

The
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LEFT SECTARIANISM
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR
FROZEN II
AN INTERVIEW WITH DIVEST PRINCETON
DADAISM
A POEM BY GREY
SMALL BUSINESS AND THE LEFT
THE BOURGEOIS FAMILY

Masthead

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A Note from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Prog!

At the start of this new term, we would like to introduce ourselves to you. We are Marc Schorin '22 and Chaya Holch '22, the new Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor of the Prog. We follow Beatrice Ferguson '21 and Alec Israel '21, who led the publication for the last year. Under their leadership, we were able to increase publication to twice a month—a significant change from the previous publication schedule, which was once a semester. We look forward to continuing the work they started in reviving Princeton's Left.

As you all know, the Princeton Progressive is the university's only leftist publication. As such, it is up to us to begin, encourage, and maintain a public anti-capitalist discourse on campus. We want to be the base for leftist students and faculty of any group or none—be it YDS, PEAC, SPEAR, BJL, AJP, etc—to discuss and organize. If you want to participate in this growing revolution, feel free not only to meet with or join any of the groups listed, but also to submit a piece to the Prog at princetonprogressive@gmail.com. We accept critical theory, political hot takes, and investigative journalism, as well as art, poetry, cartoons, word games, literature, and more. And if you would like to suggest that we write more about a specific issue, please email us!

In this issue, we are proud to present articles about a wide range of issues, from the destructive nature of the capitalist family to Dadaism. We hope that you enjoy, and that these pieces give you cause for thought.

In solidarity,

Marc and Chaya

Serious Harm: The Abusive Underside of the Nuclear Family

Anonymous

When I was eleven years old, I lied to a social worker. She had come from New Jersey's Division of Youth and Family Services, or DYFS (pronounced "dye-fuss" with a scornful tone) as I knew them at home. I had been called down to the principal's office out of my language arts class and they had the woman there to ask me questions about home. The principal sat in on our meeting.

I had been summoned unexpectedly with typical middle-school melodrama from my favorite class, so I was upset and embarrassed. It also didn't help that my undiagnosed social anxiety disorder often manifested in an extreme unwillingness to speak to others. Thankfully for my anxiety, this wasn't the first time someone had come to school to talk to me and I knew the drill: tell them nothing, make the problem go away.

I'll never know what had gotten them called that time, but I think someone found out about my dad threatening to shoot my oldest brother's dog as a punishment—complete with a shotgun's warning blast after letting her into the backyard. I had a sense that the threat was an alarming response to whatever argument they had, but it was a normal enough occurrence for me that I can't remember what caused the escalation.

My brother loved his dog most, so it was natural that my father would try to kill her when angry. A punishment wasn't supposed to be easily borne. That was simply what he had moved on to by that time: break or burn or smash whatever caused the distraction and disobedience. Threatening to shoot a dog was certain to get a faster response than getting out the wooden spoon or convincing my brother to put on a shock collar for a few zaps.

If the dog died before my father had been mollified, it was unfortunate but ultimately my brother's fault. Speaking up would only put my own dog in the line of fire. This is how I rationalized my silence as I had huddled into my mom's side to escape the damp winds of that spring. Self-preservation and cowardice are hard to disentangle.

Writing this story today was difficult, so I can only imagine the difficulties that I would have had processing it verbally in front of a stranger right after it had happened. No, I knew better than to talk about the real punishments. After all, the contents of this conversation would eventually get back to my dad and he would not be happy if I went around twisting his ac-

"They reminded me that if I did talk, I could have the responsibility of breaking up our family on my shoulders."

tions. He had threatened to shoot a dog as a punishment, not actually killed her without warning. Other people wouldn't understand that the action was actually quite generous.

Instead of explaining, I told the social worker something vague about having computers taken away. It was an answer that anyone could have given and I knew it wouldn't upset anyone. If I had been totally honest, I would have said that the computer was "smashed in a fit of rage when dad was mad," but that was, ultimately, the same as having it taken away until a replacement could be found. It was enough of a truth that I could say it without sounding untruthful, but enough of a lie that I remember that interaction vividly.

Part of the reason that I was so comfortable lying was that I knew that I did not receive the worst punishments anymore. While mine were still emotionally or mentally deleterious, I had been avoiding physical ones for some time. I think it was because I was the youngest, the only one assigned female at birth, and the best academically. A smashed computer or burned novel is nothing compared to being forced to hold a zap collar to yourself as a shock is administered or to watch as your dog's life is threatened. I had also been complicit in my brothers' punishments, whether by fetching the zap collars or by watching the dog be let out, so I felt conflicted tattling. I didn't pull the trigger, but I also didn't say anything, so I was just as guilty.

In the end, I didn't say a word about dogs, and eventually the social worker and principal thanked me for my time and honesty. I was sent back to class feeling shaken in a way I'm still not certain how to describe.

I often think back on that conversation, that question, as a chance to change my life that I threw away. Would I not jump and curl up at sudden noises? Would I be able to carry conversations easily, talking about myself without expecting the details to be weaponized? Would I willingly embrace others and enjoy physical contact? Would I stop feeling a desperate urge to apologize any time someone looked the least bit angry? They're questions best left unanswered.

That afternoon one of my brothers, to whom DYFS must have also talked, mentioned his conversation with my parents who were enraged at what they saw as meddling from the government. If it happened behind closed doors, it was a family issue which they needed to stay out of. Both of them reminded me to never speak to DYFS and coached me to ask for a lawyer if it ever happened again. They reminded me that if I did talk, I could have the responsibility of breaking up our family on my shoulders.

I was eleven.

With the Catholic Church perpetuating the lofty premise that family is the fundamental unit of society since medieval Europe, we now live in an era where "family values" are central to social order. Some people assert that the nuclear family—one man with one wife and two and a half children—is essential, while others argue that is merely the kinship structure which most benefits post-industrial capitalism. Academics can dispute endlessly about the origins and merits of it, but these conversations do not make the system any less violent. Despite the conservative argument that the nuclear family is the ideal system for raising children, we need to acknowledge that it often does not benefit minors and that better systems are possible.

The flaws of the nuclear family model are not unexplored. If not patriarchal in nature, the nuclear family has become inextricably linked to heterosexism; its justification comes from a dark pseudo-scientific past as (white, colonial) evolutionary superiority. Victorian social scientists claimed that it was the most evolved family structure and used that to both rationalize colonial intervention and exploit cultures with other kinship structures through sensational anthropology. It allows people to scorn economically and socially marginalized groups as bad parents without accounting for the effects of mass incarceration, privatized healthcare, and other sources that contribute to differential outcomes. It facilitates the transmission of biases that it then cultivates

"What if the accountability for child welfare was more formally distributed in a community?"

into racist, sexist, etc. mindsets. Most importantly to me, lifting up the nuclear family as the ideal model leaves the safety of children unchecked.

The nuclear family is the best kinship model for child abuse. One angry parent married to one meek parent with two and a half ungrateful brats is the perfect recipe for maltreatment. The harm is categorized by experts as either physical, sexual, or emotional/psychological. In the United States, the federal definition of abuse according to the "Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act" is "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation," while "an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm" constitutes neglect. However, these definitions can be too vague. For instance, there is no good way to differentiate between corporal punishment and physical abuse. Moreover, "serious harm" to the individual, especially one that is still developing, is hard to gauge.

I went from speech therapy in elementary school for talking too quickly to therapy in high school to help me be comfortable ordering at a restaurant, but it is legally ambiguous whether I was abused. In the UN Secretary-General's "Study on Violence Against Children," "forced ingestion" was considered corporal punishment. Both examples, "washing" a mouth with soap and swallowing hot spices, were benign parts of my early childhood. I didn't think it was odd that someone who cussed or spoke disrespectfully had to clean out their mouth with foaming watermelon hand soap. Similarly, coating my thumb with red chili powder was meant to help me stop a bad habit for my own good. Since I didn't have allergic reactions or choke to death, one could argue that there was no "serious" physical harm—and psychological harm is, of course, elusive. To this day, however, I cannot eat anything with artificial watermelon flavor without gagging. This fits the larger pattern of my childhood: I never went to the doctor's office with broken ribs but I struggled and continue to struggle with depression and anxiety and odd tics that were fostered by a toxic environment.

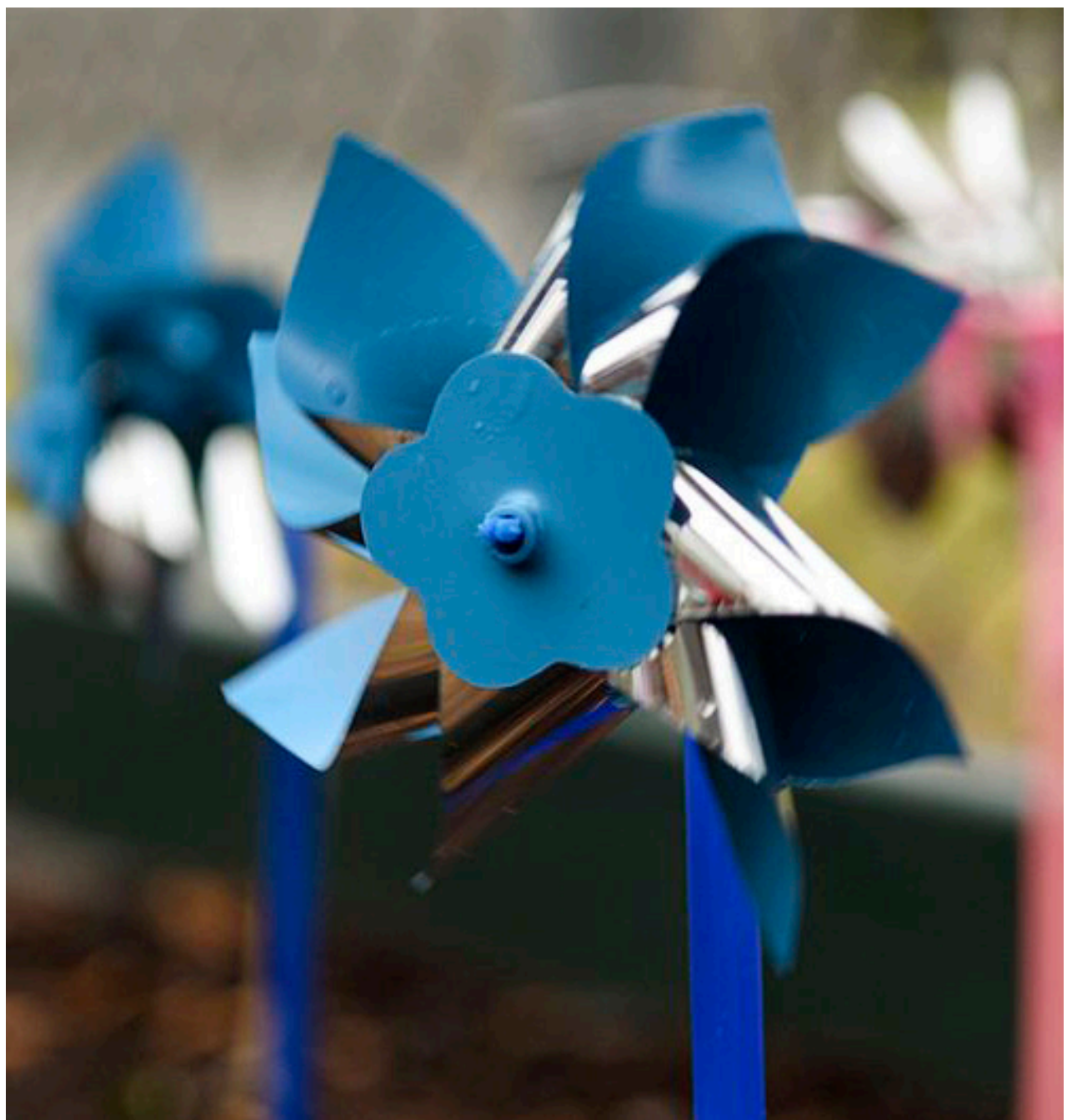
In a society where destroying the nuclear family is sacrilegious, a couple instances of forced ingestion is no reason to tear children out of a home. What about when coupled with hitting with the hand or an implement? By the time we add burning or scalding, we've definitely crossed into certified abuse territory—but mostly because it is not normalized for Americans in the same way as routine "spankings." It's even more complicated when we consider that the abuser might be a sibling. For example, one of my brothers tried to sexually assault me a couple of times when I was younger and both brothers sexually harassed me for many years which would not be solved by transplanting us into a different

house together. At what point should we disregard the importance of family to protect a child? The US Children's Bureau reported that approximately 47 percent of the nation's children received an "investigation" or "alternative response" while only around nine percent of children were considered "victims" in 2017 (note: it was unclear how repeat interventions were classified, so this may be slightly inflated). A study by Professor David Finkelhor concluded in 2008 that fifteen to twenty-five percent of "women" and five to fifteen percent of "men" were sexually abused; if we assume that there was not a massive reduction in abuse in the decade in between, children are falling through the cracks. Despite growing fears about an overbearing government trying to cleave the nuclear family, it becomes clear that they may be erring on the side of preserving harmful situations.

The stakes are high and the effects are long-lasting. As early as 1991, researchers in the introduction to "The Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect" highlighted the generational ripples of abusive childhoods: ninety percent of people who abuse and neglect children were themselves abused or neglected. In my case, I'm certain that both of my parents' fathers used similar methods. As I was being told that I would not be allowed to leave the house

at a time when I only left about once a week, I remember being given the impression that I had it better than my parents, that they were kinder than my grandparents would have been. Social isolation was not as bad as being beaten black and blue in their eyes since it left no physical scars. The nuclear family cannot fix what it has caused and to expect that strengthening the institution that causes the harm will solve it approaches the definition of insanity. With the foster care system being traumatic as well, how can we prevent child abuse, neglect, and harm broadly defined?

The answer, as opposed to "free range parenting" and increased removal, may share roots with the anti-policing movement: stronger communities. The worst parts of my childhood happened when I was on a dairy farm precisely because the physical distance made accountability difficult. If no one is around to hear a child crying because they've been forced to do their chores naked in late autumn for procrastinating, do they really make a sound? Having suburban neighbors who would hear my parents' screaming and throwing matches forced them to learn how to manage their tempers to avoid social pressure. You can't threaten to shoot a dog in your backyard with Mrs. Smith peeping over the fence and no fields to bury her in. What if the accountability for child welfare was more formally distributed in a community? Redefining the basic family unit to be an apartment building floor or suburban block or rural square mile(s) instead of one man and one wife is both more realistically the fundamental unit of society and more productive for safely raising children.



Airman Shawna Keyes - Wikimedia Commons

How Democrats Fail To Reach Small Business Owners

M.E. Walker

Small business owners frequently feature in Democratic speeches and messaging, and the Party has ample policy evidence to make its case clear both nationally and at a state level—yet it consistently fails to reach these voters. Rather than centering appeals to worn identity politics or voters' fear of a continued Trump presidency, while effectively ignoring many business issues, a more cohesive messaging approach that explains these policies and trusts the public to understand them would better reach small business owners, a crucial voting population.

According to the 2016 National Small Business Association (NSBA) Politics of Small Business Survey, 70 million people in the United States run or work for a small business, 47 percent of which have five or fewer full-time employees. When asked which party best represents their business, 46 percent of the small business owners surveyed chose the Republican Party, and 14 percent chose the Democratic Party, while 40 percent selected "Neither." In other words, there is a large block of currently disaffected potential supporters.

Moreover, small business owners are extremely engaged politically. Of those NSBA members and non-members surveyed, 97 percent said that they vote regularly in national contests, and 82 percent said that they vote regularly in local and city contests. In addition, 65 percent said that they had donated money to a candidate's campaign, 42 percent to a political party, and 30 percent to an issue-specific campaign.

Democratic leaders should be shocked at the extremely low rate of small business owners who say that the Democratic Party best represents their business compared to the Republican Party, since the Democratic Party champions many of the policies that would help small businesses the most. In the NSBA's survey of small business owners, "Controlling Costs of Health Care," "Regulatory Reform," and "Deficit Reduction and Entitlement Reform" were among the issues most frequently selected as reasons for which respondents have contacted their elected officials. All of these could be winning issues for Democrats among these voters, given more effective messaging.

While healthcare policy is currently being debated within the Democratic Party, a broad consensus exists that government should play a more active role in healthcare to keep costs down, similar to the governments of other developed countries. Right now, em-



ployer-sponsored health insurance imposes significant administrative costs on small businesses, which must compete both with companies in countries like Canada and Germany with public healthcare systems, as well as with larger corporations, which are able to administer more efficiently due to their greater scale. Adopting a healthcare system in line with other OECD countries—which all spend less than the United States on healthcare per capita—would free small businesses from this administrative disadvantage. In addition, the employer-sponsored health insurance system in the United States traps some workers in their current jobs, preventing them from leaving to work elsewhere or start their own businesses. This angle of attack on the issue is too rarely taken by Democrats.

The deregulation of the American financial sector since the late 20th century has been disastrous for small business. The 2008 financial crisis and subsequent Great Recession, facilitated by this deregulation, forced the closure of small businesses across industries and led to layoffs and a shortage of small business loans. While some Democrats in the decades leading up to the crash did contribute to the conditions that enabled it, the Republican Party has refused to address these institutional issues. The 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, proposed by President Barack Obama, was passed largely along party lines, and Republicans have tried repeatedly to weaken or repeal it. In industry, the Democratic Party should reaffirm the importance of antitrust

regulations in combating monopolies in industries from beer to tech, where large companies like Anheuser-Busch and Microsoft are able to stifle competition. Democrats should stress that crucial regulations like these don't restrain small businesses; rather, they protect small businesses from having to suffer from the risky behavior or anti-competitive practices of firms many times their size.

On deficit reduction, the Republican Party has been abysmal. The Trump administration's 2017 tax cuts, rushed through a Republican Congress behind closed doors, expanded the deficit with little of the benefit going to small businesses or to low- and middle-income Americans, who would reintroduce it into the economy through spending. Passed during a period of already-high growth, the cuts largely funded stock buybacks by large corporations at the expense of young Americans, who will be servicing the national debt for years to come. While Democrats must deal with the deficit more seriously through policy, doing so also requires challenging Republican hypocrisy on this issue in front of the American public. GOP claims to fiscal responsibility are illegitimate and should be viewed as such.

By not framing several important policy issues, including healthcare and regulation, in ways that could better attract support from new bases, such as small business owners, Democrats undermine their ability to complete politically and, ultimately, to enact policies that would help their constituents.

YESYES: The Cultural Impact of Ephemeral Dada

Mary Alice Jouve

As one of the more abstruse art movements, Dadaism defies complete explanation. In and of itself, Dada is incomprehensible, but for generations it has changed the way we think about how art interacts with society and politics. Dadaism, when its political messaging is downplayed, is often lumped into surrealism; however, understanding Dadaism and its massive cultural impact can help us as we continue in its long lineage of mysterious and insightful critique.

Dadaism is purported to have its origins in the Cabaret Voltaire, a nightclub in Zurich, where a variety of different artists would meet, coalescing around the chaos and war that plagued Europe in 1916. The origin of the word Dada is disputed as well, as it means both "hobbyhorse" or "rocking horse" in French and "Yes! Yes!" in Russian. In this time period, the very notion of Western civilization seemed to be crumbling as World War I raged. The logic, aesthetics, and beliefs that underpinned Europe, such as capitalism and enlightenment thought, were creating mass destruction that could no longer be ignored. The major European powers were fighting over the imperialistic division of the world and the newest breaks in science and technology were being used to kill rather than to better people's lives. The Dadaists wanted to reject it all and

expressed this sentiment in a series of iconoclastic acts, artwork, and writings that twisted the prevailing social order against itself to mock and critique it while reveling in a reality beyond these constraints.

Absurdism pervaded much of the work of the Dadaists, as they saw it as the only possible reaction to the horrors of war. In what is considered the inaugurating act of Dadaism, German writer Hugo Ball performed a poem of nonsense syllables called "Karawane." He saw this poem as a true expression of himself outside of the words others had created as well as an imitation of how many regarded news of the war: garbled words that play in the background of a population in psychosis.

Another key element of Dadaist works was subversion: using that which was created for the purpose of capital against itself. This took the form of collages made of cut up advertisements to form nonsensical images. Artists like Francis Picabia created fantastical schematic drawings and machines to mock industrialism and the view of people as cogs in the wheels of capitalism. Marcel Duchamp is known for turning found objects or trash into art as well with his famous Fountain, a urinal with "R. Mutt" signed on it. While creating a conversation about the definition of art that

European society had cultivated, Dadaists depicted the emptiness of consumerism in conjunction with the violence of imperialism, demonstrating that these two sides of capitalism are inseparable.

Dadaists moved to many cities, including Berlin, Paris, and New York. The rambunctious energy of Dadaism was hard to contain, as the original artists peeled off into other groups, with many going into Surrealism. However, the original nexus of artists laid the framework of artistic reaction to political and economic events and systems. In the wake of rampant militarism and consumerism, the problems identified by the Dadaists in the late teens and twenties only became more widespread. Starting in the 1950s, multiple movements cropped up that had similar themes and designs to the original Dadaism, adapting them to fit the given aesthetic of their time. These included neo-Dada, nouveau-réalisme, and Pop Art, each finding varying degrees of societal acceptance.

Even more broadly, the same sort of absurdism and rejection of realism pervaded much of the mainstream media produced in the 1960s, as the Vietnam War was waged and consumer culture continued to develop. In Tim O'Brien's book *The Things They Carried*, he discusses the impossibility of telling a true and unbiased war story and gives further insight into how absurdism describes the psychological realities of war and its aftermath. The narrator and setting of the story change as they continually grapple with taking responsibility for their actions. The reality of the war that they were a part of, and the trauma it inflicted, would drive many soldiers to mentally transport themselves to other places and times, all represented by the things they carried. This focus on objects as a window into the soul adds new meaning to the detritus that Dadaist artists like Arman picked up in found object artwork like *Poubelles*.

As the 20th century continued, other notable multimedia projects continued to capture the spirit of Dada. One rather unlikely group to take up Dadaism is U2 during its early 90s experimental period. During U2's ascent to fame in the 1980s, a large part of its brand centered around its authenticity and performative displays of social justice seen through Bono's pretentious on-stage political monologues (termed "bonologues"). Feeling the band's creativity stagnate, its members decided to reinvent themselves in the image of the criticisms leveled against them, throwing their



Intro message to U2 Zoo TV concert tour



An advertisement collage by Francis Picabia

band into the context of the consumerism that pervaded society at large. Bono dyed his hair black, donned hilariously large black sunglasses, and dressed in black leather, creating a caricature of himself that he called The Fly.

Further political context converged to add more meaning to this period. During the Gulf War, Bono once recalled watching the TV coverage and thinking about how, among the background of advertisements, TV shows, and endless political posturing, it all seemed to fade into a morass of absurdism. While U2 was recording its album *Achtung Baby* in 1989 in Berlin, the Berlin Wall fell, causing the band to further explore the implications of a monopolar world and Europe's new identity. The band members also wondered how new advances in technology would change both the music scene and how it was presented to consumers. In an attempt at reinvention and trying to conceptualize an uncertain future, U2 used its 1991 to 1993 concert tour, *Zoo TV*, to subvert and contradict both capitalism and their own image as a highly commercialized band.

They experimented with multiple forms of expression that mirrored early Dadaists, incorporating modern media and commenting on current events. U2 created its own television station called *Zoo TV*, which would play a garbled mess of other television programs and had a news presenter that read nonsensical soundbites, much like Hugo Ball's "Karawane." Broadcasts of their show would begin with a

screen saying: "Do not enter we are broadcasting." U2 flashed a stream of subliminal messages on large screens behind the stage, with highlights including "Watch more TV," "Everything you know is wrong," "Enjoy the surface," and "The future is a fantasy." This was reminiscent of the word art posters that Dadaists made with phrases like "OUI=NON" and "Le futuriste est mort. De quoi? De DADA" ["The futurist is dead. Of what? Of DADA."].

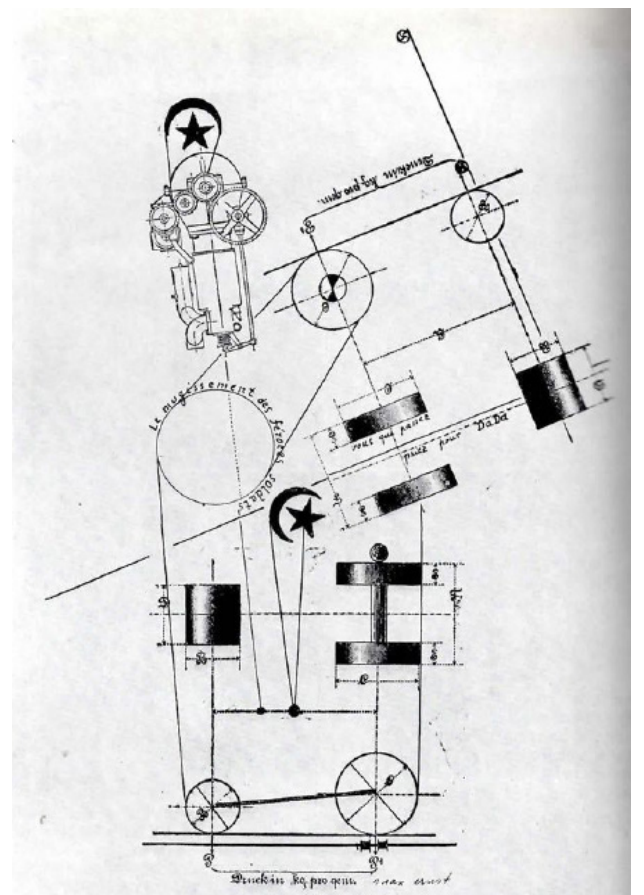
U2 developed the ideas they initially set forth in the tour with *Zooropa*, their second 90's album. At this point, the moniker *Zoo* had developed into something similar to that of Dada: an indescribable rejection and subversion of the world around it. However, under *Zooropa*, it became a new conception of what the world could be without the systems of oppression that tie it down. U2 placed *ZOO* in the middle of the 12 star EU logo in promotional material, and the *Zooropa* album itself has a distorted EU flag on it, as if to express a longing for a unified Europe but not under the neoliberal regime that then ruled. In the first song, entitled "Zooropa," Bono sings a Dadaist sound collage of advertising slogans like United's "Fly the friendly skies" and Audi's "Vorsprung durch Technik" that he melds together to describe his new world. Bono created another alter-ego for himself named Mr. MacPhisto, an English vampiric devil clad in golden lamé. In place of his overly-pious bonologues, Mr. MacPhisto would prank call world leaders and famous people, congratulating them for help-

ing him do his job. In his speeches he would celebrate the worst of consumer culture and the political sphere.

Much like the other Dadaist projects, *Zoo TV* and U2's determination to make salient political critiques seemed to fade away after the tour ended. However, the outer aesthetic of *Zoo TV* remained in many ways because, as Bono once admitted, a bit of the Fly might have rubbed off on him. Bono never stopped wearing glasses, and leather continues to be a frequent go-to for him. On the other hand, the world leaders whom he used to prank call, like Bill Clinton and Bush Senior, are now people with whom Bono frequently rubs elbows. Now, Bono seems to espouse the same views that he once parodied as MacPhisto. When Bono partnered with Apple to promote the iPod in the early 2000s, many fans were confused as to whether he had turned his back on his critiques of consumer culture or whether this was part of a grand Dadaist scheme.

This self-recuperation is reminiscent of how Dadaism developed over the 20th century in general, as the abstracted aesthetics of Dadaism translated more so to the aforementioned movements than the original political commentary. Many of the original Dadaists were critical of Neo-Dadaism's greater acceptance of commercialization. Additionally, Pop Art's depictions of the ephemera of consumer culture did more to cultivate stylistic advertisements and cheap prints as a form of art than making any deep criticism of capitalism. Like many great counter-cultural movements before and after it, Dadaism's radical elements were obscured, leaving an aesthetic people could participate in while doing nothing to actually disrupt the system, much like Kylie Jenner giving a Pepsi to a police officer.

Dadaism's hegemonic yet hidden place in modern culture makes it all the more important for leftists to reclaim Dadaist art and works inspired by it. It is worth celebrating the world that can exist outside of capitalism in the most joyous ways possible: through music, art, and poetry. This innovative method of critique should not be forgotten as the problems it identifies still persist today.



Example of nonsense machine schematic:
The Machine by Francis Picabia

Introduction to Bruising

Grey

Call me Red,
Hot Desperation.

Tell me I'm Fleeting,
Brittle Bones
The Look of Fingerprints Against Skin.

Call me Broken Beautiful and Then Some say
Cotton Mouth. You miss the saliva and the quick breath
the shiver of my legs.

Name me Quiet, oh Quiet Girl
push your fingers between my lips
Tell me, Quiet Girl
touch the grooves of my teeth.
pull them out, make me
Quiet Girl

Press in the button ribs. Call me Shattered,
Shivering, Shaking. Call me Bluffing say
Bullshit.
Tell me Lying,
Liar Baby here for your mouth
you in my mouth
call it Suffocation or Choking. Call it a Cover Up
and a Hickey Staining the Neck.

Call me Lusting, Wet
Anything but my name
Paint me Purple and Blushing
Red or Pink or whatever it is
you can make of me then title me
A Dirty Little Masterpiece
strangled in the sheets of your bed
or just Dead.

Call that lovely.

The Unknowable Man

Kai Tsurumaki

Inspired by Francesco del Cossa's Portrait of a Man with a Ring



Politics Without Conflict?

Braden Flax

Everyone has that uncle at Thanksgiving. Yes, him, the one whose mouth moves faster than his mind, whose every clause might represent the difference between a civil meal and a toxic blowout. As a result, others in the family steel themselves for the experience, promising one another that engagement is not on the table and that they're just going to get through an annual rant, however unhinged and disconnected it might be. In most cases, this approach is perfectly reasonable; I, for one, am not prepared to prescribe how others should behave among their own family members. Navigating that dynamic is tough enough, without others giving unsolicited, poorly-informed and frequently impractical advice. But the institution of the family is unlike the outer world, which is to say that disengagement outside of the home has very different implications and should be considered much more carefully. This is especially consequential for leftists, who are often accused of pointless, self-destructive internal division, not to mention hostility and divisiveness in the face of those who have not yet been turned to the righteous cause of social emancipation. This criticism, legitimate in part, rests largely on an understanding of politics that ignores the significance of social questions, alongside the inescapable inconvenience that politics represent conflicting social interests, so long as a class structure and social inequality persist.

It is perfectly true that, in the various bubbles that constitute particular academic and digital slices of the left, "cancel culture" is too prominent. Consequently, people become separated and alienated from the movement according to trivial slights and interpersonal slip-ups. The less careful we are about moderating some of these self-erasing instincts, the more we resemble the construct of a circular firing squad.

"The less careful we are about moderating some of these self-erasing instincts, the more we resemble the construct of a circular firing squad."

This is hardly unique to the left; the right, and even the center, indulge regularly in such superficial diversions. Ultra-leftists demonize anyone who listens to Joe Rogan's podcast, centrists pretend to be outraged at his less-than-woke record, and right-wingers castigate anyone who is not entirely loyal to the current President, the latest iteration of reactionary political correctness under the name of American patriotism.



Thanksgiving dinner - Tom Purves - Wikimedia Commons

No, the left is not unique in perpetuating toxicity and social disintegration. It is, however, unique in that its activities cannot be measured with the same moral yardstick as that held up to its less enlightened adversaries. There is no need here to mince words: the left has not only the most, but indeed the only, remotely defensible political project. This is not

a question of how aggressively committed we should be; whatever must be done, must be done. By the same token, though, the most penetrating judgements of the left must come from within; we must take our objectives seriously enough to recognize that, in replicating dynamics of social isolation and political shunning, we are frequently in error.

The problem is not that the left is too militant;

it is, in important ways, very much the opposite. Rather, the left sometimes directs its emotional, intellectual, and material energies inappropriately and destructively, undermining its liberation-oriented goals and descending into the bottomless muck of vacuous, but on occasion sharp-witted, liberal discourse. This tendency is exemplified in the triumph of performance, form and symbolism over the grounded content of substantive politics. For instance, debates about whether particular people can, as a function of their identities and backgrounds, actually be racists signals ideological sophistication and intellectual rigor. But such sociological wakefulness misses the point; racism, not unlike other manifestations of false consciousness, is not an immaterial set of ideas that someone buys into or not. Rather, it has a particular social history, significance, and function. Analysis of the relationship of the left to a concept such as race must go beyond identity-based quibbling and liberal moralism; beyond these, it is more so a question of revolutionary strategy and class solidarity. Compulsive privilege-checking, in leftist spaces, should be supplanted by a simultaneously more charitable and more disagreement-friendly appraisal of our political similarities and differences.

Frozen II: Writing Colonialism

Jane Markley

Walking out of *Frozen II*, one would be forgiven for feeling confused. Reviews commonly settle upon the description of “convoluted” to describe the plot, and public perception of the film seems to have stagnated at “it’s pretty okay.” Compared to the straightforward *Frozen*, the sequel seems to have both more to say, and a harder time finding the words. However, even in its imperfection *Frozen II* finds itself making a much more meaningful a statement.

While *Frozen*’s themes revolve around sisterhood, love, and self-acceptance, *Frozen II*’s trend more towards belonging, truth, and colonialism. Disney did not explore these themes perfectly. *Frozen II*’s plot revolves around Elsa’s (Idina Menzel) journey into the Enchanted Forest to discover the truth about herself and her powers. Along the way, she learns of a decades old conflict between her people, the Arendellians, and the indigenous people of this area, the Northuldra. Her search concludes with her learning that her grandfather (Jeremy Sisto), king at the time, intended to hurt Northuldra’s forests and way of life with a dam. When he was challenged by the Northuldra leader (Alan Tudyk), he killed the defenseless man.

The conflict between the Arendellians and the Northuldra is often simplistic, and I cringed when an indigenous Northuldra character said, “We only trust nature. When nature speaks, we listen.” It seemed like a step back to the days of Pocahontas’ “Let the spirits of the Earth guide you,” where the “mystic native” trope stereotypes a real indigenous people. Issues like these make one question the ethics of a monopoly like Disney capitalizing upon stories of colonialism, especially if they are going to muddle the messaging along the way. Mistakes in portraying these cultures are not just ones of ignorance, but also play into the larger issue of reinforcing condescending stereotypes for the purpose of profit. However, perfectly telling a story that reckons with these ideas is not what determines if the movie was “good” or “worth it” in the end. In fact, I don’t think that it is even my place to say either way.

Rather, we should look to those most impacted by Disney’s choices. The Northuldra closely parallel the real indigenous people of Scandinavia and Russia called the Sámi. The first *Frozen* film was criticized by many Sámi for opening with a title song called “Vuelie,” which was based on the historically outlawed Sámi vocal music called a *joik*. Although it was composed by Sámi musician Frode Fjellheim, many resented the inclusion of the song

as some sort of “ethnic flavor” to what was an overwhelmingly white, Norwegian cast of characters. Of the character Kristoff, who is implied to (maybe?) be Sámi or of Sámi descent, Anne Lajla Utsi, the managing director of the International Sámi Film Institute, stated that it was “not exactly how we would have done it.” Disney seems to have learned from these criticisms: for *Frozen II*, Disney signed a formal agreement with the Sámi parliaments of Norway, Sweden and Finland, as well as the Sámi Council. They formed an advisory group of artists, historians, and elders to inform the film and help ensure cultural sensitivity. Disney also worked to create a dub of the movie in North Sámi, the most spoken of the Sámi languages, and released it at the same time as the Norwegian version. Careful cultural consideration can be seen in the film’s outfits, which took inspiration from the traditional Sámi *gákti*, and the Northuldra’s village, which is made up of *goahti*, a type Sámi hut. The collaboration also facilitated Walt Disney internships and opportunities for some Sámi filmmakers and animators.

Perhaps even more impactful, whether intended by Disney or not, is the way *Frozen II* mirrors the experiences of real life Sámi people. In the film, the colonizing Arendellians built a dam that hurts the Northuldra’s forests and livelihood. Anna ultimately heroically brings the dam down. Conversely, in a turning point in the fight for Sámi rights in the 1970’s and 80’s, a dam and a hydroelectric power plant were planned on the Alta river in Norway. At the time, it was clear that the building of the dam would flood and displace a Sámi village, and disrupt reindeer migration and salmon fishing. However, the Norwegian Supreme Court ruled that the dam had a right to be built, and it still stands today. *Frozen II* changes how the story ends. Instead of the Northuldra/Sámi being ignored and silenced, their voices are heard and justice wins out. In Anna’s words, “Arendelle has no future until we make this right.”

This effort *mattered*. The attempt to not only be sensitive to Sámi audiences, but to write a story where their historical oppression was a direct thematic core, *mattered*. To Sámi audiences, *Frozen II* was proof of a studio not only listening to their criticism, but acting on it. The result seems to be a film that, regardless of how many suburban moms it confuses with its storyline, has been largely embraced by the Sámi community. Aili Keskitalo, president of the consultative Sámi Parliament in Norway, stated, “I am planning to see the movie again with my whole family, [...] my youngest daughter is really looking forward to watching the movie in her language.” Another Sámi reviewer said,



Shevman — Wikimedia Commons

“The work they did with the story is to be commended. They did not just throw the Northuldra/Sámi into the storyline. They incorporated my people’s history and struggles directly into the plot. Whether they intended to or not, *Frozen 2* [sic] has put forth important messages.”

This is not to say that the movie is perfect. While not a deal-breaker, I still think my criticisms of overly-mystifying the Northuldra and that feeding into the “magical native” trope are valid. In addition, some lament that the film’s portrayal of reparations as lacking. Film critic Inkoo Kang commented that the story’s framing of reparations as a zero-sum game is “both simplistic and possibly counterproductive toward actual justice,” something I won’t argue against. However, it is more important for media to be meaningful than unerring. Could the way *Frozen II* tackled its complex messages have been better? Yes. Does this mean that the impact of this film matters any less? No.

Movie reviewer “Big Joel” argues that “*Frozen 2* asks and attempts to answer a really complicated question: What is the psychological nature of colonialism? What is its impact on the colonized?” The answer he finds in the film is, “Feeling frozen. Being alienated in a motionless, small world where oppressor and oppressed must idly sit next to each other.” Disney, the powerful monopoly that it is, created a movie that tackles the sort of ideas and histories to prompt these sort of analyses. *Frozen II* is Walt Disney Animation’s largest opening for a film in the company’s history. In the end, is it “right” that such a powerful American company headed by uber wealthy white men profits from stories of colonialism? Maybe not, at least not to the extent that they are. However, that shouldn’t be what we take away from the story of *Frozen II*. Instead, as stated by Utsi, “[*Frozen II*] is a good example for every other film [company] in the world who want[s] to be inspired by Indigenous culture. If you want to do it, you have to collaborate.” It is in this collaboration that we find ourselves where we are today, where a Sámi girl has the opportunity to, for the first time ever in Disney’s history, see a princess sing in *her* language.

An Interview with Divest Princeton

Reporting by Miguel Gracia-Zhang, Edited by Chaya Holch

This interview constitutes part of a series in which writers for the Prog sit down with leaders of progressive student groups on campus. Interviews are intended to highlight the work of these groups, to learn more about the mission driving their efforts, and to encourage interested students to get involved.

In October, Divest Princeton published a letter to President Eisgruber demanding that Princeton divest its endowment from fossil fuel companies. So far, 720 Princeton students and alumni have signed the petition, agreeing that they will not donate to Princeton until it divests from fossil fuels. The group is now partnering with more than 50 other college divestment groups across the country for Fossil Fuel Divestment Day on Thursday, February 13. The Prog sat down with Tom Taylor, a first year MPA student at the Woodrow Wilson School and one of the movement's organizers, to talk about Divest Princeton, its goals, and next steps for the movement.

MGZ: What goals do you have regarding the Divest Princeton movement: what do you hope to accomplish with the movement?

TT: Well, we're still a new group; and because we're forming, we're open to our objectives shifting, but broadly we are very concerned that the university has a really significant endowment, a proportion of that being invested in fossil fuels. We don't know how much is because there's no transparency about that. We are pushing for the university to divest that endowment from fossil fuel projects and to reinvest in greener projects that are more aligned with climate justice objectives. I think in the process we really want to be talking to people about climate change, [and] about the climate crisis. That's sort of a secondary goal: to make sure that there's a really active conversation on climate change and the impacts of climate crisis on Princeton students or broader community and people around the world.

MGZ: In light of that, what is Divest Princeton looking to do right now?

TT: So at the moment, we are in the process of forming and having more clarity about where it is that we want to go. At the same time, we are very clear that the university is diverse, so while [...] some of the details are sorted out, we feel confident that the university has to divest. Our first few pieces include a letter to the university to gather signatures from students and alumni and staff saying that they won't donate to the university until it divests from fossil fuels. We have more than 720 signatures [on that] matter. That's a very powerful statement that this matters to people. We know that students have a strong relationship with the university. We know that Princeton has a



really high rate of annual giving and also that students are really concerned about climate change and the lack of action from our leaders at all levels. We are pushing for Princeton to do more as well as leadership at all levels. A big, important symbolic but also financial action is to divest from fossil fuels.

MGZ: How can student groups or individual students get involved with the movement?

TT: I think that there are lots of opportunities to work through Divest Princeton, and there's a lot for us to do. We are really interested in growing and people coming on board to help out with that work. But also, there is really interesting climate activism that happens in lots of different ways. So whether that's joining a local extinction rebellion group or joining the Sunrise movement or linking up with PEAC, they are doing great work on campus. With regards to climate activism, people should get involved in whatever fits for them.

MGZ: There has been a previous Divest Princeton movement that ended up being rejected by the board of trustees. Can you talk about what you know about the prior Divest Princeton movement and perhaps how it is inform-

ing the current movement?

TT: To my understanding, there was a campaign in 2014/2015. I think there also was another piece in 2016. That campaign for the most part looked at growing a petition and then a submission to the university. That campaign made a really good case to the university, and the university said no. I think a few years on, the climate science is even clearer. It is even scary for people, particularly people that live in areas that are feeling the sort of the impact of natural disasters. So the ask is not different now, but the urgency is even greater. What we hope to do is to go back to the administration and ask them to reconsider that decision in light of this increased urgency. [This is] also in light of the troubling lack of action that we see from our governing bodies, our democratic institutions, especially from federal and national governments around the world. For example: the Trump administration recently beginning its withdrawal from the Paris agreement. And so, in order to respond to the climate crisis, we need leadership from different levels, including big institutions like Princeton. We need them to lead by example, because [we] have seen their wealth, but also because they have a real respect in the

broader community, and the symbolic weight of their actions really reverberate and, therefore, what Princeton does is much bigger than just this institution.

MGZ: You mentioned that the ask for Princeton is the same as the previous movements'. But is the manner of asking different? The last time, Princeton rejected it mainly on the grounds of it being a "political statement." With that in mind, does this movement have to be non-political? Is it a human crisis, an environmental movement? How are you thinking of framing it this time around?

TT: I think that the status quo is political. If you think of the climate crisis as political then you must also accept that the status quo is political, and continuing to invest in fossil fuel projects that fuel the climate crisis is also political. There is no such thing as something that is not political. So what is the more interesting question to me is "What are the ways in which the climate crisis manifests and the impact of the climate crisis?" One of the ways in which the movement has evolved is to be talking more about the very real impacts on people and on communities, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized. It is the poor communities, people of color, who do not have significant wealth to mitigate the impacts of climate crisis, [who will feel these] very real human impacts.

That is the impact of climate change. It is all encompassing. It impacts upon communities, it impacts upon economic and financial systems, it impacts ecological systems. It is manifest in all different parts of how we live. But I think principally, it is a human crisis. It's re-

ally important to remember that and to keep talking about that in the first place.

MGZ: So there are campuses that have divested from fossil fuels. There are also several that have not—a number of the Ivy Leagues for example, and the movement to Divest is going on in several other universities as well. Are you working together with other movements? How does Princeton's divestment relate to divestment in other universities?

TT: That's one of the really exciting things: that we are not the first sort of university to do this or to tackle this. So there's a real sort of wealth of knowledge in other institutions about divestment. We are connecting in with those universities to work out what we can learn from them and how we might go to work with them, and so that's really exciting. What exactly that looks like I don't know at this point. But this is something that students and alumni and people all around are grappling with and are responding [to in] really clever, creative ways to make sure that we are holding our leaders accountable on of the climate crisis.

MGZ: What do you want this movement to look like in five years?

TT: I'm really excited about the prospect of Princeton divesting, but I am more excited about the ways in which that creates a ripple effect, and the ripple effect sort of moves in all sorts of different directions. One of the directions is that we have a whole university full of people that are smart, that are hardworking, that will go into positions of leadership and that will be informed by a conversation about the climate crisis and the role of wealthy insti-

tutions to lead in terms of responding to the climate crisis. I think that's the first thing. I also think we should push Princeton to reach for those aspirational values of being "in the service of humanity." And part of that is to align the things that it invests in through its endowment with the things that it teaches in its classrooms and the things that it purports to care deeply about. I am really excited about it and have to believe that we are moving towards action on climate change. I think that the work of students on campus, over a number of years in all sorts of different capacities (have shown that) students are really, really committed to this. We understand deeply how connected our futures and climate action are. We cannot disentangle our education or our time here or this institution from the impacts and the ways in which the climate crisis is being fueled. I guess I'm optimistic about the impact of Princeton divesting and what that means in terms of other leaders at other universities and at other local, state, and federal government levels and in the response of corporations to take real action on climate change and not just to roll out nice marketing campaigns. The way in which we might play a part in bringing about that change is exciting for me. If you speak to young people and not just young people, but people in the community, they are impatient for change, and they are ready to work hard for it.

Want to get involved with Divest Princeton? Email Tom at tlmt@princeton.edu or ffdivest-princeton@gmail.com. And check out Divest Princeton's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/DivestPrinceton/>. Divest Princeton meets every Monday at 6PM in Frist 228.



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