

*FALL ISSUE II 2022*  
*THE BULLY PULPIT*



*PRINCETON'S LEFT*  
*POLITICAL PUBLICATION*

**THE**  
**PROG**



# THE PROG

*PRINCETON'S LEFT  
POLITICAL PUBLICATION*

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

*DEAR READERS,*

In our second issue of the Fall 2022 semester, we bring to you a diverse array of articles primarily on electoral politics and deft criticism of the messaging of capitalist media and of Princeton, inspiring this issue to be titled "The Bully Pulpit". For those unfamiliar with the phrase, bully pulpit is a term coined by President Theodore Roosevelt, who used the phrase to describe the presidential office as a vital platform to advance and advocate for an agenda. As Princeton's only leftist publication, *The Prog* aims to serve as a "bully pulpit" by challenging the status quo and amplifying the diversity of leftist voices on campus.

This semester, we are grateful to have expanded the membership and leadership of *The Prog*, and we welcome a number of new officers who have and will continue to make meaningful contributions to the publication. To celebrate and highlight our new editors, staff writers, campus group correspondents, and secretary, we have included a spread of short introductions submitted by each of the officers. We greatly appreciate the work and passion all of our new members have put into *The Prog* and are eager to continue our work with each of you!

Lastly, we still have a couple of open positions that we would like to fill. First, the Social Media Assistant Manager position, whose main responsibilities will include posting articles and corresponding images to the website, and the Website Manager position, who will craft Instagram posts and stories to advertise events, meetings, and new articles. We are also always accepting Editors, Staff Writers, and anyone interested in contributing to the organization. If you are interested in applying for one of these positions, please send a short interest statement that specifies your other campus commitments and why you are interested in the position to [maryami@princeton.edu](mailto:maryami@princeton.edu) and [mjouve@princeton.edu](mailto:mjouve@princeton.edu).

Until next time,  
Mary Alice and Maryam



## MEET THE PROG

### *MARYAM IBRAHIM '23*

*EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER*

Maryam is a senior studying sociology with a certificate in linguistics and has been a member of *The Prog* since her first year. She has contributed articles to *The Prog* since 2019 but stepped into her role as Editor-in-Chief and Social Media Manager in summer of 2022. Her greatest pleasures in life come from eating berries and choosing aesthetic color schemes.

### *MARY ALICE JOUVE '23*

*EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND DIGITAL CONTENT EDITOR*

Mary Alice is a senior in the History department with certificates in medieval studies and French. She has contributed articles to *The Prog* since 2019 but became Editor-in-Chief and Website Manager in winter of 2022. She splits her time between ogling at intricate medieval manuscript illuminations and getting too excited about the Mudd Manuscript Library's records of Princeton's Board of Trustees meeting notes from the 1960s.



# MEET THE PROG

## AUSTIN W. GLOVER '24

MANAGER EDITOR AND STAFF WRITER

Austin is a junior in the Politics department pursuing certificates in African Studies and the History and Practice of Diplomacy. He hopes to never be elected to public office because he has spent way too much time learning about how to execute a successful coup to ever trust himself not to seize power if the opportunity arises.

## M.E. WALKER '23

TREASURER

M.E. is a senior who enjoys reading new perspectives and listening to a good speech.

## CIAN HEALY '26

SECRETARY

Cian (he/they) is a first-year student looking to concentrate in Mathematics and considering certificates in French Language and Culture and Teacher Preparation. They are immensely passionate about progressive/leftist causes, and co-led walk-outs and demonstrations with their high-school peers. He is very excited to continue this work in his new role as Secretary of *The Prog*. Outside of these interests, they enjoy listening to music of all kinds (with a slight inclination to over-indulge in Phoebe Bridgers's discography), reading long books (currently working on *Infinite Jest*), and being addicted to caffeine. You'll know it's them if they have an energy drink (or two) in their hand.

## THOMAS COULOURAS '25

EDITOR

Thomas is a sophomore, likely in the Sociology department, and is involved in activist groups and dance. Loving Nicki Minaj is his most prominent personality trait, but he does have some hobbies second to his fan behavior.

## UMA FOX '26

EDITOR

Uma (she/they) is a Princeton freshman who is prospectively majoring in the School for Public and International Affairs, Politics, or History. In addition to being indecisive about her major, Uma enjoys embroidering, trying new bubble tea combinations, and stirring up drama by looking up her friends in the FEC campaign contributions database.

## BEN GELMAN '23

EDITOR

Ben Gelman is a senior studying Politics from Houston, Texas. He spends his time deleting and then remaking his Twitter account and wasting time at Terrace.

## SHIREEN AMNA WARAICH '24

EDITOR

Shireen Amna Waraich is a junior in the History department pursuing certificates in South Asian Studies and Persian. Over time she has given up on teaching people how to pronounce her name correctly and can now respond to any mixture of garbled sounds following a 'sh'. Her hobbies include cutting her hair when stressed and crochet.

## OLLANTAY AVILA RISD '24

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND DESIGNER

Ollantay is a junior in the Graphic Design department at Rhode Island School of Design. They love a good everything bagel, surfing craigslist, and curating hyper-specific playlists. Check out more of their work at [www.ollantay.xyz](http://www.ollantay.xyz).

## FELIX O'MAHONY '23

DESIGNER

Felix is a British exchange student in the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering School. When he's not avoiding his problem sheets, he spends his time defending the concept of constitutional monarchy to Americans and checking the BBC to see who the Prime Minister is at the moment.

## ANDREW DUKE '25

STAFF WRITER

Andrew is a Sophomore from Kansas who, at time of writing, is still studying Math. He's doing far too much, but he's going to keep on this horse until it throws him (sorry, that's the Kansas coming through). He's currently displeased at how long it takes to walk anywhere from Yeh.

## ABDUL-BASSIT FIJABI '24

STAFF WRITER

Abdul-Bassit Fijabi is a junior in the Neuroscience department pursuing certificates in Applied Math and Biophysics. He derives an unhealthy amount of satisfaction from how fast he can type his PIN into his door. In an act of vulnerability, he told his friends about his mild disdain for the French, but that only led to them sending him every instance of French people they could find.

## THEO GROSS '24

STAFF WRITER

Theo Gross is a junior from Monroe, Connecticut concentrating in Politics with certificates in French and European Cultural Studies. In his free time, he enjoys exploring the contradictions of being a religious leftist and arguing about Marxist doctrine.

## ANTONIO MCHUGH '25

STAFF WRITER

Antonio is a sophomore that is studying Politics or History and joined *The Prog* in his sophomore year. His family moved from California, where he had lived his whole life, to Delaware right as he began college. His conflicted political views formed clarity and acquired a progressive streak ever since being exposed to the mind-opening music of Bob Dylan. Recently, Antonio went to South America and Bolivia, where his mother's family is from, and had one of the richest experiences of his life thus far.

## JAZMIN MORALES '26

STAFF WRITER

Jazmin is a freshman who is also one of the first, non-male film bros to ever exist. They enjoy writing about LGBTQ+ issues and manifesting a better character arc for the MCU's Bruce Banner.

## ALEX NORBROOK '26

STAFF WRITER

Alex is a first year student who spends his free time being indecisive about which social science field to major in. You can find him stopping to take pictures of random things on his hurried walk to classes or talking about invasive plants to anyone who will listen.

## BRYCE SPRINGFIELD '25

STAFF WRITER

Bryce is a sophomore studying Politics and pursuing certificates in Spanish and Latin American Studies. His favorite things to do include viewing raccoon memes and going to bed at 5 in the morning.

## ETHAN WANG '26

STAFF WRITER

Ethan is a freshman from Houston, Texas. He intends to study Economics, but in his free time he writes poetry and checks Frank Ocean's Spotify page to fantasize about a new album.

## ARREY ENOW '26

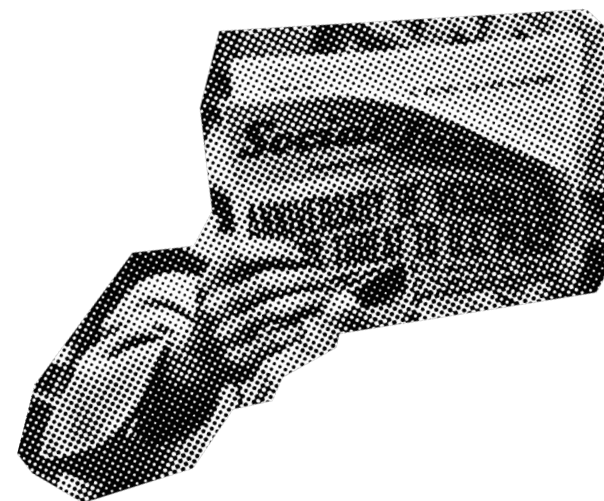
CAMPUS GROUP CORRESPONDENT

Hi, my name is Arrey Enow, and I'm a first-year from Atlanta, Georgia. I'm serving as a Campus Group Correspondent and am excited to share progressive perspectives on campus.

## LUZ VICTORIA JASSO '24

CAMPUS GROUP CORRESPONDENT

Luz Victoria is a junior studying sociology with a certificate in Latin American Studies and Spanish. She is starting her work with *The Prog* this fall as a Campus Group Correspondent. Some of her favorite things in life include the sound of waves crashing and chicken noodle soup. She does not care for the cold or New Jersey.





# REPORTING ON RECENT CAMPUS ACTIVISM

## JIMMY TARLAU EVENT Maryam Ibrahim '23

Around a dozen *Prog* members, old and new, attended an intimate discussion with Jimmy Tarlau and David Schankler about their time as student activists with Students for a More Democratic Society (SDS). As a part of Princeton University's first substantial and sustained political movement, SDS primarily mobilized and strategized behind combatting the Vietnam War and Apartheid, placing immense pressure on the institutions within the University that contributed to these injustices such as the Board of Trustees and the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), a non-profit organization that provides scientific research to the Department of Defense. Despite attending Princeton over 50 years ago, Tarlau and Schankler offered valuable insight applicable to student activists in the present day. On the topic of maintaining engagement from the student body, Tarlau emphasized the importance of connecting and engaging with students with the objective of calling their attention to what students can do about the institution around us instead of symbolic protest. During their time at Princeton, Tarlau and Schankler organized educational opportunities such as teach-ins and book discussions to provide a space for progressive discourse and those who may be interested in learning more about leftist issues.

Upon hearing the testimony of Tarlau and Schankler's multiple arrests and the disciplinary action they faced from the university for their protests, many students raised their concerns about how political activism and their visibility in challenging the status quo may impede on their future aspirations. Tarlau and Schankler admitted that their ability to have successful careers despite facing many arrests and disciplinary action is a reality of their privilege as white men who have families with the resources to bail them out of jail. Along the same lines, the activist alumni encouraged us to acknowledge our privilege as students at an elite university with access to opportunities and resources most other students do not have and the fact that many employers value those who challenge prevailing ideas on an issue.

*THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF OF THE PROG WOULD LIKE TO GIVE A SPECIAL THANKS TO JIMMY TARLAU AND DAVID SCHANKLER FOR OFFERING THEIR VALUABLE TIME AND INPUT ON STUDENT POLITICAL MOBILIZATION. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WORK OF SDS, READ MARY ALICE JOUVE'S ARTICLE TITLED "SDS PROTESTING THE VIETNAM WAR AT PRINCETON: A CONVERSATION WITH MOVEMENT STRATEGIST JIMMY TARLAU" AT THEPRINCETONPROGRESSIVE.COM.*



Jimmy Tarlau and Prog Members

## GLOBAL CLIMATE STRIKE PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY ALEX NORBROOK '26

On September 23rd, 2022, Staff Writer Alex Norbrook attended the Divest Princeton 2022 Global Climate Strike that took place in front of Nassau Hall. Princeton students and community members gathered to protest Princeton's continued investment in the fossil fuel industry.

In a *Daily Princetonian* article covering the demonstration, Alex Norbrook expressed, "[o]ur university's deep ties to the fossil fuel industry are terrifying, and fighting against such a large and well organized institution is scary." As the majority of the climate protesters at the strike were first-year students, Alex noted that, "[t]he younger you are, the more you will be affected by the climate crisis. And so as the years progress, Princeton is almost certainly going to see more and more climate activists coming to campus."

*TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ACTIVISM OF DIVEST PRINCETON, VISIT DIVESTPRINCETON.COM AND FOLLOW THEIR INSTAGRAM PAGE @DIVEST\_PRINCETON.*



Global Climate Strike

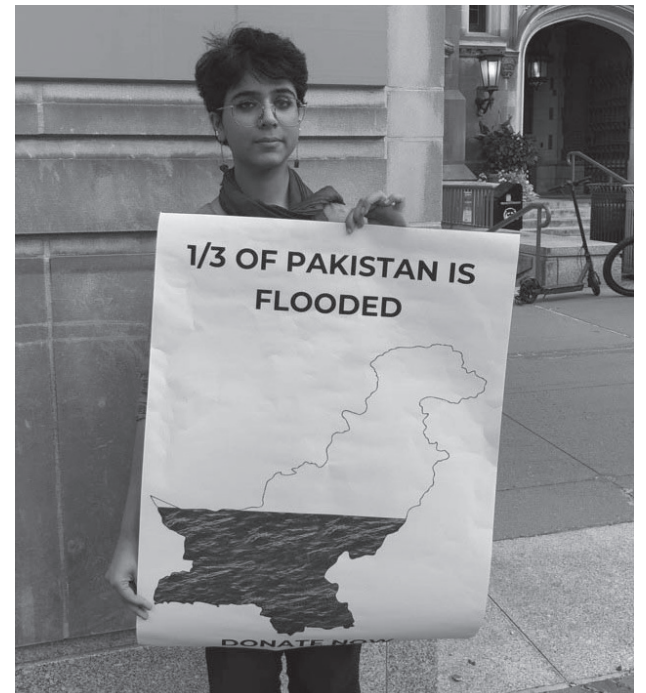
## PAKISTAN FLOODS FUNDRAISER AND TEACH-IN THOMAS COULOURAS '25

On September 26th, 2022 on the lawn of Frist Campus Center, The South Asian Progressive Alliance (SAPA) hosted a powerful teach-in and fundraiser for the flooding occurring in Pakistan as a result of the climate crisis. While Pakistan emits less than 1% of global carbon dioxide emissions, they are among the hardest hit by the climate crisis, especially due to rising sea levels. Over a third of the country is now underwater and its people need our support.

To learn more about SAPA's efforts to provide aid to Pakistan and how you can donate to the Edhi Foundation, Alkhidmat, and the Mahwari Justice Organization, scan the QR code below to be directed to the SAPA Instagram page.



POST SHARED ON SEPTEMBER 27  
BY SOUTHASIANPROGS



Protest for Pakistan

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FRONT, INSIDE, AND BACK IMAGES (IN ORDER FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) BY Melpo Tsiliaki, Egor Vikhrev (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> pages), Brad Starkey, The New York Public Library, and Joanes Andueza via Unspalsh

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# The University's Focus on Service Deflects from Student Dissent

## Alex Norbrook

“PRINCETON IN THE NATION’S SERVICE AND THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY” is the unofficial motto of our University. At Princeton, opportunities for service abound: Community Action programs are undertaken by first-years, a myriad of opportunities in service organizations are offered by the Pace Center, and service internships are easily accessible. Look no further than Princeton Internships in Civic Service or Princeton’s International Internship Program. However, by promoting mostly volunteer- and advocacy-based service, Princeton preemptively restricts the possibility for disruptive activism on campus.

The Pace Center, which oversees service activities at Princeton, defines service as “responding to those needs in the world around you with which you can engage in a responsible way and with ever-widening concern and attentiveness.” The Center continues by connecting service to civic engagement, or responding to those needs “by scaling up [students’] understanding of the structural dimension of those needs and responding to

them by connecting to—and in some cases, challenging—civil and political institutions and organizations, in a responsible way.”

Yet, with this definition, the University limits the scope of what is considered service and therefore constrains how students engage with dissent on campus and beyond. Though the Pace Center’s definition of civic engagement described above encourages dissent to an extent by including a call to “challenge” institutions, this endorsement is deemphasized in parentheses in comparison with the call to “connect” to those institutions. This language deprioritizes taking action to disrupt an institution, implicitly encouraging students to work within rather than outside that institution for change. Moreover, the definition says that community engagement should be done “in a responsible way.” “Responsible” service implies service which avoids mass protests or strikes. This definition necessarily restricts the arena for systemic change.

We can see the restricted nature of Princeton-sponsored service projects by the types of

service offered. For instance, the Student Volunteers Council (SVC), a student-run volunteer organization, promotes volunteer projects in fields like education, health, and hunger. These projects aim to help individuals suffering because of our current educational, medical, and food security deficits, making people’s lives tangibly better. The SVC outlines its five core principles as follows: reciprocity and learning in service; awareness of historical and societal contexts; responsiveness to community and student strengths; fostering long-term interpersonal relationships; and culture of accountability and dedication. Nowhere in these principles does the SVC say it hopes to end the disparities that cause its own volunteerism to be necessary in the first place.

Because volunteer service may only address the effects of inequality or systemic oppression, it is considered apolitical, an axiomatic good. Therefore, Princeton can use its commitment to service as a marketing tool and avoid creating any controversy from donors, families, alumni and students invested



Hannah Reynolds '22 via Divest Princeton





*Students walking on a tour of Princeton, by Storm Miller via Pace Center*

in preserving unjust systems. The University's choice to emphasize this type of service directs the next generation of leaders "in the nation's service" to think and act mostly within the confines of the current system.

The University further restricts radical changemaking by moving activism under the broader umbrella of advocacy, transforming it into something more palatable. "Student advocacy and activism organizations provide undergraduate and graduate students with the opportunity to put their ideas into action," the Pace Center says on its website. "An advocacy organization is a group of students who have come together, in the spirit of civic engagement, to lead and advocate on behalf of a social issue..." Notice that after the first sentence, the word activism is dropped entirely. The Center proceeds to define advocacy without explaining activism, which diverts the attention of would-be changemakers towards the former and away from the latter.

The difference between activism and advocacy is subtle but has crucial implications for the range of activity the University endorses. To advocate involves within-the-system work, and necessitates being a participant in the decision-making process alongside or supporting the people in power. At Princeton, we see this type of action in organizations such as the Princeton Student Climate Initiative or the Undergraduate Student Council—both of which work with experts, elected officials, and administration to advance change. Activism can be much more disruptive, entailing mass protests, civil disobedience, and even (though less common) arrestable actions. The Black Justice League's 32-hour occupation of President Eisgruber's office in 2015 falls under this category. The League had a list of demands, including that the University remove the name Woodrow Wilson from campus programs and buildings. Their controversial action forced the University to agree to some of their demands, leading to reluctant yet substantive change. By funneling students into advocacy, the University can preempt this difficult-to-handle activism which publicly discredits Princeton.

In addition, after the University concedes to activist demands, it claims credit for the changes it makes without acknowledging the work of those activists. We can see this as recently as the decision to divest and partially dissociate from fossil fuels. Board of Trustees Chair Weezie Sams said of the decision

to divest: "It is thanks to [Princeton faculty members'] work, and the engagement of many members of the University community, that we're able to take these steps today." Sams did not directly mention the role of student, faculty, and alumni activists in the Princeton Sustainable Investment Initiative and Divest Princeton who pressured the University to divest for nearly a decade. He referenced them only as part of the "University community" as a whole. This is not a new strategy. The University has sought to diminish the role of activism in policy reform many times, from the Black Justice League's wins to Princeton IX Now's victories in strengthening the University Title IX system. By concealing the role of disrupt-

tive activists in improving University policy, Princeton portrays their impact as negligible.

The result of the University's prioritization of advocacy and dismissal of activism is evident in the list of "advocacy and activism" student organizations sponsored by Princeton. Most of these organizations (with some important exceptions) support issues that are not controversial within the University, and do so through non-controversial means such as fundraisers, conversations, and other forms of education. Groups sponsored include Acts of Kindness, an organization aiming to create a welcoming environment on campus through "kindness initiatives," and Students for Sensible Drug Policy, which discusses drug use and drug policies and hopes to address the damages of the War on Drugs. These organizations fight for worthy causes; however, the ecosystem for political action requires support of more controversial forms of activism, too.

Princeton's commitment to service is a tactic which serves to preemptively manage dissent on campus. By directing students to volunteer-based service, the University focuses on remediating the effects of injustices rather than the arrangements which produce those unjust effects. And, even when giving resources to political organizations, the University preemptively waters down radical organizing through bundling activism into less controversial advocacy and hiding the successes of activist groups on campus. This is one of the myriad ways Princeton actively supports the general political apathy in our community. And it has real consequences for the future, encouraging students to engage with service throughout their lives—just not service that fights for systemic change.

As students, we must adopt dissent as an organizing tactic to show that beyond the volunteerism peddled by Princeton, there is a viable and radical way of forging a better future. ○



*Via Pace Center's Advocacy and Activism student resource page*



# MIRRORED DISCRIMINATION: British and American Transphobia in Legislation & Media

## Jazmin Morales

ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO SPEND MUCH TIME examining the current American news zeitgeist to find a new story on childhood transition, increased restrictions on trans athletes, or a variety of legislation that impede trans rights. In the US, conservatives have only started to mobilize by taking aim at transgender identity, but worldwide, restrictions on trans people have been increasing for years. The discriminatory regulations that are being introduced in the US were already present in an eerily similar fashion within the UK where the media and government have torn down and disregarded the rights of trans people.

One of the most egregious examples of rampant anti-trans legislation and transphobic media coverage over the past few years can be found within the United Kingdom. In Great Britain, failure to disclose gender history with a consenting sexual partner is considered rape through the means of "gender fraud". This law isn't archaic. In fact, it was established as legal precedent only in 2013, and it has led to several convictions of transgender partners, such as the case of *R vs. McNally*. In this case, a trans man was sentenced to 3 years in a juvenile detention center and was placed on a sex offender registry due to accusations of "gender deception" despite consensual sexual encounters prior to the plaintiff learning of his gender assigned at birth. But how can a person fraudulently represent their own gender? This idea can only be justified under a common belief that sex or genitals are inherent to gender. However, gender is a socially constructed idea defined by societal and cultural norms and individual expression. Unsurprisingly, this misrepresentation of



*Former Prime Minister Liz Truss, by Tim Hammond via Flickr*

trans identity is also common in the rhetoric of leading British media figures, celebrities, and news stations.

The BBC, commonly perceived as an unbiased, neutral news source worldwide, printed a 2021 article with the open proclamation that lesbians are pressured into having sex with transgender women. The article, titled "The lesbians who feel pressured to have sex with trans women", built itself around a self-reported survey with the claim that 56 percent of lesbians in the

UK felt pressured into having sex or entering relationships with transgender women. Although BBC editors have since edited the article and its headline to reflect that the self-selected survey "lack[s] statistical validity," these updates did not occur until six months after the article's release. Even still, the piece details the accounts of lesbians who report that they felt coerced into sexual partnerships with transwomen in fear of being labeled a TERF (trans exclusionary radical feminist) or a transmisogynist. While the debate on the ethics of dating preferences is a highly complex matter that requires an entirely separate article, this 2021 BBC article frames transwomen as predatory and threatening to cisgendered lesbian women, a common trope weaponized by media outlets to incite public outcry. These negative stereotypes about trans women and trans people in general have been used to justify legislation that targets and criminalizes trans identity. Inaccurate and sensationalist articles aren't the only thing that plague the outlet, as the gap between the reality that transgender people face in the country and the threat the BBC conveys is quite stark.

Before her recent resignation, the British prime minister Liz Truss had no issue with openly espousing transphobic talking points. Within the first few weeks of her term, Truss sought out legal advice to effectively block legislation that could fully reform Scotland's 2004 Gender Recognition Act, according to



*BBC Studios by K. Mitch Hodge via Unsplash*



two UK government whistleblowers who corresponded with Vice News. The Gender Recognition Act details the measures to obtain a “Gender Recognition Certificate” (GRC), or a document that grants an individual the ability to alter their legal gender. A 2020 press release from Truss, who served as Minister for Women and Equalities at the time, details an incredibly uncompromising application process to receive a GRC:

*“In order to apply for a GRC, applicants will continue to need:*

- *A medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria from an approved medical practitioner;*
- *A medical report from an approved medical professional providing details of any treatment they have had;*
- *Evidence they have lived in their new gender for at least two years;*
- *Agreement from their spouse/civil partner...;*
- *Make a statutory declaration that they intend to live in the acquired gender until death (making a false statement is a criminal offence).”*

Then, after paying a fee, the required documentation, agreement, and declaration is sent to four judges and four medical professionals who make up a “Gender Recognition Panel” to accept or decline an application.

If passed, the reform bill would eliminate the first three listed requirements in addition to reducing the age minimum to 16. However, Truss resorted to ensuring that these slightly more lenient adjustments are averted. On BBC News, articles detailing Truss’s infringement upon Scotland’s parliament and the ramifications of preventing changes to such a stringent act are non-existent. Even with the reforms to the Gender Recognition Act, the legislation still lays out an intrusive process that limits the autonomy of trans expression. It also perpetuates harmful ideas such as the notion that trans identity is a mental illness, as signified by the medical diagnosis requisite, and the false idea that gender identity is static throughout a person’s lifetime. In short, the act bars trans people from living freely within society.

In the US, unsurprisingly, the same pattern has emerged. Republicans, online and legislatively, have targeted transgender people and their rights with a burgeoning fervor, while liberal media outlets placate these conservative sentiments. Akin to the BBC, The New York Times, a bastion of the liberal American political center, has attempted to take a moderate stance that amounts to interrogating national data. In their most recent article tackling transgender issues, titled “More Trans Teens Are Choosing ‘Top Surgery’”, the problems that riddle the previously mentioned BBC article remain. The author refers to studies that report on the experiences of transgender children as small in sample sizes while maintaining that a study of just 28 individuals who have de-transitioned displays significant examples of “intense regret” over medical transition. In truth, the sample sizes of both studies are extremely small. According to Education Weekly, just 0.7 percent of all 13 to 17 year olds identify as transgender. Moreover, when the author of the NYT article tried to ascertain the number of these children who received top surgery, a form of medical transition, they were only informed of 236 different cases, as many clinics declined to report statistics. In addition, according to Gender GP, a



Via Unsplash

global trans health clinic, only 8 percent of respondents de-transitioned in a survey of 28,000 people, but the majority did so out of financial or family pressure—not due to regret.

While the article does acknowledge the Texas state legislation that removes the right to medically transition, one must wonder why the author of this article chose to sow doubt about medical transition for adolescents with devastating anecdotal stories all while the options for trans adolescents across the country are dissipating.

When the media leaves gaps in its reporting on transgender discrimination sanctioned by law, it sets the stage for a continued festering of transphobic ideals and actions. When news outlets focus on LGBTQ+ pain, regret, and reinforce harmful tropes, they misrepresent what being a member of the queer community can signify. This misinformation also manifests in very real social consequences. According to Pink News, in 2020, 2/3 of transgender people in Britain feared using public restrooms, and 70 percent of the trans people polled cited transphobia as “detrimental to their mental health.” In addition, a Seattle NBC branch wrote that, the number of transgender hate crimes grew by 41 percent between 2019 and 2020 and 2021 was, according to the

Human Rights Campaign, the deadliest year for trans people recorded.

For those who have had limited exposure to the trans community or trans issues as a whole, resources such as GLAAD or The Trevor Project can provide accurate information about the experiences of transgender people in the US as starting point. Respectfully talking with openly trans friends about their own experiences is also an effective way to become aware of ways to support the trans community. On campus, the Gender + Sexuality Resource Center provides a wide number of opportunities to connect with members of the LGBTQ+ community such as a number of peer educators, who serve as resources and support for students. By educating yourself and others around you, you can help combat transphobia by advocating and amplifying transgender voices; you can be a force in breaking the cycle of misinformation.

If you choose to continue reading outlets such as BBC News or the New York Times, I urge you to give a closer read of their articles; research their studies, claims, and events, and think critically about them. Understand that they, the editors and media boards, will only make small changes under pressure, but will continue to produce and participate in a culture that upholds increasingly discriminatory laws. ○



# WE THE PEOPLE, REPRISED: Assessing a Nation's Failed Promise of Democracy

## Abdul-Bassit Fijabi

*"It's not just Trump, it's the entire philosophy that underpins the—I'm going to say something, it's like semi-fascism."*

*"Well, folks, in just 46 days [from September 23, 2022], democracy will be on the ballot. Americans will have to choose between the MAGA Republican platform who have [sic] embraced extremism and the Big Lie; Democrats, independents, mainstream Republicans who believe in the rule of law."*

*"But if you give me two more Democratic senators in the United States Senate, I promise you... we're going to codify Roe. We'll once again make Roe the law of the land. And we'll once again protect a woman's right to choose."*

THE QUOTES ABOVE encapsulate President Joe Biden's rhetoric with respect to the dangers of right-wing extremism in the United States, as well as what he believes to be the cure—more Democratic representation in government. This certainly has some truth to it; Donald Trump's presidency and the rise of Republican leadership that followed it permeates today's air like an obstinate gray fog. Shattering the Democrats' supposed utopia that was the Obama administration, Trump and his retinue of sycophants pursued their vision of a nationalistic and intolerant America. Trump himself would go so far as to endorse and catalyze a violent insurrection on the Capitol Building after his defeat in the 2020 election. In this past year, the Supreme Court's conservative majority overturned the previously settled precedent of the right to an abortion, establishing as the law of the land an ideology unsupported by a majority of Americans and striking a heavy blow to reproductive health and justice.

Biden's approach isn't a unique one. In response to this growing autocratization, many

political pundits (both now and especially during the unified Republican control of government between 2017 and 2019) proposed that total Democratic control of government was necessary to reverse this concerning trend. On this note, the Editorial Board of The New York Times published an opinion piece on July 3, 2018, in response to Anthony Kennedy stepping down from the Supreme Court. The Board argued that the Constitution and its amendments were now in danger of being misinterpreted by a new conservative majority which would actively disobey the intentions of the more modern Framers (especially those of the 14th Amendment), turning back time to originalism. It specifically mentioned the passage of the 14th Amendment as a "second founding" of America as a democracy, marked by the addition of the power to protect the rights of marginalized groups not explicitly listed in the Constitution; under a right-wing Court, however, the Board claimed that these protections could vanish. But how true is it that a more liberal Court could guarantee the re-fortification of America's democracy? Moreover, what did the Framers truly intend as they drafted the Constitution and its revisions? The 14th Amendment can certainly be considered a step toward a more race-conscious and tolerant society, but what does this look like in practice?

In this article, focusing on two noteworthy statements from the NYT Opinion piece, I argue that the tendency of American institutions to disenfranchise the most vulnerable members of our society cannot easily be undone by changes of leadership or politics. Furthermore, it is my belief that the original Framers' vision for the Constitution resulted in a document that, from its inception, would inevitably become a tool for oppression; it would require more than just the

words of the 14th Amendment to protect disenfranchised communities. In that sense, conservative leadership—and the Supreme Court majority that it has created—is interpreting the Constitution exactly as intended.

### COMPROMISES AS DISENFRANCHISEMENT

First, I wish to examine the original intent and framing of this document, which has long been co-opted by conservative leadership and corrupted to the country's detriment, as the Editorial Board contends. The Board does acknowledge that "for all its genius, [the Constitution is] a deeply self-contradictory document." But how much of it is contradictory, and how much of it is written deliberately to adhere to the principles of its time? In *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, Robert Dahl examines the consequences of the inevitable limits that the Framers encountered when drafting the "supreme law of the land." He expounds on the specific elements of the Constitution that make it undemocratic. I will elaborate on three of these: slavery, suffrage, and the Senate.

From its conception, the Constitution was limited by the requirement that it establish a "republican form of government." According to Dahl, the Framers were emboldened not only by their fervent support of such a system, but also by the belief that all other American citizens shared their thinking. A governing document that purportedly derives its power from the people must necessarily appeal to as many of those people as possible. Thus, the notion of compromise also came into play, with the most contentious of these being the decision to not abolish or weaken the institution of slavery—a choice made out of an understanding that Southern states would never ratify the Constitution should it threaten slavery's legal status. This practice of compromise inaugurated the precedent of institutional powers being limited by a vocal, unrelenting subset of the population.

In addition, the Constitution did not provide a universal guarantee of suffrage, but rather allowed the individual states to decide who could and could not vote instead. Given the prevailing ideologies of the time, this was equivalent to explicitly denying women and people of color the right to vote. Here, the idea of equal vs. equitable treatment results in the needs of these groups going unaddressed. This also manifests itself in the form of 'equal' representation that the Senate provides: equal representation per state. When one hears about efforts to increase representation in government, this is usually expressed in relation to underrepresented identities like race, gender, and sexual orientation; a person's state of residence is generally not included in this list, but it serves as the great equalizer for one-half of the legislative branch of the U.S. government. This supposedly unbiased structure also carries a hidden form of discrim-



Via Getty Images



ination; in 26 states (enough to be considered a Senate majority), racial minorities account for less than 30 percent of the population, according to data from the 2020 Census. Therefore, the group that is truly represented by the “equal Senate” is White Americans.

From this, we can see how the Constitution has ultimately become an anachronistic fragment of history that, without the necessary amendments, would have lost all relevance to our ever-changing society long ago. The conscious decision of the Framers to exclude certain groups from the protections of the Constitution, combined with the unknown consequences of their newfound model that have since emerged, have resulted in a weak governing document that can be taken advantage of in order to marginalize targeted communities.



*Via Getty Images*

#### HIJACKING THE CONSTITUTION

In *Boundaries of Blackness*, Cathy J. Cohen develops a complex model of marginalization that addresses the “historical experiences of exclusion and marginalizations that have so forcefully shaped the consciousness and actions of African Americans.” Rather than simply making distinctions between those with power and those without it, she explores the locations of power and which groups are granted access to it, as well as how these entities evolve over time. In this section, I aim to place the Constitution and its consequences in the context of Cohen’s well-defined framework of exclusion, which begins with the emergence of marginal groups—“those who exist outside of dominant norms and institutions”—through four processes. I want to focus on one of these processes, institutions, defined as the state-sponsored and organized regulation and oppression of marginal groups, commonly performed without malice and considered “the normal processes of everyday life.” Historically and contemporarily, institutions have functioned to exclude marginal groups from dominant society and limit their access to certain resources. The Constitution and its compromises, for instance, seem to treat voting rights and representation as a limited resource, as a commodity to be regulated, as a good to which access must be controlled.

From this understanding of the emergence and consequences of marginalization comes a better understanding of its varied and ever-evolving patterns. Cohen describes one type, categorical marginalization, as the “practices that seek to exclude [a group of people]” from dominant institutions. In African American history, she gives the example of the institution of slavery, fortified by the Slave Codes and the racial ideologies that formed out of a need to

somehow justify the practice. In time, Cohen argues, sanctioned institutions become a way for ideologies to disseminate within society. With respect to the rights granted and withheld by the Constitution, people came to truly believe that marginal groups do not deserve the commodities of citizenship and suffrage, and that if they did happen to obtain them, they must have stolen them from the more deserving dominant groups; this is an observable phenomenon in the present day (seen in conservative responses to affirmative action and LGBTQ+ movements) and throughout history. Finally, Cohen explains how the development of ideologies and institutions revolving around marginalization, in turn, leads to social conflicts within groups, which can endure well beyond the repeal of laws and norms. At this stage of advanced and secondary marginalization, negative traits and behavior observed in these disenfranchised communities are then thought to be originating from themselves with the context and history of their oppression being forgotten and ignored. In this way, the practice of believing a group of people to be inferior has come to be central to the American identity—much more so than a genuine belief in democracy.

#### CAPTURING A POPULATION

With this fuller understanding of how institutions form long-lasting societal changes from deep-rooted biases, we can now consider the hypothetical capacity of a Democratic Supreme Court, Congress, and presidency to reform and improve America. This is the solution that the NYT Editorial Board implies is necessary for the betterment of the nation, stating that “as an increasingly hard-right majority settles in, it’s reasonable to fear that the court will move in the wrong direction for years to come.” It is certainly the case that there have been numerous examples of conservative power structures advancing the vulnerability of BIPOC communities in recent years. But when we look at examples from history, what can we say that a Democratic majority government entails?

Princeton Professor Paul Frymer, in his work, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America*, directly challenges the notion that a competing political party is necessary to acknowledge marginalized groups and improve their conditions. He contends that it is unnecessary for a party to address the concerns of these groups and, moreover, that it actually benefits them not to. To prove this point, Frymer draws from historical examples during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction Eras in the South; in response to the Democratic Party once again becoming nationally competitive, there was an understanding among the leaders of the Republican Party (then considered more aligned with Black interests) that appealing to Black voters by advocating for their civil rights would result in the loss of reliable White voters. This did have a basis in reality at the time; the state-by-state passage of the 15th Amendment by Republicans resulted in Democratic victories in state elections. As a result, the conservative wing of the Republican Party was strengthened, as they hoped to build and maintain ties with southern White voters. But even with reliable support from this group, and even with comfortable victories in Congress in the early 20th century, Republicans’ desire to pursue southern White voters persisted and their previously vested interests in Black issues became invisible; this paved the way for racial discrimination and disenfranchisement across the country, as it was no longer considered electorally viable to fight against it.

The concept of electoral capture plays a heavy role in the leeway that political parties have in neglecting the interests of certain groups that

support them, especially when one considers the Democratic Party of today. As described by Frymer: “By electoral capture, I mean those circumstances when the group has no choice but to remain in the party. The opposing party does not want the group’s vote, so the group cannot threaten its own party’s leaders with defection. The party leadership, then, can take the group for granted because it recognizes that, short of abstention or an independent (and usually electorally suicidal) third party, the group has nowhere else to go.” With the current status of the Democratic Party being the more progressive option favored by Black Americans, what can they get away with? What have they gotten away with?

The post-Civil Rights era has seen overwhelming support for Democrats among Black voters, a phenomenon originally stemming from the opposition of Republicans to the Civil Rights Act; for Black voters at the time, the choice to vote Republican was a vote directly against their best interests. Consequently, this situation has left Black voters entirely at the mercy of the Democratic Party in a two-party system. Having established a presumed bastion of support, Democrats then began to appeal to swing voters by abandoning the platforms that drew the support of Black voters in the first place. Hence, the political agenda became an optimization problem, to which the improved treatment of Black Americans is never a feasible solution.

Which Party Stands for Democracy? Neither.

From this, we understand that when parties compete against each other, their primary audience will inevitably be the White moderate; any radically progressive change and its aftermath will not be centered on those who need it most. Whether an administration willingly acquiesces to more intolerant ideologies or is effectively vetoed and undermined by local administrations, race-blind and even BIPOC-favored policies can lose power and be more harmful than helpful to marginalized groups, all while simultaneously benefitting the privileged in either circumstance.

When it comes to discussions surrounding certain laws and policies, oftentimes the response to these laws and ideas is ignored—such as is the case with certain “race-neutral” mechanisms of voter suppression, such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and gerrymandering. With current forms of marginalization, and with the people that are presently in power, there is no guarantee that a dedicated response to these laws will not harm BIPOC communities. On the contrary, the persecution of these vulnerable groups is arguably the only certainty. Thus, I cannot find myself agreeing with the Editorial Board that a conservative majority court is the root cause of our democratic backsliding. Nor is it entirely accurate to say that the core principles of democracy are somehow a staple of U.S. governance. Rather, our ‘supreme law of the land’ is marred with deliberate inconsistencies and oversights that prioritize the maintenance of harmful, bigoted institutions. Furthermore, we have observed the continuity of this problem throughout U.S. history, where the issues of vulnerable communities have nearly always been sidelined in favor of a “more general” interest. Democracy has never been on the ballot, and rampant (semi-) fascism has been at best ignored if not cultivated. The leaders of disenfranchised groups are in a unique position to reverse this trend, however, and their growing representation in government is very promising. But they must not fall into this trap of marginalization. No matter the progress we have made through civil rights movements, we must acknowledge that the challenges we face can evolve as well—and that sometimes, these challenges can even present themselves as the solution. ○



# YOU'RE A LEFTIST— NOW WHAT?: Progressive Electoral and Social Housing Efforts in St. Petersburg, FL

## Bryce Springfield



LUIS SANTANA, *Tampa Bay Times*

AS I WAS RIDING A BUS IN MY HOMETOWN THIS SUMMER, a man initiated a conversation that struck a chord with me. As he entered the bus and sat near me, he recognized my Pinellas County DSA shirt featuring a rose and the outline of a roseate spoonbill—a native Floridian bird. Excited to meet another socialist in the South, we quickly delved into a conversation on his socialist convictions—he wanted to do concrete and effective work instead of just being on Twitter. I shared that I happened to be on my way to a protest for a rent stabilization ballot measure and that I had been working on some other longer-term housing efforts with DSA and our allies. But the piece of our discussion that stuck with me the most was his understanding he could be more effective in realizing a progressive future. Yet, he did not know where to start outside of logging off Twitter.

So, say you're like the man I met on the bus and you care about leftist politics. You may even engage with an online leftist community, as various "BreadTubers" such as ContraPoints and Philosophy Tube have rapidly grown in popularity and infographics have diffused over Instagram stories, particularly over the course of the pandemic. Unfortunately, your activities largely are limited to posting socialist memes to your Twitter and Instagram account. But what would more impactful actions look like?

The recent efforts related to electoralism and social housing in my hometown, the coastal city of St. Petersburg, Florida, are a compelling example of a recent effort at concrete activism. St. Pete, from my perspective, is a particularly interesting case for a few reasons. For one, it is the fourth largest city in Florida, a state notorious for its headline-grabbing right-wing government and a large population

of Cuban immigrants who inherit, to say the least, a sour relationship with the S-word. Secondly, the Tampa Bay area, in which St. Pete is located, has one of the worst housing crises in the United States, facing the highest rent increases of any metropolitan area in the country in 2021. The area experienced an average rent increase of 24 percent as well as a concerning high home vacancy rate of 19%, suggesting that living spaces are widely misused as investments rather than for housing.

Regarding the notorious conservatism of the Floridian government, despite appearances, support for progressive policies is actually quite pervasive among Floridians. For instance, in 2018 and 2020, respectively, Florida overwhelmingly approved amendments to the state constitution which would restore the right to vote for former felons and phase in a \$15 minimum wage. This demonstrates an opening for progressive organizing even in a red state like Florida.

The desperate need for affordable housing directly affects a wide range of people, regardless of political affiliation. Because of the tangible impacts that housing insecurity has on so many people in St. Pete, housing policy is an issue that many renters care about and are passionate about addressing. By recognizing these two realities, progressive groups in the Tampa Bay area were able to conjure up ideas for moving forward.

### THE RICHIE FLOYD CAMPAIGN

Throughout 2021, the Pinellas County chapter of DSA volunteered their human resources to intensely focus on getting one of our members, Richie Floyd, elected to the St. Petersburg City Council. Richie—despite be-

ing a founding member of the Pinellas DSA—has had quite the political trajectory. Before his time as a union leader while teaching at a public school, he first worked as an engineer at Honeywell, a multinational company that engages in military defense contracting, which in his eyes conflicted with his most fundamental principles and initiated his turn toward public service and his greater focus on community activism. In the years preceding his campaign, he already had been fighting for progressive policies, including leading an organized effort to reach out to Floridians about the \$15 minimum wage initiative and pushing for the CALL program, which, since its passing in St. Pete in January 2021, diverts police calls to social workers regarding non-criminal or non-violent issues.

This year, an unprecedented grassroots movement behind Richie formed in the city as a consequence of his history as a fierce community organizer. Richie was the only candidate to get on the ballot through collecting petition signatures rather than paying a fee in any municipal race for the election cycle. Instead, his campaign relied heavily on "raising money from small-dollar donors, knocking on as many doors as possible, ... and having as many face-to-face conversations with people as [his campaign] could manage." These constituents who volunteered their time for Richie's campaign were often eager for a candidate who broke from typical approaches to politics in favor of a democratic socialist vision. Rather than seeking to appeal to the realtor lobby, as other municipal candidates frequently rely on, Richie actively spoke for alternative models of housing, such as social housing, aggressive environmental, economic, and social



policies as well as democratizing the workplace. Regular canvassing and phonebanking supplemented by frequent community socials helped to spread the message for progressive change throughout the city and allowed for St. Pete residents to get to know Richie and his vision for a better city.

On the night of November 2nd, 2021, the general election was called for Richie Floyd against a moderate opponent who had formerly served on the City Council, opening up new opportunities for organizing around progressive policies, such as city-owned social housing.

As expressed by Richie, “meeting people where they are and talking to them about how their material conditions can be better can build a broad coalition and can win things in places where you might not have thought it was possible.”

#### ONGOING SOCIAL HOUSING EFFORTS

Going into 2022, a coalition that includes Pinellas DSA, Faith in Florida, the St. Petersburg Tenants Union, and many groups uniting under the People’s Council formed efforts under the unique conditions of St. Pete around social housing—including city-owned, mixed-income, and tenant-managed housing, partly inspired by examples in Vienna and Singapore.

In addition to acknowledging the rapid rent increases in the city, the proposed redevelopment of the Historic Gas Plant District posed another significant issue. The Gas Plant District was once a thriving black working class neighborhood in St. Pete. However, the historical community was displaced by the construction of Tropicana Field, a baseball stadium that ended up consisting mostly of a vast parking lot. The neighborhood’s residents were promised housing and jobs by the city, yet the Gas Plant residents and their descendants continue to face worsening problems with housing insecurity and unemployment.

Under the previous city administration, the

land was going to be sold to private investors and was to include luxury apartments. However, the new mayor of St. Pete, Ken Welch, restarted a process for the redevelopment of the Gas Plant District to make better use of the land. For housing advocates, this opened up a new opportunity to push the city to maximize the public utility of the 86 acres of publicly-owned land, in part with social housing.

During Community Conversations held by Mayor Welch, community members overwhelmingly advocated to keep the land public and to utilize it for social housing rather than selling out this long-term public investment for merely private profit by constructing temporary affordable private housing. In the midst of Pinellas DSA’s efforts preceding this reopening, Council Member Floyd noted in a private communication that, “[w]hen we canvassed homeowners and tenants, almost universally, the social housing piece was responded with ‘Yes, why aren’t we doing that immediately?’”

Under such an environment, other tenants’ issues, such as the right to counsel and rent increase notices, came to the table through the action of Council Member Floyd. Additionally, through the Tenants Union’s correspondence with the City Council, proposals to put short-term rent control on the ballot were considered, though with serious obstacles, for the first time. The ultimate goal—social housing—was consistently brought to the City Council’s attention through the frequent attendance of housing activists at public meetings and Council Member Floyd’s advocacy.

With these factors combined, the dialogue has shifted in favor of social housing and other tenants’ issues. Instead of merely discussing subsidized private developments with a limited number of temporary affordable units, even landlords, news outlets, and the mayor have begun to use the language of social housing as a potential solution to our local housing crisis.

The fight for equitable and affordable so-

cial housing continues, however, as Pinellas DSA works on a whitepaper with the consultation of housing policy experts to present to St. Pete city officials on the benefits of social housing and pushing the Mayor to ensure the Gas Plant District remains publicly-owned. In addition, the Tenants Union and various other progressive organizations continue to organize members of the public around the housing crisis and convert community frustrations into unignorable protest.

#### TAKEAWAY

Although taking implementable action is the most effective way to realize a more democratic and just future, it can be difficult to imagine what progressive political action can look like. However, thinking about concrete and actionable ways the left can build momentum and awareness is the first step in ensuring the liberation of the working class and other oppressed groups.

As said by Trimarco, “[W]e’re already seeing an openness toward a fairly radical housing policy that I don’t think we’d be seeing without the legitimacy brought by ... a sitting City Council member.”

As I told the fellow socialist on the bus, there is plenty that socialists and progressives can do outside of online engagement to effectively organize our communities. St. Pete’s organized efforts for a socialist representative and a robust social housing system serve as a model for just two areas of interest for activists, but the possibilities are endless. The most important part is considering the most pressing issues in our local communities and adapting to their specific conditions to best serve human needs and move “beyond the predatory phase of human development.”

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ANGELICA EDWARDS *Tampa Bay Times*



# POTOSI: A Story of the Coping Miner

## Antonio Zapata-McHugh

*"I AM THE RICH POTOSI, treasure of the world, king of mountains, and the envy of kings."* The alluring *dicho* [proverb] of the 1547 coat of arms of the city of Potosi, Bolivia captured the essence of what the world thought of Potosi and its great Cerro Rico silver mines at the time. Potosi and the Cerro Rico were a silver El Dorado, a bastion of unfathomable, myth-like riches in the heart of the Spanish Empire. Although it had long been the fervent wish of Spanish conquistadors like Francisco Pizarro, the mercenary who infamously ordered the death of the Incan King in the public square, to discover such a prize of immense wealth,

nial art, supplied silver currency to the world, and stimulated technological development via heightened capital flows into the region. These fantastic new achievements of mercantilism preceded and eventually resulted in a shift toward the more cunning mode of exploitation that now controls the economic possibilities of Potosi's inhabitants: domination by multinational corporations and international finance.

This past summer, I had the chance to visit Bolivia, the birthplace of my grandparents and home to many of my cousins, where I took the opportunity to visit Potosi and its famed Cerro Rico. Potosi is now a shell of its

troduced by the Spanish. Thus, the Bolivian miner goes to work every day believing that his work is deeply evil and that it pulls him further and further into a deep moral debt to this pure deity he wishes never to disappoint. This torment is significantly different from the more typical laborer's apathy or even anguish toward their job, as the Bolivian miner's self-disgust is derived from a visceral, spiritual revulsion to how they are killing the Earth even as they continue to engage in the bloodletting anyway. At least the bloodletting surgeons of the past (like the coal miners of West Virginia today) could find mental comfort and absolution in a pseudoscience which told them that their work was benefiting humanity. Unfortunately, there is no 'Americans for Prosperity'-style dark money organization in Bolivia to propagandize to the miner that his work is somehow pushing his country towards a new frontier of economic prosperity. Even if this sophistry was prevalent in Bolivia, the Bolivian miner would be a natural skeptic. He has already heard an eerily similar mythology blared out by the Spanish colonizers. He will not be fooled again, and so the mind in the mine of the Cerro Rico is hardly ever at ease.

How do the Bolivian miners get through a day of excruciating mental discomfort, constantly feeling that they are participating in the slow murder of Pachamama? How do they shoulder the burden of furthering a disgusting extractivist colonial tradition which has gone on for generation after generation? How do they grapple with having to pass this burden on to their adolescent sons, many of whom begin toiling in the mines at the age of 13? A visit to Potosi reveals the answer, as it is evident at every *kiosko* corner: drugs. The mine workers do all they can to alter their doors of perception so that they can hang tough for their family without becoming insane. The drugs (or drug-adjacent substances, depending on your definition of drug) include copious amounts of coca leaves from the Chapare jungle region, poured into small plastic bags from one of the massive sacks slung over the shoulder of a *cholita* woman; long and thick tobacco cigarettes so the lungs and mind will be filled by tar and smoke rather than silica dust and culpability; and *el puro*, a beverage composed of 95% alcohol to ease the mind and banish the worrisome thoughts which remind the miners their family is hungry. It is important to note that the coca leaves make the miner more alert and suppress his own hunger, so that he can work harder and longer without break. Additionally, the coca leaves, aside from being integral to indigenous Bolivian tradition, also seem to magically counteract the extremely thin air of the highest city of Bolivia's *altiplano* [high plain], which threatens to crush



Cerro Rico by Pedro Henrique Santos via Unsplash

this honor and glory would instead fall to Diego Gualpa, an indigenous Andean who came upon the mountain of silver in 1545. However, this momentary symbolic victory of the humble Andean prospector over the greedy Spaniard conquistador quickly became a nightmare as hundreds and then thousands of nearby indigenous people were forced into slavery to work in the richest mountain of the "New World". An ensuing meteoric rise in immigration and slave traffic to the city in the 16th century from all different regions of the world soon rocketed Potosi's population and wealth to a status that rivaled the great "Old World" cities of Paris and London. There was no questioning that Potosi was the material and ideological center of America throughout the period, as it provided muse for colo-

romanticized colonial portrayal and is one of Bolivia's poorest cities. Today, it unfortunately seems that many of those who work in the mines of Cerro Rico—which still produce silver some 500 years after the height of the Spanish Empire—are plagued by an immense guilt over the consequences of their toil. One miner, in reference to his work and the meager profit he makes, said that he owes a massive debt to the *Pachamama*, an indigenous Bolivian conception of "Mother Earth". The idea of *Pachamama*, originally an Incan goddess who represented fertility, benevolence, and balance in nature, has thrived and evolved due to the reliance that Quechua and Aymara people have maintained on the land and the strong synthesis between the goddess and the similarly benevolent Virgin Mary in-





*Cerro Rico via Public Domain*

the spirit of work with intense altitude sickness. With these goods in one hand and dynamite from the same kiosk mart in the other, the miner prepares to descend into the depths of the section of the mine that has been designated to him by his worker cooperative.

As the worker travels through the *bocamina*, the entrance to the mine, he makes sure to offer his gratitude to *El Tio*, the god of the underworld and one of the thousands of statues that wait at the entrance to every *bocamina*. The more gratitude shown to *El Tio*, the more precious metal the miner will discover, whether it be silver, tin, zinc, lead, or even gold. If *El Tio* receives a miner incredibly well, it is the most ardent hope that the snaking golden veins present on many of the mine's walls will not be of the "fool's gold" variety. And if *El Tio* is feeling heroic, he will lessen the chance of the miner drunkenly stumbling to his death in one of the many pits or getting bludgeoned by rocks thrown by the dynamite explosions that send visible shock waves of dust through the mine corridors. Thus, every *El Tio* statue is well-taken care of by the miners, who blanket him in coca leaves, give him tobacco in the mouth to smoke, and drench him in *el puro* alcohol. Each day of work begins with this deal with the devil.

After bartering with the devil one too many times, and amassing an unpayable debt to *Pachamama*, the Bolivian miner will likely die around the age of 40. Many of these deaths are due to complications from a disease called silicosis, a respiratory ailment similar to black lung which develops in the lungs after many years of inhaling silica dust in the mines. They do not have the proper ventilation equipment to mitigate the silicosis; nor, for that matter, do they have many safety measures of any kind. When visiting or studying Potosi, it slowly

becomes obvious that the concrete economic conditions on the ground have made this hellish reality, this life and ideology of coping, one of the only options a Bolivian miner has if he wants to survive. The Bolivian miner cannot simply work harder to fix the shape that he's in. The development of miner cooperatives appears to be a progressive step toward enabling the miner to keep more of the direct fruits of his labor, the metals he extracts, as the rewards are not redistributed by the cooperative nor are they taken by the state. It also seems that worker cooperatives are helping to limit violent sectionalism within the mining community, a momentous step in the right direction given that the history of mining in the region is mired in violence. These benefits cannot be ignored. However, the hard-to-swallow economic reality is that the worker's only option is to sell his raw metals to large foreign corporations in the international market economy. Only these entities have the capital to process the metal, and they thus control the price at which any raw earth metal will be sold. The worker hopes that the price dictated to him by these faceless profit-driven entities will allow him to eke out subsistence, but hardly ever more.

This is a very short view into the life of the modern miner at Cerro Rico in Potosi, Bolivia. Perhaps in the future the Bolivian miner will no longer have to plunder the earth he loves so much for the entirety of his work life, all the while resorting to drugs and alcohol to mentally and physically cope with the trauma. Perhaps Potosi's workers will soon feel solace in letting the historic Cerro Rico transition into a tranquil UNESCO World Heritage site rather than allowing this mystical Andean peak to sink lower every year as its foundations are blown and torn out from un-

derneath it. Perhaps, at the very least, Cerro Rico miners will not only be referred to as "he" because the mining conditions will have improved to a point where the miner will no longer have to insist that "this is no place for a woman." However, for the time being, it seems that the Bolivian miner is mildly content with working at Cerro Rico to provide the most basic necessities for himself and his family. This is better than nothing and better than serfdom or slavery. He has no delusions of some sort of coming economic revolution, nor does he have the opportunity to imagine such a thing, but Princeton students are imagining this—or at least they should be. ◻



*Photo by Peter Burdon on Unsplash*



# RON DESANTIS: Exceptional or Par for the Course?

## Theodore Gross

IN SEPTEMBER 2022, the Republican Governor of Florida Ron DeSantis made headlines with his choice to involuntarily relocate Venezuelan and Colombian migrants by sending them hundreds of miles away from their arrival destination in Florida to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts in an apparent critique of President Biden's immigration policies. While some may denounce DeSantis' behavior as exceptional, our political system facilitates and indeed encourages upending people's lives for political gain.

The fifty undocumented immigrants who were shipped off by DeSantis arrived in the United States to seek out better economic opportunities for themselves and their families in the supposed land of opportunity. These immigrants were even told they would receive jobs, food, and shelter upon their arrival. However, they were instead coerced into a one-way plane ticket to a destination with no guarantee of life essentials upon arrival, creating a humanitarian crisis in the scarcely populated island of Martha's Vineyard. With the aid of Florida state funds and an airline charter company named Vertol Systems, the DeSantis government spent millions to manipulate dozens of vulnerable migrants into being pawns in a political chess game against Joe Biden and the Democratic Party.

As a part of the Florida government's political strategy to transport undocumented immigrants to progressive states, these migrants are being weaponized by the Republican party to shift responsibility onto Democratic governments that laud themselves as sanctuary states. The lack of forewarning to these progressive areas has caused compounding issues for both the migrants and the communities that are unprepared to support them. With scarce resources and limited shelter, many of the migrants who arrived in Martha's Vineyard were transported to a military base in Cape Cod and elsewhere to receive necessary services and shelter for the time being. With many of these migrants having limited English language skills and little to no support networks or community, these undocumented immigrants were shipped across the country simply so Republican governments such as DeSantis's could cynically make the statement that Democratic states should take sole responsibility for the undocumented migrants they claim to want to support.

We can denounce DeSantis for his actions, condemn him using taxpayer money to make a political statement against Biden and risk the lives of these migrants by sending them to ill prepared states upon landing. However, these actions are not out of the ordinary for GOP politicians. In fact, DeSantis is not the only Republican governor to have pulled this



*Republican Governor Ron DeSantis by Jeff Swensen via Getty Images*

stunt to redirect undocumented migrants to Democratic majority states. In the same week as Gov. DeSantis, Texas Governor Greg Abbott bussed 75 to 100 migrants from Texas to Kamala Harris's Washington D.C residence. These political ploys will likely not be the last either, as DeSantis's administration has set aside \$12 million as well to transport migrants from Florida across the country. In the last few days, \$1 million was set aside by the Florida legislature to fly migrants to Illinois and Delaware, President Biden's home state. However, it appears that, according to a recent report by the Associated Press, flights to these two states have been mysteriously postponed for the time being.

While Republican politicians have resorted to stifling the lives of migrants as an opportunity to score political points against the Democrats, the Democratic Party is not so immune from such political games. Despite promises to reverse the anti-immigrant policies of Donald Trump, such as the obligatory collaboration between local police and ICE, policies that criminalize migrants are still in effect across the country. A journalist from the Ventura County Star even reported that "under Biden, the federal government is still relying on local police partnerships as the main engine of the deportation system." Both parties endorse playing a game that prioritizes politics over human life and that emphasizes the need to secure re-election in place of enacting policies that promote the well-being of their constituents.

Unfortunately, politicians continue to be rewarded for how well they can play this game of political deceit. While many politicians disguise themselves as populists attuned to the interest of their constituencies, more times than not, they are revealed to be from wealthy and well-connected backgrounds. Ron DeSantis is just one of many politicians who attempts to appeal to the average American by claiming to be from "blue-collar roots" despite attending Yale and Harvard and working as a Federal Prosecutor. At a time of heightened political polarization, voters are left with only an illusion of choice—to vote for a party that claims to be in favor of progressive policies yet does very little to dismantle the polities that continue to oppress millions of Americans or to support a party that poses as a voice for disaffected Americans by directing blame at protected classes for the ills of the country.

While it is hard to imagine, we should strive to realize a different way of practicing politics where policymakers are true representatives of their communities rather than hired political operatives. In essence, we need to make politics more local. Rather than choosing the best pieces on a nationwide political gameboard, we would be better off to elect those who have demonstrated their dedication in bringing meaningful change to their communities. This is of course easier said than done but focusing on local change is a tangible first step in combating the all-consuming partisan warfare encouraged by our country's political system. ○



# Don't Join the Honor Committee

## Ben Gelman

AS EACH NEW SEMESTER STARTS, all of our inboxes are flooded with solicitations to join new clubs. However, one option always seems to stick out among the dance groups, pre-professional organizations, and volunteer opportunities: joining the Honor Committee and the Committee on Discipline (COD). Students should not be fooled: joining either Committee means participating in the investigation and punishment of one's peers without due process — and we should simply stop doing so.

Last year's Senior Survey (though not a random sample) showed that only 23.4 percent of seniors view the Honor Code favorably, and it is not hard to understand why. An investigation by *The Daily Princetonian* in Spring 2022 laid out in shocking detail the excesses of the system. According to Sociology Professor Patricia Fernández-Kelly, the University's criteria and standards “would be laughed out of the court of law in the United States of America.” Honor Committee hearings are distressing, traumatizing events for any student involved, no matter how blameless.

There is not enough space here to go into all the malicious practices inherent in the Honor Committee and COD, but one of the most troubling details includes the fact that students who are on financial aid and found guilty of Honor Code and COD infractions are not eligible for grants for the semester they must repeat. This means that our classmates on the Honor Committee choose not only to

derail their peers' academic trajectories but also potentially their financial well-being.

Apologists for the Honor Committee hang on to the possibility of reform from the inside or harm mitigation. There is no greater evidence of this than when the former head of the Honor Committee told the 'Prince' that, “When we thought it would be accepted by the University, we tried our best to err on the side of disciplinary probation. But when we thought that it would not be accepted by the University, we assigned a one-semester suspension.”

The notion of “mitigation” is nefarious. It allows for the Committee to justify its harsh penalties, simply by claiming that the punishment would have been more severe if they had been overruled by the administration; therefore, students should just be grateful. If Committee members truly had the sympathy for their fellow students that they claim to have, they would recognize this process as illegitimate, overly punitive, and unfair, and they would challenge the University to overrule them more often.

What would happen if the Honor Committee simply refused to recommend suspensions and expulsions? Would we see a wave of University overrulings of their verdicts? I would welcome that outcome only because it would reveal this system for what it is: a top-down effort from the University to instill an atmosphere of distrust among students. A wave of

overrulings might also put an end to the ridiculous idea that students are policing themselves because of their deep commitment to the Honor Code rather than anxiety and fear. Perhaps then we could have an honest conversation about why the University seems to believe the Honor Code creates a healthy environment for students despite their endless claims to care about our mental health.

Sadly, this vision where the Honor Committee dares the University to overrule it will never come to be. Honor Committee members are not elected or accountable to students. Instead, they are nominated, and no one with radical new ideas would ever get past the University-sanctioned screening process. The only meaningful way to stop the Honor Committee from legitimizing the administration's decisions is to deny it student members.

It is time for us to have a conversation about what kind of disciplinary system, if any, ought to replace the Honor Code and Committee on Discipline. However, in the meantime, students ought to stop collaborating. Instead of buying Committee members' specious argument that they are somehow staving off something more severe or joining as a way to gain some kind of law school resume builder, we should exercise solidarity with one another and refuse to participate.

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*Princeton by User mbell1975 on Flickr*



# A CONVERSATION WITH BENJAMIN BRADLOW:

## Brazil's Current Political Climate and The Urban Development of Sao Paulo and Johannesburg

### Maryam Ibrahim & Mary Alice Jouve

ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, we were kindly welcomed into the office of Associate Research Fellow Benjamin Bradlow, a progressive faculty member in the Sociology Department who Jimmy Tarlau connected us to following his visit to campus a week prior. With the conclusion of the first-round of the Brazilian Election and the imminence of the second round on October 30th, 2022, we were eager to get Mr. Bradlow's input on the political atmosphere of Brazil.

"The PT is a really interesting case for people on the left to understand about the role of political parties in pursuing redistributive change," Bradlow began, going on to explain the background of the PT as an organization and the many tendencies that came together to form the coalition. "The PT is a multi-tendency party because there was this idea when they formed the party that it should be a party of the workers and not just a party that speaks on the behalf of workers that doesn't come from the workers."

"Traditionally, organized labor was very integrated into a very hierarchical relationship with political parties in Brazil that really removed a lot of the independent organizing and political voice of unions themselves. During the military dictatorship in Brazil from the mid-60s to the mid-80s, a new kind of labor leadership emerged in São Paulo and some of the suburban municipalities around São Paulo, particularly among metal workers mainly working in auto factories. Lula was the key, the main leader, who emerged from there."

"There was also in much of South America and, including in Brazil, in urban peripheral slums of São Paulo, an ideological tendency of the Catholic Church known as liberation theology, which linked poor people's struggles to religious life in a way that was very powerful. There was an organizational unit that emerged there that was called ecclesiastical base communities. At the same time, there were new intellectual currents in the universities and cultural groups that formed. These were the three key parts of the left, forming the basis of organizing for democracy."

Fascinated by this multi-tendency approach to organizing, we asked how these diverse groups were brought together into a single party. "Lula is a very unique figure in world history, because he, as a person, expresses a charisma that itself, ...has integrated a lot of these different tendencies that went into the formation of the PT," Bradlow responded.

"Charisma is always very important in politics," Bradlow added, "particularly electoral politics, but has some bad aspects because individual charisma can often end up stifling organizational growth and change which is necessary for persisting over time."

With this history in mind, Bradlow gave us his analysis of Brazil's current electoral situation. Although Lula was in first place, there was a larger gap in the polls between Lula and Bolsonaro than expected, leading to a planned run off to take place on October 30th, 2022.

"Lula missed winning the first round by about 1.5%. In that sense he did quite well. It's the closest that any presidential candidate has come to winning the first round in a Brazilian election since democratization."

"But," Bradlow added, "it's absolutely true that Bolsonaro did better than people were expecting based on the polls. Not only that, but all of his allies did very well in congressional and gubernatorial races across the country, much better than people were expecting."

"This does bring up the polling issue, which is familiar to people in the US as well, that there is clearly something about the contemporary right wing and polls. Pollsters don't understand how to capture it. One seemingly viable explanation is that people on the right just don't want to participate in polls..."

"One thing that was curious about Bolsonaro's election in 2018, was that a key swing group that supported him and put him over the top was the urban peripheries. The same urban peripheries in the large cities of the southeast that had been the key for the formation of the PT, the rise of the PT in its early electoral wins, weren't voting overwhelmingly for Bolsonaro but was a key swing area. This means that the margins are shifting."

However, Bradlow wasn't sure how the urban peripheries would vote in the upcoming runoff. "It's unclear how to read the urban peripheries in this election," Bradlow explained. "There's some evidence from the first round that maybe in some of the key cities, the urban peripheries are returning to the PT, but we'll have to see, as it's a bit hard to compare with the previous election. We also know that Bolsonaro is increasing his margins in big agricultural areas of the interior of Brazil, in some of the very rich areas of the south and southeast."

"To me, it's 50/50 whether Lula wins in the next round. He has obviously a shorter margin than Bolsonaro to make up. However, the congressional gubernatorial results show that there's a massive, increasingly institutionalized support for the new right in Brazil."

We were also interested to know more about how Bradlow came to academia and the research for his latest book, *Urban Power*.

"I had worked in urban organizing and housing politics for a number of years primarily in South Africa. Before I started my PhD, I was working with a network of organization-based informal settlements primarily in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America called



*Benjamin Bradlow via benbradlow.com*

Slum Dwellers International."

Bradlow's experience in this organization is what initially attracted him to completing a master's in City Planning at MIT: "[Urban planners] seem[ed] like they [were] an important part of the picture to building more equal cities," he explained.

Bradlow continued, "I went back to South Africa after doing the masters, and then when I decided to do a PhD, I knew I wanted to compare South Africa with somewhere, but I didn't really know where. And in the early days of my doctorate, I started reading about Brazil and realized that there were a lot of interesting similarities with South Africa."

"In particular," he noted, "there were similarities in terms of how unequal the countries and the cities are. And what sociologists would call the social basis for democratization in both countries, had a lot of similarities. In both countries, you had new independent trade unions, urban movements, basically neighborhood movements and, in some cases, citywide movements that were oriented around what I call urban public goods, things like housing sanitation, affordable rent, basic services transportation."

Bradlow also highlighted the importance of the strong leftwing political parties in both nations, the African National Congress in South Africa, and the Worker's Party (PT) in Brazil. "As I dug deeper into the comparison," Bradlow continued, "I realized that the largest city in each country which was kind of like the hotbed of social organizing for democracy, Johannesburg and South Paulo, started at very similar positions. I was looking particularly at housing, sanitation, and transportation."



Despite their similar starting points, Bradlow found that São Paulo experienced a better outcome in the distribution of public goods since its democratization when compared to Johannesburg.

Dr. Bradlow wrote his PhD dissertation based around this concept, and his first book further dives into this topic along with the relationship between local bureaucrats and local political movements: “I look at the way that movements not only influence the political will or desire of local government to make a change,” Bradlow elaborated, “but these are contexts where you actually have to build a lot of new capacity within local government to actually deliver changes in the distribution of these kinds of public goods on the ground. So, I look at not just the state-society relationship, that is the relationship between movements and local government, but how local government itself actually changes internally to deliver on the kinds of demands that movements are making.”

We then asked Dr. Bradlow to sketch out the framework of his theory on the conditions within a city that are best for delivering public goods based on the comparison between South Africa and Brazil: “In urban politics and urban sociology, there’s a sun around which all of the other actors are revolving, which is the power of real estate. We know that real estate in the large modern metropolis can command a great deal of attention and resources from local government. The question is, to what degree can other kinds of forces generate a countervailing power within the city?”

Bradlow found that strong citywide social movements are what presented such a force. “These are movements that aren’t just existing in a single neighborhood, but they’re federated and connected across the city that make demands for new kinds of policies that are going to distribute more housing and regularized land, so that you can deliver public services like sanitation.”

“In São Paulo,” Bradlow continued, “you actually have cases where many of the movements end up inside the government. It’s not just that they’re demanding from the outside but they say, ‘we actually need some of our people in [government] to make sure that these new programs that we’ve been demanding really do what we want them to do.’”

Bradlow contrasts this situation with Johannesburg, explaining that “even though you had a strong alliance between movements and a key political party in the struggle against apartheid after democratization, the ANC government basically said to movements, it’s time to stand down and demobilize. The state is going to deliver on everything that we promise.”

According to Bradlow’s theory, low participation of such social movements in government has been very detrimental to such movements. “[T]he consequence of that is that you have very weak movements that are only organized... in a particular neighborhood or even a particular street and the kinds of things that they demand are just securing specific benefits for their neighborhood. There’s not a kind of programmatic policy generation that emerges from the interaction between movements in the local state, like we see in São Paulo.”

From these conditions Bradlow finds in São Paulo and Johannesburg, he concludes that “movements are not only about generating political will, but they’re about building new state capacities and in building new state capacities that also produces a context in which movements can continue to organize at a large enough scale that they can continue making new programmatic demands.”

Maryam and I were interested to know why Bradlow chose to focus on cities as opposed to the state or national level, to which he replied, “[O]ne thing I try to be very careful about is not studying a city in isolation from these larger scales. Cities are a just context where there’s a very specific set of administrative tools.”

“In a lot of the world,” Bradlow continued, “cities are a unique bureaucratic administrative context. There’s a lot of variation between them. From a social scientific perspective, I think there’s a lot to be gained by looking at that variation particularly in highly unequal contexts which are kind of like the most difficult cases for thinking about how you might generate more equal distribution of resources, that we all think, or we all know are extremely important.”

Lastly, we wanted to know how Bradlow felt about his research as an avenue for providing research to advance progressive causes, to which he replied,

“If you find your work at odds or supporting your beliefs, this is always a really fraught question for social science researchers... The kind of work that I am pursuing is a mode of inquiry which is certainly along the lines of

what we would commonly call comparative positivist social science. There’s a research question, there’s a set of hypotheses for explaining the answer to that question, and there’s a way of testing which is the right answer.

However, the kinds of questions that we ask in social science always have a lot of political implications, no matter what,” Bradlow explained, “particularly for those of us who are concerned with anything that has to do with the distribution of resources in society. By that, I mean if we’re asking about the kinds of social groups that impact changes in inequality, this kind of work will inevitably have implications for political strategy.

The fact of the matter is for those of us who study the role of movements, in order to do that, you end up in relationships with people who are in movements, but you certainly do not as a researcher have to merely regurgitate whatever somebody in a movement is telling you is the truth.

There’s certainly a scientific endeavor about sociological work, but I don’t think you can ever say that this is separate from questions of political strategy for inequality. I think many sociologists would say that various forms of inequality are at the heart of what sociology is all about.” ◻

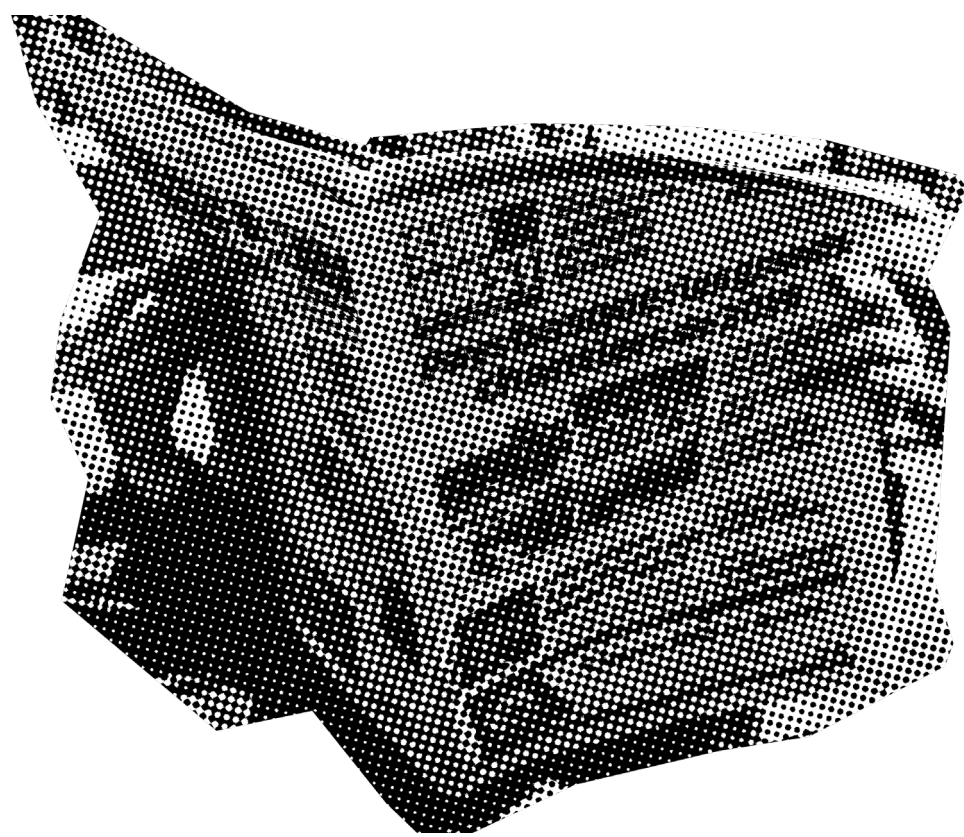


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