NHS PUTS U.S. TO SHAME P. 9
NINA TURNER'S TURN P. 7
WILL GITMO EVER CLOSE? P. 56
PLUS: THE 7,081 READERS WHO PUBLISH *IN THESE TIMES* P. 28

IN THESE TIMES

THE FRONTLINE WORKERS WE FAILED

Taking stock of a bitter year

BY HAMILTON NOLAN

\+ Tina Vásquez on the migrants whisked away in the night

APRIL 2021

The Invention of the Year

The world's lightest and most portable mobility device

The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people.

Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation... The Zinger.

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough... a personal electric vehicle. It's called the ***Zinger***, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"
–Kent C., California

The first thing you'll notice about the ***Zinger*** is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum. It weighs only 47.2 lbs but can handle a passenger that's up to 275 lbs! It features one-touch folding and unfolding– when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the ***Zinger*** to move forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your ***Zinger*** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.

Why take our word for it. You can try the ***Zinger*** out for yourself with our exclusive home trial. Call now, and find out how you can try out a ***Zinger*** of your very own.

Zinger Chair®

Call now and receive a utility basket absolutely FREE with your order.

1-888-668-3870

Please mention code 114069 when ordering.

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS Rating of A+

The Zinger Chair is a personal electric vehicle and is not a medical device nor a wheelchair. Zinger is not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. It is not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid.

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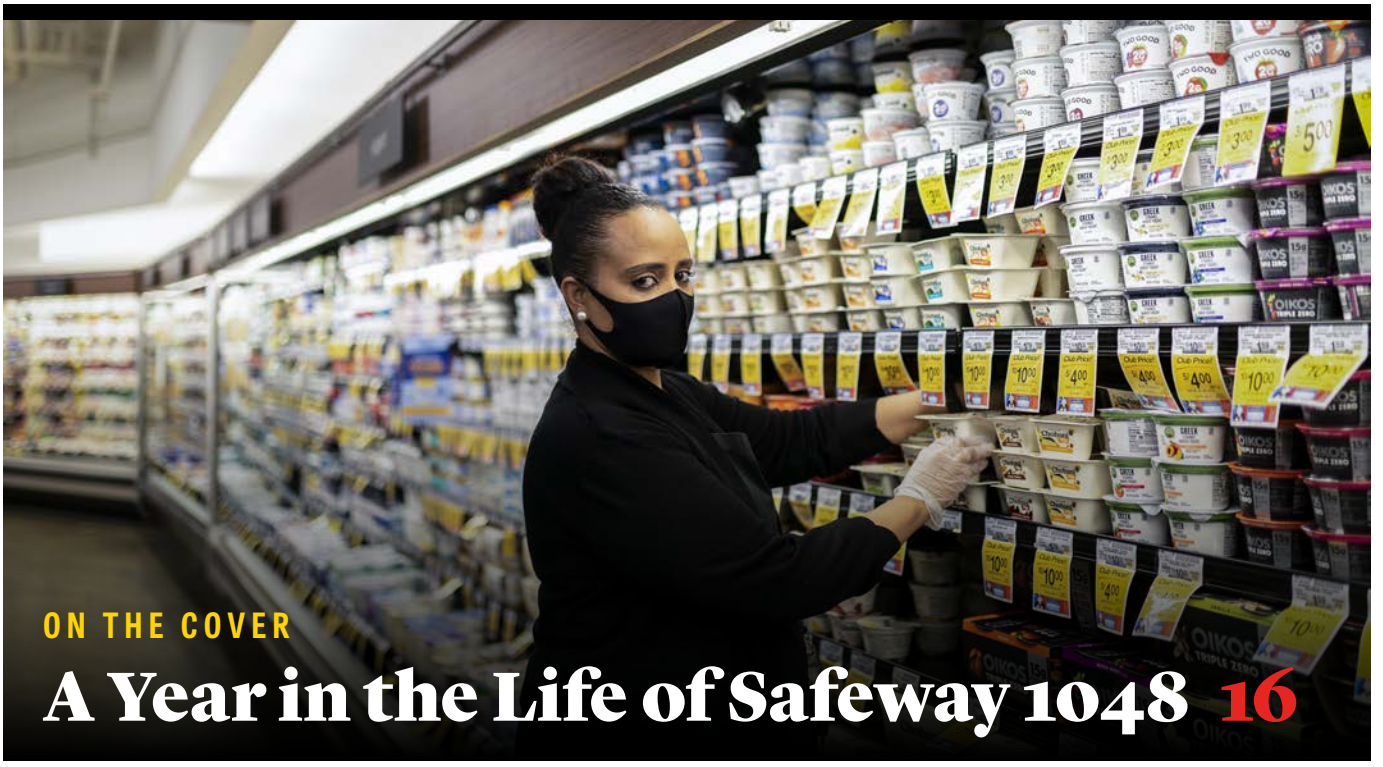
IN THESE TIMES

VOLUME 45 NUMBER 4



ON THE COVER

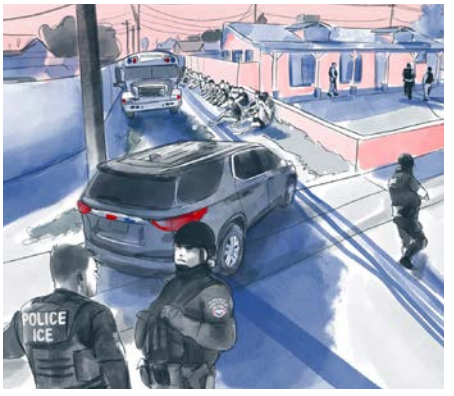
A Year in the Life of Safeway 1048 16

Is It Nina Turner's Turn?

The Cleveland native hopes to move Ohio left

BY NUALA BISHARI

7



SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

The Disappeared Migrants

The Biden admin continues Trump's expulsions on public health pretext

BY TINA VÁSQUEZ

22

RTW Cleaves the Granite State

In New Hampshire, the future of labor hangs in the air

BY C.M. LEWIS

6

> No political movement can be healthy unless it has its own press to inform it, educate it and orient it.
>
> —*IN THESE TIMES* FOUNDER JAMES WEINSTEIN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISPATCHES

VIEWPOINT

CULTURE

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

ON THE COVER

Photo by Farrah Skeiky

IN THESE TIMES

FOUNDING EDITOR & PUBLISHER
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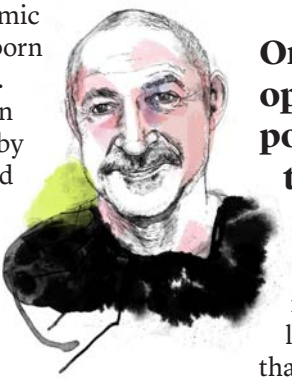
Class War in the Senate

Missing from the Congressional debate over raising the $7.25 federal minimum wage to $15 an hour is any acknowledgement that poverty-level wages are integral to a class system that rewards the rich and punishes the poor.

With few exceptions, where a person ends up in life—in terms of health, wealth and general wellbeing—is determined by the economic class into which they are born. People born poor die poor. People born rich die rich. This basic, intrinsic feature of American political economy is shaded from view by our culture's celebration of the so-called meritocracy, the myth that if a person works hard enough, they can win at any table, despite the stacked deck.



Government can intervene to lift people out of poverty. The 1944 GI Bill, for example, enabled the families of millions of World War II vets to enter the middle class. Because of structural racism, however, most of those who benefited were white. The legislation did not guarantee the same housing and educational benefits to 1.2 million Black vets.

On March 5, the Senate had another opportunity to lift millions out of poverty, this time by raising the minimum wage to $15. But 50 Republicans, seven Democrats and an Independent voted against the bill sponsored by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). In doing so, they denied a raise to the 32 million workers—about 21% of the workforce—including 31% of Black workers, 26% percent of Hispanic workers and 20% of white workers. That number includes the 1.1 million Americans who earn $7.25 or less, and the approximately 20.6 million who earn a "near-minimum" wage of up to $10.10, according to the Pew Research Center.

Like $7.25 an hour, $10.10 is not a "living wage," the earnings needed to cover the cost of a family's basic necessities, as defined by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator project. By MIT's calculation, a couple with two children who each earn $10.10 an hour would both need to work more than 65 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, to earn the $68,808 living wage they need. Some people try to do it; according to the Census Bureau, around 7.8% of workers hold more than one job.

When former enslaved person and abolitionist Frederick Douglass took his first paying job, he declared, "Now I am my own master." But by 1883, he observed, "Experience demonstrates that there may be a slavery of wages only a little less galling and crushing in its effects than chattel slavery, and that this slavery of wages must go down with the other."

On March 5, the Senate had another opportunity to lift millions out of poverty, by raising the minimum wage to $15. But 50 Republicans and seven Democrats voted against the bill.

The condition of wage workers has improved since the depravities of the Gilded Age because of the tireless work of the American labor movement. That movement, however, has atrophied in recent decades, with membership declining from its 1954 high of 34.8% of the workforce to the current 10.8%.

Though his bill was defeated, Sanders vowed to fight on: "If any Senator believes this is the last time they will cast a vote on whether or not to give a raise to 32 million Americans, they are sorely mistaken."

In addition to giving that raise, next on the progressive agenda should be the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which passed the House on March 9, and now heads to the Senate. If passed, it would enshrine the basic right of workers to organize without interference from their employers. It would also allow workers to engage in political strikes, secondary strikes and solidarity strikes—powerful tactics once despised by anti-New-Dealers who sought to rein in worker power with the Taft-Hartley Act.

American workers need a raise. They also need power over their workplaces and their own lives.

—JOEL BLEIFUSS

FROM AN 'OLD REDNECK'

I was just reflecting on Sam Mitrani's January 2015 article for *In These Times*, "The Police Were Created to Control Working Class and Poor People, Not 'Serve and Protect.' " Now, in 2021, it is all the more clear.

I also recently heard someone say that, in the United States, the purpose of the police is to keep poor people away from rich people. To my mind, this idea sums up your entire, excellent article. As an old redneck white man, I can't even conceive of how much more obvious the concept must be to non-whites. Sadly, we lack the political will to lift a finger to fix it.

Just as it has always been throughout history, the rich people call the shots and the poor people have to live with it.

—*Ronnie Childs*
Richmond, Va.

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

I'm not sure where the author of "Cuban Dissidents Log On" (February 2021) gathers information, but I suggest they visit Cuba before slamming it. If they have visited the island, they did it with their eyes closed.

—*Kevin Haley*
Colona, Colo.

FROM THE EDITOR:

I find it helpful to read an article with my eyes open. As author Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo writes, he lived in Cuba. Not just a visitor to the island, he spent the first four decades of his life in Cuba; he "escaped," as he puts it, in 2013 when he was 41. He was one of the Cuban writers featured in our 2009 special edition to mark the 50th anniversary of the revolution, "Inside Cuba: Voices from the Island." In his 2009 article, "Guerilla Blogging: A Virtual Democracy Against All Odds," Pardo Lazo describes the persecution faced by famed Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez and other writers.

The day after In These Times' *special issue went to press in 2009, Sánchez and Pardo Lazo were abducted, beaten and dumped on the outskirts of Havana, an event Sánchez chronicled in her blog, Generación Y.*

Pardo Lazo was not the only In These Times *contributor to suffer. After agreeing to write an article about LGBTQ rights in Cuba for the magazine, activist Mario Joe Delgado Gonzales was arrested and jailed, ostensibly for trying to organize a "Mr. Gay Havana Contest."*

—**JOEL BLEIFUSS**

PHOTO BY JAMIE HENDRY

NOW IN SEASON: COVID

In hindsight, February 2020 was an inauspicious month for a grand opening.

This time last year, *ITT* was celebrating the opening of the new space for The Lincoln Lodge, Chicago's popular stand-up comedy showcase, on the first floor of our building ("Laughing Out Lodge," April 2021). Part of the nonprofit Tight Five Productions, the Lodge spent two years renovating the downstairs commercial space to create three small theaters and a training center, an upgrade from its early 2000s roots in a restaurant backroom.

Then the pandemic hit. "It was hilariously perfect timing," says Tight Five board member Mark Geary. "Which is what comedy is all about, right?"

Geary hopes for funding from the $15 billion Save Our Stages Act (SOS), part of the December 2020 pandemic relief bill. But the Lodge is not alone in its struggle. Performing arts venues across the country are scrambling to stay afloat, and SOS applicants who lost a larger percentage of their annual 2020 revenue (compared with 2019) receive priority. As an organization with a new venue under construction in 2019, the Lodge brought in less revenue that year, which puts it in a sticky situation.

In the meantime, Geary has come up with creative ideas to raise funds, from setting up a recording studio for comics and performers to getting a special license to hold raffles.

In These Times has committed to keeping the Lodge as our tenant for the rest of 2021, regardless of its ability to cover rent. Still, the nonprofit faces other costs to support staff and performers and to survive as an organization.

The Lodge plans to reopen April 9, though its future remains uncertain. "At this point," Geary says, "[SOS is] our only real lifeline to any sort of future."

The Lincoln Lodge is welcoming donations at gofundme.com/f/lincolnlodge.

DEAR GOOD PEOPLE,

You always have this little "tell us how you really feel" bit on your letters page. You even want to know what someone might "hate" about *In These Times*. I don't hate anything about the magazine, but I am puzzled and curious about something: Since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, I have not seen *any* articles in the magazine that even *begin* to ask sharp questions (let alone attempt to answer them) about what might be a less-than-truthful pandemic narrative coming from the big health agencies and institutions, such as the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health. Why not?

I don't understand. I am a left-wing kind of guy and hated Trump as much as the next socialist. But I don't get this faith in these institutions and in the stories they put out, which most left-leaning people seem to have.

Hundreds of perfectly credible doctors, medical administrators and scientists have come forward—at risk to their careers—with some solid critiques of the Covid-19 pandemic mainstream propaganda. Surely *somebody* there has looked into it? Anybody?

Could we have maybe an article about it? I just renewed my subscription.

—R. Crumb
South of France

TELL US HOW YOU REALLY FEEL

Tell us what you like, what you hate and what you'd like to see more of by emailing letters@inthesetimes.com or tweeting @inthesetimesmag, or reach us by post at 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We love when *In These Times* stories make national headlines.

In February, Shireen Al-Adeimi wrote a correction to the accounts that President Joe Biden was ending U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia's brutal war on Yemen. While papers like the *New York Times* treated word from the White House as fact, Al-Adeimi, a Yemeni American scholar and activist, clarified: Biden's declaration is a significant step, but the wording leaves loopholes big enough to ship an F-35 fighter jet through.

Al-Adeimi then appeared on "All Things Considered" from NPR and "The World" from PRX/WGBH-Boston.

But sometimes when we are thinking about what stories to cover, we ask instead: What will never make national headlines?

For our cover story this issue, we sent labor reporter Hamilton Nolan to spend a week with the workers of Safeway store 1048 in Arlington, Va. We knew Hamilton was unlikely to discover a smoking gun of employer maltreatment; like most corporations, Safeway does just enough to skirt bad press while preserving its bottom line. He found Safeway 1048 cleaning and sanitizing nightly, but not requiring customers to wear masks and doing little to protect workers when someone at the store tests positive for Covid-19.

Workers are bitter, exhausted, sick of arguing with maskless customers and scared to hug their own families. These are stories that do not make headlines in the dailies.

The stories do, as Hamilton's does, tune in to the background hum of American life: the quotidian misery thrust upon workers by corporations. The pandemic has turned that hum into a scream.

Jessica Stites
Executive Editor

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AP PHOTO/CHARLES KRUPA

Above: The International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 3 rally against so-called right-to-work laws in Concord, N.H., in February 2017. House lawmakers killed the union-targeting legislation after a Republican-on-Republican debate. Today, state Dems say labor-friendly Republicans are in short supply.

Right To Work Cleaves the Granite State

JAFFREY, N.H.—As fellow Democrats reveled in Donald Trump's presidential defeat, New Hampshire State Rep. Doug Ley (also president of the American Federation of Teachers-New Hampshire) watched the election results with unease. Republicans captured both chambers of the General Court of New Hampshire, and Republican Gov. Chris Sununu handily won a third term.

In New Hampshire, a unified right-wing government is on a collision course with organized labor. And, aided by poor pandemic safety protocols (deterring Democratic officials from the State House), the GOP has its best chance in a generation to remake the Granite State.

Right-wing interest groups like the Koch-funded Americans for Prosperity have long pushed for conservative reforms such as so-called education savings accounts, which critics say will divert public funds toward private and religious education. But their true prize—and the greatest source of consternation for unions like the American Federation of Teachers—is a Senate bill known as SB 61.

SB 61 would make New Hampshire the 29th right-to-work state in the country, creating what Ley calls an "entering wedge into the Northeast."

Right-to-work laws, which originated in the Jim Crow South, prohibit unions from negotiating contracts that require dues from non-union members for the benefits provided by the union—in practice choking off union funding. Over the past decade, the laws have expanded into labor strongholds like Michigan and Wisconsin. New Hampshire has debated becoming a right-to-work state since former President Reagan took office, but more labor-friendly Republican state officials have resisted.

Legislators like Democratic State Rep. Brian Sullivan say there is now a new extremism in the Republican caucus. The Free State Project—"an effort to basically turn [New Hampshire] into a libertarian island"—is part of a larger ideological shift that is, he says, "definitely growing."

Campaign spending has helped shape the New Hampshire legislature, too. A report in the *New Hampshire Union Leader* finds political action committees contributed nearly $100,000 to Republican state Senate candidates by exploiting a loophole that allows special interests to make multiple contributions. In this case, every contribution was traced to a single advocacy group, the New England Citizens for Right to Work, and to its out-of-state donors.

Glenn Brackett, president of the New Hampshire AFL-CIO, says legislators who accepted "out-of-state money" should have to answer to the public. "[It was] an abdication of their sworn constitutional duties to the citizens of New Hampshire and their constituents," Brackett explains. "Right to work is not an organic program. … It's being driven completely by out-of-state

special interests, and [people] are accepting basically campaign contributions for their votes."

New Hampshire also has a requirement for legislators to attend sessions in person, despite the risks posed by Covid-19. That requirement could pave the way for right to work this year, despite past defeats. "We have a lot of Democrats that are not going to the general sessions because of concerns about Covid," according to Democratic State Rep. Dan Toomey. "If everything were normal, I wouldn't be worried about [right to work] at all."

House Democrats, led by House Minority Leader Renny Cushing (who has stage four cancer), sued Republican Speaker of the House Sherman Packard over the requirement, alleging Packard violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by refusing to make remote accommodations for legislators with serious health risks. But a district court dismissed the suit February 22.

Toomey's fears appear to be warranted. Other controversial bills have already advanced despite several state lawmakers being unable to cast votes, including anti-choice legislation passed two days after the district court's ruling. According to the *Union Leader*, House Republicans also reversed the previous Democratic majority's positions on education aid, gun control and redistricting that same week. The New Hampshire AFL-CIO has since distributed personal protective equipment in an effort to address the safety concerns of legislators from both parties.

Montana's legislature voted down right-to-work legislation March 2, and a similar bill has been reintroduced in the Missouri state legislature, but New Hampshire would become the first right-to-work state in the Northeast—with potentially far-reaching consequences.

"When states like Wisconsin and Michigan went down to right to work, it was a message to the entire country that states that have a long labor tradition can be vulnerable to anti-labor legislation," Sullivan says. "Wisconsin had the first public-sector bargaining law, and now they don't have one."

Although hopeful that unions and legislative allies can stop right to work and other conservative priorities, Ley is preparing for a fight.

"Labor unions lead the way," Ley says. "The gains that we're able to make often get transferred to and aid those who are not members of our unions. [This is] a corporate assault on working families and working people across the United States."

C.M. LEWIS is an editor of Strikewave and a union activist in Pennsylvania.

Is It Nina Turner's Turn?

CLEVELAND—Former Ohio State Sen. Nina Turner calls into a virtual fundraiser February 24, hosted by Our Revolution, the grassroots political advocacy group that used to call Turner its president. The event is one of dozens as her run for Congress ramps up in Ohio's 11th Congressional District, around Cleveland and Akron.

Per usual, Turner includes a call for radical change.

"This nation is going to be bet-

THIS MONTH IN LATE CAPITALISM

- **OPIOIDS KILL TENS OF THOUSANDS ANNUALLY,** so four Big Pharma corporations are paying out $26 billion for the role they've played in the crisis. Of course, Johnson & Johnson, McKesson, AmerisourceBergen and Cardinal Health still "disavow any wrongdoing or legal responsibility." And they'll rake back in $1 billion each from related tax deductions. So, four cheers for corporate tax deductions!

- **SEVEN-YEAR-OLD LIZA'S BRAIN SURGERIES** are being funded one lemonade at a time, thanks to the stand she set up in Birmingham, Ala. (Liza's mom did purchase additional health insurance but is still short thousands of dollars.) As Republican Rep. Buddy Carter (Ga.) once said (despite the pandemic), the United States has the "best healthcare system in the world." Liza says, "I hope I make it. ... I feel like I'm not [going to make it]."

- **COVID-19 VACCINES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE FREE** at point of service, but reports are surfacing of providers charging fees, like the $195 "vaccine consultation" billed to a patient at Chicago's Michigan Avenue Immediate Care. After public outcry, the clinic says it will end the practice. No word yet on what fee-cancelation fees may be incurred.

- **THE BATTLE FOR THE COVETED "RICHEST-PERSON-IN-THE-WORLD" TITLE** continues between Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos and Tesla CEO Elon Musk. Bezos is ahead at press time with a net worth of $180 billion (Musk is at a paltry $166 billion). According to Rupert Hoogewerf, whose Hurun Report tracks these figures, "The world has never seen this much wealth created in just one year ... [un]expected for a year so badly disrupted by Covid-19." Hindsight is, after all, 20/20.

NEW YORK—Hundreds demonstrate at a rally February 20 in Washington Square Park, denouncing white nationalism and standing in solidarity with the Asian American community in response to a wave of Covid-related violence. In the city, anti-Asian hate crimes increased more than ninefold between 2019 and 2020. Advocates blame the Sinophobic rhetoric of former President Donald Trump, who referred to the coronavirus as the "China virus." Federal agencies are banned from using the phrase under President Joe Biden, whose executive order cited its potential to incite discrimination. (Photo by Dia Dipasupil/Getty Images)

ter because there are some 21st-century freedom fighters who are willing to put it on the line," Turner tells attendees.

Turner, who frequently cites famous Black politicians and activists, this time references former Rep. Barbara Jordan (D-Texas), who famously said in 1977: "What the people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise."

"Whether it's dealing with the damage that we're doing to Mother Earth, to ensuring that everybody in this nation has Medicare for All, to canceling student debt, to dealing with the injustices in the criminal justice system—you name it, baby, that is about creating an America that is as good as its promise, for everybody," Turner says.

Turner announced her run to replace Rep. Marcia Fudge in December 2020, shortly after President Joe Biden announced Fudge as his pick for secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Turner is one of seven Democratic candidates, but what sets Turner apart early is her national following.

Turner quickly won an endorsement from Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), whom she campaigned for in the 2016 and 2020 Democratic presidential primaries. Reps. Cori Bush (D-Mo.) and Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) endorsed Turner the day she announced. The progressive political action committee Justice Democrats endorsed Turner in January, and Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) and Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) followed suit in February.

"I'm looking to have her seated next to me, fighting this fight," Bush says at the February fundraiser. "We need somebody like Sen. Nina Turner who is unapologetic, who is unbossed, who is not ashamed and not afraid of her progressive values."

Inside the district, no polling data has been released and campaign finance reports have been slow. But in the first few weeks of the campaign,

Turner—who has pledged on Twitter not to accept any lobbyist or corporate PAC money—had raised $646,744. The next-highest fundraiser, Cuyahoga County Councilor (and local Democratic Party Chair) Shontel Brown, had around $40,000.

Liz Shirey, Turner's campaign manager, says they raised more than $1 million by early February in "tens of thousands of small-dollar donations from across the country."

The former state senator's local name recognition goes back more than a decade. Turner served on the Cleveland City Council from 2006 to 2008 before being appointed to the Ohio Senate. She won her seat in 2010 but chose not to run in 2014 to make a bid (unsuccessfully) for Ohio secretary of state.

Turner is joined in the race by Brown, former Cleveland Councilor and current state Sen. Jeff Johnson, former state Rep. John Barnes Jr., former state Sen. Shirley Smith, and lesser-known candidates Tariq Shabazz and Bryan Flannery. Based on fundraising and endorsements, Turner and Brown are considered the frontrunners.

In a state that went for former President Donald Trump in 2020, District 11 is a Democratic stronghold. Demographically, it is 53% Black with a strong working-class voting base and a median household income of $42,000.

Turner's platform includes a $15 minimum wage, recurring stimulus checks and free public college, which she believes her working-class constituents need.

"I'm running for big mama who needs some relief," Turner says. "I'm running for the babies in our community, some of whom don't have the hardware, the software, the internet connection they need to even be able to study and learn. I'm running for frontline workers."

Local endorsements in the race are slowly rolling in. The Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), which represents around 1,800 workers in the Cleveland area, endorsed Turner in late February, as did the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union Local 19, and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

ATU was one of the first unions to endorse Joe Biden in the 2020 primaries, so its vote of confidence in Turner hints at her ability to win over mainstream organizations, despite the more traditional Democratic candidates.

Still, Turner faces stiff competition to win the labor vote. Brown has the support of the local Bricklayers Union, the Pipefitters Union, the Cleveland Building & Construction Trades Council and the Black Contractors Group, among others. The steelworkers have yet to endorse.

Fudge's seat became officially vacant when her federal appointment was confirmed by the Senate on March 10 and she resigned from the House of Representatives, paving the way for Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine to call a special election. The primary will likely be in early May.

Turner has faith in her district and believes voters want real, systemic change.

"They want to know that their vote does really matter," Turner says. "That when they do vote for Democrats, that something materially is going to change in their lives."

NUALA BISHARI is a freelance reporter based in San Francisco, Calif.

The NHS Gives Britain a Shot in the Arm

LONDON—Dr. John Lister watched in horror as the United Kingdom's Covid-19 mortality rate climbed above 1 per 1,000, one of the highest death rates in the world since the start of the pandemic. So, when the 71-year-old Briton was informed he would receive the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in late January, he could hardly contain himself.

"It was a great moment of excitement when I got the notification," Lister tells *In These Times*.

Lister, a health policy expert and associate professor at Coventry University, was one of 15 million people in the United Kingdom to receive a Covid-19 vaccine before February 15, thanks to a vaccination program that has consistently ranked among the

DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES

Below: Nina Turner, national co-chair of the Bernie Sanders 2020 presidential campaign, rallies voters Feb. 26, 2020, in North Charleston, S.C.

three fastest in the world. As of mid-February, the U.K. government's tiered plan had succeeded in vaccinating roughly 80% of its healthcare workers and more than 90% of nursing home residents and people older than 70. These groups represent 88% of the country's Covid-19 deaths and make up roughly a fifth of its population of just over 68 million.

This development marks a turning point in a pandemic response once described as "a string of failures," which has left more than 100,000 people dead. While Prime Minister Boris Johnson has met the U.K. government's benchmarks, the real triumph belongs to the National Health Service (NHS), the universal healthcare system of more than 1,000 hospitals that spans England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Founded in 1948 in the wake of World War II, the NHS was the jewel of the Labour Party's social welfare state, the first of its kind in the West. Despite decades of efforts from conservatives to privatize the NHS, its three basic principles have endured: that treatment is free at the point of service, available to everyone (including non-residents) and publicly funded. The NHS vaccination program has been arguably the West's greatest success story: By February 15, 22% of the U.K. had received a first dose compared with 11% in the United States.

Even before it began jabbing the public, the NHS had built the infrastructure for a rapid vaccine rollout. "Our system is pretty unique," says Lister, co-founder of Health Campaigns Together, a broad coalition working to protect the NHS from cuts and privatization. "Because everybody is covered by the NHS, we have this database [that allows us] to identify risk factors in a way that no other country is able to do."

The private-sector parts of the U.K. response, meanwhile, have failed to achieve results. Hundreds of millions of

IN CASE YOU **MISSED IT**

ALL THE NEWS THAT WAS FIT TO PRINT— AND WHAT GOT PRINTED INSTEAD

HYPED

TRIVIAL

VITAL

IGNORED

Texas Sen. "Cancun Cruz" took an early spring break while fellow Texans froze to death. The even bigger conversation needs to be about our imminent climate catastrophe.

Amazon workers in Alabama are voting on whether to unionize. The decision could ripple across the right-to-work South.

The GOP has launched an all-out assault on voting rights in Georgia after being routed by Democrats.

The Senate parliamentarian being a woman has nothing to do with whether the Senate will (finally) hike the minimum wage.

Pulling Dr. Seuss books with racist illustrations is progress, not "cancel culture."

Biden bombed Syria without congressional approval, reigniting discussion about the limits of presidential power.

The famine in Yemen could devour a generation, according to the United Nations.

MyPillow CEO Michael Lindell, being sued for defamation over election conspiracy theories, says he expects to lose $65 million in revenue from boycotts. Cue the tiny violin.

Margaret Keenan, 90 at the time and the first U.K. patient to receive the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine, chats with Lorraine Hill at University Hospital Coventry on Dec. 9, 2020, a day after getting the shot.

JONNY WEEKS/POOL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

pounds have been squandered on "unusable" or otherwise inadequate personal protective equipment, and the outsourced contact-tracing failed to have its intended effect. Dr. Tony O'Sullivan, co-chair of advocacy group Keep Our NHS Public, says the decision to outsource contact tracing "led to a failure to rely on tried and tested systems that were in place with the National Health Service [based on] the cooperation between hospitals, primary care [physicians] and local [government]."

While vaccination rates in the United States are increasing, with President Joe Biden promising "enough vaccine supply for every adult in America by the end of May," the rollout looks haphazard by comparison. As of early March, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported just 27% of those 75 and older had received a first dose. For those 65–74, it was 28%.

Dr. James Kahn, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco, attributes the trouble in the U.S. rollout to the "highly variable and disorderly" distribution of vaccines. A *New York Times* report from February 19 finds some states had been stashing up to 6 million doses, while other states struggled to obtain enough for their most vulnerable residents.

Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, who works alongside Kahn at the Physicians for a National Health Program—an organization of more than 20,000 health professionals advocating for single-payer healthcare—believes a centralized health database (like the one the NHS maintains) could have prevented these problems. Woolhandler is also quick to praise another aspect of the U.K. rollout: Primary care physicians contact their patients directly and can review their personal health records, as well as help assuage any concerns about the vaccine.

"Everyone having longstanding access to medical care means that, when an emergency comes up, you can mobilize that access and get everyone in," Woolhandler says. "It's more than just a list of names and phone numbers; it's actually a set of relationships."

Maryland-based pediatrician and healthcare advocate Dr. Margaret Flowers ascribes the United States' sluggish vaccine rollout to the country's "disjointed" healthcare system and decades of underfunding for public health infrastructure. Online registration portals, Flowers says, are often inaccessible to Black and Brown communities who have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. The closure of more than 120 rural hospitals since 2010 has made it difficult for local residents to reach vaccination sites. And several private institutions have offered wealthy donors doses ahead of the most vulnerable people.

Whereas the FBI, the Food and Drug Administration and Interpol have each issued warnings about Covid-19 treatment and vaccine fraud schemes in the United States, the NHS offer of free service at point of care has inoculated the country against this kind of profiteering. "If anybody is offering to sell you the vaccine," explains Lister, "they're a crook."

Now, as every adult in the U.K. is being promised a first shot by the end of July (depending on supply), Lister says one thing is clear: "What [the NHS vaccine program] really does is prove the superiority of the universal health care model."

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VIEWPOINT

DANNY SJURSEN

Forever War Once More

On February 25, the U.S. military bombed Syria along its border with Iraq, where Iranian-backed militias were allegedly stationed. The missiles were launched across an international border and without the approval of Congress. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki framed the strike as a "defensive" response to a series of rocket attacks against the United States earlier in February, which killed one and wounded several Americans. The U.S. bombing left a "handful dead," according to one U.S. official on CNN.

Tehran, meanwhile, condemned the assault as "illegal and a violation of Syria's sovereignty," a perception gap certain to complicate President Joe Biden's plans to reverse former President Donald Trump's antagonistic Iran policies and to rejoin the Iran nuclear agreement.

The bombing will do little to further U.S. objectives in the broader region (which are difficult to articulate at this point), but it heralds something even more dispiriting: Nearly two decades after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Washington still does not understand the Syria-Iraq-Iran nexus, perhaps willfully so. The Biden administration is continuing to follow the failed U.S. blueprint for the Middle East—a reality that was thrown into sharp relief when the United States elected not to punish Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, even after a declassified intelligence report shows he was directly responsible for the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Few U.S. news outlets have even bothered to ask what these pesky paramilitary groups are up to. The U.S. military first intervened in Syria in 2014 following the Islamic State's takeover of the country's eastern territories, along with northern and western areas of Iraq. Iraqi Shiite groups intervened, too, and did a good amount of the fighting during the bloody recapture of ISIS-occupied territories when the U.S.-trained Iraqi army all but collapsed.

These militias, following Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's call to defend Baghdad—al-Sistani is the spiritual head of Iraq's Shiite Muslims—formed under an umbrella organization known as the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) with the support of the U.S. military. Over the past seven years, U.S. troops have seen their mission in Syria change and change again, from defeating ISIS, to preserving Kurdish autonomy, to "containing" Iran and Russia (which have fought the Islamic State in alliance with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad), to "securing" Syria's sparse oil wells. Iraq's militias have evolved as well—from defending Iraq against ISIS to resisting U.S. occupation.

So long as U.S. troops remain in place, significant segments of Iraq's population will see these paramilitaries (and their rocket attacks) as legitimate.

The U.S. intervention in Syria looks a lot like the disastrous 2003 invasion of Baghdad, which shattered the Iraqi state and ignited a brutal civil war. Neither country is likely to see a full withdrawal of U.S. troops in the immediate future.

Biden, who believes his son's fatal cancer was caused by exposure to toxic burn pits in Iraq, has repeatedly asked God to bless our troops. Yet, keeping U.S. soldiers in a war zone with no discernible aim might be considered a sacrilege.

The same can be said of the rocket attacks that provoked that "defensive" U.S. bombing in Syria. Iraqi militias pose no danger to the people of Baltimore or Little Rock, Ark., and Baghdad does not demand an American presence. To the extent Americans face a security threat at all, it is of our own making. What's more, Saudi Arabia—

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supposedly a key regional ally—has backed Sunni insurgents (including al Qaeda and other Islamist elements in the Syrian civil war) who have killed scores of U.S. troops across the Middle East.

Which brings us to the Biden administration's decision not to penalize bin Salman and the Saudi royal family, in any meaningful way, after the murder of a journalist working for a U.S. paper. When considered alongside the bombing in Syria, Biden's first major foreign policy decisions bring us no closer to an overdue exit from the Middle East than Trump's buffoonish bluster over the past four years. In fact, Biden is seemingly continuing the only thing American empire has left to offer: tough-guy theater for a rapidly dwindling audience—in this case, Tehran.

When Trump ordered the extrajudicial assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani in January 2020, the Iraqi parliament overwhelmingly voted to expel U.S. troops. The United States effectively ignored the resolution, with Trump threatening to sanction Baghdad "like they've never seen before, ever" if Iraq followed through. Then, as now, U.S. soldiers remain bait for attacks that Washington can cynically exploit in a "war on terror" entering its 18th year.

This tired playbook, which Biden inherited, is the one he seems intent to follow, no matter how unsuccessful it's been or how much chaos it has wrought.

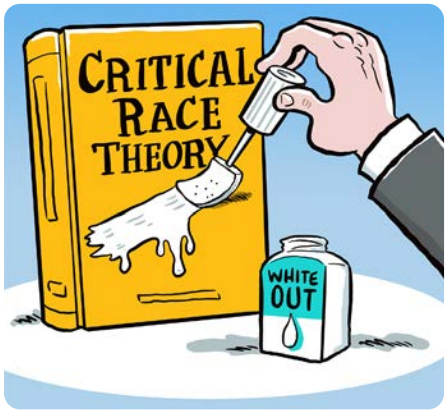
THE BIG IDEA

crit•i•cal race the•o•ry

noun

1. An analytical framework to critique institutionalized white supremacy. Pioneered by legal scholars, critical race theory is continuously evolving but remains rooted in an ethical commitment to human liberation. The framework emphasizes that race is socially constructed and intersects with other identities, such as gender. Proponents seek to use scholarship to transform social structures.

» Where did critical race theory come from? Critical race theory, or CRT, emerged in the 1980s among a group of legal scholars, including Kimberlé Crenshaw (also known for the related concept of "intersectionality"), to explain how racial subordination could persist within a system predicated on "equal rights." They objected to the dominant academic and popular conception of racism: that it resulted from irrational bias that could be corrected by changing the beliefs and behaviors of individuals. Discrimination endures, Crenshaw wrote, due to the "stubborn endurance of the structures of white dominance" enmeshed in the American legal (and socioeconomic) system.



» OK. So why has CRT suddenly become national news? In a September 2020 memo, the Trump administration attacked CRT as "divisive, anti-American propaganda" and banned federal agencies from conducting racial sensitivity trainings. That kicked off the former administration's full-frontal assault on the field of critical race theory, culminating with the release—on Martin Luther King Jr. Day!—of a "1776 Report" that erases the United States' history of racism.

**» The Biden administration reversed Trump's ban, but conservative lawmakers are pursuing similar measures at the state level. In Arkansas, a pair of bills introduced in January would cut funding for classes and activities promoting "social justice" for certain groups, specifically prohibiting curriculum using the *New York Times*' "1619 Project." The *Times* project, developed by reporter Nikole Hannah-Jones, re-examines the central role of slavery in U.S. history. (Republicans in Oklahoma and West Virginia have introduced similar legislation.)

> **"The commitment to free speech seems to dissipate when the people who are being gagged are folks who are demanding racial justice."**
>
> —KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW, PIONEERING LEGAL SCHOLAR

» In reality, how widespread is CRT? You may be surprised to learn our former president was exaggerating its prevalence. While a new right-wing website, CriticalRace.org, "reveals" more than 200 universities that offer courses engaging with CRT and urges parents to defend their children from "indoctrination," many primary schools still teach that Columbus "discovered" America, the American Revolution secured "inalienable rights" for all Americans and the civil rights movement solved racial inequality. In reality, this is just the latest in a long history of attacks on any attempts to discuss racism in K-12 and higher education curriculum.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TERRY LABAN

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For questions, please contact Joel Bleifuss at joel@inthesetimes.com.

Left: *In the late 1970s,* In These Times *staff pose for a photo on the fire escape at our offices at 1300 W. Belmont Ave.*

IN THESE TIMES

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF SAFEWAY 1048

The workers who kept us fed when their employers did not keep them safe

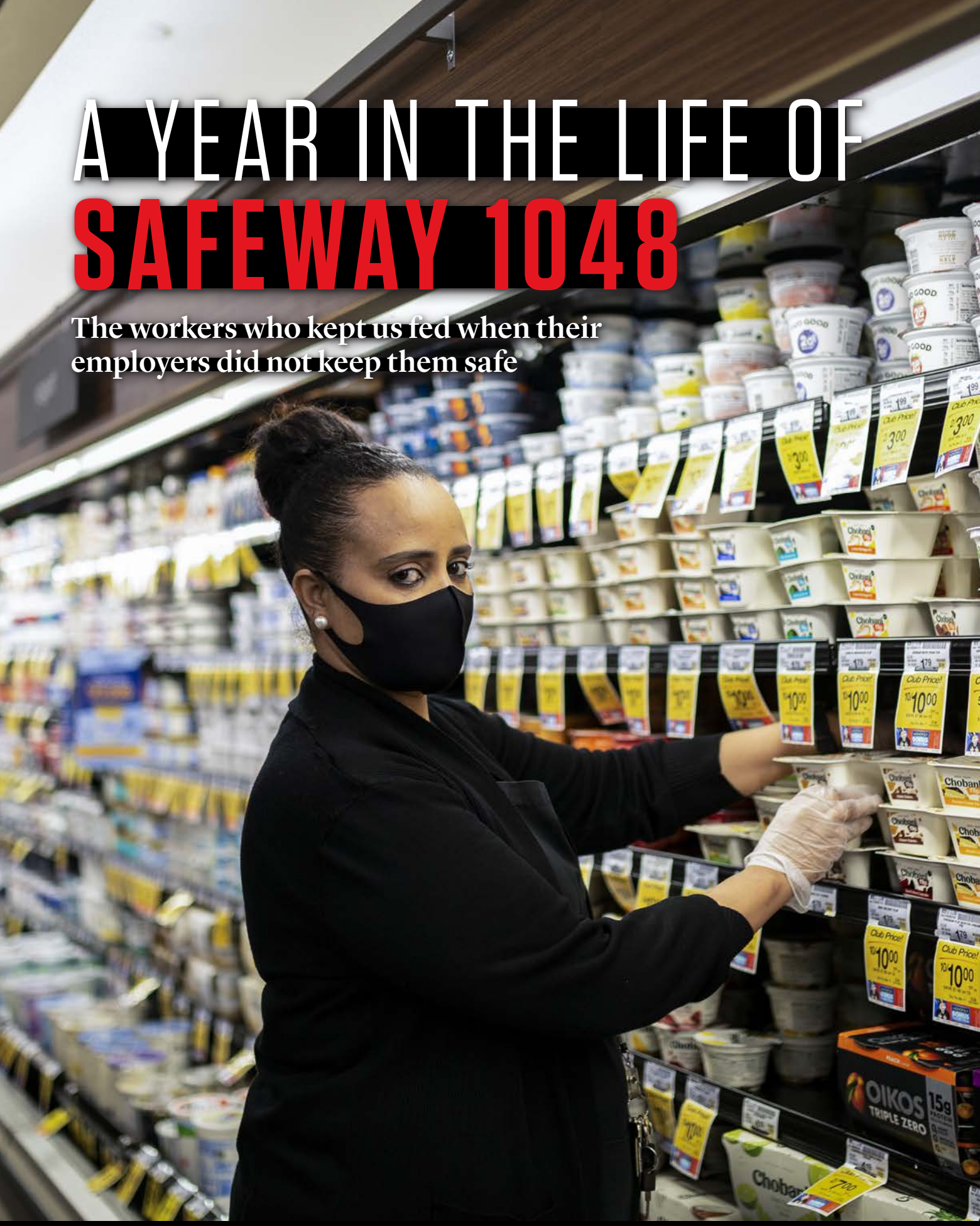


PHOTO BY FARRAH SKEIKY

Tekele Abraha does not run marathons, but she wears Hoka shoes. This thick-soled choice of elite runners can cost more than $150 a pair, nearly a day's pay for Abraha, who wears them to cushion the long hours she spends on concrete floors, six days a week. She hopes the shoes will stave off the grinding joint and back pain that afflicts many of her coworkers.

Abraha is a grocery worker. The shoes mark one of many unseen tolls of her job.

We talk in an airless, subterranean breakroom at Safeway store 1048 in Arlington, Va., a typical, prosperous suburb of Washington, D.C. The low-slung store sits partially submerged next to an underground parking garage on the main drag of the Rosslyn neighborhood, full of gleaming office buildings and apartment towers that look like office buildings. The store's staff is as diverse as Embassy Row, just across the Potomac River: Black and white, Eastern European, East African.

Abraha, a 42-year-old single mother of two, grew up in poverty in Ethiopia with her mother and four brothers, unable to afford three meals a day. She came to the United States at 17, without knowing English, and worked three fast food jobs. Sometimes, she slept in a McDonald's to save time. Eventually, Abraha scraped together $15,000, enough to buy her mother a six-bedroom house in Ethiopia, which fills her with pride.

For the past 18 years, Abraha has worked at Safeway. Six days a week, late into the night, she helps run the front of the store.

BY HAMILTON NOLAN

Her diligence is matched by the toll it has taken on her during the pandemic. In fear of bringing home coronavirus, she has not kissed her two college-age children since March 2020, even though they live with her.

"Every time I go home, I was insecure," she says. "I thought, 'I'm gonna take something with me. I'm gonna get sick. I'm gonna lose my children.'" Tears well up in her eyes when she contemplates the past year. But she is not one to complain.

"I don't have any choice," she says. "That's life. I have to pay the bills."

Left: Tekele Abraha works the yogurt aisle at Safeway 1048 in a D.C. suburb March 9. She says she has no choice but to work six days a week during the pandemic.

Heith Fenner, union rep for the workers of Safeway 1048, looks on March 5, a year into the pandemic.

FOR MANY PEOPLE, THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN A SHOCKing break from the normal rhythms of their personal and professional lives. And then there are grocery workers.

The lives of grocery workers have continued as usual, but with an added dose of deadly risk. They never really signed up for it. Though less celebrated than nurses or paramedics, grocery workers are quintessential frontline workers—the ones who have kept showing up so the rest of us can survive.

Like their counterparts across the country, the employees of Safeway 1048 have kept on working through a dangerous year. Their employer has given them mask policies, more cleaning in stores and a fleeting dose of hazard pay, but their lived experience has shown them the safety net has holes big enough to fall through. The experience has left many of them bitter.

Safeway is neither an outlier on safety issues nor a uniquely bad employer. It has given out personal protective equipment and established a contact-tracing program with up to two weeks of quarantine pay. The company also says it intends to offer the vaccine to every worker as soon as their city or county makes it available to grocery workers. The workers at Safeway 1048, despite being eligible per state guidelines, had not been offered the vaccine by early March. (The company said that "our pharmacies in northern Virginia are under the direction of the [Virginia Department of Health] not to vaccinate anyone under the age of 65.")

A review of policies at some of Safeway's biggest direct competitors—Walmart and Costco, as well as grocery conglomerates Kroger, Publix and Ahold Delhaize (Food Lion, Giant, Stop & Shop)—shows that Safeway's policies on hazard pay, sick leave, masks, worker safety and vaccinations are very much in line with the industry. It almost seems as if the grocery industry's employers, customers and regulators have settled on a set of standards without bothering to ask the workers whether they think those standards are adequate.

The one thing Safeway's workers have going for them is their union. They have seniority rights, pay minimums, guaranteed vacations, a grievance procedure and other basic protections their non-union counterparts lack. Safeway has been unionized since at least 1935, when it signed an agreement with the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, which later merged with the Retail Clerks International to form today's United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). Today, more than 6,000 Safeway workers in D.C. and the surrounding states are part of UFCW Local 400. Since Virginia is a so-called right-to-work state, no worker is required to pay union dues; about three-quarters of the 65 employees at Safeway 1048 are dues-paying members.

Their longtime union rep is Heith Fenner, a solicitous, ruddy-faced man who roams the store greeting everyone by name and checking in on new issues weekly. A former grocery worker who has served as a union rep at seven different grocery chains, Fenner is a virtual encyclopedia of the industry's problems.

"Safeway runs a skeleton crew," he says. "They run almost short-handed, particularly in key positions. When you get a small [Covid-19] outbreak in the store, that leaves you short-handed. Even worse, it becomes a catastrophe for trying to run the store when you have four or five people out."

It is not hard to imagine how this corporate dedication to reducing costs could create a strong disincentive for Safeway to pay close attention to safety measures, because safety measures can be expensive. Paid sick leave while workers quarantine will inevitably raise labor costs. Employees say, over the past year, their store's management has shown little institutional concern for worker health and safety, consistently prioritizing profits and corporate reputation over the lives of workers.

ANTHONY SISTRUNK, A FAST-TALKING, 39-YEAR-OLD D.C. native who has worked for Safeway since he was 17, had a rough 2020.

"The year started off fucked up," Sistrunk remembers. In January 2020, just as he was coming off a cancer scare, he had to have his appendix removed. He returned to work after recovering, but one day soon after he felt so dizzy he went home after only a couple of hours. He slept all day, woke up at night feeling bad and passed out on his floor. After a trip to the emergency room, Sistrunk got the bad news: He was the first employee of Safeway 1048 to test positive for Covid.

Dehydrated, coughing and his head throbbing, Sistrunk went on Facebook and made a quick post so his friends and coworkers would know he tested positive. He was primarily concerned about the health of his coworkers—masks were not yet mandatory, even for employees.

"And then," Sistrunk says, "all hell broke loose."

Shortly after his social media post, he says, he received a call from the Safeway human resources department, asking pointedly if he was "badmouthing" the company.

"I was offended," Sistrunk says. "I felt like Safeway was trying to stop any kind of bad media. They didn't want any kind of uproar."

Sistrunk was so sick he didn't return to work for seven weeks. He lost his sense of taste and smell and had trouble breathing. "The worst thing was the fatigue," he says. "I felt like someone snatched my soul."

Fenner called him every other day to check in. Sistrunk did receive paid sick leave—two-thirds of his average wage—as a benefit of his union health insurance plan. "God forbid if you're not a union member," Sistrunk says with the tone of someone looking back on a narrowly avoided disaster. "You're screwed."

When Sistrunk began with the company 22 years ago, he says it felt like an exclusive and highly valued job. He had to write an essay with his application about why he wanted to work there. There were employee outings: summer cookouts, bowling parties, crab feasts. But all of that faded away as the years went by and, it seemed to Sistrunk, management focused more and more intensely on profits. He sounds wistful when he reflects on his years there. "It's not that family bond anymore," he says.

Safeway is one of 20 grocery chains owned by Albertsons Companies, whose biggest investor is the private equity firm Cerberus Capital Management, named for the three-headed dog of Greek mythology that guards the gates of hell to make sure no one gets out. According to Andrew Whelan, an spokesperson for Albertsons, "When we learn that an associate has a confirmed case of Covid-19, our crisis response team conducts a close contacts investigation and may recommend that additional members of the store team self-quarantine." The company offers up to 80 hours of "quarantine pay" for those who meet its standards. Whelan says the store is "appropriately staffed."

Safeway uses the definition of "close contact" provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is 15 minutes or more within 6 feet of an infected person per day. It's an extremely high bar in a store where everyone is moving around. Consequently, employees and the union say management at Safeway 1048 rarely tells a worker to quarantine.

I got a firsthand view of this dynamic in action. When I went to the store to talk with workers, nearly everyone was discussing that an employee from the cut-fruit section had tested positive. I saw where the fruit-cutting happens: a windowless corner of steel tables in back by the breakroom, where several people work at once. If I worked in such close quarters with a Covid-positive person, I would certainly be worried.

Fenner says, after management was alerted to the situation by the union, they "cleaned and sanitized" the store but did not order any quarantines or alert employees to the positive test. Whelan disputes this, saying that one employee was quarantined due to "close contact." Whelan also says the company informs the staff when an employee tests positive, but workers say they usually hear through word of mouth or from the union.

Anthony Sistrunk talks with Heith Fenner on March 5. When Sistrunk was out with Covid-19 for seven weeks, Safeway HR was concerned—that he might be badmouthing the company.

PHOTOS BY FARRAH SKEIKY

Then there is the matter of customers who shop without masks. Every employee I spoke with cited this persistent minority of customers as a threat to their health, particularly because workers are not empowered to do anything about the situation except to offer a mask to customers.

"I've been called 'bitch' so many times" for asking customers to wear a mask, Abraha says. "I wish the company took it seriously."

The Safeway store does not have a security guard, meaning regular workers and supervisors become de facto security guards and mask-checkers. Calling the police doesn't feel like an option. "By the time you call the cops," Sistrunk says, the maskless shoppers "are out of here."

Whelan acknowledges that while the store has signs telling customers to wear masks, "If a customer refuses to wear a mask and to leave the store, we permit the customer to continue shopping in order to avoid conflicts that would put the store director or other employees and customers at risk."

Stuart Allison, 79, has cut meat for Safeway for over 50 years. He grew frustrated with customers shopping at the store without a mask during the pandemic.

Jason Winbush, a bearded, 44-year-old food clerk who has been at Safeway for 28 years, has a wife and five children at home. The combination of management's failure to alert employees directly about positive tests or to find a way to make customers wear masks has convinced him the company does "not at all" take the safety of its workers seriously. Winbush has even used some of his vacation days to get time away from the store because the mask situation worried him so much.

"It's starting to get [to be] too much," Winbush says. "It's stressful. Very stressful. It's written on the wall: Money is more important than your employees. And that's not right, cause you don't know if we have preexisting conditions, if my kids have preexisting conditions."

STUART ALLISON, A MAN WITH A PLEASANT SOUTHERN

drawl and the enormous hands of a heavyweight boxer, has been cutting meat at Safeway 1048 for 25 years. That is less than half of the time he has been working for Safeway, where he began as a meat cutter in 1968. (After more than a half-century with the company, Allison makes $24 an hour.) He is 79, works six 8-hour shifts a week, exercises regularly and appears perfectly capable of wrestling a man half his age.

Allison remembers seeing people die during a flu epidemic in the 1940s, and those experiences have left him a remarkably calm person. Even though Allison contracted a mild case of Covid in summer 2020, he has never allowed the events of the past year to throw him into a panic. "Things come up like that; they don't disturb me," he says. "Whatever it is, I just take it. I guess I'm more a positive thinker than a negative thinker. This is not my first time being around a virus."

But even Allison, a pinnacle of equanimity who has little fear for his own health, finds his hackles raised by what he sees as management's lax attitude toward customers shopping without masks in the midst of a pandemic. "They were saying, 'You gotta wait on people that don't have masks on,' " Allison says. "I think management is going along with what their superiors are telling them. But that doesn't work, to me. ... I told all the checkers, 'If they come in without a mask, don't wait on 'em.' "

The stress over worker health reached a high mark in the days surrounding the January 6 Trump rally and storming of the U.S. Capitol. Many of former President Donald Trump's supporters who had come to Washington for the event stayed in the hotels that dot the blocks around the Safeway in Rosslyn. Many of them came into the store with an aggressive disregard for safety.

"We had a really rough time that week," says Michele Miler, a 61-year-old file maintenance manager who has served as Safeway 1048's union shop steward for the past 25 years. "They were coming in without no mask."

In fact, the employees I spoke with remember the week of

January 6 as one in which they were left to fend for themselves. As our nation's political insanity invaded their workplace, some workers say they refused to serve maskless Trump supporters; one says she just argued with the maskless and endured insults; most said they were constantly uncomfortable and disappointed that Safeway did nothing to save them.

Sistrunk says that when he asked a manager to intervene, the response was that the company didn't want bad press in an age when everyone has a cell phone.

Abraha says some of the Trump supporters ignored her request to wear a mask; one even handed her his used mask and demanded she throw it away for him. "If I call the police, I don't know what's gonna happen, because of politics," Abraha says. "What about if I lose my job? ... It's crazy."

> "I think management is going along with what their superiors are telling them. But that doesn't work, to me. ... I told all the checkers, 'If they come in without a mask, don't wait on 'em.' "
>
> —**Stuart Allison**

THE PANDEMIC HAS BEEN GOOD FOR BUSINESS AT GROcery stores. Everyone remembers the empty shelves in spring 2020 as people stocked up, just in case. Albertsons saw its sales rise a remarkable 47% in March of 2020; by December, year-over-year sales were still running 12% higher. All of these sales were enabled by the fact that thousands of grocery workers, just like those at Safeway 1048, continued to come to work, putting their own health at risk to ensure stores could sell food.

What did those workers get in return? At Safeway, they got a $2 "hazard pay" wage bonus from March 15 to June 13, 2020, with two one-time bonuses adding up to about $350 for full-time employees (less for part-timers, the vast majority of the workers). In other words, hazard pay ended when the country was seeing around 22,000 new daily cases of the coronavirus. Even when cases rose to 300,000 per day by January 2021—a 1,264% increase in risk—hazard pay never came back.

Whelan, the Albertsons spokesperson, justified this discrepancy by saying, "We are not currently offering appreciation pay at this time because businesses large and small across our operating areas have reopened and resumed operations."

This argument is a bit of sleight of hand—right down to the use of the phrase "appreciation pay" rather than hazard pay. First, state governments ignored public health risks and reduced business restrictions (which fueled Covid surges and increased the number of hazards for workers). Then, companies used those policies as an excuse not to take more action or offer workers more compensation. Poof: Thanks to poor public health policies, businesses made their own obligations disappear.

The flagrant hypocrisy of praising frontline workers as heroes while denying them payment for their heroic work is a textbook example of corporate greed and the primacy that shareholders have over labor.

And that so few grocery workers emerged from 2020 with long-term raises is a textbook example of union workers squandering their labor leverage. The moment certainly marks a national failure by the UFCW, the nation's biggest food and retail union, which has been unable to secure any real lasting gains for its members, even as public regard for grocery workers soared.

Every Safeway employee I spoke with thought that, at a minimum, the $2 hazard pay increase should have become permanent. They wish everyone would wear a mask. They wish they did not have to rely on word of mouth to learn someone from work has Covid.

They live in fear of getting their families sick. They rise at 4 a.m., work six days a week and casually discuss the many ways the job has destroyed their bodies.

They do this whole routine for decades for, if they are lucky, a $20 wage.

If they had stopped—if they had shut down the nation's groceries—there would have been panic. But they worked.

We ate.

From the perspective of the workers themselves, 2020 was a year of swallowing harsh insult after harsh insult. When I asked Marilyn Williams, who has worked at Safeway 1048 for the past eight years, what she thought of the quick disappearance of hazard pay, she paused for a long moment, then said, "Ha. Ha.

"That's my reaction.

"Ha. Ha." IN

HAMILTON NOLAN is *In These Times*' labor reporter.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STUART ALLISON

Trump Created a Shadow System To Expel Migrants. Biden Embraced It.

On Trumped-up "public health" grounds, migrants are whisked away in the night

BY TINA VÁSQUEZ

A man calls the Phoenix Police Department on January 29—his uncle has been kidnapped. Smugglers are holding his uncle at a drop house. They had helped his uncle, a newly arrived undocumented immigrant, cross the border. Now, they want more money.

After the police arrive, agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement show up. They apprehend the uncle and dozens of migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, including three children.

So far, the events that unfolded are disturbing but standard practice. In Phoenix, local police and federal immigration authorities have long cooperated.

But what happened next was part of something new.

To find out where these migrants were taken, grassroots migrant justice organization Puente Human Rights Movement tapped its network of activists and legal advocates. Some were detained at the Florence Correctional Center in Florence, Ariz. Others, at the Eloy Detention Center in Eloy, Ariz. According to advocates (who spoke with one migrant's family members), the migrants were never asked if they were asylum seekers, and they were never asked to participate in a criminal investigation into human trafficking, which could have earned them temporary immigration visas.

Instead, advocates say, the migrants were held and expelled under an obscure provision in U.S. Code Title 42, the part of the law that covers public health and welfare. President Donald Trump weaponized Title 42 during the Covid-19 pandemic as a way to expel border-crossers more quickly and with less fuss, a practice that continues under President Joe Biden.

Title 42 Explained

The Trump administration invoked Title 42 early in the Covid-19 pandemic, under the pretense of protecting public health, to authorize Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to expel migrants without documentation near the border or at ports of entry. Migrants subjected to Title 42 are whisked away, leaving almost no trace in the U.S. immigration system.

That mechanism—expulsion—is different from deportation.

In deportation, migrants are first admitted into the United States. They receive an Alien Registration Number, or A-Number. And, unless they qualify for "expedited removal," they get to ap-

pear before a judge. Even in expedited removal cases, asylum seekers who pass a "credible fear interview" get a hearing. No matter how broken and punitive the process is, there is, at least, a process. Expulsion results in the same ejection of migrants from the United States, but without any of this process.

Title 42 has sealed the border in a way that anti-immigrant zealot Stephen Miller, a top Trump aide and the policy's biggest proponent, could have only dreamt of.

At the start of the pandemic, Title 42's forerunner, the 2019 Remain in Mexico policy, had already pushed approximately 60,000 asylum seekers to Mexico—people who previously would have been allowed to wait in the United States for their cases to be adjudicated. At the urging of Miller, the Trump administration effectively closed the border using Title 42. Remain in Mexico hearings were indefinitely postponed and newly arrived migrants—including asylum seekers—were expelled.

Of course, for the anti-immigrant Trump administration, public health concerns were a mere fig leaf. According to the Associated Press, experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention balked at the Title 42 order, saying there was no evidence it would slow the virus. Public health experts stated that there was no scientific justification for the policy. Masks, social distancing and screening measures at the border could make migration safe.

Crucially, experts noted, the government would also need to stop holding newly arrived migrants in group detention centers and instead allow them to shelter with their families or community contacts in the United States.

ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLA TRUJILLO

These alternatives to detention programs have existed for years, enabling asylum seekers to reside in the United States as their cases are adjudicated.

Beginning in February, the Biden administration began its slow reversal of Remain in Mexico (frustrating those who wanted it immediately rescinded) by processing a couple dozen asylum seekers a day in some ports of entry, including San Diego and El Paso.

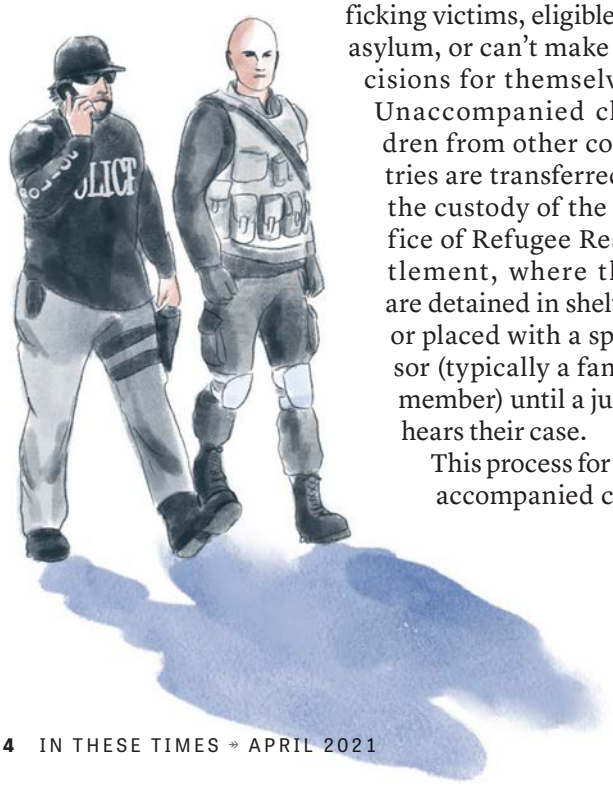
Title 42 expulsions continue on a daily basis.

On February 10, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki had a message for migrants seeking life-saving asylum: "Now is not the time to come." Psaki cited Biden's limited time in office as the reason "a humane, comprehensive process for processing individuals" at the border does not yet exist. In the meantime, Psaki said, a "vast majority of people will be turned away."

Trump's Kids

Outrage over the Trump administration's Title 42 expulsions exploded in summer 2020 after federal immigration authorities secretly contracted with a private security firm to detain children and families at hotels. Unaccompanied children were of particular concern.

Otherwise known in the immigration system as "unaccompanied alien child[ren]," these minors migrate alone to the United States without authorization. In theory, minors have significantly more protections than adults, because of laws such as the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and the *Flores* settlement agreement (which outlines basic standards of care for immigrant children in federal custody). Before being sent back across the border, Mexican and Canadian children must be screened to determine if they are trafficking victims, eligible for asylum, or can't make decisions for themselves. Unaccompanied children from other countries are transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, where they are detained in shelters or placed with a sponsor (typically a family member) until a judge hears their case.



This process for unaccompanied children impeded the Trump administration's ability to deport newly arrived children as easily as it wanted. So, instead, under Title 42, children as young as one year old were put into black sites under the supervision of unlicensed transportation workers employed by a private company, contracted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) spoke with some of these children. According to TCRP senior attorney Karla Marisol Vargas, the organization learned that there were children held in hotel rooms, watched over by guards, for days. Phone calls were generally forbidden. This meant children could be driven to the airport for expulsion flights in the middle of the night, with many of their families not even knowing they had been in federal custody.

Beyond violating asylum laws, the Trump administration's use of Title 42 also created a shadow system that made tracking these migrants impossible.

There was no record of these children in the regular immigration system, no A-Number, no information about where they were detained. It was as if they didn't exist, according to Vargas, who has advocated for children subject to Title 42. Attorneys eventually learned these children instead received Title 42 identification numbers, which were entered into a shadow tracking system.

An ongoing class action lawsuit from the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children prompted a judge in November 2020 to block the federal government's ability to continue using Title 42 to detain children in black sites. Another court reversed the ban on January 29, but there have been no reports to date of children being held in hotels under the Biden administration.

The use of Title 42 to expel adults who cross the border without documentation, however, continues.

Biden's Migrants

Presently, under Title 42, adult migrants found at the border without documentation (who are not "amenable to immediate expulsion to Mexico or Canada," per a CBP memo) are detained, then expelled to their home country. Border Patrol's "portable command stations" process migrants in the field, allowing "expeditious" expulsion—meaning they are transferred to ICE custody, where, in the name of public health, they are detained in crowded facilities where Covid-19 is known to spread. ICE then expels these immigrants (and the virus, if they have contracted it) all over the world.

In total, between March 2020 and January 2021, Title 42 was used more than 450,000 times at the U.S.-Mexico border. Many of these people would otherwise have undergone the asylum process.

In the first 11 days of February, the Biden administration commissioned planes to fly about 900 Haitians seeking asylum back to Port-au-Prince under Title 42, according to an analysis by Jake Johnston of the Center for

Economic and Policy Research.

On February 23, more than 60 members of Congress signed a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas calling for an end to Title 42 expulsions, focusing specifically on expulsions to Haiti.

"Many migrants are at high risk of exposure to Covid-19 while being detained in the United States pending their expulsion or deportation to less-resourced countries with severely strained health systems," the letter says. "Haiti, for example, has only 124 [intensive care] beds and the capacity to ventilate 62 patients for a country of 11 million. The island nation also is mired in severe economic, security, and constitutional crises, yet has received more than 900 migrants since February 1. This includes a recent February 8 flight in which 72 people were deported to Port-au-Prince, including a two-month-old baby and 21 other children." (Although the letter used the term "deported," this was actually an expulsion.)

Title 42 has sealed the border in a way that anti-immigrant zealot Stephen Miller, a top Trump aide and the policy's biggest proponent, could have only dreamt of.

Red Flags

The use of Title 42 in Arizona is unprecedented.

Phoenix is a major metropolitan area that is a 150-mile drive from the nearest U.S. border, far from where enforcement of Title 42 would be expected, given that the policy is directed at people in the act of crossing over. But in September 2020 and January 2021, under Title 42—in different operations and during different presidential administrations—advocates report at least 125 newly arrived migrants were apprehended and processed.

The morning of Sept. 16, 2020, Sandra Solis, director of organizing and movement building for Puente, received a text message from a colleague about a multi-agency raid unfolding in Phoenix. Solis is accustomed to providing support when immigrant communities are targeted, but when she arrived at a home on residential 27th Avenue, something seemed off.

According to Solis, the chaotic scene included about 30 officials with the Department of Homeland Security (including CBP), the Phoenix Police Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Undercover officers mixed with armed officers in paramilitary gear as unmarked SUVs and trucks—and a tank—stood in front of the house. Migrants apprehended in the raid were herded into vans parked in an alley.

Solis says she became suspicious because CBP and DEA officials were on the scene—two agencies that almost never participate in Phoenix-area immigration raids. Later that day, in nearby Chandler, a similar raid was staged. Grassroots organizers and legal advocates were able to determine the migrants apprehended were expelled from the United States within hours.

No records of these migrants exist by A-Number in the U.S. immigration system, Solis says. They were disappeared.

The speed of the expulsions meant Puente was unable to establish contact with the migrants. Advocates never learned if they were trafficked or asylum seekers.

"The city of Phoenix has its own protocol for when people are victims of trafficking [and] essentially this was trafficking," Solis says. "All of these people should have been provided U-Visas [for victims of crime]. Instead, they were [expelled] without due process.

"I think that's one of the biggest, most important things to note: They're utilizing Title 42 to deny people who are victims of trafficking."

Local news outlets reported on the raids and cited narcotics search warrants, potential criminal activity and the apprehension of several dozen people "suspected of entering the country illegally," but only one referenced Title 42.

The use of Title 42 was confirmed, however, by Javier Gurrola, CBP executive officer of law enforcement operations, in an email to Losmin Jiménez, who worked in partnership with Puente as a former senior attorney at the Advancement Project, a racial justice nonprofit in Washington, D.C. First, he confirmed Border Patrol participated in a "multi-agency operation" Sept. 16, 2020, in two Phoenix-area locations, and took custody of 65 people, including unaccompanied minors, suspected of being undocumented.

Then, the email reads: "The majority of these detainees have been processed as per [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines (T42) to prevent the introduction of Covid-19 into the United States."

Solis says the multi-agency September raids remind her of how Arizona has piloted a partnership between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities before,

with a 2010 law known as SB 1070 that attracted attention and outrage nationwide for explicitly allowing racial profiling. The law, at the time, was the strictest anti-immigrant measure in the United States. Portions of the law were struck down by the Supreme Court, but the "papers please" provision that critics say allows racial profiling was not—meaning that police officers in Arizona are still required to make a reasonable attempt to determine the immigration status of anyone lawfully stopped if the officer has "reasonable suspicion" they are undocumented.

Copycat bills were introduced in other states, although most failed to make it into law.

SB 1070 solidified a police-ICE partnership in Arizona, creating what advocates call a *poli-migra* state, a slang term used in some Spanish-speaking immigrant communities to refer to the coordination of local police with federal immigration authorities.

Expelling Victims

Even before Arizona's SB 1070 law, the state had a history of piloting deeply harmful immigration policies and practices. For example, in 2006, Arizona became one of the first places to implement Operation Streamline, under the radar. This joint Homeland Security and Justice Department initiative created "zero-tolerance immigration enforcement zones" in which authorities could criminally prosecute migrants for "illegal entry"—where, previously, Mexican migrants would be returned to Mexico and non-Mexican migrants would have to appear before an immigration judge.

In effect, Operation Streamline pioneered the "crimmigration" system the U.S. now has, in which undocumented migrants are prosecuted through the criminal justice system, rather than processed through the civil immigration system.

Advocates with Puente fear it's only a matter of time before immigration authorities use Title 42 to expel migrants in cities beyond Phoenix—if it's not happening already.

After the September 2020 raids, Jiménez thought the use of Title 42 so far from the border could have been a "one-off thing." Then, it happened again.

On January 29, someone called Puente's crisis line to report a number of unmarked vehicles in front of a house on 14th Avenue. There are few media reports about the January 29 raid, but a statement to Prism and *In These Times* from Mercedes Fortune, Phoenix Police Department public information sergeant, confirms police responded to a caller reporting "a person who was being held against their will."

Officers found more than 50 people inside the residence and "determined the persons were involved in human smuggling," according to the February 19 statement. "The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement were advised

and they have taken over the investigation."

In instances of suspected human trafficking, the Phoenix Police Department is supposed to perform its own investigation. According to the department's Operations Order 4.48, the "papers, please" provision of SB 1070 does not apply if it may hinder an investigation by undermining cooperation. The order notes, in particular, the need for "significant cooperation of those involved" in human trafficking cases.

Instead, in the January 29 raid, the Phoenix Police Department appears to have simply handed the case to ICE. The police department did not respond to a query about whether it was conducting its own investigation. ICE, in an emailed statement to Prism and *In These Times*, says it took 60 people to the ICE office for processing. From there, according to advocates, the migrants wound up at the Florence and Eloy Detention Centers. (The Eloy Detention Center, in June and July of 2020, had one of the largest coronavirus outbreaks of any immigration detention facility in the country, and both centers had confirmed cases as of January.)

Children could be driven to the airport for expulsion flights in the middle of the night, with many of their families not even knowing they had been in federal custody.

Solis and her colleagues at Puente maintain ICE processed the migrants under Title 42, based on information from someone who was picked up in the raid and held at Eloy. (The names of undocumented migrants and their family members have been withheld for their protection.) Puente says it confirmed with a legal-aid attorney that the person was detained at Eloy and that they do not appear to have an A-Number. Since this person's release, members of Puente say another aid group has confirmed similar Title 42 findings.

A great deal of murkiness still surrounds the use of Title 42, including whether ICE even has authority to use it. The Trump administration's original memo outlining the use of Title 42 was directed at CBP and "specifically the United States Border Patrol," separate from ICE. In the first Arizona raid in September 2020, CBP was at the scene; at the January raid, advocates saw only ICE and the Phoenix Police Department.

When asked directly whether ICE has authorization to process newly arrived undocumented migrants under Title 42 without coordination from CBP, ICE spokesperson Alexx Pons would only say Title 42 is within the purview of CBP and "expulsions under Title 42 are not based on immigration status and are tracked separately from immigration enforcement actions."

ICE referred further questions to CBP. CBP did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

A Rogue System

The raids that unfolded around Phoenix are perhaps the first (documented) cases of Title 42 used to expel migrants far from the borders.

It is relevant to note that, while many associate CBP directly with the U.S. border, its reach is actually much larger. It has authority within 100 air miles of any land border or coastline, a territory that encompasses Phoenix, New York and many other major cities. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population resides within CBP's jurisdiction—in other words, the territory where Title 42 grants CBP license to quickly expel newly arrived migrants under the guise of public health.

That the Biden administration has so far chosen to continue Title 42 expulsions may surprise some, but not Solis. The community organizer anticipated Biden taking an "Obama-style" approach, a nod to the raids and mass deportations that occurred during President Barack Obama's years, when Biden was vice president.

"The people affected the most are those whose lives are affected by the immigration system, and this administration's not really doing anything super proactive," Solis says. "Title 42 is serving its purpose. It's doing what [Homeland Security] intended it to do, which is create a rogue system.

"Regardless of the presidency, when it comes to immigration, there's always a rogue system." ITT

This article was reported in partnership with Prism, a nonprofit news outlet that centers people, places and issues underreported by national media. Paco Alvarez and Brianna Bilter provided fact-checking.

TINA VÁSQUEZ is a senior reporter at Prism, covering gender, labor and immigration. She is based in North Carolina.

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The other day, a right-wing troll called in to demand that I defend describing democracy as a "sacred" value. He asked: "Do you have an argument in favor of democracy or just faith in it?" Explaining why I believe that we should always err on the side of equality, I told him:

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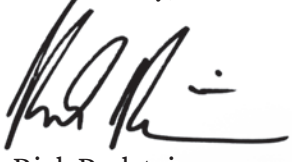

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> **—NOAM CHOMSKY,**
> *IN THESE TIMES* FOUNDING "SPONSOR"

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— *IN THESE TIMES* REMEMBERS —

RODNEY BLEIFUSS (1928–2021) died in January in Grand Rapids, Minn. Rod grew up on a farm in southern Minnesota. He was the son of a socialist public health doctor who voted for Eugene V. Debs for president, and a math teacher who supported the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

Rod earned his Ph.D. in geology in 1966 from the University of Minnesota, where (except for a stint at U.S. Steel) he worked throughout his life. He fully retired in 2018, clearing out his office at the university's Coleraine Minerals Research Lab in Coleraine, Minn., where he had once been director. Rod co-authored 10 metallurgical patents for the university and was sole patent holder of the "Row-Go" human-powered vehicle, coming soon to a bicycle path near you.

Rod is sorely missed by his wife, Meredith, his four children and three stepchildren, and his seven nephews, including *In These Times'* Editor & Publisher Joel Bleifuss.

The family asked that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to *In These Times* and Doctors Without Borders.

CYNARA STITES (1948–2020) died in March 2020 at her home in Storrs, Conn. A social worker and educator, Cynara wrote her dissertation on consensual relationships between students and faculty members, an expertise much sought after in the #MeToo era. She founded and led one of the first support groups for gay university students, the Gay-Straight Rap, and supported the group's members through the AIDS epidemic.

A lifelong champion for the just and the sensible, Cynara wrote the legendary poem "UConn Never Closes" about the University of Connecticut's reluctance to declare snow days in the 1980s and 1990s. Dozens of her letters to the editor on social and community issues were published in the *Hartford Courant* and *Willimantic Chronicle*. In 2018, Cynara testified to the state legislature's Public Health Committee in support of "An Act Concerning End-of-Life Care," an aid-in-dying bill.

Cynara is survived by her sister, her brother and her mother; her daughter, *In These Times* Executive Editor Jessica Stites; and her grandson, Wren, whom she never got to meet.

> *In These Times* is a rare beacon of truth-telling amid that swamp of political propaganda known as the media. It delivers the hard news one might expect from a free press. It explains the subtext for the continuing scandal of our decayed democracy. Read it—you will be regularly shocked by what other journals leave out."
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> **—WILLIAM GREIDER (1936–2019),**
> JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR OF *ONE WORLD, READY OR NOT*

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— *IN THESE TIMES* REMEMBERS —

PERRY ROSENSTEIN (1926–2020) died in April 2020. With his passing, *In These Times* lost a friend and American workers lost a champion. Perry was the son of Polish Jews who, having immigrated to New York at the turn of the 20th century, became labor movement activists.

Following World War II and a stint as a union organizer in the steel mills of South Bend, Ind., Perry had hoped to become a teacher, but he was blacklisted because of his economic and racial justice work. He became a captain of industry instead.

Perry's innovative manufacture of screws made him a millionaire. In 1983, Perry put his fortune to work at the Puffin Foundation, which supports artists, independent journalism and the Puffin Gallery for Social Activism at the Museum of the City of New York.

In 2009, the economic fallout from the Great Recession put the future of *In These Times* in doubt. Perry, as president of the Puffin Foundation, stepped up to help fund the "*In These Times* Growth Plan," which grew the magazine's subscriber base to its current 38,000 (up from fewer than 10,000 in 2010) and our full-time staff to 12 (up from 4 in 2010).

Perry is survived by his wife, Gladys Miller Rosenstein, and his son, Neal Rosenstein, who are building on his legacy at the Puffin Foundation, along with another son and daughter.

MICKEY FLACKS (1940–2020) died in April 2020 in Santa Barbara, Calif., where the former New Yorker moved in 1969 with her husband, the sociologist Dick Flacks. "Mickey always tried to be true to herself—and for that reason she was a role model for many women who came to know her," says Dick.

Longtime friends of *In These Times* founding editor James Weinstein, Mickey and Dick helped write the Port Huron Statement in 1962. In our 2012 anniversary cover story about the Port Huron Statement, Mickey recalls: "The [Students for a Democratic Society] spoke a language that was not redolent of the Germanic phrases of classical Marxism, but more like the cadences of the U.S. Constitution."

In 2018, the couple published a memoir, *Making History / Making Blintzes: How Two Red Diaper Babies Found Each Other and Discovered America*.

Bernardine Dohrn, who interviewed the couple at 57th Street Books in Chicago, remembers her friend as "a proud Jewish radical, who was perfectly comfortable being her passionate and modest self. A light to the world."

Mickey is survived by her husband, Dick, two sons and six grandchildren.

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>
> **—CAROLYN M. BYERLY,** PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION, CULTURE AND MEDIA STUDIES AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY

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> "I am just one example of hundreds of young progressive writers who've been able to publish and find their voice at *In These Times*. I simply cannot emphasize enough how important this is."
>
> —**CHRIS HAYES,** HOST OF *ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES* ON MSNBC AND FORMER *IN THESE TIMES* SENIOR EDITOR

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— *IN THESE TIMES* REMEMBERS —

DENISE D'ANNE (1934–2020) died in September 2020 at her home in San Francisco's Mission District. A longtime San Francisco city employee, she once served as the co-president of the Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club.

Denise, a transgender woman, transitioned in 1968 and then moved to the city, where she became a committed labor activist and proponent of social justice. In the 1970s, Denise helped establish the city's Commission on the Status of Women and a credit union for women. As president of the San Francisco Community Recyclers, she hosted a radio program about environmental justice. In 1997, Denise helped draft the sustainability plan for the city and county.

A member of Service Employees International Union Local 400, Denise served as shop steward, as editor of the Local 400 newspaper and as member of the executive board. She helped write new bylaws that, at her insistence, included a clause banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.

A longtime friend of *In These Times*, Denise remembered the magazine in her will. She is survived by her "adopted" grandson, Geoffrey Scott, whom she met in 1995 at a recycling center where she volunteered. (*Photo courtesy of Geoffrey Scott.)*

WE ALSO REMEMBER

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> At a time when dissenting views are almost nonexistent in mainstream media, the sanity and common sense I receive from *In These Times* is my monthly tonic. It helps keep me in good health physically and ethically.”

—STUDS TERKEL (1912–2008),
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> "It is incredibly important the work that *In These Times* does ... We can only understand that workers can win if we can talk about what their struggles are, so that we can all join together and use solidarity to ensure that workers do win."
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> **—SARA NELSON,** PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FLIGHT ATTENDANTS-CWA

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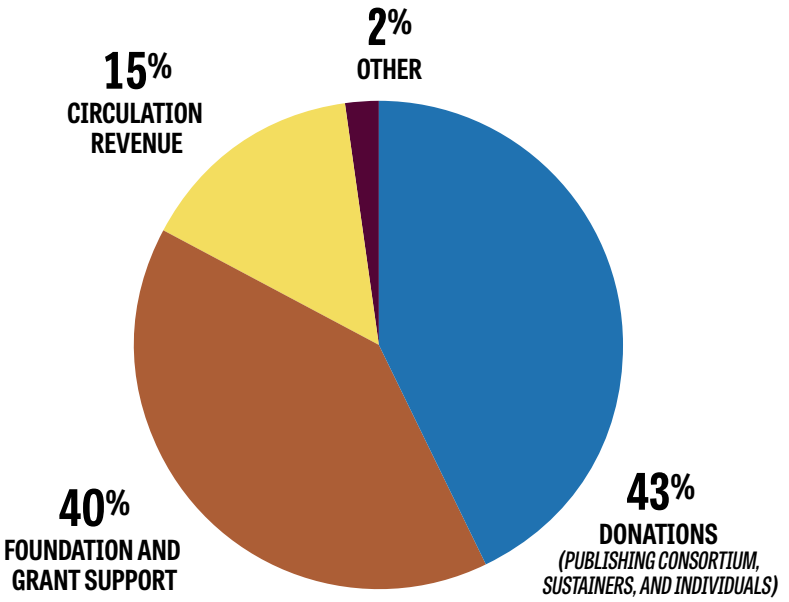

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Tatiana Zybin

Dear Reader,

As we put together this issue of the magazine, I imagine readers like you flipping through the pages—perhaps dragging your finger down the list of 7,081 names—to find your own. Your name is included to thank you for making *In These Times* possible in the chaotic year that was 2020.

When the pandemic broke, advertising revenue waned, and many journalism outlets were forced to reduce their coverage or stop publishing altogether. As a reader-supported publication, *In These Times* was able to escape this fate. Thanks entirely to supporters like you, we not only survived 2020, but we did not miss sending a single issue to press. I trust that our gratitude for your support radiates off the pages of this issue.

In 2021, the continuation of your support is key to the amplification of the broader progressive movement. With each donation you make, *In These Times* is able to connect readers like you with the causes you care about most: the rights of working people, access to healthcare, institutional racism, climate change complacency and more.

That's why we will keep asking for your contributions, this year and beyond. Your donations are one way in which you make this world a better place, and our solicitations for support are a reminder that a better world is possible.

Whether or not you find your name in this issue today, I hope you share in the belief that the fight for a better tomorrow is worth supporting. If so, please consider using the donation envelope in this issue to make a donation right now. Thank you again for all you do to support *In These Times*.

—Lauren Kostoglanis, Development Director

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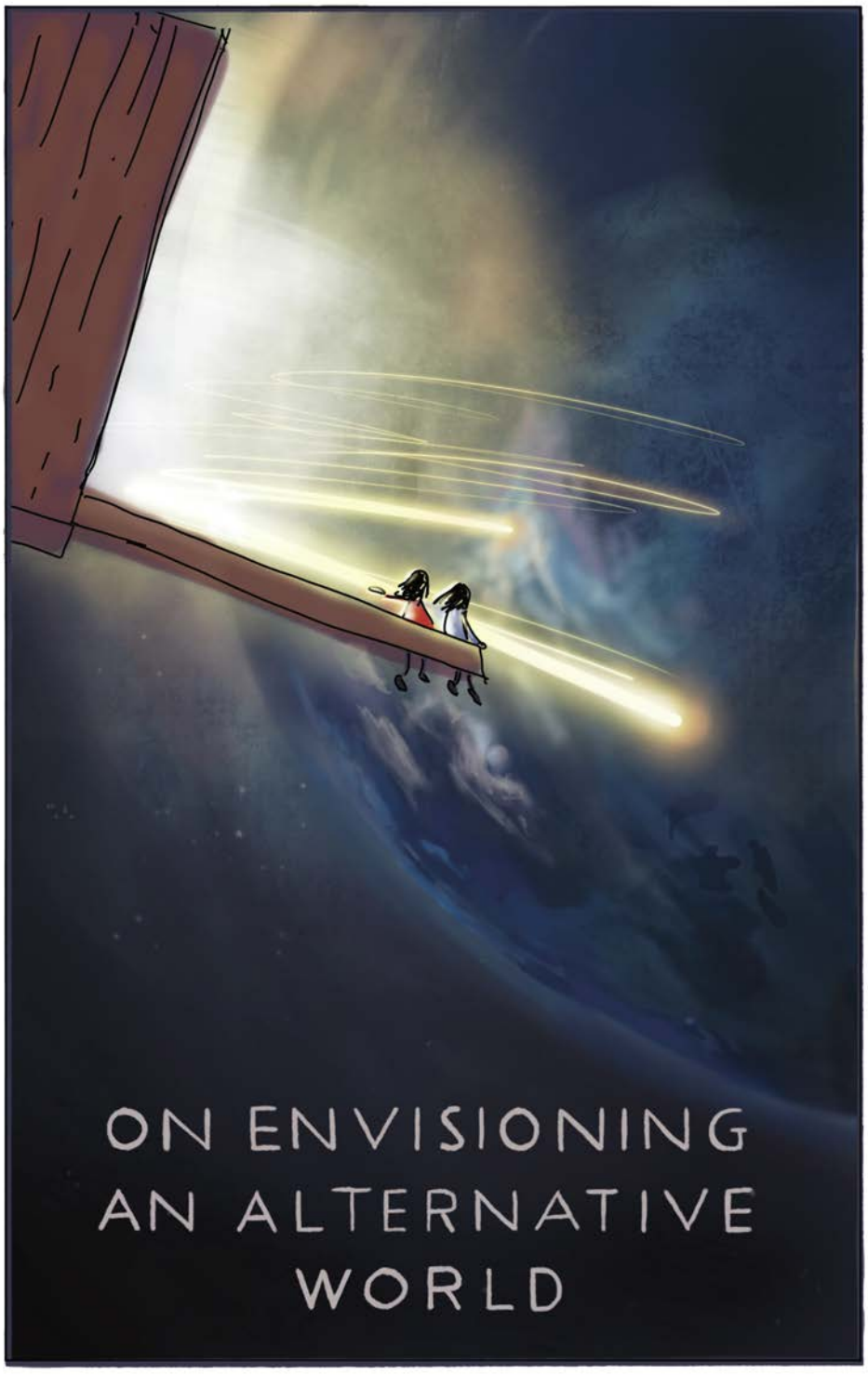
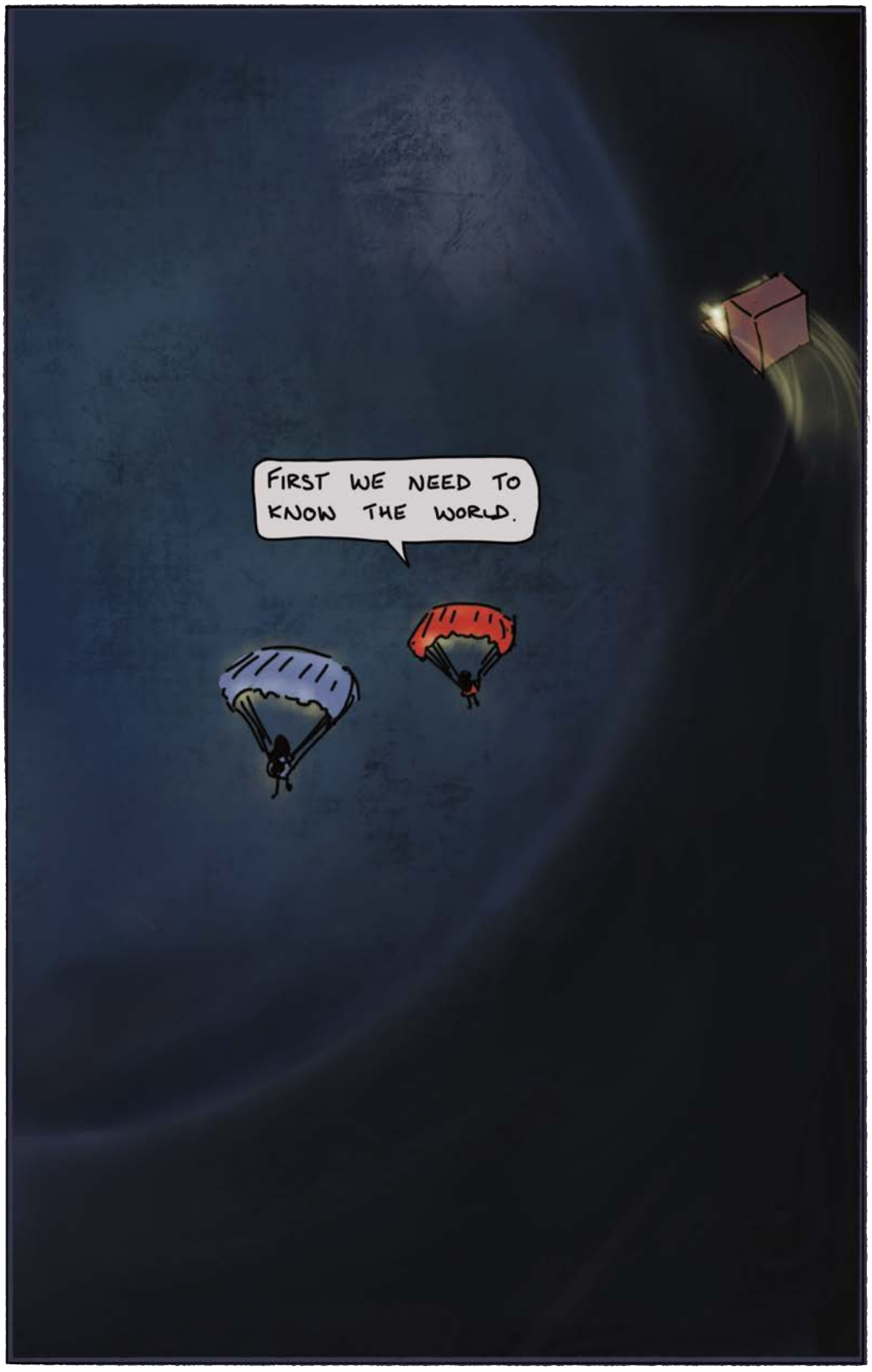


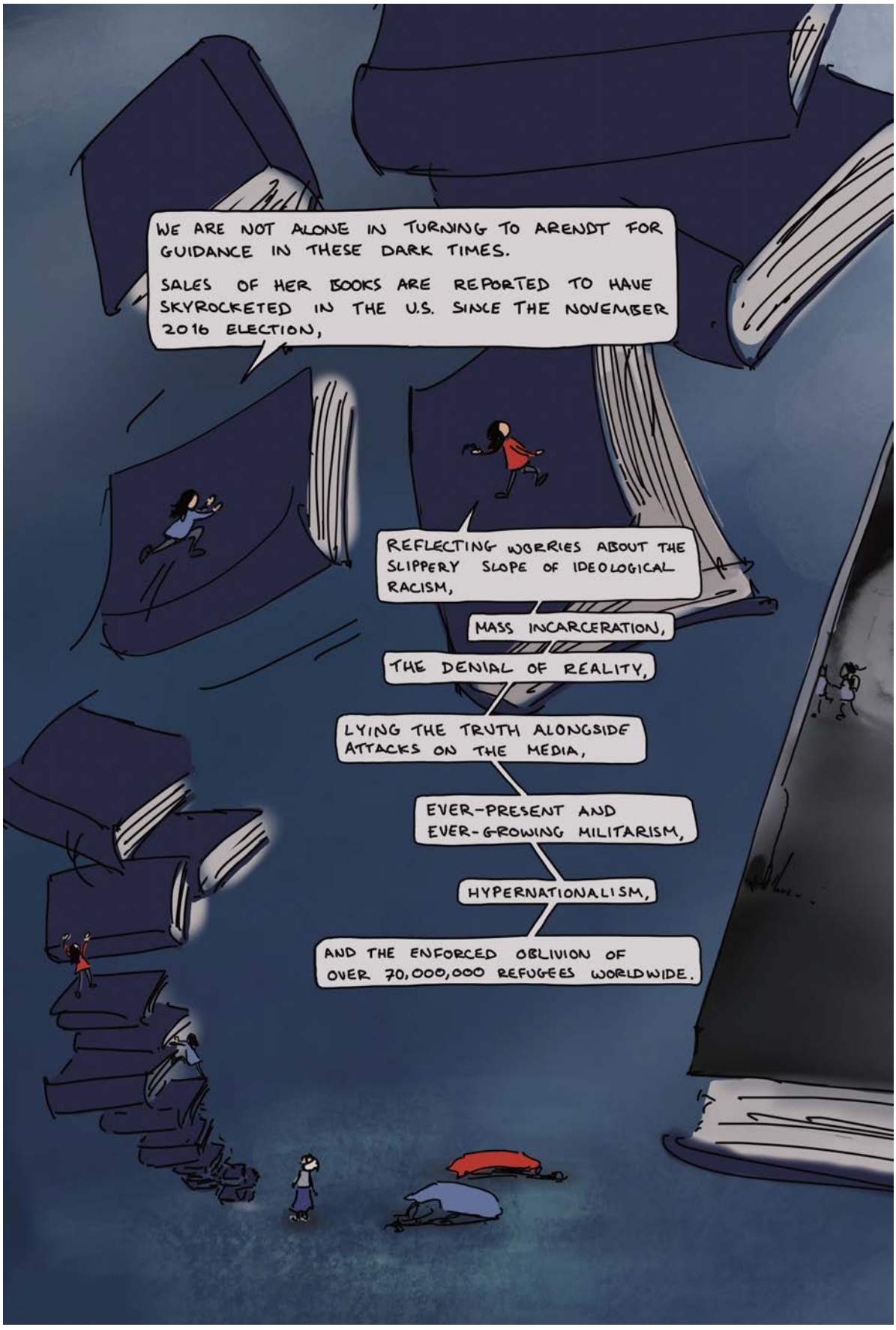
Artist Charlotte Corden was so inspired by Alisse Waterston's 2017 farewell address as president of the American Anthropological Association, given to about 1,000 anthropologists, that she spent the rest of her evening illustrating what she had heard—a meditation on the works of several epochal writers and thinkers. From those drawings, the idea for a graphic novel emerged: *Light in Dark Times: The Human Search for Meaning.*

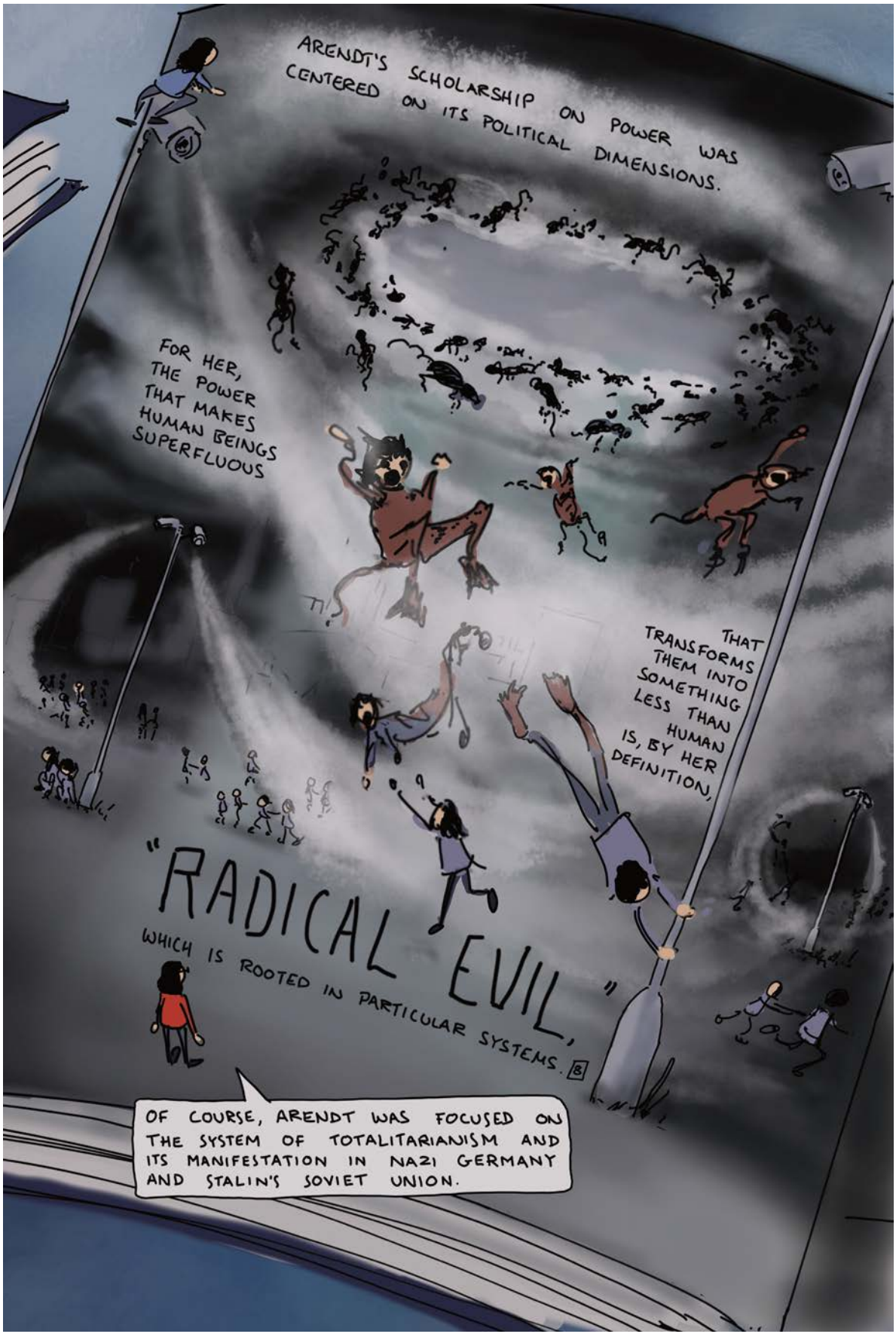
The crises of climate change, poverty and vast social inequity (among others) can feel overwhelming. Anthropologists hold that their study of humankind can lend critical understanding to help effect real change. *Light in Dark Times* offers one such attempt, explaining how anthropology can help navigate the perilous now. This excerpt from the book reflects on the work of German-Jewish author and philosopher Hannah Arendt.

ALISSE WATERSTON (writer) is a cultural anthropologist and chair of the department of anthropology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Author of six books, including the award-winning *My Father's Wars: Migration, Memory and the Violence of a Century*, Waterston studies the human consequences of systemic inequalities. She served as president of the American Anthropological Association (2015-2017).

CHARLOTTE CORDEN (illustrator) is an artist who explores the power of handdrawn images to reveal and describe complex truths in social science research. She earned a master's in anthropology from University College London. She has worked with the Young Foundation, British Cabinet Office and National Health Service. Corden studied fine arts at the London Fine Art Studios and the Art Students League of New York.


FIRST WE NEED TO KNOW THE WORLD.

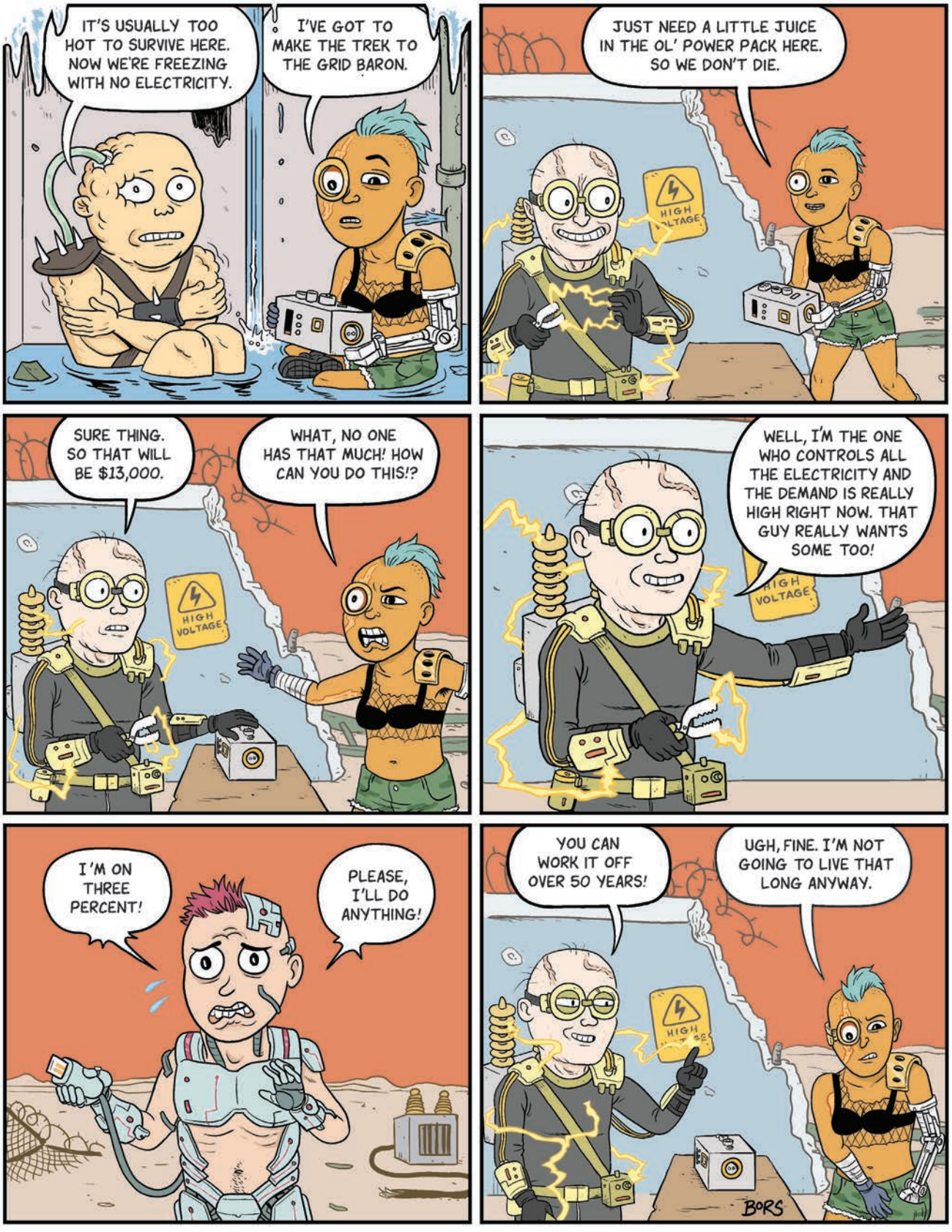

WE ARE NOT ALONE IN TURNING TO ARENDT FOR GUIDANCE IN THESE DARK TIMES.
SALES OF HER BOOKS ARE REPORTED TO HAVE SKYROCKETED IN THE U.S. SINCE THE NOVEMBER 2016 ELECTION,
REFLECTING WORRIES ABOUT THE SLIPPERY SLOPE OF IDEOLOGICAL RACISM,
MASS INCARCERATION,
THE DENIAL OF REALITY,
LYING THE TRUTH ALONGSIDE ATTACKS ON THE MEDIA,
EVER-PRESENT AND EVER-GROWING MILITARISM,
HYPERNATIONALISM,
AND THE ENFORCED OBLIVION OF OVER 70,000,000 REFUGEES WORLDWIDE.


ARENDT'S SCHOLARSHIP ON POWER WAS CENTERED ON ITS POLITICAL DIMENSIONS.
FOR HER, THE POWER THAT MAKES HUMAN BEINGS SUPERFLUOUS
THAT TRANSFORMS THEM INTO SOMETHING LESS THAN HUMAN IS, BY HER DEFINITION,
"RADICAL EVIL,"
WHICH IS ROOTED IN PARTICULAR SYSTEMS. [8]
OF COURSE, ARENDT WAS FOCUSED ON THE SYSTEM OF TOTALITARIANISM AND ITS MANIFESTATION IN NAZI GERMANY AND STALIN'S SOVIET UNION.


ARENDT ALSO WROTE ABOUT HUMAN ATTACHMENT AS A FORM OF FRATERNITY OR RECOGNITION OF A COMMON HUMANITY.
SHE OBSERVED THAT HUMANITY MANIFESTS ITSELF IN SUCH BROTHERHOOD MOST FREQUENTLY IN DARK TIMES. IT HAS APPEARED HISTORICALLY AMONG PERSECUTED PEOPLE AND ENSLAVED GROUPS.
THUS, HUMAN ATTACHMENT IS NOT A NATURAL AFFINITY BUT, FOR HER, IS THE GREAT PRIVILEGE OF PARIAH PEOPLES, THE OUTSIDERS.

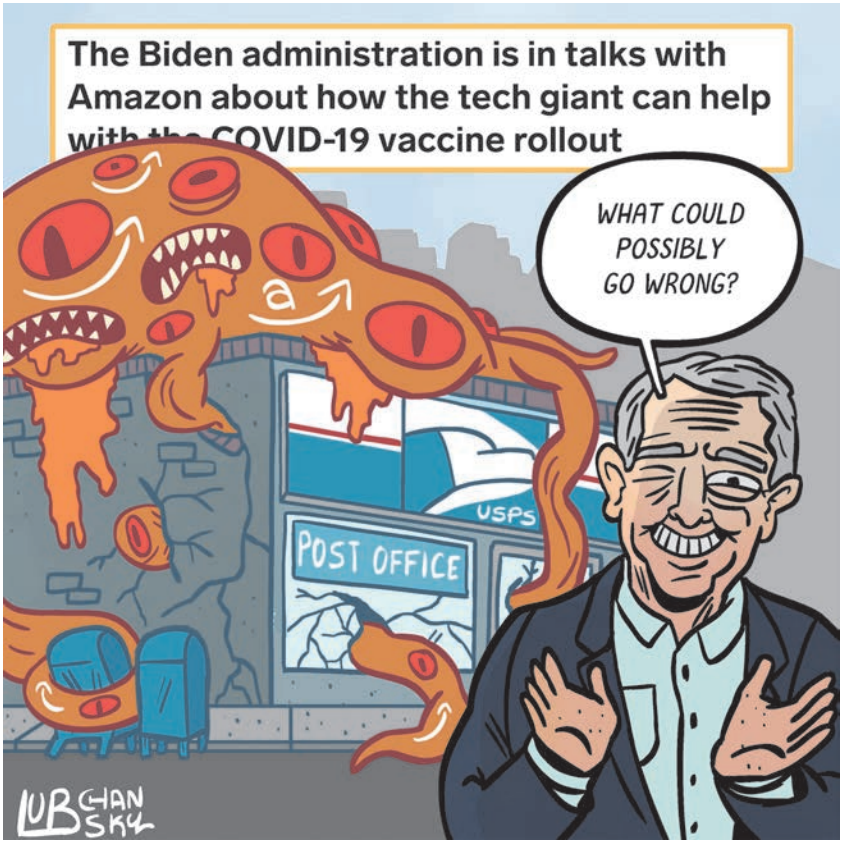

SHE HAD NO FAITH IN ENLIGHTENMENT IDEALS, WHICH TO HER LOOKED LIKE RECKLESS OPTIMISM IN LIGHT OF THE PRESENT REALITIES.
EVEN SO, ARENDT NEVER FELL INTO MELANCHOLY AND SHE SAW POSSIBILITY IN A PROCESS OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING ON A GIGANTIC SCALE.

MATT BORS

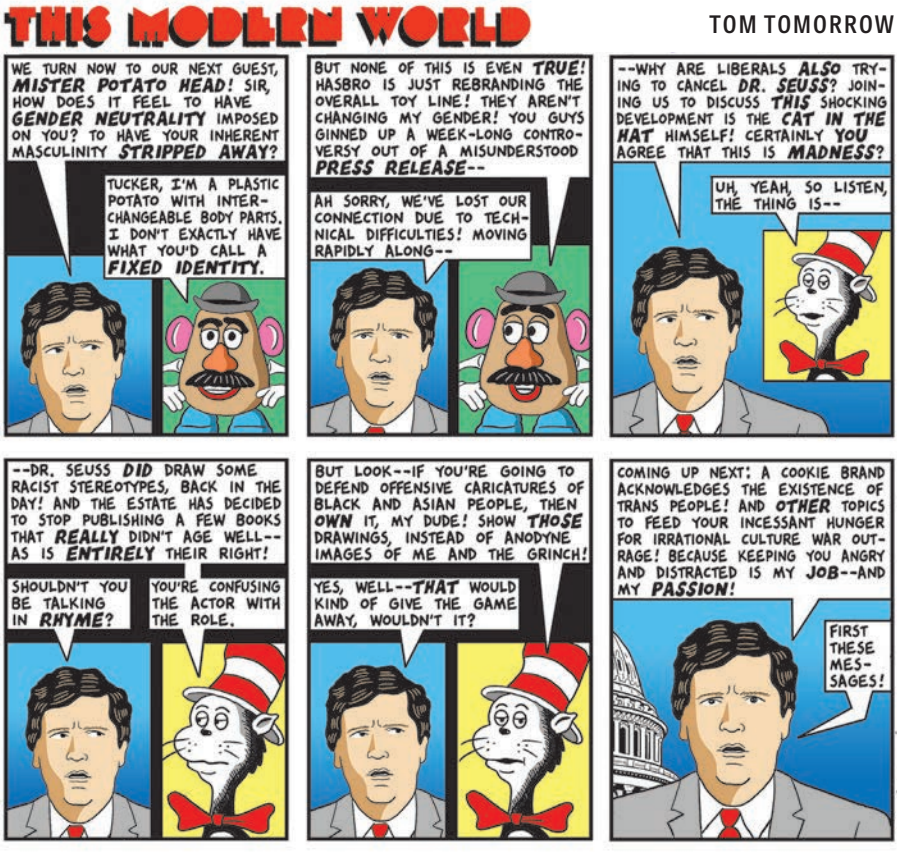

IT'S USUALLY TOO HOT TO SURVIVE HERE. NOW WE'RE FREEZING WITH NO ELECTRICITY.
I'VE GOT TO MAKE THE TREK TO THE GRID BARON.
JUST NEED A LITTLE JUICE IN THE OL' POWER PACK HERE. SO WE DON'T DIE.
HIGH VOLTAGE
SURE THING. SO THAT WILL BE $13,000.
WHAT, NO ONE HAS THAT MUCH! HOW CAN YOU DO THIS!?
HIGH VOLTAGE
WELL, I'M THE ONE WHO CONTROLS ALL THE ELECTRICITY AND THE DEMAND IS REALLY HIGH RIGHT NOW. THAT GUY REALLY WANTS SOME TOO!
HIGH VOLTAGE
I'M ON THREE PERCENT!
PLEASE, I'LL DO ANYTHING!
YOU CAN WORK IT OFF OVER 50 YEARS!
UGH, FINE. I'M NOT GOING TO LIVE THAT LONG ANYWAY.
HIGH
BORS

JEN SORENSEN

MATT LUBCHANSKY



TOM TOMORROW



GITMO HAS GOT TO GO

The Biden administration reiterated its aim, in February, to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay by the time President Joe Biden leaves office. Human rights advocates might be forgiven for their skepticism. President Barack Obama also promised to close the site in Cuba, and he significantly reduced the number of people held there, but Congress kept the prison open. Today, the facility detains 40 people; many of them are detained without charge or trial.

Back in 2009, Eric Lewis warned *In These Times* readers that closing Gitmo was not enough—that if the United States wants to reaffirm the rule of law, it must ensure that all of its prisoners are given due process. The following is an excerpt from that story, exploring what was (and what remains) at stake.

Below: Eric Lewis wrote "Closing America's Torture Chambers" for the March 2009 issue of In These Times.

IN 2009, ERIC LEWIS WROTE: To mark a true break from the policies of the [President George W.] Bush years, the Obama administration must resolve some lingering questions.

First, what will happen to [Gitmo] detainees who cannot be returned to their home countries?

There are about 65 to 85 detainees now held at Guantánamo who have been "cleared for release." That is, they have been found not to have committed crimes and not to pose a threat of future danger. ... As a first priority, the Obama administration should work with allies to get these men—some of whom have been incarcerated for nearly seven years—out of jail and resettled, and accept some of these detainees into the United States.

Second, what will happen to the detainees who cannot be charged with crimes but have been viewed as "too dangerous to release"?

No doubt there are dangerous men at Guantánamo. Yet only 21 have been charged with crimes. The Pentagon is holding the rest—about 70 to 80 detainees—in preventive detention, which means a special court may have to consider whether they should be held. But a preventive detention court is fundamentally incompatible with our criminal justice system, which adjudicates the culpability of past acts rather than predictions of future dangerousness. These men should be put on trial in our criminal courts.

... [President Barack Obama] should end these military commissions, which fail to provide the basic rights of our civilian or traditional military justice system.

It is also vital that steps are taken to assure that evidence has not been obtained by torture, and that the defendants have the right to confront evidence against them and to have access to exculpatory evidence that the criminal justice system provides.

... [Last],will the system change or only the [prison location]?

... The Obama administration must make clear that, once out of an active war zone, prisoners under U.S. control will be given appropriate process and held at sites where the conditions of captivity are humane and transparent. ... [I]t is important that detainees are not brought en masse to Afghanistan or other places where the government will argue that detainees lack fundamental rights because they are in a war zone or outside U.S. sovereignty.

What is critical is not only the end of Guantánamo, the place and the symbol, but also Guantánamo as a parallel legal world that is anathema to American values and the rule of law. Many of the 245 men who remain are now marking their seventh year in captivity. The closure should be done carefully but quickly. ...

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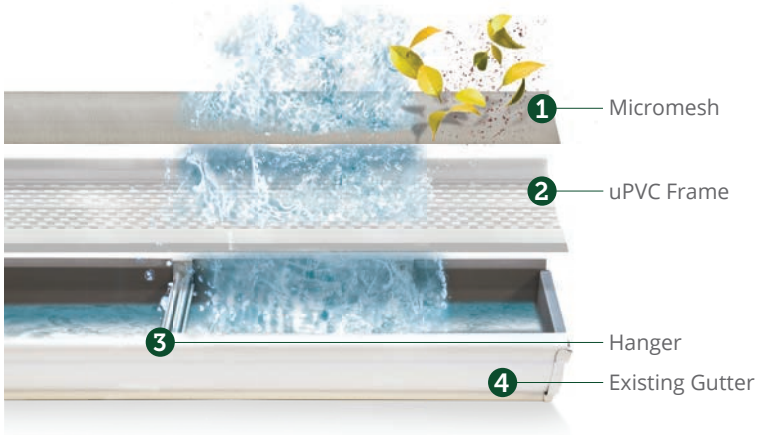

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