

Masthead

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Prog PSA: Bread and Puppet Theater at Princeton!



photos courtesy of Bread and Puppet Theater

We are excited to announce that the Prog will host Bread and Puppet Theater, a political puppet theater troupe based in northern Vermont, for a performance of their new show "Diagonal Life: Theory and Praxis" on Friday, March 6. We invite you to join us for an evening of nonsense, diagonality, and puppets! The show will begin at 8pm in McCosh 10 (probably) and is free and open to the public. Invite all of your friends!

From Bread and Puppet:

Vermont's rabble-rousing Bread and Puppet Theater returns to Princeton with Diagonal Life: Theory and Praxis, a new show examining humanity's current precarious (diagonal) condition: on the verge of collapse, yet always capable of uprising. "The vertical is the exceptional human predicament, the up and forward striding ambition that manufactures history and warfare," says Peter Schumann, Bread and Puppet's founder and director. "The diagonal results from the hurts that the verticals suffers in the process. It is our common human fate, the hard to sustain in-between-life, neither up nor down." Diagonal Life animates the humorous, tragic and bewildering possibilities of diagonality with song, dance, magic, mechanism, and stunning cardboard and paper maché puppets painted in Peter Schumann's exuberant expressionist style.

After the show, Bread and Puppet will serve its famous sourdough rye bread with garlic aioli, and "Cheap Art" – books, posters, postcards, pamphlets and banners from the Bread and Puppet Press— will be for sale outside.

This event is made possible by generous support from the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice, the Global Perspectives on Environmental Justice Fund, Princeton Progressives (PPro), Projects Board, the Politics Department, the Program in Theater, and ODUS. Support for this project has been provided in part by Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts.

Check out the event at: https://www.facebook.com/events/187032816039743/?notif_t=plan_user_associated¬if_id=1582081830633675.

Divestment, Climate Change, and Colonialism

Kenji Cataldo

Upcoming event: "Climate Change and Colonialism: Lessons from the Puerto Rican Environmental Movement." Hosted by PEAC in East Pyne 010. Come for a 10am panel with environmental activists Ruth Santiago and Arturo Massol Deyá and legal scholar Rafael Cox-Alomar. At 1pm, Ms. Santiago and Dr. Massol Deyá will lead a practical workshop on climate organizing strategies for on-campus activists and organizers.

To fight climate change, we must address colonialism.

In an open letter published in the Daily Princetonian, members of Divest Princeton recently summarized the movement's recommendations to the Council of the Princeton University Community. The letter closes as follows:

We are all compelled to fight climate change to the extent that our power allows, and with \$26 billion under its control, the University has more power than most. If universities like Princeton who pride themselves on reason and evidence-based leadership fail to take the necessary steps in the fight against climate change, who will?

The meaning of the rhetorical question "who will?" is clear: as an institution of immense wealth and intellectual prestige, Princeton University has a moral imperative to use its considerable resources to combat climate change, including through its investments.

There is another side of the question that bears consideration, too. The question "who will?" looks to the future, for in Princeton, climate change still figures largely as a future threat. A rapidly approaching apocalyptic threat, but one whose impact we are only beginning to feel.

That is not true everywhere. Too often, conversations about climate change focus solely on the future, but, as the open letter from Divest Princeton notes, "the climate crisis is with us now, from the floods in Indonesia to the fires in Australia that have been burning out of control since June 2019."

In addition to "who will," let's ask "who are?" And one answer is that it is people who have no choice but to fight climate change now. People who are not insulated from the climate crisis by socio-economic privilege and the luck of geography. People for whom climate

change is not a future danger but a present disaster.

The letter asserts that "as an institution of historical privilege, the University owes a debt of reparation to marginalized communities, even more so now as black and brown people around the world have been, and will continue to be, the worst affected by climate change." What is also important to remember is that these "marginalized communities" are not only the most affected by climate change but are also on the leading edge of the fight against it.

On Saturday, February 29, the Princeton Environmental Activism Coalition (PEAC) is holding a conference titled "Climate Change and Colonialism: Lessons from the Puerto Rican Environmental Movement." In conversation with guest speakers coming from Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C., we aim to learn about the links between colonial government and the climate crisis in Puerto Rico today: how are activists in Puerto Rico— which faces extreme weather, unpayable debt, and exploitation by the government in Washington— responding to climate change? How can climate activists in the U.S. support Puerto Rican movements, and what can they learn from them?

Starting at 10:00 AM in 010 East Pyne Hall, there will be a two-hour panel on climate justice and decolonization featuring presentations from two prominent environmental activists Ruth Santiago and Arturo Massol Deyá and legal scholar Rafael Cox-Alomar. After lunch, this will be followed at 1:00 PM by a practical workshop on climate organizing strategies with Ms. Santiago and Dr. Massol Deyá for on-campus activists and organizers.

As the divestment movement grows, we must recognize that the fossil fuel industry's environmental impact is not limited to carbon emissions, and this impact is deeply tied to histories of colonialism. In Puerto Rico, toxic coal ash produced by a power plant in the southeastern municipality of Guayama is contaminating the aquifer that is the primary source of water for the south of the island. While Virginia-based multinational Applied Energy Systems (AES) profits from a contract worth \$300 million a year, communities in Puerto Rico's southeast must live with the water and air pollution it produces. The plant continues to operate despite decades of community opposition.

Academic institutions in the U.S. are implicated in ongoing histories of environmental colonialism. In March, 2019, a watchdog organization called the Public Accountability Initiative revealed that SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson sat on the board of AES Corp and owned over \$2.5 million worth of AES stock. Amid public pressure over the corporation's highly polluting power plant in Puerto Rico, she resigned from her position with AES Corp.

Princeton not only has financial ties to a fossil fuel industry that has devastated and exploited communities in places including Puerto Rico; its illustrious former President Woodrow Wilson was the U.S. President who signed the infamous Jones Act of 1917, a colonial law that unilaterally imposed U.S. citizenship on Puerto Ricans and deepened Washington's control over the islands. As students continue to study at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and live in Wilson College, we inherit a legacy of racism and colonialism with which we must grapple as members of the Princeton community.

To understand climate change as a matter of environmental justice, we must know these histories of colonialism and our own places within them. PEAC invites you to join us on February 29, as we seek to learn about climate change and colonialism together.

the princeton environmental activism coalition invites you to

CLIMATE CHANGE AND COLONIALISM

LESSONS FROM THE PUERTO RICAN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

saturday, february 29
010 east pyne hall
princeton university
free and open to the public

EVENT PROGRAM

10-12pm panel: climate justice and decolonization
SPEAKERS:
RUTH SANTIAGO (COMITÉ DIÁLOGO AMBIENTAL)
ARTURO MASSOL DEYÁ (CASA PUEBLO)
RAFAEL COX-ALOMAR (DAVID A. CLARKE SCHOOL OF LAW)
DISCUSSANTS: TO BE ANNOUNCED

12-1pm lunch

1-3pm workshop: climate organizing strategies
SPEAKERS:
RUTH SANTIAGO (COMITÉ DIÁLOGO AMBIENTAL)
ARTURO MASSOL DEYÁ (CASA PUEBLO)

organizer: kenji cataldo '20
email kcataldo@princeton.edu with any accessibility requests.

co-sponsored by **PLAS** **PROJECTS BOARD** Department of Spanish and Portuguese

photo courtesy of kenji cataldo

Reclaiming Freedom in Discourse

M.E. Walker

While a popular ideal in a number of countries, freedom is particularly animating among Americans. Our founding myth (often departing from historical realities of genocide and forced assimilation) highlights the courage of a small number of revolutionaries in defying a tyrant empire. From this period, we carry forward a fundamental distrust of government and such documents as the Declaration of Independence and revolutionary Patriot Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. Our narrative then continues through the settling of a vast frontier (again ignoring both the indigenous peoples and Spanish-speaking populations who already lived in the area before Americans reached it) by self-sufficient pioneers, followed by the (de jure) emancipation of enslaved peoples at the end of the Civil War. The turbulent, complex 1960s have been remembered for their free spirit, and many of America's lasting cultural heroes are those who have fought for freedom, in some form.

Historically, freedom often directly involved government, as Princeton University professor of history and public affairs Julian Zelizer noted in a public lecture this past October, offering the civil rights movement as an example. In his 1941 State of the Union Address, president Franklin Delano Roosevelt spoke of "four essential human freedoms", including a freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear, to justify expanding aid to the Allies of World War II. Westward expansion was encouraged and facilitated by the federal government. And even earlier, Paine advocated welfare programs for the poor and a form of citizen's income to be awarded upon turning 21 and every year after 50.



Don Sniegowski - Flickr via Creative Commons

upon which issues are debated, resulting in more power for large corporations and less for the common people. In the United States, where freedom is so central to national identity, claiming the status of the party of freedom in the collective imagination is of crucial import.

Democratic presidential candidate and South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg has made freedom a priority in his campaign messaging. In one stump speech given in Greenville,

South Carolina early in the race, Buttigieg laid out areas where Republican policies, including government inaction in some cases, have made people unfree. In many states, conservatives have layered onerous restrictions on obtaining safe abortions. Republicans have also opposed consumer protec-

tion regulations, which make consumers freer by empowering them to defend their interests against powerful corporations. In addition, Republican opposition to public health insurance makes would-be entrepreneurs less free to leave their jobs, since doing so would jeopardize their health care. Other ideals, such as a sense of social responsibility for the common good, have been successful in justifying progressive policy in other nations and have some place here, however serious campaigns at progressive change would be foolish to not tap into what amounts to America's strongest narrative. In his book *Profit Over People*, historian and social scientist Noam Chomsky comments on America's comparatively weak sense of social responsibility, writing "The U.S... has little residue of earlier European structures, one reason for the relative weakness of the social contract and of support systems, which often had their roots in pre-capitalist institutions." This is further complicated by the nation's large scale and its cultural and socioeconomic diversity, undermining attempts at constructing national solidarity and goodwill.

Reclaiming power for common people requires communicating both at the policy level and at a more fundamental one. And right now, Democrats are leaving a key fight uncontested.

"Since the 1970s, however, American conservatives have narrowly redefined freedom to mean only freedom from government."

Since the 1970s, however, American conservatives have narrowly redefined freedom to mean only freedom from government, such as a corporation having free rein to pollute or to use religious beliefs as justification to withhold healthcare from employees. In distorting this concept, Republicans tilt the playing field

South Carolina early in the race, Buttigieg laid out areas where Republican policies, including government inaction in some cases, have made people unfree. In many states, conservatives have layered onerous restrictions on obtaining safe abortions. Republicans have also opposed consumer protec-

Eight Skills for Radical Leftists

K. Stiefel

What is the difference between a leftist and a liberal? There are many ways to answer this question, enough to fill an entire book, but one main difference is trust in the state. For example, many liberals may be okay with leftist goals of equity. However, they often are not willing to put their bodies on the line to enact more equitable systems or challenge the state when it stands contrary to their goal. Even so, believing in leftist ideologies alone does not automatically teach you how to safely protest, unionize, or organize. I have identified eight skills for radical leftists that are important for safely and effectively organizing communities.

The purpose of this article is not to be the beginning and end of an education in these skills. Rather, it should serve as a guide for further learning. If you only have twenty minutes between lecture and precept, this guide should pique your interest in something. If you have an hour to procrastinate on your thesis, this guide could spark deeper learning on a topic. And, of course, there are more skills than the ones enumerated below. A digital version of this article will contain links for further (easy) reading on these topics.

1. Jail Support

Whether you call your leftist organizing direct action or civil disobedience, it often ends in arrests. As the person asking others to go through the ordeal of arrest, processing, and jail, you need to be prepared to support them through the process. There is the logistical side: mobilizing money and people, but there is also the emotional toll of arrest. It is exhausting and dehumanizing by design. This is unsurprisingly especially true if the people volunteering for arrest hold marginalized identities which provoke further harassment and violence from police.

When arrest is a possibility for your actions, it is helpful to have a coordinator who is not at the action (or far enough away) to ensure they will not be arrested. Know which laws you are breaking and what kinds of crimes they are; there is a big difference between a felony and a misdemeanor. This person should have a working phone number and be connected with financial and legal support to coordinate bail and juggle court dates (if necessary) as they come in. People risking arrest should first be educated on the consequences so that they can make an informed decision and then write the number of the coordinator on their arm. Don't risk forgetting if it's 82 or 28.

Implicit in the preceding paragraph is preparation. One aspect is bail money, which needs to be set aside for each person arrested. If someone is financially able to front their own

"As the person asking others to go through the ordeal of arrest, processing, and jail, you need to be prepared to support them through the process."

costs, that is ideal. Otherwise, you'll need to crowdsource the money for their release. To ensure that people can get their money back, you then need to make sure each individual planning to be arrested has transportation to and from court for any further proceedings. Some arrests only result in fines, which also may require fundraising. It also doesn't hurt to consult an attorney or other legal support to ensure you know all the possible risks. Even if they're an unlicensed practiced paralegal or law student, a legal advocate involved in planning the jail support is helpful.

Lastly, be there to support people as they are released. The coordinator should know where people are getting sent, either based on the calls or predicting the closest facility. Have people gathered outside the jail, far enough away to not be forced to disperse by the police, ready with food, beverages, and good spirit. A cup of hot chocolate and uplifting music goes a long way towards preventing burn-out after an action. Ideally, there would be at least one support person per arrested person who can help them get home and make sure they're not alone.

Additional Resources:

<http://upagainstthelaw.org/jail-support-and-solidarity/>
<https://popularresistance.org/best-practices-for-jail-support/>
<https://organizingforpower.org/jail-support-solidarity/>
<https://rebelsteps.com/episodes/6-jail-support.html>
<https://www.joffefederaldefense.com/what-is-the-distinction-between-a-felony-misdemeanor-and-infraction/>
<https://www.nolo.com/legal-research>

2. Self-Defense

Regardless of your stance on violence, tense situations often erupt, and being prepared is a must for your own safety. A cardinal rule of self defense is to never pull the first weapon; if the legal system gets involved, the escalation makes your case worse. The first potential weapon that comes to mind is often a pocket knife which, though incredibly useful in other contexts, makes a horrible weapon. Using a gun is most likely to result in a lot of trouble for you because your potential charge becomes Assault With a Deadly Weapon. Of course, almost anything can be construed as a deadly

weapon.

For those who are not comfortable with the idea of carrying a weapon but still anticipate being in dodgy situations, home-made pepper spray is a great solution. No matter the size and height difference, a mixture of cayenne pepper the eyes is no fun. The customization of the mixture gives you a chance to be creative with your spice cabinet and maybe even flex creative skills to repurpose an aerosol canister for the mix. Be careful not to make it too strong, as uncommonly strong sprays (such as one made with ghost peppers) may also be construed as a "deadly weapon" in the eyes of the law.

Self-defense isn't just for physical assaults from counter-protestors, but also involves monitoring the police. When you are challenging the dominant powers in society, you do not have the luxury of assuming that the police will help you, and you instead need to operate knowing you may need to record injustices and violence. In short: always record the police. Legally, you are almost always guaranteed to have that right unless you are on private property with posted signs that say no recording is allowed. That won't stop police officers from asking you to stop recording or attempting to confiscate your device. It is important that you clearly state that you believe your rights are being violated as they force you to stop recording. This is where the habit of stopping to monitor police interactions for others comes in handy: they have no reason to tell you to put down your phone if you are a bystander. Monitoring cops should be taught as the ABCs of organizing: "always be capturing."

Additional Resource:

https://www.acluga.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/protest.monitor.pdf

3. Identity Protection

Whether or not you plan to break any laws, the best way for you and your comrades to avoid being hassled by the cops is to avoid the confrontation altogether. Outside of legal matters, doxxing or revealing an anonymous user's identity is a risk. There's no point in making the work for anyone who wants to know who you are an easy task. The biggest rookie mistake when it comes to protecting identities is capturing actions on film that shouldn't be preserved. Check with the organizers of any

"Technically, a workplace cannot legally fire you for trying to unionize."

events whether photography is helpful. There may be people or portions they don't want recorded. Alternatively, there may be a particular group that the organizers want media focused on. Checking in ensures that doxxing, outing, and prosecuting are minimized while positive coverage is maximized. Remember that many leftist organizations are targets for infiltration and monitoring from both the government and private companies.

If you plan to be involved in anarchist gatherings such as the black bloc, gatherings of anonymized individuals who take direct action together, you will need a face mask. Instead of buying a ski mask, you can watch simple tutorials to turn a black t-shirt into an identity protecting mask. Gloves are never a bad idea and there truly are DIY tutorials for anything you may need at a demonstration, including gas masks. Talk to more experienced or involved members of a group to get a sense for the level of sophistication you need.

The simplest security method? Do not use rapid unlock methods on your phone. If a police officer stops you and confiscates your phone, they cannot compel you to give them a pin or password, but they can hold a phone up to your face or hold your finger to the button. Make them get a warrant to access your data. Similarly, it may be prudent to invest in a virtual private network (VPN) to mask your internet traffic. ExpressVPN offers a free trial with a relatively good service if you only need a short-term solution. An additional layer for websites are extensions like Location Guard which prevent a site from pinpointing your location. Communications can be done through encryption apps like Signal, which also has features to automatically erase messages and is trusted by journalists around the globe.

Additional Resources:

<https://plainwordsbloomington.noblogs.org/post/2017/04/17/how-to-mask-up/>
<https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/make-improvised-gas-mask/>
<http://upagainsthelaw.org/category/stop-snitching-on-yourself-ssoy/>

4. First Aid

Part of being anti-police is minimizing their involvement in your communities. In the United States, if you call for medical assistance the police will arrive as well. It is easy for people to avoid calling them for conflict resolution, but most people would struggle not to dial 9-1-1 if they saw a fight taking place. Basic first aid knowledge is one way to not only rely less on the police in your community, but to also make protests and demonstrations safer (as cops firing rubber bullets usually don't send in the emergency medical technicians (EMTs) afterwards). However, many volunteer EMT squads will train and certify you if you agree to work for them for two years. Being able to treat minor injuries yourself often eliminates the reliance on police. Also, many places have "good samaritan" laws which stipulate that if you do not have official training (like an EMT certification), you cannot be liable for attempting life-saving interventions. This means you don't legally need a class to teach yourself the basics and act as required.

That being said, if a professional that you trust shows up, remember that your training is less than theirs. They can help the injured person more effectively than you can, so while you shouldn't leave, step back. If professionals show up and you don't want to be treated for any reason, you always can refuse care. The only exception is when you are legally unable to give consent, something that is only the case if you are not alert, not aware, or in life-threatening danger (actively having a heart attack or bleeding out, for example). They will always tell you that you should go to the hospital, but if you don't want to simply say "I do not consent to care; I want to sign your waiver." If you change your mind, you can always head to the hospital later without the cops hanging around.

If you decide that you do need emergency medical care, be prepared. Ask any friends who don't need to be there or are especially vulnerable to leave the scene as you're calling. Tell the cops as little as they need: assert this is only a medical issue and use other techniques for dealing with police. They often won't leave before the EMTs, so have at least one person who makes sure they won't be snooping around while you're in the ambulance. Lastly, know that you can insist on being taken to a specific hospital with good reason (e.g. better trauma center, your regular doctor, etc.) and that you have a right to treatment even if you cannot pay for it.

Additional Resources:

<https://nhcps.com/lesson/cpr-first-aid-medical-problems-encountered/>,
<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid/performing-first-aid/first-aid-steps>,
<https://unchartedsupplyco.com/blogs/news/basic-first-aid>
<https://healthcare.uslegal.com/patient-rights/the-right-to-treatment/>

5. All Things Union

The perennial question in American Labor politics has become "why join a union?" when under capitalism it should be "why not join a union?" Many people think that "unionizing" is a dirty word until they do it and realize that union membership's bad reputation is almost entirely just preemptive smear campaigning by management and owners. They know that discussing your pay with other employees and using your power as crucial parts in the production of their product means that they have to give everyone fair wages and respect. Since your hourly rate or yearly salary cuts into their profit margin, being able to undervalue the work of poor, non-white, non-masculine people is their best scam yet.

Technically, a workplace cannot legally fire you for trying to unionize. It's hardly a secret, however, that they will either fire you outright or for nonsensical reasons so they don't risk losing precious profit. WikiHow has a good flowchart which walks you through how to consider unionizing a workplace and many large unions, like AFL-CIO offer guidance and consultations. The important part is to quietly build support among employees, countering any anti-union propaganda, before you vote

to establish one. Be aware that short of retaliatory firing, there are many tricks up the sleeves of companies to dispel unions. One of these is discouraging people from discussing salaries or wages and some companies try to convince employees that such disclosures are illegal which in itself would be an illegal act by the company.

Once you've built collective power with your fellow employees, there are many tactics that you can begin using to achieve workplace goals. These obviously work best with official union membership, but strong bonds among workers have a history of making unsanctioned union actions such as "wildcat strikes" equally effective. Most people are familiar with striking, a refusal to work until certain demands are met, but there are many more tactics that unions use. Something that might accompany a strike is a picket action where you gather outside a place of work to dissuade other people (also known as "scabs") from working during the strike and draw media attention. It doesn't necessarily have to accompany a strike, though, as the (black) Civil Rights Movement utilized it effectively against discriminatory institutions. There are also "slow-downs," a purposeful reduction in productivity that may evolve into a full-blown strike or remain its own method. The appeal of a slow-down is that striking workers don't go without wages. Lastly, never underestimate the effectiveness of leaflet campaigns to convey messaging.

Additional Resources

<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/truth-about-discussing-your-salary>
<https://www.wikihow.com/Unionize-Your-Workplace>
<https://www.lexisnexis.com/legalnewsroom/labor-employment/b/labor-employment-top-blogs/posts/is-it-time-to-start-a-union-at-your-workplace>
<https://www.eballot.com/blog/the-union-organizing-process-explained>
<https://www.avvo.com/legal-answers/can-i-be-fired-for-attempting-to-unionize--1689508.html>, <https://aflcio.org/formaunion>
<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/pages/preventionunionorganization.aspx>
<https://unionbustingplaybook.com/>
<https://www.hrexchangenetwork.com/hr-compensation-benefits/articles/nine-key-tactics-for-successful-union-negotiations>

6. Self-Care

Leftism is not a personality trait. I sometimes push myself to the point of breaking down at a protest, and guess what: it doesn't stop the systemic injustice that I am protesting. As Audre Lorde said, "[Self-care] is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." Far from a consumption model (e.g. "buying x is self-care"), she envisioned it more as purposefully setting aside time and space to immerse oneself in loving oases before venturing back out into the toxic world that we inhabit. Currently, people acknowledge between five and seven categories of self-care ranging from physical to psychological to spiritual.

Make a list before you're tired and burnt out of things to do and people to talk to. For me, self-care often takes the form of hanging out with other trans students and simply being happy. That is revolutionary in and of itself, like Lorde said, precisely because we live in a time where some people still assert that trans

people should be sad, self-loathing recluses. Having different types of self-care you can practice in response to the variety of stressors that you will encounter is also important. Set your boundaries now. Practice saying “no” to others when they ask you to help, and have friends help keep you accountable. The hardest part of self-care in my opinion is not feeling guilty for taking the time for yourself. As long as you are actively working towards a more equitable future, some mental/physical/spiritual maintenance is part of that fight.

Additional Resources:

<https://themighty.com/2017/11/types-of-self-care-for-mental-health/>, <https://secure.everyaction.com/p/Pg5bqblugE6-NGld-09RlcQ2>, <https://blogs.psychcentral.com/weightless/2011/05/the-7-vital-types-of-self-care/>, <https://www.blessingmanifesting.com/2017/07/what-is-self-care.html/>, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shyness-is-nice/201403/seven-types-self-care-activities-coping-stress>

7. Financial Literacy

If you're striking or the state decides to fine you, you need money. It helps to have a basic understanding of savings, loans, and all things financial. You don't need to become a certified accountant who can file tax returns in their sleep or a Wall Street stocktrader on the side, but you should know how the American financial system handles debt and credit. For example, while “payday loans” and car title loans are great ways to get cash quickly, they are predatory and should be avoided when possible. The differences between secured (something held in collateral like a house or car) and unsecured or variable-interest (fluctuates with the “market”) and fixed-rate interest correspond to different levels of cash available and the lifetime debt that the loan represents. Regardless of the type, the common sense adage holds true: only borrow what you need. In the unfortunate event that someone close to you dies, never make a payment on any of their debts unless you were the co-signer of the loan or issued payments from a joint account. Many companies will trick family members into assuming debt when legally before the first payment it would only be settled using the deceased's “estate” (aka things they owned at the time of their death).

The other main part of the American financial system is credit or credit history, a record of how you use money. A report exists for every

social security number and includes credit cards, loans, and whether payments are late. These are then translated into a numeric representation which is supposed to indicate how good of a candidate you are for financial support. Financial institutions make inquiries into your score before issuing loans or credit cards. At any point in your life, you can be in one of three situations: 1) no credit history, or a truly neutral situation that makes it difficult to borrow because of a lack of records; 2) “bad” credit history, which may exist without your knowledge because of parental borrowing using your social security number; or 3) “good” credit history, which requires maintenance or your score decreases. You can easily monitor your credit score for free with CreditKarma.com. You can build credit by opening a secured credit card (the bank puts a hold on enough money to cover the amount you can charge) if you have savings or having someone with an established credit history co-sign (and thus assume responsibility for any debts). If those don't work, you can get credit-builder loans (basically forced savings account).

American credit can't be responsibly discussed without mentioning the racial dynamics of it: communities of color are often denied access to credit sources and then a lack of credit history or bad scores are used to deny access. Until we reform the system, learning how to play by these antiquated rules is a must. Only the independently wealthy will never need a credit card or loan, and they are not impacted by the system in the first place. On a related note, choosing a bank (for-profit institution) or credit union (not for-profit, but smaller) is an important decision that can be incredibly confusing. Any financial institution that you use should be insured, a guarantee by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) that your money will be returned to you if the bank closes. After that, the choice comes down to account requirements, interest rates, and digital/physical accessibility of your money. Lastly, remember the importance of savings. How much and how you save depends on what your short and long term goals are, but you rarely know in advance when your income will decrease or your debts will increase.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/if-someone-dies-owing-a-debt-does-the-debt-go-away-when-they-die-en-1463/>, <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/finance/debts-after-death-life-insurance/>, <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/finance/how-to-build-credit/>, [<ent-types-of-personal-loans/>, <https://www.tiaa.org/public/learn/personal-finance-101/how-much-of-my-income-should-i-save-every-month>, <https://www.wikihow.com/Choose-a-Bank-or-Credit-Union-That-Is-Right-for-You>](https://lendingtree.com/personal/differ-</p>
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8. Education

No one is born understanding the varied and intersecting axes of oppression that define our society. The ideas of solidarity and speaking words to power are useful, but only if you know and understand them. Lived experience is crucial, but it can be helpful to use theory as a guide to frame the experiences. Reading literature can reinforce your convictions, broaden the scope of a problem, and facilitate communication through common language. While I personally will never assert that theory should be central in the life of a leftist, it shouldn't be totally neglected when possible. There are resources online like Library Genesis where you can find many books for free—and public libraries are often underutilized.

The other side of the coin is that education skills are undervalued. Not only does teaching content give you a better grasp of it personally, but you increase the number of people in the world who understand the importance of equity. Not everyone has the time or energy required to sift through Lenin and W.E.B. DuBois, so being able to teach other leftists helps increase the accessibility of theory. In turn, this brings more people into the dialogue on issues and enriches the theory through their contributions. On a broader scale, part of changing the world is changing the next generation. More people thinking about how to solve the problems that we have inherited means more solutions to choose among.

Additional Resources:

<http://gen.lib.rus.ec/>, <https://www.marxists.org/>, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B-z011IF2Pu9TUWlxVWxybGJ1Ync?fbclid=I-wAR2p_kusGKPs-4DdE2uf0YJxl2Nz9iOGqK-CIbdKaPTwmHs8e5UR9PjDjJ0

Bonus Skill: Food Preparation and Gardening
People can't strike or riot if they're hungry. Buy produce cheap when it is in season, and pickle or preserve it so that you help save both money and the environment. Have one dish you can make to feed 50 to 100 people if necessary. Be aware of dietary restrictions (do you know how to make sure a meal is halal?) you may encounter. So many herbs and small plants can be grown indoors to save you money. Some food you buy at the supermarket you can then plant a portion to get essentially infinite food. Home-grown produce also reduces your carbon footprint.

Bonus Skill: Basic Carpentry, Plumbing, Electricity

So much more becomes available when you have access to a hammer and knowledge. Putting together an Ikea cabinet or building a ramp can make an area more accessible. Some basic plumbing or electrical know-how lets you help a friend whose utilities have been turned off or who unexpectedly hits a rough patch. You can repurpose discarded electronics to save money and prevent waste. It never hurts to be more autonomous, either. Just remember what the limits of your skills are and don't be too naive to avoid more experienced help.



Adam Cohn - Flickr via Creative Commons

Bullet Journaling: A Force for Productivity and Procrastination

Maryam Ibrahim

Muji stationary hauls, inspirational quotes for study motivation, daily to-do lists, and self drawn calendars. If you have ever stumbled across social media posts of journal pages laying out various tasks in a often colorful and creative way, you may already be familiar with bullet journaling. Created as a way to clearly organize what needs to be completed day by day, bullet journaling has transformed into an unexpected online phenomenon. Platforms such as Youtube, Pinterest, Reddit, and Instagram have fostered a strong community of people who find entertainment and joy by sharing, making, or watching others share their journals. Accounts dedicated to bullet journaling can reach well over a million Youtube subscribers and hundreds of thousands of Instagram followers. The growing popularity of bullet journaling has allowed millions of people to organize their lives for maximum productivity and even provides a simple and personal artistic outlet for some. While the method has no doubt led to improved organization for millions across the world, the influence of social media may lead to some concerns for the average bullet journaler if they set their satisfaction based on what post will get the most likes. The quintessential image of bullet journaling on social media can discourage many from picking up and staying with the method due to the very high standards and expectations set by almost all of the popular images of bullet journaling on the web.

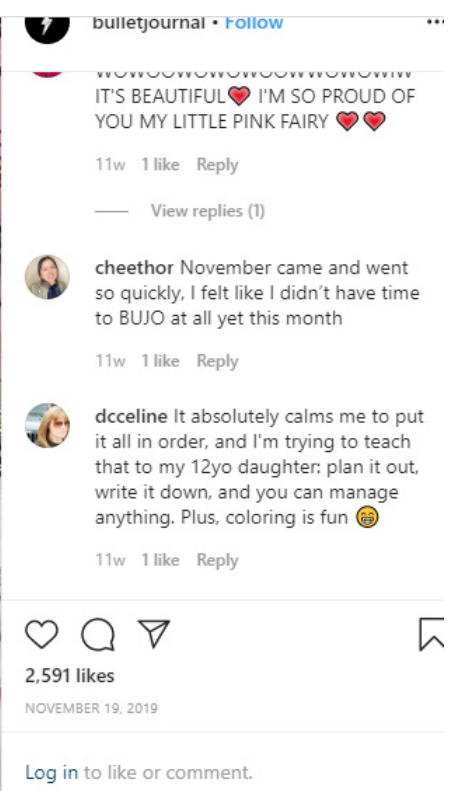
Bullet journaling is fairly difficult to briefly describe, as it varies from person to person. The contents of each journal depend on the needs of the owner and can range from habit trackers for hours you spend studying, exercising, or reading to vision boards, future goals, and even spreads dedicated to K-pop stars. The creator of bullet journaling, digital product designer Ryder Carroll, created the technique to aid the Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) that he was diagnosed with early in life. Like many with the condition, Carroll's learning disorder made it difficult for him to focus on one thing at a time. With limited resources and information about ADD during his early development, he developed methodologies to make organizing and completing tasks easier. Calling it "the art of intentional living," Carroll began to share bullet journaling through his website and Youtube videos. Carroll's vision of bullet journaling was one of simplicity, with his first tutorial consisting of only a black pen and a blank journal. Entitled "Bullet Journal," Carroll's video racked up almost 2.5 million views. In this first video, he showed himself creating only an index as well as both a monthly and daily to-

do list; what the average bullet journal tutorial has evolved into is a significant departure from Carroll's initial simple design. If you look up almost any recent "plan with me" video on Youtube, it would become evident that these recent videos aren't at the same level of simplicity or relatability as Carroll's tutorials.

Where bullet journaling loses its relatability is exactly what gives it the ability to be so extraordinary and engaging. The most popular journal pages are ones that have elaborate drawings outlining the titles and borders of the page, which no doubt take hours to create. While this type of artistic expression can be calming and therapeutic for some, it may feel like another form of procrastination for others. Even though almost all social media content can be used as procrastination, employing bullet journaling for this purpose is puzzling for a community that emphasizes productivity. Given social media's pressure to have perfect photos, bodies, and makeup—in other words, lives—it is no wonder that the bullet journaling community has fallen into a similar competitive trap. This form of procrastination likely stems from members of the community feeling like they would be unable to reach the same level of skill that some of the most popular posts have. Instead, they would rather view the journal of someone else who is able to achieve beautiful calligraphic handwriting and draw intricate images, knowing that they are either incapable of doing so or do not have the time or dedication to reach the same level of skill. Bullet journaling is an incredibly individual experience, and for that experience to be maximized, it's better to embrace our imperfections and limits,

rather than aim for the unattainable abilities of our favorite Instagram bullet journal star. Whether you prefer bullet journaling creator Ryder Carroll's singular black pen or whether you find comfort in having dozens of muji pens and highlighters surround you as you craft elaborate journal pages, these are both valid preferences if they aid in your organization and focus as intended.

On the other hand, creating the actual bullet journal might serve as a distraction for some. Spending more time to create an aesthetically pleasing journal page instead of actually completing the tasks that you write down is almost a common joke in the online community. In the subreddit r/bulletjournaling, one user posted a picture of their impressive drawing of Gandalf from Lord of the Rings and captioned it with a fitting quote for the broader journaling community: "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us." and captioning it with "Sometimes I procrastinate by making inspirational pages." Despite the journal's main objective to make organizing tasks simple, for this redditor and many others, the creative expression which may seem counterproductive may actually be a form of stress relief. Most of us at Princeton are often suffocated by an environment that pressures us to always be busy and preoccupied through coursework, activities, and friends. Taking some time out to not only write down what needs to be done, but also possibly adding in some artistic flair may serve as the short pause that we all need to stay in the present moment and relax, even if some may categorize it as procrastination.



Students Knock on Doors in New Hampshire for Bernie Sanders

Jason Seavey



photo courtesy of Young Democratic Socialists of Princeton

Eighteen Princeton students spent the weekend before the New Hampshire primary canvassing for Bernie Sanders. Spread across the southern part of the state, the group of undergraduate and graduate students braved temperatures in the single digits to knock on doors and engage voters before they headed to the polls.

With only days to go before the primary, student volunteers were primarily engaged in a get-out-the-vote effort. Despite this mandate, some of the volunteers reported that they went the extra mile and managed to convince an undecided voter or two.

Ananya Malhotra '20 described her experience, "It felt good to volunteer my time for a candidate I'm passionate about and to feel like I had some tiny part to play in this historic election instead of sitting at home and anxiously watching the news. My favorite part was speaking with people about the issues that matter most to them and what they want from the next four years."

Justin Wittekind '22 and Max McGougan '21 primarily organized the trip to New Hampshire. Wittekind serves as the President of Princeton's Young Democratic Socialists (YDS) and McGougan served as co-chair before him. "I think it was great that we were able to in-

volve as many people as we did in this critical part of the Sanders campaign," Wittekind said. "It doesn't hurt that Bernie ended up winning, but I don't think our work is anywhere near done."

Based on the success of their New Hampshire trip, YDS is currently advertising another trip for the weekend before Super Tuesday to canvass in western Massachusetts.

In New Hampshire, the Princeton students joined other volunteers from across the state and beyond, including dedicated supporters who made similarly lengthy journeys to canvass for the weekend. Some volunteers told the students that they had been on the ground organizing New Hampshire for months. Fellow Bernie supporters hosted the Princeton students, providing them with a place to sleep and warm up after a day spent walking in the snow.

The Princeton volunteers described canvassing as an arduous process. They learned quickly that most doors on their route will never open, whether because the homeowner is busy, at work, or simply uninterested.

The Sanders campaign told Vox that before the final get-out-the-vote weekend they had knocked on upward of 450,000 doors.

Then, as part of the aforementioned get-out-the-vote-effort, volunteers for the campaign knocked on 150,000 doors the Saturday before the primary alone. For context, according to the most recent Census data, there are only about 475,000 households in the entire state of New Hampshire.

This massive mobilization paid off: Bernie Sanders secured a victory in the New Hampshire primary, providing him with crucial momentum heading into Nevada and the upcoming South Carolina caucus. Bernie opened his Tuesday night victory speech by thanking his volunteers. He emphasized their importance in what became a close contest.

"The reason that we won tonight in New Hampshire, and last week in Iowa, is because of the hard work of so many volunteers," Sanders claimed.

Wittekind also had a message for potential new volunteers: "We intend to ramp up our campus presence and work on organizing students for the campaign. If this is something that might interest you, please get in contact with me [justinbw@princeton.edu] and we will loop you in as soon as possible."

Reflections from an Evening with TREYF

Marc Schorin

On Wednesday, February 6th, the Alliance of Jewish Progressives (AJP) held its workshop, “Dismantling Anti-Semitism.” There were over 20 attendees, arranged in a semi circle; since we were in the Lewis Library, I was surprised to see so many people who were willing to trek out. I was also surprised to find that these people were not purely progressive Jews—other community organizers and friends of friends also came. Led by Sam Bick and David Zinman, Jewish anarchists and hosts of the Montreal-based radio/podcast TREYF, the event was a thoughtful and thought-provoking first step in building a foundation for a leftist understanding of anti-Semitism at Princeton.

This is not the first time that Bick and Zinman, in their five years together as TREYF podcasters, have hosted workshops of this nature—but it was the first time that they had condensed their four-hour program into a half-hour presentation followed by a half-hour Q&A. However, the presentation did not strike me as overwhelming. They articulated what many leftist Jews have felt for many years. Namely, they deconstructed and investigated the Jewish right’s dominance of the intercommunal conversation around anti-Semitism. Bick and Zinman emphasized that they were not about to launch into a full analysis of anti-Semitism—which would be an impossible task in a single hour—but rather, they wanted to present an overview of anti-Semitism to help the audience better understand and combat it as left-wing activists. Moreover, they explained that while they are not theorists, these ideas grew out of the many conversations they have had with each other and the activists and scholars they have interviewed and organized with.

The mainstream narrative around anti-Semitism, they claim, is based around three as-

sumptions—“three pillars”—forwarded by the Jewish right. They are 1) that anti-Jewishness is a “natural and unstoppable” force, 2) that there is a single and stable Jewish identity, and 3) that anti-Semitism is unrelated to other forms of oppression. These are ideas that would be familiar to anyone who grew up in a Jewish community; indeed, these are ideas that are woven into the identity of 21st century Judaism. However, they are each destructive in their own right.

In contrast to the “Three Pillars,” Bick and Zinman offer “Three Principles,” or the foundation for a leftist approach to anti-Semitism. The first principle relates anti-Semitism to the broader systems of power. It is, in other words, the exact opposite of the third pillar.

On this point, Bick and Zinman brought to the workshop’s attention the struggle of Unist’ot’en activists to keep a pipeline off of their land; the RCMP, a Canadian governmental intelligence agency, made a number of arrests over the past year and have even prepared to fire on the protestors, as reported by The Guardian. The Unist’ot’en website is <https://unistoten.camp/>; The Guardian’s article on the RCMP’s reaction to the protests can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/20/canada-indigenous-land-defenders-police-documents>, and another article about the broader situation can be found at <https://theyee.ca/Analysis/2019/01/08/LNG-Pipeline-Unistoten-Blockade/>.

The second principle of the left makes two claims: 1) that anti-Jewishness is the result of “material conditions” (by which is meant historical contexts of politics, economics, etc. For example, the Church’s influence in colonialism, the rise of nationalism, and increasing wealth inequality have all factored into Europe’s perception of Jews.), and 2) that anti-Jewishness

is spurred by specific institutional sources. At any given moment, these sources may comprise the Church, the State, etc. This second principle can then be understood to be the opposite of the first pillar. The third principle is what upholds the first two: the belief that Jewish peoples and communities are diverse, and so is anti-Semitism. This principle is, of course, the opposite of the second pillar.

The split between Jewish identities points to what “pluralistic” Jews have always known: that there is no one way to be Jewish. Even the most religious Jews disagree amongst themselves, each Hasidic dynasty fervently opposed to the other. However, the more interesting point is that as a result of the many Judaisms, there is no one anti-Semitism. And so the question arose from the audience, What does hold us together as Jews? And what does Jewish comradeship mean between the left and the right?

Bick replied that it depends what our priorities are as activists. For him, connecting the Jewish Left and the Jewish Right is not a priority. Zinman agreed, but told a story about the Bund, the largest Jewish political organization before the Holocaust. As the Fascist threat grew, these Jews, members of a radical Left organization, would mobilize to protect important places of Jewish communities—even the synagogues that were home to what we would now categorize as the religious right. As leftists, the Bund understood that solidarity in the face of danger was key.

What struck me most by the end of the night was that the workshop was successful. I have long been disenchanted by Jewish intercommunal conversations, and I was not expecting to have the source of my falling out to be articulated. Because Bick and Zinman’s discussion of right- vs. left-wing understandings of anti-Semitism implies two fundamentally different ideas of what it means to be Jewish, they were able to get to the heart not only of the right/left split, but also of Jewish identity. For instance, where the right sees a single “Jewish people,” the left sees many. Where the right sees us as separate from all other nations, the left sees us as part of a broader historical context.

What the workshop affirmed is that the interpretation that lends itself to the political right is the mainstream narrative—and it is suffocating. Even on an emotional level, the first signs of separation from that story felt liberating. I can only hope that this conversation not only continues among the people who attended that workshop, but also reaches a broader Jewish audience. There are other Jews who are dissatisfied with the standard notions of our identity—what we should consider is how to reach them.



From left: TREYF co-founders Sam Bick and David Zinman, AJP leaders Rafi Lehmann '20, Chaya Holch '22, and Zora Arum '22.

Political Revolutions, Then and Now: An Interview with Professor Matthew Karp

Alec Israeli

Matthew Karp is an associate professor of history at Princeton, specializing in the politics of the Civil War era. During this primary season, he has actively campaigned for Bernie Sanders, most notably penning multiple articles supporting Sanders's nomination in *Jacobin* magazine, where Karp is a contributing editor. This work is not new for Karp—in a way, he is reprising a similar role he played in 2016. I sat down with him this past November to discuss his public writing, its connection to his research, and how he perceives the complex relationship between scholarly and political work.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

AI: I first encountered your work in 2016 before I even got to Princeton. I knew you abstractly as the guy who always writes these Bernie plug pieces for *Jacobin*. You put your pundit hat on then, and you continue to do so today—you're a contributing editor at *Jacobin*, you're sitting on panels at the Verso Loft, you're popping off on Twitter. Could you talk a little bit about your entrance into the world of public political commentary?

MK: I was always interested in politics and its relationship with history, but the contents of the politics were a little bit different. For most of grad school I don't think my politics invited, and certainly didn't require, disagreement with those around me. I canvassed for Obama in 2008; that wasn't a controversial opinion. Being a liberal, partisan Democrat was not a position that people would be like, "Wow you're so political!" It was just the water that everyone else was swimming in in grad school in Philadelphia in 2008. Sure, there were a few people who I understood to be on the left in a way that was distinct from liberalism, but they actually were not very strongly represented in my social world. I didn't think about liberal/left arguments a lot in grad school, to be honest.

I became a little bit disillusioned in the post-Occupy, post-financial crisis era, and became interested in the socialist tradition



@Michelle Prevost

Michelle Prevost - Flickr via Creative Commons

and democratic socialism. I wrote a few things in my really early days, actually, when I was a postdoc before I came here as a professor, but they were more in a historical vein. They were commentaries about the history of slavery or Civil War with maybe some analogy to the present. It really wasn't until I finished my first book... Coincidentally I submitted some final copy edits in January 2016, right before the Iowa caucus. There's this whole gap where they [the publishers] have to edit it, and there's a kind of window where you could launch your second book. Or, you could spend your time rearranging your mental furniture to become a full-time Bernie propagandist. That's what I did. I was really swept away by the ideas and the energy behind that campaign in 2016. It felt distinct from anything I had experienced in my life not just in terms of what the campaign stood for, but the extent to which it felt

like it had developed a mass base for what it was fighting for. A huge portion of the country was rallying around the idea of Medicare for All, and the idea that the one percent or the billionaire class shouldn't run our economy. Those politics hadn't been in the mainstream in my life. I had dim childhood memories of Jesse Jackson, but that's all.

AI: Who Bernie endorsed.

MK: Yeah, exactly. I had the best politics I ever had until I was like 36 was when I was 6, because I really loved Jesse Jackson. I was a huge fan of the Jackson '88 campaign, even though I can't exactly remember why. And then, there was a long period of doldrums in the 90's and 2000's where I called myself a "moderate Democrat": in some ways, basically a reactionary. But the politics were new in 2016, and the enthusiasm and the energy. He [Sanders] beat Hillary Clinton by 20 points in New Hampshire. I went up and canvassed for him there, and so I was engaged on a personal level as a citizen in a new way.

There was a huge void, it seemed to me, in the world of media and political commentary. The establishment media, the mainstream media, but also the progressive media—even flagship liberal outlets—were at best bemusedly non-plussed by Bernie. [The media] were conde-

"A huge portion of the country was rallying around the idea of Medicare for All, and the idea that the one percent or the billionaire class shouldn't run our economy."

scendingly like, "Oh, that's cute," and at worst very hostile to him. So there just weren't that many voices that were doing campaign punditry from that perspective and writing, in effect, narrative: making arguments about the shape of the race and about what the Bernie voter looked like and what Bernie's chances were, and so on. So I really did give up much of my spring to doing that kind of work, and it felt like there was a receptive audience to that.

That was the moment; it was the spring of 2016. I think I wrote three substantial pieces about, you know, who was voting for Bernie, why they were voting for Bernie, and why Bernie could win, and what Bernie's theory of politics was. And then there were a lot of other small pieces—reactions to things that happened. I discovered that I enjoyed responding to events in real time. I had been interested in political history and politics, but I had never seen myself as a writer of that kind of stuff. I enjoyed that marriage.

AI: Yeah, to that effect your latest for Jacobin [in November 2019] was, "Is This the Future Liberals Want?" That's exactly about who is voting for Bernie, what his campaign looks like, why his campaign is different. You outline the fundamentally different approaches to class politics between Warren and Sanders: there is prominent support for Warren among six-figure making professionals, she stresses policy wonkery and her moderation, her campaign staff is from the party establishment. These are all things you hit.

Then, in a long thread on Twitter Vox editor Matthew Yglesias—a liberal commentator who embraces the politics that you critique, and whom you also explicitly criticize in this Jacobin piece—picked apart the piece. He topped it off with,

"For starters, the whole idea of a [checks notes] professor at [checks notes] Princeton lecturing others about the acceptable class composition of a political coalition is so absurd as to be hardly worth engaging with."

You replied,

"Not only a Princeton history professor, but an Amherst and Penn graduate, and before that a child of North Bethesda. You could call me the JD Vance of affluent liberalism."

Which I thought was very funny. But, when identity and background play such a central role in political discourse on the left, I guess I want to play devil's advocate for a minute for Yglesias: Why should we be listening to you as a wellspring of left commentary? In the context of Princeton, as a tenured professor, how can you or can any other professor with similar politics extricate yourself from the more inert politics of the university administration? What is the relationship here between academia and activism?

MK: There's so many things to say here. Just to indulge and wax biographical for a minute: On the one hand I grew up in an absolute lap of privilege in Rockville, Maryland (they call it North Bethesda for real estate purposes). On the other hand, I was raised by a single mom, and I was a financial aid student in college at Amherst. It's not like I was a "horny-handed son of the working class," but in some ways I did have a very particular kind of class con-

"I'm convinced that [change] is best pursued in two venues: in labor struggle, and in electoral political struggle."

sciousness—the middle middle-class kid surrounded by upper middle-class kids. I mean, my mom was a middle manager at the NIH; there was food on the table at dinner. But yeah, I grew up in county-subsidized housing in a very rich county. Very comfortably, but also aware of some distinctions.

In all those years of being aware of those subtle but still real distinctions, I actually never turned to the left. It's only since I've got this incredible, fancy job here that I've accepted a more sweeping left critique of class society than I ever held while I was striving within it. In some ways, it's only when the narrative confirmed my own privileged place in the universe that I think I became more convinced of its deeper inequality and basic wrongness.

So where does that leave me? I got a job here; I didn't choose to work here obviously. But I'm immensely lucky to work here. I know that my work here, and the work of this university, the social function of this university, is to reproduce many of the class stratifications that the Bernie campaign is out to oppose. Of course, the society I want to build is based on free public education, rather than expensive, meritocratic private education that they just dole out to the lucky and chosen few of the non-capitalist classes. So in that sense I'm complicit in this society. And the cheap but also fundamentally real answer is that we are all embedded in this society, in this class society.

I think it's a mistake to believe that any individual moral or ethical acts can transform that society. Instead, what we need is political struggle to provide the quote "big structural change." I'm convinced that [change] is best pursued in two venues: in labor struggle, and in electoral political struggle. The Bernie campaign represents a kind of bridge towards a better and more equal future in a way that I don't feel any number of radical individual life decisions would achieve. I could quit this job tomorrow; somebody else will come in and do it. It's not going to have any desired effect in levelling society. Is there an element of intrinsic, irreducible hypocrisy in that? Probably, and I'm willing to tolerate that. But I also think all my arguments about politics will always be greeted with some skepticism based on this position, will always be set up to be dunked on by the Yglesiases of the world. But the presumption of that dunk, as other people pointed out on Twitter in response to his comment, is that anyone who has scrambled to a place of privilege in this economy should just naturally have contempt for any attempt to change that society—which points out the fact that we need a new society! All these cynical dunks end up actually naturalizing these inequalities that exist.

The issue is, what kind of world do we want to build? In the world that I want to build, that I think Bernie is a step towards building, it wouldn't be taken as a natural fact of the universe that the upper class should scorn and despise the lower class. That's the horizon that we are aiming for. On the road to that horizon,

there are inevitably contradictions.

In terms of my personal experience—to come to the question about academia and activism—I haven't found too much contradiction yet, probably because I haven't rocked the boat sufficiently. People outside the university would give me that question sometimes, especially when I was an untenured assistant professor: "Do people in the field feel threatened? Do your colleagues, or the institution, or the administration feel threatened by that?" The answer is no, or maybe, not yet. If Bernie actually becomes President, that could change. I do think that part of it is that this movement, this new left momentum... Its trajectory and its strength are still very uncertain. It hasn't forced its opponents to respond to it with the fullness that it can expect to be responded to.

AI: That's one of the funny things I see in academia in general, is the degree to which certain radical scholarship is accepted or even striven towards, but actual radical politics... There's a lot of professors that use a very obviously Marxist analysis when they're dealing with literature or history, but their politics are firmly left-liberal. I think it's just because Marxist discourse has become such a pillar in the American academy, whether or not this is actually affecting any change. I feel like this is an odd thing.

MK: I agree. There are a lot of things to say about the place of Marxism in the academy. According to some accounts, political Marxists were largely driven out of social sciences a generation ago or more, and that even in the humanities they've been superseded by other forms of progressivism or radicalism that are less threatening to the power of capital. In some ways this goes back to old arguments in the 1990's about questions of representation and recognition as opposed to redistribution. I think there is some truth in the analysis that a lot of the new demands for representation and recognition have been much more prominent in scholarly work for over a generation, and that they have found favor at the administrative level too. Whereas, candid, blunt demands for massive material redistribution have shown up with somewhat less frequency in the academy, and it's not a coincidence.

AI: Radical politics has very much informed your scholarship, public or otherwise. In your Civil War lecture course last year, I remember you made a point that slavery didn't start the Civil War—antislavery started the Civil War. Assertions like these generally have a wider implication that it's progressive or revolutionary movements which must consciously push history forward, that history happens through action rather than reaction. It's not a big leap from this view of history, to throwing support behind Bernie's campaign.

I've seen a recent proliferation of popular articles from you and from others about the Civil War era, and I don't see that as just a coincidence. So has your focus on the Civil War era—this time of radical politics and change—

influenced how you interpret the current left movement, or has it worked backwards, that being alive in this political time today has changed how you look at your period of expertise?

MK: I think it's probably the latter. I'm persuaded that all history reflects the conditions of the present probably in a more substantial way than most historians would acknowledge. My first book, which was about slaveholders and foreign policy, came out of trying to unpack

that a huge chunk—I think in fact polls now do show a pretty healthy majority of Americans support things like health care for all, jobs for all, college for all, and if you polled even further I think you would get support for housing for all and other universal programs that would fundamentally transform not just the welfare state, but the experience of deprivation and scarcity and misery in American life. These ideas had been studiously kept off the table by almost everyone in the Democratic Party for the last 30 years, and we didn't

a quarter of the amount of people voted [as the number of general election voters]—tons of Americans have heard of Bernie Sanders but barely know what he stands for. I still think that's true about non-voters, people who didn't vote at all in 2016. But polls show that a lot of those Americans support his ideas, and when those ideas can get politicized in a general election campaign it's a once-in-a-generation opportunity. I don't think any of the candidates in the Democratic field, however much they embrace parts of that rhetoric and parts of that program... They remain too committed to a standard Democratic Party way of doing business that fatally limits the appeal of those ideas in a general campaign.

AI: Say he does win. How can you see a Bernie victory influencing your own scholarship?

MK: Yeah, I mean that's really interesting. I'm toying with the idea of writing a trilogy that goes through the Civil War era following the Republican Party. First, the political revolution of the 1850s that brought antislavery to power, that's the current book. This is a slightly grandiose scheme, but I would need to take the story through the military revolution of the Civil War, and the governmental revolution of the Civil War, in which emancipation was achieved, but the government and the party were transformed. That second book would go through to the 14th amendment, or to the Reconstruction Acts, to the summit of the political and wartime radical revolution. The third book would consider the triumph of reaction. Centering the experience of the Republican Party as the vessel that produced the Civil War, won the Civil War, and then lost Reconstruction internally, I would put the causality or the emphasis there.

The experience of a radical politics when it gets into government and what it can and can't achieve is something I definitely would want to explore, and I hope to God we have the chance to have that experience. My sense is almost certainly that it would involve mass disillusionment, but it would be the kind of disillusionment that I think would be wonderful to experience as opposed to the disillusionment of simple defeat.

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a foreign policy worldview that was definitely influenced by the war in Iraq, the Bush administration, and this idea (which in retrospect the Bush administration didn't even represent that well) of a small and restricted government at home, and an expansive and powerful state abroad. I found parallels between American foreign policy in the 21st century and slaveholders' idea of foreign policy in the mid-19th century. That definitely shaped the first book, and its emphasis on the slaveholding worldview, which was fundamentally about a conservatism, or about a reaction. It is worth saying that that's the book that got me this job; that's the book that got me tenure, in effect; and that book was born out of a left-liberal politics, even though by the time I was revising it I had started to make an ideological shift.

I would say it's impossible to avoid, and I don't even want to run from the conclusion, that this new project I'm working on now about antislavery politics is imbued with the experience of the Bernie 2016 campaign, a belief in the possibilities of mass politics, and—I think you put it really well, about agitation and radical organization driving the motor of history, not just reaction—the possibilities of specifically electoral struggle. There is a reason why this book is focusing on the creation of the Republican Party as a national party contesting presidential elections. I hope I'm not strip-mining this history for usable parts for politics 160 years later, but I do think the example of the mid-nineteenth century United States is something that radicals or progressives or anyone who wants to transform society broadly from the left can't afford to ignore. There is a lot more to be said even than what the current scholarship says about the political process, the political revolution, that produced an antislavery government.

AI: Could you summarize your take on Bernie: Why should we support him, and why can he win?

MK: Why we should support Bernie and why I think Bernie should win really amount to the same thing. In 2016, Bernie uncovered what I would call something like a sleeping majority for social democracy that the United States,

know how popular they were or weren't. Bernie found that they were popular, and especially then married those ideas to a class-centered political analysis that put the blame for why we don't have healthcare, college, housing, jobs for all on the 1% which has siphoned the wealth out of the economy for the last 40 years while wages haven't grown, and the average standard of living for a median American has arguably stagnated.

Bernie developed that analysis in mass politics. He built a constituency for it that connected the social democratic platform with the critique of the billionaire class, and he's built it into a diamond-hard formula that has enormous traction nationally. If he were the Democratic nominee, a general election fought on those terms, even just the election campaign itself, could really transform the country in a way that no primary campaign could. If you think about how much he achieved in 2016 just in the Democratic primaries—in which about



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