can only be viewed as progress that the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights began an investigation into 55 universities' handling of sexual misconduct cases in 2010 and 2011. Princeton appeared on the list, and recently the investigation came to the conclusion that the university violated Title IX in regard to its response time and effectiveness in ending the hostile environment, specifically with regard to one student.

The news of the university's violation came a month after the administration enacted controversial changes in its policies towards handling sexual assaults. Many of the changes are subtle and involve shifts in language that appear unimportant, but the consequences could be far-reaching. The most important change pertains to burden of proof; rather than requiring "clear and persuasive" evidence, the university now mandates only a "preponderance" of evidence. In practical terms, rather than requiring an evidence standard in which it is highly probable that a crime took place, it now simply must be more likely than not. Specifically, there must be a chance greater than 50% that the allegations are true.

This change is ridiculous if you pause for a moment to think about it. In a situation in which those hearing the case are weighing one person's word against the other, the probability is already at 50%, if not higher when allowing for the fact that almost no one would take pressing such charges lightly. What has happened to due process? By taking such steps, this university and others around the nation, however well-intentioned, are denying the accused of some of the fundamental rights upon which the U.S. justice system is founded. Giving victims a voice and attempting to reduce some of the trauma frequently associated with trials by endowing them with a sense that they have the jury's trust is one

thing, but one cannot overlook the concept of "innocent until proven guilty" in order to do this. True, the university is not bound to the standards of the legal system, but why shouldn't it accept its most fundamental precepts, particularly in matters of such gravity?

Other measures in the university's policy include replacing a panel of students and faculty with one comprised of investigators, permitting both accuser and accused to obtain outside counsel, taking measures to expedite investigations, creating greater community awareness about matters of sexual misconduct, and providing both sides with equal rights of appeal. On the surface, these implementations appear benign or unequivocally positive. For instance, the university's stated commitment in the wake of being called out for Title IX violations to reexamine past cases and redouble efforts to foster a safe environment on campus for everyone could be perceived as something faultless. But such an image is at least in part misleading, for although taking such steps perhaps offers an important message to victims that their voices must and will be taken seriously, we must look at the context in which these changes arose and at the nuances of the potential repercussions.

The university notably enacted the new policies under the threat of losing funding from the government. This fact itself raises the question of motive. Is the university looking after its students, or after its financial interests? This is not a question that should be ignored. And yet – if these changes result in giving victims a sense of greater security, they remain a net benefit. In a society in which survivors often do not come forward or fear repercussions if they do, an institutional show of support is exactly the right move, regardless of what causes it to be taken. It is simply a poor choice for such a move to lower the standard of evi-

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dence for the reasons already enumerated.

Recently, 28 Harvard law professors weighed in on the implementation of similar measures at their home institution in an op-ed for the Boston Globe, decrying what they see as a misguided attempt at progress. In it, they illustrate some of the nuances of such policies: "The goal must not be simply to go

as far as possible in the direction of preventing anything that some might characterize as sexual harassment. The goal must instead be to fully address sexual harassment while at the same time protecting students against unfair and inappropriate discipline, honoring individual relationship autonomy, and maintaining the values of academic freedom.” Many of their later comments target the lack of transparency on the part of the administration, a problem both at Harvard and at Princeton.

According to a largely laudatory Washington Post op-ed written by Princeton student Aly Neel on the changes, the university felt a sense of urgency to push the new policies through. This rush denied the larger campus community the right to debate the issue and resulted in a sense that decisions were made behind a veil. Ms. Neel went on to outline the benefits of other aspects of the changes, and at one point notes, “What will determine the committee’s [the new Committee on Sexual Misconduct] effectiveness is the extent to which Princeton’s administration is willing to be transparent and allow the committee’s resulting recommendations to influence its decisions.” The university has already demonstrated a disregard for the wider community’s opinion when the clock was ticking with large sums of money at stake. What is there to guarantee future openness aside from a promise from administrators whose underlying motives are subject to debate?

In their article, the Harvard professors also raise concerns about the tenability of one of the administrations’ new policies; namely, the matter of outside counsel. Both sides now have the opportunity to seek out said advice, but what happens to those unable to afford legal representation on either side? Will the committee make provisions for such cases in order to give a fair chance for both the accused and the accuser? Will they have to make do with university representatives? Has

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The university has already demonstrated a disregard for the wider community’s opinion when the clock was ticking with large sums of money at stake. What is there to guarantee future openness aside from a promise from administrators whose underlying motives are subject to debate?

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the administration thought this through?

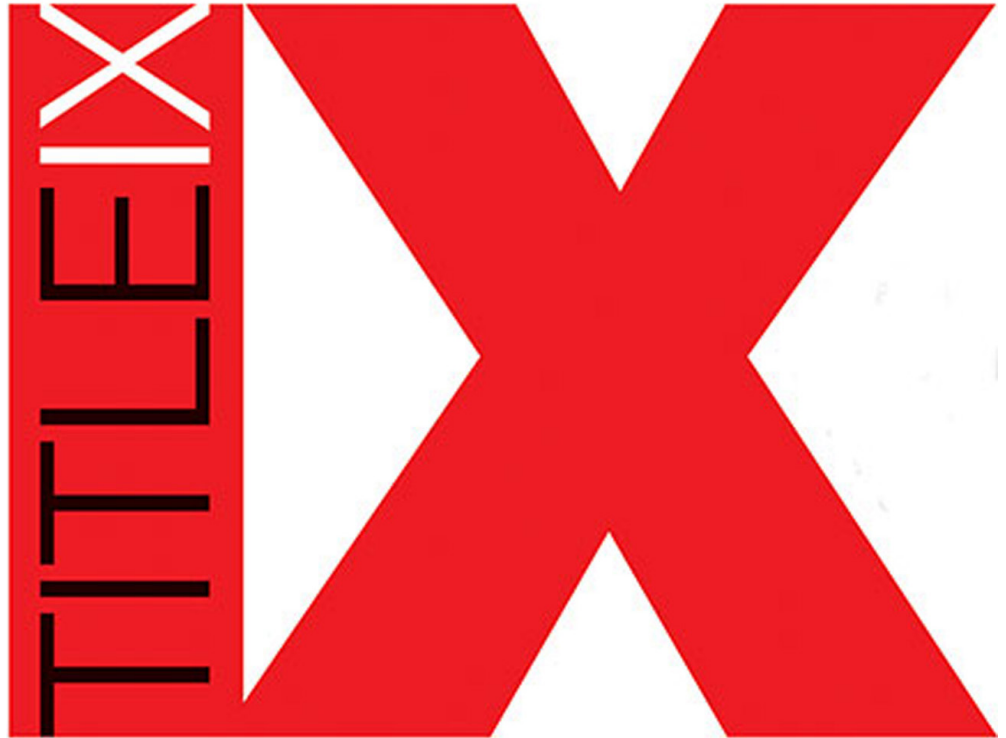
One step that the university could take to tackle more systemic issues, even if some of the measures are revoked, would be to adopt a policy similar to California’s recently-enacted “Yes means Yes” law. The law forces

publicly-funded universities to change the current standard of consent to one based on “affirmative, conscious and voluntary agreement,” thereby creating a crucial shift in the psychology of the matter. Instead of necessitating a negative expression (i.e. telling someone not to do something), the emphasis is placed on communication from the outset.

This is not to say that the “Yes means Yes”

at a “no” that for a range of reasons, sometimes never comes, the law fosters the idea that both partners should be more attuned to the other’s cues. In the long run, then, this new rule could move towards addressing many of the underlying cultural norms that have necessitated Princeton’s misguided choice of policy changes in the first place.

And yet, perhaps it’s time to step away



law is entirely without weaknesses, but its main fault is its intrusiveness, and in combating a pervasive issue this can simultaneously serve as its primary strength. “Yes means Yes,” as it marks a move on the part of legislators into a realm previously left to the discretion of those involved, demarcates the lines of consent unambiguously. It also promotes a type of explicit communication that is appallingly absent from current cultural norms.

Some critics say that “Yes means Yes” will simply exacerbate current issues in which consent falls within a “grey area” where, according to libertarian Shikha Dalmia, “much of sex is not consensual—but it is also not non-consensual.” Others argue that the definition of consent outlined in this policy is too narrow and fails to take into account more nuanced forms of communication, both verbal and nonverbal. By the standards of “Yes means Yes,” many current practices and their corresponding portrayals in popular media, would be classified as rape.

This may all be true in day-to-day enforcement. But what is much more important, and what Princeton and the country as a whole could gain from its implementation, is a shift in perception. Instead of waiting to stop only

from the extremes of Princeton’s new policies and “Yes means Yes” and look at barriers to the kind of communication the latter hopes to foster while maintaining the more reasonable standard of evidence used in the wider U.S. judicial system. One obstacle to clear consent can be linked to a wider societal discomfort with discussing sex as a whole. This is a factor of the lack of in-depth sex education in U.S. high schools. In practice, this can lead to one or both partners not feeling prepared or equipped for sexual intimacy. By implementing mandatory general sexual education classes alongside plays and talks about sexual assault, we can start a campus-wide conversation about sex that could empower partners to be more at ease in their own, more intimate discussions. Such a move, coupled with expansions on the quality work that SHARE already does to support victims and in conjunction with a concerted effort to monitor the university’s resolutions in accordance with Title IX, could begin to change the wider culture. Perhaps it could even facilitate the university’s transition from being accused of harboring a “Rape Haven” to being a haven for survivors and for justice in the proper sense of the word.





# Reasonable Precautions

By Mason Herson-Hord

Susan Patton '79 has widely publicized her opinion that women who are sexually assaulted while intoxicated or while dressed suggestively bear responsibility for the assault because of how their choices led to that outcome. I feel no need to regurgitate important arguments by everyone from Princeton faculty to Jon Stewart that such sentiments are victim-blaming or contribute to a culture of sexual assault. More interesting, in my opinion, was the dissent from the Daily Princetonian editorial written by Zach Horton and Sergio Leos.

This is not a matter of guilt or blame, but of common sense. "Rape prevention strategies" such as sobriety and conservative dress are simply pragmatic ways to deal with the hazards of being a woman. This is not an exceptionally monstrous argument. There are many decent, progressive people who very much want rape to end who accept this basic wisdom. Rape isn't a woman's fault, flows this view's logic, but we should be practical as well. Not drinking or flirting around people who might take advantage of you is just a "reasonable precaution."

There is a single word that sums up everything that is wrong, misguided, and toxic with the "reasonable precautions" approach: depoliticization.

The political nature of rape is quite straightforward. Rape is political in that it is an expression of entitlement to another person's body and to a position of power and control. Decades of sociological and psychological research have determined that rape is not an act committed out of hunger for sex but out of hunger for power. Sex is simply the mediating context for the infliction of that power. Serbian troops who raped Bosnian women with rifles did not do so because they were men who wanted sexual release. Lesbians being "cured" by "corrective rape" in South Africa are not attacked because men want sex and are stronger and take it. These attacks are inflicted upon women because their behavior does not

conform to the standards required by male supremacists. Due to the sexual violence of our prison system, we may now live in the first society in the history of the world where men are raped more frequently than women, and prison rapes do not happen with such frequency because there are so many horny gay men behind bars. Prison rape is a weapon of social control. Rape is not sex that is violence, but violence that is sexual. Furthermore, rape as an assertion of individualized power takes place within the confines of a much larger hierarchy, whereby an entire class of human beings (men) holds power over another (women). Rape is political because it is an expression of power on the personal level that functions to maintain power at a societal level.

Obviously, not everyone committing these acts recognizes that they are political. An unsolicited grope or a roofie tablet are rarely preceded by conscious intent to maintain an oppressive social order. But neither did every person who spat at a black person or called them a nigger have conscious, political intention to maintain such hierarchies. Neither often do men who use misogynistic humor to defend themselves from sexual equality or watch violent pornography that eroticizes female subordination or call women sluts. It is in fact essential for racist and sexist perpetrators to not recognize the politicality of their behavior, to be convinced that the systems of hierarchy they are defending is the natural order.

Imagine if one in five black people in the United States was a victim of a lynching, or beating by American whites. It would be a national crisis of violent white supremacy. To fall back on an imperfect but useful analogy, rape (roughly speaking) does for patriarchy what lynching did for white supremacy. Like white violence, rape works as a psychological weapon. In all other contexts, we we call this terrorism.

My point here is not really that drunk guys who have sex with people who don't want it are terrorists. It is that even when we are not

talking about politicized violence – say, Pinochet's secret police training their dogs to rape political prisoners – sexual assault from public buses in India to eating club bathrooms works to keep women in fear, with the consequence that sexual hierarchy stays intact.

This brings is back to friendly, pragmatic advice to take "reasonable precautions." By adopting the "women, change your behavior so you don't get raped" framework, we depoliticize rape while playing precisely into the hands of its politicality: women's behavior kept under male control, enforced by the threat of violence. Don't walk alone, because you need to have a man you trust to protect you. Don't get drunk, because you must remember your place in a world where any vulnerability is an invitation for attack. Don't wear a short skirt like that, because your body is not your own.

If we were to transfer Susan Patton, these nice liberals, the dissenting voices of the Daily Princetonian editorial board, and all of their "realist advice" back to the 1920s, I imagine they would advise blacks under Jim Crow to always be polite and display deference to whites, to never smile at a white woman if you were a black man, to keep your eyes down at all times. Even worse, this advice would be devoid of any politicality. It might even be clad in a narrative of normalization, implying throughout that this is simply nature, that white people are simply programmed to burst into frenzies of violence against blacks, who therefore "bear a certain responsibility for the consequences they faced." Worst of all, this "advice" bolsters white supremacy: by placing the burden for containing white violence on blacks, it reproduces the dynamics of black submission to white force. The only way out, apparently, is through subservience, which is all white supremacy wanted in the first place.

I do not want to be interpreted as saying women should reject "reasonable precautions" by drinking maximally and dressing minimally. I am saying that women should be able to do whatever the hell they want. Adopting "precautions" plays into the demands of patriarchy and rape culture in exchange for whatever dubious safety that obedience provides. Women can protect themselves in ways that might feel more like fighting back than submitting. Organizing together to watch out for each other is one. Pepper spray is another. But I have no right to tell women how to make that decision: I do not have to plan my nights out with considerations made for my personal safety. I can walk alone in cities at night without fearing that I will be attacked because of what is between my legs. I have never had to pay any serious attention to the possibility that I may become that one in five. Without knowing what that feels like, I cannot say whether taking "reasonable precautions" for self-preservation makes sense.

But I do question whether it's worth it.



## A Call for Rhetorical Reform

By George Kunkel

The current state of political discourse is hardly healthy. Partisanship is alive and well, thriving in our gridlocked Congress and the media outlets that seem to derive perverse pleasure from skewering the other side. When we wax poetic about the liberal ideal of free speech in an open discourse, is this what we are really mean? Are constant mudslinging and personal attacks a foundational part of our political dialogue? The answers would theoretically be no, but theory and practice are only the same in theory.

On Monday, September 29th, the James Madison Program at Princeton hosted an event featuring Professor Robert George and columnist George Will on the topic of “Higher Education and the Intellectual Culture: Is Reform Possible?” While Will reminisced about the past, Professor George expressed concern for the future of conservative ideas on college campuses. Citing last year’s protests against graduation speakers at a number of universities including Rutgers, Smith and Haverford College, George professed the need for a political environment in which anyone could speak, no matter their place on the political spectrum. He and Will agreed that the cause of the current shift towards anti-conservatism was largely based on a new conception of harm.

Instead of direct physical, monetary, or political harm to individuals, this new conception is dignitarian harm. Historically, dignitarian harm had to do with physical attacks and has been extended to slander, libel, and other attacks on a person’s dignity.

However, for George, this new conception has overreached. It can now describe any psychological harm inflicted through public or private speech. Professor George did not go into specifics, but ex-

amples are not hard to find. Speaking out against homosexuality or affirmative action is now likely to be characterized as harmful and therefore unacceptable speech.

This new notion of harm, George said, promotes shutting the door on open dialogue and contradicts the idea of freedom of speech within public discourse. Yet in calling for change in this environment, what many conservatives like Professor George do not account for is the origin of the environment they identify as toxic.

When the James Madison Program puts the word “Reform” in the title of the event, it signifies a need to change something in contemporary culture. However, what it fails to realize is that the intensity of today’s anti-conservative rhetoric, especially within universities, but also at large, is also a kind of call for reform.

Many young liberal activists see themselves as trying to fix the problem of insensitive, even hateful, socially conservative ideals. For the liberal side, these ideals seem bigoted, and expressions of bigoted ideals are harmful.

For Professor George’s call for change in political discourse at large to have any effect, it needs to take this into account. He may believe that this kind of dignitarian harm is silly and unnecessary, but it is gaining public support and winning political influence. Conservatives need to realize that ultimately, the more radical iterations of their ideas heavily influence the way conservative opinions are received as a whole. Professor George can carry the cross of conservatism back into the fray of liberal reform, but before he does, what conservatives really need is their own Council of Trent. Conservatives need counter-reform.

Take, for example, a recent exchange over the decision of the Supreme Court on same-sex marriage. On October 6th the Supreme Court declined to hear seven same-sex mar-

riage cases that would have affected five different states. As a result, appeals-court rulings that permitted same-sex marriage in Indiana, Oklahoma, Utah Virginia, and Wisconsin were upheld. This raised the total number of states that allow same-sex marriage to 24.

Professor Matt Franck, a current preceptor for Professor George’s own Constitutional Interpretation class, believes that the Supreme Court’s decision to avoid a decision on these appeals is analogous to the *Dred Scott* decision.

Professor Franck is a political scientist at the Witherspoon Institute and a well-respected scholar of constitutional law and political philosophy. And yes, he did mean *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857). Just a few years before the civil war, this Supreme Court decision determined that African Americans were not citizens. In a blog post in the National Review Online’s Bench Memos section, Franck compared that case, which turned slaves—human beings—into the property of their white owners, to the appeals court decisions on same-sex marriage.

Unsurprisingly, some people were incensed. Did Franck really believe that legally recognizing the right for an individual to marry the person that they love, regardless of sex, was akin to allowing slavery? Ian Millhiser of ThinkProgress certainly thought so, calling the piece “The Most Offensive Response to the Supreme Court’s Expansion of Marriage Equality.” The twitterverse promptly let Franck know its opinion; one user named him “asshole of the day.”

The following day, Franck issued a terse response with six defenses of his original comparison. He offered a variety of arguments-- about constitutionalism, a definitional defense of marriage, and even a clarification of his own reasoning. A constitutional scholar, he was making an argument *only* about constitutional law. Franck was not comparing same-sex marriage to slavery; he was comparing methodology.

I met with Franck to further clarify his argument. As he points out in the two response pieces, same-sex marriage decisions, like *Dred Scott*, can be viewed as examples of courts asserting themselves where they do not belong. Franck asks whether the Supreme Court, or any court for that matter, should be making decisions on the biggest moral questions of our time.

Franck’s argument engages with the idea of substantive due process, a reading of the 5th and 14th Amendments as protecting certain rights, life, liberty, or property from government interference without “due process.” *Dred Scott* was the first use of the doctrine, protecting the right to an individual’s property in the form of a slave. However, for



Franck and many other scholars, substantive due process is a misreading. The “due process” of the Amendments should only apply to procedural due process. Each individual has a right to fundamental fairness in civil or criminal proceedings. Examples include the right to an unbiased trial and the Miranda Rights. Substantive due process, in Franck’s opinion, is a “laughable oxymoron.”

Admittedly, Franck has an argument with which many constitutional scholars would agree. He is not making an outright attack against anyone, specifically those who support gay rights. And he is not an idiot. So, what is the problem with Franck making this comparison? Shouldn’t the average reader with a simple con-law background understand the arguments that he is making? The problem comes with Franck’s mode of expression. It is possible for an academic to explain an argument about constitutional law without sounding like a jerk.

Although he knows what he is talking about and could run circles around most when it comes to Constitutional law, Franck’s rhetoric baits liberals who are ready and willing to attack conservative opinions. When he clearly states in his third piece, “None of us, so far as I know, thinks [state recognition of same-sex marriage] is as bad as treating human beings like chattel property,” he is trying to clear the air. But what happens when he continues by asking, “There, now, is everyone happy?” The embittered tone is unnecessarily

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*American liberals tend to believe that social conservatives are, to speak bluntly, racist homophobes lacking empathy and living in a bygone era.*

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combative. The first response he gave to Millhiser’s piece in ThinkProgress was couched in the same rhetoric. He begins, “Millhiser can claim to have mastered only one form of argument, the ad hominem, so let me enlighten him further,” and closes “Here endeth the lesson for Mr. Millhiser.” These two claims of absolute intellectual superiority bookend his six points of argument and represent the tone of the piece as a whole.

Throughout the “lesson,” Franck writes like a teacher shoving facts down an unwilling student’s throat. Calling same-sex marriage a “false anthropology,” he leaves no room for debate; it is, quite simply, not a part of human nature. He goes on to say that same-sex marriage rulings degrade individual freedom “to live, work, and learn in communities, schools, universities, and other organizations in which people can live the truth about marriage.” The Franckian lesson plan seems to consist

of a kind of elementary school true-false test. And in Franck’s classroom, the only question is “marriage is between a man and a woman,” and the only answer is capital T, “True.”

In Franck’s defense, Millhiser’s piece offered almost no argument and missed most of the legal arguments. But Franck, casting himself as the teacher and Millhiser as his simple-minded student, is actually the one who shows his mastery of the ad hominem. Franck is an academic. He is making an argument. And yet he insists on needless name-calling.

When I asked Franck why he would consciously choose to use an aggressive tone, his only response was that I should to try and understand his situation. The first time he heard of Millhiser was a tweet in response to his original piece saying simply, “You are truly an idiot RT @MatthewJFranck...” Franck explained that these types of interactions are common on the internet: “The world of blogging has always been characterized by sharp elbows. Twitter attaches razor blades to sharp elbows.” Yes, Millhiser’s tweet is representative of a generally regrettable state of contemporary political discourse, especially on social media. But Franck’s response is emblematic of the situation that many conservative thinkers find themselves in today.

American liberals tend to believe that social conservatives are, to speak bluntly, racist homophobes lacking empathy and living in a bygone era. Despite what Professor George may think about dignitarian harm, this prevailing sentiment is the driving force for what he has correctly diagnosed as “anti-conservatism,” pushing ideas out of the political discourse and deeming them as unfit for practical discussion. These effects are only exacerbated when conservatives use belittling rhetoric and boastful appeals to intellectual superiority.

What happened to the conservatism that called for rugged individualism in defense of laissez-faire capitalism? Where are the calls for the importance of traditional family values in the face of a changing society, or the free market principles that serve as the foundation for supply-side economics?

Conservatives have long been very good at fine-tuning their rhetoric to garner support. They spun the issue of abortion by declaring themselves “pro-life.” Abortion, they told us, is not about women’s rights, it is about whether or not you accept killing a human being. The “pro-life” label sidesteps charges of misogyny. Positive rhetoric in favor of one’s own ideals, as opposed to personal attacks on the other side, is a lost art form that conservative America may want to rediscover.

It is too easy for the general public to assume that Matt Franck is expressing a bigot-

ed view of the law in comparing Dred Scott to gay marriage. It does not matter if there is substance to his argument. It does not matter that he has something to teach all of us about the law, morality, or his beliefs, because when Professor Franck responds to being called an idiot with pedagogical snobbery, he becomes the asshole of the day—not because of his comparison between *Dred Scott* and same-sex marriage, but because he val-

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*When we refuse to engage with ideas seriously, we lose the opportunity to understand where these ideas came from. We take away our own ability to empathize with the very people we accuse of lacking empathy.*

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idates the stereotype of the egotist conservative. All we hear is “I’m right, you’re wrong, and I’m not going to change my views.” When conservatives come off as lacking any shred of empathy, it seems like a lost cause to even engage with them in discussion.

The state of today’s political discourse is disappointing on both sides. Unfortunately, it is probably only going to get worse before it gets better. I will not pretend to defend the idea that endemic demonization of one half of the political spectrum is appropriate. Professor George is correct to state that conservative ideas, even ones deemed ignorant by the liberal wing of society, do have a place at the table. The free exchange of ideas is how a country moves forward politically and socially.

I do not agree with the majority of socially conservative positions. I even find some of them totally objectionable. But when we refuse to engage with ideas seriously, we lose the opportunity to understand where these ideas came from. We take away our own ability to empathize with the very people we accuse of lacking empathy.

There are uncomfortable political realities that conservatives must face. Slowly but surely, American society is becoming increasingly liberal. Conservative ideas are falling out of favor, a development that some see as progress. If conservatives want their ideas to survive, the burden of proof falls on them to show that they are not bigoted. Instead of responding to critique with righteous anger, conservatives need to show why their positions have merit; they need to prove the assumptions wrong. Simply put, conservatives need to start playing nice-- even if it hurts their pride.





# Dispatch from Tehran

By Sarah Sakha

"I'm a girl. But I decided it was easier to be a guy."

I met her at a hair salon in Tehran, one summer when I was visiting family in Iran. She was a client of our family friend. But peculiarly enough, she walked in without a hijab.

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*However, this is a matter greater than women's rights – it concerns basic human rights, or rather, the lack thereof.*

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But then again, ostensibly she didn't even need one. Rather, he didn't need one – with short, closely trimmed hair, a cap, a military-green jacket, jeans, and sneakers, she passed for a he. In fact, she had been passing for a he out of her own volition for the past couple of months. It was only a façade, but it was nonetheless tenable.

It wasn't the fact that she chose this pretense that appalled me—although former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad may assert that the only kind of sexuality to exist in Iran is heterosexuality, I do not agree. Rather, it was the motive behind her volition that appalled me. Twice before, she had been caught and detained by Iran's basij, or the infamous "morality police" – the omnipresent force in charge of enforcing Islamic dress code among women. Having not provided many details beyond that about her run-ins with

the morality police, much was left to conjecture.

But one can only imagine the worst, considering those two incidents compelled her to superficially switch genders and forego her identity—all so that she could avoid conformity to an austere dress code, and evade more encounters with the police. Ultimately, she left the oppressive environment of Tehran and moved to Armenia.

This incident seems odd, especially considering Hassan Rouhani's myriad promises, reformist ideology, and pressing desire to reform. He even audaciously opposed gender segregation and promised mitigation of the morality police's authority. But that was all a utopian misconception.

Over the past year, conditions for women have worsened in terms of higher education and employment. Furthermore, the application of the law continues to be unjust in the arenas of self-defense, rape, marriage, and domestic violence.

U.N. investigator Ahmed Shaheed has turned in seven reports to the United Nations General Assembly underscoring the repression and unjust treatment of women in Iran. According to the New York Times, "girls as young as 9 can be married, so long as a court gives its blessings," "nonconsensual sexual relations" in a marriage are permissible, and a woman trying to divorce her husband on the grounds of domestic abuse must prove the treatment to be "intolerable." He points to brand-new quotas that reduce

opportunities in higher education for women and to new laws that impose employment restrictions on single unmarried women.

Such criticisms of deteriorating women's rights in Iran were prompted by the recent execution of Reyhaneh Jabbari. The 26-year old was given the death penalty for killing a man she accused of raping her. In reality, she did not even commit the crime, and instead, another member of the Iranian intelligence was responsible. Indubitably, in an effort to not tarnish the repute of the Iranian regime, Jabbari was tortured and coerced into confession.

This execution engendered vehement international opposition. According to the Daily Beast, "Jabbari's execution Saturday was widely condemned by human-rights groups on the grounds that it illustrates how Iran's own legal system is prejudiced against women." And while Rouhani did try to rescind the decision, he lacks jurisdiction over the judiciary, ultimately rendering his efforts futile.

However, this is a matter greater than women's rights – it concerns basic human rights, or rather, the lack thereof. In the past year, the number of executions in Iran has increased drastically, according to Amnesty International. According to the Economist, Iran stages more executions than any other country, except for China. 852 executions have taken place, even more concerning is that no universal standards exist concerning humane methods of and justifiable warrants



for capital punishment. Iran continues to practice virtual “killing sprees” and public executions – not to mention throwing guilty people off cliffs. Also, most of the executions carried out by Iran are for anti-state and/or political offenses – petty in comparison to rape or murder.

These egregious violations of human rights – state-sponsored killings – need to be actively censured beyond written documentation from the UN, both in the international community and within Iran. And everyone, regardless of sex, status, or rank, needs to be held accountable. Members of Iran’s intelligence and security are ostensibly above the law, employing a perverted interpretation of Jean Bodin’s theory of absolute sovereigns being above the law. The constitution may not too rigid for change, but why can’t we even incriminate the right people – those who are truly guilty?

Perhaps it’s attributable to the fact that all countries’ eyes remain irrevocably fixated upon the U.S. and Iran reaching a nuclear deal. According to Al Jazeera, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iran Foreign Minister Mohammed Zarif have met in private talks, but even so, an agreement may not be imminent. “At issue is the number of uranium-enriching centrifuges Iran should be allowed to keep spinning in exchange for sanctions relief and rigorous inspections at its nuclear sites...The West is unconvinced by Tehran’s denials that it has never sought a nuclear weapon and wants curbs that would

put an atomic bomb forever beyond reach.”

Western powers, particularly the P5+1 powers countries, seem to champion human rights and publicly castigate those countries that infringe upon the most basic human rights, especially the right to life. But it seems that everyone conveniently turns a blind eye to the inconceivable wrongs occurring in Iran, preferring to futilely debate whether Iran is developing nuclear weapons for belligerent purposes, or whether Iran is going to blow us, or Israel, up. But with a substantially larger and more potent army in both Israel and the United States, ready to deter or combat a nuclear threat at any moment, the answer remains a glaring no. Iran simply does not possess this faculty.

It’s time to impel Western powers to act, to address these human rights violations, to ameliorate the condition of women in Iran.

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*It’s time to impel Western powers to act, to address these human rights violations, to ameliorate the condition*

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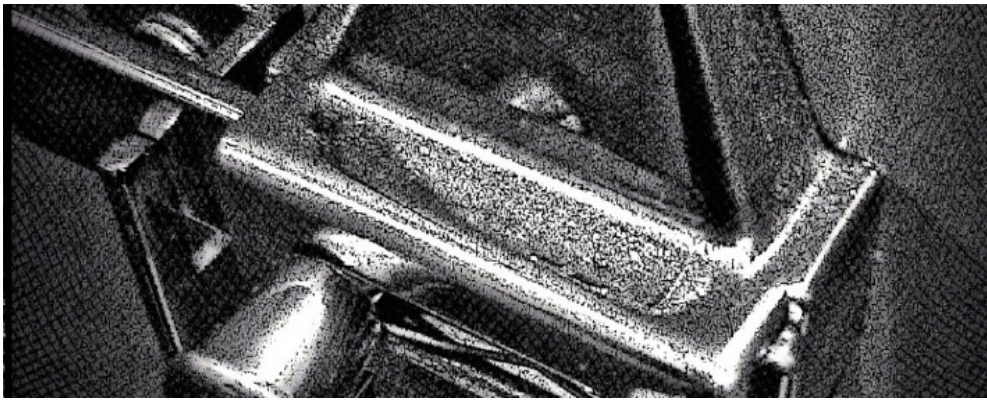
Sure, local media is now covering cases in which the victims’ families can pardon the suspects in the eleventh hour, and many believe the Iranian government is trying to get more people, including loyalists, to pardon transgressors. But the West must decry these glaring human rights abuses and exhort the United Nations to standardize the warrants

and means for capital punishment, to limit its use, and to collect more comprehensive data to establish more humane methods. Ultimately, these efforts may result in abolition of the death penalty.

As a first-generation Iranian-American living in the United States, the atrocities occurring in Iran horrify me, particularly because of the president that put forth so many auspicious plans for the country. I remain dumbfounded by the West’s inability to act, and by how ineffectual and inefficient international bodies, like the UN, have become. The United States, along with multitudes of other countries, is capable of encouraging change, and it must now step into that role.

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## Why Locks on Women's Bathroom Doors are Not Obsolete

By Emily Lever

One night last year when I was showering in the women's bathroom I heard a large group of shouting guys massing in the hallway outside on their way to the stairs. I rinsed off but stayed in the dripping shower stall, waiting for everyone to clear out. The thought of walking through a crowd of drunk men wearing just a towel made me uneasy. Suddenly some guy started banging on the door of the women's bathroom and yelling. To my terror the keypad started beeping.

I don't know what I thought would happen if the door opened but I didn't want it to. The aimless punching on the keypad didn't open the door. I stayed there with the sturdy door

*I stayed there with the sturdy door between them and me. I started to shiver but I could still hear them right outside so I stayed put.*

between them and me. I started to shiver but I could still hear them right outside so I stayed put. Eventually I bundled up in my thin towel, locked myself in a bathroom stall, and sat on the lowered toilet seat until they were gone.

I used to be indifferent on the question of bathroom codes, but now I'm pretty glad they exist. In the late 1970s, shortly after Princeton went co-ed in 1969, female undergraduates lobbied successfully for the installation of locks on women's bathrooms. At the time, men outnumbered women two to one. "The going wasn't easy for many of these young female pioneers," an Alumni Day speaker recalled in 2010. The sexual climate was tense, the position of women in campus society precarious. A group called the Concerned Alumni of Princeton was committed to keeping numbers of women and minori-

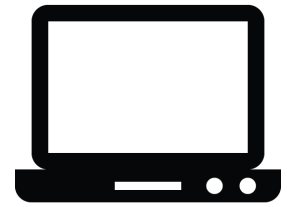
ties to "a combined 10-20%" of the student body. The three most prestigious eating clubs on Prospect Avenue were all-male. The then-social chair of one such club, Cottage, is said to have quipped, "Women are like pizza. If we want them, we send out for them."

In 2014 it's not so hard to be a woman on campus, but fears of male-on-female aggression are still justified. On the morning of September 28th, a male student allegedly came into the women's bathroom and held his phone over the shower door to videotape a female student who was showering. Clearly, the bathroom door must have been propped open for the sake of convenience. Otherwise the alleged act of sexual assault would not have been possible. I don't mean to say that anything like sexual assault would necessarily have happened to me if there had been no lock on that bathroom door last year, or that victims are responsible for being aggressed, in bathrooms or anywhere else. But the incident from a month ago suggests that keypads on the bathrooms are not obsolete and in fact can be useful safety measures. It's just no use having locks on the doors if the doors are left open.

*The then-social chair of one such club, Cottage, is said to have quipped, "Women are like pizza. If we want them, we send out for them."*

To be fair, it can be a pain for women to not be able to get into their corresponding bathrooms in buildings other than the one where they live. But a spreadsheet of the women's bathroom codes for all buildings has long been in circulation—hit me up, ladies, I'll forward it to you.

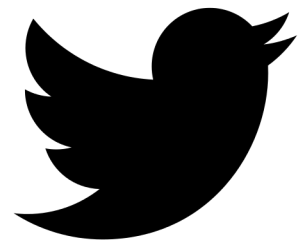
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# Hungry in America

By Daniel Teehan

On October 11th of this year, I met with Ojore Lutalo and Bonnie Kerness of the American Friends Service Committee's Prison Watch Project on assignment for my journalism class. Mr. Lutalo was incarcerated for 28 years in New Jersey state prisons for activities related to his involvement with the Black Liberation Army, a black nationalist movement prominent in the 1970s. He spent 22 of those years in solitary confinement. Throughout his confinement, Mr. Lutalo maintained his convictions and anarchist ideology, and remains a political revolutionary and educator to this day. His story is remarkable and at times strains belief. It is presented here entirely in his own words, edited only for length and clarity.

## Hard Times

My name is Ojore Lutalo, I'm a New African anarchist. I was born in a city called Longbranch, New Jersey in extreme poverty - I come from a family of twelve. I grew up in a predominantly black and Latin neighborhood in Asbury Park.

We had difficult times in our lives, such as living in cold water flats with no running hot water—no heat, et cetera. A lack of food, a lack of money to buy proper shoes for our feet. I had twelve siblings, some of them passed on, but I grew up in a family of twelve - I'm in the middle. It was extremely difficult due to the fact of poverty. I was just like everybody else in our neighborhood, we were economically, you know, dependent; we were lacking the basics.

Prior to me becoming political, I was what we would describe as a lumpen. You know what a lumpen is, right? Well you have the lumpen proletarians, then you have the lumpens. I was a lumpen which means I hustled as opposed to work: I became a stick-up kid. I would steal checks, I would do shoplifting, I would do breaking and enterings - I was introduced to the street when I was round about 12 years old. Because my household was so poor that I had to steal food to bring home to eat. I refused to be hungry in America.

I was out there what we would call gunnin' and runnin', living the fast lane, livin' the street life. Prior to me becoming political, I was a bank robber - for personal reasons. I was involved in different kinds of armed robberies, super markets, banks, loan companies ...We were just doing it for survival purposes.

I grew up in the 1960s. In 1969 I first heard about the Black Panther party. I listened what they had to say, but I wasn't in tune to embracing what they were saying because I was caught up in the lumpen lifestyle. So I heard what they were saying and I didn't hear it. Then I was in prison. For bank robbery. Which was apolitical at the time. I think that was in 1970.

And then - then I started to read a lot. First, I heard about the BLA [Black Liberation Army]. I was attracted to them more than I was to the [Black] Panthers because they were dealing with the reality of police oppression in our communities as black people, right? I would read some of their writings, I would listen to what some of the

BLA prisoners in prison had to say, right? I was influenced, I was impressed. Not on a romantic level, on a political level: they were articulating the realities - my realities.

I was drawn to that particular formation because they were action prone, dealing with our reality with regards to the police brutality. They would take actions against the police for terrorizing our communities. For instance, the government has accused the BLA of neutralizing, of liquidating police - frontline police forces around America.

My first introduction to left wing politics was through Che [Guevara] - a pamphlet called "Vietnam and World Revolution." A 17 page pamphlet I got from Pathfinder Press while I was in prison. In prison, I done a lot of extensive reading. And that's when I learned about imperialism, in that particular pamphlet. And then after I read that pamphlet, you know, I got an international understanding. It wasn't...as clear as it is now, but I understood who the enemy was and why our conditions were like they were. Home - here in America - as well as abroad.

I was also influenced by Mao. Mao Tse-tung. I studied Marxism, Leninism, but their articulation of politics was more foreign to me because they was coming from a European point of view in another time zone. Mao taught struggle from a peoples of color point of view. You see, Mao took Marxism-Leninism to another level. And then Mao - Mao had volumes of books out, but he also put things in pamphlet form, to make it easier for people to read and understand where he was coming from, what he had to teach. So I was more of a Maoist than I was a Marxist.

But then I was introduced to anarchy by Kuwasi Balagoon, in prison. He's another BLA prisoner. He was there for carrying out

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*I was introduced to the street when I was round about 12 years old. Because my household was so poor that I had to steal food to bring home to eat. I refused to be hungry in America.*

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what the government call bank robberies. We call that expropriations - the terminology bank robbery is apolitical. Expropriations is political. And so I met him, I met other political people behind the bars of Trenton state prison, so we would talk and talk and talk and talk and just started from there. He articulated an anarchy from a people of color's point of view as opposed to a white European point of view. Anarchy is a concept. You understand what I'm saying? It's not owned by one particular formation or organiza-

tion in a group or grouping of white leftists.

I believe in the consensus process. Whereas, let's say you're trying to resolve an issue in our community. We would take it to the people, we would have meetings, or we would pick representatives from different communities, neighborhoods, and they be coming together and everything's based on consensus instead of having one person or one small group of people making decisions for the whole body - community-controlled self-government. That's what I believe in. We police our own communities, we patrol our own communities, we control the finances going and coming into our communities. You see I realized after reading Che's pamphlet that voting didn't work for people of color. Demonstrating didn't work for our people as well, so there's only one solution, so we just took struggle to another level. Which entails armed resistance.

### Committing to the Struggle

I changed my name in 1983 to represent my African heritage - again I'm a new Afrikan, I guess we're Afrikan in America, or African American. I'm a new Afrikan because, look, my ancestors were stolen and brought to this country in chains, as you are well aware, right? They took everything, they stripped everything: the identity, the language, rights. So we started from that to redefine ourselves. That's how I became a new Afrikan.

You could say I was a free agent. I was en-

might be. That's a plague in our communities, all you have to do is go into any inner cities and you'll see what the effects of what drugs do.

I was captured in 1975. Mercer county, New Jersey, Trenton. We had a gunfight with the police. At that point, the government became more focused on who I was. From that point on, they stopped treating me as a regular person.

Before I became involved, before I took a step forward, I weighed the consequences, right, I said, can I deal with the consequences of my actions to come if I'm captured. So I said to myself: as a revolutionary you have to come to terms with the prospect of death and captivity. You have to understand that in revolution you either win or you die, there is no compromise. That was our mindset; that was from my understanding. I didn't start struggling because a girlfriend or boyfriend or brother, I started struggling because I was oppressed. I understood my oppression and what that oppression entails, and what it took to alleviate that oppression. So my commitment to struggle was 100 percent.

### 28 Years with 22 in Isolation

Once you accept revolution, right, it's not a matter of a time factor. You could get killed in action. So you have to again, come to terms with the prospect of death and captivity. So come what may, I was ready to deal with it.

I returned to Trenton state prison in 1982. I was in up from 1982 to February

tial. So I said, "How can I defend myself?"

It was a sham. So every 90 days you would have a hearing to determine whether they would release you from the management control unit... But I'm getting ahead of the story.

The MCU consists of 90 individual cells, locked down 24 hours one day and 22 hours the following day. Maybe 14' by 15' or 15' by 9' or something like that, small cells. We were allowed reading material, we were allowed a typewriter if you could afford one, we were allowed a radio if you could afford one, we

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*I realized after reading Che's pamphlet that voting didn't work for people of color. Demonstrating didn't work for our people as well, so there's only one solution, so we just took struggle to another level. Which entails armed resistance.*

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were allowed a T.V. if we could afford one.

I was one of the most closely watched prisoners in the state of New Jersey. They would censor my mail, copy it and then they would go through. So that way, they said we were planning on escape or anything like that, they could pick up on it, follow the flow so to speak. Some of the mail I never received. Some of the people I wrote, they never received my mail. It's like that.

I was engaged with a lot of the people, because I was trying to rally support around issues of control unit, so I was in touch with a lot of people. I was in touch with revolutionary organizations in foreign countries, like for instance, in Barcelona, Spain.

I would get up in the morning, and I would, bathe, turn the radio on, listen to the news, read, write, exercise. Things like that. During the course of my years in isolation, I created a lot of collages.

I knew people that self-destruct psychologically, because they can't cope with the constant lockdown - they deteriorated mentally. First, when a person first starts to deteriorate psychologically, their personal hygiene starts being neglected, they withdraw from people that they knew. And that's how you could tell the process has started.

I had a strong sense of self and purpose, I had an ideology. Initially, I came to terms with the prospects of death and captivity, right? So, that was all part of being a revolutionary - come what may, I dealt with it. As a political person with an understanding of who I was fighting against.

### Leaving the Box



Philadelphia, 1980s

gaged in struggles with people of Marxists, nationalists, different ideologies. Whoever we was inclined to stand up to the US Government. I was doing expropriations, like we would do expropriations, we would get the money and funnel some of the money back into the communities, we would take action against drug dealers in our communities, we would take the dope and destroy the dope brought down the silver or whatever case it

4th, 1986. That's when they placed my in Management Control Unit (MCU), 1986.

When they put you in MCU, you're not there because you violated any of the prison rules, you're there for who you are and your abilities to influence other prisoners, to overthink, or to take action. You had a sham hearing. I would go to the hearing and they said, well, we can't disclose the evidence because it's confiden-



I went to court – here's what happened.

I went to court August 25th [2009]. They put me in the little armored truck, right? Strapped me to the bench inside, had a police escort in the front, police escort in the back, and the sirens blazing to the courthouse. Once we got to the courthouse, we had guards posted with machine guns, automatic rifles. I had my hearing. So the judge ordered my release the next day, August 26th. I just walked out Trenton State Prison like nothing ever happened.

Four in the afternoon, the attorney Jean Ross picked me up and I went to Philly. I was staying with a supporter over in Philly. I needed a place where I could sit back and focus on my future plans. I needed a safe space so to speak, a safe area. And that area was provided for me by one of ABCF supporters – Anarchist Black Cross Federation.

I was attending different meetings, meeting new people, just readjusting to what they call "freedom after 28 years, with 22 years in isolation." I've never experienced freedom, so I don't know what freedom is. But being released from constant lockdown was like when you close somebody in the closet and leave them there forever, then open the door, you see the light? It was like that.

But my only adjustment was technology. I had to come to terms with that, which I'm still doing. See, I never allowed myself to become institutionalized, so me being released was no shock to anything.

The day I was free, another prisoner was being released with me, and he refused to go, because he had become institutionalized. They had to physically pick him up, sit him outside the door, say "you can't stay here, you got to go, you free, go on home, go about your business." But I didn't have that problem, because I never wanted to be in captivity. I never wanted to be in prison.

I came out and all the cars looked alike. When I went in, you had a selection of the cars. Now, all the cars look the same. And a lot of the people I knew had died, so I was meeting a lot of new people. I would travel around the country. I went to Cuba. I became involved with people that were strictly doing above ground activities, working.

A lot of members of the BLA were killed, chased into exile, or placed in prison. It was like, presently the BLA is just licking its wounds, so to speak. The BLA is a concept. The fact that you have oppressed people, you will always have a Black Liberation Army. Somewhere in some form.

### Planting Seeds

When I came home I saw that the oppression was more intense than in 1982. You have more oppressive laws, more repressive surveillance.

I've seen that people needed to be educated. So I set out to start doing that. I set out to start educating people about the politics of prisons.

All you can do is plant seeds. It's up to the people you speak to, that speak to you, to decide the path they want to travel. One day you might become a revolutionary. Who knows? I think it's my responsibility to educate people about the reality of their oppression, especially white people. Majority of white people don't see themselves as being oppressed.

They think they're actually sitting in the circles that make economic, social and political decision of this country, and it's not true. It's not true. Corporations make those determinations. Corporations dictate who will be president and who's not going to be president – that's who run, that's who control the world.

So have you seen this DVD? It's about confessions of an informant for the FBI. It's in his own words, and this is yours. You need to go back and let your fellow students watch that with you. This is one of my responsibilities – to educate. If I don't share the information, you won't never know. That's what I'm doing, that's what you're supposed to do.

Once you become aware, you have to be held responsible, because you know now. Once you become aware of these activities of FBI informants, you are aware. So that's why I'm giving it to you, that's why I'm sharing everything with you.

Everything is more repressive than it was back in '82. You don't have any resistance to anything. Everybody's moving on the reformist level, when reforms don't work...

*Daniel Teehan: What do you think would work?*

Well, that's not for me to say, because I'm an individual. I might feel that people should resort to armed struggle.

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### *Everything is more repressive than it was back in '82.*

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Other people might feel another way.

*DT: People who voted for Obama thought he was going to change the world. Once Obama got in office, who did he bail out?*

You have to understand that Obama is, just a black face in a high place. He represents the corporations, which came as no surprise to me. Because of my national and international understanding of the world.

Obama deported more immigrants than any other president. He used more drones than any other president. Obama – I say Obama is being an international terrorist – 'cuz he killed women and children. So again, if people feel like they're being oppressed, they have to sit down and make a decision like I did

about how they're gonna approach that, the oppression. My duty, my responsibility right now is to educate. And what might become of that, who knows. I can't forecast the future.

You have to understand the nature of a protracted guerilla warfare. It took the people of Vietnam 40 years to win their independence, but they won it. They had ups and downs faced some defeats. But they carried on. They wanted to be their own liberators. They wanted to dictate their own reality. So they struggled against all kinds of oppression on the international level. That's the nature of struggle.

### An Amtrak Ride, 2010

See what it is, political prisoners aren't supposed to travel alone. That was a mistake I made.

I received an invitation from the Anarchist Black Cross chapter in LA to do a presentation at the event. So I went to LA, by way of Amtrak. I spoke. And then on my way back, in La Junta, Colorado, I was arrested by the Colorado policing unit and accused of "endangering public transportation" which means – the charges were threatening to blow up Amtrak.

So there was a lady sitting in front me, she was listening to my conversations – I stayed in constant contact with Bonnie and Tim and other people. Just articulating my experiences at the conference, right?

And so the lady, now she heard all these things, right. She was writing that, she started putting in things that was never said. So she got up and contacted the conductor, so they called, the train stopped in a little country town named La Junta, Colorado.

Prior to that I had been down to the lounge and washed up and came back. I was laying down, relaxing, dozing off. Next thing I know, I heard someone say, "Don't move." So I opened my eyes, I'm looking down the barrel of two automatic pistols and the guys dressed in plain clothing. And they never identified themselves as police or anything.

They said "Don't move, expose your hands to us."

I exposed my hands. They said, "Get up, turn around." They cuffed me, took me off the train.

I was thinking about how the Gestapo done back in the day when they would raid a house or raid an apartment of pull a train over, take people off, take them out to execute them. I was thinking that, right. Because I didn't know what was going on.

[Being killed] was a possibility! So then I seen the train pull off, and we're out in the middle of nowhere. It's 9:30 at night, I didn't know where I was, I didn't know where I was at the time they took me off. So they take me to the local jail in La Junta, Colorado, put me in a holding cell.

First of all I had to establish contact with



the outside world. Make people aware of what was happening to me – which Bonnie [Kerness, of the American Friends Service Committee] did very effectively. I knew that I had legal support. Then I knew that as long as I had Bonnie there, then she would, then I could count on her, right. Bonnie has been my backbone. And throughout history, women have been the backbone of all struggles.

So anyway, so after that I was released on bail, and the Anarchist Black Cross Federation in Denver bailed me out and took me in to their home. A complete stranger – they put their home up, they just had their baby. But they said, “You’re a comrade.” So they took me into their home, they gave me a key to their home, said, “This is yours.” Just like I was family.

The lady in front said she had a gut feeling about me which she couldn’t articulate. Then she told the police that I threatened to blow up the train. So based on that they arrested me. Once the investigation started, the other passengers said, “no, no, he never said anything about blowing up the train.”

Even the lady who reported my conversations to the conductor said “no, no, no” – no reference was made to me saying that I was going to blow up the train. So now the case started crumbling. So the FBI came down to investigate. And they said that “we can’t make the case yet because there’s no evidence.” So they were forced to drop the charges.

They charged me with trying to blow up an Amtrak train. So obviously they have some sort of proof, of evidence – they didn’t. So the district attorney and the arresting officer had a conversation about ways they should have killed me because they were forced to drop the charges.

*Transcript via Alternet*

*Arresting Officer Mobley: I should have just let [the arrestee] get off the train and go.*

*Assistant District Attorney Barta: Ah, you should have said that he pulled a knife on you and shot the son of a bitch.*

*Mobley: (Laughter)*

*Barta: (Laughter) He pulled something out of his pocket and it looked like a gun... then... it was a goddamn comb, I’m sorry! (Laughter)*

*Mobley: My bad, I’m sorry! (Laughter)*

*Barta: My bad! (Laughter)*

*Barta: (Laughter) Oh well, anyway... (Pause) Or, you could have arrested him, alleged that the train tried to pull out, and here’s a thought, throw him under the track, the wheels, and then say he tried to escape. But too late for that...*

*Mobley: Yeah ...*

*Mobley: Oh well! Anyway...*

## A New Isolation



Philadelphia, present day

Stemming from that, once I got out, people were more concerned about my number being in their phone than about my welfare. Because of the fear factor.

It was all over the news. They charged me with being an Islamic terrorist. Malcolm X says the government is good at making the victim look like the villain and the villain look like the victim, right?

After they dropped the charges the damage had been done. Because I began to receive death threats by way of the internet. All kinds of death threats. Ways that I could have been killed or should have been killed. Turned into road kill or shooting me in the head or, things of that nature. Total strangers, right.

So then because of that, because of the Amtrak, people started pulling back from me, because I got that exposure. You have to understand that people have a tendency to distance from whatever they might hear on the news or read in the newspaper. And my personal history came out at that time, being a political prisoner, et cetera. And some people said, “Well how’d he get out of jail?” “Why’d you let him go?” Well, I maxed out. They couldn’t understand why I was supposedly free.

I’m surveilled more now. By the police. I’m a political person, and I didn’t want to be harassed. So that’s why, as opposed to taking an airplane to California, the Amtrak, I thought, would be safer. That proved to be untrue. I didn’t want to be harassed. I was just trying to have my own, to get my life back in mode after 28 years in prison. You need time to adjust. This happened six months after I was out.

I live across the street from the park, so the police would come by and wave to me. Which they never done before. Up until Colorado. Then I would see undercovers in the neighborhood. Which is easy for me to identify as being undercovers – the way they look, the way they dress. I mean, I live in a predominantly well Colombian, Haitian neighborhood, and once you start seeing... A person with my experience,

it’s easy to identify those kinds of people.

*DT: Do you think that, given another chance, they’ll try to arrest you again?*

Well sure. Again, that’s the consequence of struggle. I can be killed. Anything can happen. Once again, if you accept revolution, you have to accept all that it entails.

## Understanding Oppression

White people need to do some research on the nature of their own oppression. And read another book called “Look out Whitey, Black Power’s Gonna Get Your Mama.” Don’t be taken back by the title, because it goes deeper than that.

That’s one of your responsibilities. Cause you, do you see yourself as being oppressed? I’m asking you! Explain how. Are you one of the people that makes the decisions that govern the political, economic and social life of this country? You have to understand that the people who run the country are a small minute – you’ll be a lackey.

The people that you’re talking about [Princeton students], they exist to be lackeys. Spokespersons. That’s all they do! What power do you have?

Everything now is reactive. Everything now is based around reform. Even after Obama, people are coming to understand that Obama didn’t live up to what their expectations.

So we’ll have to see, we’ll have to see what the future brings. Are you going to vote, did you vote for Obama? Are you going to vote next time around? Your vote would be a vote to oppress the Palestinians. Why waste your time? Why not become a revolutionary?

Don’t think I’m trying to be smart, put you on the spot or anything. Do me a favor – don’t vote. I hope people listen to what I had to say, and educate themselves, and do what they feel is necessary. Please, don’t vote. If you vote, you’re just voting to oppress the Palestinians – you’re voting to help the US prison-industrial complex.



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