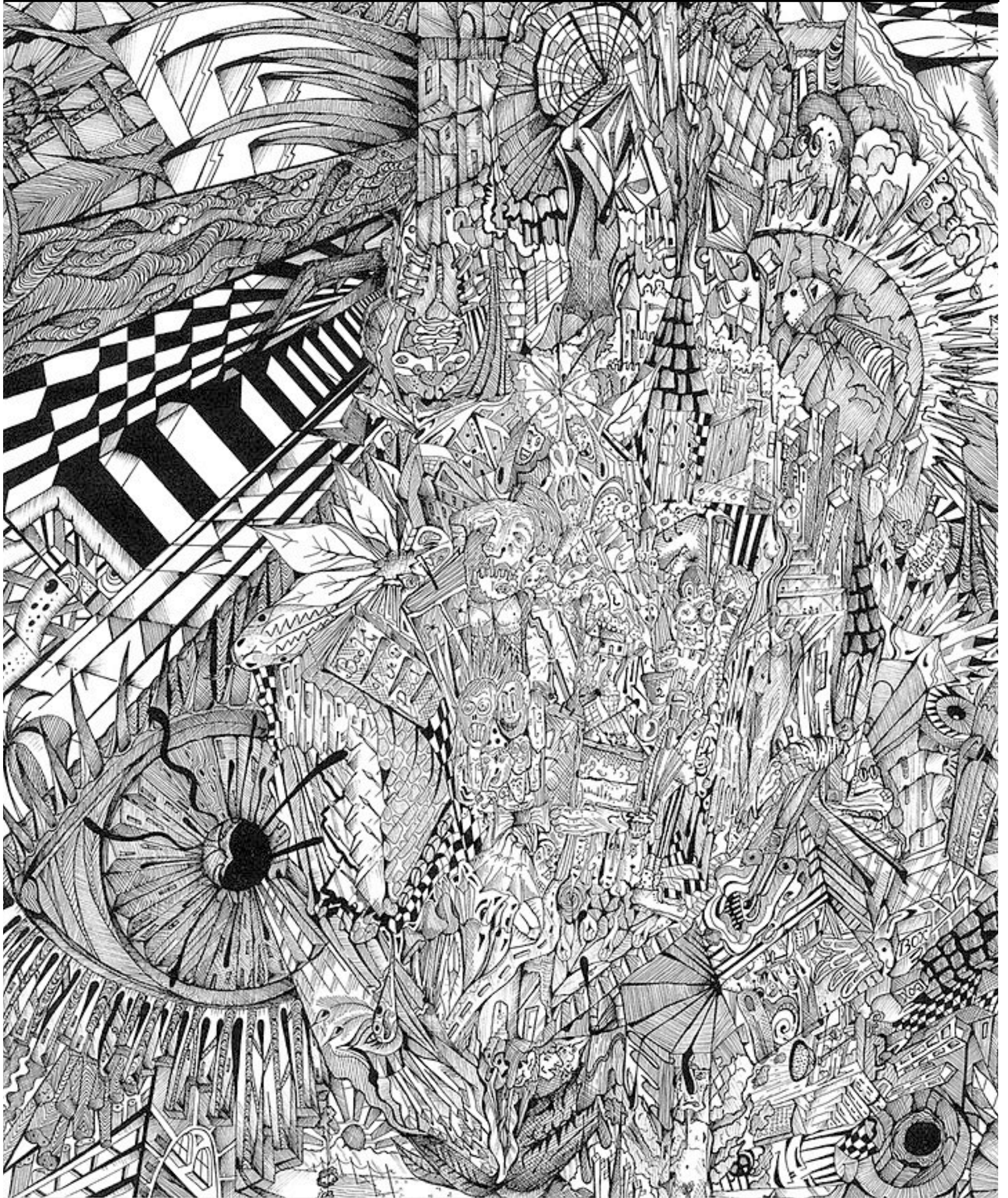


the PROCG

Princeton's Left Political Publication



Masthead

Editor-in-Chief	Beatrice Ferguson '21
Managing Editor	Alec Israeli '21
Senior Editor	Chaya Holch '22
News Editor	Marc Schorin '22
Staff Editors	Tori Gorton '21 Jane Markley '22 Joshua Judd Porter '21
Copy Editors	Molly Cutler '23 Rebecca Han '22 Maryam Ibrahim '23
Design Editors	Ameena Faruki '22 Emma Popham '21 Kai Tsurumaki '23
Digital Editor	K Stiefel '20
Treasurer	Chris Russo '20
Staff Writers	JD Copeland '23 Cole Diehl '20 Joseph Feng '22 Braden Flax '21 Miguel Gracia-Zhang '23 Mary Alice Jouve '23 M.E. Walker '23 Chase Lovgren '21 Rebecca Ngu '20 David Palomino '22 Tamica Perera '22 Nalanda Sharadjaya '21 Elliott Weil '23
Logo Design	Maria Medrano '17
Cover Photo	@user: Surreal artist rhodes / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA-3.0

www.theprincetonprogressive.com

Table of Contents

- 4** **Politics of Space at Princeton**
M.E. Walker
- 6** **Disaster Capitalism: The Highest Stage of Imperialism**
Mary Alice Jouve
- 7** **The Gaps in Princeton's Checks: How Campus Jobs and Financial Aid Penalize Non-Nuclear Families**
K Stiefel
- 9** **Climate Fires and the Green New Deal: Naomi Klein and Keenaga-Yamahtta Taylor on the Impending Climate Crisis**
Maryam Ibrahim
- 10** **In The Oven of YouTube, Bread Rises**
Joseph Feng
- 11** **Tweets for Transformation**
Elliot Weil

Politics of Space at Princeton

M.E. Walker

Princeton, as an educational institution, cultural symbol, and source of research and economic growth, defines and is defined by its spatialization. The University's constructed environment—its grassy courtyards, ornate arches, and Gothic halls—influences how students interact with each other and the outside world, as well as how they view the University, their fellow students, and themselves.

In “The Political Economy of Public Space”, human geographer David Harvey analyzes the impact of Haussmann's redevelopment of Paris in the late 19th century on class conflict and politics within the city. Haussmann, commissioned by Napoleon III, demolished ancient, crowded sections of the city to make space for elaborate gardens, upscale cafes, and wide boulevards to facilitate the transportation of people, capital, and troops. This new “spectacle,” Harvey notes, had myriad implications for the political fabric of the city—which had been the site of several violent uprisings just years before. New spaces were designed to promote imperial power and facilitate military and commercial control, and cross-class interactions were reduced, changing how Parisians of different classes viewed each other.

Like that of Paris, Princeton's spatiality impacts how students see themselves in relation to others, including both other Princeton students and the members of the communities from which they come. For some, the University's prestige—physically embodied in the grandeur of structures like the 125-year old Richardson Auditorium, and exhibited by the array of media figures, business

leaders, and politicians that speak there—may reinforce existing biases. If a student from an affluent background views themselves and others like them as somehow more suited to attend Princeton, especially if they come from a community with strong connections to the University or to elite education in general, stepping onto campus and being greeted by Blair Arch may feel like confirmation of this sense of exceptionalism. Few other universities, of course, have comparable architecture and museums, corporate recruiting, and colleges with names like “Rockefeller,” “Wilson,” and “Forbes”. Similar to how Haussmann envisioned the imposition of an extravagant capital onto a reconstructed Paris as promoting French nationalism and obscuring the city's oppressed working class, the character of public space at Princeton nurtures both a belief in exceptionalism and a tendency towards insularity. The spectacle of campus space is central

public spaces can be less welcoming. The same Gothic architecture, social prestige, and orientation pageantry can contribute to imposter syndrome that is, in part, class-linked. In detailing a poor French family's perception of a new, opulent cafe as exclusionary, Harvey describes them as “internalizing the gold that has been appropriated from them.” This phrase equally describes how some students may feel when confronted by Princeton's concentrated wealth, which has strong historical connections to slavery, imperialism, and labor exploitation. In addition, a network of tacit traditions and expectations await students on campus, most notably Princeton's eating clubs, with their quasi-independence from the University, various restrictions on entry via passes on different nights, and contradictory posturing as both exclusive and accessible institutions—particularly the bicker clubs. Bringing students from a greater diversity of backgrounds

to campus does not necessarily ensure they are truly included. While Princeton has made some efforts to remedy the problem through new orientation programs, resolution of the conflict requires more fundamental, radical change in how we view the histories, politics, and present-day class dynamics of institutions like Princeton.

At a first-year event this September titled “Princeton, Money and Me,” University alumni discussed the challenges of be-

ing a low-income student on campus. This included the intersection of wealth with social life on campus and the strange situation some students may find themselves in of having necessities on campus provided via financial aid but knowing their family is struggling to make ends



photos credit: Michael Hauge

to Princeton's exclusive mystique and promotes buy-in to this mentality among applicants, students, and the public.

For other students, especially first-generation students or those from communities where higher education is less accessible, Princeton's



meet back home. The dialogue, however, avoided looking at the underlying class politics and causes of this conflict in favor of surface-level, feel-good remarks and a general sense that low-income students would be alright by virtue of lucrative careers that the Princeton brand would provide them in the future. One alumnus, for example, remarked that his community sees his academic journey as impossible, and that he always tries to tell them that they too can work hard and get to Princeton. The hard work of many students to overcome obstacles of class and background to obtain spots at top universities like Princeton is certainly praiseworthy, however even offhand remarks like this contribute to a culture that places the onus of accessing college on poor youth, considers difficult-to-access higher education as acceptable, and lets wealthy communities and institutions off the hook for upholding barriers to economic and educational mobility.

In addition to feelings of reinforced superiority or of not belonging, resentment or guilt can also contribute to the complex personal reactions that students have to Princeton's spatiality. The contrast between Princeton and other spaces where students come from—and where their friends may be attending school, working, or otherwise living—can induce new examinations of oneself and where one comes from. Students may feel guilty of the resources that they have access to but other young people from their

communities do not, either because they are in the workforce, at a two-year college, at a less affluent four-year college, or for some other reason. Being exposed to the wealth at Princeton, including both the school's wealth and the personal wealth of many of its students' families, may also prompt resentment.

In discussing the politics of public space in Paris, Harvey focuses on the blending of public and private space. Whereas pre-renovation Paris was home to significant mingling between classes, who lived in the same buildings and shared the streets, Haussmann segregated much of the city and encouraged the construction of cafes and department stores along major streets, turning much of this space over to private interests. This newly commercialized space, regulated by owners and commercial institutions, created new tensions as the lower classes saw themselves being shut out and the upper classes grew to expect class homogeneity. While the space inside a store is public, it is public in a different way than a space owned by the people is public. Much in the same way, Princeton's campus is an example of what Harvey describes as contested public space, "where ambiguities of proprietorship, of aesthetics, of social relations... and the political economy of everyday life collide." Only in 1991 did the Ivy Club and Tiger Inn accept women, for example; the additional cost and, in some cases, secretive application processes of the eating clubs, which serve as

social hubs on campus, continue to disadvantage low-income students who attempt to join. Princeton's timeworn structures, which primarily tell the narrow, whitewashed story of an elite, often violent ruling class, carry forward their own politics and history across the centuries, creating a sense of dissonance when these intersect with modern realities.

Space holds power. This is especially true of Princeton's campus, which has such a long, somewhat obscured history of violence. Enslaved people were once auctioned in front of Nassau Hall. A majority of students and alumni who fought in the Civil War joined the Confederacy, and, as Richard Anderson of The Princeton Slavery Project notes, the University's Civil War memorial omits the allegiances of the student-soldiers it records, implying a moral equivalency between the two armies. Princeton has long maintained connections to a variety of institutions that perpetuate wealth inequality and labor exploitation. The resultant dynamics of space on campus can elicit feelings of resentment, unworthiness, or degradation. Students should be empowered to more accurately examine the University and their place here. Only by students and the University doing work to deconstruct these hierarchical spaces and the forces behind them can these conflicts begin to be resolved.

Disaster Capitalism

The Highest Stage of Imperialism

Mary Alice Jouve

In Naomi Klein's renowned book *The Shock Doctrine*, she expounds upon capitalism's newest advances. Through the use of economic shocks, natural disasters, and wars, companies working in concert with governments take advantage of the debilitating quality of crises, whether through creating or exploiting them. Putting Klein's thesis in the context of Vladimir Lenin's observations about the development of capitalism, as set out in his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, creates a fuller picture of the development of imperialism as it relates to capitalism in modern history.

In 1916, Lenin wrote *Imperialism* to show that capitalism had entered a new phase, one that was no longer composed of many businesses competing in a free market but instead one where large monopolies were controlling ever-increasing portions of economic sectors. To uphold the infinite growth that capitalism requires, monopolies began to use other nations as resources from which they can expropriate both labor and wealth. Monopolies also began to use the power of governments and financial systems to take over both the land and wealth of other countries. This death of free trade in favor of monopolies, banks, and governments controlling the world economy is the fundamental shift Lenin identified and the conditions which create the development of what Klein calls "corporatist" tactics to further expropriate wealth from the Global South.

Klein implicitly expands off of Lenin's thesis when she observes new developments in the methods used by corporations, governments, and financial institutions to uphold the domination of global capitalism. The new tools Klein identifies she names "disaster capitalism" or the "Shock Doctrine," i.e. the use of crises to disorient people in order to implement neoliberal policies.

Lenin identifies the origins of the Shock Doctrine when he refutes the idea that imperialism can create world peace and decrease economic crises because countries and corporations are too heavily invested in the global economy to risk causing strife. The tendency of capital to accumulate actually creates more instability as overspeculation runs rampant. Lenin even asserts that as corporations caught onto the boom and bust cycles that occurred in the late 19th century, companies adapted by forming monopolies. Monopolies are better able to weather and profit off of financial downturns because they are too big to be affected by certain sectors of the monopoly not making profits. During depressions, they are able to acquire failing companies and turn profits from them when the economy becomes stronger again.

In addition, Lenin acknowledges the historical backdrop of his work by connecting World War I to imperialism. The profit motive

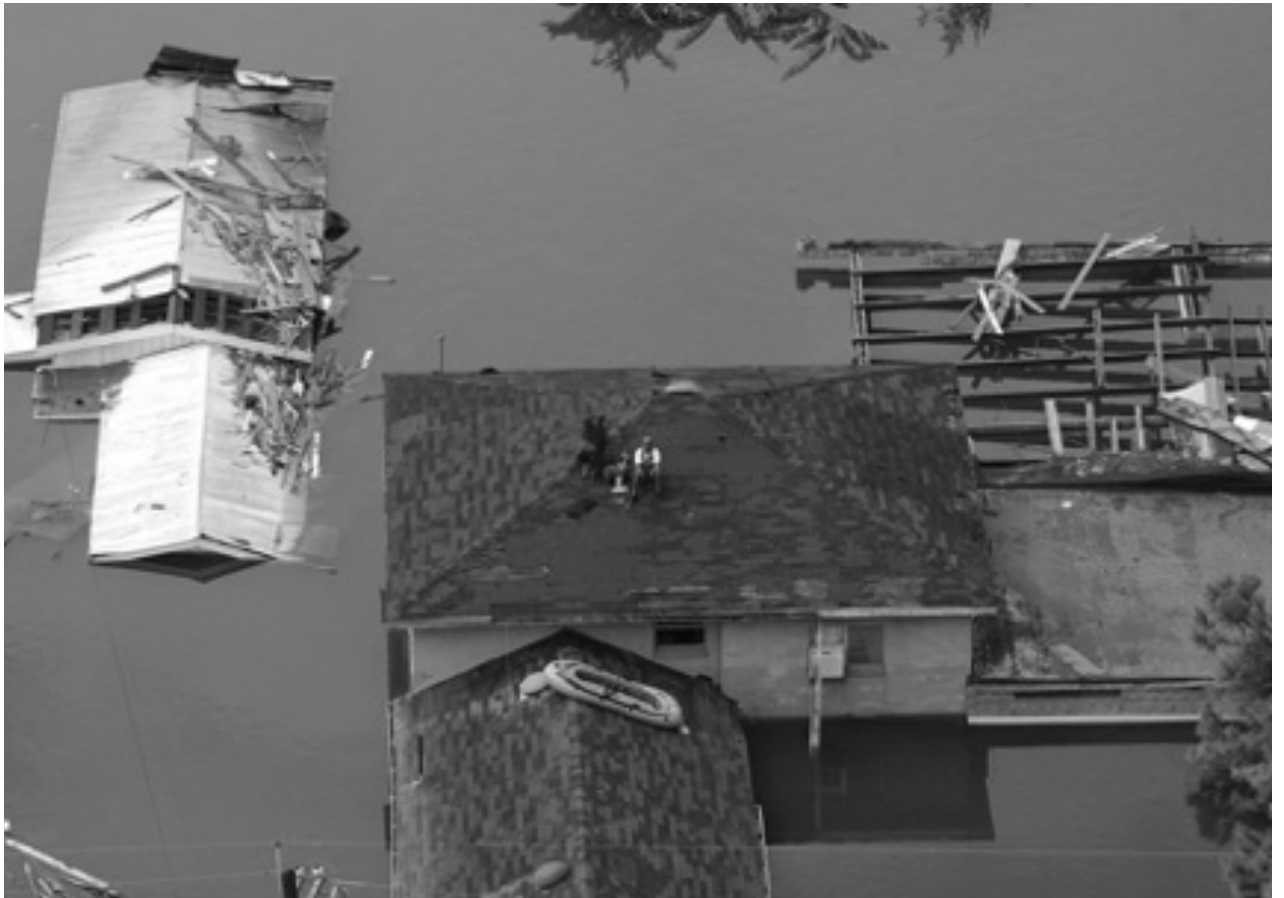


photo credit: FEMA image library - public domain

of companies and nationalistic colonial superpowers combined to create the excessive militarism present before the beginning of World War I. Through Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and the League of Nations, the further division and control of the world amongst imperialist powers was achieved.

Klein identifies how capitalists have advanced past using the natural boom-bust cycle of the market to creating or taking advantage of crises that disorient the population to implement free market policies. After decades of America using contingencies placed on International Monetary Fund loans to force countries to embrace the so-called free market, countries in the Global South have been much more reluctant to give up their social safety nets in favor the empty promise of the Washington Consensus. Countries like Venezuela show that people can fight against the selling off of their natural resources and the erosion of their standard of living. Now, the corporatocracy is starting to rely more on these aforementioned shocks in order to destroy societies and remake them so that they are easy to exploit.

As Klein painstakingly details, Western Imperial countries have tried to thwart many nations in the Global South which attempt to create mixed or planned economies. Allende, the democratically elected president of Chile, was executed in 1973 by the followers of Pinochet in league with the CIA when he began to implement socialist policies and stop foreign corporations from extracting resources from his country. The America backed opposition party in Venezuela has and is still trying to take power from the United Socialist Party of Venezuela because it has nationalized many industries and

has blocked exploitative foreign investments.

Increased social welfare programs and equitable trade balances aren't new to Western social democracies. However, capitalist nations fight hard against the creation of these policies in the Global South because they decrease the ability of corporations to exploit these nations for labor and resources at the greatest profits. As Lenin details in *Imperialism*, concessions given to workers in imperialist countries like a higher minimum wage or free healthcare are granted at the expense of the global proletariat who are exploited for their labor. Even though popular social democracies like the Nordic countries are hailed as bastions of a more equitable society, they are merely benefitting from imperialist expropriation.

This truth that is uncovered by looking at Klein and Lenin's theses in concert should inform how we think about national and international politics. We should not be afraid to critique politicians who want to make people's lives better in America but will do nothing to decrease the military-industrial complex or to help nations who are trying to escape the grips of predatory multinational corporations. Without this global perspective and solidarity with the workers of the world, no movement against imperialism or monopoly capitalism could be successful.

The Gaps in Princeton's Checks

How Campus Jobs and Financial Aid Penalize Non-Nuclear Families

K Stiefel

For the second time in my life, I needed to tell one of my bosses this semester that I was working more hours than I could handle. While juggling four regular sources of employment was not new and still hasn't changed for me, I finally felt comfortable enough in my finances a few weeks ago to not work a job that was causing a scheduling conflict with my academics. A combination of my thesis advisor throwing shade at me for missing our lab group meetings and my working hours exceeding thirty hours some weeks meant that I finally had the agency to switch up my schedule without the omnipresent fear of not being able to afford the next semester's bill. If I had known in my senior year of high school that I would not have been financially secure at the basic level for the majority of college despite Princeton's promises of generosity, I would have chosen one of the many actually generous colleges that were offering me full financial aid with stipends that would have covered my expenses instead of choosing a place that was barely meeting my needs from the beginning. The layout of the letter from the financial aid office made begging my non-custodial parent to fund my education despite the terms of my parents' divorce seem like a reasonable choice for the education of my dreams. When I accidentally came out as transgender to my family, however, my non-custodial parent decided to stop supporting me financially and left me with no legal recourse to secure funds to continue my education without taking out loans. The series of events that choice triggered led me to violently realize that campus employment is not sufficient for students who must fully support themselves and that Princeton's "generous" aid process is deeply flawed.

Some students will graduate having never filed an I-9 form and others, like myself, will leave with upwards of a thousand hours of labor. At an institution that often keeps students too busy to even reflect, the idea of expending precious hours washing dishes or finding books may seem counterproductive. The math is simple: three hours you spend at McGraw tutoring is three hours you cannot spend on your own pets and readings. The counterargument is also straightforward: professors don't pay you for doing well in their class. For every hour an undergraduate chooses to spend working at a paid campus job, there is a financial situation, present or future, that has created the impetus. In

mine and others' experience, this need to work sometimes arises out of the need to survive—in concrete terms, to have food and shelter and healthcare in the present—despite the fact that Princeton has the financial resources at its disposal to ensure the financial stability of its student population. For both students with complicated family structures that resist a traditional two-parent characterization and students who are disowned but not federally categorized as independent, the financial aid office is not able to calculate the financial resources actually available to the student because of their rigid family-based expectations. These gaps in its financial aid policies are then further exacerbated by the gaps in its campus employment which is not suited to allow students to achieve and maintain economic independence, particularly because of the absence of jobs that have both high pay and many available hours with some degree of flexible scheduling.

We can easily assign four core motivations to students working on campus. The first group works for resume-building or research opportunities, ultimately impacting their financial situation through increased future earning potential. However, their current situation is not directly correlated with their finances in this speculative capital if experience is the only motivation. The second group works because the university decided they must by offering them "work-study" in their aid package. To clarify, "work-study" aid is when the university notices a financial need and, instead of allocating grant money for that student, decides they should earn that money through campus employment. The only benefit of being assigned "work-study" in your aid package is that you have priority in the student worker hiring process over those without the designation and may earn a wage increase of fifty cents per hour. Working, even when designated as a "work-study" recipient, is not required by Princeton and the expenses may be covered by loans or alternative means. How the financial aid office (and the federal system at large) decides one student must work to meet their demonstrated need while others may receive stipends for the same expenses and the implications underlying their policies is an article unto itself.

The third class of student workers are those who do not need employment, but want to work for a source of disposable income. These

students can quit or lose their job(s) at any time without serious financial repercussions, the worst usually being that it might be harder to go to the movies or travel the world, and they may need to request additional funds from family for their everyday expenses. Within this group, those who work because they would rather not ask their parents for money might believe they are unfairly grouped with the wealthiest working students; the fact that they can entertain ideas of "wanting" to work instead of "needing" proves their membership, though the range of socioeconomic positions in this group should not be oversimplified. The fourth group is one that should arguably never exist at a well-funded institution such as Princeton: those who must work to support themselves or their (financial) dependents. "Work-study" students share significant overlap with this group and, given the right combination of unexpected situations, are liable to join its ranks. This is the category that most workers fall into in any given non-student workforce, but in my experience makes up only a small population of student workers at Princeton. There is no formal data collected on student employment except the raw number of workers: over 2,500 students or less than half of the enrolled undergraduates.

One reason that students shouldering serious financial responsibilities do not visibly occupy space on this campus is that on-campus jobs are not sustainable for them; they are best suited to support students seeking disposable income. Many employers can offer students either a job with many hours or a job with high wages, but it is rare to find an opportunity with both good compensation and as many hours as needed for financial independence. One of the best paying jobs on campus at \$14.80 per hour, tutoring through the McGraw Center, will initially assign a maximum of six hours a week to those interested (with more hours potentially available) and employs roughly 100 students. This is barely comparable to one "work-study eligible" job (ranked third-lowest in hourly pay at \$12 per hour) which can usually offer around ten hours a week per position with nearly ten times the number of positions available. Those who do not qualify for work-study may be paid as low as \$11 per hour, further lowering their earning potential. In an added layer, the physical and mental demands of a job are not always fairly compensated. Sweating in the dish room

of Forbes during Sunday brunch offers the exact same pay as sitting behind a desk in one of the libraries. This problem is exacerbated for students with disabilities or visas whose prospects must be further narrowed based on the availability of an accessible position. An obvious solution is to work multiple jobs with different employers, but many jobs overlap in their available hours (especially for the evenings and weekends) and are not able to be flexible when scheduling because of the nature of shift work. On top of that, a professor scheduling a midterm that overlaps with evening employment, which has happened almost a dozen times in my own experience, is just one instance in which the student is forced to lose hours of work to support their academics or to reschedule the exam to support themselves, usually taking it earlier than their classmates and losing precious studying time. As with any pervasive issue, we must uncover the root causes if we hope to find permanent solutions. Is the lack of sustainable campus jobs, and by extension the financial situations that require them, an institutional oversight or a malicious policy? The answer lies in the university's financial aid statistics.

While Princeton is slowly increasing the amount of students admitted who require financial aid, the percent of seniors graduating with debt is rising faster as per their public statistics on the admissions website. During the 2015-2016 school year, only 60 percent of students were on financial aid, while 84 percent of seniors graduated debt-free. This past academic year, there was a one percent increase in the percent of students on financial aid compared with a two percent decrease in seniors graduating without

debt (which first appeared in the 2016-2017 year and is persisting). If we make the (safe) assumption that students are not taking out frivolous loans, we quickly see that the decrease in seniors graduating without debt means an increase in the number of seniors the university is unable to adequately support despite their promises to meet their financial needs with grants. More importantly, the university found the financial resources to expand admission without addressing the current needs of its student body. This shows that they undeniably have the funds they can reallocate to financial aid as-needed but avoid doing so to prevent enrolled students from taking on debt. Why are seniors graduating with debt, then, if the university could readily prevent that?

Since Princeton "need-based" aid calculations are dependent on students coming from supportive nuclear families, their calculations are not designed to recognize those who fall outside these normative family structures. Not every queer, trans, or abused student who no longer has a financial relationship with their guardian(s) will be financially emancipated, simply because they might not be able to produce the correct documentation to qualify for a narrowly defined federal category. While Princeton might not directly impact the federal policy, they are clearly uninterested in either lobbying to change the federal definition or creating an alternative support network for those who need additional support outside its bounds. Students who come from a single-guardian household without a non-custodial parent present in their lives likewise struggle to document their situation in a way the financial aid office can understand without its narrow framework. A divorce, even

with the stipulation that the non-custodial parent will not contribute to the child's educational expenses, does not prevent a financial aid officer from calculating what the non-custodial parent is expected to contribute. When these situations occur and are brought to financial aid, I imagine they are given similar responses to what I was told when I explained that my parent would not provide me financial support after coming out to them: "the contribution is what they *can* pay, not what they *want* to." It might be surprising that more seniors do not graduate with student loans until we consider that the seniors who graduated with debt does not include those who spent significant amounts of time working to meet the financial demands without taking out a loan.

In fact, Princeton has no way of estimating how many of its students are working campus jobs to support themselves or others and has a vested interest in obscuring this reality. Having this information would challenge the university to be accountable in their promise to meet "100 percent of [students'] demonstrated financial need with grant aid," as they advertise to prospective students. For now, the administration can shake their heads as they feign bewilderment at student debt at such a "generous" institution. We, however, see clearly that the failure of financial aid to meet the financial needs of students, which is exacerbated by the working environment, straddles the line between oversight and malicious intent. While it may have been purely an oversight the first few times a situation like this arose, it became malicious through the administration's refusal to address it and intentional ignorance of the reality they foster.



photo credit: Paul VanDerWerf

Climate Fires and the Green New Deal

Naomi Klein and Keenaga-Yamahtta

Taylor on the Impending Climate Crisis

Maryam Ibrahim



photo credit: Richard Smith

As children, we may have heard about climate change in middle school science class and felt pity towards the polar bears stranded in the melting Arctic. But as time goes on, issues relating to the climate crystallize and become personally salient: the 2018 UN climate report stated that the global community has only 12 years to prevent the Earth's temperature from increasing by 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit, otherwise sea levels are likely to rise by ten centimeters. In 2019, we are down to 11 years, and with our current White House administration, the number of years may now be even smaller. At this point, the UN can only seek to slow down the process of climate change, as it has already caused the destruction of homes, lives, and communities, dislocating millions. The Green New Deal, a radical departure from the halfheartedness and blatant apathy towards climate change seen within most government institutions, is sponsored by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Ed Markey and seeks to ensure not only that climate change is combatted through investment in low carbon activities, but also that American lives are improved overall through policies like the implementation of a livable minimum wage. The Green New Deal proposes all these changes to

go forward within ten years.

This was the topic of the conversation between Naomi Klein, Canadian journalist and author of *No Logo* and *The Shock Doctrine*, and Keenaga-Yamahtta Taylor, author and assistant professor in Princeton's Department of African American Studies, which took place on October 1 in Richardson Auditorium. Klein and Taylor are no strangers to criticizing capitalism; they spoke openly about workers' oppression and the imperialist nature of the extraction of resources. Specifically, they discussed Klein's most recent book, *On Fire: the (Burning) Case for the Green New Deal*, which urges its readers to wake up to the current climate crisis and uncovers the deeper level of harm wreaked by apathy.

During her opening remarks, Klein spoke of three fires that are affecting our world today: climate change, politics, and "our fire." Climate change is responsible for the forced migration of millions, a consequence of the dramatically increasing amount of storms, wildfires, floods and likely hundreds of millions to come. As a result, a political fire is ignited, one that has world powers isolating migrants and asylum seekers through policies of displacement, such as ICE's raids in America or Australia's earlier "Pacific Solution" (a governmental policy whereby asy-

lum seekers and migrants impacted by climate change were sent to neighboring countries in Oceania). Klein further pointed out that the increasing climate problem and the exclusionary practices of oppressive regimes in powerful countries fuel one another.

The last fire may be the most vital of the three. As opposed to the other two, "our fire" is not destructive but "life giving"; it "clear[s] away debris." What Klein means is the mobilization of the youth, such as the Sunrise movement—which challenged Democratic leaders to stop ignoring the climate debate—and the activism of Greta Thunburg. Klein believes that this new climate change movement's insistence upon planning and the "building of infrastructure" sets it apart from other waves of protest such as Occupy Wall Street. Professor Taylor agreed and spoke of past sentiments on climate change as a type of cognitive dissonance, where one was aware of the crisis but was not sure how to fix it. The Green New Deal epitomizes a new kind of mindset of organized resistance. Regardless of any specific legislation with the intent to solve the climate issue, what is very clear to Klein and Taylor is that carbon taxes are not enough: we must act both quickly and radically.

In The Oven of YouTube, Bread Rises

Joseph Feng

When Karl Marx published *Das Kapital*, his pioneering critique of capitalism, it heralded a new age in political theory. With its descriptions of class struggle and hope for a better future, *Das Kapital* spread, agitating revolutionary fervor across Europe, and eventually the world. Nearly 200 years later, Marx's works remain a centerpiece of modern leftism, providing critiques of capital that still ring true today. Yet despite Marx's sharp and seemingly timeless insight, his texts are undoubtedly old, left behind by a modernizing language. And his more polemic criticisms of an alienating, exploitative society are often buried under philosophical models and long-winded analyses of linens and coats.

Despite the left's focus on working class unity and strength, its contemporary efforts to reach a broader audience have been spare. The foundational leftist materials of the 19th and early 20th century can be quite difficult. Often only those with the education and the time necessary will be able to parse dense theory on dialectical materialism or the value of labor. While the left's dedication to nuance and analysis is necessary for understanding the issues of modern society, its scholarly flair can be jarring to a broader audience that needs to understand it the most. And this tendency towards the academic can often breed a sense of elitism against the ignorant; even though much of the left's failure to spread in America can be attributed to the active suppression of class consciousness, the movement's propensity to treat ignorance and apathy with disdain can often make it hostile to potential recruits.

This lack of modernization has rendered the left woefully inadequate in dealing with the ascendant alt-right. In contrast with the slowly adapting left, the right has been remarkably successful in adopting new technologies to spread their message. Despite their violent and hateful rhetoric, the far right has been undeniably successful in making their ideology easily accessible. In the lawless lands of internet media platforms, the alt-right has found its home, preying on the reluctance of companies to police their violent ideology. Targeting young, impressionable, white male audiences, the right has produced a decentralized mass of propagandizing content that has spread with the assistance of 4Chan, Reddit, and YouTube. Over the years, this infrastructure has been strengthened by the investments of right-wing conservatives. Dennis Prager and the Koch brothers have utilized their vast wealth to fund a network of right-wing YouTube channels, such as Steven Crowder, Ben Shapiro, and Prager University. Aided by platforms designed to keep users' attentions for as long as possible, the alt-right has created a remarkably effective radicalization pipeline.

YouTube, in particular, is where the

radicalization efforts of the alt-right shine. The YouTube videos they produce are often short, professional, and easy to understand. They are forward with their outreach efforts, campaigning as hard as possible to convert anyone willing to give their arguments a chance. The right has even infiltrated previously non-political spheres, fomenting anti-"political correctness" content within the largely white and male online gaming circles that feel threatened by a perceived feminization of their hobby. They normalize the more fringe sects of the right by platforming fascists and racists like Stefan Molyneux on more polished, professional channels.

The right's success on YouTube has largely been built on the back of the YouTube algorithm. As a corporation, YouTube's goal is simply to make as much money as possible through advertisement, and as such, it does its best to keep you watching for as long as possible. YouTube does this most notably through its "recommend" feature, where it will recommend or even automatically play videos based on the user's previous watch history. This system of recommendation causes right-wing channels to feed into each other, continuously exposing viewers to more radicalizing content. And because YouTube often deems the extreme videos of the alt-right engaging despite (or maybe even because of) their violent rhetoric, the videos are deemed worthy of promotion and rack up millions of views.

Yet despite the dominance of the right on YouTube, the platform has also been the left's biggest break. In the past few years, leftist YouTube, affectionately called BreadTube in reference to the anarchist text *The Conquest of Bread*, has grown massively as a response to the right's dominance on the platform. Spearheaded by YouTube channels like *ContraPoints*, *PhilosophyTube*, and *HBombguy*, BreadTube has created strong informational pipelines that combat those built by the right. Its videos are diverse in form, with news analysis from the *Majority Report* and *Some More News*, leftist theory from *PhilosophyTube* and *BadMouseProductions*, and thought-out counterarguments to the online right-wing hegemony from *Shaun and Three Arrows*. And it has seen remarkable success in both deradicalizing right-wing viewers and growing the leftist movement.

As a free-to-use platform, it seems natural that YouTube would enable a previously unseen level of accessibility for the left. However, BreadTube's success has not been unearned. They have learned from the right, adopting many strategies that directly challenge the effectiveness of right-wing YouTube. Many BreadTubers create detailed response videos to alt-right propaganda, allowing them to reach right-wing audiences through the YouTube algorithm. With provocative titles like "Does the Left Hate Free Speech" and "Talking About: Racial

Comparisons," their videos find a home within the clickbait-filled YouTube recommended list. And by responding directly to right-wing content creators, they can successfully manipulate the algorithm into placing their responses next to the original video. Furthermore, BreadTube has countered the right's debate fetish by using well-sourced counterarguments and a healthy dose of ridicule, making the right's arguments seem downright incompetent. *Faraday Speaks*, a BreadTuber who was recently de-radicalized from the alt-right, has ascribed much of his new left bent to ability of these response videos to so roundly counter the arguments of the right, exposing their performative "facts and logic" appeal.

Additionally, BreadTube has expanded the potential audience for leftist content. Before the rise of BreadTube, engaging with leftist theory took a more active effort, often one only those who were already developing class consciousness would attempt. But by combining both political and non-political content, BreadTubers have been able to stretch their reach to even the politically disengaged. *HBombguy* and *Shaun* have infiltrated the largely reactionary YouTube gaming sphere, by producing content that analyzes gaming culture from a leftist lens. *PhilosophyTube* creates informational videos on epistemology and philosophy, often diving into Marxist and Hegelian concepts. But most importantly, BreadTube has made theory downright entertaining, with videos that are thought-provoking, professional, and genuinely funny. They refine dense leftist theory into digestible chunks by using simple language and strong arguments that make leftism both understandable and compelling. Fundamentally, BreadTube's success is derived from its ability to reach previously unreceptive audiences, allowing leftism to grow beyond its previously isolated core.

BreadTube has, however, seen its fair share of challenges. Its largest content creators are all white, and its centralization around them has stirred controversy among its hierarchy-adverse audience. The heterogeneity of opinion within BreadTube still leads to large amounts of infighting. And its reliance on viewer funding, while morally correct, still leaves it an underdog against the astroturfed right. But BreadTube has demonstrated a strong ability to reflect critically on its shortcomings. Larger content creators have made active efforts to promote smaller channels. Leftist unity, while still not fully realized, is a widely discussed and commonly shared goal. Meanwhile *Patreon*, a funding system that relies on viewers, has been crucial in enabling BreadTube's continued grassroots strength. Ultimately, BreadTube has revolutionized the left and its outreach efforts. In its fight against the dominance of right-wing YouTube, BreadTube has made leftism more accessible than ever before.

Tweets for Transformation

Elliot Weil

This summer, as the Democratic primary began to heat up, we saw a fair share of unique, memetic campaign strategies. These ranged from Andrew Yang’s use of bribery to get people to sign up for his mailing list, Marianne Williamson’s ramblings about re-aligning the chakras of the spiritual nation, and Bernie Sander’s declaration that he “wrote the damn bill!” However, perhaps the most important moment for understanding the changing landscape of politics in the internet age was a presidential campaign that you may not have heard of.

The pairing of Mike Gravel, an 89-year-old former US senator from Alaska, and a campaign leadership team of three teenagers—David Oks, Henry Williams, and Henry McGowan—may appear confusing. Gravel, a prominent voice in the anti-war left of the 70s, was for the most part forgotten by popular American history, and relatively unknown to most Gen-Zers. This was until the three boys, later dubbed the “Gravel Teens,” heard about his reading of the Pentagon Papers on the popular left-wing podcast Chapo Trap House. Within a week, they had called the senator, convinced him to run for president, launched an exploratory committee, and started what would be the focal point of the campaign: @MikeGravel on Twitter. Explaining that the bid was solely for the purpose of pushing other candidates to the left on issues like ending the American empire and expanding transgender rights, the end goal was simply putting these issues on the Democratic debate stage. Four months later, the campaign amassed over 65,000 unique donors, hitting the requirement for the July debates. Gravel was even outpolling high profile candidates such as Kirsten Gillibrand. This was not the product of a fluke or something special about Gravel himself; the Gravel Teens had merely tapped into a social media strategy that is able to recruit Gen-Z and Millennial voters to the left in an unprecedented way.

Many have written the campaign off as a ploy for social clout due to the teens’ use of memes and “extremely online” humor to propagate their vision. The Gravel Twitter timeline is populated with gems such as “trans-rights uwu” or “sOmE oF uS lIkE tHe CeNtEr.” While certainly playful, the campaign shaped the political discourse, especially among those 25 and under. Their platform advocated for radical change, especially in the realm of foreign policy. Cutting military aid to Israel, bringing every troop home, establishing a robust reparations fund, outlawing



Senator Mike Gravel @MikeGravel · 19m

Andrew, I'm not trying to win. I'm trying to get in the debates to push other candidates to the left. Go to mikegravel.org

6 1 42



Justin Allen @JAllen_NY · 14m

Some of us like the center.

4 3



Senator Mike Gravel

@MikeGravel

Following

Replying to @JAllen_NY @AndrewSolender

sOmE oF uS lIkE tHe CeNtEr

9:51 PM - 19 Mar 2019

19 Retweets 95 Likes



11 19 95

anti-homelessness architecture, were all ideas offered up by the campaign that have received virtually no attention in mainstream discourse. However, when bluntly advocated for by the Gravel Twitter account, they are presented as the obvious ethical obligation of the state.

The Gravel campaign is just a taste of the greater left-wing Gen-Z movement online that has democratized political expression. While right-wing radicalization may have won-out on YouTube early on, (there has now been a slow shift towards left wing content on that platform as well) teens in high school or even younger are skeptical about the sort of edgy, alt-right rhetoric popular among the Ben Shapiro-esque online presence, and have turned to a more sincere form of advocacy on even younger platforms like TikTok. Just this past summer, 16-year-old Gillian Sullivan utilized TikTok to help organize a general strike among students in Clark County, Nevada, in solidarity with teachers being denied deserved raises. The video received over 36,000 likes on TikTok and attention from around the internet, sparking a national conversation among students who sympathized with failing school districts. Another TikTok user, @onlyjayus, recently went viral for lamenting the exorbitant wealth of Bill Gates, listing off all of the ridiculous things he could buy without making a dent in his fortune, before contrasting it with the reality that she decides not to buy food on her lunch

break to save money. After reaching out to the creator, Isabella, for a comment, she stated that she actually votes Republican and has no affiliation with the political left at all. So while content like this may not show any actual translation to realigning political identity, the video shows a massive shift in internet political discourse. This is a shift towards a greater consideration of economic inequality and a questioning of the status quo.

Yes, the Gravel teens and their TikTok counterparts are trying to approach our political system with a more satirical sentiment, and no, they aren’t as serious as MSNBC pundits or other candidates more interested in compromise. This mockery is if anything, however, just making transparent the presence of youth frustration with the current state of affairs. Too long has the political establishment asked us to be polite when addressing those who treat human life as a traded commodity. We’ve tried everything else. If memes are what will get attention, urgency requires us to use them. Our political system is a satire of itself, and the sincerest commentary on this system, in many instances, is mockery. For better or for worse, memes are the future, and the youth reclaiming political discourse is essential to its survival.

PROG
ant

ANOTHER

WORLD

THE PRINCETON PROGRESSIVE **IS** GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY
THE PRINCETON PROGRESSIVES (PPRO) ALUMNI GROUP.

OUR WORK IS MADE **POSSIBLE** BY DEDICATED SUPPORT FROM
PRINCETONIANS COMMITTED TO PROGRESSIVE VALUES.

!