

POLITICAL
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES

The Public Eye



UNTIL
WE'RE
ALL
FREE

PRA Statement on the 2024 National Election • Three Way Fight: Revolutionary Politics and Antifascism • What Is Movement Infrastructure? • Rising Against Authoritarianism • Q&A: Harnessing Our Power to End Political Violence • Synagogue Safety Beyond Higher Walls and Militarized Police • The Education Wars • Review: *Commune or Nothing!* • Review: *Reverberations of October 7*

The 2024 U.S. national elections have come and gone, and the results have left many of us devastated, angry, and scared. The outcome of the MAGA movement's electoral victory—the Right's capture of all three branches of government—is deeply troubling.

As we turn to each other to process what's happened, we can share and find strength in our collective struggles for justice—and importantly, learn from them. Realizing the world we need and deserve will require organizing with radical insight, creativity, and care, in active solidarity with people targeted by the next administration.

In planning this Fall 2024 issue of *The Public Eye*, we couldn't predict the election's outcome, but we knew the authoritarian Right wouldn't be going away. That's why this issue departs from our usual format to feature short articles by PRA staff and comrades on strategies for resisting right-wing authoritarianism and fascism.

We begin with PRA's election statement (p. 3), which reflects on the conditions we face and reminds us that opposing authoritarian forces “requires us to be open to different strategies.”

As we organize, how should we think about the relationship between far-right politics, the capitalist state, and the Left? In an excerpt from *Three Way Fight: Revolutionary Politics and Antifascism* (p. 4), Xtn Alexander and Matthew N. Lyons outline a radical framework that can “inform sharper and more effective strategies for organizing for human liberation.”

The leaders of four movement organizations speak with Cloee Cooper on how movement infrastructure can sustain us (p. 7), and the unique insights that many Black and immigrant communities have in resisting authoritarian regimes (p. 10).

How can we build community safety without relying on racist policing or the security state? Naomi Washington-Leapheart speaks with Scot Nakagawa and Hardy Meriman about *Harnessing Our Power to End Political Violence* (HOPE-PV; p. 12), a new guide and training project; and Ben Lorber and Shane Burley report on how activists are fighting antisemitism with intersectional solidarity in an article drawn from their book, *Safety Through Solidarity* (p. 16).

As far-right forces behind the next administration continue to wage campaigns against public schools, True North Research's Alyssa Bowen interviews Jennifer C. Berkshire about *The Education Wars* (p. 18), a citizen's guide for defending public education.

To build a principled front against fascism, we must remember that our lives and struggles are connected. In her review of *Commune or Nothing!* (p. 21), Hialy Gutierrez considers what lessons Venezuela's communal movement can offer to U.S. Leftists. And to mark the return of Reports in Review, Habiba Farh reviews *Reverberations of October 7* (p. 24), Palestine Legal's report on anti-Palestinian state repression.

Online, Fred Clarkson reports on the electoral strategy of the NAR—the theocratic Christian Right's cutting-edge—and editor Jack Giesecking speaks with the authors of *The Global Fight Against LGBTI Rights*.

In the Art of Activism (back cover), cover artist Dio Cramer speaks with PRA about the concept behind their artwork and how organizing and nature inspire their artistic practice.

We must fight until we're all free, because “we will all rise or fall together,” as PRA said in a 2018 statement aligning with Muslim and immigrant justice movements during the first Trump administration. As we band together to survive the next few years, *The Public Eye* will continue to publish the strategic analysis that frontline organizers and movements need to fight the authoritarian Right, defend one another, and rise together. Visit us at politicalresearch.org and religiondispatches.org, between issues, to inform your resistance.

Kitana Ananda, Editor

**POLITICAL
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES**

THE PUBLIC EYE
QUARTERLY

PUBLISHER
Tarso Luís Ramos
Sylvia Broude

EDITOR
Kitana Ananda

COVER ART
Dio Cramer

PRINTING
Park Press Printers

The Public Eye is published by
Political Research Associates

Tarso Luís Ramos, *OUTGOING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

Sylvia Broude, *INCOMING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

Kitana Ananda, *EDITOR*

Abigail Battles, *EDITORIAL COORDINATOR*

Melanie Bouchard, *OPERATIONS COORDINATOR*

Chancie Calliham, *RESEARCH ANALYST*

Frederick Clarkson, *SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST*

Cloee Cooper, *RESEARCH DIRECTOR*

Evan Derkacz, *EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF RELIGION DISPATCHES*

AJ Faiella, *HR AND OPERATIONS DIRECTOR*

Habiba Farh, *RESEARCH ANALYST*

Ethan Fauré, *SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST*

Orlisha Fox, *DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR*

Steven Gardiner, *RESEARCH*

Jack Giesecking, *EDITOR*

Hialy Gutierrez, *DEPUTY RESEARCH DIRECTOR*

Asia Korkmaz, *DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR*

Renee Kuhl, *GRANTS MANAGER*

Olivia Lawrence-Weilmann, *DATA AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER*

Ben Lorber, *SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST*

Koki Mendis, *COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR*

Divine Mugunga, *HR & OPERATIONS MANAGER*

Zoe Newton, *COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR*

Greeley O'Connor, *MANAGING DIRECTOR*

Aidan Orly, *SENIOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGER*

Micaela Pacheco Ceballos, *SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER*

Harini Rajagopalan, *COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER*

Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart, *STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS DIRECTOR*

Annie Wilkinson, *SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Katherine Acey, *Chair*

Fatema Ahmad • Saqib Bhatti

Kevin Bruyneel • Linda Burnham

Orson Moon • Carin Mrotz

Serena Sebring

FOUNDER

Jean V. Hardisty, Ph.D.

contact@politicalresearch.org
© Political Research Associates, 2024
All rights reserved. ISN 0275-9322
ISSUE 111

www.politicalresearch.org

PRA Statement on the 2024 National Election



A poster affixed to a fence in Washington, D.C. in 2020, referring to the Black Lives Matter movement (Credit: Elvert Barnes, Flickr.com)

There were glimmers of hope as the national election results came in Tuesday night, such as the advance of reproductive freedom in five states and historic elections of transgender and Black women. Overall, however, the elections delivered a stunning victory to the nationalist and authoritarian MAGA movement, including the Christian Right.

It would be premature to offer a full assessment, but some features focus our attention:

As the 47th president of the United States, Donald J. Trump is prepared to order and immediately enforce a sweeping agenda prioritizing White minority rule, patriarchy, and retribution. We take seriously his declared intent to conduct mass deportations, concentrate power in the executive office, and pursue perceived internal enemies.

It is in no way reassuring that the path to a second Trump administration cut through ballot boxes rather than a siege of the Capitol—neither is it unprecedented. Rather, this is the playbook for the current global surge of autocracy and illiberal democracies. As PRA noted in 2022, the scheme turns on several strategic components:

- state capture by an authoritarian coalition;
- erosion of democratic institutions; and
- formation and mobilization of a loyal

mass constituency—a new nation to sanctify a new kind of state.

We understand the stakes are astonishingly higher than four or eight years ago. As we write, it appears probable that all branches of the federal government will be held by MAGA allies. They are empowered and readying to implement Project 2025’s “Mandate for Leadership,” the authoritarian blueprint for the incoming administration. January 6 insurrectionists may well be pardoned and set loose to act with impunity.

We face a powerful alliance of authoritarian forces in—and flanking—government that requires us to be open to different strategies suited to these conditions. It’s a moment, for instance, to consider the strategic possibilities of non-violent mass non-cooperation. The next administration’s broadening multiracial, cross-class approval and appeal is not a mirage. We will need to call in people from every sector of society to resist and ultimately defeat fascism and authoritarianism.

Every victory against oppression in the U.S. and anywhere else—abolition, civil rights, labor rights, human rights, and gender justice—came from people rejecting isolation, refusing despair, and organizing to block supremacy and domina-

tion and build a more liberatory future. The defeat of slavery ushered in the multiracial democracy of Reconstruction. The defeat of Jim Crow ended the White monopoly on electoral politics and legal White supremacy. The defeat of MAGA authoritarianism will make possible a new, transformative era in U.S. society and politics.

This is our organizing heritage and our collective responsibility to current and future generations.

Over the last many months PRA has worked with a range of racial, social, and economic justice movements on scenario planning and preparedness for this potential outcome. We are now in motion with organizing, advocacy, legal, media, and other partners to inform resistance strategies and align the largest possible coalition around effective anti-authoritarian and pro-democracy action.

Join us. Over the coming weeks we will offer a variety of resources and programs to our communities, including briefings and guides to keep our protest movements safe; continued analysis on the emerging moment; and opportunities to strategize and organize within our movement ecosystem.

Please take care of yourself and each other.

BY XTN ALEXANDER AND MATTHEW N. LYONS

Three Way Fight: Revolutionary Politics and Antifascism



Counterprotestors oppose a rally in support of the Confederate flag in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2015 (Credit: Fibonacci Blue/Flickr.com)

This article is an adapted and abridged excerpt from *Three Way Fight: Revolutionary Politics and Antifascism* (PM Press/Kersplebedeb, 2024), 1–9. It is reprinted with permission of the authors and the publisher.

What's the relationship between fascism and capitalism? What's the relationship between combating far-right political forces and working to overthrow an exploitative and oppressive social order? Does antifascism mean radicals need to build alliances with liberals or even conservatives, and if so on what terms? How do we make sense of far-right calls to fight the state, oppose Western military power, or challenge economic elites—and how should we respond?

Antifascists, specifically militant and revolutionary antifascists, have been faced with these questions for over a century, but they haven't always grappled with them in the best ways, and the an-

swers they came up with in the past don't necessarily provide good guidance today.

In 2004, a small group of revolutionary antifascists started the *Three Way Fight* blog and website to share information and analysis about political movements and the context in which they operate. The project's supporters rejected the conventional liberal binary that portrays authoritarian extremists threatening a democratic center, but also the standard leftist binary that sees fascism and liberalism arrayed together in defense of capitalism against the working-class left. As editors of the website later put it:

Unlike liberal anti-fascists, we believe that “defending democracy” is an illusion, as long as that “democracy” is based on a socio-economic order that exploits and oppresses human beings. Global capitalism and the related structures of patriarchy, heterosexism, racial and national oppression represent the main source of violence and human

suffering in the world today. Far-right supremacism and terrorism grow out of this system and cannot be eradicated as long as it remains in place.

At the same time, unlike many on the revolutionary left, we believe that fascists and other far rightists aren't simply tools of the ruling class. They can also form an autonomous political force that clashes with the established order in real ways, or even seeks to overthrow global capitalism and replace it with a radically different oppressive system.

This meant that “Leftists need to confront both the established capitalist order and an insurgent or even revolutionary right, while recognizing that these opponents are also in conflict with each other.” Hence the term “three way fight.”¹

The essays and interviews in this book offer an in-depth look at three way fight politics: where it comes from, what it has to say about recent political struggles and the systems that underlie them, and how

it can inform sharper and more effective organizing strategies for human liberation in the time ahead. The voices we've brought together don't always agree, but they're grappling with a shared set of questions largely using a shared set of tools. We offer them both to help clarify how we got to the present moment and as an intervention in ongoing debates among radicals and antifascists on how to move forward.

As a concept and a political project, three way fight was shaped by earlier developments in the US left, particularly Anti-Racist Action (ARA) and the Sojourner Truth Organization (STO). ARA was a large, decentralized network of local groups focused on a physical, direct action approach to combating fascist and far-right organizing. ARA, which was founded around 1987 and reached its peak of activity in the 1990s, emerged from skinhead and punk subcultures but grew to become a broader, more diverse youth-led movement. While most ARA members were nonaligned ideologically, many members were anarchist or antiauthoritarian in orientation, and Marxist, feminist, and other perspectives were also represented. Unlike liberal "anti-hate" organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, ARA rejected relying on the police or the courts, and some of its chapters organized against racist police violence and state repression as well as the Far Right.² In 1998, ARA added a commitment to "abortion rights and unrestricted reproductive freedom for all" to its Points of Unity. The new language reflected a struggle against sexism within ARA, as well as the network's increased focus on clinic defense and many militant antifascists' developing understanding that the Far Right encompassed Christian rightists as well as neo-nazis and that the fight against patriarchy must be at the forefront together with the fight against white supremacy.

Unlike ARA, STO was a relatively small Marxist organization, active from 1969 to about 1985. An offshoot of the New Left based primarily in the Chicago area, STO developed a distinctive form of independent Marxism—influenced by W.E.B. Du Bois, Antonio Gramsci, and C.L.R. James, among others—that emphasized

working-class agency and targeted racial oppression as a key contradiction within the US working class. STO practiced a rare combination of revolutionary politics and public openness about internal debates and disagreements. STO also developed a concept of fascism that sharply challenged both Stalinist and Trotskyist assumptions, arguing that while fascism has "intimate connections with the needs of the capitalist class," it also "contains an



Three Way Fight: Revolutionary Politics and Antifascism (PM Press/Kersplebedeb, 2024)

anti-capitalist 'revolutionary' side that is not reducible to simple demagoguery."³

Three way fight politics was also influenced by several other Marxist and anarchist political currents, and by investigative journalists studying the emerging rightist movements. Of particular note among the latter were Sara Diamond, who broke new ground in studying the Christian right as a well-organized, politically autonomous mass movement, and Chip Berlet, whose work included both anti-nazi organizing and investigation of police and FBI repression, and who helped found the antirightist think tank Political Research Associates in 1981. Berlet's 1994 report *Right Woos Left* warned against far-right infiltration of the antiwar movement and the spread of conspiracist ideology in sections of the left. Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons coauthored

Right-Wing Populism in America (published in 2000), which traced the long history of US movements that have combined antielitism with efforts to intensify social oppression.⁴

Two events around the turn of the millennium highlighted the need for fresh thinking on the relationships between far-right politics, the capitalist state, and the left. The 1999 Battle of Seattle, a series of militant mass protests against the World Trade Organization, brought together radical leftists, procapitalist liberals, and far rightists within the amorphous "antiglobalization" movement. The 9/11 attacks in 2001, in which al-Qaeda destroyed the Twin Towers and damaged the Pentagon, showed even more dramatically that global capitalism's enemies could be found not only on the radical left but also on the far right.

An important response to the changing landscape was the 2003 book *Confronting Fascism: Discussion Documents for a Militant Movement*, with writings by former STO member Don Hamerquist, independent Maoist J. Sakai, Xtn Alexander, and others. *Confronting Fascism* put forward many positions that would become foundational for three way fight politics: that fascism is an active and dynamic current that doesn't necessarily look the same now as it did in the 1930s or 1940s, that it feeds on popular hostility to big business and the state and has the potential to gain mass support in the United States and beyond, and that it represents a revolutionary challenge to capitalist power—not revolutionary in any liberatory sense, but in that it aims to seize power and systematically transform society along repressive and often genocidal lines.⁵

The *Three Way Fight* website was launched in 2004 to continue this discussion. Like *Confronting Fascism*, *Three Way Fight* brought together Marxist and anarchist contributors and sometimes offered conflicting positions in dialogue with each other. Over the following years, *Three Way Fight* writers developed a distinctive approach to radical antifascism, with core features such as these:

- We need to look critically at standard leftist assumptions about fascism: that "the cops and the Klan go hand in



The Seattle Battle in 1999. A banner that reads "Think the WTO is bad?...Wait Until you hear about Capitalism!" (Credit: Carwill/Wikimedia Commons)

hand," that fascism is always white and automatically white supremacist, that fascists and capitalists are basically working toward the same goals. Those assumptions are at best oversimplified and often out-and-out wrong.

- Antifascists need to take fascists seriously rather than dismiss them as liars, opportunists, cowards, or nutcases. We should try to understand fascist ideas and goals and what gives fascist politics the potential to appeal to masses of people. And we should pay particular attention to far-right militancy, hostility to elites and established institutions, and efforts to win working-class support, all of which pose a particular danger to liberatory anticapitalist movements.
- Political differences and disagreements between fascists and other forces on the right matter—notably differences over how to relate to the state—particularly because they may call for different strategic responses to combat them.

- Women's oppression and gender politics more broadly are central, foundational issues for the Far Right, which has often been pulled between efforts to intensify patriarchy and efforts to build a mass base among women—issues which many leftists and antifascists have ignored or treated as secondary.
- Antifascism should involve efforts to understand developments in the global capitalist system and in ruling-class strategies, which shape the context in which both liberatory movements and far rightists operate.
- We need to combat far-right efforts to build alliances with leftists and also efforts to co-opt antifascism as a tool of ruling-class repression.

Since first becoming a part of the revolutionary and anarchist youth movements of the late 1980s, Xtn Alexander has spent the better part of his time on earth participating

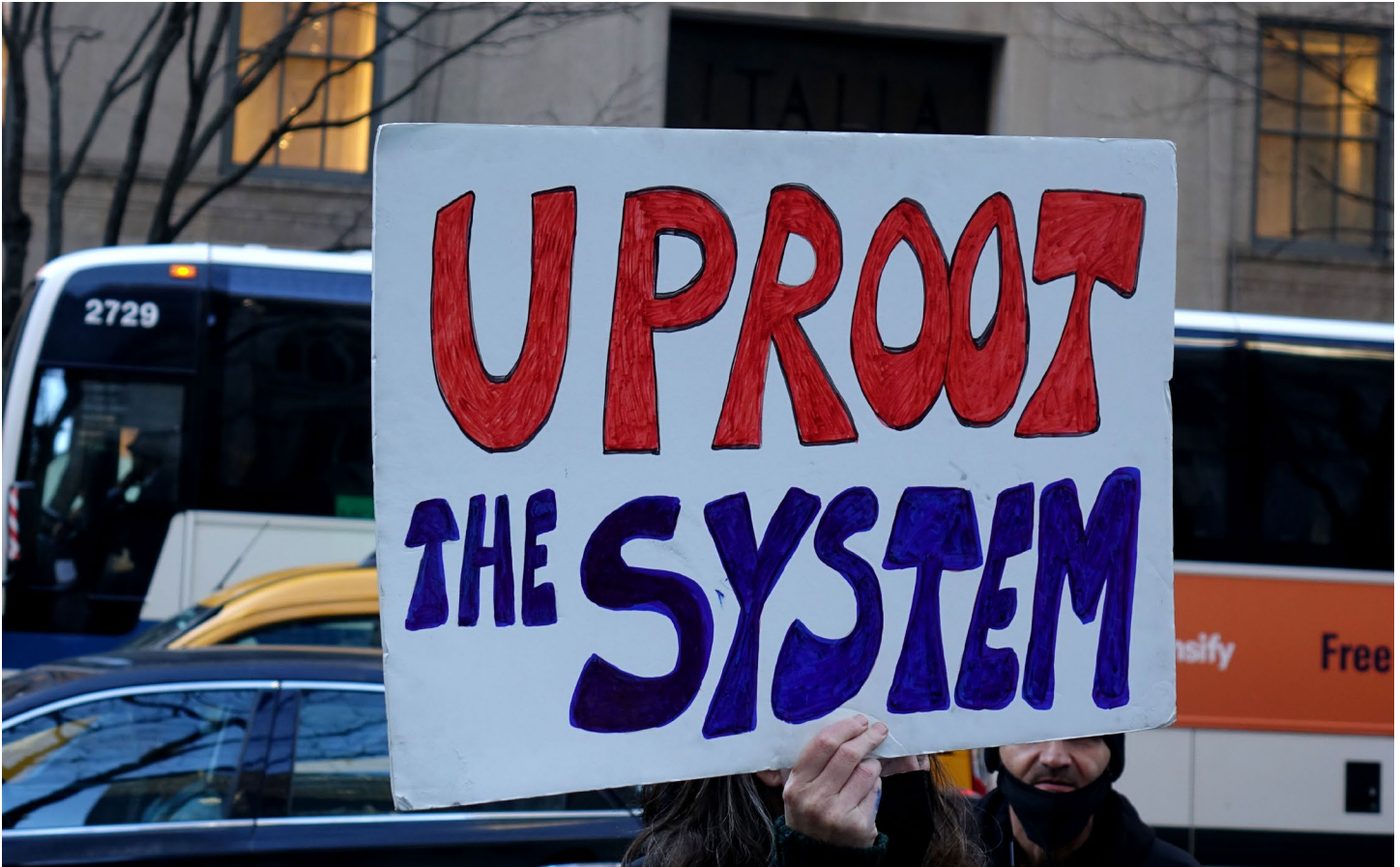
in anticop, antiracist, anti-imperialist, and antifascist organizing and action. He works in emergency and trauma medicine and is an avid supporter of music, art, and radical (sub)cultures and has been involved with *Three Way Fight* since its founding in 2004.

Matthew N. Lyons is the author of *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire* and coauthor with Chip Berlet of *Right-Wing Populism in America*. He has been a contributor to *Three Way Fight* since 2005, and his writings have also appeared in several other leftist and mainstream publications. Matthew is co-trustee of the Lorraine Hansberry Literary Trust, which stewards the literary legacy of the late playwright and activist Lorraine Hansberry.

BY CLOEE COOPER

What Is Movement Infrastructure?

How Movements Sustain Us Amid Rising Authoritarianism



A banner at a Stop Cop City protest in 2023 (Credit: Felton Davis/Flickr.com)

When government officials and far-right groups throw up more and more barriers to limit participation in society, people find places to turn. Social movements that have built resilient relationships and structures can offer important insights for resisting government repression and authoritarian regimes. PRA spoke with leaders from veteran and new movement organizations—Alex Tom of the Center for Empowered Politics, Meena Jagannath of the Movement Law Lab, and Vince Warren of the Center for Constitutional Rights—about building movement infrastructure in times of heightened authoritarianism. They share what has worked, what has inspired them, and how infrastructures that were built to support

movements can sustain us through challenging times in the U.S. and globally. The following excerpts have been edited for length and clarity.

Alex Tom, co-founder of the Center for Empowered Politics, has been helping organizations across the country think through how to develop infrastructure to support dynamic movements. His insights come from over 20 years of experience organizing alongside the Chinese Progressive Association in California's Bay Area.

From the Civil Rights Movement to people-power movements, there has always been nimble and dynamic kinds of formal and informal infrastructure—a

balancing of the people and leaders we need and the entities and operations we need. Sometimes when people talk about infrastructure, they tend to lean on one or the other. From what we've seen, we need both, if not more.

For the last 20-plus years, we have tried to find a better way to sustain the young people and leaders we brought into the movement so they could stay long term. We want to sustain them because, back in the day, people got burnt out or didn't feel "down enough" if they took a break. So, we were trying to figure out: How do we have a place for people to grow and be purposeful, to make a more collective impact?

The other thing is that movement conditions were different in the 1970s. Many

people thought revolution was around the corner; what we have built since is based on a set of conditions of 50-plus years of neoliberalism clawing back our past gains. So, it must be about form following function and innovation. When I came into the Chinese Progressive Association 20 years ago, passing a minimum wage locally was a new thing. Once we passed it, we realized that there was no enforcement. We had to learn policy—how to create legislative change to pass a minimum wage enforcement policy. Then, we had to learn how to defend our wins and start to understand the role of governing power. We started to build up our expertise, but

host and steward of the Global Network of Movement Lawyers, the Lab brings lawyers together from across the globe to test and learn from strategies to block authoritarian power through legal action.

Movement Law Lab's core role within the movement ecosystem is centered on training and shifting the legal sector toward a movement-oriented approach. We provide substantive support to various campaigns—from abolition efforts in Chicago to the Stop Cop City movement in Atlanta. We engage in advocacy against the use of terrorism narratives in relation to

We have tremendous power when we come together in coalitions and alliances. Our power to coalesce around an issue, even if we don't agree politically on everything, is one of the greatest powers that we have for change.

the focus was building Chinese immigrant worker power within a broader multiracial power building strategy.

We wanted to continue to make material changes in working people's lives. That was the North Star. The other challenge was building organizational infrastructure that is interdependent with the broader movement ecosystem. As with many things, it's easier said than done. When we build our infrastructure in silos, we end up building empires. How do we learn to build up our organizations and build the movement ecosystem at the same time?

It's about creating a synergistic and complementary ecosystem of people and the organizations that can sustain them for the long haul. And this ecosystem needs a North Star, a clear guiding vision. Many movement builders are developing Long Term Agendas that have concrete 5–10 year fights toward the long-term 50-year structural transformation, instead of getting us stuck in one or two-year struggles.

Meena Jagannath, Director of Global Programs at Movement Law Lab, shared how movement lawyers are using litigation as a frontline defense against rising authoritarianism. As

the genocide in Palestine. And we provide lawyers with political education to deepen their understanding of and engagement with movement-based work.

With Brexit, the election of Trump, and the election of Bolsonaro, we began to see a wave of political happenings that we thought we should understand as a global community. We also felt it would be important to get insights flowing to and from our work within the U.S. At the [network's] initial convening in 2019, we had lawyers and activists from more than 25 countries, representing people from most of the world's continents.

The idea was to exchange information about what we were seeing in our different areas and discuss how we as lawyers who work alongside movements can do so in a way that gets at the root of structural problems. That gathering matured into the network, which understands that global crises need global solutions. We must build an infrastructure that can help people understand how different problems manifest at the local level, their global roots, and who the power holders are on the other side.

We have also tried to innovate new tactics—new ways of leveraging the international legal system to unlock different

legal paths, new jurisprudence, and new arguments that provide platforms for movements from different countries to articulate. For example, COVID vaccine inequity has roots in the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. Legal documents can articulate this—that the failure to address ongoing coloniality in our global economy is something that results in this inequity. We're trying to create legal movement infrastructure that will help folks build better strategies and leverage international tools to address problems that don't have any borders.

Of course, in this moment of rising authoritarianism, the questions are: what are the features of authoritarian regimes in different places and how do we compare those playbooks? How can a country that may be further along on the path toward authoritarianism or fascism help instruct those of us who are at a different point on that trajectory? How can that help us prepare and organize ourselves differently to prevent moving further down that path to fascism, or at least protect ourselves while we gain more power to resist?

Vince Warren, Executive Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), shared the organization's guiding vision: a total transformation of resource distribution so that oppressed people can live and thrive in joy. He shared insights from recent collective struggles that relied on the power of coalitions. He also highlighted how a strategic orientation called Block and Build,¹ articulated by Max Elbaum, helped CCR push the needle in that direction.

We have tremendous power when we come together in coalitions and alliances. Our power to coalesce around an issue, even if we don't agree politically on everything, is one of the greatest powers that we have for change.

There are two examples. One was in the context of New York City's Stop and Frisk program. The practice is violent and terrible for Black and brown people. Under the auspices of searching for guns and drugs, data began to show that cops were rolling up on anybody who was Black or



Communities United for Police Reform banner at a protest (Credit: changethenypd.org)

brown. They weren't getting guns and drugs off the street. It was a method of social control.

CCR, the New York Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Legal Aid Society were on legal teams that were litigating on behalf of people who were harassed by the NYPD. We also pulled together a coalition called Communities United for Police Reform² to examine and address different parts of the problem. The coalition got extraordinary state- and city-level accountability measures passed. And data collection was critical, because everybody on the street knew what the cops were doing, but it wasn't observable without data.

After almost 15 years [of lawsuits], we were able to secure two wins: the department's practice of Stop and Frisk was declared unconstitutional and we passed affirmative legislation to make it harder for the police to stop and terrorize people indiscriminately. And we did that all from the perspective of communities that were impacted instead of a top-down policy approach.

That was a very good example of what build can look like. Even starting off in a defensive position can be a catalyst for a coalition coming together to build what we want to see.

Another example happened just last week. We've been representing The Descendants Project³ in Louisiana, which has been challenging Greenfield Louisiana LLC's building of an enormous toxic grain elevator in their community.⁴ They

are connected to several other parishes and a loose coalition of folks who are sharing strategies and resources.

CCR took the entire set of groups to Geneva to speak with the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee issued a scathing report calling for change in what's called "Cancer Alley" and a reparations commission. That helped us file a lawsuit that called for a moratorium on new petrochemical plants in Cancer Alley. And it resulted in Greenfield Corporation pulling out from St. John the Baptist parish.

There's the block: We blocked one company from coming in. That fight enabled the community to think about what a reparative economy could look like, and to ask: What could they build there, what would they change, and how should resources be distributed?

There will be people who don't share radical transformative politics, and the challenge is that a democratic formation has to be done democratically. There won't be a Project 2025⁵ from the Left. That's not how we roll.

The organizations that are clear on the challenges we face while focusing on creating a compelling and doable vision for our communities to thrive—those are the organizations I'm going to support. We also need the infrastructure to cultivate broader understanding that aligning with the status quo is the end of democracy and aligning with the dream is essentially the beginning of the democracy that we haven't had yet.

Cloe Cooper is a journalist and researcher with over a decade of experience researching far-right movements and their inroads into law enforcement and local government. She was granted the 2021 Soros Justice Media fellowship to develop a podcast on far-right sheriffs and holds a master's degree in journalism from the Medill School of Journalism, specializing in social justice and investigative reporting. Before the mainstream knew of White nationalism, she tracked, monitored, and organized against anti-immigrant organizations with ties to White nationalism with the Center for New Community from 2009-2012. Her work has been cited in Politico, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, HuffPo, NPR Nevada, and The Guardian. You can read her analysis at The Progressive, The Center for Right-Wing Studies, PBS Chicago, and The Public Eye. She currently serves on the editorial board of *Hard Crackers*, a journal documenting the everyday life of those striving to overturn the mess we are in.

BY CLOEE COOPER

Rising Against Authoritarianism

Amplifying Voices for Immigrant Justice



A protestor's T-shirt at the United Against ICE rally in San Francisco in 2018 (Credit: RawEarth/Flickr.com)

In this interview, Greisa Martínez Rosas, Executive Director of United We Dream, shares her journey as an undocumented, queer woman leading the largest network of immigrant youth in the U.S. Martínez Rosas spoke with PRA about the centrality of anti-immigrant sentiment to rising authoritarianism in America, and the unique experience many immigrant communities have in resisting authoritarian regimes. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

PRA: Could you tell us who you are and how you started to resist authoritarianism and state repression?

Greisa Martínez Rosas: My name is Greisa Martínez Rosas. I'm undocumented, unafraid, queer, and unashamed. And I've been doing this organizing work for the past 15 years—since I was in high school.

I grew up in Texas, which has historically been a state where it's difficult to be a woman, a person of color, or an immigrant. When I was 18, my father was detained and later deported. That was the first time that I was con-

fronted with the full weight of what it means to be undocumented in this country.

My dad told me stories of being detained in a room that's so cold, he signed his own deportation order without counsel or a hearing just to get relief from the desperate conditions. By then, I was involved with United We Dream, and we'd been fighting for the DREAM Act and DACA. That time was the most heart-wrenching and politically defining moment of my life.

What is your sense of the moment we are in? How would you define some of the challenges of the political atmosphere that you're organizing within right now?

Martínez Rosas: We are in a period of rising authoritarianism, not only here in the U.S., but across the globe. The real harms of living under authoritarianism are why some of our community members have fled to the U.S. Fascism and authoritarianism threatened our very lives, so we made the courageous decision to make this our new home.

But fascism and authoritarianism have in some ways always existed in America and have thrived in different places across our country, specifically in southern states like Texas, Georgia, and Alabama. That is true in so many ways for Black people in this country, and it's true for immigrants.

Growing anti-immigrant rhetoric signals that we are in an increasingly authoritarian place. That rhetoric—like lies about a "Great Replacement" and the growing impact of that story—has caused the death of many of our people.

So, fascism is coming and it's coming on the backs of women, queer people, and immigrants. Over the last 20 years, the budgets of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and CBP (Customs and Border Patrol) have tripled in size into billions of dollars.¹ We have seen how women have been forcibly sterilized in detention centers, Black migrants and refugees at the border have been whipped by CBP on horses, and families have been separated.²

This moment is the first time in the last 40 years that government negotiations around immigration haven't included ro-

We need more cross-movement spaces that call us home—spaces where young people and elders can be together and make meaning of difficult moments, like the one that we’re in now.

bust protections for undocumented people, and that is telling.

Immigrant communities are uniquely positioned to be on the frontlines of resistance partially *because* we have experience surviving authoritarian and fascist regimes. We know what it’s like to have our governments not speak for us and not protect us, and still survive. And we have been able to harness the power of young people to imagine a new world.

That was powerful. And it dovetails perfectly with my next question: How is the infrastructure that you’ve helped build at United We Dream helping people resist this move toward fascism and authoritarianism?

Martínez Rosas: We have made two specific offerings to broader movement infrastructure.

First, since our inception, we have been clear that we don’t live single-issue lives. There has always been clarity that United We Dream is an LGBTQ and women-led space and that we show up in other movement spaces to make explicit connections between our concerns and struggles.

The issue of immigration is not just about the immigration system. We must name anti-Blackness as a part of why we’re in this mess. Unless we’re clear that Black lives must be centered, queer lives must be centered, the leadership and lives of women must be centered—unless we’re able to do that, there will be no path forward on the issue of immigration.

We have played a critical role in the immigrant rights movement by making this explicit. It’s not only about gaining citizenship, or even about shutting down detention centers and stopping deportations. Those are some ways that we can address harms inflicted on our communities, but it’s not the ultimate goal. A society where we can all thrive interdependently is the goal. Therefore, everything from our strategy to our structures and base-building

must reflect that interdependence, even if it makes it hard, slow, or inconvenient for our movement infrastructure.

We’re proud that this has been part of the technology we’ve offered to immigrant rights and other progressive movements. There is no labor power or working-class power without immigrants and our stories, vision, and dreams centered in those spaces also.

Second, we harnessed unapologetic storytelling and sharing. It’s not something that emerged purely out of United We Dream. It was a gift from our ancestors in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). They walked with us as we nursed our wounds during difficult moments. And they inspired us to sharpen our ability to share compelling stories that move the needle and create new openings where none existed.

And we have inspired others to use narrative to shift public consciousness. We’ve talked with groups like the Sunrise Movement and the March for Our Lives about how to organize and share their stories. I am proud of how young people continue to hold the arc of speaking and bringing to life a new world.

What do you draw on for inspiration in the struggle to resist heightened nationalism and authoritarianism?

Martínez Rosas: I feel inspired by young people who are organizing across the globe around immigrant rights. Despite growing repression, they have had some significant wins: organizing in refugee camps; obtaining protection for a segment of undocumented people in Ireland; and in Spain and the U.K., coming together with the experience we had and building infrastructure.

Then there’s the example of the United Farm Workers (UFW), poor people of color from a [predominantly] Latinx framework who demonstrated the power of organized labor from a grassroots power-building perspective. I’m proud that we’re part of their lineage. It’s also

a story of evolution. In the UFW’s early years, farm owners drove a wedge between longtime Chicano residents and new immigrants to pit UFW members and undocumented workers against each other. Fast forward to 2018, when Trump was in office: We worked with the farm workers to negotiate a potential immigration bill that had been introduced at that time.

And I’m inspired by the Black Liberation Movement. We need a Black-led, multiracial, working-class movement, and when that is in place, all of us will be able to thrive.

What kind of initiative or movement infrastructure do you hope to see in the coming period?

Martínez Rosas: We need more cross-movement spaces that call us home—spaces where young people and elders can be together and make meaning of difficult moments, like the one that we’re in now. We’re doing ancestral work.

Something that I learned from leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has stayed with me: the work we do [now] will be necessary, but not sufficient. We need an intergenerational strategy that spans hundreds of years. I think that is the work to be done.

Cloe Cooper is a journalist and researcher with over a decade of experience researching far-right movements and their inroads into law enforcement and local government. She was granted the 2021 Soros Justice Media fellowship to develop a podcast on far-right sheriffs and holds a master’s degree in journalism from the Medill School of Journalism, specializing in social justice and investigative reporting. Before the mainstream knew of White nationalism, she tracked, monitored, and organized against anti-immigrant organizations with ties to White nationalism with the Center for New Community from 2009-2012. Her work has been cited in Politico, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, HuffPo, NPR Nevada, and The Guardian. You can read her analysis at The Progressive, The Center for Right-Wing Studies, PBS Chicago, and The Public Eye. She currently serves on the editorial board of Hard Crackers, a journal documenting the everyday life of those striving to overturn the mess we are in.

BY NAOMI WASHINGTON-LEAPHEART

Harnessing Our Power to End Political Violence

An interview with Scot Nakagawa and Hardy Merriman



United Farm Workers on a march from the Mexican border to Sacramento (Credit: John Malmin, Los Angeles Times/Wikimedia.com)

Political violence has been on the rise in the United States amid a particularly volatile political climate. In a survey¹ conducted in 2021 by the National League of Cities, more than 80 percent of local officials across the U.S. said they had been threatened or harassed. But research also shows that a large majority of Americans disapprove of the use of political violence. What is political violence, and what damage does it do to democracy? How can communities facing the threat of political violence respond strategically and meaningfully? *Harnessing Our Power to End Political Violence (HOPE-PV)*, a new training project from the 22nd Century Initiative and the Horizons Project, helps us answer these questions and more.

PRA spoke with Hardy Merriman, President of the International Center on Non-violent Conflict and author of the *HOPE-PV Project's Harnessing Our Power to End*

*(HOPE) Political Violence*² guide, and Scot Nakagawa, Executive Director of the 22nd Century Initiative, about political violence, its impact on our democracy, and how we can make it backfire. Their September 2024 interview has been edited for length and clarity.

PRA: Can you tell us about this project and why you wrote this guide?

Scot Nakagawa: The HOPE-PV Project originates with the Horizons Project and the 22nd Century Initiative. We were responding to the incredible rise in political threats. That, along with actual incidents of political violence, has created an atmosphere of fear that greatly impacts people's political participation, which is essential to a healthy democracy. We felt this needed to be confronted. We recognized that there are many efforts toward digital and physical secu-

urity, greater police accountability, and supporting survivors of political threats and violence. But what seemed to be missing is a political response—an attempt to make these incidents backfire on their perpetrators, to raise the cost to them for behaving in that way. We thought we should fill the gap.

Hardy Merriman: I was thrilled to be asked [to write the guide] because I had been deeply concerned about political violence since seeing it start to rise around 2016. After the 2020 election, there was a growing recognition that U.S. elections can be subverted. While there are many threats to U.S. democracy, political violence was the one that kept me up at night. It's an epidemic that affects our public life in countless ways. For example, we don't know how many people have decided not to run for public office because they were afraid of political violence. Those who step down may not be

This country has a history of using political violence to keep entire populations in fear: It's part of the glue that held together the Jim Crow South.

forthcoming about how it affected their decision. And people *in* office—how are their decisions affected by this? How are election workers, activists, and historically marginalized communities affected? We know they are.

Top-down ways of addressing political violence have been overemphasized. Government, social media companies, and advocacy groups all need to play a role, but without community engagement, those approaches are inadequate. We need bottom-up.

Why is political violence on the rise? Because it gets results. Those who incite threats benefit in trying to achieve a political goal. The way to reduce the demand for that is to make it backfire by making it more costly for them—to make sure that their use of violence has the opposite effect.

What is political violence? What forms does it take here in the U.S., and what impact does it have on democracy?

Merriman: In simple terms, political violence is the use of violence to try to achieve a political goal or advance a political message.

What do we mean when we say violence? Our definition includes inflicting physical harm on people and acts that make people fear that you will inflict physical harm upon them, such as making and sending threats, using weapons for intimidation, and doxxing people, which is putting their information online to enable others to harass and threaten them. When those acts are done to advance a political goal or political message, that can qualify as political violence. We look at the perpetrator's intention when deciding to use the term "political." All acts of violence have political implications—whether interpersonal or structural—but when that violence is done with [a] particular political motivation, we call it political violence.

And its effects are huge. Political violence is very damaging to U.S. democracy. With it, a small group intends to gain power outside of the democratic process. Through violence, they instill fear to limit our exercise of constitutionally-guaranteed rights, like that of free speech. They try to reduce voter turnout during elections, and then dispute the results to circumvent the process. They can also use it to try to drive people from public service,

threaten judges and juries, and get businesses to stop taking certain positions.

And this country has a history of using political violence to keep entire populations in fear: It's part of the glue that held together the Jim Crow South. It's been targeted at groups such as LGBTQ people. It's been targeted at workers and laborers who seek fair wages and safe working conditions. And it's used against those who show solidarity with those groups. Unless we stop it, I fear it will continue to get worse.

Nakagawa: The impact of political violence and threats is profound. Organizations, for example, are rolling back canvasses and losing volunteers because people aren't willing to expose themselves and their families to the possibility of threats and violence. [This is] a critical issue that we need to deal with by reminding people that the vast majority of us oppose most violence, and certainly political violence of this kind. We must get people to feel they belong to the majority and give them the opportunity to take actions they feel are real and palpable.

Can you describe the guide's backfire strategy and how activists might use it to effectively counter political violence?

Merriman: The Backfire Model is a five-step process for getting political

Five Principles of the Backfire Model. For a more detailed look at the image, visit <http://endpoliticalviolence.org/guide> (Credit: HOPE-PV)

5 PRINCIPLES MAKING POLITICAL VIOLENCE BACKFIRE



1

REVEAL

Countering cover-up involves research, evidence, and consented interviews. Activists can deter cover-ups by documenting actions. Present credible evidence: data, stories, or trusted sources. Plan reveals to show determination and call for action.

2

REDEEM

Countering devaluation means humanizing victims, sharing their stories, and having trusted figures speak up. Use photos, videos, and advance training to prepare for devaluation attempts.

3

RE-FRAME

Counter reinterpretations by documenting abuse impact, showing its illegality, and identifying systemic issues. Use clear narratives and trusted messengers to convey these points. Anticipate reinterpretation and prepare to counter it swiftly.

4

REDIRECT

Keep public outrage alive, redirecting it towards continuous mobilization and pressure to oppose injustice. Options include supporting, criticizing, or making demands of the process, launching their own parallel process, or using the institutional process as a campaigning tactic.

5

RESIST

Standing firm and resisting intimidation and bribery can cause backfire. Prepare by warning your networks, documenting efforts, and making threats public. This deters perpetrators and turns threats into catalysts for mobilization.

violence to backfire against perpetrators [of that violence]. It's drawn from examples all over the world. A group of scholars³ studied repressive acts of violence to understand why they backfire at some times and not others. They discovered that perpetrators use a five-step playbook to try to inhibit outrage against their abuse, which means there are five steps to make their actions backfire: reveal, redeem, reframe, redirect, and resist.

First, since perpetrators will deny the abuse is happening at all, often by claim-

“The struggle to uphold democracy is ours, as a people. It is not just the government’s job to counter political violence. It falls to all of us.”

ing it's not real, activists and community members must **reveal** it—and in a way that does not cause greater fear, which is the work of political violence. You want to reveal it on your terms, in your language, with your people and allies to show you have solidarity.

Second, perpetrators try to devalue the victim by leveraging prejudice and bias, spreading false information, taking something wildly out of context, or trying to provoke a reaction. We want to **redeem** the person by emphasizing their story and values—not to present them as perfect, but to show they are part of the community and are worthy of our care and attention.

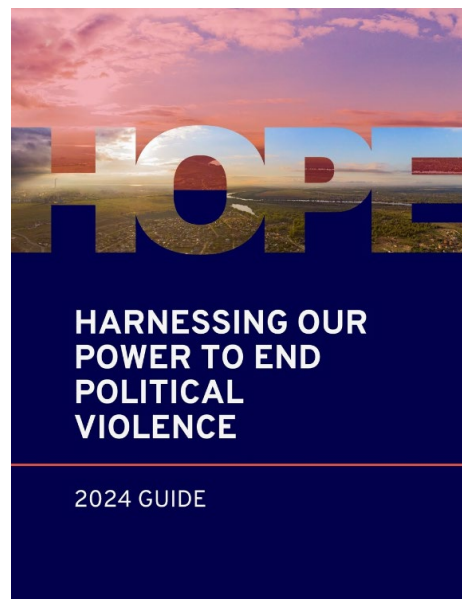
Third, perpetrators try to reinterpret events to minimize the impact [of violence] and their role. To counter this, activists can **reframe** the narrative. We need to say: this is something systemic and the damage is real. We can't let those who incite violence off the hook.

Fourth, when the first three tactics fail, perpetrators may accept a formal investigation process—judicial or otherwise—but they'll try to control the process by dragging it out while limiting information and access. Activists can demand an open and accessible process. But we can also **redirect** from relying on institutional processes to deliver justice, and instead use them as opportunities for mobilizing and public education.

Fifth, perpetrators threaten people to silence them and offer bribes as rewards for staying quiet. We must **resist** this and be prepared to turn such efforts into backfire opportunities.

I love that using backfire strategies puts us on the offensive. Another strength of the training that we've developed based on the guide is its use of case studies. How have communities used backfire in action and what have you seen happen on the ground?

Merriman: We can learn much from the brilliance of movements that came before us. You will not find a better example of engaging a backfire strategy than



Harnessing Our Power to End Political Violence guide (Credit: HOPE-PV)

the Civil Rights Movement. They deeply understood the principles. They planned. They were prepared. The Nashville lunch counter sit-ins, the Birmingham campaign, and other actions were remarkably effective in using backfire principles. The same is true of some of the United Farm

Workers' tactics while organizing in grape vineyards in the 1960s.

There are also recent examples. In Whitefish, Montana, when White supremacist and neo-Nazi group activity was damaging the town's reputation, some residents created Love Lives Here. The town rallied when armed groups put out a call to march in 2017 on Martin Luther King Day. Businesses put "Love Lives Here" stickers up and held public actions designed to include people and display their joy and strength. Numerous groups—indigenous rights, labor, LGBTQ, Republican, and Democrat—came together to oppose the march. The town resisted, created a counternarrative, and ended up stronger. As a result, the marchers didn't even show up! That's a clear example of backfire.

Nakagawa: In Portland, Oregon, in 1992, an evangelical group proposed a horrific ballot measure⁴ that dehumanized LGBTQ people by demanding that homosexuality be named "abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse" in the state's Constitution. In the context of that campaign, there was extraordinary violence. People formed the Homophobic Violence Documentation Project to document incidents as they happened and interview people who were victimized to humanize them. Going beyond the numbers helped people see how ordinary people—LGBTQ people and straight allies—were being attacked for putting up lawn signs and bumper stickers, making public statements, and community canvassing. And with media coverage of these stories, people started to lead kitchen-table discussions about the measure's implications. It had a profound impact.

I once worked at the Highlander Center, one of the Civil Rights Movement's cradles. During one of my jobs in the library, I read the archives and journals of people trained by the Center. It was an extraordinary effort to stop political violence—and to use [evidence of the perpetrator's violence] to advance the civil rights cause. Marchers knew they would face resistance and potential violence, but when confronted by hostile law enforcement and citizens, they didn't back down. This forced a different kind of

conversation to emerge among people witnessing this violence about what it means to live in a democratic society as the dominant majority: *Do I want to participate in that majority if it results in this kind of violence?*

democracy is ours, as a people. It is not just the government's job to counter political violence. It falls to all of us. As Scot said, we must see that as an opportunity. Research tells us that a bipartisan majority of Americans [believes]

vania, Co-Pastor and Minister of Music at the Wisdom's Table at St. Peter's United Church of Christ, and most recently director of the Villanova University Gospel Choir. In her spare time, she delights in singing with the Philadelphia Threshold Singers, an all-volunteer choir whose mission is to bring audible comfort and kindness to the bedsides of people living in hospice care.

Rev. Naomi is proudly affiliated with The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM).

We want practitioners to be able to engage communities and provide people with tools to act nonviolently in response to political violence, so we can participate in and save our democracy.

A huge amount of progress is predicated upon being able to reframe issues in the context of violence. While it feels hard to think of this as an opportunity, I strongly believe it is one. It's an opportunity to drive a wedge with a huge majority of people on the side of nonviolence. Nonviolence is a bedrock principle of a healthy democracy.

What should people do to learn more about backfire?

Nakagawa: People should go to the website, endpoliticalviolence.org, to get the guide and other resources. They can

that political violence is unacceptable. There are many ways to engage with that. Not everyone has to be a frontline activist. We need researchers, communicators, lawyers. There's a place for everyone and all skill sets. Together, we can turn the tide.

Nakagawa: My last word is: don't obey in advance. That's exactly what political threats attempt to do—get us to obey authoritarian power. The authoritarian movement represents a minority of people who are attempting to take power through the democratic process by dividing us. Engaging in the effort to confront political violence is critical if we want to protect and expand democracy. I encourage people to connect with us and make sure that your activist toolkit includes as many tools as possible for addressing violence.



Freedom Riders hanging banners out of a bus in Birmingham, Alabama, in the early 1960s (Credit: U.S. Embassy, The Hague/Flickr.com)

also reach out to us to bring trainers to their community and get trained as trainers. We want practitioners to be able to engage communities and provide people with tools to act nonviolently in response to political violence, so we can participate in and save our democracy.

Merriman: The struggle to uphold

Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart, a Blackqueer daughter of Detroit, is a minister, professor, and movement strategist. She is so grateful to be able to make a life doing the work she was made for - preaching, teaching, and plotting resistance to inhumane political, economic, and religious systems. Naomi has worked as a faith organizer and director for POWER Interfaith, the National LGBTQ Task Force, and the Mayor's Office of Public Engagement in the city of Philadelphia. She teaches emerging scholars of religion and theology at Villanova University, Arcadia University, and Harvard School of Divinity. Music was and is her first love. Naomi received dynamic vocal and instrumental training from some of Detroit's finest music educators, and has served as director for the New Spirit of Penn Gospel Choir at the University of Pennsyl-

BEN LORBER AND SHANE BURLEY

Synagogue Safety Beyond Higher Walls and Militarized Police

An Excerpt from *Safety Through Solidarity*



A vigil in Pittsburgh after the Tree of Life shooting in 2018 (Credit: Governor Tom Wolf/Wikimedia Commons)

Safety Through Solidarity takes the fight against antisemitism out of the hands of status quo defenders and into the hands of social movements. In this excerpt, Lorber and Burley unpack how racialization shapes experiences of Jewish safety in the United States, and report on how activists are building intersectional solidarity and community safety teams to protect one another from violence. Using history, analysis, and interviews with frontline organizers, it situates the fight against antisemitism where it belongs: alongside the fight against all forms of oppression. With White Christian nationalism on the rise, Israel's horrific genocidal siege of Gaza, social justice organizers facing repression, and conversations around antisemitism more polarized than ever, it's never felt more important to change the narrative on what antisemitism is and what it isn't, and to strengthen our movements for collective liberation.

This excerpt has been adapted and edited for brevity and clarity.

Excerpted from Safety Through Solidarity: A Radical Guide to Fighting Antisemitism (Melville House, 2024), 310–316. Used with permission of the publisher, Melville House Publishing. Copyright © 2024 by Shane Burley and Ben Lorber.

When the Tree of Life synagogue shooting happened in Pittsburgh in October 2018, “a lot of Jews were scared and panicked,” Hannah Freedman, an organizer and member of Kavod, an independent collective of young Jews in Boston, told us. In Kavod's first Shabbat service after the shooting, hundreds of Jews gathered inside, while over twenty non-Jewish community safety volunteers kept watch outside the building. “It was very scary to gather as Jews at that time,” Alyssa Rubin, another Kavod member, recalls. “I felt moved to tears by seeing that many allies outside.”

Activists across the country are developing alternative models to defend protests, religious centers, and other marginalized community spaces from

bigoted violence without relying on racist policing or the national security state apparatus. In moments of heightened antisemitic violence, establishment Jewish institutions typically advocate for increased police and private security at synagogues and Jewish spaces. When the 2020 George Floyd uprising began, Chava Shervington, a Black Orthodox Jewish woman, remembered seeing warnings on her WhatsApp thread that presented the protests as threatening, and some would suggest that they “go thank every police officer” in response. There was often a distance that white Jews in her community had from issues of police violence because they had moved through the world without having to experience the racist victimization by law enforcement that many Black people have experienced.

“It's a reflection on the fact that in America [white] Jews and Black people have had very different experiences of safety and community at the hands of the police,” Shervington told us. “So when

[white] Jewish communities feel harm they rely on policing and other forms of armed security, which makes me feel less safe, makes my family feel less safe.” But there is a “different level of fear that Black Jews . . . [are] walking around with,” Shervington continued. “There’s always a lack of safety in my personhood because I’m a Black person in America.” This reality has driven a core resiliency: a determination to survive and thrive despite the threats. [S]he cofounded Kamochah, which supports Black Orthodox Jews [to] advocate for diversity in *yeshivot* (Jewish religious schools) and prepares Orthodox communities to interrupt racism.

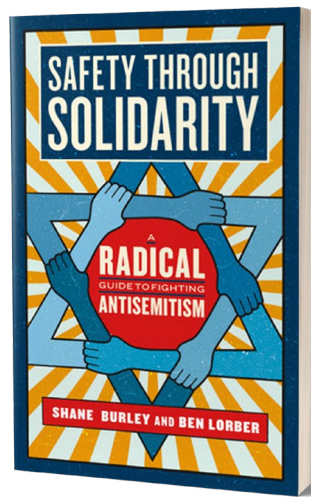
The federal security grants championed by communal leaders can also undercut the principled, intersectional approach to fighting antisemitism we need. Many federal funding initiatives designed to provide faith groups with access to these resources, such as the Nonprofit Security Grants or Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs, have long been used “to increase state surveillance of Muslim organizations under the guise of protecting them,” as *Jewish Currents* reporter Mari Cohen said in 2021. Some programs mandate collaboration and intelligence sharing with law enforcement, while others work closely with federal agencies like the Department of Homeland Security known for biased surveillance against Muslims, detaining and deporting migrants at the border, and crackdowns on Leftists. For organizations like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Boston-based Muslim Justice League, the “counterterrorism” frame underlying these initiatives plays on long-standing Islamophobic post-9/11 narratives.

Moreover, even for white Jews, police are not inherently a source of safety. Many police themselves are part of or sympathize with antisemitic radical Right groups. A 2020 report by Michael German of the Brennan Center for Justice calculated that since 2000, law enforcement officials in at least fourteen states have been outed as members or supporters of groups like the Ku Klux Klan, Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, and militias.

After Unite the Right, Kavod organized and trained a community safety team of mostly non-Jewish volunteers from local

movement groups to guard their services. “In Appalachia, the South, we have a long lineage of both abolition and opposition to the Klan, the cops, and the state,” Shawn Fischer, a non-Jewish member of SURJ’s Faith Committee who helps run these trainings, told us. “And I think that’s really important for me to understand that I’m part of this much longer tradition.”

Community solidarity after the Pittsburgh shooting, Freedman told us, “was a big turning point for people to believe that we could be doing this work, and that folks could be showing up for us.” In the years since, Kavod built an active community safety team,



Safety Through Solidarity: A Radical Guide to Fighting Antisemitism (Melville House, 2024)

working with partners to anticipate possible threats, build safety plans, deploy dozens of volunteers, and collaborate with groups like Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) and Jewish Voice for Peace doing similar work across the country. Dozens of synagogues and Jewish centers across the United States use community safety models as a values-based approach to fighting antisemitism with solidarity, while also supporting local or national abolitionist campaigns. “I think we on the Left are at the very beginning of figuring out our approach to threats to Jewish spaces,” Jewish scholar and activist April Rosenblum told us. [She added],

Most Jews in the US don’t know what it’s like to live with violent authoritarianism. We’re just beginning to grapple with how

to protect ourselves in a time like this . . . I think for many US Jews, who grew up with relative privilege and safety, there is a comfort in sticking to abstract ethical ideals. We want to express our liberatory and abolitionist principles by focusing on having open doors and broad networks of solidarity. And that solidarity is essential. It’s the only way forward for the long term. But we have to also have a plan for the short term. We have to figure out concrete ways of actually preventing attacks in our spaces, while also protecting and prioritizing Jews and allies who would be made unsafe by the mainstream methods of policing and surveillance that we are trying to undo . . . It will take creativity to figure out how we can really block physical attacks on our community in a liberatory way. But when we figure it out, I think we’ll gain a lot of momentum and we’ll see many more people start to join us in our larger vision.

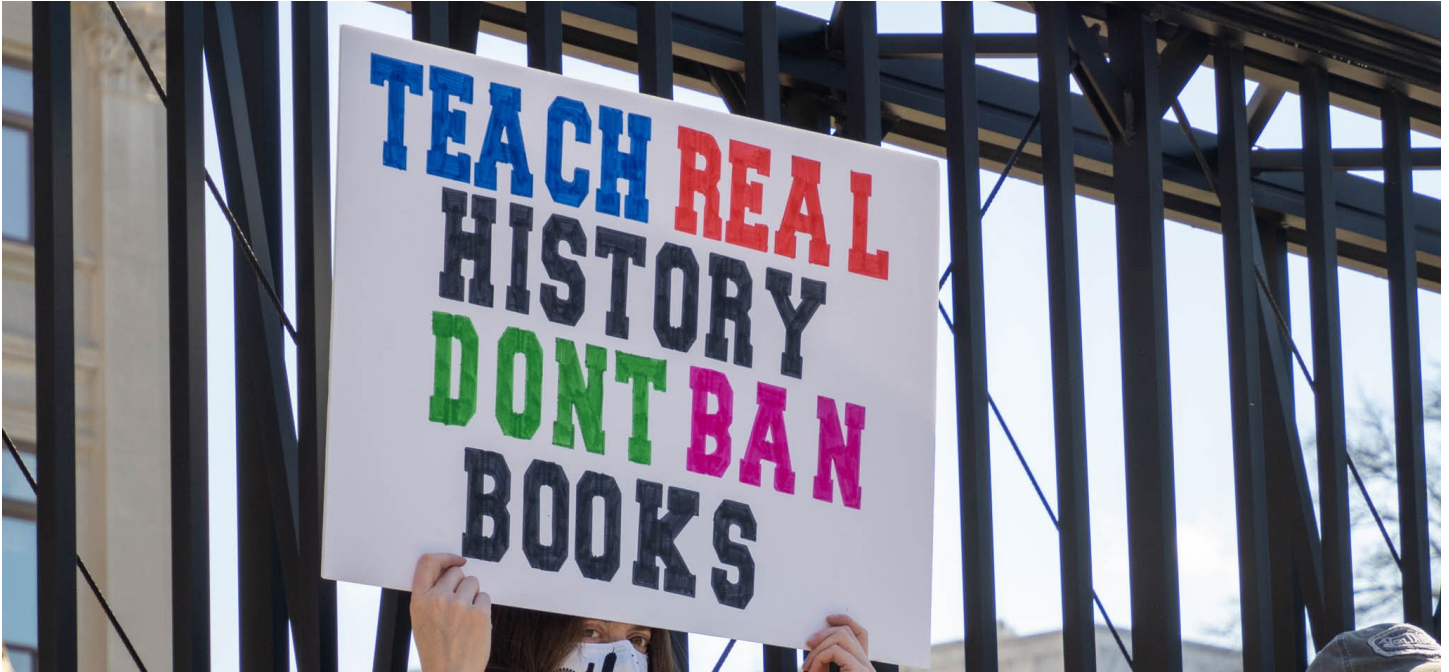
Ben Lorber works as a Senior Research Analyst at PRA, focusing on white nationalism and antisemitism. Lorber has worked as a journalist, organizer and movement-builder for over a decade. Lorber has published on right-wing social movements, Israel/Palestine, Jewish culture and other topics at The Nation, Salon, Jewish Currents and more. He is the co-author of Safety Through Solidarity: A Radical Guide to Fighting Antisemitism (2024). He tweets at @BenLorber8.

Shane Burley is a writer and filmmaker based in Portland, Oregon. He is the author of Why We Fight: Essays on Fascism, Resistance, and Surviving the Apocalypse (AK Press, 2021) and Fascism Today: What It Is and How to End It (AK Press, 2017), and the editor of the forthcoming anthology ¡No pasarán!: Antifascist Dispatches from a World in Crisis. His work is featured at places such as NBC News, The Daily Beast, The Independent, Jacobin, Al Jazeera, Haaretz, Tik-kun, The Baffler, Bandcamp Daily, Truth-out, and the Oregon Historical Quarterly. He is also the editor of a special issue of the Journal of Social Justice on “Antisemitism in the 21st Century.” He is currently working on two books, one on radical approaches to antisemitism and another on the history of antifascism and popular struggle.

BY ALYSSA BOWEN

The Education Wars

Author Q&A with Jennifer C. Berkshire



A sign at a protest against banning books in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2022 (Credit: John Rampscott/Flickr.com)

Since 2021, public education in the United States has come under renewed attack from the Far Right, which took advantage¹ of the COVID-19 pandemic's interruption of public education to promote school privatization and push public school alternatives.² Far-right political operatives have also fueled "culture war" issues in schools. Groups such as Moms for Liberty and Parents Defending Education, funded by ultra wealthy privatizers, have banned books,³ assailed inclusive policies and curriculum,⁴ and demonized teachers.⁵

Such efforts also include attacking curricula and protections for marginalized communities, especially transgender students and Black communities, to bolster White suburban voter turnout.⁶ Notably, dark money groups funded by donors like Charles Koch push this agenda by drawing on tools of White supremacy that have been used to attack public schools ever since *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled against school segregation in 1954.⁷ This

playbook⁸ helped elect and reelect Republican governors in Virginia and Florida⁹ in 2021 and 2022, respectively. Although they lost¹⁰ school board races across the country in 2023, public schools remain squarely in the Far Right's crosshairs.

Jennifer C. Berkshire and Jack Schneider's latest book, *The Education Wars: A Citizen's Guide and Defense Manual* (The New Press, 2024), explains how public school advocates across the political spectrum can push back on such attacks. The book makes clear that opposition to public schools is not about the slogans trotted out by dark money groups promoting their right-wing billionaire donors' agenda. Rather, a few loud and well-resourced agitators seek to silence the majority of parents and students who believe in an inclusive and well-funded education system for all.

Berkshire sat down with PRA to discuss how right-wing groups are undermining public education and our democracy, and the importance of highlighting how diverse and equitable

schools benefit everyone—regardless of political persuasion.

PRA: You mention in the introduction to *The Education Wars* that attacks on public schools in this country are as old as public schools themselves. What are some age-old tactics used against public schools?

Jennifer C. Berkshire: What is immediately apparent in the history told in the book is that the tactics haven't changed. We recount a story about Kanawha County, West Virginia, in the 1970s. People will instantly recognize the kind of school board battle that was playing out. The school had recently adopted a new textbook series, and conservative parents were concerned that it was indoctrinating kids into feminism, multiculturalism, and secular humanism. Things got really nasty. Buildings were bombed. Molotov cocktails were thrown. At the time, a brand-new conservative think tank called the Heritage Foundation rushed to

the scene because they saw an opportunity to convince conservative parents to pull their kids out of these schools. They used newsletters to warn parents about the “isms” that kids were [supposedly] being taught—atheism, cannibalism—to try to get them out of the schools.

sive definition of “religious freedom.” In one decision after another, the courts have said that the states must fund religious schools or they’re violating religious freedom. They’re also using this expansive definition of religious freedom to undercut vast swaths of civil rights law

At a time when our rural-urban divide is so deep and is being used to justify and exacerbate backlash politics, there is resistance to school vouchers in rural communities.

In the short term, it was successful. But in the medium term, they couldn’t convince many people to flee public schools. They’re doing exactly the same thing now. It’s why my email inbox fills up with the direst warnings about things that are supposedly happening: “Oppression Olympics,” boys in girls’ locker rooms. And it’s as if to say: *You won’t believe what’s happening. The best thing you can do is pull your kids out and go to a micro school, homeschool, or classical Christian academy.*

The book touches upon the work of the courts at a time when the corruption of the U.S. Supreme Court by billionaires and special-interest groups is often in the news. What role are the courts playing or what role do far-right interests hope the courts will play in undermining schools?

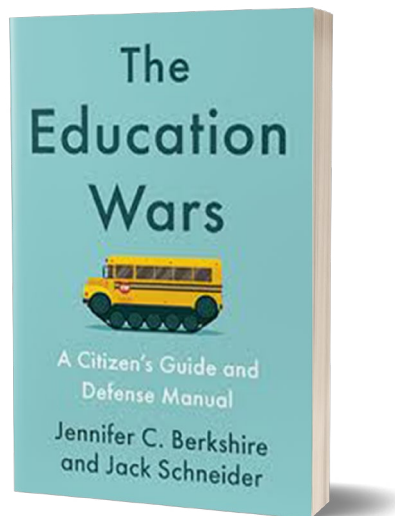
Berkshire: It’s really interesting what an old story this is as well. We think of this as recent—that there was a steady march of progress and then the bad guys got on the Court. But in the Nixon era [after he filled not one, but four vacancies on the Supreme Court], the brakes were being applied to any vision of public education as a real driver of equality. There were two key cases. The *Rodriguez* case involved school funding.¹¹ In the *Milliken v. Bradley* case about a plan to desegregate public schools, the Court decided against integrating urban communities and the surrounding suburbs.¹² Since then, the courts have steadily eroded policies promoting equity in public schools. More recently, the energy is on an expan-

and employment protections.

Stories about these court decisions are written in a technical way that makes it hard to understand why the decisions are such a big deal. But they are such an important part of the plan [to undermine and defund public schools].

Your book argues that recent attacks on public education are also unique. Could you talk about what’s new and why it’s of concern?

Berkshire: Many of these policy ideas have been around for a long time and are being repackaged. For example, “education savings accounts” are just newfangled school vouchers. [These privatization schemes have] been around since the 1950s.



The Education Wars: A Citizen's Guide and Defense Manual (The New Press, 2024)

But this is the first time that we’ve seen public education in the crosshairs to this extent. If you look at these states—the 11 states that have enacted or expanded sweeping school voucher programs—you can see their budget trajectory.

Take a state like Arizona. Their private school voucher program¹³ is already costing taxpayers up to \$1 billion.¹⁴ At the same time, Arizona and other states have passed huge tax cuts for their wealthiest residents. In the next few years, the funds that pay for public education will dry up. Since these states are picking up the tab for affluent parents who already send their kids to private schools—usually religious schools—those programs come with a built-in army of lobbyists. The policy elites and legislators who have enacted these programs know that it will be nearly impossible to take away a new entitlement from these parents who will lobby and say “cut the public schools.”

These programs have become so big and expensive that it’s not only public education funding that is imperiled. Arizona had to eliminate more than \$300 million of investment in water infrastructure because of [school vouchers] funding the privately-administered education of wealthy students. The same dynamic is playing out in one state after another.

With this book, you’re going on what you described to me as an “organizing tour.” What are some new forms of fighting back against these attacks on our schools?

Berkshire: One example is so recent that it’s not in the book. As of late July, people in Nebraska succeeded in forcing a question about whether they are going to be funding private religious education onto the November ballot. This was amazing because state legislators had gone to almost comical lengths to try to keep people from being able to vote on this. The opponents of school vouchers had already brought one question to the ballot, only to have legislators decide to get rid of the original law and pass a new one to make the ballot question irrelevant. Well, it turns out that people feeling like they were being kept from expressing an opinion may have been an even more



Protestor at a rally against Project 2025 in Washington, D.C., in January 2024 (Credit: Elvert Barnes/Flickr.com)

powerful motivator than the vouchers. In just 67 days, they collected far more than the number of signatures needed, including from a significant percentage of people living in rural areas. To me, that is the most hopeful part of this. At a time when our rural-urban divide is so deep and is being used to justify and exacerbate backlash politics, there is resistance to school vouchers in rural communities.

How do you see this fight to defend public education intersecting with or diverging from broader efforts to oppose the Far Right?

Berkshire: A growing number of people are involved in both fights, partly because the Far Right's attention is directed at public schools. As we lay out in the book, this can't be a partisan fight. We must somehow combat the Far Right's efforts while going to great lengths to avoid branding public education as the next "blue" cause. Because if that happens, we're sunk.

Those of us who are public education advocates are desperately trying to understand the Right. But there's a delicate balance between understanding the Right and quickly feeling overwhelmed by the sheer amount of money and number of groups. Yesterday, I read a *New Yorker* profile of some group I had barely heard of, and its whole point is basically: *You think Project 2025 is bad, just wait.* It's easy to connect so many dots that you end up feeling overwhelmed. Charting the Right's attacks without leading us to despair is where the work of groups like PRA can be really helpful.

Alyssa A. Bowen, PhD, is the Deputy Director of True North, a watchdog group that shines a light on key state and national players impeding fair courts, voting rights, equality, and climate change mitigation. Her work has focused on the special interest groups attacking public education, LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive justice, and other freedoms. Alyssa's research and analysis have been featured in The Guardian, Politico, Slate, Popular Informa-

tion, Axios, and more. She has had bylines in The Nation, Ms. Magazine, Rethinking Schools, Rewire News Group, and Truth-out, where she is a regular contributor. She received her PhD in History from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

BY HIALY GUTIERREZ

Review: *Commune or Nothing!*

Lessons for Building Grassroots Power Toward Liberation and Democracy



Still from “El Maizal Commune Leads by Example, Take on Venezuela State Superstructure” uploaded on February 6, 2018, by Venezuelaanalysis (Credit: YouTube.com)

Former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez once called communes the “cells of socialism”¹ because he saw them as foundational units for building a truly socialist society that transcends the failures of 20th century socialism. By empowering local communities to manage resources and self-govern, Venezuela’s communes have embodied Chávez’s vision of participatory democracy and collective ownership, driving grassroots transformation from the bottom up. But their survival is now complicated by the highly contested result of the country’s 2024 presidential election.

Leftist social movements in the U.S. are also at a decisive juncture, contending with a fractured ecosystem that struggles to improve people’s living conditions amid rising neo-fascism, alienation from Democratic party politics, and imperialist support for the genocidal occupation of

Palestine. What can U.S. leftists learn from Venezuela’s communal movement and its ongoing struggle against U.S. imperialism, toward liberatory organizing that attends to the needs of our communities?

The struggles and strategies of Venezuela’s communes are illuminated in Chris Gilbert’s book, *Commune or Nothing! Venezuela’s Communal Movement and Its Socialist Project* (Monthly Review Press, 2023). Gilbert, a professor of political studies at the Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela and the creator and co-host of *Escuela de Cuadros*, a Marxist educational television program and podcast, argues that communes represent a practical realization of social justice principles. In particular, they demonstrate the tenets of and conditions for participatory democracy by fostering grassroots-level, collective decision-making and self-management that emerges from shared political clarity

rather than a representational state apparatus. Gilbert’s work weaves together historical and political context, cultural memory’s legacies of resistance and solidarity, theoretical insights, and empirical anecdotes to illustrate the paths to, tensions faced by, and lessons from the design and implementation of these communes.

Historically, Venezuela’s communes, as conceptualized by Chávez, emerged from a specific political-economic conjuncture and was part of a broader project that he called “21st Century Socialism.”² For much of the twentieth century, a small elite controlled Venezuela’s wealth—especially its oil—leaving most of the population impoverished.³ The 1989 “Caracazo” riots, a response to imposed austerity measures, highlighted widespread dissatisfaction with the neoliberal economic model and prompted demands for structural changes. Chávez, inspired by Marx-

ism, liberation theology, and the legacy of Simón Bolívar, sought to address these inequalities through the Bolivarian Revolution. He envisioned communes as grassroots organizations that would decentralize power, facilitate participatory democracy, and economically empower marginalized communities. This model was also a response to international dynamics, particularly U.S. opposition to anti-capitalist projects and the rise of leftist governments across Latin America during the “Pink Tide.”⁴ Chávez saw communes as essential to building a new

(e.g., coffee, chocolate), their geographic location (e.g., rural communes met material conditions differently than urban communes), and members’ shared political clarity. On the latter, for instance, he writes that the Che Guevara commune’s coffee growers brought “their traditions of hard work and, just as often, the political consciousness of veteran leftists fleeing persecution.”⁷

Alongside such distinctions, Gilbert’s book demonstrates how Venezuelan communes share six key features: participatory democracy, self-management,

the masses came to view the communes as a necessity. This highlights the need for political clarity as a precondition for revolution.

While Gilbert’s book chronicles how the communes dramatically improved the material and social conditions of the communards, they are not without challenges, such as resource shortages resulting from sanctions and hyperinflation.¹⁰ This is to be expected because socialism is a process, not an outcome—or, in Angela Davis’s words, “freedom is a constant struggle.”¹¹ This struggle was especially pronounced during the 2024 Venezuelan presidential election. In August, the National Electoral Council declared Nicolás Maduro the winner with 51 percent of the vote; however, the opposition, led by María Corina Machado, accused Maduro of election fraud.¹² Machado claims that her party’s candidate, Edmundo González Urrutia, actually won the election. She has provided what she says is evidence of this, although the government dismisses these claims as forgeries. The disputed election has led to widespread protests across Venezuela. Meanwhile, the U.S. government has recognized Edmundo González as the presidential election’s winner—paralleling its recognition of Juan Guaidó as interim president in 2019.¹³ This pattern of political manipulation and economic sanctions aims to destabilize Venezuela’s socialist project, which the U.S. perceives as a challenge to neoliberal and oil interests in the region. The election, therefore, becomes a critical juncture where the survival of these communes—and by extension, the broader project of democracy—is at stake.

The outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential election also holds significant implications for Venezuela and global struggles for democracy. A far-right administration in the U.S. would likely support far-right figures like María Corina Machado and Juan Guaidó, who oppose the Chavista government. With a focus on undermining President Maduro, a far-right, anti-democratic U.S. administration would likely escalate sanctions and further isolate Venezuela on the international stage.¹⁴ This strategy would fuel existing political tensions and deepen divisions within the country, potentially

The communes are an invitation to anchor both U.S. social change ecosystems (cooperatives and movement organizations) to a socialist politic to resolve these contradictions and gaps and prefigure the relations needed for a liberatory world.

socialist society, rooted in local traditions and resilient against external pressures.

An important contribution of Gilbert’s book is its explanation of the connection between the theories of Hungarian Marxist philosopher István Mészáros and Chávez’s conceptualization of the commune. Twenty-first century socialism, according to Mészáros and applied by Chávez through the communes, is a transitional framework that aims to not only undermine capitalism as an economic system, but also *capital* as the material expression/process of inherently exploitative social relations that sustains and is sustained by capitalism. This transition to new relations requires “a radical reorganization of society in which workers themselves consciously control production in a profoundly democratic way.”⁵ This new transitional arrangement is what Chávez referred to as “the elementary triangle of socialism”—the organic unification of social property, social production, and satisfaction of social [communal] needs.”⁶

Gilbert’s book focuses on four communes—El Panal, El Maizal, Che Guevara, and Luisa Cáceres—to illustrate the different ways they built communal power and strategy based on their members’ material needs, the land’s natural resources

aspirational economic autonomy, social inclusion and solidarity, strategic linkage with the State, and cultural and ideological programming. Taken together, these features allow for transitional *and* institutionalized changes that are needed to democratically manage resources. For example, through cultural and ideological programming, the communards’ rigorous political study enables awareness of their individual and collective power and an informed commitment to the revolutionary political project they aim to advance; the protagonism⁸—or political subjectivity—emerging from this awareness is what enables informed consent in a participatory democracy. Additionally, the communes’ strategic linkage with the State directs its governing power toward addressing the people’s needs, rather than that of capital, to further the political project of 21st century socialism.

Notably, the commune model that Chávez had conceptualized was not implemented until after he had passed away in 2013. Gilbert explains that the delay resulted from a combination of political priorities, institutional challenges, and, most importantly, a lag in “the project’s reception in the masses themselves.”⁹ Through political education during an intensifying economic crisis, however,

Venezuela's communal movement offers several important lessons for U.S. leftists as they confront fascist forces. These lessons revolve around building grassroots power, maintaining political clarity, and developing alternative structures that challenge the capitalist status quo.

destabilizing the government. Increased U.S. sanctions, foreign interventions, and internal opposition may restrict the communes' ability to function effectively, producing significant economic and logistical challenges and weakening their capacity to support vulnerable communities.

In many parts of the world, far-right leaders have risen to power by capitalizing on economic and social crises, often with the backing of neoliberal elites,¹⁵ and movements characterized by nationalism, authoritarianism, and opposition to socialist principles. Their success could erode communal structures and reassert capitalist dominance in Venezuela and globally. This conjuncture calls for a renewed commitment to building and defending communal power as a decentralized bulwark against internal and external challenges to democracy.

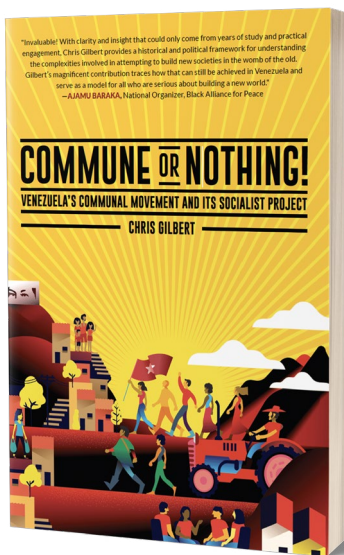
Venezuela's communal movement offers several important lessons for U.S. leftists as they confront fascist forces. These lessons revolve around building grassroots power, building political clarity, and developing alternative structures that challenge the capitalist status quo.

First, building grassroots power is essential. Chávez mobilized poor and working-class communities and created a broad social base of support through the establishment of communal councils and participatory democracy. He also mentored a successor, Maduro, to continue the socialist revolution. U.S. leftists can learn from this by organizing locally, capturing state and institutional power, and building solidaristic, democratic community networks that can resist and safeguard against authoritarian tendencies.

Second, building political clarity is crucial. Venezuela's leadership articulated a clear vision against neoliberalism, framing their struggle in terms of class conflict and imperialism. Leftists in the U.S.

should define their struggles, situational objectives, and privileges (including and especially imperial privilege) more clearly, engaging in ongoing conjunctural analyses to better understand—and thereby better strategize through—the capitalist and imperialist forces coming together to create particular conditions and contradictions.¹⁶

Third, developing liberatory infrastructure and relations that challenge the capitalist status quo is necessary. The Venezuelan communes built new structures and processes based on cooperative ownership and communal decision-making. Similarly, U.S. leftists



Commune or Nothing!: Venezuela's Communal Movement and Its Socialist Project (Monthly Review Press, 2023)

can create practical, sustainable alternatives to capitalist exploitation—from supporting cooperatives that engage a socialist politic to developing local currencies and other means of exchange that do not rely on capitalist financial institutions—and build resilience against right-wing authoritarianism. Coopera-

tives are often presented as a solution toward economic democracy,¹⁷ a paradigm that seeks to shift ownership and decision-making power toward people to manage their collective needs. But as Gilbert points out, without an explicitly socialist politic, conventional cooperatives can replicate capitalist relations because property is still privatized, albeit in a collective way, and decision-making is often still exploitatively hierarchical.¹⁸ At the same time, social movement organizations, especially in the U.S., do not necessarily or consistently have programming that builds the institutions and structures to meet their base's material needs. The communes are an invitation to anchor both U.S. social change ecosystems (cooperatives and movement organizations) to a socialist politic to resolve these contradictions and gaps, and to both prefigure and institutionalize the relations needed for a liberatory world.

Together, these strategies can form a robust foundation for resisting fascist tendencies and advancing social justice.

Hialy Gutierrez (she/her) is passionate about cultivating critical relationships and critical consciousness - both of which she believes are foundational to a cohesive, compassionate, and just society. She joins PRA with almost two decades of experience as a community organizer and over a decade of experience conducting and overseeing research across various academic disciplines.

Hialy holds a BS in Engineering from Stanford University, an MPH from Columbia University, and is a PhD Fellow at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Hialy is also the Founder of Justice Cream, an abolitionist solidarity economy project that co-creates punny ice cream flavors and political education programming with grassroots community organizations in pursuit of collective liberation.

BY HABIBA FARH

Review: Reverberations of October 7

Mobilization Against Genocide Undeterred by Peak Anti-Palestinian Repression by Palestine Legal



Demonstrators at a rally organized by Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of Oregon for the International Day of Action in 2024 (Credit: Ian M./Flickr.com)

On October 25, 2023, the Anti-Defamation League and the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under the Law¹ published an open letter to college and university presidents. In it, they asked administrators to investigate their campus chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) for potential violations, including “whether they have improper funding sources, have violated the school code of conduct, have violated state or federal laws, and/or are providing material support to Hamas.”² The letter, which made baseless accusations against campus activists, en-

couraged universities to take actions that could potentially violate their students’ constitutional rights.

This incident is one of many mentioned in Palestine Legal’s May 2024 report, *Reverberations of October 7th: Mobilization Against Genocide Undeterred by Peak Anti-Palestinian Repression*. The report details state and non-state actors’ efforts to repress Palestine solidarity activism and expression from October 7, 2023, through December 31, 2023. As Palestine Legal notes, “The last three months of 2023 witnessed a harrowing level of attacks on Palestine advocacy at a time when it was most

needed to stop an unfolding genocide.”³ In that time, Palestine Legal received 1,037 requests for legal support—almost five times the number the organization received in all of 2022. Nearly half of the requests—specifically, 478—were related to universities’ crackdowns on student organizing, along with 383 reports regarding “employment concerns,” including 124 reports about employment terminations; 268 reports about doxing; and 73 reports about K–12 education.

Schools, universities, and workplaces were not the only places engaged in anti-Palestinian repression. Their efforts



A protest sign at a Gaza solidarity encampment at the University of Oregon in 2024 (Credit: Ian M./Flickr.com)

were accompanied by laws designed to criminalize Palestine solidarity.⁴ During the same three-month period, Palestine Legal reported that legislators introduced 33 new federal and state-level bills and resolutions targeting Palestine solidarity activism—many of which are based on U.S. anti-terror legislation rooted in anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, and Islamophobic sentiments. Palestine Legal’s report highlights two federal bills and a resolution that would target Palestinian immigrants or immigrants who express support for Palestine. These proposals would prevent DHS and the State Department from issuing immigrant or nonimmigrant visas to Palestinian nationals; enable the President to deport foreign nationals who participated in pro-Palestine protests; and determine those who “endorsed or espoused

terrorism gives law enforcement the permission to do what Israel’s military forces do to Gaza’s people—to invade, detain, condemn, brutalize, and possibly maim them. Weaponized accusations of antisemitism, along with anti-Palestinian racism and anti-Muslim bigotry, are tools for state and social actors to normalize the brutalization and criminalization of Palestine solidarity activists and dissenters in general. But as the report argues, despite increasing repression, the pro-Palestinian movement remained “intent on making visible a situation of extreme oppression that the U.S. government and media purposely keep from full view, and on shifting the status quo that enables it.”⁷

Palestine Legal’s contribution to these efforts connects the assault on Palestine solidarity activism to other domestic and

port makes clear, today it is Palestinians and their allies who empower others to imagine and realize a better world.

State and social repression indicates a movement’s power. As Palestine Legal’s report about efforts to stop the largest mass mobilization for Palestine in U.S. history shows, pro-Palestine solidarity is no longer a “fringe” concern—it has become central to conversations about U.S. imperialism, capitalism, education, and society. While the report presents important data about the frequency and methods of anti-Palestinian suppression, it also offers an important strategic insight from student organizers facing such attacks: that “repression is evidence of our power.”⁹

Indeed, if there is repression, there will be resistance; and where there is resistance, there is power.

Habiba Farh is a research analyst at Political Research Associates monitoring legislation and discourses addressing hate crimes, terrorism, and extremism. She has written on intergenerational political repression on historically marginalized communities in the U.S., Arab-American diasporic politics, U.S. foreign policy on the Middle East, and Islamophobia and anti-Arab bigotry in American policy and law.

Accusing student organizations of receiving illicit funding or supporting terrorism gives law enforcement the permission to do what Israel’s military forces do to Gaza’s people.

terrorist activities”⁵ by Hamas, Hezbollah, and other groups to be “engaged in terrorist activity.”⁶ The bills quell dissent, chill speech, and target groups with the least legal protections.

Accusing student organizations of receiving illicit funding or supporting

global liberation struggles. They affirm that “We are confident history will judge our movement in the same light as civil rights, anti-apartheid, and other justice movements before it, despite the fierce repression they, too, faced in challenging racist and apartheid systems.”⁸ As the re-

Three Way Fight: Revolutionary Politics and Antifascism

1 Three Way Fight, "About Three Way Fight," *Three Way Fight*, July 15, 2013, updated November 12, 2017, <http://threewayfight.blogspot.com/p/about.html>.

2 See Shannon Clay, Lady, Kristin Schwartz, and Michael Staudenmaier, *We Go Where They Go: The Story of Anti-Racist Action* (PM Press, 2023).

3 Sojourner Truth Organization, "Theses on Fascism," April 1981, published in *Urgent Tasks*, no. 13 (Spring 1982), reprinted in this volume. On STO see Michael Staudenmaier, *Truth and Revolution: A History of the Sojourner Truth Organization, 1969-1986* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012).

4 See Sara Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right* (Boston: South End Press, 1989); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995); Chip Berlet, *Right Woos Left: Populist Party, LaRouchite, and Other Neo-fascist Overtures to Progressives, and Why They Must Be Rejected* (Cambridge, MA: Political Research Associates, 1994); and Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000).

5 Don Hamerquist, et al., *Confronting Fascism: Discussion Documents for a Militant Movement*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Kersplebedeb Publishing, 2017).

What Is Movement Infrastructure?

1 Max Elbaum, "Strategy in the Time of MAGA: Block and Build," *Common Dreams*, July 21, 2023, <https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/defeat-maga-2024>.

2 Communities United for Police Reform, Home page, accessed October 15, 2024, <https://www.changethenypd.org/>.

3 The Descendants Project, Home page, accessed October 15, 2024, <https://www.thedescendantsproject.org/>.

4 Seth Freed Wessler, "The Greenfield Grain Elevator

and Black History," *ProPublica*, August 9, 2024, <https://www.propublica.org/article/wallace-louisiana-greenfield-grain-elevator-black-history>.

5 Project 2025 Presidential Transition Project, Home page, accessed October 15, 2024, <https://www.project2025.org/>.

Rising Against Authoritarianism

1 Refer to "The Cost of Immigration Enforcement and Border Security," *American Immigration Council*, August 14, 2024, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/the-cost-of-immigration-enforcement-and-border-security>, 5, for the 2024 fiscal year budgets of ICE and CBP, which are close to triple their 2003 budgets (before accounting for inflation); more specifically, U.S. Border Patrol's 2024 budget is more than 7.5 times its 1994 spending when adjusted for inflation.

2 "CBP Releases Findings of Investigation into Horse Patrol Activity in Del Rio," *U.S. Customs and Border Protection*, July 8, 2022, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/national-media-release/cbp-releases-findings-investigation-horse-patrol-activity-del-rio>. This claim was investigated and disputed by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Q&A: Harnessing Our Power to End Political Violence

1 National League of Cities, "New Report: Harassment, Threats and Violence Directed at Local Elected Officials Rising at an Alarming Rate," November 10, 2021, <https://www.nlc.org/post/2021/11/10/new-report-harassment-threats-and-violence-directed-at-local-elected-officials-rising-at-an-alarming-rate/>.

2 Hardy Merriman, *Harnessing Our Power to End (HOPE) Political Violence* (22nd Century Initiative and the Horizons Project, 2024), <https://www.endpoliticalviolence.org/guide>.

3 Brian Martin, *Backfire Man-*

ual: Tactics Against Injustice (Sparsnäs: Irene Publishing, 2012), <https://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/12bfm/index.html>, on the backfire approach; also refer to Martin, "Backfire Materials," <https://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/backfire.html>, for a bibliography on the subject by one of the most well-known in this group of scholars.

4 "2: Ballot Measure 9," *No On 9 Remembered*, accessed October 29, 2024, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/ballot-measure-9/>.

The Education Wars

1 Alex DiBranco, "Conservative, Christian, Corporate: COVID-19 Opportunism and Betsy DeVos's Education Agenda," *Political Research Associates*, October 27, 2020, <https://politicalresearch.org/2020/10/27/conservative-christian-corporate>.

2 Heron Greenesmith, "Homeschooling During COVID-19? Be Aware of Outreach by Evangelical Homeschooling Organizations," *Political Research Associates*, April 1, 2020, <https://politicalresearch.org/2020/04/01/homeschooling-during-covid-19>.

3 "Spineless Shelves: Two Years of Book Banning," *PEN America*, accessed September 4, 2024, <https://pen.org/spineless-shelves/>.

4 Lisa Graves and Alyssa Bowen, "Tax Docs Link Right-Wing 'Parents Group' to Leonard Leo's Dark Money Network," *Truthout*, February 9, 2023, <https://truthout.org/articles/tax-docs-link-right-wing-parents-group-to-leonard-leos-dark-money-network/>.

5 Greg Sargent and Paul Waldman, "In a Deep Red Florida County, a Student-Teacher Revolt Shames the Right," *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/06/01/hernando-county-ron-desantis-book-bans-democratic-governors/>.

6 Amelia Nierenberg, "The Conservative School Board Strategy," *The New York Times*, October 27, 2021, [*vative-school-board-strategy.html*.](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/27/us/the-conser-</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

7 Jasmine Banks, "Sowing the Seeds of White Supremacy Through Education," *Political Research Associates*, October 21, 2024, <https://politicalresearch.org/2021/10/21/sowing-seeds-white-supremacy-through-education>.

8 "The Disinformation Playbook Targeting Our Public Schools and Elections," *True North Research*, last updated September 14, 2022, <https://truenorthresearch.org/2022/09/dark-money-buys-school-board-races-for-gop-2022/>.

9 Alyssa Bowen, "Dark Money School Groups Are Trying to Buy the Midterm Elections for the GOP," *Truthout*, September 15, 2022, <https://truthout.org/articles/dark-money-school-groups-are-trying-to-buy-the-midterm-elections-for-the-gop/>.

10 Jarod Facundo, "Right-Wing School Board Groups Posted Losses at the Ballot Boxes," *The American Prospect*, November 17, 2023, <https://prospect.org/education/23-11-17-right-wing-school-board-groups-losses/>.

11 In *Rodriguez v San Antonio Independent School District*, the U.S. Supreme Court decided against the Rodriguez family who had sued the state of Texas for grossly underfunding a low-income, predominantly Mexican American school district when compared to neighboring, mostly white school districts. This was a major loss for civil rights groups who sought equal funding for schools, not based largely on property taxes, a model disproportionately benefiting the education of whiter and wealthier districts. For more, see Matt Barnum, "The Racist Idea that Changed American Education," *Chalkbeat*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/23584874/public-school-funding-supreme-court/>.

12 In the *Milliken* case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state and city officials not be found responsible for racist housing practices that trapped Black families in poor, segregated school districts, and therefore,

they could not be forced to help desegregate Detroit. Thurgood Marshall called this “a giant step backwards” from *Brown*, as it made school district borders a tool for segregation. See Elissa Nadworny and Cory Turner, “This Supreme Court Case Made School District Lines a Tool for Segregation,” *NPR*, July 25, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/25/739493839/this-supreme-court-case-made-school-district-lines-a-tool-for-segregation>.

13 Eli Hager, “School Vouchers Were Supposed to Save Taxpayer Money. Instead They Blew a Massive Hole in Arizona’s Budget,” *ProPublica*, July 16, 2024, <https://www.propublica.org/article/arizona-school-vouchers-budget-meltdown>.

14 Jack Schneider and Jennifer C. Berkshire, *The Education Wars* (The New Press, 2024), 109; also refer to Michael Grifith and Dion Burns, *Understanding the Cost of Universal School Vouchers: An Analysis of Arizona’s Empowerment Scholarship Account Program*, *Learning Policy Institute* (February 2024), https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/4193/download?inline&file=Universal_School_Vouchers_REPORT.pdf, which estimated the program’s cost for the 2023–24 school year to be \$708.5M, based on data available as of December 26, 2023.

Review: Commune or Nothing!

1 Chris Gilbert and Cira Marquina Pascal, “News from Nowhere” — Building Communal Life in Venezuela,” *Progressive International*, January 19, 2023, <https://progressive.international/blueprint/1c235d6f-72d4-4973-b76d-939a4655f028-news-from-nowhere--building-communal-life-in-venezuela/en>.

2 Marta Harnecker, *A World to Build, New Paths toward Twenty-first Century Socialism* (NYU Press, 2015), 8.

3 Gregory Wilpert, “The Economics, Culture, and Politics of Oil in Venezuela,” *Venezuelanalysis*, August 30, 2003, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/74/>.

sis/74/.

4 Chris Gilbert, “The Dream of a Thing: Refounding the Economy of a Venezuelan Commune,” *Venezuelanalysis*, June 19, 2024, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/the-dream-of-a-thing-refounding-the-economy-of-a-venezuelan-commune/>.

5 István Mészáros, *Beyond Capital: Toward a Theory of Transition* (Monthly Review Press, 1995), 87.

6 John Bellamy Foster, “Mészáros and Chávez: The Point from Which to Move the World Today,” *Monthly Review*, June 1, 2022, <https://monthlyreview.org/2022/06/01/meszáros-and-chavez-the-point-from-which-to-move-the-world-today/>.

7 Chris Gilbert, *Commune or Nothing! Venezuela’s Communal Movement and Its Socialist Project* (Monthly Review Press, 2023), 70.

8 Marta Harnecker, *Ideas for the Struggle* (Socialist Project, 2010), <https://socialistproject.ca/content/uploads/2017/11/struggle.pdf>; Michael Lebowitz, “Popular Protagonism in the Transition to Socialism,” *The Bullet*, Socialist Project, July 28, 2020, <https://socialistproject.ca/2020/07/popular-protagonism-in-transition-to-socialism/>, for more on the political concept of protagonism.

9 Gilbert, *Commune*, 19.

10 Cira Pascual Marquina and Chris Gilbert, “Venezuela’s El Maizal Commune in the face of the sanctions,” *Monthly Review*, August 2, 2021, <https://monthlyreview.org/press/venezuelas-el-maizal-commune-in-the-face-of-the-sanctions-cira-pascual-marquina-and-chris-gilbert-on-venezuelanalysis/>.

11 Angela Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Haymarket Books, 2016).

12 Alfredo Meza, Stefano Pozzebon and Abel Alvarado, “US says Maduro lost Venezuela election as opposition leader says she’s in hiding,” *CNN*, August 1, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/01/americas/venezuela-election-opposition-machado-hiding-intl-latam/index.html>.

13 Miguel Tinker Salas, “As Venezuela Coup Attempt Fails to Overthrow Maduro, Guaidó Calls for More Street Protests,” *Democracy Now!*, May 1, 2019, https://www.democracynow.org/2019/5/1/as_venezuela_coup_attempt_fails_to.

14 Mision Verdad, “Another Political Labyrinth of Anti-Chavismo Begins With Donald Trump’s New Term,” *Resumen*, November 11, 2024, <https://resumen-english.org/2024/11/another-political-labyrinth-of-anti-chavismo-begins-with-donald-trumps-new-term/>.

15 Alessandro Bonanno, “Crisis of neoliberalism, populist reaction, and the rise of authoritarian capitalism,” *International Review of Modern Sociology* 45, no. 1 (2019): 9–26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4863676>.

16 “Liberatory Strategy Toolkit,” *LeftRoots*, 2023, <https://dusk.leftroots.net/liberatory-strategy-toolkit>. LeftRoots offers a guide for how to perform conjunctural analysis.

17 “Home,” *Center for Economic Democracy*, accessed October 22, 2024, <https://economicdemocracy.us/>, for a broad definition of economic democracy, which has many interpretations.

18 Gilbert, *Commune*, 88.

Review: Reverberations of October 7th

1 The ADL and Brandeis Center claim that they protect Jewish communities from antisemitism while using the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which conflates anti-Zionism with antisemitism. This definition allows institutions to criminalize and censor those expressing support for Palestine, and is the basis of U.S. anti-terror legislation. Refer to Alice Speri, “How the ADL’s Anti-Palestinian Advocacy Helped Shape U.S. Terror Laws,” *The Intercept*, February 21, 2024, <https://theintercept.com/2024/02/21/adl-palestine-terrorism-legislation/>.

2 Spencer Ackerman, “The ADL Is Defaming Palestinian Students as Terrorist Supporters,” *The Nation*, October 31, 2023, <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/adl-palestine-terrorism-letter/>.

3 *Reverberations of October 7th: Mobilization Against Genocide Undeterred by Peak Anti-Palestinian Repression*, *Palestine Legal*, May 2024, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/548748b1e4b083fc03ebf70e/t/664fbc07860df7037ba81300/1716501546613/Pal+Legal+Report+Reverberations+of+Oct+7th>, 48.

4 *Reverberations*, 43–44.

5 August Pfluger, “H.R.6200 - Terrorist Inadmissibility Codification Act,” *Congress.gov*, November 2, 2023, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/6200/text>.

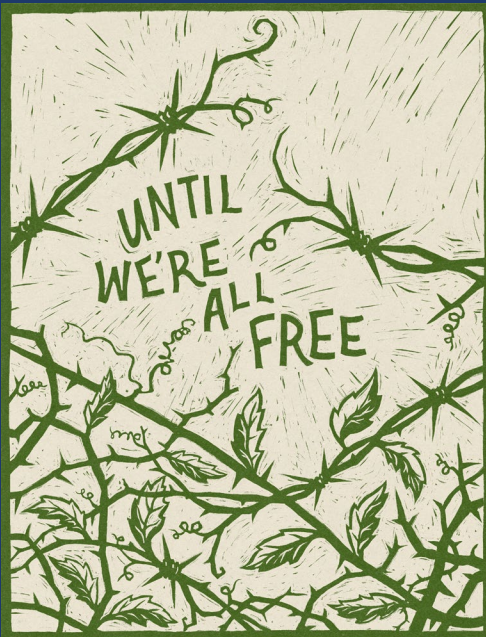
6 *Reverberations*, 47.

7 *Reverberations*, 48.

8 *Reverberations*, 7.

9 Dissenters (@wearedissenters) and National Students for Justice in Palestine (@nationalsjp), “Repression Is Evidence of Our Power,” *Instagram*, November 22, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cz9VG-KJCb_/?img_index=1, quoted in report.

The Art of Activism: An Interview with Cover Artist Dio Cramer



Copyright: Dio Cramer

Can you explain the concept of this artwork to us?

This piece came from a long walk through brambly woods, and work I was doing with *Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar*. I was thinking about the feeling of moving through brambles and engaging directly with hard prickly things rather than avoiding them, and thinking about all the incredible people I know who are staying with the trouble and working within hard and horrible systems to engage in liberation work, specifically around prisoner solidarity.

What drew you to art as a medium of resistance?

I've always used art as a medium to engage with the world, and so as I became more aware of the world my art turned more political. When I started organizing it was through the lens of organizing of artists to make political art in support of various movements, which is work I am still engaged in today.

What does solidarity mean to you?

Solidarity means that none of us are free until we're all free, and that we have obligations to ourselves and each other to be in shared struggle together.

**POLITICAL
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES**

Political Research Associates (PRA) is a research and strategy center devoted to supporting movements that are building a more just and inclusive democratic society. Visit our website, www.politicalresearch.org, to access past issues of *The Public Eye*, connect with us through social media, and donate. You'll also find in-depth reports, web-only articles, and movement resources. Need to renew or purchase a subscription? Go to politicalresearch.org/subscribe. Email us at contact@politicalresearch.org for more information.

Your support makes *The Public Eye* possible. Subscribe and donate today!