THE PRINCETON PROGRESSIVE

Issue 4
April 2015

POWER WITHOUT LOVE IS RECKLESS AND ABUSIVE, AND LOVE WITHOUT POWER IS SENTIMENTAL AND ANEMIC. POWER AT ITS BEST IS LOVE IMPLEMENTING THE DEMANDS OF JUSTICE, AND JUSTICE AT ITS BEST IS POWER CORRECTING EVERYTHING THAT STANDS AGAINST LOVE.

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ISSUE 4, APRIL 2015

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS OF THE PRINCETON PROGRESSIVE

In the Progressive's first issue of the year, we condemned what we saw as the dominant campus culture, claiming that "the prevailing perception that our campus is apathetic or conservative still exists." At the time, that sentiment was widespread. The prospect of anything happening to change it seemed unlikely. Seven months later, after the People's Climate March and #blacklivesmatter march, after the die-in and divestment, we can begin to speak about a campus where apathy is giving way to awareness. Awareness is not yet action, but it is a start. The gravest mistake that we could make now would be to content ourselves with the progress that has been made–to pat each other on the back and walk off the field.

It is a sign of genuine progress that there are now several movements that aim to awaken intersectional consciousness and seek to understand and oppose the oppression of others. But as Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us, "love without power is sentimental and anemic." None of these movements have power yet; we must not let them lapse into sentimentality. If we want the current moment to become a pivot instead of an anomaly, these movements need to establish roots that will outlast the waning of outrage or the graduation of individual members.The supporters of the status quo have an institutional structure and flow of monetary support that student groups will never match. Nevertheless, these groups have an ability to leverage the passions of the moment into solidarity capable of achieving real change.

In this issue, we highlight both theoretical and practical ways of engaging with power. In "Activism in Review," members of student activist groups–some that formed this year, others that existed for years before–describe the ways in which they have challenged existing discourses and policies this year. Their methods are as disparate as their concerns, but taken together they represent a rediscovered conception of how to be a socially conscious and politically active Princetonian. These groups increasingly influence the school's public sphere. In doing so, they offer opportunities for collective engagement with serious issues.

It is important to note that not one of the movements that seek to change university policy has succeeded yet. But these movements have succeeded identifying oppression and its sources, especially when those sources exist on campus. Now is the time to move from asking "what is power and how is it abused" to asking "how do we build power, how do we take power, and how do we use our power to fight injustice."

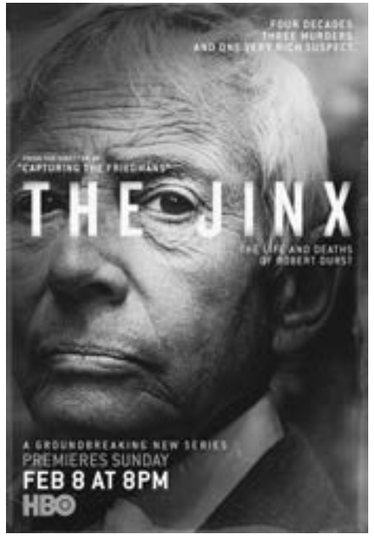
A History of Commodifying Criminal Justice

By DANIEL TEEHAN '17

Fewer than a hundred years ago, on a plantation in Mississippi, hundreds of black men labored daily in the fields from sunup to sundown in unbearable, abusive conditions. More than 50 years after the end of the Civil War, their labor was exploited under threat of the lash—and it was done so without wage compensation. This was Parchman Farm, and the men who worked there weren't slaves—not in name at least. Parchman Farm was, and continues to be, Mississippi's largest prison. The men toiling there were subject to the involuntary servitude permitted by the 13th Amendment as "punishment for crime." The practice of exploiting the underpaid labor of incarcerated bodies (often bodies of color) is one that can be traced from Parchman to the modern day, where it persists as one of the manifold ways in which the incarcerated are exploited for capital gain. But there was another form of exploitation, less brutal but still insidious, practiced at Parchman that finds parallels in the present day: the appropriation of the experience of incarceration for popular consumption.

In 1933, John Lomax, a folklorist made famous by his documentation of cowboy songs, arrived at Parchman with his teenage son in tow. They saw in the plantation, so segregated from society, an opportunity to document an African-American musical tradition free from the influences of contemporary culture and musical trends such as jazz. According to Lomax, "My son and I conceived the idea this summer that the best way to get real Negro singing in the Negro idiom and the music also in Negro idiom was to find the Negro who had had the least contact with the whites." In short, they wanted to capitalize on the "authentic" field songs preserved by Parchman's imposed isolation from postwar society. Where some might have seen only the discomforting continuation of slavery by a different name, John and Alan Lomax saw a chance to document the real "Negro idiom," free from "the influence of white speech and white singing." While this desire to capitalize on the fetishization of slave culture and the mystique of incarceration seems repugnant today, the popularity of recent pop culture phenomena such as Serial and The Jinx shows that our voyeuristic tendencies toward prisons and criminal justice proceedings have changed only in form.

While some might chafe at the comparison between a podcast and television show on the one hand, and a cultural appropriator like Lomax on the other, the similarities lie in how we as a consuming audience buy into the commodification of the prison experience for entertainment without regard to what that experience actually entails. Rather than offer meaningful insight into the machinations of the criminal justice system, the stories of Adnan Syed in Serial and Robert Durst in The Jinx serve simply to offer the public anomalous real-life examples of the sensationalized and largely unrealistic crime procedurals consumed en masse on television. While some have hailed the series for raising consciousness about issues within the court systems, the simple truth is this: if the Serial listener or Jinx viewer allows their understanding of the criminal justice system to be shaped or formed by the shows, they now fundamentally misunderstand the realities of the broader criminal justice system.



By focusing on the most dramatic instances of violence and post-trial ambiguity that they could find, Sarah Koenig of Serial and Andrew Jarecki of The Jinx have perpetuated the American delusion that the courtroom is the center of drama in a criminal proceeding. Drawing out the process of investigation and publication over the course of months and even years, they force those involved in these tragic murders to slowly and painstakingly relive them. And they have done all of this in pursuit of ratings and press, which we as the public have been more than happy to provide. In reality, mandatory minimums, plea-bargaining, and an eroded system of indigent defense have ensured that courts are places of near-minimal significance for the vast majority of those who pass through the system. In fact, due to the overwhelming powers invested in prosecutors by years of tough-on-crime legislation, 94 percent of state cases and 97 percent of federal cases never make it to trial in a court: they are settled out of court, in a plea bargain. And the plea is always guilty.

If you want to be outraged about problems in criminal justice, you shouldn't need Serial's indictment of faulty memories and trial tactics. In fact, I'll give you some options. With five percent of the world's population, our prisons hold almost 25 percent of the world's incarcerated. By some estimates, we incarcerate six times more of our black population than South Africa did in the midst of apartheid, more than were controlled under slavery 13 years before the Civil War, and we disenfranchise almost six million citizens on account of prior convictions. This includes almost a quarter of black adults in Florida, which, if you know much about Florida's history of electoral politics, is a sort of a consequential fact. We're the last country to have juveniles in prison sentenced to life without parole, and we're one of the few industrialized countries that still regularly executes our own citizens (unsurprisingly, in a racially inflected way). We hold over 80,000 people daily in conditions of solitary confinement characterized by the UN as torture. Some of those people have been living in parking-lot-sized cages for over 40 years. More than 65 million Americans, or almost one third of adults, have a criminal record. Those with records can be discriminated against, legally, when it comes to getting jobs or applying to schools. Those with felony drug convictions are ineligible for public housing, food stamps, and Pell grants. The list goes on and on. The American carceral reality, if you choose to look at it, is unconscionable.

Unfortunately, this reality does not make for good television, be it fictional or not. But it is a reality we need to confront if we are to address the very real, very racial problems plaguing our society. The Jinx and Serial obstruct this effort by misdirecting attention and interest that could be stoked into outrage at our status quo. Of course, these shows are not the first true-crime dramas to profit off of the sensationalism of criminal proceedings. However, other such series differ markedly in production value and target audience—cringeworthy reality shows such as Judge Judy, Dog the Bounty Hunter and COPS spring immediately to mind. There is also the entire genre of fictional television, stretching from Law & Order through NYPD Blue all the way to Orange is the New Black, which shamelessly translates crime and punishment into serialized entertainment. The way these shows have been naturalized in the entertainment industry is suggestive of the naturalization of the relatively recent phenomenon of mass incarceration. Yet, while those productions at least seem transparent about what they are, The Jinx (produced by HBO) and Serial (made by the creators of This American Life) have managed to use high production values and brand recognition to sneak procedural melodrama into highbrow cultural circles. To the extent that these shows are smash hits likely to breed copycats and offshoots, this is a troubling trend indeed.

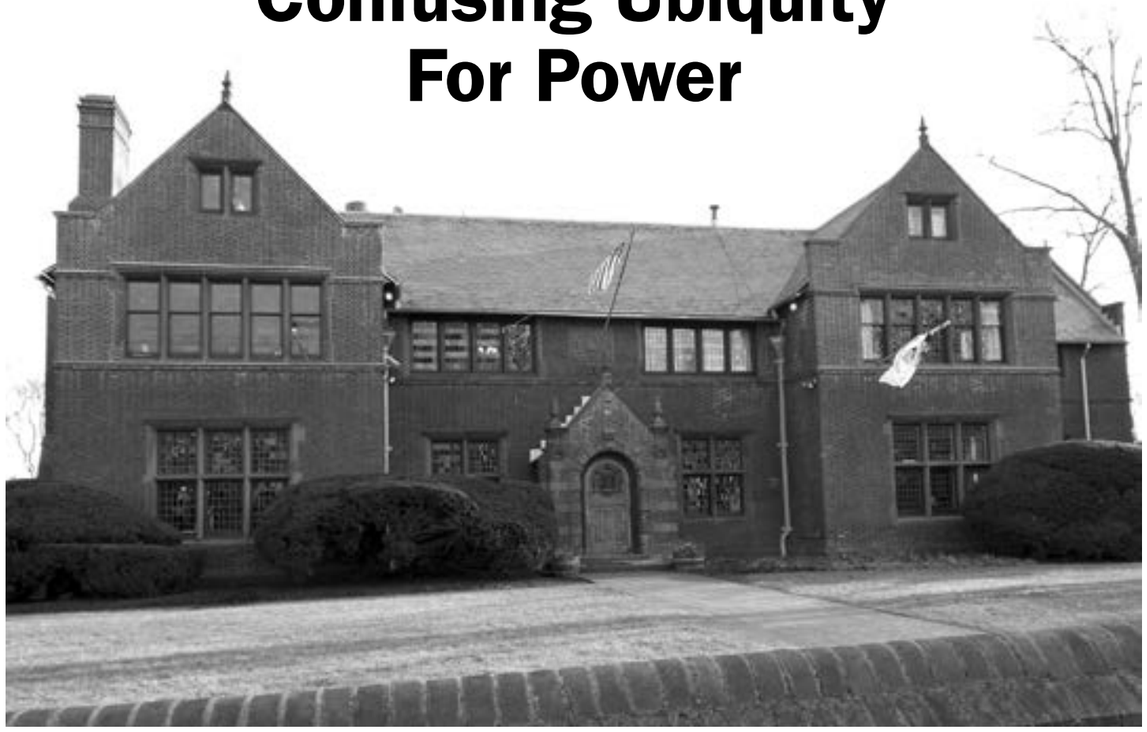
The popularity of these shows speaks to something larger than good storytelling. In fact, public fascination with prisons and punishment has been around as long as the country has, and it extends in scope far beyond recordings of field songs. In the 18th century, those convicted of crimes were displayed in the pillory or whipped in the public square. In the 19th, public hangings were advertised in newspapers and drew staggering crowds. In the 20th, prison biography became a widely read literary genre. The relatively recent shift away from public punishment did little to lessen the allure of the experiences of the condemned. If anything, isolating prisons and executions from society has opened up a fertile imaginative space in which the anxieties and curiosities of the free citizenry can manifest. Rather than facilitating real empathy for the plight of the incarcerated, popular culture has appropriated the high stakes of trial and punishment for the sake of ratings and publicity.

Rather than facilitating real empathy for the plight of the incarcerated, popular culture has appropriated the high stakes of trial and punishment for the sake of ratings and publicity.

Clearly, the primary way in which the timeless interest in criminality is currently manifesting itself is a problem. But it need not be. Other media—fiction and otherwise—addressing prison issues have managed to occupy less cringeworthy spots on the entertainment-education spectrum. Eugene Jarecki (brother to Jinx maestro Andrew Jarecki) created The House I Live In, a scorching documentary about the War on Drugs which, while not entertaining per se, is certainly as gripping and well-made as The Jinx. Michelle Alexander's unexpected hit book The New Jim Crow, though not perfect, has changed the discourse on incarceration and engaged an entirely new demographic of advocates. My ability to comment on The Wire is limited (by the fact that I've only watched a season), but enthusiasts of the series celebrate its research, casting, and verisimilitude in depicting the War on Drugs. This more nuanced ethic seems borne out by creator David Simon's prominence in The House I Live In, and by his recent sit-down with President Obama. The point is: if a writer or filmmaker wants to present crime and imprisonment to the consuming public, there exist plenty of more thoughtful models to choose from.

At a time when people are becoming more conscientious of the ethical implications of their choices, whether they be what they buy, how they eat, or where they invest, the same nuance can be brought to bear on the cultural products we consume. Students who question the University's investment policies or take Peter Singer's "Practical Ethics" and then give up meat should bring that same scrutiny to what they listen to and watch. A good start would be to not fall prey to shows that take up the long tradition of commodifying the trauma of criminal proceedings. I, for one, can think of a few sensational crimes more deserving and needing of our attention. But they're more likely to be found on CSPAN than HBO. ■

Confusing Ubiquity For Power



By JOSHUA LEIFER '17

Today's activists fight their battles in the public's collective vocabulary more often than they fight in the streets. They are interested in "changing the conversation," or "changing the culture," and in having their voices "be heard." The turn towards discourse in political activism means that agitation for social change now takes the form of struggles over particular words and phrases, especially on social media, where the fights over what can be said and by whom are magnified. This kind of politics has a long intellectual and theoretical genealogy. It is the product of way of thinking that locates the roots of systemic oppression in language and culture. That way of thinking, particularly in the decades since it broke out of the esoteric academic settings in which it was born, emphasizes culture and discourse instead of institutions and structures of power.

But both culture and discourse are rarely sound or steady terrain for political struggle. Both are often amorphous, intangible, and immaterial. There is no singular political authority or institution responsible for a culture or a discourse. And unlike a state or a government, neither a culture nor a discourse has official positions of power that can be seized. If there is anything the past several decades of the left's failures have shown, it is that activist campaigns that identify culture and discourse as their battlegrounds almost always fail.

The focus on culture and discourse pervades activist campaigns at universities, and Princeton is no exception. These campaigns capture the campus' collective attention for a few brief moments. Students change their profile pictures, like so many did for the "Princeton Perspectives," post statuses or tweet, and put up posters around campus. If the posters' creators are lucky, their peers might even stop to read them. But most campaigns vanish from students' memories after several weeks or, in the best case, a few months. The posters sometimes fall down; in many instances, belligerent drunks just tear them down. The buzz and conversation around them fade away or are drowned out by the next big campaign.

The recent Hose Bicker campaign, which aims for a USG referendum to facilitate the elimination of "bicker," exemplifies the problems of campus activism campaigns that operate on the levels of culture and discourse. The Hose Bicker website's FAQ section notes, "this referendum is not a dictate from the USG or the university: it is an opportunity to make [students'] opinion heard." But whose voices exactly are meant to be heard, and by whom? Hose Bicker does not target any institution that can actually make the changes it calls for. It does not specify the culture or conversation it seeks to change. The eating clubs individually and the Interclub Council are not beholden to the USG's referendums. Moreover, around 70 percent of this year's sophomore class participated in bicker. And while there are undoubtedly students in bicker clubs who disapprove of the practice and who signed the petition, their participation in the system they profess to oppose means the school is unlikely to get rid of bicker anytime soon. This is the fatal flaw of activism that emphasizes culture and conversation instead of structures of power and institutions—hundreds of students in bicker clubs could sign the petition and voice their support for the referendum, but what difference does it make if they choose to remain in the clubs whose practices they claim to oppose?

Without an identifiable power to address, these activist metaphors that locate the power for social change in the words people use in their everyday lives are meaningless. "Being heard" becomes nothing more than screaming into a void.

All of this is to say that Hose Bicker fails on two important levels. First, like other campaigns that operate on a discursive level—looking to "change the conversation" or "be heard"—it does not pressure or target any institution, power, or authority that can actually implement the changes it demands. This is a kind of activism concerned more with venting, emoting, and expressing the frustrations of its organizers than with actually achieving its goal or winning. The second is that Hose Bicker presupposes the existence of a culture opposed to bicker not just in rhetoric but also in practice—a culture that, while present on campus, is not very large. Bicker is a dominant social practice, something that only around 30 percent of the students in a given class abstain from. And unless the Hose Bicker activists are prepared to commit for the long haul, to a several-year process of eroding bicker's hegemony, fighting the practice on the cultural level means fighting a losing battle.

A simpler and more effective campaign would be to boycott bicker and the system of selective eating clubs. Students could refuse to both participate in the bicker process and, afterwards, refuse to go to the bicker clubs. A statement along the lines of, "As long as these practices continue I refuse to participate in this system" would directly put pressure on the institutions responsible for bicker: the clubs themselves.

Of course, a boycott of bicker and bicker clubs will never happen anytime soon. The different mansions on Prospect Street, whatever discontent or dissatisfaction some of their members may feel, are strong enough to guarantee that students want to join them every year. Club members and their friends will not stop going to the clubs because they don't like the bicker process. And people's feelings about bicker are far more complicated than either opposing or supporting it. Every year, many of those who bicker claim to hate the process, but they bicker anyway. Besides, bicker is no more unfair or discriminatory than the admissions process that landed all of us here in the first place, and other exclusive extra-curricular groups employ similar selection procedures.

This is not to lament "Princeton's culture"—I'm hesitant to argue such a thing exists. One of the reasons why campus activist campaigns disappear so quickly is that they operate on the level of "campus culture," when in truth it is nearly impossible to distill the different social words and practices that exist here into a unifying culture. Other than the University's own events and traditions that bring together the disparate social groups that make up campus life, there isn't much of a universal "Princeton culture" to speak of.

There is far more to a culture than an institution's character and history. Culture is practiced; it is enacted. It encompasses the place on campus where you spend times with your friends. It is the clubs where you eat, and it is the beer you drink while you are there. It is manifested in what your friends do and where they see themselves going. For every generalization you possibly think of to describe your life and your friends' lives, there is another generalization that describes a kind of life here that looks drastically, if not unrecognizably different from the one you live. This is partly why campaigns to "change culture" are unavoidably slippery. Which culture? Whose culture? A culture is not something created by decree from on high. A culture is not something that can be taken control of or ruled over. It is something individuals make and reproduce through their collective participation in it. It is something that we exist inside of.

The Hose Bicker campaign is not exceptional. It is representative of a larger phenomenon: the reduction of campus activism to cultural or discursive politics. To be sure, for historically marginalized groups, culture and discourse can be important battlegrounds, sites for raising consciousness to eventually gain the power necessary to address historic injustices. And this is why expressions that emphasize the politics of discourse can be instruments of resistance—of speaking truth to power. But without an identifiable power to address, these activist metaphors that locate the power for social change in the words people use in their everyday lives are meaningless. "Being heard" becomes nothing more than screaming into a void. And the demand to

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Too often, campus activism emphasizes culture and discourse while ignoring the steady political work social change requires.

A Year of Activism

POST-FERGUSON

Near the end of the summer of 2014, the unarmed Michael Brown was shot in cold blood and left lying dead in the street for hours. Though the nation was in uproar, I was expected to return to my beautiful campus at one of the most elite institutions in the world and go on with business as usual. There would be meetings to attend and studying to do, all within a bubble of an environment that was perfect for blocking out the real world. I had an escape, yet I chose not to use it. I could not escape my own anger, my own sadness, or any of the grief stemming from a demand for justice. Thankfully, I was not alone. Many of my fellow classmates expressed similar emotions, eventually rising to the point where we couldn't take it any longer.

Starting with an email chain between members of the Black Leadership Coalition (BLC) during the summer, we began discussing possible ways we could funnel our rage into something positive. The idea of a vigil in honor of those slain to police brutality came up as a chance to pause as a campus to acknowledge that these events affect our reality, to acknowledge the fact that we care. I, along with other members of BLC, spearheaded the vigil. It was amazing to see people from all corners of campus come together to perform, speak, and show solidarity with not only Michael Brown, but also victims of police brutality everywhere.

It was not long before tension again rose in anticipation of the grand jury's decision on whether to indict the Ferguson police officer who had shot Michael Brown. BLC partnered with ODUS and the Carl A. Fields Center to host a town hall where students could gather in the wake of the decision. There we were: professors, students and faculty alike, hearing our president tell us to keep calm while yet again no one had been held accountable for the death of another black body. We could not keep calm.

In that room people erupted in tears, songs, spoken word, and sincere questions of "how can this happen AGAIN? And how are we supposed to go out and enjoy 'Dranksgiving' tonight? Why should we ignore the tragedy occurring in our own backyard?"

On social media, we called on all of campus, urging everyone to gather at the Frist Campus Center wearing all black. From there, we took to the street. "Hands Up, Don't Shoot!" "Black Lives Matter," and "No Justice, No Peace" were the cries heard throughout the night. Since then we have joined national organizing efforts in facilitating a school-wide walk out of classes and a die in before winter break. We also engaged issues specific to our campus by silently protesting a panel on diversity that seemed to pit racial diversity against economic diversity despite their connectedness. We met with the administration to discuss how racism has seeped through the ivy walls of our campus and how we can address its pervasive presence. We serve on task forces that aim to bring institutional and climatic change to Princeton. We continue to do whatever we can because our hearts continue to burn with a fire that won't be calmed until we see justice not only in Princeton, but across the nation.

– BRIANA PAYTON '17

PRINCETONIANS AGAINST THE OCCUPATION

It has been a groundbreaking year for activists agitating for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine and an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. In the fall, over 70 tenured faculty members and 500 undergraduate students signed petitions calling on the University to divest from companies that profit from their involvement in the occupation. Now, in the spring, the Princeton Divests Coalition—spearheaded by the Princeton Committee on Palestine but composed of a number of different social justice groups—will bring a referendum before the undergraduate student body. The referendum calls on the University to "divest from companies that maintain the infrastructure of the illegal military occupation of the West Bank, facilitate Israel's and Egypt's collective punishment of Palestinian civilians, and facilitate state repression against Palestinians by Israeli, Egyptian, and Palestinian Authority security forces." Members of the Princeton Committee on Palestine and the Princeton Divests Coalition have been busy drumming up support for the referendum, which will be put up for a vote sometime in April.

While a number of social justice groups support the divestment initiative, the Center for Jewish Life and its affiliated groups, Tigers for Israel and JStreet U, are working to oppose it.

In an email sent out to a large segment of the student body last fall, the Center for Jewish Life pledged to take the necessary measures to defeat the divestment initiative. In doing so, the Center for Jewish Life's leadership gave the impression that the Jewish community's stance on divestment was monolithic when, in reality, it was not. Thirty-nine Jewish students published a letter in the *Daily Princetonian* asking the Center for Jewish Life to refrain from taking an institutional stance and respect the diversity of opinion with the Jewish community. (Disclosure: I was one of the students who signed and helped write the letter. As result of the letter and the discussions that took place after it was published, Maya Rosen and I created the Alliance of Jewish Progressives. The Alliance is a new group committed to a vision of social justice and equality and to the idea that all people deserve freedom and the opportunity to forge their own futures.)

While it is an exciting time to be involved in anti-occupation activism, the odds are sadly stacked in favor of those who prefer to keep the status quo in Israel/Palestine unchanged. The CJL-affiliated groups have a well-funded and professionally organized institution behind them. They are supported by wealthy donors and assisted by powerful people, including former U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer. They receive help from established advocacy groups such as StandwithUs and The David Project.

The divestment and anti-occupation activists do not have that same kind of institutional support. The Princeton Divests Coalition is an entirely grassroots operation, built by its members' hard work and not the donations of rich alumni. It does not have the kind of resources that its opponents have. Still, it is unclear what will happen when students will vote on the referendum.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." Hopefully, when the vote on divestment arrives, Princeton students will choose to bend the arc towards justice and elect to oppose a brutal system of military control over a disenfranchised civilian population.

– JOSHUA LEIFER '17

DREAMERS AT PRINCETON

The Princeton DREAM Team is a community-based, student-run advocacy group that focuses on immigrant rights. Volunteers raise awareness about immigrant-related causes, push for immigration reform, and reach out to and provide resources for the Princeton community.

Being a part of the Princeton DREAM Team allows students to take an active role in community organizing and student activism. The group's past efforts include organizing a campus rally to stop a deportation, traveling to Washington, D.C. for the Not1More Deportation protest, and holding a vigil in front of the Frist Campus Center titled "In Honor of Las Monarcas." The latter sought to raise awareness around the growing number of migrant deaths along the Mexico-U.S. border each year and to honor those

lost lives through poetry, live readings, and a moment of silence.

Among its ongoing projects, the DREAM Team sends members to the Elizabeth Detention Center every Saturday morning to meet with undocumented detainees who have requested visitors. Volunteers also work with First Friends, a nonprofit that aims to acknowledge the dignity and humanity of incarcerated immigrants by meeting with them to discuss their cases or simply converse. These visits serve the incredibly important role of providing detainees with a connection to the outside world. Finally, the DREAM Team visits the office of the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund (LALDEF) in Trenton every two weeks to meet with high school students about their college, financial aid, and scholarship applications. Most of these students are undocumented, and LALDEF's mentoring and tutoring services help answer any questions they may have about the college experience while offering them guidance along the way.

The Princeton DREAM Team is a community-based, student-run advocacy group that focuses on immigrants rights.

Currently, the DREAM Team is selling "No Human Being is Illegal" T-shirts to raise funds for its Chasing-A-DREAM Scholarship, awarded each year to high-achieving undocumented students who are ineligible for financial aid and loans due to their immigration status. DREAM is also holding a benefit dinner on Friday, April 3 to raise funds for the scholarship and provide an opportunity for the Princeton community to learn more about immigration reform and hear from past scholarship recipients. Finally, the DREAM Team is hosting the annual Collegiate Alliance for Immigration Reform (CAIR) Conference this semester from April 24-26.

– COURTNEY PERALES REYES

ANIMAL LIBERATION

There's a large vegetarian and vegan community at Princeton, but in my time here, that has not translated into political action. This may partially be a result of how distanced we are from the obscene animal abuse and environmental degradation that goes into a slab of meat. We never see the pig; we just see the strip of bacon.

But animal exploitation exists more tangibly on campus. There are thousands of mice and hundreds of other animals, including a few dozen monkeys, in our neuroscience labs. In 2011, a series of USDA inspections revealed consistent violations of the Animal Welfare Act at Princeton, including regularly depriving monkeys of water. Even under legal conditions, life as a caged object of experimentation is never pretty and is often short.

After an alleged, though now disputed, incident of marmoset abuse, concerned students petitioned for reforms and transparency measures and for the retirement of the affected monkeys to a sanctuary. The group met with various research administrators and has been able to negotiate several small changes.

Public opposition to animal research is approaching a majority, especially among young people. After I wrote an article detailing conditions in the primate labs, many students joined a new group, Princeton for Primate Justice, affiliated with Princeton Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), to advocate for our evolutionary cousins.

Toward the end of this semester there will be a few outreach events between students and lab staff to increase transparency and allow for critical dialogue. I hope these events will facilitate greater student engagement on the issue of nonhuman animal research, create a space for neuroscience undergrads to reexamine their career choices, encourage the community to decide whether the optimal path forward is reform, reduction, or outright abolition. Personally, my loyalty lies with the animals—I won't be satisfied until every cage is empty.

– DAYTON MARTINDALE '17

FIGHTING FOR PRISON REFORM

Students for Prison Education and Reform (SPEAR) is a student run advocacy and education group that seeks to advocate against mass incarceration & solitary confinement, provide educational opportunities in New Jersey prisons, and educate members of the Princeton community about the inequities and injustices rampant in the United States criminal justice system. To this end, SPEAR often takes direct action aimed at raising awareness on campus, helping those who are incarcerated, and catalyzing change in policies at the university, state and national level.

Members of SPEAR are involved in a variety of advocacy, education, and research projects that seek to contribute to the criminal

justice reform movement. The organization initiated and teaches the Princeton Reentry Employment (PREP) project, which provides weekly workforce preparation to those incarcerated at A.C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility. SPEAR also engages more than 60 students in letter correspondences with people held in solitary confinement across the country. This year, members of that program have collectively sent and received almost 300 letters.

SPEAR frequently works with and assists other organizations that ground their work in the lived experiences of incarcerated people. For example, working with a lawyer People's Organization for Progress, members of SPEAR's advocacy team read through and catalogued over 60 letters from people suffering from correctional officer inflicted abuse at Bayside State Prison in south Jersey. At a panel hosted by SPEAR this year, members of the advocacy team confronted NJ DOC Commissioner Gary Lanigan about the reports. Some of the most egregious abuses were later excerpted in a report by the American Friends' Service Committee entitled "Torture in New Jersey Prisons," which SPEAR intends to help disseminate. SPEAR has also recently joined the Interfaith Prison Coalition, a grassroots advocacy organization centered around the needs of those most affected by incarceration. The coalition is currently undertaking a boycott of phone companies that charge exorbitant rates to family members trying to stay in contact with their incarcerated loved ones.

On Princeton's campus, SPEAR undertakes campaigns to demonstrate student and faculty support for more humane criminal justice policies. This year, SPEAR has been an active proponent of S.2588, a bill to severely restrict, and hopefully end, the use of solitary confinement in NJ state prisons. To this end, SPEAR collected the signatures of over 130 students and professors within a period of two days leading up to the bill's first legislative hearing. The letter of support, with the co-signatures, was delivered to the Senators deliberating the bill in committee. SPEAR's Admissions Opportunity Campaign is also in its second year, having received the support of over 500 Princeton students and faculty last year. The admissions campaign calls upon Princeton University to remove the question about past involvement with the justice system from applications for undergraduate admission. Since starting the campaign last Spring, the campaign has spread to seven other campuses and the issue of access to higher education has received attention in the New York Times and Marshall Project. As part of SPEAR's annual conference this year, students from several other campuses came to Princeton to discuss and organize a national "Abolish the Box" Campaign.

– CLARISSA KIMMEY '17 and DANIEL TEEHAN '17

MAKING PRINCETON'S INVESTMENTS SUSTAINABLE

The Princeton Sustainable Investment Initiative (PSII) is a student effort to extend Princeton's on-campus sustainability efforts to its endowment. PSII advocates for the creation of a committee that will write a binding set of environmentally sustainable guidelines to inform the Princeton Investment Company's investment strategy.

Princeton's $21 billion endowment is currently estimated to have three to five percent of its investments in fossil fuel companies alone. PSII is not asking for full divestment but rather for increased investment in companies making strides toward sustainability and for relatively fewer holdings in those not part of the transition to clean energy.

PSII is composed of a core group of 15-20 undergraduate and graduate students, who wrote the proposal through a series of collaborative editing sessions during October and November. The proposal was introduced to the campus community around Thanksgiving and has gathered almost 1,600 signatures, including those of professors Peter Singer and Michael Oppenheimer. It has fostered a broader campus discussion on the ways in which our environmental impact should be measured. PSII recently presented the proposal to the Resources Committee of the Council of the

Princeton University Community (CPUC), a collection of students, community members, and faculty administrators tasked with making decisions in the university community's interest. PSII is looking forward to the committee's response and to continued campus activism on this important issue.

– **MATTHEW ROMER '18**

AGAINST THE SURVEILANCE STATE

Guarding Liberties Against the Security State (GLASS) is a student group founded to discuss and protest the excesses of the national security state. GLASS began as a working group within Princeton United Left (PUL) last semester and became its own organization in 2015. It seeks to mobilize Princeton students around the pressing issue of domestic and international surveillance, and to raise awareness about the research that Princeton conducts for the NSA, the funding Princeton receives from the NSA, and the NSA's recruitment of Princeton students.

The group recently held a film/discussion series examining Laura Poitras' documentary trilogy on post-9/11 America. The first installment, My Country, My Country, concerns the U.S. occupation of Iraq, and the second, The Oath, Guantanamo Bay. We will complete the series with the third documentary, Citizenfour, on NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden.

The group also organized a protest at the "public forum" held by NSA Director Michael Rogers on campus. Wearing orange, GLASS members attended the event with a list of probing questions. Students held up video cameras, symbolically "watching the watcher," but were told by security at the event to put them down, though they were powered off.

Given the profound consequences of the War on Terror at home and abroad, GLASS believes that it is important to start broader campus discussion and raise student awareness on national security issues. Princeton's involvement with the NSA must become more transparent and the subject of public discussion.

- FRANCES STEERE '16 & DAYTON MARTINDALE '15

Secular Stagnation and Inequality

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they age and with this small change, he is able to describe an economy that can get caught in a trap of secular stagnation. Most importantly, Eggertsson's findings relate directly to the inequality. He argued that, in his model, a sharp rise in inequality—such as in the United States—could lead to mass unemployment and prolonged, anemic growth. As a result, Eggertsson's work bolsters the progressive argument that inequality is a significant economic issue, even if one completely ignores arguments about fairness. The conference's discussion of secular stagnation is another example in which academic economists pivoted away from traditional modes of economic analysis and found that inequality, an issue important to progressives, can have significant macroeconomic consequences.

The presentations at the Julis-Rabinowitz Center for Public Policy and Finance's Fourth Annual Conference did not have rhetorical flourish and were not aimed to rally progressive activists. They were filled to the brim with academic jargon and PowerPoint slides containing charts, graphs and equations that hurt my eyes. However, after paring through it all, the research presented at the conference should be a source of optimism for progressives. Like Alvin Hansen, the JRCPPF conference urged economists to focus on the obstinate economic problems of our time, which are the interconnected challenges of inequality, anemic growth and underemployment. The research presentation at the conference were filled with data and proposed policy solutions that would be familiar to any progressive interested in economic policy. It is an admittedly small sample. But, even though economics is still stereotyped by images of Milton Friedman slamming liberal economic policies, if the JRCPPF conference is any indication, it may not be an accurate description of economic research for much longer. ■

Confusing Ubiquity For Power

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be heard, as voiced by the relatively (though certainly not uniformly) privileged students at Princeton frustrated with their system of selective eating clubs, turns the centuries-old call "to be heard" into a farce, an empty platitude.

Worthwhile and effective activism also tends to require some kind of sacrifice—a change in one's political participation or even personal behavior. Too often, campus activism emphasizes culture and discourse while ignoring the steady political work social change requires. It is unsurprising that the Hose Bicker campaign has been able to garner signatures from bicker club members. But it does not ask them to make a commitment or a sacrifice. While appealing to a broad base often strengthens a campaign, in the case of Hose Bicker, it neutralizes the campaign. Bicker club members can sign the petition, vote for the eventual referendum, and feel good about themselves because they know they will never be forced to put their views ahead of their club affiliations.

There are plenty of powerful activist campaigns that operate on discursive and cultural levels, but they do so in tandem with concrete, well-articulated strategies for achieving their goals. Empowering the historically marginalized, amending narratives to recognize the previously unrecognized, and advocating for specific policy changes are all activist goals that entail an element of cultural activism but do not depend exclusively on it. They involve actually doing something, rather than merely talking about it. They identify the structures of power and authority capable of enacting the changes they demand. At a certain point, every campaign must ask people—both its supporters and the authority responsible for enacting its demands—to act.

Identifying the authority with the capacity to implement a campaign's demands is rarely easy. At Princeton, like at most places today, navigating

institutional bureaucracy to find whom exactly is responsible for what can be next to impossible. But perhaps out of humility or because of low expectations, campus activist campaigns often let administrators, donors, and boards of trustees off the hook too easily by making only modest and small demands of them. Instead of making the demands more appealing or manageable to those with power and authority, this makes them easier to dismiss. Student activists' demands should be significant but specific. Faced with illegible and opaque bureaucracies and hierarchies, student activists must structure their campaigns to target the particular authorities or institutions with the ability to meet their demands. Campaigns that make no demand of those with power and authority damn themselves to inefficacy and failure.

Being part of "activist nation," that broad and diverse group of people committed to building a better and more just future, often feels like being constantly on the losing side of politics. From climate change to campaign finance, and from income inequality to racialized police violence, it seems like those with the money and guns are winning, and that all we have to show for our efforts are retweets and blog-posts. I remember reading, after the destruction of the Occupy Wall Street encampment by the NYPD, in one of the many post-mortems written by those who were involved, that the movement had fatally confused ubiquity for power. At the time, Occupy tent cities were spread across the country. It seemed as though everyone from politicians to pundits was speaking about the 1 percent and the 99 percent. But all of the media coverage and protests during the inspiring months of the Occupy movement's peak culminated in few, if any, tangible political gains. Occupy was everywhere, in culture and discourse. It looked like we were winning. But when the campsites were cleared and the TV crews went away, the institutions and structures of power the movement sought to challenge and even topple stood as strong as ever.

Culture and discourse can be useful fronts in political battle, but without a theory of change that includes how to take power, or at least make significant and binding demands of it, what happens on the cultural and discursive fronts guarantees nothing. The number of people who adopt a campaign's terms, framing, or language is meaningless until the people in power do the same. Thousands of students can sign a petition, but a handful of administrators, trustees, or student government representatives can choose to ignore it. ■

Rethinking Power in the Face of Inequalility

By GEORGE KUNKEL '17

A VERTICAL LINE VISUALLY separates two phrases: on one side, "the world as it is" and on the other, "the world as it should be." The description of "the world as it is" details a world run by power. This view of the world sees bodies of self-interested individuals forming pluralities. On the other side is a world fueled by love. "The world as it should be" is filled with selfless individuals acting not for themselves but for others in society. This love is closer to a genuine form of altruism that takes the pluralities of "the world as it is"—aggregations of individual interest—and unifies them around the goal of pursuing the common good.

The two sides of this line, one embodying self-interest and the other selflessness, at first glance diametrically opposed to one another, make up a paradigm used by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). Although the two visions of the world described are abstractions, they offer a simple way to see that, as we view them, power and love may be constantly in tension.

Created by Saul Alinsky in 1940, the IAF is a network of community organizations aimed at community organizing. Alinsky's efforts began in Chicago, where he worked to bring together citizens on a local level around their common interests, and have now spread nationwide to over 65 cities. The network works with thousands of religious congregations and civic associations. IAF organizers work with the individuals in these already-existing institutions to push for substantive changes in community life: housing reform, better healthcare, access to utilities, school standards—the list goes on.

This work, often with the disadvantaged sectors of society, is complicated by an America today where wealth inequality is on the rise. As the rich continue to grow richer, the average citizen is losing efficacy in the political environment. Princeton professor Martin Gilens and Northwestern professor Benjamin Page note the implications of this trend in their 2014 study, Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizen:

"Economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence."

The broader import of such a finding resides in a cycle of consolidating control; those without political power grow apathetic in the face of a dominant elite, thereby allowing those same elites to exert more, unchecked influence. In this environment, the tangible changes that the IAF pursues are only part of its mission. Its member organizations represent the active, quantifiable piece of what is a broader goal: to rebuild the community on a local level, helping average citizens rediscover their own political and social agency.

One way in which the IAF and other similar organizations begin to counteract the apathy-fueled narrative is by using the above paradigm to spark a discussion on expanding our view of power. We think about power as the capacity to have an effect on one's environment. In today's imbalanced political environment, similar to the abstract "world as it is," many view power as unilateral.

This notion of power can be thought of as power over others in one's environment. The economic elite of today's society wield power due to their ability to monetarily influence policy and elections. Their interests are the controlling forces, while the interests of the average citizen, despite our nominally representative system, are subordinate. In his essay "Two Conceptions of Power," professor and theologian Bernard Loomer explains how unilateral power works to use others as a means—as "a function of one's own ends"—thereby separating the relationship between two or more parties into the actors and receivers. It does so by taking into account only the interests of the actor. Even if I act in what I think to be the interest of others, I am still acting unilaterally when I fail to take into account the actual interests of others.

Loomer sees this view of power as the traditional conception, pervading the consciousness of contemporary society. Because unilateral power prioritizes the interests of those in a position to exert their imbalanced influence, it works to "alienate the possessor of power" from his or her environment. In doing so, value is found in the ability to successfully accrue power on one's own, whereas "dependency on others, as well as passivity, are symptoms of weakness or insufficiency." If we view power as unilateral, allowing another person to act with us or do something for us, even if the effect is a positive one, means allowing one's own interests to be subordinated. Allowing someone else to act on us, even help us, is a sign of weakness. Although Loomer does not directly draw the connection, it is easy to see how this view of power contributes to the classic American myths of the "American Dream" and the "self-made man." Independent success is valued, while cooperation takes a back seat. Welfare programs are shunned in favor of individual responsibility. Those who cannot achieve success on their own are powerless.

When citizens are inactive, there are few, if any checks on the powers that be and the few, the elites, the one percent can take even greater control. Democratic resignation is the foundation of oligarchy.

The IAF works mostly with the disadvantaged in society who face an uphill battle in the presence of institutionalized forms of unilateral power. When the citizen facing a slew of constraints—commitments, lack of money, recently passed voter ID laws, etc.—on his means to political participation sees the political capital wielded by corporations and the financial industry of today's society, a feeling of ineffectuality or even helplessness can develop. It is no exaggeration that there is a strong sentiment today that 'my individual vote doesn't matter.' Coupling these harsh realities with the strong ideological undercurrent that hard work will always lead to success helps to shape a society in which citizens may feel they are unable to affect the environment around them—a feeling that they are unable to shape their future and the circumstances in which they live. When citizens are inactive, there are few, if any checks on the powers that be and the few, the elites, the one percent can take even greater control. Democratic resignation is the foundation of oligarchy.

What may be hard to realize in these situations is that the average citizen, despite what may be an imbalance of wealth, political capital, or even social influence, does have power. It is a form of power that lies not in bank accounts or job description, but in the people around us—in community. Unlike the view of power as unilateral power over another person, the IAF offers a view of power as relational power with others. Where unilateral power was the ability to act on another person, relational power combines this with the ability to also be affected. We can have an effect on our environment, on our relationships with others, by both giving and receiving influence. The IAF attempts to teach communities how to harness relational power in order to reclaim their agency and begin to reshape the world around them as they see fit.

For Loomer, the ideal form of relational power is represented by "the capacity to sustain a mutually internal relationship." Instead of pursuing one's interests by treating relationships only as a means to personal interest, exercising relational power means treating the relationship as an end in itself. Inequality within relationships may still exist, but "one must trust in the relationship" in spite of imbalances since "the good is an emergent from the relationship." When all parties commit mutually to a relationship, that relationship will grow and its subsequent strength may facilitate the pursuit of the interests of all parties involved as opposed to only the interests of the unilaterally stronger. Whereas unilateral power had different effects on the acting and the affected party, relational power provides a mutual benefit to all members of the relationship.

IAF organizing provides some concrete examples of this more abstract notion of power, beginning with its relational meetings that focus on sharing personal stories. Community members meet in a public place, whether a church or a recreation center, where each individual is accepted and encouraged to bring their own concerns to the table. In this way, meetings focus on hearing and understanding the interests of everyone in the community, but the purpose of these stories moves beyond simply sharing experiences. The ultimate

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goal of these meetings is to tease out the issues raised in different stories, analyze them, and find where they overlap. Setting out the concerns of the community in this way then allows those same community members to create a plan to address those concerns.

In his book *Blessed are the Organized*, Jeffrey Stout describes just these types of meetings in New Orleans at Wicker Elementary School. Parents and teachers generally had concerns about contin ous school absences and through the relational meeting were able to narrow down their focus to the cleanliness of the school's bathrooms. The movement from general concerns to more specific issues allows organizers to pinpoint realistically fixable issues to be addressed. As they move from the general to the specific, a plan of action is formulated. Community members engage in deliberative disc sion based on the assumption that each individual has the ability to come to reason-based judgments on what actions should or should not be taken by the group. The meetings recognize each individual's ability to contribute to the plan and the discussion, offering a forum in which community members can act. They can feel once more that they are having some effect. IAF organizing does not empower individuals, but instead shows them where their power already lies. The community members themselves come together. They select the issues, and they act to change their own circumstances.

This is not to say that the abstract moral gains of agency are the only piece of the puzzle. Another important step that organizing must take is pushing for public recognition and substantive change. In public assemblies and what the IAF calls accountability sessions, the concerns targeted in relational meetings are brought to the forefront by the entire community. Public officials are invited to community gatherings in which concerns are raised. Politicians are allotted limited time to speak, while the focus shifts to acknowledging the importance of community interests. Other methods include demonstrations, strikes, or public shaming of officials. Just as a strike will not succeed if all members are not fully committed, all of these techniques rely on the strength of the bonds between the participants. The power exists in the way they relate to one another.

We saw a similar development here at Princeton following the Ferguson riots earlier this year. After town halls and community-wide protests, students packed in to the Council of the Princeton University Community (CPUC) meeting to force administrators to hear their concerns. These meetings establish a direct relation between community members and those in positions of power. Local public officials, more so than University administrators, are held directly accountable to community members and their concerns. Continuous pressure in these public forums creates a relationship in which officials must recognize the concerns of those present.

The community organizing in which the IAF engages deals mostly with the disadvantaged in society and aims at allowing those people to harness a form of relational power to target existing forms of oppression. The paradigm offers a way to think about striving to create a society closer to "the world as it should be," while acknowledging the realities of power and self-interest in "the world as it is." While this is all immediately relevant to those living in some of the, needless to say, less-than-ideal urban centers of America, it is also an important perspective for the Princeton student. For the most part, living at Princeton is an easy life. Our basic needs are met. Workloads aside, our lives are relatively comfortable. This, however, does not mean that there aren't pieces of campus life that cannot be tweaked. The administration may hold sway over decision-making, but the formation of a number of task forces on diversity following the Ferguson protests are the most visible examples of campaigns currently being pushed for by organized students armed with specific plans of action.

Potentially more important than changes to campus life though, is the way in which we relate to the outside world. Whether we like it or not, Princeton is a campus housing and nourishing the budding elite of society. Princeton's alumni network already boasts an astounding array of influential individuals, and our classmates will go on to be politicians and corporate executives. Before going out into the real world, we should make an effort to understand the way in which we relate to each other and that our successes need not come at the expense of others. Instead these same successes can be seen as arising directly from the relationships with those around us.

But if such a change in traditional institutional ethos is too idealistic, more may need to be done to question existing authority. The idea of the Orange Bubble is a manifestation of an environment in which the outside world stays out of Princeton life and is easy to ignore. I can certainly imagine going through four years here without acknowledging any problems past Nassau Street. The massive commitments that we make in terms of schoolwork, part-time jobs, and extracurriculars may even allow us to ignore the problems that Princeton could help to solve. This ignorance may not be apathy, but it is close to passive acceptance of the status quo. Pushing for change necessitates, first, an ability to actively point out what needs to be changed in our lives and, second, the recognition that each and every one of us can do something in pursuit of that change. The hard part is that such recognition is often dependent on a realization that change can come from below; it does not need to come from Nassau Hall, or Washington, D.C, but instead can begin from the united voice of a group of committed individuals. ■

YANIS THE MAN-IS

By ARARAT GOCMEN '17

FOR MOST OF HIS ADULT LIFE, Yanis Varoufakis was merely a disgruntled academic: a mathematically trained economist with an expertise in game theory, but also an intellectual disdain for traditional economics. After the global economic meltdown in 2008, he emerged as a second-tier public intellectual, actively participating in the debate regarding the European financial crisis via his online blog, Twitter, and published works.

Then, just a few months ago, Yanis added politician to his list of assumed careers, running as a parliamentary candidate in Athens as a member of Syriza, a left-wing Greek political party. Finally, with Syriza's victory in the Greek general elections this January, he put on his policymaker's hat, as Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras officially appointed him Greece's new Finance Minister.

The elaborate arc that Yanis' career has followed is certainly a unique one, especially in that he declares himself an "unapologetic Marxist." Radical academics rarely double as parliamentarians or technocratic policymakers (not to mention as apparent fashion icons). Compared to some of the politically impotent ivory-tower intellectuals who represent the most prominent voices of the modern left, Yanis makes you wonder why those of today's students with radical sympathies tend to take that radicalism to the academy instead of to public policy circles.

Indeed, in its embodiment of the experience of the radicalized academic-turned-policymaker, Yanis's career exemplifies the ideal path through which young, aspiring American and European intellectuals of the left can gain real political authority: by leveraging scholarly success in some policy-relevant field to ascend to positions of direct political power. If you're a college student with radical sympathies trying to figure out which path in life will help you effect the most substantive change in the world, Yanis' story has some lessons to offer you.

Varoufakyou, Eurogroup

The inner circles of the European policymaking community aren't where you would normally expect to find someone who lists Marx as one of his foremost inspirations, despite what the nominally Socialist parties that represent the European center-left want you to think. Even when parties of the "far-left" are in power, as the Western media has largely portrayed Syriza since its parliamentary victory in January, Marx-inspired academics are scarce at all levels of European and American government. What differentiates Yanis in this respect is the particular field in which he pursued his academic career: not philosophy or literary criticism, nor any kind of [insert name of historically marginalized group here] studies. Instead, Yanis is an economist, making him the rare kind of modern leftist that pursues an academic career in a discipline with direct implications for public policy.

Yanis entered economic academia in the 1980s, choosing to specialize in the highly mathematical and tremendously technical subject of game theory. In doing this, he entered a field in which no kind of radical

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political sympathies have any direct relevance. This lack of emphasis on his own ideological views seems to be a general theme in Yanis' professional narrative. He has also consistently abstained from making any references to his radicalism in his discussions of the European financial crisis since 2008. However, Yanis has clearly remained in touch with his Marxist roots throughout his professional career. From the title of his 1987 doctoral thesis in economics, "Optimization and Strikes," to his lecture at the 2013 Subversive Festival in Zagreb in which he detailed his lifelong intellectual development as a libertarian Marxist, Yanis has consistently made subtle hints to his leftist politics throughout his time as an academic and public intellectual.

Capitalizing on his legitimacy in the academy, Yanis got his first taste of the public policy world from 2004 to 2006 as an economic adviser to the Greek center-left politician George Papandreou, who headed the PASOK party. By the time Papandreou became the country's finance minister in 2009, when the Greek financial crisis was first starting to grow in severity, Yanis had turned against PASOK and emerged as one of its foremost critics. He took a strong public position against the neoliberal, austerian policies of the Papandreou government and the center-right ones that followed it. He leveraged the credibility that his academic background had afforded him as an expert in all matters economic in order to censure multiple Greek governments' approach to resolving Greece's macroeconomic and financial malaise.

After getting more involved in Syriza and the Greek left more generally in recent years, Yanis is now both a prominent figure within the party and the new Greek Finance Minister. He has started letting his true radical colors show and has begun to assert himself against the Eurogroup, the joint meeting of Eurozone finance ministers that represents Greece's European creditors in the country's debt negotiations. Mind you, he has undoubtedly stayed within the bounds of what is considered respectable technocratic deal-making: he promises that Syriza's Greece will "not ask [its] partners for a way out of repaying [its] debts, while assuring his critics that he "is [not] motivated by some radical-left agenda." Nevertheless, he has also gone on the record to say that he is "determined to clash with mighty vested interests in order to reboot Greece," and declared that he will not allow the country "to be treated as a debt colony."

Yanis' career represents the optimal path that any young, aspiring student of the Left should follow if they crave the opportunity to make substantive change in the world.

Though his first achievement as a radical policymaker was a mixed success—securing a four-month extension on Greek's debt repayments, but without any longer-term concessions from the country's creditors—Yanis will likely serve as a menace to the Eurogroup throughout his time as the Greek Finance Minister. His legitimacy as an academic economist having got him into office in the first place, he can now assert himself in his newfound position of real political power. This is the role of the radical when conferred with true political authority, which is why Yanis' career represents the optimal path that any aspiring, young student of the left should follow if they crave the opportunity to make substantive change in the world. His experiences demonstrate the viability of the academy as a potential instrument of radicalism, particularly as a practical and otherwise unavailable means through which radicals could enter the realm of public policy.

Embrace Your Inner Yanis

Despite the current rarity of the radicalized academic-turned-policymaker, the revolving door-like phenomenon between academic and public policy circles is quite common. This is especially true in economics, as the institutional links between central banks, finance ministries, and economics departments in Europe and the United States are generally very strong. Yanis' emergence as a radical policymaker exemplifies this fact.

However, radical academic-turned-policymakers are low in numbers in most Western governments. This absence of radicals in positions of political and technocratic authority is partially explained by the fact that most leftist university students are generally turned off by economics and other public policy-related fields. (Of course, neoliberal governments tend to avoid appointing radicals to public policy positions in the first place, but that's a separate issue.)

The problem is that the material studied in classes that have any relevance to public policy oftentimes lacks the necessary characteristics to attract students with a radical bent. Courses in economics and public policy, for example, suffer from an ignorance of the humanity of the human subjects they claim to study. They discuss issues like unemployment and healthcare, which are directly relevant to the lives of most people, in terms of efficiency and cost-benefit analysis rather than morality and justice. This undoubtedly frustrates those few politically radicalized students that take these courses. Moreover, the kinds of implications that are drawn in such policy-relevant fields are usually incongruent with the aims and aspirations of student radicals. For example, when Economics and Woodrow Wilson School professors ask their students how they would resolve this or that problem of public policy, they normally won't take "redistribution," let alone "revolution," as a viable answer.

Radicalized students with plans to enter academia must endure through these courses if they seek to make real, substantive change in the world. They must learn to temper their intellectual frustrations and be like Yanis, who, as an academic economist, stomached 30 years of studying traditional economics and all its pro-market implications to one day have sufficient academic legitimacy to become a technocratic official. They must thoroughly reorient their scholarly priorities, moving away from fields, particularly cultural studies, that fail as pragmatic means of gaining political power and instead into economics, game theory, and other disciplines related to public policy. They must then for years and years moderate and, if necessary, even suppress their radicalism within their own academic work. And they must do so until the point when they possess sufficient credibility as an expert in some policy-relevant field to have even the semblance of an opportunity to be offered a position of political power. And, once they eventually earn such real political authority, once Syriza or some other up-and-coming party of the uncompromising left appoints them as the Minister of Health, the Labor Secretary, or, maybe even like Yanis, the all-powerful Finance Minister, they can then finally unleash their inner radical and implement policies that will bring forth progressive reform, if not revolutionary change to society.

Radicalized students with plans to enter academia must be like Yanis, who stomached 30 years of studying traditional economics and all its pro-market implications to one day have sufficient academic legitimacy to become a technocratic official.

If this sounds like a fairytale situation that some naive, radical youth came up with in his free time, you're probably right. Nevertheless, even though it's highly improbable that this narrative—Yanis' narrative—ever plays out in full again, the potential societal benefits from it occurring just once are high enough to merit a call-to-arms for young, aspiring radicals to pursue academic careers in economics and other public-policy fields. Though the phenomenon of the radical economist-turned-policymaker is undoubtedly a rare one, Yanis' experience has shown that it is at least a possible one, whereas the ivory-tower philosopher or critical theorist's appointment to a position of real political power has proven impossible.

Yanis is currently the Greek Finance Minister, and, if Podemos continues its political rise in Spain, there may soon also be an incarnation of Varoufakis in Madrid. But there are no Zizeks in positions of political authority anywhere in the Western world, nor will there ever be. If you're a student with radical sympathies at some American or European university, take note of that. ■

Secular Stagnation and Inequality

By ASHESH RAMBACHAN '17

Shocked by the depth and duration of the economic hardship wrought by the Great Depression, economist Alvin Hansen, in his presidential address to the American Economic Association in 1938, grimly wondered whether the United States had entered a new economic era; one characterized by permanent depression and mass unemployment. He labeled this prediction "secular stagnation," and with elegant rhetoric that academic economists rarely exhibit, he warned:

"This is the essence of secular stagnation—sick recoveries which die in their infancy and depressions which feed upon themselves and leave a hard and seemingly immovable core of unemployment."

Specifically, Hansen worried that an aging population, a shortage of productive investment opportunities and a shortfall of demand would be the driving forces of future stagnation. Looking back now, Alvin Hansen may appear to be needlessly pessimistic. Mobilization for World War II, the largest federal spending program in U.S. economic history, led to massive investment in America's productive capacity. The subsequent Baby Boom stemmed fears about an aging population. Together, these two shocks laid the foundation of the rapid growth in the 1950s and 1960s. There is no reason for Hansen to have predicted these two enormous, positive shocks to demand. More importantly, he deserves our praise for his willingness to direct his colleagues towards studying the causes of, and possible solutions to, prolonged depression and mass unemployment, which Hansen called the "most obstinate problems of our time."

The Julis-Rabinowitz Center for Public Policy and Finance's (JRCPPF) Fourth Annual Conference, like Alvin Hansen, sought to highlight recent research and inspire future discussions on one of the most obstinate problems of our time: inequality and its diverse effects on the economy. Held on Princeton's campus in February, the conference focused on the topic of "Finance, Inequality and Long-Run Growth." Presenters discussed the latest economic research on a variety of topics, ranging from the effects of globalization on employment and financial stability to mathematical models of financial bubbles. The discussions among academics, economists, and policymakers at the JRCPPF Fourth Annual Conference are just a small sample, but they demonstrate that, even though most economists were blindsided by the Great Recession and many ignored the importance of rising inequality during the 2000s, the field is beginning to internalize the lessons of the last decade. In particular, the conference shows that economists have begun to seriously study the causes and consequences of inequality, an issue that is rightfully important to progressives on campus.

The conference began with presentations on the trend of inequality and its causes in the United States. Since the 1970s, income and wealth inequality have skyrocketed. Much of what we know about this startling phenomenon is due to the empirical work conducted by the conference's first presenter, Gabriel Zucman of the London School of Economics, and his colleagues, Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez. Using extensive tax records, Zucman constructed a yearly snapshot of wealth inequality in the United States since 1913. He found that the share of wealth going to the top 0.1 percent was nearly 25 percent in 2012, its highest level since the eve of the Great Depression. The sharp increase in wealth inequality was driven in part by a rise in tax evasion on the part of the super-rich who utilized offshore tax havens. For example, Zucman highlighted that the taxable investment income of the top 0.1 percent doubled since the early 1990s, while at the same time, the proportion of these investments that are stashed abroad in tax havens such as Cayman Islands, Monaco and Switzerland increased from 2 percent to 10 percent. Taken together, this suggests that the amount of wealth that dodges taxation in foreign tax havens has skyrocketed over the last two decades. The conference proceeded with a presentation by Princeton professor Benjamin Moll on a new working paper that attempts to provide an explanation for the sharp rise in inequality documented by Zucman and his colleagues. Moll argued that the rise in income inequality could be explained by the soaring wages of "superstars" such as financial managers and investment bankers. Moreover, the rise in wealth inequality could be explained by the high returns the super-wealthy earn on their investments. Moll went on to note that this could be due to extensive tax loopholes that the super-wealthy largely exploit.

Inequality is no longer off-limits within economics, and economists are now willing to tackle the questions about inequality that may prove to be important to more progressive agendas.

Zucman and Moll's opening presentations highlighted the newfound emphasis placed on the study of inequality by academic economists. The papers and presentations suggest that economists are willing to let go of old canons that ignore questions about the distribution of income and wealth. For example, many basic economics courses downplay studies of the distribution of income and wealth, as idealized free markets are pareto-efficient. This means that, because it is impossible to improve the welfare of one individual without hurting another, a society ought not to worry about how income and wealth are distributed amongst its citizens. But of course, ideal free markets exist only in textbooks. As a result, Thomas Piketty in Capital in the 21st Century criticized academic economists for neglecting the distribution of wealth for far too long and argued, "it is long since past the time when [economists] should put the question of inequality back at the center of economic analysis." The vibrant discussion among Princeton economics professors, academics from other universities and policymakers at the conference suggests that economics has, to some degree, responded to these criticisms. Inequality is no longer off-limits within economics, and economists are now willing to tackle the questions about inequality that may prove to be important to more progressive agendas.

Later that day, the conference shifted back to Alvin Hansen and his secular stagnation hypothesis. Larry Summers, the conference's keynote speaker, had revived secular stagnation in a speech at the International Monetary Fund in 2013. In that speech, he worried that Hansen's secular stagnation "may be not without relevance to America's experience" and is "profoundly important in understanding Japan's experience [since the 1990s]." Summers continued his analysis of secular stagnation at the JRCPPF conference. Citing anemic growth even during the height of the housing bubble in the mid-2000s, he argued that it has been decades since the American economy has produced strong, yet financially sustainable growth.

He said, "If one asks the question, 'How long has it been since the American economy enjoyed reasonable growth, from a reasonable unemployment rate, in a financially sustainable way?' The answer is that it has been really quite a long time, certainly more than half a generation."

Summers continued by explaining that it is possible that the United States, along with the Eurozone and Japan, have entered an extended period in which the natural rate of interest or the interest rate that is consistent with full employment is persistently negative. As a result, conventional monetary policy is unable to restore growth by itself. As a result, Summers concluded that, in the absence of major policy action, the United States may be facing an era of economic stagnation with no end in sight. While it is surprising that a prominent, public figure in the economics and policymaking community like Larry Summers is willing to make such unconventional predictions, it may not representative of any meaningful changes within the broader economics community. In particular, Summers escaped the cutthroat competition among young academics and is no longer operating under the imperative to "publish or perish." As a result, he is freer to publicly contradict established orthodoxies. It would be more meaningful if younger academics were willing to entertain these ideas.

The JRCPPF conference provided a striking example of the newfound willingness of academic economists to engage with the unconventional ideas such as secular stagnation. Gauti Eggertsson, a professor at Brown University, presented a paper entitled, "A Model of Secular Stagnation," that lays out a mathematical model of Alvin Hansen and Larry Summers' formulation of secular stagnation. Eggertsson noted in his presentation that certain conventions of macroeconomics must be dropped in order to tell this story of an economy caught in a persistent depression with elevated unemployment. Specifically, he explained that standard models of recessions assume that the causes of depressions are temporary. If enough time passes, the models predict that economies would return to normal. He argued that standard macroeconomic models precluded the very idea of secular stagnation by "baking its assumptions into the cake," so to speak. In the paper, Eggertsson departs from this conventional wisdom by altering his assumptions. He realistically assumes that individuals make different savings decisions as

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Princeton, PRINCO, and Environmental Responsibility

BY LEIGH ANNE SCHRIEVER '16

EVERY DAY, MORE AND MORE people take shorter showers, use more efficient lightbulbs, and carry reusable water bottles in an effort to lessen their own environmental impact and respond to the dangers of climate change. We live in a society that encourages personal responsibility for the planet—an increasingly important mindset as sea levels and temperatures rise, erratic weather patterns become more common, and life on Earth tries to accommodate the burden that human actions have put on it.

However, individual efforts will never be enough to slow or reverse the rapidly changing climate. Private institutions, including universities like Princeton, must also take responsibility for their environmental impact, including in the investment process. By failing to do so, they counteract all of the personal efforts made to reduce environmental harms and inadequately address climate change with the necessary immediacy. Princeton pursues many sustainable on-campus policies, but if it wants to invest in a sustainable future it should focus on its endowment as well as its campus. It is time to start attacking the threat of climate change from every possible angle, including through our investments.

To encourage a transition to a sustainable financial system, fundamental changes will be necessary. Capitalism often works in opposition to progressive goals, but we have an opportunity to make it work in favor of environmental protection. Companies like Halliburton certainly make more money in the immediate future with poor fracking practices when they lobby successfully for weaker regulations on drinking water purity, but everyone else must eventually bear these costs. The long-term impacts of these actions should be factored into the value of a company's products and assets. The system must hold them accountable by correctly accounting for those costs in pricing and valuation. By considering environmental impacts when we invest, we can reduce the incentives to fund environmentally damaging companies. One out of every six dollars professionally invested by asset managers already incorporates considerations of environmental, social, and governance factors. It is time for all institutions, including Princeton, to do so.

Across college campuses and in other large private endowments, the environmental impacts of investments are under discussion. Often, the campus debates focus on fossil fuel companies, especially the 200 that possess the largest fossil fuel reserves. Student divestment movements on campuses across the world have pushed their universities to remove money from these companies, which represent the problems caused by the entire sector. At some schools, like Harvard and Yale, students have been turned down by their universities or handed pathetic substitutes for real divestment. Even at Stanford, which did agree to divestment, direct investments have only been removed from coal, which is a tiny fraction of their endowment.

The issue isn't just limited to those 200 companies, or even just to fossil fuels. The scope of unsustainable investment practices is much larger. It is inherent to the investment process itself. To really address this systemic problem, institutions must not only remove themselves from certain problematic investments, but also develop a new way to screen assets for the hidden costs of their endowments. This reassessment of costs will almost certainly require divesting from many kinds of companies hurting the environment through high carbon emissions, deforestation, or funding for climate change denial. It must also include a process for keeping future investments out of similarly harmful companies, to gradually and permanently reduce the carbon footprint of institutional endowments. This is where divestment movements have not reached their full potential: there is no plan to retain the gains made from divestment as the market shifts, new companies arise, or existing ones change.

The Princeton Sustainable Investment Initiative (PSII) seeks to build upon and broaden the scope of previous divestment efforts. It begins by calling for a few introductory steps, including signing onto both the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Investment and the Carbon Disclosure Project, which encourages companies to disclose information about their emissions. These first steps are simple ways for the University to demonstrate its commitment to more long-term, systemic change, particularly since the remainder of the proposal will take several years to achieve its full impact.

To monitor that impact, as well as assess the initial size of the endowment's environmental harms, the proposal requests that the University release an annual report detailing the carbon footprint of the endowment. This is part of the Initiative's broader goal of challenging the current perception of the endowment as a wholly separate entity, removed from the rest of campus. All too often, students and the administration focus solely on the environmental impacts of on-campus initiatives, but the endowment is just as much a part of Princeton as its buildings. When our money funds global environmental degradation and the acceleration of climate change, we are responsible for a share of those harms. We have understood this in the past, and divested from companies involved in apartheid South Africa and genocide in Darfur. Climate change deserves this type of strong response. Even as Princeton seeks to reduce its on-campus emissions by installing solar panels and constructing efficient new academic buildings, it undermines these gains with every dollar the Princeton Investment Company (PRINCO) invests in companies that hurt the environment. By publicly acknowledging the carbon footprint of the endowment, the University would recognize the positive impact its investments can make and partially quantify the progress being made towards more sustainable financial practices and lower carbon emissions funded by the endowment.

The centerpiece of the proposal is the formation of a democratically elected committee, composed of faculty, students, and administrators, including members of PRINCO. This committee would be tasked with doing in-depth research into all possible options that would lead to more environmentally sustainable investment practices while still maintaining high returns on the endowment. Experts in the field, including investors who already manage green portfolios and other universities that have begun this process are only a few of the many resources this committee could obtain valuable information from. They would also be responsible for deciding which companies are most harmful and what are acceptable investments. The guidelines developed by this committee would then be put through a trial period to gather information about which processes are too difficult to implement and which are ineffective, as well as what works. This would only be applied for a limited time to a few asset managers and would help determine how to best maintain the valuable relationships PRINCO has developed with its managers over the years. This information would be used to adjust the guidelines, which would then be implemented across the endowment.

Environmentally sustainable investment is, of course, an incredibly complicated issue, and divestment alone is not a complete solution. Do we want to divest from companies committing massive amounts of deforestation? Should we file shareholder resolutions against funding the denial of climate change? Do we want to continue to invest in fossil fuel companies that are working hard to be part of an energy transition to a renewable future? How do we set long-term goals for the reduction of our endowment's environmental footprint, like those we set for our physical campus? Do we want to invest more in renewable energy companies and green alternatives to carbon-intensive industries? Are we willing to make some economic sacrifices in order to minimize our financial support of environmental destruction? All of these are important questions that require in-depth research. Our project is large in scope, which is why we need a committee dedicated to investigating this issue's many nuances.

Princeton is well suited to lead on the issue of sustainable investment by adopting our plan. Princeton has a massive $21 billion endowment, the largest endowment per capita of any university. While many reports, including the study by the Aperio Group called "Do the Investment Math: Building a Carbon Free Portfolio," say that sustainable investment processes are unlikely to have a significant impact on the incredible returns Princeton gets, our unique position means that we have room to be less worried than other universities about the financial impact. It is also part of our responsibility as an institution with incredible intellectual resources to participate in this critical process. We have some of the best financial minds working for PRINCO and on our faculty who could contribute to innovative and sustainable solutions.

As a leading research institution, we should lead a comprehensive evaluation of the problem of investment impacts on the environment and its potential solutions. Other recognizable institutions, including the Rockefeller Foundation and Stanford University, have taken major steps forward and divested some or all of their holdings from fossil fuels. It is time for us to take the next step and devise an endowment-wide process to institutionalize the changes that these other institutions have started to make.

Princeton stands as a role model, both for other institutions and for its own students. Each year, graduates are funneled directly into the finance industry, having come from a supposedly ethical institution that still invests heavily in unsustainable practices. Maybe they recognize that solar panels for their roofs or motion sensors for their lights are important personal steps to take, but they do not see the importance of using every possible method to combat climate change and protect the environment. Princeton students across all disciplines will continue to neglect the long-term costs of environmental degradation and the rapid growth of this problem as they go about their work. This institution has a chance to shape the next generation of investors, policy-makers, and educators by setting an example. Princeton lists sustainability as one of its core values—students should see their University live up to its own ideals.

Without a doubt, this process will take a lot of work. Many hours will go into the research and construction of guidelines, but the tangible impact that follows will be well worth it. There are a number of asset managers that have environmentally friendly portfolios and green options for investors, but an industry-wide shift to these kinds of practices is necessary to make a real difference on climate change and its systemic causes. This can only happen if the demand is there; Princeton can play an important role in creating that demand.

The Princeton Sustainable Investment Initiative has already gathered almost 1,600 signatures from students, faculty, alumni, and staff. There is an incredible amount of support for this movement on Princeton's campus. PSII has also met with the Resources Committee for dialogue and discussion with the administration, with the hopes that they will respond positively and pass the proposal on to the Board of Trustees for approval to start this process. If a leading educational institution like Princeton steps up and publicly announces its commitment to the transition and follows through with it, other Universities and endowments are likely to follow suit. Once the ball starts rolling, a massive and much-needed change can sweep through financial institutions and our market system can stop standing in the way of a holistic response to the incredible dangers of climate change. ■

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