

**OPPRESSION, CENSORSHIP AND FEAR** | Trevor Grundy  
**PERSECUTED FOR TELLING THE TRUTH** | Leonard C Goodman  
**HOLDING PENS FOR THE HOMELESS** | John Clarke

ISSUE 197

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

JANUARY 2020

## WAR ON TERROR, WAR ON EDUCATION

**Andrea Mazzarino**

tells how war has targeted kids in the post-9/11 years, and asks: Isn't it time we provided learning opportunities that are less likely to kill or maim them?

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Issue 197 | January 2020

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**Andrea Mazzarino** tells how war has targeted kids in the post-9/11 years, and asks: Isn't it time we provided learning opportunities that are less likely to kill or maim them?

# War on terror, war on education

**O**NE day in October 2001, shortly after the US invaded Afghanistan, I stood at the front of a private high school classroom. As a new social studies teacher, I had been tasked with describing violence against women in that country. I showed the students an article from the front page of the *New York Times* featuring Afghan women casting off their burqas as they bathed in a stream near Kabul.

The implication of the piece was that the US would liberate – had already, in fact, begun to liberate – such women. I soon realised, though, that my students weren't really paying attention. They hadn't, in fact, been fully capable of focusing for the previous three weeks, ever since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. They squirmed in their seats, watched the clock, or stared out the window at California's rolling hills as if something bad was about to happen.

One student finally raised her hand and said, in evident confusion, "I don't know why, but I'm scared". And we had our first meaningful conversation since that fateful September day. One after another, my students confessed that they didn't know what the response to those attacks – already dubbed by the Bush administration a "Global War on Terror" – would mean for all of us or what Washington's goals of 'liberation' in distant lands would mean for their futures, no less those of the women in the photo.

As last month's explosive report in the *Washington Post* on the lies our top military and political leaders have offered us ever since about 'progress' in the Afghan War made all too clear, none of us could really have had a clue, nor did we even know what questions to ask then.

**E**ighteen years later, the war on terror has spread to some 80

countries around the world, a nightmare far worse than anything those children or I could have imagined on that long-ago day.

As a military spouse and a therapist-in-training, specialising in the effects of war on health, I've lived in several cities with a high concentration of veterans and military families, as well as refugee and migrant families from countries across five continents, many deeply affected by those still spreading armed conflicts (or even older ones in Central America that the US had been involved in launching in the previous century).

It's clear to me that, at least for the children of such groups, the never-ending fighting thousands of miles away can affect their concentration levels, the ways they solve problems with peers at school, and how their own parents respond to interpersonal conflict in their homes. I've watched more than once as such kids flinch at the everyday sound of an airplane overhead



or sirens from an ambulance passing by while I'm trying to troubleshoot their concentration problems with them. At such times, they explain to me that similar trigger moments, unexpected reminders of violence in their home countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, or Central America, sometimes keep them from concentrating at school or even from effectively discussing their problems with me in therapy.

Such conversations drive home a point that merited only a few brief references in the recently published book of essays, *War and Health: The Medical Consequences of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*, that Catherine Lutz and I – both of us from Brown University's Costs of War Project

– put together. The truth is, though, that the subject of the hidden costs of war to the young undoubtedly deserves a volume all its own, a reminder of how America's wars and other conflicts, barely seen by most of us, are nonetheless deeply felt, even here, in all sorts of unnerving ways.

**I**n a powerful piece on heroin use and survival among Afghan war widows, for instance, anthropologist Anila Daulatzai tells how an eight-year-old Afghan boy died in a bomb blast as he walked to school. Such senseless violence prompted his mother (and other similarly grieving wives and mothers) to start using heroin as a coping mechanism. Similarly, anthropologists Jean Scandlyn and

Sarah Hautzinger note how our country's post-9/11 wars have affected the study habits of the children of military families even here on the home front. Some miss school to prepare for parental deployment or homecoming. Some struggle to keep up as they assume some of the household responsibilities of the missing parent. Others are even hospitalised in response to depression brought on by what could be thought of as deployment stress – simply knowing that a parent is gone and might be in danger.

I've seen the way armed violence many thousands of miles away affects the ability of kids to study and that's obviously so much more true of the young in actual war zones (even when the option of school exists, which in the chaos of war, disrupts

tion, and displacement it often doesn't). I've heard it in the voices of the children I've met who tell me that they remember vividly their inability to study because they were afraid that, in the very schools where their minds were to be moulded, at any moment their bodies might be attacked or even destroyed.

**A**s my colleagues Catherine Lutz, Neta Crawford, and I learned when we started the *Costs of War Project* in 2011, it's pretty hard to quantify the indirect human costs of war, particularly those that manifest themselves in mental illness or chronic injuries among soldiers, civilians, and their families, in people eternally grieving or struggling to adjust to worlds that have often been turned upside down. Partly, this is because those in power who decide to go to war give little or no thought to what attacking another country, no less sending your troops in as occupying forces for years on end, will mean for everyday life in the war zones to come. In addition, once such wars have begun, they do a terrible job of keeping track of those costs.

In June 2016, for instance, I spoke with a Human Rights Watch analyst who was doing research on what the Saudi-led, American-backed counter-insurgency war in Yemen meant in terms of attacks on schools. As of then, more than three quarters of that country's schools had already been closed due to insecurity. Most schools

## School buses were used to transport troops or people to political rallies, leaving kids without a safe way to attend school

that had sustained direct damage in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, she told me, had not actually been directly targeted by Saudi-led forces. They had been grim collateral damage from air strikes on nearby suspected weapons caches and the like. Yet the consequences of such bombings have been immense and intense.

In Yemen in 2015, 1.85-million children could not take their final school exams. That's a population larger than Philadelphia's and that was just in the first year of an American-supported war that would only get worse (and worse and worse). War, in other words, is not just a conflict between states, not when the children who live through it (and the chaos that invariably follows in its wake) can't do what anyone should be able to do to grow up in a reasonable way, no less sustain civilisation – namely, learn to read, write, listen to others of varying viewpoints, and do the kinds of math and critical thinking that should help them anticipate the consequences of similar war-making decisions themselves one day.

**O**f course, when it comes to at-

tacks on education, bombs dropping on schools barely scratch the surface of the damage caused by this century's forever wars. A few years ago, I conducted research for the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), which reported on how wars around the world affected education. In the process, to my grief, I learned about all kinds of not-so-obvious ways in which students are forced to participate in conflicts that should have nothing to do with them.

I learned, for instance, that schools can be used as barracks for troops, weapons caches, bases from which to fire on an advancing enemy, and recruiting grounds for soldiers. I learned that kids around the world were scared to walk to school because they or their parents feared kidnappings, rapes, roadside bombs, or because they would have a hard time reaching school thanks to clogged military checkpoints. In other places, school buses were also used to transport troops or people to political rallies, leaving kids without a safe way to attend school.

The May 2018 report that resulted from our joint efforts found that ever more targeted and indiscriminate attacks on schools, teachers, and students had occurred between 2013 and 2017: 12,700 attacks hurting more than 21,000 students and teachers in at least 70 countries. Colleagues working in Ukraine, for instance, told me that schools for kids with disabilities had been occupied

by parties on both sides of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and that most of them had to be evacuated early in the war. There were few other options for such children when it came to education. Similarly, girls' schools tended to suffer disproportionately when education was attacked, as did schools for other kinds of kids who generally get the shorter end of the stick during peacetime as well.

When it came to Afghanistan, my high school students were right to be skeptical about or pay little attention to the optimism of that *New York Times* article I showed them. While US aid did indeed bring new educational infrastructure to some regions of that country, building new schools hardly began to make up for the damage done by that still unending war.

As nurse-midwife and anthropologist Kylea Liese has shown in an essay on maternal mortality in our new book, the growth of Islamic extremism among warring factions over the last 18 years has made it difficult for young women to leave their homes in the first place, let alone sit in a classroom all day. Many fear that they will be raped or killed on their way to or at school. What numbers we have are not encouraging: as of 2018, 8 percent of Afghan boys and 22 percent of Afghan girls at the primary level, and 2 percent of boys and 10 percent of girls at the secondary level identified insecurity as the reason they did not attend school.

## The full consequences of America's forever wars across the globe remain only partially known even to those who focus on the subject much of the time

Because so much of the damage to education is overlooked when states wage war, it can be hard to get the full story of just how many young people are being killed, hurt, or prevented from studying due to attacks on schools. When I worked on the GCPEA report, our research methods were limited to painstaking surveys of news reports from around the world and interviews with the few intrepid activists willing to speak out on the subject, often despite fearing for their own lives.

We struggled to cobble together as full a picture as possible of how many young people have been attacked, had died, had been injured, and how many children simply couldn't study in the aftermath of such violence. But given the inability to discover so much, the full consequences of America's forever wars (and other conflicts) across significant parts of the globe remain only partially known even to those, like us at the Costs of War Project, who focus on the subject much of the time.

**O**ne problem with a war on terror that can, as on 9/11, manifest itself anywhere at any time

(and the promotion of the fear of terror that's gone with it) is that there are no limits on the militarised chaos it can create in people's lives. After all, since 9/11, it's become part of our culture to assume that armed violence – terror of the Islamic or white nationalist variety – can touch us anywhere we are, including in the classroom.

It's also common to think that physical violence is the right way to solve problems and that militarised language and tactics are reasonable ways to deal with and discipline children, especially in schools. Kids I work with attend one of the more highly regarded school systems in the country when it comes to both academics and security. Yet every week, I learn of school arguments, including disputes over who likes whom enough to date him or her, or who gave whom a dirty look in the hallway.

Such arguments have a way of escalating quickly into fights that end when uniformed security personnel break them up without – as kids and their parents typically tell me – anyone being asked what happened. The involved parties are simply removed from the scene, often by force. Such school fights and the way schools now tend to resolve them may have nothing at all to do with our distant armed conflicts abroad. Still, I'm aware that kids are increasingly seen as threats in the very places where they are supposed to be learning and that, for some kinds of kids, a militarised version of security, not the school



equivalent of diplomacy, is considered the order of the day.

And don't forget that violence, however you explain it, is now a remarkably regular part of school life and the school experience, or at least fears and preparation for it are. Even as the US has spent trillions of dollars to fight jihadist terror targeting civilians at home and abroad, gun violence, including suicides, homicides, police violence, and mass shootings (especially in schools), has cost us exponentially more lives. Yet according to the *Atlantic* magazine, we've invested only the tiniest fraction of the money we've spent prosecuting the War on Terror in protecting students in America's schools (roughly \$22-million annually).

Still, the effects of mass shootings and the ways we prepare for them have changed school life in grim ways, normalising the very idea of armed violence. Recently, I shushed my two preschool-age children while I took a work call, only to hear one of them say to the other, "Let's play lockdown! The shooters are coming!" They then crawled behind an armchair and lay flat on their stomachs like little boot camp trainees, their eyes wide as they watched me. In other words, somehow they've already absorbed the lockdown school mindset of the moment, those grim preparations for mass shooters, and they've yet to arrive in their first classroom.

As someone who came of age when the Columbine massa-

## Our government is not shy about directly encouraging kids to fight wars. In 2019, for example, the Army set aside some \$700-million for recruiting

cre took place, a time when we assumed that it was an isolated incident perpetrated by mentally disturbed young men, I regularly wonder why we aren't doing more to address the ways in which war and other forms of mass violence continue to affect the hearts and minds of students here and around the world. Isn't it time to work to change a culture in which the young spend too much of their school and homework time focused on violence rather than on the subjects they came to study?

**A**nd, of course, our government is not shy about directly encouraging kids to fight wars. In 2019, for example, the Army set aside some \$700-million for recruiting, though it's not clear how much of this is spent to recruit in schools. Data suggests that schools with a high percentage of lower-income students are visited far more frequently by recruiters than more affluent schools. According to the American Public Health Association, most new US military recruits are in late adolescence and less able to handle high levels of stress, more likely to take uncalculat-

ed risks, and more likely to suffer long-term injury and mental health problems as a result of their military service.

I've argued with relatives who insist that junior ROTC and the recruiting of teenagers in school should be a source of pride and opportunity, especially for the most disadvantaged kids. Yet when the 'opportunity' you're offering includes the possibility of being maimed or killed, then wouldn't it make sense to devote a larger slice of our country's budgetary pie to training more numerous, better-qualified teachers and college counsellors, while creating better constructed and supplied schools, so that kids of all stripes have a shot at opportunities that are less likely to kill or maim them?

At home or abroad, whether we know it or not, in the post-9/11 years, war has targeted the young. It's not a pretty sight. **CT**

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**Andrea Mazzarino** co-founded *Brown University's Costs of War Project*. She is an activist and social worker interested in the health impacts of war. She has held various clinical, research, and advocacy positions, including at a Veterans Affairs PTSD Outpatient Clinic, with Human Rights Watch, and at a community mental health agency. She is the co-editor of the new book *War and Health: The Medical Consequences of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*. This essay first appeared at [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com)





END IN SIGHT: Detail from a poster for the 1991 Codesa talks to end apartheid in South Africa.

**Arianna Lissoni** checks out the work of Judy Seidman, who has devoted her life to helping South Africa's struggle against injustice

## Art against apartheid

**J**UDY Ann Seidman and her artwork embody the feminist maxim that the personal is political, and the political is personal. US-born Seidman is an artist and activist based in South Africa who, for more than four decades, has contributed to defining the iconography of the country's struggle against apartheid and injustice.

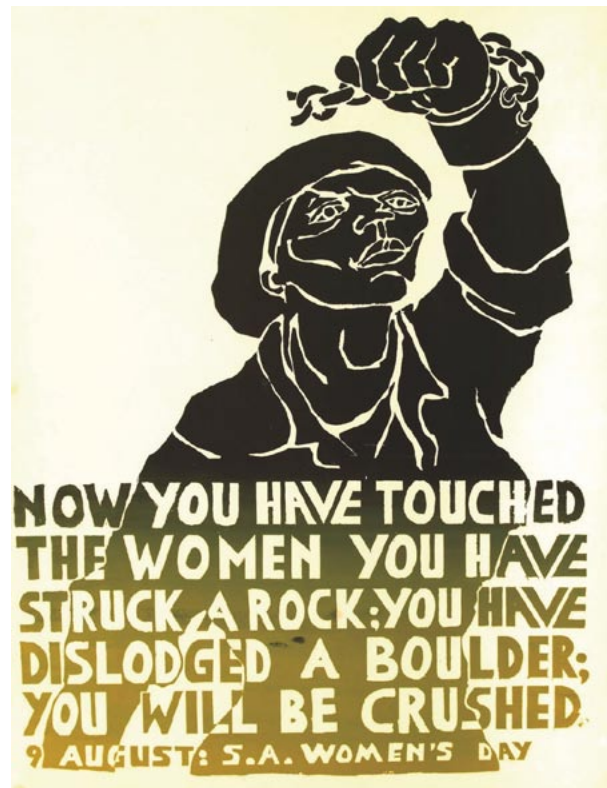
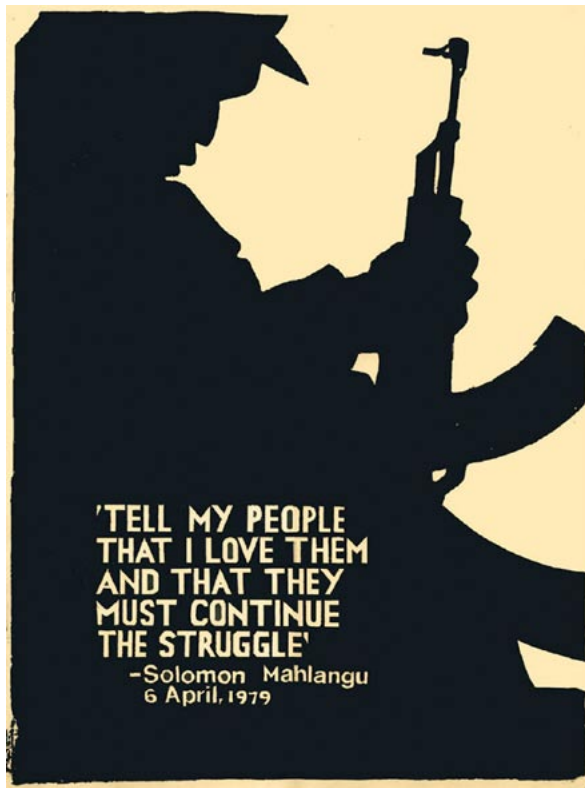
*Drawn Lines*, an exhibition

at Johannesburg's Museum Africa, provides a significant retrospective of her work.

Seidman's artworks are revolutionary weapons. She is behind some of South Africa's most iconic liberation struggle images, each of which tells a story that is personal and political. Many of these stories can be found in her self-published memoir, also titled *Drawn Lines*.

Women's rights and libera-

tion have been a constant theme in Seidman's work. She made the Women's Day drawing (next page, top right) in 1981 as part of a brief to position women in the struggle. It was inspired by the women who marched to Pretoria on 9 August 1956 to protest the introduction of passes for women. In the liberation movement, the date was celebrated as a 'national day' and officially became a public holiday after



10 STRUGGLE: Notable poster art by Judy Ann Seidman for Solomon Mhlangu (left) and SA Women's Day.

the end of apartheid.

The words in the poster were developed by the Medu Art Ensemble collective, based in Botswana and which Seidman joined in 1980: *Now you have touched the women/ you have struck a rock / you have dislodged a boulder / you will be crushed.*

Those words come from the song *Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo* (*When you strike the women, you have struck a rock*), sung by the marching women in 1956. The original drawing had the woman holding up an AK47 rifle, but the collective felt that, in the light of increasing raids by the apartheid regime, the picture should not show close alignment with the armed struggle. A broken chain came

to replace the gun.

The Solomon Mahlangu poster (above right) was designed for the 1982 anniversary of the 19-year-old uMkhonto weSizwe operative's execution by the apartheid regime in 1979. A few hundred copies were silk-screened by Medu members, with the help of soldiers passing through Botswana. The works were smuggled into South Africa and illegally displayed by members of the Johannesburg Silkscreen Training Project. They were torn down by the police the next day, but this poster remains one of Seidman's best known works.

Seidman moved to South Africa in 1990 after the unbanning of the liberation organisations. She was commissioned

to draw the poster for the 1991 congress of the Congress of South African Trade Unions.

She also designed a poster for the Convention for a Democratic South Africa negotiations: a rising sun symbolising a new dawn for the people of the country.

In the early 1990s Seidman and her partner Serge Phetla, an uMkhonto weSizwe combatant, were diagnosed HIV positive. No antiretroviral treatment was available at the time, and their status was not made public for political reasons.

With the advent of democracy, Seidman came out publicly about living with HIV. Serge died just before the first demo-



cratic elections in 1994. An intimate portrait of him reading a copy of the *African Communist* magazine (right) is part of the exhibition.

The exhibition provides a chronological unfolding of Seidman's life, starting with her time in Lusaka, Zambia, where she arrived for a visit in 1973 after graduating with a Masters in Fine Arts in the US.

Her parents, the Africanist economist Anne Willcox Seidman and Bob Seidman were working at the University of Zambia, while her sister Neva was a secretary in the office of the ANC's external headquarters. Seidman's first encounter with the ANC was in the context of an exhibition, for which Neva asked her 'friends' in the ANC office to help transport her sister's artworks.

Among them was a young man called John Dube (JD), whose real name was Boy Mvemve. A few weeks later, he was killed by a letter bomb sent by the apartheid regime. Seidman's poster for JD's funeral became the first in a series of drawings she did for the ANC and allied organisations.

In Lusaka, Seidman married historian Neil Parsons and in 1975 they moved to Swaziland where he took up a lecturing post. It's also where their first daughter was born.

In Swaziland, she worked with the sculptor and writer Pitika Ntuli, whose vision of art and revolution had a great impact on her. Both had studied



PARTNER: Serge Phetla reads the *African Communist*.

in Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana in the early 1960s and had been influenced by Pan-African ideals. In 1980 Seidman moved to Botswana with her family. She took a letter of introduction from writer and activist Barry Feinberg addressed to Thami Mnyele and Mongane Wally Serote, then leading figures in Medu.

Seidman remained in Botswana, by now working within uMkhonto weSizwe structures. This led to the breakdown of her marriage, and her two daughters moved to the UK with their father after their house in Gaborone was petrol bombed in 1986.

At the turn of the century she worked with the Khulumani support group to support victims of political violence. She also became involved with the One in Nine campaign which campaigns against gender-

based violence and whose work forms 'an exhibition within the exhibition' with four panels dedicated to it.

The last section, which Seidman dubs the 'cultural wall', showcases recent work with music and recent struggles such as #FeesMustFall.

The exhibition underscores the message that, in her life and in her work, Seidman has never been afraid of taking sides in struggles for liberation. **CT**

*Drawn Lines is at Museum Africa in Newtown, Johannesburg, until the end of January 2020, with further extensions expected. Admission is free.*

*Arianna Lissoni is a researcher at the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, South Africa. A longer version of this article was published at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)*



It's time for a concerted effort to end wars, declassify those 'secrets' the people should know about our military, and reward truth-tellers instead of punishing them, writes **William J. Astore**

# Wars, secrecy and lies

12

**Y**OU know an American war is going poorly when the lies come swiftly, as with the Afghan War, or when it's hidden under a cloak of secrecy, which is also increasingly true of the Afghan War.

This is nothing new, of course. Perhaps the best book I read in 2019 is H. Bruce Franklin's *Crash Course: From the Good War to the Forever War*. Franklin, who served in the US Air Force in the 1950s before becoming an English professor, cultural historian, and an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War, is devastating in his critique of the military-industrial complex in this memoir. I recommend it highly to all Americans who want to wrestle with tough truths.

Let's consider one example: Franklin's dismissal of the "stab-in-the-back" myth (or Rambo myth) that came out of the Vietnam War. This was the idea the US military could have won in Vietnam, and was indeed close to winning, only

to be betrayed by weak-kneed politicians and the anti-war movement.

Franklin demolishes this argument in a paragraph that is worth reading again and again:

"One widespread cultural fantasy about the Vietnam War blames the antiwar movement for forcing the military to "fight with one arm tied behind its back." But this belief stands reality on its head. The American people, disgusted and angry about the Korean War, were in no mood to support a war in Vietnam. Staunch domestic opposition kept Washington from going in overtly. So it went covertly. It thereby committed itself to a policy based on deception, sneaking around, and hiding its actions from the American people. The US government thus created the internal nemesis of its own war: the antiwar movement. That movement was inspired and empowered not just by our outrage against the war [but] also by the lies about the war, lies necessitated by the war,

coming from our government and propagated by the media. Although it was the Vietnamese who defeated the United States, ultimately it was the antiwar movement, especially within the armed forces, that finally in 1973 forced Washington to accept, at long last, the terms of the 1954 Geneva Accords, and to sign a peace treaty that included, word for word, every major demand made by the National Liberation Front (the so-called Viet Cong) back in 1969 ...

"The truth was that for three decades our nation had sponsored and then waged a genocidal war against a people and a nation that had never done anything to us except ask for our friendship and support [during and after World War II]."

This is well and strongly put. The American people had no interest in intervening in Vietnam in the 1950s; the Korean debacle had been enough. But the US government intervened anyway, lying about its involvement until it could no longer lie. Then a bigger lie was concocted,



**KILLING MACHINE:** Sailors perform a foreign object damage (FOD) walk-down on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman.

the Gulf of Tonkin incident, to justify a larger commitment of troops in the mid-1960s, which led to near-genocidal destruction in Vietnam.

**W**ars built on lies are rarely won, especially in a democracy. But even as they are lost (Vietnam in the 1960s, and now Afghanistan), there are always ‘winners’. Weapons contractors and other war profiteers. The Pentagon, which from war gains more money and more power. And authoritarian elements within society itself, which are reinforced by war.

If we wish to take our democracy back, a powerful first step is to end all American wars overseas. This would not be isolationism; this would be sanity.

Wars, secrecy, and lies are three big enemies of democracy. Maybe the big three. War suppresses thought and supports authoritarianism. Secrecy prevents accountability. Lies mislead the people. And that’s what we have today. Constant warfare. Secrecy, eg reports on ‘progress’ in the Afghan War are now classified and no longer shared. Lies are rampant; indeed, lies are policy. Just look at the *Afghan Papers*.

Yet wars, secrecy, and lies have been incredibly successful. The Pentagon budget is booming! Weapons sales are exploding! No one is being held accountable for failures or war crimes. Indeed, convicted war criminals are absolved and touted as heroes by the president.

The solution is as obvious as it will be painful. We need peace, transparency, and truth. End the wars, declassify all those ‘secrets’ we the people should know about our military and wars, and reward truth-tellers instead of punishing them. **CT**

*William J Astore is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and professor of history. He is the author or co-author of three books and numerous articles focusing on military history as well as the history of science, technology, and religion. A co-founder of The Contrary Perspective (TCP), he served as its editor and chief writer from 2013 to 2015. This article was first published at his web-site, [www.bracingviews.com](http://www.bracingviews.com)*

Israel may emerge stronger by playing politics with antisemitism, but not without severe repercussions for Western Jews, writes **Jonathan Cook**

# Left smeared as antisemitic while Right targets Jews

14

**T**HE year ended with two terrible setbacks for those seeking justice for the Palestinian people.

One was the defeat in the UK election of Jeremy Corbyn – a European leader with a unique record of solidarity with Palestinians. He had suffered four years of constant media abuse, recasting his activism as evidence of antisemitism.

The Labour Party's electoral collapse was not directly attributable to the antisemitism smears. Rather, it was related chiefly to the party's inability to formulate a convincing response to Brexit.

But the antisemitism allegations succeeded in stoking deep divisions within Corbyn's party, making him look weak and, for the first time, evasive. It planted a seed of doubt, even among some supporters: if he was incapable of sorting out this particular mess in his party, how could he possibly run the country?

Any future political leader, in Britain or elsewhere, contemplating a pro-Palestinian

position – or a radical economic programme opposed by the mainstream media – will have taken note. Antisemitism is a fearsome smear to overcome.

The second setback was a new executive order issued by US President Donald Trump that embraces a controversial new definition of antisemitism. It seeks to conflate criticism of Israel, Palestinian activism and the upholding of international law with hatred of Jews.

The lesson of where this is intended to lead was underscored by Corbyn's experience. Earlier, his party was forced to swallow this very same definition, formulated by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), in an attempt to placate critics. Instead, it gave them yet more ammunition with which to attack him.

Trump's executive order is designed to chill speech on campuses, one of the few public spaces left in the US where Palestinian voices are still heard. It blatantly violates the First Amendment, which privileges

free speech. The federal government is now aligned with 27 states where Israel lobbyists have managed to push through legislation penalising those who support Palestinian rights.

These moves have been replicated elsewhere. Last month, the French parliament declared anti-Zionism – or opposition to Israel as a Jewish state that denies Palestinians equal rights – as equivalent to antisemitism.

And before it, the German parliament passed a resolution that deemed support for the growing international movement urging a boycott of Israel – modelled on moves to end apartheid in South Africa – as antisemitism. German MPs even compared the boycott movement's slogans to Nazi propaganda.

Looming on the horizon are more such curbs on basic freedoms, all to assist Israel. Britain's Conservative prime minister, Boris Johnson, has promised to ban local authorities from supporting a boycott of Israel, while John Mann, his so-called 'antisemitism czar',





APART: The Israeli separation barrier in Bethlehem.

is threatening to shut down online media outlets critical of Israel, again on the pretext of antisemitism. Those are the very same media that were supportive of Corbyn, Johnson’s political opponent.

**T**he irony is that all these laws, orders and resolutions – made supposedly in the name of human rights – are stifling the real work of human rights organisations. In the absence of a peace process, they have been grappling with Israel’s ideological character in ways not seen before.

While Trump, Johnson and others were busy redefining antisemitism to aid Israel, Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a report last month revealing that Israel – a state claiming to represent all Jews – has used military orders for more than half a century to flout

the most fundamental rights of Palestinians. In the occupied West Bank, Palestinians are denied “such basic freedoms as waving flags, peacefully protesting the occupation, joining all major political movements, and publishing political material”.

At the same time, the UN’s Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination broke new ground by berating Israel for its abuses towards all Palestinians under its rule without distinction, whether those under occupation or those with degraded citizenship inside Israel.

The panel of legal rights experts effectively acknowledged that Israel’s abuses of Palestinians were embedded in the Zionist ideology of the state, and were not specific to the occupation. It was a not-so-veiled way of declaring that a state structurally privileging Jews and systematically abusing Palestinians is a ‘racist

endeavour’ – wording now ludicrously decreed by the IHRA as evidence of antisemitism.

In HRW’s latest report, Middle East director Sarah Leah Whitson observed: “Israel’s efforts to justify depriving Palestinians of basic civil rights protections for more than half a century based on the exigencies of its forever military occupation just don’t fly anymore.”

But that is precisely what the new wave of laws and executive orders is designed to ensure. By silencing criticism of Israeli abuses of Palestinian rights, under the pretext that it is veiled antisemitism, Western governments can pretend those abuses are not occurring.

There are two very different political constituencies backing the current crackdown on Palestinian solidarity – and for very different reasons, neither concerned with protecting Jews.

One faction includes Western

centrist parties that were supposed to have been overseeing a quarter-century of peacemaking in the Middle East. They wish to obstruct any criticism that dares to hold them to account for their egregious failures – failures only too visible now that Israel is no longer prepared to pretend it is interested in peace, and seeks instead to annex Palestinian territory.

Not only did the centrists' highly circumscribed, Israel-centric version of peace fail, as it was bound to, but it achieved the precise opposite of its proclaimed goal. Israel exploited Western passivity and indulgence to entrench and expand the occupation, as well as to intensify racist laws inside Israel.

That was epitomised in the 2018 passage by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government of the nation-state law, which declares not just the state of Israel, but an undefined, expansive 'Land of Israel' as the historical home of the entire Jewish people.

Now, centrists are determined to crush those who wish to expose their hypocrisy and continuing alliance with an overtly racist state implacably opposed to self-determination for the Palestinian people.

So successfully have they weaponised antisemitism that human rights scholars last month accused the International Criminal Court in the Hague – the supposed upholder of international law – of endlessly dragging its feet to avoid conducting a proper war crimes

## If Jews are justified in laying claim to being the chosen people in Israel, why can't whites make a similar claim in the US and Europe?

investigation of Israel. ICC prosecutors appear to be fearful of coming under fire themselves.

**T**he other faction behind the clampdown on criticism of Israel is the resurgent, racist right and far-right, who have been increasingly successful in vanquishing the discredited centrists of US and European politics. They love Israel because it offers an alibi for their own white nationalism. In defending Israel from criticism – by characterising it as antisemitism – they seek a moral gloss for their own white supremacism.

If Jews are justified in laying claim to being the chosen people in Israel, why can't whites make a similar claim for themselves in the US and Europe? If Israel treats Palestinians not as natives but as immigrants trespassing on Jewish land, why can't Trump or Johnson similarly characterise non-whites as infiltrators or usurpers of white land?

The more the right whips up white nationalist, anti-immigrant fervour, the more it is able to undermine political solutions offered by its opponents on the centre and left.

Perhaps most astounding of

all, much of the Jewish leadership in the US and Europe has been actively assisting the right in this political project, so blinded they are by their commitment to Israel as a Jewish state.

So where does this take Western politics? The centrists have let the antisemitism genie out of the bottle in order to damage the left, but it is the populist right that will now work to refine the weaponisation to further their own ends. They will stoke fear and hatred of minorities, including Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims, all to Israel's ideological benefit. Jews in the West will pay a price too, however. Trump's speeches have repeatedly imputed nefarious motives, greed and dual loyalties to American Jews. Nonetheless, faced with Israel's staunch backing of Trump, conservative Jewish leaders in the US have preferred to stay largely silent about the president stoking nativist sentiment.

That is a reckless miscalculation. The mock battle of fighting a supposed left-wing antisemitism has already diverted attention and energy away from the struggle against an all-too-real revival of right-wing antisemitism.

Israel may emerge stronger by playing politics with antisemitism, but Western Jews may as a result find themselves more exposed to hatred than at any time since the end of the Second World War. **CT**

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**Leonard C Goodman** tells why the continuing struggles of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning are the most important free press stories of the past year

# Persecuted - for telling the truth

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**T**HE most important stories of 2019 for those who care about a free press involve the arrest of Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian embassy at the request of the US government, and the re-arrest of the whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

Assange is the founder of WikiLeaks, a website that publishes official documents exposing the crimes and lies of world leaders. Before publishing, WikiLeaks verifies that the evidence submitted is authentic. Of the millions of items published by WikiLeaks, not one has been shown to be fraudulent or untruthful.

Chelsea Manning is a former Army intelligence officer who leaked hundreds of thousands of classified documents to WikiLeaks that exposed war crimes and official lies relating to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Manning confessed to her crimes and was sentenced to 35 years of incarceration. But her sentence was commuted after seven years by President

Barack Obama, who conceded that she had acted out of a sense of duty to expose wrongdoing.

For at least three decades, the US government has primarily served the interests of the 1 percent – the major donors to the Democratic and Republican parties. To carry on in such an undemocratic fashion in a country that still requires leaders to stand for election, our leaders need to lie with impunity, especially about matters of war. To get away with this, they classify as secret every official document that has the potential to embarrass them or enlighten the people.

**O**f course, Assange is not the first publisher to expose government crimes. What makes Assange such a threat and so hated is that he publishes official government documents in real time that are impossible to dispute or discredit.

To grasp the power of WikiLeaks, imagine it had existed in 2002 during the run-

up to the Iraq War. At that time, the administration of George W. Bush was telling the nation that we faced a grave threat from Iraq and its president, Saddam Hussein, who we were told had reconstituted his nuclear weapons programme and had amassed large, clandestine stockpiles of deadly VX, sarin, and mustard gas. The situation was said to be so dangerous that we couldn't even wait a couple of months to allow a team of international weapons inspectors to finish their job. Then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice warned that the smoking gun in Iraq may "be a mushroom cloud."

Of course, our leaders produced no actual evidence to support their claims about Hussein and Iraq. All of the evidence was classified. The American people – who were called upon to pay for the war in blood and treasure – were not entitled to see any of the actual evidence for war. The mainstream press, including the *New York Times* and NPR, repeated the

evidence-free assertions of our public officials as if they were proven fact. The American people were given no choice but to fall in line.

Years later, after it was too late to do any good, the actual intelligence reports were leaked. They showed that nearly everything we were told by the Bush administration about its evidence for war was a lie. The wild claims about chemical weapons were all based on the stories of a known fabricator named Curveball, and on tales invented under torture by a CIA prisoner named al-Libi. The dire warnings

about a ‘mushroom cloud’ were based on a forged document that pretended to show Hussein purchasing uranium from Africa, together with a bogus report that ordinary aluminium tubes purchased by Iraq might be used to enrich uranium.

**H**ad WikiLeaks existed in 2002, a patriotic officer like Manning might have leaked the official intelligence reports exposing the lies our leaders were telling to get us to go along with the war. Hundreds of thousands of lives could have been saved, and the trillions of dollars spent on the Iraq War could have been used instead



to give every American free health care, free college, and a Green New Deal.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been publicly threatening Assange since Pompeo was CIA chief. But there is concern among Assange’s foes that a fair-minded judge might recognise that Assange’s actions were no different than the actions of the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*, which also published the leaked material from Manning. If these establishment papers were protected by the First Amendment, then why aren’t Assange and WikiLeaks?

This explains why the US government has put Manning

back in jail. They need her to testify that Assange helped her steal classified documents, something the government almost certainly knows is untrue. The Obama Justice Department spent years trying to find

evidence to justify a claim that Assange did more than act as a publisher but found nothing to justify that accusation. Besides, if the Trump Justice Department had any evidence that Assange participated in the theft of classified documents, it wouldn’t need to force Manning to say it.

This holiday season, Assange is locked away in the Belmarsh high-security prison in London, awaiting extradition to the US, while Manning is back in jail in Virginia. The US government believes that any person with the courage and integrity to expose the misuse of power must be eliminated. I am sending these words of encouragement to Assange and Manning. May they continue to find the strength to resist a ruthless foe and help save our democracy. **CT**

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Many of the tools and tactics adopted by American police over the past half century were originally deployed to fight communism abroad. A book review by **Patrick Blanchfield**

# The Thick Blue Line

**T**HE first test call using America's 911 emergency system was placed on February 16, 1968. To fanfare in the press, a state legislator sitting in the City Hall of the small Alabama town of Haleyville dialed in to the local police station. His call was answered by a group of august notables – a US representative, a telephone-company executive, and president of the Alabama Public Service Commission Theophilus Eugene Connor. Better remembered today by his nickname, “Bull” Connor was an outspoken white supremacist who believed desegregation was a communist plot; just five years earlier, as commissioner of public safety in Birmingham, he had notoriously unleashed riot police, fire hoses, and attack dogs on nonviolent civil rights protesters.

That such a man should have been on the receiving end of

America's first 911 call is fitting. As Stuart Schrader reveals in his new book, *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*, the United States' 911 system was modelled on an earlier programme pioneered by American-funded police forces fighting a Marxist insurgency in Caracas.

The Venezuelan emergency-number programme, used by local authorities to connect civilian informants and coordinate crackdowns, was such a success that President Johnson's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders recommended its adoption stateside.

The new emergency-call network was a signal achievement of the Johnson administration's War on Crime, which overhauled America's police infrastructure and laid the groundwork for modern mass infrastructure and the carceral state. By fostering “consumer-



like expectations of police responsiveness”, Schrader observes the 911 system proved transformative. “Agents of state power authorised to enact violence would not be a last resort. The first line of defence became the first responders.”

**H**elping security forces crush dissidents in Venezuela was not America's only ‘experiment’ in foreign police assistance in the 1960s and '70s, and today's 911 system is not the only ‘product’ developed abroad and then imported back to the US during this time.

In his distressing and erudite history, Schrader documents how many of the tools and tactics adopted by American police over the past half century were originally deployed





ROBOCOPS: Portland police line up to face protesters.

to fight communism abroad. His argument, which *Badges Without Borders* persuasively demonstrates, is that the era of intensified American policing that began in the 1960s cannot be understood outside the context of the Cold War national-security state.

After World War II, the United States found itself in a delicate position: ostensibly committed to a global agenda of liberty and human rights, but also materially and ideologically vulnerable to leftist and communist insurgencies in the decolonising nations of Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

“The United States could not fight a hot war against all of these everyday people who took up the mantle of revolution”, Schrader writes. “But its

security thinkers tried mightily to figure out how to stymie these efforts”. One form these efforts took was the creation of a world order of “uncompromising police, professionally trained and equipped on a US model.”

Since the Truman administration, an alphabet soup of government programmes, initiatives, and presidential commissions, their names deliberately innocuous and similar-sounding, have channelled funds, matériel, and know-how to friendly police departments around the world. Schrader focuses on the most significant of these programmes, the Office of Public Safety (OPS), created in 1962 as part of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Though it cost a fraction of

what directly deploying American forces did, the OPS’s impact was outsize. Along with similar organisations, it disbursed millions of dollars in guns, riot-control gear, radios, uniforms, and office supplies in more than 50 countries across the Global South. Throughout Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa, US specialists provided ‘technical assistance’ in building crime labs and prisons, and helped local police develop surveillance and interrogation squads.

American police veterans were embedded as ‘Public Safety Advisors’ within national gendarmeries and frontline counter-guerrilla squads, ostensibly in an advisory capacity, but on occasion killing people themselves. Foreign police were flown stateside to

attend conferences and pursue degrees in specially created academic programs taught in multiple languages. Some even trained hands-on with American police, walking beats in US cities that were gingerly selected to minimise racial friction.

**A**merican officials portrayed US-sanctioned police in the decolonising world – from South Vietnam to Indonesia to Nicaragua to Turkey – as essential to maintaining international order, and cast political dissidents as criminals who needed to be stopped. As Schrader observes, this was a savvy, calculated move: Protests against state brutality or American intervention could now be dismissed as ‘subversion’, and police crackdowns on dissidents defended as ‘law and order’.

The rhetoric of police aid was always technocratic, draped in a language of neutrality, experimentation, and flexibility. American specialists would train local authorities who could become trainers themselves, and thereby better adapt and tailor American lessons to ‘conditions on the ground.’

But, as Schrader shows, the reassuring rhetoric of technocratic development was a convenient shield. The emphasis on ‘experiments’ inoculated the US from responsibility for what its proxies actually did with what they learned and the tools they were given. In countries from Nicaragua to

### The emphasis on ‘experiments’ inoculated the US from responsibility for what its proxies did with what they learned

Indonesia, US-trained police preserved the interest of local elites by repressing dissidents – or simply murdering them.

In Guatemala, John Longan, an Oklahoma cop who had risen to become chief of US Public Safety Assistance for Latin America, organised an urban counterinsurgency unit that launched what it called *Operación Limpieza* (Operation Cleanup) in 1966. Paramilitaries went on a months-long spree of ‘disappearing’ peasant and worker organisers, arresting and torturing them before dumping their bodies in the ocean. When the bodies washed ashore, Longan was blasé, claiming that the massacre was the type of thing that ‘just happened’. US-trained Guatemalan forces would be implicated in up to 40,000 more disappearances during the country’s long civil war, which itself left some 200,000 people dead, and hundreds of thousands more tortured and subjected to systematic rape.

**T**he Americans who populate Schrader’s book, like the institutions they worked for, are strikingly generic. Many were

veterans of the Second World War who were afterward recruited to rebuild national police departments in US-occupied Japan and West Germany, and from there to work for the CIA and various government-adjacent consultancies. “Security was his earthly purpose”, Schrader writes of Byron Engle, the Kansas City police reformer turned OPS director. “His high forehead, broad nose, prominent ears, and bulbous chin contrasted with his thin, tight lips. Exaggerated features balanced by a mouth easily kept shut – his was the very visage of US empire’.

However quiet and unremarkable they may have been, men like Engle were driven by a ‘vision of modernised, professional, well-trained, proactive, counter-subversive police’, and were the architects of a truly cosmopolitan system where ‘Kansas City met Tokyo met Ankara met Saigon.’

“Occupied territory is occupied territory”, wrote James Baldwin of 1960s Harlem. He argued that America’s police, like its troops across the world, enforced a particular social order – one marked by the rhetoric of democracy and free markets but defined by racialised violence. Baldwin’s unflinching assessment of the transnational character of America’s counterinsurgency programs is supported by Schrader’s analysis: *As Badges Without Borders* shows, the OPS’s ‘experiments’ did not just impose order abroad. They also helped consolidate new forms

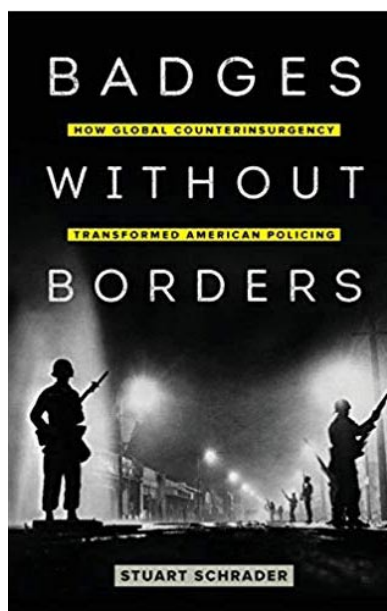


of social control at home.

Two key features of today's police – SWAT teams and the use of tear gas as 'riot control' – both drew upon lessons from foreign 'experiments'. Tear gas was cannily sold to American liberals as a 'non-lethal' tool successfully tested by US forces in Vietnam. The National Guard began heavily deploying tear gas against urban uprisings in 1968, using it both in open spaces and to overpower and immobilise people in enclosed ones. As Schrader writes, "the ability to preempt crime or unrest with nonlethal weapons meant that police could treat political dissent as incipient rioting." On campuses and in streets, police launched and dropped tear gas to preemptively 'disperse' crowds or create 'buffer zones' to confine them.

Buildings occupied by Black Panthers and other radical groups were besieged and saturated with gas; when their inhabitants fled, they were shot down by police waiting outside. The new tool meant that any mass agitation in public, from nonviolent marches to sit-ins to walkouts, could be considered a form of disorder, which police professionals could quell through tools effective against 'subversives' and 'criminals' alike.

In the 1960s, the link between America's wars abroad and its police at home was made by radical groups like the Black Panthers, the Third World Women's Alliance, and the



**BADGES WITHOUT BORDERS**  
How Global Counterinsurgency  
Transformed American Policing

Stuart Schrader  
University of California Press  
\$35

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Efforts to raise public awareness about the OPS were quickened by revelations of torture at an OPS-advised island prison off the coast of Vietnam and the killing of an American trainer in Uruguay. Media pressure and congressional inquiries mounted, and the OPS was dissolved in 1974. But, as Schrader notes, the US has hardly stopped training and arming police in other countries; today it annually disburses hundreds of millions of dollars in police aid to Latin America alone. As the Soviet Union collapsed, the rationale shifted from fighting communist 'subversion' to fighting terrorism, but the security state

has become so normal it is basically invisible – as dependable and ubiquitous as calling 911.

Since the publication of Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* in 2010, American arguments over policing and imprisonment have increasingly acknowledged how the racial politics of the War on Crime shaped the American criminal-justice system. But in this domain as in many others, the debate has remained parochial, hemmed in by the nation's borders.

Today, the US carceral apparatus is rightly understood as exceptional in size and scale – but its connection to the global operations of US empire remains largely unspoken and unseen.

Meanwhile, the mandate of police, and their material empowerment, has only continued to expand. Counterinsurgency policing, first promised as a way to secure the United States' imperial core from outside threats, has become a way of life. "At home and abroad", Schrader writes, "policing would remain the cornerstone upon which liberal democracy was built, as well as its greatest fetter."

We can only hope that his magisterial history will help to break this shackle. **CT**

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*Patrick Blanchfield is a writer and associate faculty member at the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research. This review first appeared in Black Agenda Report at [www.blackagendareport.com](http://www.blackagendareport.com)*



In an ironic twist, participants in US-backed Venezuelan coup attempt are now in an ICE detention camp, writes **Alan Macleod**

# Pro-coup soldiers locked up in US detention centres

**T**HE Venezuelan soldiers who participated in the US-backed coup attempt last April and who subsequently fled to the US have been incarcerated in ICE detention camps ever since. *Telemundo*, a subsidiary of NBC Universal, secured an interview with Major Hugo Parra, the highest-ranking of the handful of soldiers who answered self-declared President Juan Guaidó's call to overthrow the government of Nicolas Maduro.

After the coup ended in spectacular failure, Parra revealed that he fled the country, ending up in the United States on April 11, where he expected to be given a hero's welcome for his part in the Trump-approved insurrection. Instead, he was immediately detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), first kept in a facility in Texas, then later transferred to the Winn Correctional Center in Louisiana. He has been refused all requests for bail or appointments to see a judge, and is now one of nearly 42,000

people, most of them from Latin America, currently locked up in ICE prisons.

Parra told the pro-coup *Telemundo*: "I have fallen to rock bottom. I have lost everything: my family, my house. My actions were worth nothing. I don't see any way out."

Thus, his attempts to bring about a US-backed far-right military regime in Venezuela ended ironically with him in the custody of a militarised authoritarian system he was trying to establish.

**W**hile top US officials including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Senator Marco Rubio specifically called on the military to rebel against Maduro, Parra said he felt totally abandoned by both the US government and by Juan Guaidó, Washington's handpicked successor to Maduro. Guaidó had promised to protect all military defectors, but, despite using Parra for public relations purposes, has diligently ignored

his pleas for help. Guaidó's ambassador to the US, Carlos Vecchio, likewise shunned the detained soldiers, according to Parra. "All the steps have been taken", the detained soldier lamented, so that Vecchio could support them with a lawyer but he has not been able to elicit anything.

When asked for a response, Guaidó's Director of Consular Affairs in Washington, Brian Fincheltub, distanced himself from Parra: "Every day in Venezuela there are millions of emergencies and hundreds of cases like this that are happening", he said, adding that the resources of the diplomatic mission of the interim president in the country are limited and that they have restrictions to act "especially on immigration issues."

Guaidó attempted three coups last year, in January, April and November. All were backed by the United States. The last of the three was so unsuccessful that it was barely noticed even inside the country.

Guaidó, of whom over 80 percent of Venezuelans had not heard of in January, has seen his popularity wane throughout the year as his increasingly desperate attempts to seize power continued to fail.

He had previously convinced Vice President Mike Pence that he commanded the loyalty of the majority of the armed forces in the country, but when Pence and Guaidó joined forces to call on them to rebel, only about 0.1 percent did so. Guaidó's mentor Leopoldo Lopez also told the international media at a press conference that if his party succeeded in ousting Venezuela's government, they would ask the US to govern Venezuela formally.

Despite being generously bankrolled by the American taxpayer, their Popular Will Party remains the sixth-largest in the country. Guaidó has also been the subject of multiple embezzlement scandals totaling over \$90-million last year alone.

It appears, therefore, that the US government increasingly sees him as something of a charlatan who tricked them into supporting a series of hare-brained schemes bound for failure. As a result, media depictions of him have



**DETAINED:** Major Hugo Parra, left, and first lieutenant Erick Molina cross the border into the United States where they surrendered themselves to immigration authorities on April 11, 2019.

fallen from glowing in January to frosty by December.

**N**icholas Maduro, the hand-picked successor of late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, won the country's re-election in May 2018 in a vote that, on US government orders, the more radical wing of the Venezuelan opposition refused to participate in. Since then, Washington has increased its economic warfare on the country.

Trump's sanctions were declared illegal by the United Nations, who implored every

member state to break them. In September of 2018, Alfred de Zayas, the former special rapporteur for the United Nations, criticised the US for engaging in 'economic warfare' against Venezuela which, he said, is hurting the economy and killing Venezuelans. De Zayas compared the sanctions to medieval siege warfare. The US has had moderate success in drumming up international support for its handpicked successor to Maduro, convincing around a quarter of the world's countries to support Guaidó. Three-quarters of the world's countries still recognise Maduro as the legitimate president of Venezuela.

If throwing key collaborators in their coup attempts in ICE prison camps becomes a common policy, the US might find even fewer Latin Americans willing to risk overthrowing their own governments. **CT**

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Instead of accepting a ruthless society that sweeps people from the streets when they have nowhere to go, we need to develop one that considers housing a human right and that acts accordingly, writes **John Clarke**

# Holding pens for the homeless

**H**OMELESSNESS is spinning out of control in many places, not least right here in Toronto. However, in California, the situation is now generating an acute political crisis. So great is the problem of mass destitution in that state that whole urban areas are facing a threat to public health and a level of social dislocation that undermines public order and the basic level of social stability needed for capitalism to conduct business. Trump's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is reporting an increase in the homeless population of California of 16.4 percent over the course of the last year and alarm bells are ringing the corridors of power. The human misery of destitution has now reached such levels that the cash registers are being affected.

When a hard right champion of the austerity agenda like HUD Secretary Ben Carson says he wants to ensure homeless people "go to the places

that are designed to help them get out of that situation", it is very necessary to anticipate what he might have in mind. The Trump Administration is "considering moving homeless people in California off the streets and into unused federal buildings". This could be interpreted in several ways but the political character of those involved leads to a very strong suspicion that what is being contemplated is not a supply of social housing, but, rather, a round-up of those who have been thrown on the streets, so as to place them against their will in holding pens for homeless people.

**M**r Carson is not known for the depth of his social analysis. To him, broken and sinful misfits are getting in the way of profitable business dealings and need to be taken somewhere where no one will see them. His moral assumptions are quite impervious to any consideration of the actual factors

driving this homeless crisis. If he were presented with an explanation of "the rising cost of housing, coupled with wage stagnation at the lower end of the income spectrum that has led to a housing affordability crisis across Southern California", the HUD Secretary's eyes would simply glaze over.

The same factors that have put 36,300 people on to the streets Los Angeles, are playing out across North America and on the other side of the Atlantic. The *British Medical Journal* is clear that, "Austerity policies lie at heart of soaring homelessness and related health harms". The US Coalition for the Homeless informs us that "an estimated one third of homeless families in New York City are working but unable to afford market-rate rents" and that the number of shelter residents who are employed has shot up. The role of 'soaring housing prices' in putting people onto the streets of Vancouver is abundantly clear. Escalating homelessness is, in fact, an inevitable effect of





HOME IS WHERE YOU MAKE It: A small tent city near an on ramp to Interstate 980 in Oakland, California.

the convergence of the agenda of austerity, coupled with the extreme commodification of housing in what has come to be known as the ‘neoliberal city.’

**M**argaret Thatcher’s infamous suggestion that there’s no such thing as society was the product of some highly selective reasoning on her part. She certainly was not signalling an intention to disband the police forces or military. Nor did she intend to fling open the doors of UK prisons. What she actually meant was that the state’s secondary role in the area of social provision needed to be drastically reduced in line with the

needs of the neoliberal agenda.

The state has always ensured public order by way of some mix of meeting peoples’ needs and applying physical coercion. If the social infrastructure is to be weakened, the readiness and ability to resort to the billy club must be increased. The neoliberal decades have seen hugely increased rates of incarceration (most strikingly in the US) and the favouring of police budgets over social spending.

This increased use of the repressive power of the state has certainly been brought to bear on the homeless populations that the agenda of neoliberal austerity has produced. As destitution has assumed

ever more serious proportions, governing authorities devoted to the neoliberal reordering of urban space, have predictably favoured the authoritarian option when it comes to trying to contain the problem.

So, with Toronto’s homeless shelters bursting at the seams, and people forced to try and survive outside, City Hall has put a premium on raiding and dispersing homeless encampments.

When a right wing Tory government in Ontario introduced the Safe Streets Act in the 1990s, it was rightly regarded as a draconian attack on people forced to ask for spare change on the street. No one would

have imagined, however, that this legislation would survive 15 years of Liberal rule and be used far more extensively today than its original sponsors ever anticipated.

Meanwhile, in British Columbia, the Mayor of Nanaimo publicly ruminates on the forced institutionalisation of homeless people.

So it is that, in California, where the intensity of the homeless crisis runs ahead of the grim situation in other parts of North America, the neoliberal agenda's 'collateral damage' creates a defining moment.

It appears that the Trump Administration favours the razing of the extensive network of homeless camps and the placing of those driven from them in 'temporary government facilities'. Some local politicians, however, are alarmed at the prospect of such rampant authoritarianism and favour a significant concession that would ensure a significant part of the homeless population are housed. The dilemma really comes down to the limitations of how far austerity and social abandonment can be taken within the framework of a liberal democracy.

**T**he capitalist state has come a full circle from the days when Elizabethan authorities in the UK, deciding they must stave off unrest and social dislocation, came up with the first model of social provision in 1601, in the form of a Poor Law. On the streets of Cali-

## In Hungary, the hard right regime of Viktor Orban has passed legislation making it illegal for people to be homeless

fornia's cities, the same stark choice is now placed before modern day state officialdom.

The homeless population there is vast and, with the global economy moving towards a slump, the even greater numbers of people precariously poised on the edge of destitution are at risk of losing their housing.

Unless a significant concession is made that partly reverses the austerity agenda, the choice will be between tolerating destitution on a scale that threatens the social order or a sweep of the streets that takes on the features of selective martial law.

The authoritarian option can only be seen as a very real threat. In Hungary, the hard right regime of Viktor Orban has passed legislation making it illegal for people to be homeless.

Trump's political instincts are striking similar to the 'illiberal' Orban and, no doubt, there would be a base of support for a crackdown on California's homeless. Once removed from the streets and out of sight, those swept up would find that their 'temporary' holding facilities became horribly permanent and a strict prohibition of camp-

ing outside, coupled with a complete lack of housing options, would turn these facilities into de facto prisons.

It would be a return to the labour camp approach that was adopted by governments during the Great Depression and that was challenged by the unemployed movements of that period, including Canada's great On to Ottawa Trek of 1935.

**A**s the economy sinks into a global slump, and the already dreadful homeless crisis intensifies dramatically, it is very likely that the 'solutions' coming from the Trumps and Orbans will become the 'policy options' of the neoliberal centre. It will be more important than ever to bring the fight against homelessness into a broader struggle against austerity. We must stop the attempt to drive out homeless people and demand, instead, the social housing, living income and decent wages that can tackle the homeless crisis. Instead of a society that sweeps people from the streets when they have nowhere to go, we need one that considers housing a human right and that acts accordingly. **CT**

*John Clarke got involved in anti-poverty organising in London, Ontario in 1983, when he helped to form a union of the unemployed. From 1990 to 2019, he was an organiser with Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. At present, he is the Packer Visitor in Social Justice at Toronto's York University.*



# ONE MAGAZINE'S 10-YEAR QUEST FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Before I wound up in Toronto and ColdType, I designed **Frontline** magazine, South Africa's top liberal-left magazine, for 10 years during the 1980s as it battled for justice and equality during the final years of Apartheid. Now, we're digitising Frontline, as a case study of prophecy and history. The first digital issues are now on line; more will follow each month.

– **Tony Sutton, Editor**



Read the digital editions of Frontline, exactly as they were published, free of charge, at

[www.issuu.com/frontline.south](http://www.issuu.com/frontline.south)



Half a century ago, Julius Nyerere promised his countrymen that nationalisation of the foreign-owned media did not mean censorship, **Trevor Grundy** tells how that promise has been shattered

# Oppression, censorship and fear mount in Tanzania

**F**IFTY years ago, in December 1969, President Julius Nyerere nationalised the English media in Tanzania. Without a day's experience on a news desk, he made himself editor-in-chief of the Lonrho-owned English language newspaper the *Standard* and its sister paper the *Sunday News*, and appointed a South African ANC activist, the South African Communist Party-supporting Frene Ginwala as managing editor.

The nationalisation came two years after Nyerere's ill-thought out Arusha Declaration (February 1967) which led to the nationalisation of most of the economy, and two years before the equally ill-conceived *Mwongozo Guidelines* of the ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) which led to nationwide factory shut-downs that brought Africa's universally applauded socialist country to its knees.

Frene Ginwala did not last long at the *Standard* and was



*Frene Ginwala in the newsroom of The Standard with the paper's new editor-in-chief, President Julius Nyerere, in 1970.*

effectively deported in 1971 after an editorial she did not write, but which she approved, infuriated Nyerere.

But for a short while (roughly between 1969 and 1975 there was freedom of expression in Tanzania such as few African and 'Third World' countries have ever enjoyed.

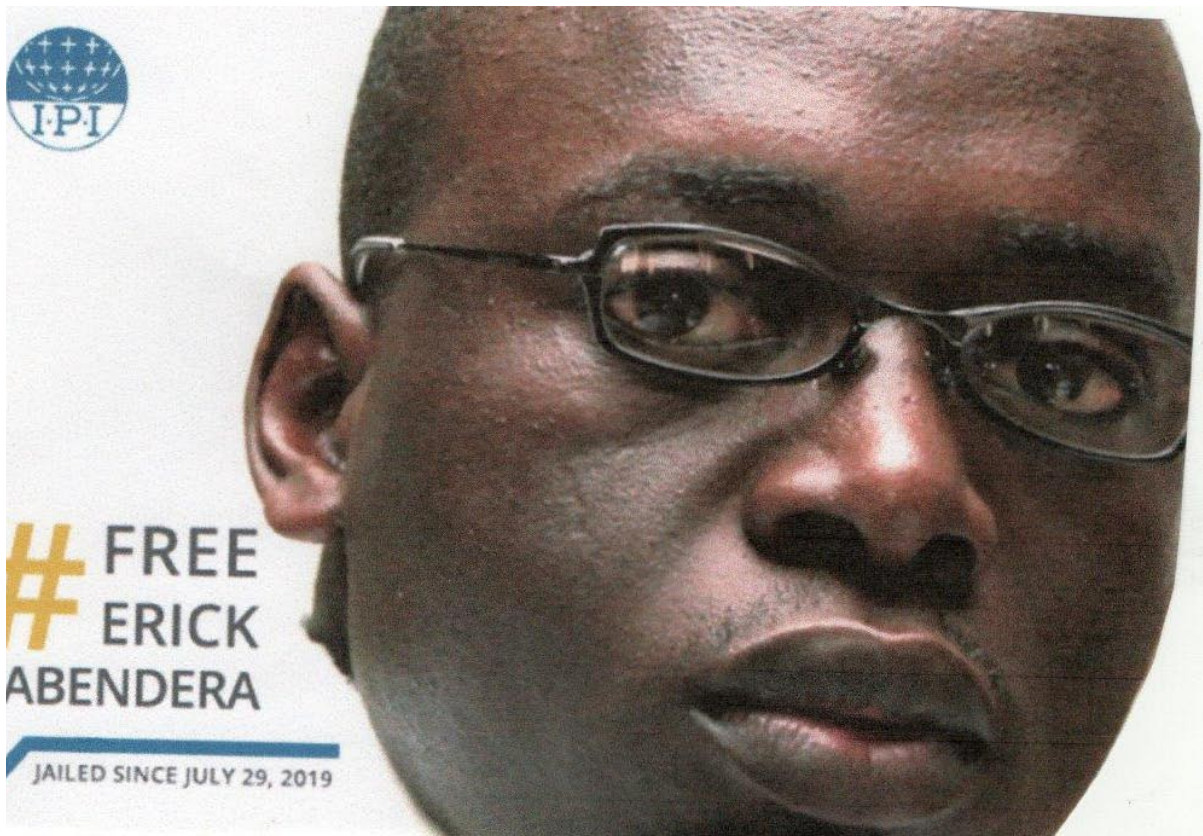
The well-respected Kenyan journalist Philip Ochieng wrote in his 1992 book *I Accuse the Press* (Initiative Publisher, Nairobi): "In all my 27 years of experience as a newspaperman in all the three East African

countries I do not recall anything like the kind of openness and depth of debate such as took place in Tanzania."

Today, many young Tanzanian journalists look back to that time and wonder what went wrong, because the situation in Tanzania for those anxious to expose the vast corruption and inefficiency of the Tanzanian Government is grim, dangerous and deadly.

Although the Commonwealth does everything possible to avoid angering African leaders by drawing attention to the way so many of them act like tin-pot Third Reich fuhrers when it comes to the media there is, say Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, a mounting climate of fear, censorship and repression in a country that once led the 'free world' in its attacks on all-white rule in Rhodesia, apartheid in South Africa and tiny minority rule by Lisbon in Portugal's African colonies, the two most important being Angola and Mozambique.

Photo: Adarsh Nayyar



**FREE ERICK:** A poster put out by the International Press Institute.

Last October the two highly respected human rights watchdogs barked loudly and came to the conclusion that President John Magufuli's government has adopted or enforced a raft of repressive laws that stifle journalism and severely restrict the activities of non-governmental organisations and the political opposition.

"As President Magufuli marks four years in office (November 2019) he must carefully reflect on his government's record of ruthlessly disemboweling the country's human rights framework", said Roland Ebole, Amnesty International's Tanzania researcher.

The regressive policies

and actions of the authorities have stifled the media, sown fear among civil society and restricted the playing field for political parties in the lead up to elections, commented Oryem Nyeko, African researcher at Human Rights Watch which interviewed 80 journalists, lawyers, representatives of non-governmental organisations and members of political parties.

**A**mnesty International interviewed 68 government officials, representatives of non-governmental and inter-governmental groups, lawyers, academics, religious leaders and diplomats

and reviewed court decisions, national laws, government notices and orders.

They found that the president and senior government officials frequently made anti-human rights statements, at times followed by cracking down on individuals and organisations. Their remarks have stifled independent reporting by journalists and public discussions on human rights violations.

Since 2015, the government has stepped up censorship by banning or suspending at least five newspapers for content deemed to be over-critical. These include Tanzania's major English language daily newspaper the *Citizen* in 2019

and four others in 2017. The Zanzibar Broadcasting Commission also shut down a radio station, Swahiba FM in October 2015 because it reported on the annulment and subsequent re-run of the 2015 elections.

Both Amnesty and Human Rights said they saw a dangerous escalation towards repression in Tanzania. The authorities are denying citizens their rights to information by administering only those “truths” sanctioned by the state, said Amnesty’s Ebole.

In July 2016, President Magufuli banned political activities until 2020 in contravention of the country’s laws. The ban has been selectively applied against opposition politicians, several having been arrested and prosecuted on trumped-up charges. In 2017, unidentified assailants shot opposition MP Tundu Lissu and in 2018 unidentified assailants killed two officials of the main opposition party, Chadema. Although the police claim to be investigating these killings, no arrests have been made.

Now, the Tanzanian government has taken its most draconian step to date and issued a warning to local journalists

## The people who followed in the footsteps of the leader known as Mwalimu (the Teacher) ignored the promise he made

about quoting foreign organisations and representatives in their reports.

**S**ammy Awami of the BBC said that the warning came a few hours after American and British diplomats released a statement criticising the process of local elections in the country which diplomats said were marred with irregularities.

The ruling party won 99.9 percent of the seats contested.

Government spokesman Hassan Abbas said in a tweet that some foreign organisations and representatives (he must have meant Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, American and British diplomats) were party to misinformation by quoting foreign sources.

“For this matter,” he said, “the government has done

enough explaining, given enough warning and enough pardons. Now we will take stern measures.”

Meanwhile, a case involving the missing Tanzanian investigative reporter Erick Kabendera has been postponed for the eighth time.

Kabendera, who has written for many international publications including the *Times* and *Guardian* in the UK, was arrested in July and charged with being involved in organised crime, failing to pay taxes and money laundering.

Half a century ago, Julius Nyerere promised his countrymen that nationalisation of the foreign-owned media did not mean censorship. For a short while, it didn’t. But the people who followed in the footsteps of the leader known as Mwalimu (the Teacher) by his impoverished countrymen ignored the promise he made. **CT**

*Trevor Grundy is an English journalist, author and researcher who lived and worked in several Commonwealth countries between 1966 and 1996. He is a member of the Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA).*

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# Insights



Photo: Arild/Flickr

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UP IN THE AIR: Toronto financial district in a photo taken from the intersection of Bay and King Streets.

## Canadian bankers get 'bleak' \$15-billion bonuses

By Linda McQuaig

**T**HERE'S silly. There's absurd. And then there's this: Canada's six largest banks are dishing out \$15-billion in bonuses this year. But, in the eyes of some, this isn't enough.

Indeed, Bill Vlaad, president of Vlaad & Co, which monitors bank compensation

trends, described the \$15-billion payout to bank executives as bleak, while noticing that it could have been worse: "It could very well have been a bloodbath."

A bloodbath? The word conjures up the sort of savagery associated with Vlad the Impaler (no relation) in the 15th-century.

Certainly, the notion of bankers suffering as they gorge on \$15-billion in bonuses highlights the cavernous gap between the world enjoyed by those at the top and the one occupied by the struggling masses, including bodies we step over on sidewalks surrounding our bank towers.

It also reveals how misleading media reports can be, particularly about high finance, with insiders allowed to peddle their self-serving agendas unchallenged.

Of course, "bankers are underpaid", said nobody ever. Last year, Canada's big six

banks accumulated staggering profits totalling \$46.6-billion.

Although banking is a tried-and-true method for making tons of money, banks enjoy a protected position at the top of the Canadian economy. With roots stretching back to before Confederation, the big banks represent the very heart of the Canadian establishment. Over the years, they've developed deeply entrenched connections to Ottawa's governing parties, making it difficult for newcomers to break in.

No matter how enterprising or innovative a Canadian citizen might be, she can't just go out and open a bank. She needs a charter from the federal government, and these aren't easy to obtain. Yet, despite their privileged perch, Canada's big six banks have gotten away with paying extremely low taxes – the lowest in the G7. Partly by using tax havens, our wildly profitable banks have managed to reduce their taxes to a rate that is about one-third of the rate paid by other Canadian businesses, according to a 2017 *Toronto Star* investigation.

Some Canadians might wonder whether we are well served by our banks. In recent years, they've shut down branches across the country, leaving

hundreds of rural and remote communities without a local branch. They've also declined to offer banking services to many low-income people, obliging almost two-million Canadians a year to pay the hair-raising interest rates charged by payday loan operators.

**Y**et, proposals that Canada Post offer banking services at its 6,200 outlets across the country have been opposed by the big banks, which insist that they serve Canadians well.

Certainly they serve themselves well, with even a “bleak” year leaving bankers divvying up \$15-billion in compensation, on top of their base salaries.

We know the bank CEOs get a generous share – led by the TD Bank's Bharat Masrani at \$15.3-million – but it's not clear how the rest of that multi-billion-dollar pie is divided, or even how many bankers get a slice.

And the \$15-billion doesn't include stock options, which enjoy special tax privileges.

Stock options can be held and cashed in when a bank's stock is particularly high. The bankers qualify for a tax break that allows them to pay income tax on these gains at just half the rate that ordinary workers

– plumbers, nurses, fast-food servers – pay on their employment income.

This special tax treatment is hard to justify, and has long been controversial. The Trudeau government has pledged to limit the loophole for employee stock options to \$200,000 a year – still a lot more than the typical worker makes.

With this limit expected to be imposed soon, bankers holding stock options will likely cash them in this year, according to David Macdonald, senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in Ottawa.

“The actual pay flowing to executives this year might well hit an all-time high as they rush to cash in all their old options – especially since bank stocks are also at an almost-all-time high”, Macdonald notes.

If so, the bankers will no doubt insist that the low-level employees in the office crank up the heat – and that they do so before they dot another “i” or cross another “t.” **CT**

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*Linda McQuaig is a journalist and author of *The Sport & Prey of Capitalists*, which explores the different energy policies of Alberta and Norway. This column originally appeared in the *Toronto Star*.*

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# Brexit and the free movement of vampires

By Catherine Spooner

Photo: BBC/Hartswood Films/Netflix/David Ellis

**F**ICTIONAL vampires tend to reflect the politics of the times that produce them. “Because they are always changing, their appeal is dramatically generational”, says the late American scholar Nina Auerbach in her classic work of criticism *Our Vampires, Our-selves*. The figure of the vampire, she suggests, always tells us as much about ourselves as it does about vampires *per se*.

With this in mind, the first episode of the new adaptation of *Dracula* for the BBC and Netflix by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss is at first perplexing. Unlike Moffat’s previous, modernising adaptations of 19th-century fiction – *Jekyll* (2007) and *Sherlock* (2010-17) – the series returns to 1897, the year in which Bram Stoker published his novel.

The setting is high Gothic, featuring a crumbling, eastern European castle (Orava Castle in Slovakia) and a convent full of crucifix-toting nuns. Eschewing the sentimental romance of Francis Ford Coppola’s 1992 adaptation or the wildly successful *Twilight* franchise, Moffat and Gatiss appear – initially at least – to take us back to the horror of the original text.



**BLOODY AND UNBOWED:** Claes Bang is Dracula.

But as the episode progresses the European setting becomes more than just spooky window dressing. One of the most famous arguments about the novel, first made by Stephen D Arata, is that Dracula enacts “reverse colonisation” – Stoker’s vampire expresses the threat that imperialism might not be a one-way operation. From his home in eastern Europe, the count travels to Britain to buy up its real estate and add its women to his harem, bypassing the need for a passport or immigration documents and threatening British manhood in the process.

Seen in this light, *Dracula* offers a clear application to our times. In an article for the *Guardian* on ‘Brexit Gothic’,

Neil McRobert points out: “When Nigel Farage expresses concern about Romanian men moving in next door, it makes one wonder if he has read *Dracula* – the story of a Romanian man who literally moves in beside some stuffy British people.”

Moffat and Gatiss are too canny to give us a straightforward metaphor for Brexit – and yet there are clear nods to contemporary anxieties in the first episode. *Dracula* quizzes Jonathan Harker on English language and culture out of a desire to “pass among your countrymen as one of their own”. He will be the good immigrant who assimilates, who blends invisibly with the host culture. There is a moment of discomfort, however, as he promises to ‘absorb’ Harker – this immigrant is a parasite who feeds off its host.

There is no direct correlation with itinerant agricultural workers, however, as *Dracula* seeks to infiltrate the highest echelons of society. In a warped version of late 19th-century eugenics, we discover that *Dracula*’s choosiness about his victims is the secret to his vampiric success – consuming only the blood of the best enables him to retain his human qualities. Hence his appetite for the British Empire. “Vampires go where power is”, says Auerbach. “You are what you eat”, quips Claes Bang’s *Dracula*.

Moreover, this is a tale of two Europeans. Sister Agatha,



the Dutch nun who questions Harker after his escape from Dracula's castle (a significantly expanded role from the book, played with exquisite exasperation by Dolly Wells), scoffs at Jonathan's English masculinity when he fails to realise the incongruity of a secret message written to him in English in a Transylvanian castle: "Of course not! You are an Englishman! A combination of presumptions beyond compare". British exceptionalism looks set to take a tumble as Dracula reaches England in the second instalment.

The episode displays the acute self-aware characteristic of vampire films, which are what Ken Gelder calls 'citational', constantly referring to previous examples of the genre. There are multiple moments when viewers anticipating romance have their expectations rudely shattered. *Twilight* in particular comes in for some sharp debunking, with Mina playing the role of *Twilight*'s heroine Bella, appealing to her lover's higher moral fibre and coming in for a shock as she discovers that true love does not trump bloodlust after all. Instead of *Twilight*'s lingering shots of gleaming male torsos we get intimate body horror in excruciating close up – a fly crawling across an eyeball, a blackened nail flaking off a finger.

One of the most striking features of Moffat and Gatiss's

adaptation is its humour. Comedy has always been a crucial element of Gothic literature, which continually teeters between terror and laughter. 'King Laugh', a metaphorical figure invented by Professor Van Helsing in Bram Stoker's novel to explain his own hysterics, is a version of death, leading the characters in a kind of *danse macabre*. The novel exhibits black humour in the character of the lunatic Renfield, in particular, who calculates how many lives he can consume, starting by eating flies and trading up the food chain.

As I argued in my recent book, *Post-Millennial Gothic*, a distinguishing characteristic of contemporary vampires is their increasing comic agency. The first self-conscious vampire joke is the iconic one-liner first spoken by Bela Lugosi in Tod Browning's classic 1931 film: "I never drink ... wine". Moffat and Gatiss get this out of the

way in the first few minutes – and even add a callback later in the episode.

There are more zingers to come as Bang quips his way across Europe like an infernal James Bond. When Harker spots him with a glass and queries that he never drinks, I almost expected him to clarify: "Shaken, not stirred."

The comparison between Dracula and Bond is not a casual one. Bond props up a crumbling British Empire – Dracula aims to infiltrate it and use it to his own ends. They emerge from the same social and historical concerns, two sides of the same coin. Both reflect us back in multiple ways, and neither offers a flattering picture. **CT**

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**Catherine Spooner** is Professor of Literature and Culture at Lancaster University in England. This article was first published at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)

## Greedy billionaires gained \$1.2-trillion in 2019

By Jake Johnson

**T**HE 500 richest people in the world, all billionaires, gained a combined \$1.2-trillion in wealth in 2019, further exacerbating inequities

that have not been seen since the late 1920s.

That's according to a new *Bloomberg* analysis published Friday, which found that

the planet's 500 richest people saw their collective net worth soar by 25 percent to \$5.9-trillion over the last year.

"In the US, the richest 0.1 percent control a bigger share of the pie than at any time since 1929," *Bloomberg* noted. "The 172 American billionaires on the *Bloomberg* ranking added \$500-billion, with Facebook Inc's Mark Zuckerberg up \$27.3-billion and Microsoft Corp. co-founder Bill Gates \$22.7-billion."

According to the *Bloomberg Billionaires Index*, eight of the 10 richest people in the world are from the US.

**A**mazon CEO Jeff Bezos lost nearly \$9-billion in wealth in 2019, according to *Bloomberg*, but he will still likely end the year as the richest man in the world with a total net worth of \$116-billion.

The analysis comes as 2020 Democratic presidential candidates, particularly Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), have made tackling inequality a key component of their policy platforms.

Warren has proposed an annual two percent tax on assets over \$50-million and a three percent tax on assets above \$1-billion.

Sanders, who has said he does not believe billionaires should exist, is calling for a wealth tax that would slash the fortunes of US billionaires in half over 15 years, according to

his campaign.

"A small handful of billionaires should not be able to accumulate more money than they could spend in 10 lifetimes", Sanders said in September, "while millions of Americans are living in poverty and

dying because they can't afford healthcare." **CT**

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*Jake Johnson is a staff writer for CommonDreams. This article was first published at [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org).*

## Crazy conspiracists versus upstanding citizens

By Caitlin Johnstone

**C**RAZY, stupid conspiracy theorists believe a mature worldview requires skepticism toward power.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe the government is your friend, and the media are its helpers.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe that powerful people sometimes make immoral plans in secret.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe the TV always tells the truth and the CIA exists for no reason.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe that extreme government secrecy makes it necessary to discuss possible theories about what might be going on behind that veil of opacity.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe that just because a*

*world-dominating government with the most powerful military in the history of civilisation has no transparency and zero accountability to the public, that doesn't mean you've got to get all paranoid about it.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe it's okay to ask questions about important events that happen in the world, even if their government tells them they shouldn't.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe everything they need to know about reality comes out of Mike Pompeo's angelic mouth.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe the very rich sometimes engage in nefarious behaviour to expand their wealth and power.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe billionaires always conduct themselves with the same*

*values that got them their billions in the first place: honesty, morality, and generosity.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe it's important to remember the lies that led up to the invasion of Iraq, and the disastrous consequences of blind faith in government claims.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe 'Iraq' is a fictional land similar to Narnia or Middle Earth, from the writings of a fantasy author named George Galloway.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe Syria is fighting to avoid becoming another Libya in a war of defence against extremist proxy armies of the US-centralised empire, which were given billions of dollars in military support with the goal of toppling Damascus.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe Bashar al-Assad is a real-life version of a cartoon super-villain who just started murdering civilians willy nilly in 2011 because he loves murdering civilians, then in 2015 his friend Vladimir Putin joined in because he loves murdering civilians also.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe the extensive history of US government lies means you should always demand mountains of independently verifiable evidence when they make

claims about unabsorbed nations.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe Russia literally committed an act of war on the United States in 2016, China is orchestrating a second Holocaust, Maduro is deliberately starving the Venezuelan people because he hates them, Assad is using chemical weapons but only when it makes no strategic sense, Cuban spy crickets are trying to assassinate US diplomats, there's novichok everywhere, and every noncompliant party in the Middle East is secretly working for Iran.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe that it can be difficult to figure out what's going on in a mass media landscape that is saturated with the propaganda of the US-centralised empire.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe that all you need to do to ensure you're getting all the facts is watch television and run screaming from the room if you accidentally flip past RT.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe the Gulf of Tonkin incident was faked, the 'taking babies out of incubators' narrative was a lie, Saddam had no weapons of mass destruction, Gaddafi's rape armies never existed and the Libya intervention was never really about humanitarian concerns.

*Smart, upstanding citizens believe it's better not to think about such things.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe the latest WikiLeaks publications of internal OPCW documents provide ample evidence that we were lied to about the 2018 Douma incident.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe those documents aren't real because the New York Times never reported on them.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe that increasing levels of government secrecy are making it easier for government agencies to do unethical things in secret.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe that questioning your government makes you a Russian anti-semit.*

Crazy, stupid conspiracy theorists believe that the billionaire class which owns the mass media has a natural incentive to prop up the status quo upon which it is built, and so construct an environment where reporters are incentivised to always support the establishment line.

*Smart upstanding citizens believe that if that kind of conspiracy were really happening, it would have been in the news. CT*

**Caitlin Johnstone** is an Australian blogger. Follow her at [www.caitlinjohnstone.com](http://www.caitlinjohnstone.com)



## COLDTYPE IMAGE OF THE YEAR



# The blood of our children

By Ron Fassbender

9 MARCH 2019 - Several hundred Extinction Rebellion activists perform a dramatic protest in Whitehall, London - the seat of government - pouring gallons of fake blood outside the residence of then-Prime Minister Theresa May in Downing Street after a solemn ceremony and calls for politicians to take seriously the threats posed by global warming and biodiversity loss to the planet. The blood symbolised that of the children lost through unabated climate change. As the year came to an end, we were left wondering if worldwide protests were likely to make a difference to the actions of blind, deaf, politicians and avaricious business leaders.

● See more of Ron Fassbender's images at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/theweeklybull>

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