

LABOR WRITES 2021

Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies



SUNY EMPIRE
STATE COLLEGE

LABOR WRITES 2021

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**SUNY Empire State College
Harry Van Arsdale Jr.
School of Labor Studies**

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Editorial Comments

In the first issue of *Labor Writes 2010*, former Dean Merrill states, “Writing [and I would add art] is an act of aspiration and of power ... *Labor Writes* also aspires and empowers.” This has been true with every issue we’ve published since, and even more true with this issue which is chock full of both aspiration and power. Writing from a wide variety of classes is represented here, both associate and bachelor students. The art, which is folded in between the writing, is also from three different classes, and is an extravagant boon in *Labor Writes 2021* (more about the art in our art editor Barrie Cline’s remarks). The writing is varied in its origin (which assignment, which reading) and its author’s course content and instructor.

Labor Writes 2021, our 11th issue is full of thoughts, of ideas, of opinions, perspectives, and learning experiences relayed to us by our students. This work — both the art and the writing — was all done during the pandemic when days were filled not simply with work, but with parenting and all that entails, especially when kids are learning virtually, it involved students’ own virtual learning and the learning curve that involved with that — not only for students but for instructors as well. The year was filled with worry about friends and family members, or self, getting or having COVID-19. This preoccupation or actual occupation could have interfered with the quality of student work, yet we had more than twice the number of submissions we usually get and had to winnow that by half. The work was, as you will see, thoughtful and entertaining and has a lot to say about the labor movement and the role of unions in our society.

Labor Writes/Labor Rights — that’s what it’s all about in the end, isn’t it? Its why you are here in school, why you are reading what you are reading, studying what you’re studying — to learn more about your rights in the workplace and in the world. About your place on the jobsite, about your place in the union, that is why you are here, to become better and more critical thinkers and writers and artists. Someone I know once told me, “A liberal education is for everyone,” and he knows what he is talking about. You will receive a liberal education at the Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies because Van Arsdale had the vision for it, you’ll be studying Labor Studies because Van Arsdale wanted to have IBEW Local 3 members educated in labor — economics, history, writing, literature, art, and social sciences, among other subjects. By reading through this issue, you will get a bit of everything and if you are in College Writing for Workers, you’ll get a sense of what is ahead for you in your studies.

And so here we are back where we started from — aspiration and empowerment, as former Dean Merrill notes it is the labor movement that aspires and empowers. It is the writing and art here will do both as you read through it. As an aside, this will be my last *Labor Writes* as I get ready to retire. One thing is for sure, these issues of *Labor Writes* will stick with me, and they will continue to [inspire] and empower me. Thank you.

In solidarity,

Rebecca Fraser, Ph.D.
Associate Professor Emerita

Art Editorial Overview

Most of the images featured in this issue have emerged from the art classes from 2019 until the present. In addition to the courses I teach, Amy Howden Chapman's version of the Public Art class (with a focus on climate change) and Andrew Tilson's film classes challenge students to both center the trade unionist experience and also to equally locate themselves as artists. With all they have going on — and for those in our classes in 2020 the pandemic hit them very hard — they were still able to absorb this dual challenge and give particular form to their perspectives embodied in new unfamiliar mediums and/or in adapting their job tradecraft materials to new modes of expression. The end result, taken altogether with the written work, makes a compelling case for the Labor Studies curriculum and its educators, but also for the creative and critical expression of the students making its way out into the world.

Barrie Cline, MFA
Art Editor

Content Editorial Overview

Getting to *Labor Writes 2021* has been an exciting 12-year journey that began with our very first issue in 2010. For us, the *Labor Writes* anthologies are a way to encourage Van Arsdale students — many of whom admit to us that they chose to go into a trade to avoid school, and especially writing — to see themselves as writers and thinkers who are part of the academic audience. Across the curriculum, students are encouraged to write in the discourse of their working-class identity, privileging the first-person narrative and experience as their primary academic voice and not the other way around. Mentors, instructors, and writing coaches collaborate to guide students to produce a quality of writing that students feel proud to publish in an anthology that will be read by other students, instructors, members of the college community, executives in their unions, and anyone who might access one of our PDFs online.

Labor Writes serves as a central text in our first-year curriculum for associate degree students, and as a supplemental text in all of our classes, alongside the work of professional authors. In doing this, our goal has been to present Van Arsdale students with a model of what they too can produce and achieve as thinkers and writers. Our commitment was and remains to elevate student writing to a genuine place of student-centeredness, to empower students to claim their place in the academic narrative, and to advocate for the legitimacy of their voices as scholarly discourse. As Van Arsdale students read essays written by their fellow apprentices, we hope they come to realize that their own writing has worth, that their ideas are valuable, and that their experiences are as much a part of the narrative as anyone else's — because they are!

Sophia Mavrogiannis, M.A.
Content Editor

Content Editorial Overview

This project serves as a perfect reminder of why the Arts and Sciences are inextricably connected, from an educational as well as existential viewpoint. From both of these feeder panels of knowledge, many “home run” circuits of consideration flowed forth in *Labor Writes*.

The idea of personal Emergence (both from students’ previous lifestyles/ educations/careers, as well as from quarantine) was an important theme to consider in the hopefully-waning context of COVID-19, while the Perspectives section reflects important discoveries made by the students using their own experiences, as well as the newfound notions discussed diligently (even through the altered perspective of e-class) with our dedicated professors. Exploring both the artistic and scientific sides of our personal spheres, especially as part of the world where we are devoted to developing all of our skills, the current of creative comprehension was gloriously generated.

With gratitude and thanks to the staff of the Harry Van Arsdale School of Labor Studies and all of my brothers and sisters in the Local 3. A special shoutout to the fine folks of Nead Electric, whose excellence and education have held me to a bar higher than any crane could raise.

Don’t hate the Plato, hate the cave.

Emily Lawless Taffe, B.A.
Content Editor

EMERGENCE

Miracle on 35th Street (A Spire)

by Emily Lawless Taffe



I Have My Father's Hands

by Rick A. Mickschl

My father Rueben Mickschl was a union blue-collar worker. He was a welder at The Trane Company producing large air conditioners in La Crosse, WI. He worked there for 37 years before retiring in the 1990s. He lived until age 66, passing away in 2003. I miss him every day of my life.

I have my father's hands. I say this to tell people that my work ethic is from my father. His hands were well-worn with callouses, always dirty from working, and they were truly working men's hands.

Today, my hands are not like his, but my work ethic comes from his teaching and his hands. His hands provided me a good living. Not rich; however, I always had a full belly after dinner. His hands provided me clothing and shoes to wear and a roof, which did not leak, over my head. His hands taught me what a hard but good day's work was like. Along with his welder job, he had a side business making wooden crates called fishboxes, which were used in the La Crosse area to transport rough fish from the local rivers to the fish market. He fabricated them out of scrap wood he got from Trane Company. He recycled the excess shipping materials that Trane received their production goods in.

Since around 9 or 10 year of age, each weekend and during summers off of school, I worked with my father moving, disassembling, pulling nails from, and recrafting these shipping materials into fishboxes. We made thousands of these crates each year. It provided extra income for our family. It taught me the definition of earning your keep, working for your supper, working to support a family and the value of your work translating into earnings to



spend. I learned quite quickly that if you didn't want to work you had no money to spend. That is still engrained in me 50 years later because of my father's hands.

Today, I represent blue collar workers through my job as a Union Representative for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. I worked at Trane Company, like my father. I was called a Trane brat, which is a child of a current Trane worker. Trane usually hired children of good workers and I benefited again from my father's hands. I was taught by other union blue collar workers to operate and run metal cutting machinery, both manual and computer-controlled. It was these machining skills that were taught and handed down from other blue-collar workers to me. Eventually, I became a trainer of machinery to others. My final job at Trane, before working full-time for the Union, was working in maintenance servicing and repairing the Trane plants and machinery as a millwright.

Throughout my time with my father, my time at Trane Company, taking roles in the union of Local 21, ultimately being President of the Local, I never lost sight of who taught me throughout my life. One day as an apprentice on a maintenance job, I was working with Doug Olson, a 30 year plus Journeyman Mechanic. We were about to use a torch to cut out a leaking steam pipe. I was on the man lift at the ceiling some 20 feet up and he was on the ground. He told me to come down and get a handful of rags and get them wet. I was confused and being young, a bit snarky for having to come back down for his request. We bantered a bit and then he got straight with me and told me "to do it, now!" I did and went back up on the lift. He then proceeded to tell me to put this handful of wet rags on top on the fire sprinkler head near where we were torching so the torch flame did not set off the fire sprinkler. If that happened, we would all get wet and the fire department would show up due to a fire alarm. I had no clue and had not thought anything of it. The moral of the story here is to look at your surroundings, assess your situation, look from all angles for dangers and opportunities, don't be mouthy when you don't understand, and mostly *respect, learn from and listen to your elders*. I will never forget this Doug Olson lesson in my life.

These experiences with my father, my union, representing workers and advocating with employers, being a machinist, working as a millwright solving machine problems, and working with other "Doug Olsons" of the world reflect each day in what I do. I call it "building bridges." If you can't get to where you need to go, be it a personal, work, or union issue, you have to build a bridge. Connect where you can to solve a problem, represent a member or save a member's job. The people in my life, the experiences I had at home growing up, learning from other union blue collars at work, and learning from my

union brothers and sisters how to fight for workers has set the north star of my life compass. I am truly fortunate to have this guiding lighthouse of personal and union experiences.

This gives me a unique perspective of a union blue collar worker — still being one, still representing them and honoring my father for teaching me how to be one. The blue-collar worker goes to work every day to support his family, pay for a home, to provide food for the table and to have the necessities of life. What seems to be day-in and day-out kind of work is the backbone of our nation's manufacturing. The blue-collar worker provides the hands and heartbeat to make the steel, craft or weld it into product and buy the products to use in his life. The blue-collar worker makes and works with the tools of industry to provide us with automobiles and trucks to drive; and the list goes on and on.

Simply put, blue-collar workers make stuff. They install stuff. They maintain stuff. They recycle the same stuff when it doesn't work anymore. It is a bit more complicated than this, but you get the idea. Look around your home, your car, your workplace, your office and your community and see what blue-collar workers have touched. It is just about everything you can see.

Blue-collar professions are sometimes looked down upon as having no success. Few realize the value of the blue-collar worker as they are like a stage crew in a theatre: doing all of the set-up, set changes, set building and running shows behind the scenes during the performances, all while never being seen. Without a stage crew, the show would not go on. The same goes for the blue-collar workers that we all benefit from each day in ways we never realize. The next time your car needs a tow or repair, or you go to a store to buy a piece of furniture, or you need to buy a new air conditioner or furnace for your house, think about who performed the service or made the product. Think about who drove the truck to get the products to your town. Think about the person who installed it at your house. Blue collar workers touch each of our lives every single day.

I still consider myself a union blue collar worker and am proud of it, as was my father. My father taught me valuable tools and good but hard lessons that I still live by today. His guidance, teaching and love lives within and through me each day. It made me who I am today, a union blue collar worker, because I have my father's hands.

Biking to Freedom

by Zoe LaFemina

Do you remember the last time you felt completely free? Even if it was just for a moment, and then all of your worries and responsibilities came back to mind? Those moments seem to be harder to find these days so, when I do experience them, I try to remember how they came about. The last time I felt free, I was riding my bike down Ocean Parkway on my way to Brighton Beach. I bought a bike during the first month of COVID lockdown and it reminded me how much I love that feeling.

Over the summer of 2020, I think most people were feeling trapped and scared, especially in New York City. From March to June, New York City was seeing a record number of hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. “As of Wednesday [April 29, 2020], there have been over 18,000 COVID-19 fatalities in New York, with total confirmed cases sitting at 299,691” (PIX11 Web Team). I was laid off from my coffee shop job, and the electricians union was not giving out any new job tickets. I was stuck in the house just like everyone else.

It feels irresponsible to say this, but at the beginning of the COVID lockdown, things were kind of exciting. I hadn't had more than a week off from work since I started work at age fourteen, so the idea of not working for a couple of months sounded amazing. Of course, it only felt amazing because I already knew about the extra \$600 added to unemployment checks. I spent the first couple of weeks of quarantine planted on the couch watching TV and calling the unemployment office.

Some days were easier than others. I still felt worried and scared for the future, and for the health of my family and friends. As days turned to weeks and weeks turn into months, I found myself feeling a lot of anxiety about the pandemic. I was constantly worrying about my parents getting sick, and I missed my friends. I'd been stuck in the house for a month and a half and I was feeling stir crazy. As I scrolled on my phone, I saw an ad for a fixed-gear bicycle on Craigslist. Biking is not a foreign concept to me; I spent a huge amount of my time as a teenager biking around my suburban town. When I think about what biking meant to me when I was a teenager, it represented freedom, as well as an escape from my small conservative town. That feeling of freedom I felt as a teenager is something that I really needed to feel in 2020.

Two hours after responding to the ad on Craigslist, I was riding my brand-new bike back to my house. The ride home was honestly a little stressful because I hadn't ridden a bike in over five years, and I'd never ridden a bike in the city. I definitely got a few honks thrown in my direction, but I didn't care! I was so excited to start my new life as a cyclist in NYC. Fast forward two weeks and

my bike was sitting in my hallway, collecting dust with a flat tire. I finally heard back from the union and started taking online classes. I'd been trying to get into Local 3 for two years, so I was making sure I passed all of my classes with flying colors. I got caught up with all of my new responsibilities and forgot all about my new bike.

After a couple weeks of studying and reading for my classes, I started to find some time to ride my bike. I started off slow, biking around my neighborhood and to Prospect Park. Biking to Prospect Park has become one of my favorite activities. Before COVID, I took the subway everywhere so I never got a good view of the neighborhoods I traveled through. I moved to NYC from Maryland three years ago, but my parents are both from Flatbush. Biking through Prospect Park and the neighborhoods surrounding it gave me an opportunity to connect with my roots. I learned that my grandparents had their first date at the Parade Grounds just south of the park, and I actually got to see the bench where they met. I've never felt as connected to my family and my roots as I do when I'm biking through Brooklyn.

After I got a little more comfortable on my bike, I started biking down Ocean Parkway to Brighton Beach. It's a pretty quick ride, and I was able to bring my swimsuit and jump into the ocean when I got there. I've always felt a connection to the ocean. Where I grew up in Maryland, I would always go to the beach with my friends after school. I would fish in the Chesapeake Bay with my uncle, and catch crabs there too. When I moved to NYC, I thought I left the ocean behind me. I was prepared to live in the concrete jungle, replacing my sandy beaches with dirty sidewalks. When I realized that the ocean was a thirty-minute bike ride away from me, I couldn't get enough. I probably biked to the beach over fifty times this summer. It became a very enriching hobby for me.

When I'm biking down Ocean Parkway and I start to smell the salty air, I feel a sense of freedom that connects me to my roots and also makes me feel hopeful for the future. I forget about all of my responsibilities for a second and it's just me, my bike, and the ocean ahead of me.

From Sitting in Skyscrapers to Building Them

by **Matthew Cox**

Growing up I wanted to be a lot of things — a space paleontologist, a lawyer, a filmmaker — but when I was asked that common question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I never replied, “I want to be an electrician!” Then how, you may ask, did I find myself a proud Local 3 apprentice? Why am I waking up at the crack of dawn to brave below freezing temperatures struggling to guide wire with my fingers that have lost to the cold any ability to feel the thin finicky conductors and sweating under the hot august sun taking orders from grown men with the temperament of petulant teenage boys? Why did I trade in the social capital, income and ease of my nonprofit management job to labor? In a world where we are told money and status will make us happy, I found peace in hard work.

My life has never been focused. I wasn't a child or young adult with long term structured plans and goals. I didn't want to dominate a sport or rank at the top of my class. It wasn't that I lacked confidence in my ability to achieve great things, I was always skeptical that the payoff was actually worth the immense effort it would take to accomplish them. I would take all AP classes but end up with C's. I would be on the Dean's List for one semester of college only to drop out the next. It was a trend that followed into my time in New York as I worked a series of dead-end sales jobs, struggling to pay rent and have enough food to put on the table at the end of the week.

In 2013 I finally caught a break. A guy I was working with, Jon Harden, let me know that he was working a temporary fundraising job for the holiday season at a nonprofit called Transportation Alternatives and asked if I'd be interested in picking up some shifts. I was thrilled to be working in an office full of hip, well-educated young people. It fit my ideas of what I had always thought being a grown up and going to work was. Soon, I was able to parlay my temporary phone fundraising job into a part time assistant job and a whole new world opened up.

I found myself not having to worry about quotas to pay my rent. My friends and family showed me a new level of respect and strangers asked for my business card. In the early part of my career at TransAlt I was always assisting others, completing small tasks and tying up loose ends they didn't have time for. I found myself excelling as a number 2, helping events go smoothly and taking leadership to make sure plans were executed. My effort didn't go unnoticed and before too long I was promoted all the way up to partnership manager leading a small team with 2 direct reports and several other seasonal

employees. I was never trained for this job and my director was often busy or absent. The position involved planning our fundraising strategy and selling sponsorships, and I felt the amount of work I put into my work in no way correlated to the results I was producing. I found myself unable to focus on the broad long-term planning and execution that came with leading a department, and I missed working on all the small things that made the big picture work. I was chained to my desk or stuck in meetings all day and was constantly restless.

In the winter of 2018 I fell into a deep depression accompanied by constant anxiety. My quality of work spiraled and I found myself avoiding my coworkers. Things finally came to a head when I had a total break and didn't leave my room for several weeks, calling in sick. I sent an email to HR asking to resign explaining my struggle to perform and clawing anxiety. To their credit, TransAlt's HR manager encouraged me to come back, seek mental health support, and work things out. While my mental state improved somewhat, my job performance was nowhere near adequate. I started looking for new office jobs, and when I was offered a position as a customer experience manager at a building supply company, I realized I was just setting myself up for more failure and declined the position. Shortly after I was fired from my job at Transportation Alternatives.

I started to think about when I was happiest. Memories of grueling backpacking trips through New Mexico and one hundred plus mile days on my bicycle sprung to mind. My body and mind seem to crave a daily physical struggle and it's during these hard days that I tend to feel most at peace. I also knew I loved problem solving. Whether it was packing an overstuffed car or dealing with an upset donor, dealing with a problem in the moment focused my mind and gave me satisfaction.

Now I could have forsaken my worldly possessions and walked across the country doing odd jobs for sustenance, and I did consider it, but ultimately, I'm more practical than that. I wanted a career that would scratch these itches while still allowing for my future goals of supporting a family and seeing the world. As someone involved in progressive politics I knew about the position of NYC labor unions and that their members could make a more than decent wage. I started researching online how one could get into a labor union. I applied for every one that was accepting applications. I even slept outside on the street to get an application for the carpenter's union. After getting turned down for the steamfitters and hearing nothing back from the other unions I had applied to, I was starting to feel discouraged. I felt like the door into New York City unionized construction was sealed off to all those but the sons of those who walked through the door before, who knew the secret password.

Right when I was ready to give up hope, a letter arrived in my mailbox. My hands were shaky as I carefully tore open the Local 3 stationary. I had been accepted into the union.

Since April 2020 I have been an Apprentice Electrician. When I get up in the morning and head to work I'm not always excited about what lays ahead of me. This job has its own challenges and a fair amount of culture shock I've had to acclimate to. But while it's not perfect, I never feel dread when I walk out my door. The depression and anxiety that poverty and alienation from my labor cause me are gone. Who knows what the future holds, but for now, I am proud and excited to be counted as a member of Local 3.

Plato's Allegory

by Kaitlyn McDonough

Plato's Allegory of the Cave can be interpreted in many ways and can still be related to society today. This story was written 2500 years ago, so it is interesting to realize that human beings have had the same tendencies for all this time. We are creatures of habit who tend to cling to our comfort zones and reject change whenever possible. There are those who are part of the minority who challenge the "norm" and think outside of the box. Plato was one of those people and this story speaks of the struggles one may face when trying to share new knowledge or ideas with others.

When "the philosopher" escapes the cave, sees the real world and returns with the truth he attempts to share this new knowledge with the other prisoners. They don't believe him and even react violently to this new information. This reaction is a defense mechanism that many humans still have to this day. When our norm is challenged and someone tries to tell us that our thoughts are wrong or we should believe something else, we become defensive and retreat into our comfort zones. Many of us unfortunately like to live our lives with a willing ignorance to what is really happening around us. The prisoners may not even fully doubt this new information, but the thought of their whole lives being a lie frightens them and causes a violent reaction in order to continue living their lives the only way they have ever known. As they say "ignorance is bliss" and this story is a classic case of humans clinging to that ignorance.

The cave represents our ignorance. It is what shields us from the truth and becomes our comfort zone. The cave is our home and as humans we naturally prefer not to leave our homes or in this case our ignorance. It is much easier to just go with the flow and not to challenge what we are told or what is shown to us by our families, the media, the government, etc. The cave prevented the prisoners from seeing the truth and today our ignorance is what prevents us from seeing the truth. The sun symbolizes truth in this allegory. It is the brightness that could not reach the depths of the cave, or the truth that cannot penetrate ignorance.

Once the philosopher saw the sun (the truth) his whole perspective on life was changed. The cave was no longer a shield to the real world for him, but when others can't or won't witness the same truth with their own eyes it is very unlikely that they will believe it. The shadows reflected on the cave wall represent a false truth. They are the only concept of life outside the cave that

the prisoners have. Their whole lives are based on what they have seen in the shadows, so when the philosopher returns to tell them that their truth is actually all a lie they become violent.

The shadows in society today can represent the media and how filtered our access to information is. We are shown only a fraction of what actually goes on in the world or even the country for that matter. The same news stories are played on a reel for hours and we are only shown what we are meant to see. Certain occurrences are used as distractions from others, a smoke screen to the truth. We believe the shadows and trust the information that is shown to us too easily and when someone tries to show us the real truth or something other than what we've been believing, the reaction is rarely a positive one.

This story applies to my life as a Union Laborer because when I first decided to join this trade, many people tried to feed me a false truth or keep me locked inside my cave with the shadows. When I first started my journey as a woman entering this industry and shared the idea with my peers and family, I was told that I couldn't handle the work, the men wouldn't want me around, or I should stick to school and become a nurse or something a woman should do. I have faced a lot of doubt by those around me, but I decided to challenge these false truths and see for myself how this industry actually is. I am so thankful I didn't cling to my cave and let the shadows be my truth because this job has changed my life and I'm thankful for it every day. None of the things I was told have proved to be true. In fact, my experience so far has been the complete opposite. I will continue to challenge the norm and force myself out of my comfort zone in my future in this industry. Thinking outside of the box and pushing myself is what got me to this position, and I will continue to do so because it has paid off so far.

The Only Guy at Milad

by Rafael Diaz



The one guy who is a single father just trying to make into the 200k-per-year club can be overwhelming, during a time called “the journey” which has already been a roller coaster ride. Finding someone to watch my 4-year-old son Rey is the hardest part of being an apprentice. Equally as hard is the separation in location to where my three daughters live in the south. Amaria is in Georgia, the oldest 18 years of age. Jada’s 13 and C.C. is 10 years old and they live in South Carolina. My youngest (TBA) is currently due October 1, 2021. What keeps me going is “House Diaz” and my personal journey in life that has taken me from Infantryman to Journeyman. The dream of building my estate on 40 acres of land with a mule named “Miggies.” This is “New Zanzibar” and it’s what I will leave my children when I’m gone. I believe calling a career with Local 3 “The Journey” is correct. Already into my second act when it comes to having a career. I do look at this opportunity with the apprentice program as my last chance. I’m currently 35 years old and my journey started when I took the test in 2014 when I was 29 years old. The interview took place the following year with an acceptance letter three and a half years later. My journey has been long and it’s lonely. This journey has been littered with setbacks and

betrayals, but I can't be mad because mostly blessings and successes are continuing to come my way because I'm still alive. "The Journey" is extremely far from the finishing line and the best is yet to come.

The hardest part of this whole long process is leaving my son Rey, who is 4 years old, before he wakes up for preschool. Job sites in "the business" require a 0600 or 0700 call. Single parents everywhere have these issues and must make sacrifices to maintain a good reputation as being reliable when it comes to showing up on time — best not get a reputation like one apprentice I came across. His nickname was "No-Show Bobby," go figure. Let's all do the numbers, shall we? With job sites "in the business" opening up either at 0600 or 0700, Rey's preschool (John Life-Coker) opens at 0800 like most daycares across the Tri-State area. So, this creates a major conflict in my time schedule. "The Journey" is a lonely one and I sympathize with single mothers everywhere because this apprentice is the only single dad at Milad. Possibly one of the few in Local 3 NYC, a small group of electricians dealing with a major problem. This forced me to request to work at nights with Milad, who has contracts with the NYC D.O.E./Public Schools. The first reason is for more money when working at nights, not a whole lot, but every bit counts when you're living in NYC on a year one apprentice hourly rate. Rey is my only child that lives with me, and I always will keep a roof over his head — and the rest of his siblings as well. Now another problem arises: I sacrificed getting him to school on time for not seeing him when he gets off of school in the afternoon. The anxiety of not having someone to watch your child as a single parent never goes away because I still have an issue with finding childcare one way or the other. Single-parent apprentices have obstacles Journeyman who are mostly married or with grown kids don't have to deal with. The look on Rey's face when I leave for work and the distance of living so far away from the girls really eats me alive.

My oldest Amaria is on her way to graduating high school with college credits and I'm now the proud father of a U.S. Army recruit. She is heading to the reserves and with college soon to begin at Albany State "House Diaz" has potentially an officer in the near future. Hopefully (insha Allah) by the time I will be getting my A card, Amaria will be getting commissioned by the president of the United States of America. It makes me really proud that I'm the only guy at Milad who has seen combat in Iraq and has a daughter about to serve the country.

Jada is my second child, and she was born in Alaska. Alaskan folklores say that when children are conceived under the northern lights of Alaska they're blessed and truly special. Japanese citizens come visit Alaska for that same reason and I believe Jada Mercedes Diaz is truly special because of it as well. She loves to write and read. I hope this published writing inspires her to become a bestselling author. Something her dad will be also (Insha Allah).

The only guy at Milad who served and lived in Alaska, truly I've been to the top of the world literally and figuratively. Completion of "The Journey" will put me back on top of the world.

Consuelo Corrine name is two out of four grandmas I had growing up. This piece on "The Journey" is dedicated to C.C. Diaz my third daughter who was named after my two favorite ol' ladies so I had to start the paragraph off right. Watching C.C. Diaz come into this world was truly something amazing and I'll leave it at that (lol). My father died on Christmas Day and C.C.'s birth is on 25 Dec. 2010, so I'm the only guy at Milad who mourns and celebrates on the 25th of December. **Consuelo Corrine is** my resurrection!

New Year's Eve going into New Year's Day 2020–2021, I experienced a miracle conception. Later this year "House Diaz" is expecting a new birth due on October 1, 2021 so you can do the math silently in your head. If it's a boy I will name him, and if it's a girl she will name her. With all honesty, I think I'm the only guy with his fifth kid on the way or just expecting in 2021, and if it is indeed a boy, I will name him after me, "Rafael S. Diaz II," so the world will know him as "Trey." "Trey" was "Johnny Carroll III" my cousin who was murdered in Hempstead, Long Island in the early morning of August 24, 2012 on my ex-wife's birthday and six days after mine.

I'm really thankful for being in Local 3 and if it wasn't for God and my mother pushing me to go to Nassau BOCES, I wouldn't be here. She had the foresight to send me for training I would later use in life, instead of spending my afternoons dodging riots and gangs I studied electric wiring. Nassau BOCES is where I met Amaria's mother. She was an older teen from a neighboring town outside of Hempstead. She was learning the cosmetology business, which was pretty cool for me, because I had cornrows as a rebellious teen. This is nothing new for me — coming into Local 3 as a year one apprentice and the experience of an apprentice is sort of like being a private again. Starting over really doesn't get to me, if you can understand where I'm coming from? I'm more thankful for the second chance I have post-military. A far cry from seeing adult males pissing their pants from hazing. The shit-talking journeymen who dish out the nicknames with jokes attached is nothing I haven't seen before. I compared it to R-rated movies vs. PG-13 rated ones. I tell this to myself on the tough bad days. Thank heaven it's almost over and "House Diaz" is back on track. So those tough days are actually easy days. Through the ups and the downs, I embrace it all and I love life. I can see some inspirational poet. Getting called "da suit" by some of my senior Journeymen is amusing to me and I find it funny because I will be in the suit one way shape or form. I wasn't built for the deck. I was built to create the deck. My ambitions are as strong as ever. Trying to survive in NYC on apprentice wages doesn't get to me because I see brighter days for myself and my family. What makes me the only guy at Milad makes me no different than any other apprentice or electrician. We all

are here for a better life for your families and to live comfortably. I appreciate whatever advice or knowledge that is passed down to me. The military has prepared me for this life and honestly it does not affect me. I have seen and heard worse. Ultimately, the responsibility falls on me to complete this journey. My goals are to become an A card holder and I have ambitions to pass the Journeymen who have come before me. I absolutely do want to wear a suit at a negotiating table working on multi-million dollars contracts to build infrastructure in NYC and the Caribbean. So "RAF Da Suit" it is for me. The only guy at Milad.



Culture in the Fire Service

by Dylan McGuire

When joining the fire service, not only are you joining a job, but you are joining a family. Your co-workers or peers become your brothers and sisters. These brothers and sisters get so close that you may get to know more about them than some of your friends. I have been in the fire service for two years now and can say I have another family. This family is because we spend lots of time together, heavily train, and are even in life threatening situations together.

When joining the fire service, you will meet a great deal of people who you will get to know and trust. The people you meet in the beginning are the same people that you will be around all the time. Whether it is seeing each other during training, events, calls or even just being around each other in the firehouse everyone gets to know each other. An example of this is being on a standby in the firehouse due to storms, high call volume, or multiple calls going on at once. During a standby you can be there with a crew for two, six, or even twelve hours. During this time, we all talk to each other, have meals together, and respond to emergencies during our time there.

Another time we are always around each other is at events. These events can be dinners, barbecues, picnics, or ceremonies. At these events we are all able to see each other at one time as well as meet everyone's kids and other family members. Events are important because you create a strong bond when seeing everyone as well as getting to meet the kids and family members you always hear about at the firehouse.

Secondly, going on calls for service with your crew is another time we are together. Whether it be a motor vehicle accident or house fire you know the people you are with will teach you something new and help you during every call. Some calls may be very important and some may not. A situation where a call is less serious would be someone burning food and setting off their fire alarms. Even during these calls, we firefighters try to make something out of every call. Calls like these are often when the new guys get close with the veteran firefighters because they will go out of their way to help you learn something and show you many things you never knew. Them doing this shows how they care and gets you more comfortable with who you are with.

Lastly, being a fireman is a very busy job, but we are not always at a call or in a fire. When not at a call I am often with my co-workers storytelling, hanging out, or training. During this off time, we eat with each other, watch TV, tell stories and talk about everything we do while not at the firehouse. Telling stories is one of the biggest parts of being in the fire house. You sit with a senior man and you can guarantee he will be telling you about a fire that he was at

20 years ago and what funny thing happened that day. It is said in "What Is the Fire Service Culture?" by Robert Avsec, "Storytelling, or oral history, have served to help perpetuate a culture within a society for thousands of years ... Such stories often had the culture embedded, whether they are deep and obviously intended as learning devices, or whether they appear more subtly, for example in humor and jokes." You learn what people do for a living, what their family is like and even little things like what car they drive. Although times like these aren't always exciting, this time also allows you to be close to the family that you joined into.

Training in the fire service is very important for our safety and the community's benefit. Training is when the young guys and the older, more experienced firefighters, get close and get to learn how each other are. When a probationary firefighter or new firefighter just gets into a firehouse these training can be how you build your reputation with the veteran firefighters. Your reputation is built with the veterans because they are able to see how into the job you are, what your work ethic is like, or even if you are a social or quiet person.

Although most of these training sessions go well, there are other times where we all fight with each other. In every family you have siblings fighting with each other or with their parents. This is also found in the fire service. People argue about anything ranging from disagreement on how something should be done, or people having problems doing what is said to be done. No matter what it may be, like other families, things always get settled and figured out so by the time the next call comes out, there are no hard feelings or grudges with each other.

Lastly, I can call my peers in the fire service my family because after any time is spent with each other whether it be fighting or not, when the job needs to be done and a life is on the line there is nothing stopping me or any of my brothers and sisters from helping one another. Being in a life-threatening situation is the biggest thing that brings your new family together. When there is someone that is scared, the person next to them is there to calm them down. Every house fire is different no matter how long you have been in the fire service. Each fire I learn something new no matter how big or small it is. I also see during every fire how well we all work together. At every fire I know if there is ever a point where my life is at risk I will have ten plus people by my side right away and willing to do whatever is needed to get me out of a bad situation. When tension is high and adrenaline is rushing, having your new family with you is very comforting and is what puts everyone together so well.

Being in the fire service is one of the best things that I have done in my life, not only because is it something I enjoy doing every day, but because of the family that I was brought into. We get along, we fight, but no matter what happens we always have each other's back and can get the job done. Although

I didn't know it going into the fire service, the bond that is made with one another is unbreakable no matter what we go through. This experience is something I will never forget and I am excited to see what it becomes in the future.

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Black at Birth

by David White

I find the task of having black people recall instances of “bias” in America a very interesting one.

As I sat down to write this essay, it occurred to me that I am being asked to recall instances that left more of an impression on me than perhaps even my first known instance of encountering bias consciously which, as it turns, I cannot recall at all. Despite it having had an unquestionable impact on my life, this first and crucial lesson in white supremacy escapes me entirely. In many ways, a black child encounters bias before it has even been delivered into the world. Hospital staff suffering from an endemic of so called “implicit bias” in their admission of health care has proven to be fatal to many Black mothers, who die during child birth at rates higher than any racial group. This apparent attack on black children is also what left Fannie Lou Hammer sterilized, after white doctors removed her uterus without her knowledge. She had always wanted children. The experience made her one of the strongest advocates against “family planning” initiatives in the black community.

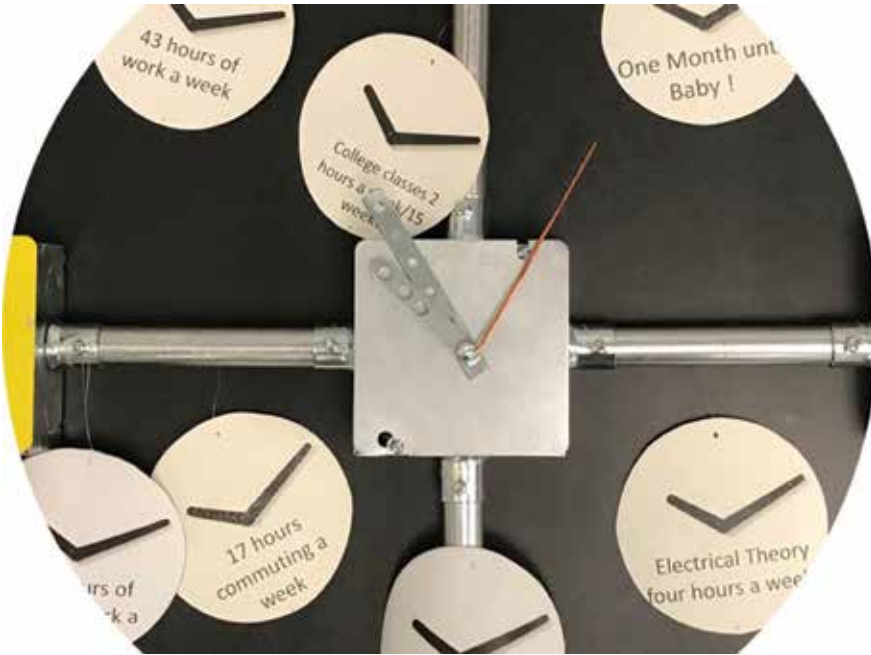
I am not entirely certain of the ways in which a black mother’s internalized fear of harm to both herself and her unborn child influences a fetus’s psychological development during pregnancy, but borrowing heavily from Joy DeGruy’s concept of intergenerational trauma, I can safely assert that the impact is most certainly more than nil. It is entirely possible, and in fact likely, that a child is born with the knowledge that it is valued less. Perhaps it can sense the hostility of the hands receiving him, it’s mother’s fear of being ignored and left to die by the doctors charged to protect her, or other instances of white supremacy as it manifests in the delivery room. I cannot say for sure, but I do know that by the time I formed my earliest memory, I knew that I was black. And I knew in a very fundamental way that this was a white world. There is no way a black child comes to this knowledge without encountering open hostility (“bias”) in the world around him.

Actor Daniel Kaluuya, star in the newly released Fred Hampton biopic, recently expressed his frustration with being asked by white journalists to explain why racism was happening. “I don’t know,” Kaluuya responded, noting that it was odd to ask a black man who loves black people to explain a pattern of behavior common among whites. Thus, a black child learns that he or she is hated almost unconsciously. We are born under punches, thrown while we were still in the womb. All other instances of “bias” we may encounter afterwards are reaffirmations (“micro-aggressions”) intended to remind.

Review lessons, so to speak to that very first education.

My Clock

by Eric Tassiello



Being Useful

by Tylor Pucciarelli

There are many different moments in my life that have led me to become a member of Local 3 and a tradesman. Growing up, I never would have imagined that I would be doing construction work. I thought a 'conventional' job wasn't for me. My father worked as an auto mechanic for New York City, and my mother was an Office Manager for a janitorial supply company, and I constantly questioned what my path would be. Since then, my views have changed, and I now see the utility and fulfillment that can be gained through a career as a tradesman. I can point to many experiences and role models that influenced me to become a tradesman, but I can boil it down to the fact that I just want to be useful.

Nearing my final days of high school, I remember being overcome with the feeling that I had wasted so much of my time by not participating in any extracurricular activities that I felt would help me to gain skills I felt were important to get through life. Fast forward to the 4 semesters that I attended Queens College, I continued on that same path of feeling like I was wasting time. I was not putting effort into my studies, but instead choosing to skip class and hang out with friends, leading to me being dropped from the college due to my poor GPA. I fell deeper into uselessness the year following by quitting my job and subsequently burning through all my savings, spending money mostly on cannabis.

When my savings were down to a measly \$700, I remember being determined to get a job just because I needed the money. After being out of work for a long period of time, it can be hard to market yourself to employers. I was lucky enough to know a manager of the local movie theater who was able to help me get a job. After working late nights, leaving as late as 4 o'clock in the morning, I knew I needed to find something different. I quit my job at the movie theater before finding a new job. My father was so upset with the choice I made, but luckily, I landed a job quickly as a stockman at PC Richard and Sons. I considered this a step up from my former job since I worked more consistent hours along with a good increase in pay.

While at work, I met a man named Paul who worked as a plumber. While I was carrying out a newly purchased freezer to his car, he asked me if I would be interested in helping him on some of his plumbing jobs. Paul reminded me of my Uncle Tom, who passed away while I was in high school. My Uncle was a plumber and I felt close to him while doing these plumbing jobs. Paul gave me the perspective I needed at the time when it came to life. We talked about how

the need to do something with my life and how there was no time to waste. I was already 22 years old and had no path to follow. In that moment, plumbing became my new path.

Like many others, I waited in line from Friday night until Monday morning to get the application for Local 1 (the Plumbers Union). I got almost no sleep because of this flower distributor that was using forklifts all night long. I was completely invested in pursuing plumbing until I was presented with an opportunity to work for an electrical company that worked on transit jobs. This made me stop and think to myself, 'Should I take this sure-fire job or do I take my chances by trying to get into Local 1?' After discussing the options with my family, I decided to move forward with the electrical job and from then on, I have been on the path of becoming an electrician.

Working with that company was a major learning experience where I was presented with some of the most challenging times I have ever faced. Everything we worked with was heavy, and I had to really learn how to use my body properly to avoid injury while at the same time learning all new material, tools, terminology and working 7 days a week. I was pushed to my limits working almost 80 hours a week while going to school 2 nights a week. I almost gave up many times, but my girlfriend Rubiya always encouraged me to stick it out. This entire time I never lost sight of that fact that my main goal is to be useful to my family. This was the reason I made sure to say when asked why I wanted to peruse a trade.

A year into working with that company, I put in an application to Local 3. I know many people who applied, but I ended up being the only one scheduled to take the placement test and eventually the interview. The first practice exam I did for the placement test I scored 46 percent on the math section, but I worked hard and after weeks of practice was able to get an 8 out of 9 on the placement test. I finally received the call that I was accepted into the Local 3 apprenticeship program, and it happened to be the day after my sister got married. When I told my father that I had been accepted into Local 3, he couldn't hold back his emotions and started to cry tears of joy. That weekend was one of the best my father has ever had, and I felt like I had finally done right by him; I felt like I was finally being useful to my family.

One thing that Paul said to me that I will never forget was "You are going to have chicken days and feather days, but you got to keep moving." That has stuck with me ever since and every time I have a bad day, one of those feather days, I remember that somewhere in the future there is a chicken day waiting for me. When people ask what I do for work, I am happy and proud that I can say I am a tradesman, working with my body and mind, developing a skill as well as making money. The skills that I have learned and continue to learn will be with me even if I lose all my money. Beyond, all the skill provides me with the ability to be useful to my family and community, which is the beauty of being a tradesman.

Untitled

by Christopher Pyzynski



Use Your Hands: *Steal Like An Artist* Review

by John Fitzgerald

In Justin Kleon's book *Steal Like an Artist*, the chapter titled, "Use Your Hands" jumped out at me and I realized that this was the chapter I had to read because to me, it represents a lot of who I am. Since a young age, I always knew that I would never work at an office where I had to sit down all day and write reports or whatever people in suits do at work. I knew I wanted to do something that at the end of the job, I could see what I actually did, whether it was hanging an exit sign next to a bathroom or installing a receptacle in the auditorium. I have always been proud of anything I could do and show off when I am finished whether it was a crazy Lego set or building a bike ramp out of sticks and mud.

When I read the chapter, I was surprised to see my idea of "hands-on" work was different to someone else's. I always put together that hands-on work is hammer, nails, and wood; go and build something. This chapter opened my mind to the idea that hands-on could be anything from playing an instrument to creating poems. If you asked me before I read this chapter, "What is hands-on about writing poems?" I would honestly tell you nothing. After reading this chapter, I realized creating the idea from drawing or going through a newspaper for ideas is all hands-on work. Almost anything done without a computer or laptop could be considered a hands-on job.

After reading the chapter, I thought how can I apply this idea of using my hands and getting away from the computer and phone more in my life. My life has been surrounded by screens, video games, and phones almost all of my life whereas now when I think back, I kind of think I wasted a good portion of my life on things that have no benefit to me now compared to things I could have done that would help me obtain skills that would be useful to me for the rest of my life. One thing in particular is learning an instrument. In 2009 to 2010 when I was in 3rd and 4th grade, I played the violin at my elementary school. Not to brag, but I was in the top 3 in my class at the instrument and really caught on to how to play the instrument. In 4th grade, I was the only boy in my class and whereas now I would love that, back then that embarrassed me for whatever reasons so I gave up the violin after that. To this day, that is probably my biggest regret in my life. I see my sister who took the same path as me learning the violin in elementary school and because of that skill, she was able to teach herself how to play the banjo, keyboard, tin whistle, and guitar. I wish that I could have those skills.

This chapter in a way has inspired me to want to at least attempt to learn an instrument again just so I could obtain the skill and be able to show it off to others around me. Another way I would like to apply this chapter to me is by spending less time at home being on my phone and doing nothing and going out seeing new things and doing more activities that excite me. COVID also plays a role in this, but I want to go to Yankee games more often, go see some concerts and even just take random road trips to see and do something. Using my hands does not have to only apply to working, it can apply to actually going out and doing new things. COVID has definitely made me realize how much I want to do. It is like the saying, "You don't know what you have till it's gone." I never realized how many things I had at my fingertips until everything was taken away from me and I was forced to stay at home and could only entertain myself there.

I have always liked work where I had to be hands-on and in reading this chapter, I broadened my idea of what using your hands really means. It could be playing an instrument, reading a book, or even going to a football game. They all apply to this idea from the chapter and in reading the chapter it has inspired me to go out and want to do more with my life.

Untitled

by Steven Vereb



Unions are Important

by Deirdra Williams

Unions are important because they help workers come together to better their circumstances. Without unions, workers are at the mercy of their employer. They have to depend on the employer to give them fair wages and favorable working conditions. When workers organize and come together, they have more power than when an individual person tries to negotiate with their employer. In the absence of an advocate, each individual does not hold as much power to be able to actually create change in the workplace. With the support of a union, workers have the ability to challenge their employer and show them that without these workers there would be no product for the company to remain in business.

It is important to have a union because without one, employers will do whatever is best for the business or profits without regard for the wellbeing of their employees. If a certain change in operations would be more profitable for an employer, they can decide to implement these changes without considering how it can affect their workforce. The union helps protect workers from losing their jobs when it's not justifiable; it can also help to ensure there are fair costs for healthcare and helps to ensure the general well-being of the workers. As Michael Yates states in his book, *Why Unions Matter* (2009), "It would force the company, so long accustomed to seeing its employees as simply costs of production, to treat workers as human beings, with the respect that all people deserve."

Yates believes that unions are important because they allow the workers to have some control over the actions of their employers. He also believes there is strength in numbers, a union brings all of the workers together to create change in the work environment. When workers join together they are able to force employers to see them and listen to their concerns. Yates also says that unions can improve wages and benefits and can change the relationship between labor and management. The union allows the workers to feel as if they have dignity and are respected since they actually have a voice.

To me unions means unity, respect, support and a better lifestyle. Every day we go to work in exchange for money so we can pay our bills and support our families. No one wants to go to work knowing that their position, health and even life is at risk. A union helps makes our labor not go in vein. Union equals better pay, better healthcare, support and a better life. Unions will fight and demand that employers give employees the benefits they need and deserve.

The Making of a Tradesperson

by Alexander Macron

The electrical trade is occupied by many different people from varying backgrounds. Through different routes, these people have all found their way to the same trade as a means to make a living. From my first introduction to working with my hands as a young man and realizing the joy it brought me and the sense of accomplishment that can be derived from a job well done, I knew I would end up working in a trade of some sort. In this essay I will tell my personal story of how I found my way to this trade as a career, through a desire to learn a skilled trade and work with my hands, a process that has been a long time in the making.

The first sign that I had an interest in electricity happened so long ago that I don't personally remember it. It occurred around Christmas right after I had turned three. While we were setting up the tree, my mother had left the room and returned only to find that I was plugging the string of lights into the wall to find some strands that were no longer working. She was very understandably upset and asked me what I was doing. I responded by saying, "Be careful mom, this is dangerous work." Needless to say, we soon had safety covers for all of the unused outlets in the house. A few weeks later, I was discovered taking all of the covers out of the outlets. When stopped by my Mother, my excuse was, "You aren't supposed to put things that aren't plugs in there."

The main factor that led to my interest in the trades comes from the fact that my father did a lot of contracting work during my upbringing. I would go to different jobs with him all throughout my childhood, but somewhere between eight and ten years old I started actually helping and learning the basics of carpentry, plumbing, tiling, roofing and electrical work. The first of these experiences that really stands out in my mind was learning how to secure dry wall. My dad would hold the board in place while I would try, poorly, to secure it to the studs. I wasn't doing a very good job, but I was learning and felt like I was actually contributing to getting the job done. I really enjoyed the work and I loved learning how to build and fix things. This continued on a fairly regular basis until I was around fifteen years old. The time spent working with my father gave me my basic mechanical abilities and allowed me to realize how much I enjoy working with my hands.

For the rest of my teens and into my early twenties, I worked several jobs that were service oriented. It wasn't until I was around twenty-one that the basic skills I learned would come back to benefit me. I had gotten a job working as an assistant for the art department in the film industry. Although this is a field where most people have a background in art, design and an eye for aesthetics

(all of which I do not), I had an advantage because of my previous experience working with my hands and the fact that I had gotten a class A license at a previous job. This was an instance where having a different background and skillset from most of my co-workers proved to be very beneficial. The abilities that would not necessarily be sought out by someone looking for employees in this field made me stand out and be known as a valuable asset on the set. The basic skills I had learned years before had proven to be valuable in securing and keeping an unrelated job in the future.

The next time these skills proved to be beneficial, and be further honed to the level they are now, was in securing my last job before I got into the apprenticeship program. I got a job as a janitor working in two large residential buildings. I was working there for about a year when the superintendent left for another job opportunity with the FDNY. When I heard the building would be taking applications I approached my supervisor and submitted my application. Because of my previous experience I was able to secure the position and I excelled. I worked in this position for nearly four years, during which time I was able to hone my trade skills as well as acquire a lot of experience in customer service and problem mediation. I really enjoyed this job and it taught me a lot about myself and dealing with people in the situations that can occur throughout one's day.

This brings us to current day where I am just at the beginning of my career as an electrician in the Local 3 apprenticeship program. Daily tasks range from receiving materials deliveries to running electrical wiring, splicing connections and installing fixtures. It has been a long and sometimes interesting road that has brought me to this point, with the basic skills I learned as a child often benefitting me along the way. These are all experiences that led me to where I am today. I am now looking forward to mastering a trade and becoming a skilled tradesperson who is an asset on any project or task that needs to be accomplished.

PERSPECTIVES

My 2020

by Abel Alvarez



The Problem with Renting in New York City

by Logan Burger

A question discussed frequently is, “Why is it so expensive to live in New York City?” As a Manhattan resident, I wonder the same thing. The cost of living in the city has been on the rise since the conclusion of the Great Depression (Miller). Developers continue to build luxury residences accompanied with absurdly high rent, those lucky enough to live in a rent-stabilized apartment hold onto it like their life depends on it, and there is an abundance of laws that protect NYC tenants. These factors contribute to the ludicrous cost of living that torments city residents. Supplemental to the cause of high rent prices are the solutions. New York City rent may be salvageable if developers were required to build a higher percentage of affordable housing into their projects and if laws were put in place to make it simpler to find housing based on income, and by zoning map redesigns across the city.

I searched high and low to find out as much as I possibly could about New York City housing. Most of the information was in abundance. However, I found it difficult to pinpoint a timeline of the price of housing in NYC. Through diligent research, I found out everything I needed to know and more.

The first reason it is so difficult to find affordable housing is because of the lack of it. Developers are able to receive a tax break if 20 percent of their development is ‘affordable housing’ (Schulz). This definitely is a great idea, as development companies look for any way they can save money and increase profits. However, the required percentage should be raised. Over 40 percent of New York City households have an income under \$50 thousand annually (Rich). In order to be classified as ‘low-income’ when applying for affordable housing, a single individual must earn just under \$60 thousand annually (Schulz). This means more than half of households in New York City are considered ‘low-income.’ However, only 20 percent of units in new construction are required to be reserved for ‘low-income’ housing. This poses an issue that will only grow with time. Population will grow exponentially while the number of ‘affordable’ housing units will increase minimally. The demand for housing increases daily and the volume of housing in the city follows suit, but the majority of new housing is not affordable to the average renter. This can be solved by increasing the percentage of units that are required to be reserved for ‘low-income’ housing to closer resemble the percentage of households that are considered ‘low-income.’ Additionally, increased taxes on luxury housing construction in general would discourage developers from building apartment buildings that cater to the richest of the rich.

Alongside the unsustainable ratio of 'affordable housing' to 'low-income families,' are those fortunate enough to have an affordable apartment whether rent-stabilized or 'affordable.' The renters who manage to get a good deal on an apartment do as anyone would and hold onto it like their life depends on it. After all, it practically does, in New York City anyway. Because of this the demand for affordable housing skyrockets, as does the price of housing. After the rent-stabilized and 'affordable' units are gone, the market value units remain. Over the past decade, rent averaged at around \$3,500 monthly (Miller). This equates to 42 thousand annually, almost two-thirds of the current median income of 75 thousand (Schulz). Even besides that fact, most landlords will not rent to a tenant that does not make 40 times the monthly rent annually. Long story short, NYC rent is practically impossible to afford. Last year, lawmakers introduced several increased protections for tenants of New York City. These include limiting rent increases and ending landlords' ability to get rid of rent control on certain units because of how much money the renter earns ("State"). These protections are certainly a step in the right direction, but it should be taken a step further. Rent stabilized units should be made more available for 'low-income' families, rather than anyone looking for an apartment.

Lastly, the zoning maps in Manhattan could use a redesign. A perfect example of this is the East Village neighborhood in the lower east side. The amount of building space permissible in a building lot is based on the type of zone it is. The type of zone determines the "Floor-Area Ratio" and in turn the total building space allowed. The majority of building zones in the East Village are 'R7A' and 'R8B' zones, which permit a Floor-Area Ratio of 4.0, which allows for 4 square feet of building area per square foot of the lot (Barro). By changing these zones to zones which allow more building space, this would allow more apartments to be built in the same square area, and this is just one neighborhood. There is a plethora of building lots in Manhattan that could be reconfigured for maximum efficiency. This is a basic economic solution. A higher quantity of apartments would lower demand for apartments, and a lower demand for apartments would mean a lower price for apartments. Obviously, this would not be a fast process, but it would definitely have an impact on the price of rent in Manhattan.

The simple supply and demand solution are currently being demonstrated in the city, although it is due to outside forces. The current coronavirus pandemic has caused many New Yorkers to flee the city to protect themselves. This has caused a dramatic change in the rent market in New York City. "More than 10,000 apartments were listed for rent in Manhattan in June, an increase of 85 percent over last year, according to a report from Miller Samuel and Douglas Elliman" ("Empty"). Because of this, rent prices are plummeting as landlords

scramble to rent empty apartments. Although it is caused by the coronavirus outbreak, this shows how an increase in supply could dramatically impact the rent price in New York City.

In conclusion, there are several procedures that if put in place, would push a substantial alteration to the rent market in New York. The volume of apartments that are reserved for 'low-income' households needs growth, and a lot of it. The 20 percent rule simply is not feasible based on the number of 'low-income' households. Close at hand with the shortfall of affordable housing is the sheer difficulty of obtaining an NYC apartment. The lengthy process and the requirements that go along with it make it nearly impossible for low-income families to find housing. Finally, Manhattan zoning laws need revamping. They are outdated and do not suffice the increased need for living space in the ever-growing city. These processes are not going to be quick fixes, but they will grant a jump start into reforming the New York City real-estate market.

My research has taught me a lot about rent and housing in NYC. I feel that as a renter in Manhattan myself, all of the information that I have gathered will benefit me greatly. I have become very well educated about the many laws and rules regarding apartments, and I also learned about the various causes and effects of housing prices in New York City.

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We Are Union (1 of 3)

by Patrick Murphy



"My name is Patrick Murphy, I'm 25 years old and have lived in NY my whole life and since high school I always wanted to be a union electrician. I tried and tried to join the union many times to be turned down at first until my letter finally came to start my apprenticeship. It was one of the most rewarding letters I have ever received. To know that I was going to be able to join this Brother/Sister Hood really made me feel genuinely wholesome. To be accepted by the older electricians and for them to teach me what they've learned over the years is extremely rewarding and sincere."



"My name is Carl Sandlot, I'm 30 years old and was born in Roskilde, Denmark. I came to America when I was 15 years old and took an interest in the electrical trade. I worked hard throughout my life to get where I am today and being in this union surrounded by people that I call my friends is what I enjoy the most. I get to come to work everyday and work an honest day's work that is sometimes hard to find elsewhere, while being amongst my brothers and sisters whom I would help and do anything for. Being in this union has taught me so much in regard to working hard and enjoying your work at the same time. To me, I feel like we can accomplish any task our foreman throws at us."

Why Unions are Important

by Erica Marshall

The article “How Today’s Unions Help Working People” by the Economic Policy Institute, explores the place of unions in the modern economy, their impact on today’s workers and their contribution to prosperity via collective bargaining. It addresses how unions benefit both individuals and society as a whole by addressing issues such as the wage gap, the need for safer workplaces and the struggles of nonunion workers. Although the report covers many aspects of this, the points that stood out to me were the role of unions in raising the standard of living and helping to establish policies that benefit the working class, as I explain below.

Unions represent the workers in sectors that are foundational to the community like transportation, construction, education and health. They have also come to represent previously overlooked professions, such as adjunct faculty members, television writers and digital journalists. This has a positive economic impact because workers in these jobs, who are often underpaid, now have the ability to earn a living wage. As explained in the article “Working people in unions use their power in numbers to secure a fairer share of the income they create... Workers who are empowered by forming a union raise wages for union and nonunion workers alike.” Politically, unions have also upheld and fought for many of the policies that benefit workers and their families today. “These essential laws and programs include Social Security, child labor laws, antidiscrimination laws, health and safety laws, Unemployment Insurance, compensation for workers who get hurt on the job, the 40-hour workweek, and the federal minimum wage.” This only represents a part of the good the unions bring to the community and society at large.

From my perspective, the benefits of the union that are addressed in the article are indeed relevant in this time. In spite of government mandated wage increases, the standard of living is less than ideal for those making the minimum wage. In an expensive state like New York minimum wage simply isn’t a living wage. To add to this problem, many lower wage jobs are gradually being phased due to convenient, cost effective technology such as self-checkout replacing cashiers and online stores replacing brick-and-mortar establishments. The increasing lack of work has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has drastically cut down the workforce in many companies. This has forced many to seek out whatever work they can find which has often been opportunities with little stability and even fewer, if any, fringe benefits. This crisis has served to expose the failings in our current system as it pertains to workers’ benefits and protections, as well as the need for a better safety net in these uncertain times.

The article concludes by pointing out that in spite of all the benefits that unions bring to the workforce, they still face heavy criticism and push-back, both politically and in the private sector. Lobbyists and employers actively seek to disband unions and unionizing efforts for their own private interests, primarily the maintenance of power. Although the economic landscape continues to change, the need for collective bargaining in the workplace has not. There must be continued efforts to push for what benefits the well-being of the working majority, those who keep production going and keep our economy running. To uplift unions is to uplift society as a whole.

We Are Union (2 of 3)

by Patrick Murphy



"My name is Mihai Coman, I'm 58 years old and was born in Pitesti, Romania. I came to America when I was 23 years old and could have never imagined my life now from what it was in Romania. To look back then to how different my life is now, it is astonishing. I credit a lot of my happy life to joining this union and all the perks that has come with it. The fact that I will always have a job to do here, surrounded by skilled trades people, I can look forward to my day and always do my best. There was not a lot for me back in Romania, but here in this union the possibilities are endless and rewarding."



"My name is Hector Jesus Lopez, I am 52 years young, and I was born in Chihuahua, Mexico. I came to America when I was 20 years old. I have had many jobs since I first came to America but being in this union is by far the best. The comradery and the kindness of others in this union really made me feel like I was home. Coming in everyday does not feel like work to me when I am able to be around some of the best electricians I know. I did not know I was going to become a union electrician and thinking back on it, at the time I probably would have said no way. But man was I wrong. This union is like my family and when we all are working together the day goes by too fast. I am extremely grateful for what I have and would not leave this job for anything."

Moral Hurdles In a Cutthroat Business

by Jose Henriquez Jr.

The morning air fills our lungs as we slowly rise and lace up our boots, preparing for another productive day in our respective trades. Subconsciously, we shake hands with the creators of our moral code of ethics. Without these moral codes there would be no standard of excellence to work/live by. Its fuel to the fire to willingly represent something greater than ourselves when the goal is excellence, similar to soldiers carrying their flag onto a battlefield or athletes representing their hometown. Our trade/craft is our sport and our co-workers are our teammates. We must respect and trust each other if we are to be the best at our craft and among the most trusted to get the job done correctly and efficiently.

One of my personally most valued moral standards on the job is to be as honest as possible when interacting with any fellow union members. In an industry as cutthroat as ours, we all know how important honesty is on the job. When your co-workers or even your peers are getting to know you and come across any white lie, it can scar your reputation and tarnish the weight of your words in any situation. A simple "I was in the bathroom" to your foreman when a journeyman saw you moping around aimlessly, can be enough to cross you out of the foreman's call back list. Being honest in a situation where it's easier to lie can propel your reputation as an honest being to great lengths. "No legacy is so rich as honesty" — William Shakespeare

On an early morning my foreman asked me and another apprentice if we wanted to do some overtime on the coming Saturday and Sunday. After agreeing he notified us not to tell any of the other 2 apprentices. Possibly so they wouldn't get upset or lose morale while working. Shortly after our coffee break, me and the other 2 apprentices start organizing some materials for a partition. While fumbling around I overheard the apprentices speaking about the OT offered to everyone else and some words about a possible layoff for the apprentices that afternoon. They were clearly upset so I tried to distance myself from them as much as possible to avoid any part of that conversation.

As I slowly got some distance I heard someone shout my name ... It was time and I had no prepared words. "Did Steve ask you to work this weekend?" with the sharpest eye contact already demanding the truth as if expecting a lie. At this moment I didn't want to be the one to tell them the truth or be the one to lie. Effortlessly with only the hard truth on my mind, my lips started moving "Honestly guys, look at it from Steve's point of view, this job will be done in 2 weeks and y'all already stated y'all can't do overtime for whatever reason. He doesn't need all of us, but he does need guys who can stay and do OT at

any given moment. He also has to follow his supervisor's orders so don't take it personally." Immediately the expression on their faces transformed from upset to "I understand." As they accepted it as the truth, we kept on working silently for a while. Shortly after dialogue drifted into the cutthroat nature of the industry. We all once again realized the sooner we accept the harsh reality of the industry the more unnecessary stress and anxiety we can avoid.

A code just as important that I enjoy hovering over my shoulders is to respect the rules and regulations of our job sites whenever present. This shows competence, respect and most importantly self-awareness to our employers and contractors. Clients and contractors love to see that employees respect the rules and regulations and are more likely to rehire contractors who value the site expectations.

One afternoon I was installing acoustical ceilings and I had decided it was too hot to wear my hardhat and who the heck was watching anyways. To my luck the safety officer happened to be taking a grand ole tour with my foreman. "HEY KNUCKLEHEAD, WHERE'S YOUR HARDHAT?" is all it took for me to jump, spin, and step right into a pencil rod that was hanging from the ceiling. "You deserve that" was all I could hear while the safety officer went on and on explaining to me for the third time why I should wear my hardhat at all times of work. It was a lesson that needed to be taught again and again until that moment on that day for me to finally start obliging. The injury could have been worse, I could have been a liability that day if they did not come around and reminded me, along with a bump on the head, why I should always wear my hardhat. As simple as it is, these rules are set in place for a reason.

Most importantly I strongly believe in taking pride in your work. All the projects we work on guide our names into the record books. For as long as our work stands, so do our names. Completing work that stands out structurally, visually and aesthetically makes you stand out as a tradesperson and adds tremendously to your reputation. People will notice your work and often ask, "Who built this?" As we aim for excellence and perfection day in and day out we steadily start to sow this standard into our character. It becomes a standard you aim for everyday ... always improving and being better than your last. As this becomes part of your character for 8 hours a day, you start to take this attitude home with you. If you have kids waiting at home for you who look up to you, you start to unknowingly upload this attitude into their wiring. It becomes a great character quality inherited for the better.

In conclusion I believe pride is the most important quality to find your own personal meaning behind your work in order to naturally and effortlessly take to work your craft. Following a moral code of ethics consistently day in and day out helps you stay on the road to "excellence" in whatever it is that you hope to achieve. As we're all individuals with our own principles, in order to succeed in our respective trades, we all must follow the rules set in place by

those before us. We must also remain as individuals with our own styles that are built upon our code of ethics. Similar to when a young baseball player is taught to swing a bat is when an apprentice is taught how to posture up before wrestling some heavy material. At the end we all figure out our own style for handling business, but it's our responsibility for business to get handled correctly and safely.

Memo to Local 3 President

by Dion Castroverde

Introduction

In the Fall 2020, Professor Ana Fisyak asked her Labor and the Economy class to complete a short paper analyzing an article or Op Ed through an economic argument. The assigned paper was to react to the article in the form of a memo addressed to the head of IBEW Local Union 3. It had to be persuasive in nature and was a chance for students to articulate their understanding of economic concepts learned in class and apply them to the real world. The papers drew from class discussions and reading, especially Moshe Adler's Economics for the Rest of Us, and in the case of Dion, Koch Hubo Castroverde's paper from Susan Pace Hamill's essay "They're a Moral Obligation" from 10 Excellent Reasons Not to Hate Taxes (edited by Stephanie Greenwood). With the Presidential election just a few weeks away, Dion's paper argues for voting for a leader who leads by example.

Memo

To: Thomas Cleary, President of IBEW Local Union 3

From: Dion Koch Hubo Castroverde

CC: Joseph Proscia, Vice President of IBEW Local Union 3
Christopher Erickson, Business of IBEW Local Union 3

Date: October 07, 2020

Re: Trump's Taxes: Why Our Vote Matters

Good afternoon Sir, I am writing you in response to what has made recent headlines on the 27th of September 2020. What has been presented to us is the President of our country has reportedly only paid \$750 in Federal Taxes in 2016 and 2017. If you, and every one of our members of Local Union 3 is a red-blooded American, you and everyone else in this country should be outraged. The article I would like for you to read at your earliest convenience located on the website <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/10/04/remember-trumps-taxes-they-are-still-scandal/> by Helaine Olen, as she points out what I, and what I presume many citizens across this country, feel. Let me inform you that it is an Op-ed piece and is solely the opinion of the author. However, Olen has written a book, and even co-authored another focusing on finance. Her writing has earned her numerous awards from reputable

organizations such as the Society of Business Editors and Writers. Although her article is an opinion, I feel Helaine Olen has a strong valid judgement on this current situation with our President.

In her opening statement, she stated, "President Trump — who in 2015 claimed a net worth of \$10 billion — paid \$750 in federal income tax his first year in office" (Olen). May I emphasize his net worth was \$10 billion, while many American citizens are living paycheck to paycheck? According to taxfoundation.org that would make Mr. Trump in the 39.6 percent tax bracket in 2016, having him pay significantly more than what was reportedly paid. The average American has approximately paid between \$1,646 to \$3,346 in federal income taxes. Me being an apprentice, if I were in our Union at the time, I would have paid \$1,646, which is more than double than what President Trump has contributed, due to loopholes and special tax breaks.

What has astonished me the most in this article is the public's reaction to this news. Olen states "We know that he used more than \$900 million in business losses to avoid taxes in the 1990s, and when challenged during the 2016 election, replied such an action was simply 'smart.'" Our President, the leader of a country in which taxes are a huge deal, claims to be "smart" by cheating the system in place for all American citizens to do their part in paying their fair share of taxes.

She proceeds to report when interviewing Trump supporters, " ... I discovered that not only weren't they discouraged by reports of Trump's bottom-of-the-barrel ethics, they believed it was acceptable behavior. Their disheartening message was that people need to do what they need to do to make a go of it in this country." This made me furious as this is unacceptable behavior from our fellow citizens. Our President should lead the way into how and why we need to do our taxes, pay our share, and work together as a country. We should not follow blindly because who you want to win in an election, that what he says or acts is virtue.

From reading this article, I can conclude that he is very much against utilitarianism. Paying taxes are already an unpleasant task we do every day, but we do it as it is a part of our American culture. As you can see, it isn't right that the Average American paid more than a billionaire. Not only is he a billionaire, he is our President who is supposed to be enforcing these laws for the good of our country. For him to cheat his way out of taxes, is definitely unfair and causes unhappiness amongst his citizens. His actions are seen as the Pareto Efficient, as it is unequal to everyone in this country. He is a billionaire and he should be paying in the hundreds of thousands in federal income taxes. Someone whose adjusted gross income is \$20,000 should not have been paying more than a billionaire. Also, may I include, President Trump is said to be a Presbyterian. He even made great efforts to pose with the Holy Bible in front of St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington D.C. in the middle

of a rowdy protest. That shows he is practitioner of the Christian faith. But does he know that in the bible, taxes are a part of the Christian life? It asks to pay what is owed, and not to take more than authorized to do. Not only was it a form of respect and honor to God, but it went towards to the public to help out your society in everything such as resources and infrastructure.

As you can see Mr. Cleary, this is not fair to us American Citizens. We hardworking Americans do our part with taxes and make great contributions. As a member of local Union 3, we know how it is to pay our union dues as it makes our Union better. We all pay our share, from apprentices to all of you staff members. This should be applied to our country. How can we as a country work together, when our President is not doing what is to be expected? He is supposed to be our leader, to lead by example, yet he is being hypocritical to our country's tax standards. We do not need him, we need a real leader. That is why I urge you to vote in the upcoming election. I would like to see a stronger encouragement to vote. If we want a better country, a better union, our vote matters.

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We Are Union (3 of 3)

by Patrick Murphy



Taking Advantage of Unions

by Thomas Von Braunsberg

Since the start of organized labor and unions they have played an integral role in the fair treatment of workers when they are employed with companies that don't try to take advantage of them. Economics and politics have always played a major part in a unionized work setting. Labor laws such as the NLRA (National Labor Relations Act) were enacted to give private sector workers the right to organize and collectively bargain against their employers. The COVID-19 crisis exposed many flaws in numerous labor laws, specifically the NLRA that was written over 80 years ago. Weaknesses in the nation's current labor laws were greatly exploited during the pandemic and the need for reform was put on display, front and center.

According to the Economic Policy Institute report "Why Unions are Good for Workers — Especially in a Crisis like COVID-19" (August 2020), it is a fact that under our current labor laws it is extremely difficult for workers to win union representation. The power seems to be in the hands of the employers more so than in the hands of the employees, and protections for workers who are looking to organize are weak. On page 8, Chris Smalls is an example of a worker at an Amazon warehouse in New York City who walked off the job to protest safety conditions. As one of the lead organizers of this walk out, Smalls was made an example of and was terminated. The first sentence of the last paragraph on page 8 reads, "Under current law, Smalls has no right to bring a lawsuit against the employer to assert his rights." If this warehouse were organized and a part of a union Smalls would not have been terminated. He was simply trying to improve the safety conditions in the warehouse. Smalls was made an example of by the company by showing other workers what would happen if they tried to organize for better working conditions.

By looking at the case of Chris Smalls it is evident that the protection for workers looking to organize is weak. They are at the mercy of the company, especially behemoths like Amazon. This is the exact situation to which the NLRA is supposed to give workers the right to confront collectively. Employers, who already dragged their feet at the thought of having its workers unionize used the COVID-19 crisis to drag their feet even more at a time where only those workers who were deemed to be essential were working because of the serious hazards that came with working during a global pandemic.

Action is needed to put the strength back in the hands of the workers. On page 10 begins the list of twelve "Policy solutions for strengthening workers' bargaining rights." The first, and in my opinion most important is the passage of the PRO Act (Protecting the Right to Organize Act). On pages 12-13 Table 1

provides examples of loopholes in the labor law as it is currently written and how the PRO act will close them through reform. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed numerous weaknesses in current labor law due to the severity of the pandemic. It put the economic and political issues that make unions so important into the spotlight.

I have had personal experience with a company where the workers were trying to organize yet the employer used every possible tactic to stop that from happening. I witnessed the meetings that were held on company time and deemed "mandatory to attend" strictly to deliver an anti-union presentation. I witnessed numerous skilled workers either lose their jobs or get demoted simply for openly supporting the unionization movement. On page 13 the 4th solution listed was to amend the NLRA to expand access for workers and union organizers to discuss unionization at the workplace. I think this will even the playing field. Employers can deliver anti-union speeches on company time, so why not allow the benefits to be heard as well?

This poses the question, "Why unions now?" With the pandemic putting on display all the lengths that employers will go to in order to stop their workers from organizing then why not now? Workers are being underpaid and overworked yet the only one seeing the benefits are the employers. Action needs to be taken on the level of government policy makers to give the workers a fighting chance against the much larger and powerful employers. Yes, unions NOW!

Sharon Lee
President, Borough of Queens
Queens Borough Hall
120-55 Queens Boulevard
Kew Gardens, NY 11424

Dear Borough President Lee:

I recently read an article that caught my attention on the qns.com website. It was titled "Demonstrators Call For More Hospital Beds in Queens During Jackson Heights Rally," which was posted on October 13, 2020 in the Jamaica Times. It was about a protest to bring awareness to the mortality rate due to a lack of hospital beds in hospitals that rely on Medicaid funding in the Borough of Queens. During this time of crisis with COVID-19, hospital beds are a premium.

Most of the poor who cannot afford health insurance are affected by these shortages of beds and closures of hospitals. The ones who benefit from these misfortunes are the rich. Some buy the properties to convert them into unaffordable apartments to push the poor out of the neighborhood or buy the hospitals outright and change the rules and policies. All of this can be better understood in the context of the 2 types of Economic Efficiency.

What I described above would be considered Pareto efficient. The inventor of this theory is Vilfredo Pareto, and his theory looks to maximize consumer surplus, which is one's reservation price (or the maximum they are willing to pay for something) minus the actual cost, and is against anti-redistribution because of it. His policy sees this as a "Win-Win" situation. An example would be to pay you \$50 NOT to see the Doctor because it costs \$100. This is a Pareto improvement in his eyes. The opposite of this is Utilitarian efficiency, invented by Jeremy Bentham. His theory is pro-redistribution because it maximizes the overall happiness in society. Bentham does recognize that there will be winners and losers to any policy change but, in a way, it is a fair shot.

If more money from the city budget was used for hospitals, they would better prepare not only for pandemics, but also local health issues. Saving people's lives and keeping them healthy is absolutely Utilitarian efficient! Nothing maximizes happiness more. I would be happy knowing my tax contributions are going to helping others. Please push for budget priorities that keep people healthy and happy. I hope this letter finds you well.

Sincerely,

Sandor Morales

Believe *Black* Men

by David White

It is arguable that the most crucial moment of the “Me Too” movement came in the aftermath of the Bill Cosby sexual assault trial. In the context of American racial relations, it was yet another affirmation that black people in America have, considering our very considerable experience with systems of white supremacy, a completely different concept of what justice is in this country. Whereas “believe women” became a slogan for many in certain demographics, black people were openly challenging the notion that a white woman’s word should ever be given such deference when levying accusations of rape against a black man in court. The disconnect between how black people were responding to one of their most beloved symbols’ unceremonious demise, and how most Americans were processing the same series of events was striking. Many hosts on black talk radio were openly aggravated at just how many of their listening audience believed Bill Cosby was innocent.

But black people have long memories, and despite what many nonblacks believe, we have never forgotten the lessons of the past. Nor have we ever truly forgiven those who’ve endeavored to provide us with an education in white supremacy. Lynching and the trauma it continues to arouse in multiple generations of black people, is never truly absent from the consciousness of a black man, woman, or child. Furthermore, all black people remember the consequences of being deemed too familiar with white women.

The Central Park Five is one the cases that lingers most in the minds of black people today. Every aspect of that case informs the memory. The universal nature in which all classes of white people rallied behind the prosecution, for instance, informs our opinion of any such allegations made today. We may not always remember the names of the Scottsboro Boys or the Groveland Four, but their ghosts linger in the forefront of our minds when Kobe Bryant is called a rapist. We give him a defense we know that he will never be afforded in the court of American public opinion.

Ezekiel Elliot, running back for the Dallas Cowboys (and someone you would assume to be a public figure), made forgotten headlines not too long ago when his white ex-girlfriend threatened to accuse him of sexual assault following the end of their relationship . On the leaked phone call that was made public to a national audience, his ex-girlfriend reminds Mr. Elliot that her word as a white woman would be given considerable weight considering his status as a black man. It is in fact common knowledge among black college athletes that many of their fellow athletes now sit behind bars for the very same reason.

When political figures as varied as Ed Koch and Donald Trump can hold the very opinion of a black man's proclivity towards rape, and an entire city can become a lynch mob overnight, it is almost insulting to the average black man's intelligence to suggest that it is in his best interest to ever give a white woman the benefit of the doubt in a rape trial. When he says he didn't do it, perhaps we should try believing him instead.

Personal Code of Ethics

by Caroline Minnich

The ethics that I use to navigate this world are individualism, diligence, and self-restraint because they promote working well as part of a group while keeping your freedom. I believe the last 2 strongly support my first ethic; working all together these could benefit society. It is possible to stay on your own path while helping groups, communities, and others along the way. Even if you are a part of a group or community, being your own person is important.

A lot of the time, leaders have hidden agendas whether they are good or bad. A couple of years ago, I joined a collective with a focus on art and performance. With a strong desire to become a part of this group, I began helping with gallery shows. Within a couple months, they asked me to move into the gallery rent free. In the beginning I had the freedom to do whatever I wanted, and they gave me creative control over a lot of things. Because I was so happy to feel creatively fulfilled while not paying rent, I was unable to see the bigger picture. I had completely lost track of myself because I was devoting myself to their cause. A couple more months passed, and I was pretty much unable to leave the space, tending to responsibilities while the leaders were not pulling their weight.

When they were around, if I ever disagreed with them, they would try to make me feel like it was my problem for having my own moral compass. They made me feel guilty for being an individualist, all the while I was being exploited for free labor for the tradeoff of a small room where I was not paying rent. If I continued to honor and agree with them, things could have turned out much worse. But one day I packed my things, explained it was not working for me anymore and moved out. They said I was entitled, when in fact they were the ones with the entitlement. I believe the shame of being “dishonorable” is incredibly toxic as it lets people project their plans onto you, and in this case, being taken advantage of. Relying on assistance from others can only go so far, and when setbacks occur, I believe I must be able to bounce back on my own. Regardless of what people are promised, nothing is ever 100%.

Diligence to me means persistent hard work and patience while paying attention to everything outside of yourself. The way people complete tasks is a reflection of who they are, and if a task is done lazily or with little effort not only does it show they do not care for the good of the group, but for themselves as well. I have witnessed many people, due to their societal privilege advance after having put no effort in, only to have it blow up in their face. The leaders I mentioned in my previous point would be an example. If a

person continuously works carefully and patiently as well as honestly, I believe they can have the most control with positive intentions. Not viewing others as a competition but rather working to improve yourself as well as others around you is the best way to stay sharp and not distracted by trivial things. You must pay attention to how you work as well as your peers so that everyone is happy and placed with their strengths. Diligence is a 2-way street, so if I think I am not met with the same hard work and honesty from a coworker, I do not wish to work with them.

Another way to have freedom while benefitting yourself as well as the needs of others is self-restraint. Workers often turn to obvious things to fulfil their desires — spending their money on cars, clothes, and constantly chasing money. Those who do not control their impulses to be rich and own things in the material world will always be slaves. Although it may seem like self-restraint is the opposite of freedom, being content with what you have makes the journey a lot easier. We always have the freedom of our own thoughts and who we want to be — and I believe experiences are a lot more enriching than material possessions. American society encourages us to consume rather than produce. If society focused more on production, there would be more availability of products and better-quality products. With workers having more control over the means of production rather than being forced to consume all the time, they would desire less and live their lives with a positive morale.

When working as part of something bigger than yourself, it is important to hold onto your personal freedom. Being your own person and sticking to your own set of rules keeps you from being blindsided by corrupt authorities. Hard work along with patience can go a long way and I believe a diligent leader who remains calm is often the best leader. Even at the top, people often want more and it is crucial to not fall into that trap. Don't be a slave to consumerism, but more importantly — stick to your guns when working hard.

Haymarket

by William LePinski



The Haymarket affair is perhaps the most controversial and famous labor dispute in all of labor history. Unfortunately, the wounds created by this tragic event back in 1886 still have not healed. Since 1886, Organized Labor, Anarchists and Police have still continued to clash over how the tragedy should be remembered.



Following the 1886 Haymarket affair, the City of Chicago had a monument placed in Haymarket Square commemorating the Police Officers who died on that day. Understandably, this did not sit well with the workers and anarchists who largely viewed the actions of the police as the reason the riot took place in the first place. The anarchists nor the workers have ever been allowed to place a statue commemorating the event within the city of

Chicago, instead, honoring the anarchists, there was a monument placed in Waldheim Cemetery where the Haymarket Martyrs were buried and a statue commemorating the workers has never been commissioned. This long history of dispute has led to much anger over the years from all sides.

The original Police statue at Haymarket square was toppled by an angry street car driver who grew tired of seeing the Policeman statue standing there with his hand outstretched. Following this attack on the monument the statue has twice been blown up by anarchists until it was finally moved in the 1970's to a courtyard at the Chicago Police Academy.

Haymarket Square stood empty until 2004 when the current monument was placed. Unfortunately, so much time and effort was put into ensuring



that whatever statue was placed would not anger anyone who viewed it. This led to the current statue representing "free speech" and not the tragedy that took place there, essentially wiping away much of Haymarket's history.

A Shared Space

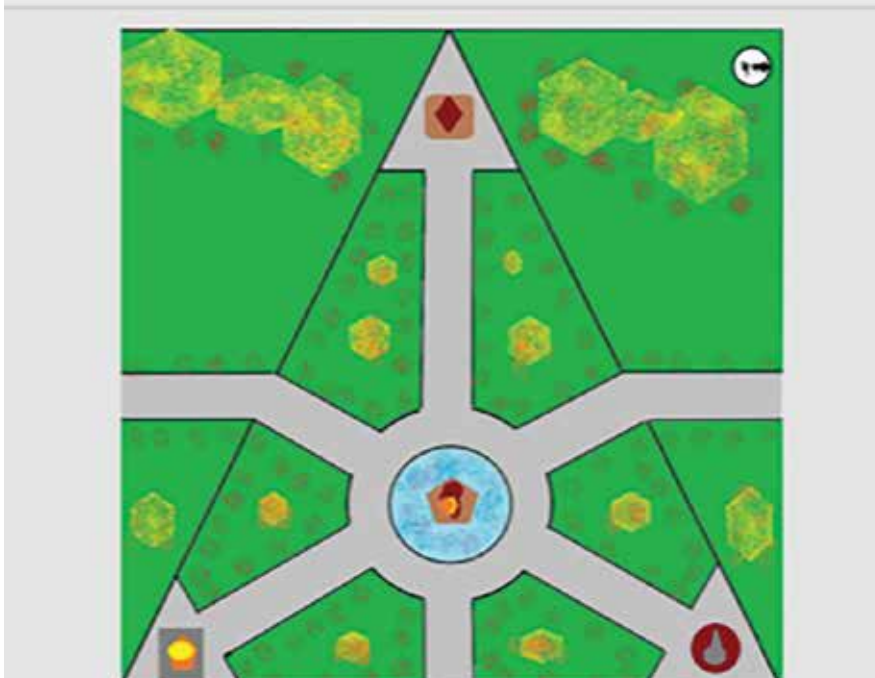
It is time to create a place where all can go to remember, and Haymarket Gardens Memorial Park could be that place. Designed so that everyone, regardless of what happened that day, could go to remember the tragedy and pass on the history to future generations. Honoring the three different groups at Haymarket, The Police, The Anarchists, and The Workers, Haymarket Memorial Park can preserve our city's history and remember those lost.

Which way you would chose to enter the park would depend on who you are there to remember. Entering through the West entrance along Des Plaines Street for example, visitors would be walking directly towards the Police Monument and looking over the sunken Mourner's fountain and statue with their views of the other two monuments obscured by trees and vegetation. Similarly, entering through the Northern entrance would give visitors a clear view of the Martyr's Monument or through the South entrance with views of the Worker's monument.

No matter which entrance was chosen by the visitor, they would have to walk through the center of the park and around the sunken Mourner's Fountain and Statue, forcing visitors to remember all who died that day and to partially share the same path with those who may be there to honor a different side. When leaving their chosen monument, visitors would also have to turn around and at least momentarily acknowledge the other two monuments on their way out as an acknowledgement of those who share the same space. The park's central triangle also symbolizes the fight for an 8-hour work day which was central to the protests surrounding the Haymarket affair. 8 hours for work, 8 hours for rest, and 8 hours for what you will.

Haymarket

by William LePinski



Haymarket

by William LePinski



REVIEWS

Spellchek Deepahtmint

by Emily Lawless Taffe



On Mazzocchi

By Jihan Bae

The early 1970s brought a period of economic woe in the United States and with it a growing divide between labor unions and environmentalists. The environmental movement was painted by many, including many within organized labor, as anti-growth and anti-jobs. Tony Mazzocchi came to realize the difficulties of a green/labor alliance but continued to insist that the “workplace environment and the community environment were of a piece.” This relationship between the workplace and the community exists in several different ways. For one, the environmental harm caused by many industrial plants can be found in many aspects of the community from the deteriorating health of workers to the negative impacts these plants can have on the local environment. For example, at the Pittsburgh Corning plant in Tyler, Texas, the extreme levels of airborne asbestos sickened and killed many workers, even causing the death of one worker’s mother whose only exposure came from washing her son’s work clothes. Also, it was discovered that the plant had been dumping tailings in a field near the plant and the burlap bags in which the asbestos was transported were later resold to garden nurseries throughout the southeast U.S.

It was later during the Shell strike in 1973 when Tony Mazzocchi came to the realization that the labor unions would come to rely on environmentalists in furthering their cause of workplace safety. He knew that the traditional methods of picket lines and attempts to disrupt production wouldn’t work against the financial juggernaut that was Shell Oil. He enlisted the help of environmental activists in order to organize the community in support of the strike. Together they were able to make the connections between class and corporate power, realizing that the health hazards of industry were a result of corporate profiteering. After a nationwide boycott and coverage in news outlets, the union was able to force Shell Oil to succumb to some, though not all, of the union’s demands. The strike helped strengthen the anti-corporate movement and the burgeoning green/labor alliance had compelled the company into settling.

Resistance to this new alliance was met by numerous industries and trade unions including the United Mine Workers and West Coast building-trades unions. In the case of the mine workers, their union sanctioned strip-mining operations which caused pollution and ultimately automated jobs away. In some cases, labor unions began to resemble the corporate entities they were meant to be working against taking cues on strategy and politics. Mazzocchi knew that by joining management, the union would be forgoing environmental regulations to protect industry. He knew that management

would continue to threaten workers' jobs if environmental protections were not loosened. The union would be stuck in a vicious cycle from which they would not be able to escape. So Mazzocchi's OCAW and the United Steelworkers started an education campaign on workplace safety and covering numerous environmental issues such as pollution and nuclear safety. With the unexpected help from environmentalists, OCAW was clearly at the forefront fighting for workplace health and safety.

Multifunctional Exercise Bars

by Cheong Kuan

Recycled Conduits



Multifunctional Exercise Bars

by Cheong Kuan

Materials Assembling



Multifunctional Exercise Bars

by Cheong Kuan

Multi-Functional Exercise Bars



Multifunctional Exercise Bars

by Cheong Kuan

It is estimated between 230–530 million tons of construction wastes produced annually nationwide, according to the Environmental Protection Agency of U.S. While a minor percentage of that gets recovered and recycled by construction and demolition contractors, most end up in landfill, which furthermore contributes to our ever increasing climate change.

We see laborers on the jobsite constantly cleaning up the job site, demolishing anything that requires to be removed before rebuilding, and pushing containers upon containers of mixture of different construction waste materials out of the building, where it loads up to a waste truck to be taken out to the facility before going to the landfill. As for electricians, we can do more than just recycling mongo wires for some side cash. We can collect and recycle some of our own materials to build something for either ourselves, or even friends and family.

On average, a passenger car emits about 404 grams of CO₂ into the atmosphere per mile. That's about 4.5 metric tons each year. Most people spend from a range of \$20-150 every month for a gym membership, that when the motivation goes away and becomes inconsistent, they end up not going completely while still continuing paying the monthly fee. There's a saying that "Some people get in a car, get stuck in traffic to get to a gym, just to get on a bicycle." Don't be that person. Going to the gym is a great way to get in shape, stay healthy, and it's a great environment to be around like-minded people who are also there for the same goal — health and fitness. But how can we create less carbon footprint by doing so, and still potentially saving ourselves more money in our pockets?

While riding a bike is an excellent way to stay fit, traveling to everywhere you go, we can also learn how to exercise with just home furnitures, or even homemade equipment. On this sculpture, artist Kuan has decided to take unwanted electrical scrap conduits and couplings from his jobsite and created a functional piece of exercise equipment that can be assembled anywhere to get a full body workout.

This exercise tool allows you to do bodyweight dips, inverted pull ups, assisted single leg squats, jump squats, hurdle jumps, calf raises, incline/decline push up, side to side agility hops, and much more. It all depends on the individual's level of fitness and you can be as creative as you want with your exercises just by changing the height and distance of the parallel bars.

You can now strengthen your body at your own convenience in your own backyard, basement or even taking it to a grass field in the park, without having to waste extra travel time to the gym. You can save time and money by simply recycling unwanted materials to create something useful to reduce carbon footprint and CO2 emission from extra miles of driving to help fight climate change.

Artist's Statement — Images: “The Great Transition,” “Cultural Wilding”

by Emily Lawless Taffe

“The very action of knowing ... is an intervention in the world, which places us within it as active contributors to its making.”

— Another Knowledge Is Possible

“The Anthropocene {Era} introduces the labor point of view — in the broadest possible sense — into geology.”

— McKenzie Wark

Along the geographical and social timeline where human influence and natural inclination have become inextricable, can these 2 out-of-phase alternating currents fire up to become more than the sum of their parts, or does the thrall and pall of “civilized” society's demands and desires leave in the dark the very environment that compelled their creation?

Invoking Haraway's concepts of “Capitolocene” and “Cthulucene” in its tinted touch, artist E.L. Taffe seeks to commit a reverse “extractionism” that uses the concept of both individual and collective human force to redistribute the means not just of power and production, but of the power of reproduction and hopefully revitalization. Considering biologist Ernst Haeckel's thoughts that ecology is “the science of empire,” perhaps with the right intents, experiments, and implements, we too can strive for a nobility that rules alongside — not above — nature.

(Aloe plants have been studied by NASA for their ability to remove pollutants, including CO₂, formaldehyde and benzene from the air, all while contributing healthy oxygen. These plants might literally help us build new worlds — or a fresh one here.)

Sculpture Materials: Recycled plastic bottles, stranded copper wire, solid copper wire, electrical tape, Greenfield flexible conduit, conduit connectors, ice, soil, aloe trimmings.

“The Great Transition”

by Emily Lawless Taffe



“Cultural Wilding”

by Emily Lawless Taffe



Soul Awakenings

By Clarissa Benitez

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates brought me so many moments of reflection. It made me think about things I have blocked and locked away. It made me reflect on the many instances I felt too dark or too afraid for my wellbeing, in situations because of my skin color. I thought of instances of when I was young and had no fear of this feeling, heck, I hardly had any fear at one point. There have been instances on the job recently where I find myself holding back my responses because I am hesitant to engage in conversations that may lead with a black lives matter or black people in general and how “they” may be portrayed. I find that I am uncomfortable with defending myself and my culture because of what may follow. It is a bit weird for me because I used to never be afraid when it came to defending myself. After many lessons, I’ve learned to pick my battles and choose wisely.

As a child, I grew up seeing so many versions of my family. I had black and white family and I did not question any of it because I knew we all came together through love. I was always so proud to be amongst such a cultured group of beautiful people. I did not realize then I was not only lucky, but I was learning about my culture and my curse. I was learning how to be black, how to be white and all that came in between. My family came from all over and introduced to me sides of the world before I was able to see them through my own eyes.

I had grown up spending every holiday and most weekends as a child in the projects where most my family lived. I knew the way of the ghetto and only noticed the difference when I would go back home to my all-white neighborhood and we were the darkest people in town. As a child I noticed it was different but did not realize that it would be the difference. I did not realize people would treat me different and see me different if I looked and spoke like where I was from. I learned how to carry myself in all different kind of situations and sometimes I learned from the lessons that these situations taught me. Coates spoke of the ghetto and how people who came from these parts were perceived and treated, how they acted as a means of survival. I totally related to it because I knew the way to carry myself to survive when walking back into certain neighborhoods.

At an early age I was out in the world on my own and I was able to see so many different sides of life. I ended up in so many different situations because my life had taken so many different turns. I was taken in by a friend’s family, they were Sicilian and sometimes they would say things as though I was sometimes a charity case. They rented out an apartment upstairs and needed

it to be cleaned for new tenants. They told me to go upstairs and clean the apartment alone. I had asked if one of their 3 children could help me and their response was, "you're the blackest one in the house, you should clean it" as they laughed, remember feeling so betrayed because I trusted them and felt that they were starting to see me as family. It was clear that they saw a difference, they thought they were better than me and tried to make me believe it.

I've lived in some of the rougher neighborhoods and some of the nicer neighborhoods and I've learned how to carry myself and how not to, in certain places. I've mastered the walk of confidence while silently saying, "do not mess with me." I've also learned how to manage my tone and facial expressions just not to come off too ghetto in certain situations. I learned this because one night I had gone out with some friends and stepped outside the bar we were all hanging out at. I was attacked by a white man who was twice my age and twice my size. I defended myself and waited for the police to help the situation, instead they arrested me and the white man pressed charges on me.

After spending hours in lockup, I was released. Every single officer was white and refused to give me any information or answer any questions. I thought I got lucky because I saw a black female captain and was sure she would help or at least listen. I asked her for help, and she would not even look at me. After begging and pleading I pointed out that we were the only 2 black females in the precinct and she could not even look me in the face. I felt ashamed because she was too afraid to stand up to her own subordinates and stand up for someone who needed her help because of color. I was loud, irate, and called out to her and she cared too much about how they would perceive for helping me. It broke my heart, but awaked my soul.

Coates words was a letter to us all, a lesson for the world to open their eyes and their hearts. We are all human and under these beautiful colors we wear we are all one.

Untitled Self Portrait

by Courtney Francis



Why Unions Now?

by Steven Driscoll

In our present-day society, we are faced with a vast amount of economic and political issues. These issues, such as minimum wage, corporate taxes, equal pay, health care, economic inequality, poverty, and political representation present a plethora of struggles for Americans, the majority of whom are middle- and low-wage workers. Many of these issues, if not all, stem from the workplace, or more specifically, the power within the workplace. Unions not only work to enhance the workplace along with the lives of workers, but also to combat the power that gives rise to these problems, with the intention to diminish the gap created by the leverage which is held by employers and represent the interests of the top 1 percent.

The Economic Policy Institute provides such powerful evidence and details of how unions contend with the struggles of American workers today in its report, *How Today's Unions Help Working People*. In taking a closer look, we are given much indication of the advantages brought on by labor unions that represent over sixteen million Americans today. In particular, we can see the true power of collective bargaining and how it improves the lives of workers. Once a Collective Bargaining Agreement has been established, the agreed upon obligations are then honored; the united workers have a voice with power. They are able to negotiate for higher wages, more steady and reasonable work hours, better access to healthcare, and much more. Even those of non-union employees are affected. This is because labor unions have the potential to set standards for other occupations, as well as entire industries. "Collective bargaining is how working people gain a voice at work and the power to shape their working lives," as stated by the Economic Policy Institute; this holds true in the workplace as well as in living, economic, political, and social conditions. Furthermore, organizing into one collective unit allows for the strengthening of democracy by creating a unified voice in policy debates which are crucial in deciding aspects of our society.

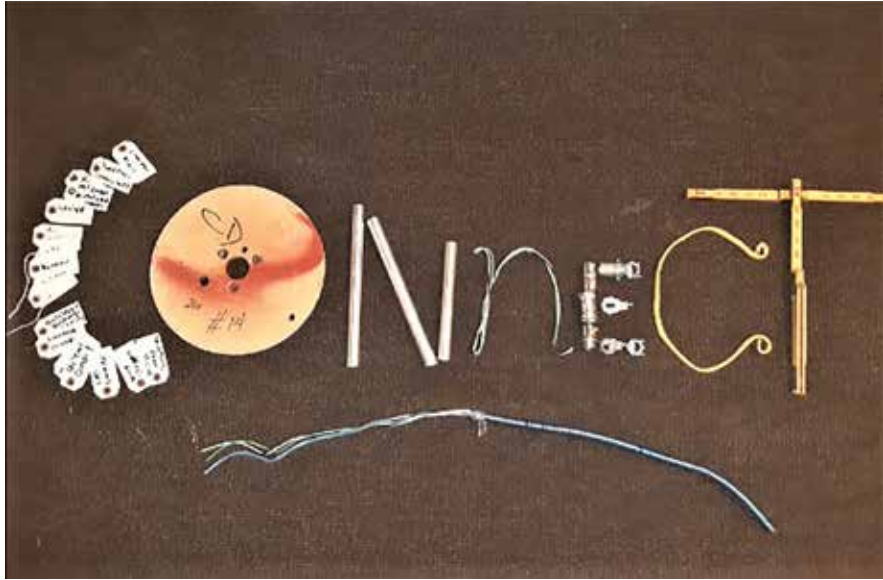
One of the main issues discussed in the Economic Policy Institute's report is the concept of economic inequality. Unions certainly strive to close this gap and to give low- and middle-wage workers an opportunity for economic growth. According to the statistics shown in Figure A of page 8, we can see that there is a direct correlation between union density and share of income going to the top 10 percent; as union membership increases, income share received by the top 10 percent goes down. Today, union density is a great deal lower than it was from the 1940s to the 1970s. Similarly, the share of income received by the top 10 percent is notably higher than during those same years. Union membership is also shown to have a correlation with

share of income going to the middle 60 percent of families, displayed in Figure B of page 9. Both lines of Figure B share a similar path, almost parallel in behavior. These statistics are indicative of the great role that unions play in economic inequality.

Not only do I agree with the information presented by the Economic Policy Institute in this report, I strongly believe that this information is significantly crucial for the lives of American workers. This is because the strength that high union density holds is the key to bridging the economic gaps and inequalities between the classes and in turn, weakening the power and control that those of the capitalist class possess. Especially now more than ever, this is why unions are so extremely important, because of the gravity of political representation today, the pressing need for living wages, and the little union density we have compared to that of the mid-1900s.

Untitled

by Joyce Smith



Review of Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt

by **Matt Hanson**

Introduction

Ching Kwan Lee's book *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt* compares and contrasts labor protests in China's northeast province of Liaoning and southern province of Guangdong. In researching the situation of workers in the old state industry heavy northeast and the new international capital heavy south, Lee finds similarities and differences in the reasons for labor protests and the strategies for implementation of protest between the two areas. Lee explores the incomplete transformation in China between socialism and capitalism. She also looks in depth at the change between legitimization of the state through shared sacrifice under socialism and legitimization through the fledgling legal framework under the new system that she calls "decentralized legal authoritarianism" (P. 10). Lee addresses the central government's control over labor law while abdicating power of implementation of labor law and the financial incentives to ignore it that took root in provincial and local governments. In this book, Lee gives us a window into the surprising number of labor protests in China and the unique Chinese twist to complaints workers world-wide struggle with.

Rustbelt

In the northeast province of Liaoning the major overarching problem that workers face is the failure of state-owned enterprises (SOE's). Under Mao Zedong's socialist government, workers were poor but respected. They enjoyed jobs for life in SOE's, state housing, and lifetime pensions paid for by the enterprise that they worked for. In the reform era of the late 1970's through the mid 1990's, when the central government decided to emphasize foreign investment of private companies, the SOE's slowly lost market share and many eventually closed. Many workers were offered, during this time, the opportunity to buy their state-owned apartments at a steep discount. Workers took advantage of this in large numbers, often to later find out that there was no paperwork proving ownership or that they only owned seventy percent of the apartment when they thought they owned it outright.

Struggling SOE's do not have the money to pay their workers, laid off workers, retirees, or heating bills for enterprise-built apartments that they are obligated to pay. Workers in the northeast complain to the managers of the SOE's who sometimes find the money to temporarily help, but often do not or cannot. This lack of "collective consumption" (P. 73) often leads to protest, a surprising

amount of protest. Lee states, "In Liaoning province alone, between 2000 and 2002, more than 830,000 people were involved in 9,559 'mass incidents,' or an average of ten incidents each involving 90 people everyday for nearly three years" (P. 5). Workers protest in front of the SOE or government buildings but more often block major roads or railroad lines to get the attention of local officials. Workers frame their protests in the language of the state, pointing out how the SOE's and the state are not living up to their stated obligations. Workers find this a moral failing of the local government as much as an economic one and view local official's corruption to be a major cause of their troubles.

Workers under Mao were considered to be at the apex of socialist society, but not all groups of workers are considered equal in Chinese society, then or now. Retirees are considered top priority by workers, enterprise managers, and the state followed in order by, active workers, laid off workers, and unemployed workers. Enterprise managers will often pay retiree pensions before they pay active workers. This is seen as the right thing to do, according to Chinese society in the northeast, because retirees paid their dues to socialism, earned their retirement, and are not capable of working anymore; while able-bodied active workers and those no longer employed can find temporary side work outside the SOE to survive. Families piece together a life of subsistence with children and grandchildren living in retiree's enterprise housing and on their pensions and family members working informal jobs or in petty entrepreneurship. Yet under the new system, workers position in society is steadily dropping in favor of capitalists and political elites particularly in the Chinese sunbelt.

Sunbelt

In the south, dominated by private companies often financed with foreign capital, workers concerns are mostly around wages and working conditions as opposed to a lack of "collective consumption" that workers in the northeast face. Sunbelt workers feel the brunt of, as Lee states, "the commodification of labor" (P. 10) in the new Chinese system. One third of the country's migrant workers are employed in the southern province of Guangdong. These migrant workers come to cities in the south, to take mainly manufacturing jobs that supplement their family's subsistence farming in rural provinces. These rural residents gained rights to land owned by the government during the reform period with the end of collective farming. However, farming does not pay enough to subsist, with high prices for seed and fertilizer, fixed low-cost state quotas for grain that subsidize industrial cities, and arbitrary taxes from corrupt local officials who lack an industrial tax base.

The migrant workers of the south often find themselves working 14- to 16-hour days with one day off per month, payday. They live in crowded company dormitories and eat in company cafeterias. It is not uncommon for them to only go home once a year or even once every few years. Working conditions are tough, with meals taken at machines, as the machines never stop. Dust in textile plants and chemicals in electronics factories sicken workers and physical dangers are commonplace. Migrant workers accept these conditions even if they do not like them.

Lee claims three types of grievance get workers to act in the sunbelt: "1) unpaid wages, illegal wage deductions, or substandard wage rates; 2) disciplinary violence and dignity violations; and 3) industrial injuries and lack of injury compensation" (P. 165). Under reform laws all employees are required to sign labor contracts that meet at least the legal minimum, for wages and social wages including pensions, however, most employers ignore this and only sign up a few workers with the consent of local governments. Workers owed wages often stay with the same employer for months trying to get paid because if they leave, they lose any leverage they have and as time goes on, they have fewer and fewer resources to find another job. The lack of documentation, by workers without labor contracts, makes getting anything through the legal system harder. If unpaid wages were not enough, Lee says, workers face "almost unchecked disciplinary and physical violence used by employers" (P. 166), including beatings for minor infractions or strip-searches and detention for works suspected of stealing. Lee also reports working conditions can be "horridly primitive and dangerous" (P. 170). Like rustbelt workers, sunbelt workers actions against employers and local governments are as much about a basic level of respect of workers as they are about financial issues.

Where rustbelt workers usually go directly to protest, workers in the south, who are younger with limited socialist history, address their grievances through the legal system first, then protest if they feel that they have not been treated fairly. Workers do not have much faith in the legal system, but they have very limited options, yet sometimes they win.

There are three steps in the legal system mediation, arbitration, and litigation. China's current legal system was created in the reform era and has not yet developed a level of professionalism. Labor law created by the central government seems fair to workers, but the implementation is tasked to provincial and local governments, Lee's "decentralized legal authoritarianism" (P. 3). The local governments interest is in keeping foreign investment flowing into their dominion and minimizing social unrest. Local authorities make entry into the legal system difficult, charging poor workers high fees for participation and required documentation, then often berating them for not knowing the system at every step. Mediation is pushed by the authorities to

get as many cases as possible settled at this early stage, with workers usually offered less than legally required amounts, in settlements negotiated by local government officials. Either side can reject mediation and go to arbitration. It is not unusual for local government paid arbitrators to have no legal training and try to mediate a settlement in the companies favor rather than arbitrate. If either side does not like the outcome of the arbitration they can go to court. Companies often go this route to wait out workers, hoping they will run out of money or patience. If workers can last this long however, they win more cases than they lose.

Labor protests happen in the sunbelt when the legal system fails workers. Lee reports one sunbelt worker saying, "We are not greedy or jealous of others making more money than we do. We just want the legal minimum" (P. 175). Like workers in the northeast, sunbelt workers protest in front of industry and government offices but get the best results blocking major roads and rail lines. When this is not effective workers sometimes travel to petition the central government. Local police often stop busses of protesters leaving to protest at the central government offices, so workers will walk for many hours if necessary. Workers in the rust belt and the sunbelt usually as Lee says, "adhere unflinchingly to the law" (P. 95) and stop protests as soon they get their demands met or the government cracks down.

Similarities

There are similarities in the situation that rustbelt and sunbelt workers find themselves in. Both groups consider themselves "ruoshi quinti" or "weak and disadvantaged groups" (P. 73) that the state has an obligation to defend. Many protests are spontaneous actions from fed up workers that live in close proximity, enterprise apartment towers in the northeast and company dorms in the south. Workers discuss their plight in their communal housing. At some point someone suggests they protest an unfair situation and often others agree to protest on the spot. Protests in both regions tend to be what Lee calls "cellular" where only workers from one workplace protest without joining with other workers with similar issues. Solidarity between aggrieved groups is strongly discouraged by the authorities. Workers want satisfaction on their grievance but do not wish to anger the authoritarian government that can easily crack-down on dissent seen as illegitimate. Workers tend to support the central government but find their local government corrupt and self-serving. Workers in both areas find that big protests with lots of workers get better results than small protests.

The Chinese government has a minimum safety net for workers in both groups; enterprise housing in the rustbelt and rural land rights for migrant workers of the sunbelt. This allows workers the ability to survive by subsistence farming or finding work in the informal economy. Despite the

challenge workers in both Liaoning and Guangdong face today, they both still think they are better off on the whole than they were in the past. And both groups see small scale entrepreneurship as a potential solution for survival long term.

Differences

Workers in the rustbelt and sunbelt also have differences in their circumstances. Lee calls the protests of rustbelt workers “protests of desperation” while sunbelt workers stage “protests of discrimination” (P. 12). The “protests of desperation” show the disillusionment of workers in the old socialist state system who were promised a job for life, pensions, free housing, and an ownership stake in the enterprise that they worked to build. In many cases some if not all of these promises were negated over time as reform decimated the SOE's. Northeastern workers feel that their sacrifice to the socialist state under Mao was wasted by corrupt local officials and now find little or no opportunity--they are desperate. Lee states, “In Shenyang, the provincial capital of Liaoning, a survey showed that between 1996 and 2000, more than one quarter of retired workers were owed pensions, and one quarter of employed workers were owed wages” (P. 5). Retirees go months or years without pensions, younger workers are laid off without opportunities or work without pay, enterprise housing goes without plumbing repairs or heat in the winter, and many go without hope for a better future when social wages go unpaid by state enterprise.

Migrant workers in the south conduct “protests of discrimination” as they feel the effects of being second class citizens in southern provinces that do not respect workers’ legal rights granted by the central government. Lee states that in 2003, “75% of migrant workers experienced wage nonpayment” (P. 7). They do not stay in solidarity together like the rustbelt workers who stay in their enterprise housing, when the going gets tough often they disperse to their home villages throughout the rural provinces.

The differences between “protests of desperation” and “protests of discrimination” come about from the different social contracts of both time and place. The Maoist socialist social contract of “collective consumption” through a government owned work-based unit for the rustbelt workers has slowly dissolved over the last several decades leaving workers and retirees desperate, undermining the legitimacy of the government, leading to social unrest. The sunbelt’s legal social contract comprised of legal minimums, provided by private companies, enforced by labor contracts through the legal system devised by the central government in the reform era to legitimize the government by communist party rule through capitalism, is undermined by the interests of local government and capitalists.

Why American Workers Should Care

In the last chapter of the book, Lee offers a short comparison of contemporary Chinese workers struggles with those of struggling workers in the United States, Mexico, Russia, and South Korea. Lee shows how workers can protest and make at least modest gains even in a totalitarian state. However Chinese workers have the disadvantage of not having competing interests among the ruling class, competing political parties, or competing labor unions compared to most countries of the world that have some or all of these things. We have in the United States the advantage of all of these competing forces to use to better our plight on the job. Dishearteningly though, Lee documents the ubiquitous nature of the race to the bottom of the wage ladder within countries and internationally. As workers band together in resistance and gain power, capitalism moves production to a cheaper more exploitable workforce, wherever it may be. We need to realize that our democratic society provides workers some advantages, but does not stop capitalism's relentless drive to squeeze every last ounce of production out of us for the lowest possible cost. American workers need to demand that workers at home who lose work to global competition are taken care of. But more importantly we need to work globally to improve the plight of all workers, and in the process, we have a much better chance of keeping the work we have. In doing this we can also know we are not inadvertently oppressing workers, no matter where they live, when we buy goods and services.

Conclusion

Lee spent a tremendous amount of time under difficult circumstances researching the nuance of the surprising amount of labor protests in China. She freely admits that it is only a small picture of the labor protest situation in a large, populous, politically closed country. Lee focuses on two provinces (Liaoning and Guangdong) and only a few cities in these provinces. The book is about labor protest, so she does not spend time discussing workers who have better circumstances, who do not feel the need to protest. Lee does not get into the reasons behind the Chinese governments slow uneven transition between socialism and capitalism, other than to show the central government's reasons to create labor law and the local government's interest in ignoring the same laws. There is much, much more to this story, however; Lee does a remarkable job of conveying the plight of the protesting workers, why they choose to protest, how they choose to protest, and the nuance between different groups, not just between sunbelt and rustbelt workers but also between retirees, employed workers, laid-off workers, and unemployed workers.

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Morality in “Nawabdin the Electrician”

by **Luigis Jimenez**

Nawabdin was a very interesting short story in many aspects because it mirrors real life and our society. At first glance Nawabdin seems like a con man who uses his wits to take advantage of clients and the utility company. Just like anything in life, his story isn't black and white. As the plot progresses we see a man who loves his family and did what he had to do in a country with very little opportunity to feed his family. This starts to draw me as a reader in because it is something I can relate to, and it challenges me to look at myself from a professional and moral standpoint. Anyone who reads this story can get something from it because it shows that life is not black and white.

As I started reading this short story, I found it funny and I really didn't respect Nawabdin. I didn't find it interesting because all I saw was a con man. As a professional, I was offended because it speaks on all electricians when anyone in our community steals or does not know what they are doing. Stealing from the utility company for clients is something that I found unacceptable. One of the only things that is really interesting about this part of the story is how everyone around Nawabdin is just fooled by this phony electrician who destroys everything he touches. Everyone around him views his improvisation as a sign of him being smart and cunning, which got me thinking about Nawabdin's environment and the people he interacts with.

I compare a small village in Pakistan to my environment on a construction site. I could never get away with the same things Nawabdin gets away with. People in my environment are educated in electrical work and have the knowledge of how correct installations should look. I could never take a ball peen hammer and start hitting with it. Everyone would know that I am not a qualified electrician. In a farm in Pakistan, they have no idea that Nawabdin clearly lacks the knowledge to operate any electrical equipment because they don't have the knowledge of what proper electrical work looks like. That is one of the things I took away from the first part of this story: if you are not knowledgeable, anyone can take advantage of you.

The author does something that really changes the dynamic of the story when he brings Nawabdin's family into the story. He introduces him as a loving husband and father of twelve children, which really got me thinking as a reader: this gives all Nawabdin's actions some cause, even though he was a hustler and a terrible handyman. That is not what completely defines Nawabdin; he is a family man who is loved very much. I reflect on that as a reader ... If I had a large family of twelve, there would be a lot more pressure for me to bring a paycheck that can sustain such a large family, especially in a

country like Pakistan where there are not as many opportunities to get ahead in the world. Another aspect of Nawabdin's family that I found interesting as well was how loved he was by his family. He and his wife, even after being married for so long, still had a loving relationship. Nawabdin had a good relationship with his kids too. I found this interesting because it made me reflect on my own life.

Professional life shouldn't be what completely defines you as an individual. Family doesn't care how good you are as an electrician. As long as you do your best most families will give you their love. That is a lesson that anyone can get from this story. This made the story very complex for me because now I didn't see Nawabdin as hustler or a con man but as a family man who is trying to take care of his family. This really created an antihero complex for me where I had to ask myself *does the end justify the means*. Even though he was destroying electrical equipment and possibly putting other people in danger with his work, is it justified because he had a family to take care of? I can see how the author really uses morality as a way to challenge the reader.

The story takes an unexpected turn that really surprised me and brings another element to the story. Towards the end, Nawabdin was robbed and wounded from gun fire. What I really found interesting is how the villagers viewed the assailant. They had no pity on him even though he was the one who was fatally injured and died. This is just another way the story makes you think about morality and what actions are just too extreme for reasoning. While at the doctor's office the assailant claimed that he only stole to survive and put food on the table. His validation for trying to steal Nawabdin's bike and shooting him was not met with sympathy but with disgust. The doctor and pharmacist refused to treat him.

The author sets an example for the reader: I accepted Nawabdin, but should I accept the validation of this man? This really gets me as the reader to question *when does the end not justify the means*. Even if what the robber was saying is true, is stealing and shooting someone acceptable? I couldn't help but agree with Nawabdin that his actions were too severe. He did not think that his actions might not affect only Nawabdin but also the people around him, like his family. There is only one thing I disagree with this in this scenario, which is when he was not treated and left to die. I believe in giving people second chances.

Nawabdin electrician is very interesting story because it allows one's personal experience to really dictate how one interprets the story. There are probably many people that see Nawabdin as a fool and a bad electrician who should have just let his assailant take his bike. However, I see Nawabdin as a family man who didn't have the opportunity to get an education. That bike was the livelihood for him and his family. The author wrote a compelling story with many layers that really helps the reader find out what his morals are.

On Between the World and Me

by **Kevin Klopot**

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates was a truly eye-opening book to read. My whole life I have known that racism is deplorable, but as a white man I have never experienced racism firsthand. This book has familiarized me with the uncomfortable reality that black people face and how racism is a constant factor in their lives. America was literally founded on racism and built on the corpses of slaves; the unfortunate truth is that racial division is as American as apple pie.

As I read through the book, I was entranced by Coates' mastery and usage of words. Every paragraph flowed into the next, his words radiated emotion: they shifted from the softness of a gentle breeze to the striking boom of thunder. This book was not explicitly written for me; I am a white man, a member of the majority. Nevertheless, this book has opened my eyes. Coates wrote this book for his son — and other young black men by extension — in an effort to help him navigate the dangerous labyrinth that is the life of a black man in America. There were times where I felt that I should not be reading such an intimate text, almost like I've stumbled upon someone's diary. It is easily one of the most, if not *the* most, intimate pieces of literature I've ever read. To read this book feels as though you are eavesdropping on a conversation between father and son at their kitchen table. This is my first time being allowed to hear this intimate conversation that has no doubt happened countless times in the black community.

This conversation has put the reality that black people face into perspective for me. As a white man I have always thought racism was obvious, loud and proud, something that anyone could spot and recognize, but after finishing this book I realize racism is far more subtle and insidious; it permeates through all facets of life in America. How predominantly black neighborhoods are over policed, and the schools underfunded — There is an insidious layer of racism just under the surface and I believe that is far worse than the upfront sort of racism because it flies under the radar.

The point that I feel is really driven home in the book is that people of color are held to an unreasonable standard compared to white people. People of color exist under a microscope: any mistake or mishap are insanely scrutinized and weaponized against them. Black people can only be perfect before they are treated with respect. There is no three strikes and you're out kind of ballgame played here; even a single mistake could have far-reaching consequences on your future, or it could even cost you your life. A scene in the book that highlights this is when Coates and his son are at a movie theater. His

son who is a toddler walks slowly, so a white woman pushes the toddler out of her way. This rightfully enrages Coates as it would any parent and in retaliation he screams at the woman. A white man comes to the woman's defense and as the argument grows, Coates pushes the man who had no business getting involved. The man threatens to have Coates arrested and Coates leaves.

I was dumbfounded when I read this passage. This random woman harmed a child and Coates was painted as the villain for defending his son, simply because of the color of his skin. I believe Coates's reaction was justified. I know if that happened to me when I was a child, my mom would have went ballistic and probably would do anything in her power to protect me. Any parent would have been enraged, but being a black man Coates cannot show anger without being painted as violent and aggressive. He elaborates: *"Our current politics tell you that should you fall victim to such an assault and lose your body, it must somehow be your fault. Trayvon Martin's hoodie got him killed. Jordan Davis's loud music did the same."*

Whenever a black person is killed, especially by so-called "law enforcement," there is always a mad dash to justify the killing or put a spin on the situation. The blame is always placed on the victim, their pasts dredged up and made a spectacle of by the media. It's a convenient and shockingly potent tool that keeps the status quo unchecked, that keeps people from questioning or even realizing the injustice built upon a foundation of systematic racism. Although times are changing, it is still all too common to hear that a black person who is oppressed and brutalized or even killed, whether by the police or by more run-of-the-mill racists, was either aggressive, a criminal, or simply somewhere they shouldn't have been.

Untitled

by Patrick Tehan



Does Capitalism Work?

by William LePinske

The Shock Doctrine confirms convinces me that capitalism cannot work because of what I have witnessed of men and women. I've yet to see a single example of capitalism working for anybody other than the upper 1% of society, for everyone else only war and the rending and tearing of human flesh all in the name of profits we never seem to enjoy for ourselves.

In reading *The Shock Doctrine*, I was faced with many truths that filled in the blanks of the modern story of capitalism, at least as I understood it, in a way that at points literally shook me to my core. As you read this, understand that every time I am forced to mention Milton Friedman, I feel sick, as it makes me question what other atrocities, both current and historical, could be attributed to his economic "theories." The Vietnam War? While I write this, nearly 50 years after the war, my own father is dying a slow painful death from Agent Orange poisoning. The current COVID-19 pandemic? We may never know.

I'll start by saying that Friedman should not have been celebrated with a Nobel prize, should not have been able to keep company with several U.S. Presidents and other foreign leaders, and certainly should never have been allowed to teach his beliefs to college students. Instead, the true history of Milton Friedman should be taught in schools, the evils that were perpetuated on innocent peoples, the complete disregard for the value of life, and for living.

I am going to take this in two parts, first my general impression and review of the book, and second, more importantly, how I think the book and its lessons can help me with my goal of growing our organization and furthering the plight of working people in this country.

Overall, I am very impressed with the book, there were times where I found it hard to set down, I will certainly read it again. Naomi Klein did an amazing job explaining *The Shock Doctrine* and I appreciated the fact that the book is so well cited. It should be noted that one of the reasons it was so hard to set down was because at times it was like reading a good novel, with stories that are hard to believe are true; sadly, they are. This realization however helps you to remember why you are an activist in the first place. This book should be required reading for anyone in the labor movement.

I'll continue by saying that if your idea of capitalism first requires an explanation and understanding of the MK-Ultra program, you have no business being in a position of power. The MK-Ultra program was a form of "brainwashing" used to "help" people with certain psychological deficiencies, at least initially. The scientists behind the program believed that to address

many psychological issues, you first had to erase the portions of a person's personality or memories that led to the psychological condition they were dealing with. The MK-Ultra Program used a combination of electrical shock therapy, sensory deprivation and drugs; including things such as LSD and other psychedelics in an attempt to erase these portions of their personality.

I was a bit confused, at least initially, as to why Naomi Klein chose to begin her book with the story of the MK-Ultra "brainwashing" program. Immediately after walking us through MK-Ultra though, it hits you right in the face why she chose to start there. *The Shock Doctrine* walks you through the story of Milton Friedman, his vision of capitalism, and the stories that followed showing attempts at seeding his "pure form" free market capitalism policies.

Sadly, many of those who participated were left permanently affected and in much worse condition than before. The program took place at a McGill University in Canada but received much of its funding from the United States secretly through the CIA, indirectly, so that the funding couldn't be traced back to the U.S. The CIA's interest was not in how the MK-Ultra Program could help those suffering from mental ailments, it was how it could be used as a form of torture to get information from our enemies.

In short, MK-Ultra was a way to "wipe clean" a person's personality so that it could be built back "properly." Enter Milton Friedman, the Chicago school of economics, and Shock Capitalism. Clearing a blank slate through shock which would leave space to implement their ideal free market capitalism.

Milton Friedman believed that capitalism could only work without any outside interference from things like government regulations, environmental regulations, unions, and things of the like. *The Shock Doctrine* looks at the way Friedman and his economic disciples, known as "The Chicago Boys," went about trying to implement his vision of pure form capitalism and other modern examples of how these methods are still being used today.

Friedman theorized that the only way to implement these pure capitalism policies was through a method of "shock." The shock of war, the shock of disaster, or any other major cultural shock would leave a clean slate in which a pure or purer form of capitalism could be implemented. This belief was based on the knowledge that many would not willingly move towards this type of society without some sort of "shock therapy."

Their first attempts were in Chile, where the U.S. government actually sanctioned staging a coup to take down an otherwise successful society that they viewed was too far left in order to create a model free market society. Their plan began in 1956 when they decided the best way to seed their free market ideals in Chile was for the U.S. Government to fund Chilean students

coming to the University of Chicago to be trained in Friedman economics. The idea was for these students to receive their doctorate degrees and then head back to Chile to seed the universities there.

Following this seeding program, the U.S. helped stage a coup in which military juntas took over the government under the control of Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet followed the Chicago School plan, called "The Brick" and privatized many government-run institutions and otherwise tried to create an ideal "free market" system. The plan failed and it left the country in ruins suffering from mass unemployment and the world's highest level of inflation. Not without mass casualties, violence, and the disappearance of thousands of people who stood in the way of their plan.

It wasn't enough to stop at Chile, the Chicago Boys also attempted to do the same in Brazil and Argentina, using "shock and awe" military techniques, fear, intimidation, murder, and mysterious disappearances to use fear to change the society. These countries saw similar results as Chile.

Friedman's ultimate plan was to try and find similar methods that they thought could work back home in the United States. Create an emergency, a shock to the society that would clear way for a new pure-form free market capitalism that would move the country back to the way they thought it should be. Moving through history, Friedman was friends and advisors to both Ronald Reagan and Great Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at the same time, leading to mass deregulation in both countries at the same time. Having read this book, you'll stop thinking "Reaganomics" and realize it was really "Friedmanomics" that deregulated the U.S. economy.

There are almost too many examples of *The Shock Doctrine* in modern society to cover in a paper this length. However, we see examples all around us. Notably mentioned in the book were catastrophes such as Hurricane Katrina and the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia.

Leading up to hurricane Katrina many had wanted to privatize the local school systems and eliminate the public housing projects in the area. Politically, it was impossible, until Katrina hit and wiped out nearly every public school in New Orleans, and caused many of the area's residents to leave the area during the storm. The storm had "cleared the slate" and left the perfect setting to complete their goals. Following the storm instead of rebuilding the public schools, private schools were built and public housing was closed to clear way for future development.

In Indonesia, the coastal areas were occupied by fishing villages which had been there for hundreds of years. The tsunami cleared these villages out of the way and now all these areas have been replaced with resorts and other commercial properties. Example after example, either wait for a disaster, or create a disaster to clear way to implement “free market” policies ... repeat.

I'd say this book is a must read for up and coming labor activists. I have been involved with this fight for many years and always knew why I do what I do; however, after reading this book, I now have a new appreciation for the importance of the work we do. This book would also be valuable reading in an organizing setting to help agitate workers to act and help them become aware of the world they are actually living in.

Stigmas and Exclusivity: Reflecting on Erlich and Grabelsky

by Joseph Monaco

Erlich and Grabelsky's article "Standing at a Crossroads: The Building Trades in the 21st Century" portrays a decline in union power over the last few decades of the 20th century, citing two reasons that ring true in my own experience. One of them is an increasing stigma against manual labor, which largely deterred me from wanting to work such a career and join a union until I was in my 20s. The other is that unions have become very exclusive, which increased the non-union work force and enabled me to do electrical work for about a year before Local #3 accepted me.

On page 2 of the article, Erlich and Grabelsky write about the diminishing status of construction jobs, citing a statistic that 70 percent of construction workers do not want their children to work in construction. Not only has this fact deterred many from seeking construction careers with unions, but also, I was deterred at one point myself. When I was a child, I thought I wanted to work in construction. Every time I would work with my dad or uncle on a do-it-yourself home project, I had a lot of fun and wanted to do it for the rest of my life. However, I was raised in a white-collar town that looked down on construction work; eventually I began to adopt this cultural judgment as well. I remember in high school laughing at the idea that a friend of mine chose to become a plumber instead of going to college. It was not until years later that I realized he was much more well off financially and much more secure in his career than I was, and eventually I found my way back to my construction roots by joining the apprenticeship program. I happen to be the exception; most kids in my position would have maintained their desire to stay out of construction work.

Later, on page 5, the authors discuss exclusionary policies as a reason for a decline in union power, citing a statistic that from 1965 to 1990 the number of electrical workers in the United States almost tripled while the number of those in the IBEW remained about the same. By making it difficult to join a construction union, those who wanted to work in construction but were unable to join the union worked in open shops, which led to an increase in the non-union workforce and a decrease in the percentage of workers who were in a union. Before I joined IBEW Local #3, I was working for a non-union shop. I knew the owner of the shop before I started working there, which not only helped me to get the job, but also gave me a non-customary worker-employer relationship. The owner was honest with me, telling me that the only way to really make a satisfying career out of electrical work would be if I joined the union. He told me he tried to join Local #3 himself, but at the time the only

way to get in was to have family in the union. He was excluded and not only worked non-union but opened a non-union shop that competed with the union that could have otherwise recruited him. I probably would have gone down a similar career path had Local #3 kept the same exclusionary policy; but now admissions seem to be more merit based than it used to be. I was able to join without having family in the union, giving them one more member and one less competitor.

I believe the ongoing trend of construction jobs losing status in the United States needs to be reversed for trade unions to build themselves up again. When I joined Local #3, I did so with the intention of making a career out of being an electrician. However, there is an unfortunate perception in the United States that kids are told they will be of a lower social and economic class if they work with their hands. This makes kids less likely to consider construction as a career, and therefore less likely to join a union in which a career is secure. To make matters worse, if unions have exclusionary policies in which you really have to know someone to get in, while it's easy to work non-union, then of course the non-union pool of workers is going to increase while the union pool will not. If construction unions want to reverse their downward trend in density, they need to promote themselves as a place to make a successful career and recruit more workers who would otherwise do the same work but less pay, benefits, or job security.

Review of *Dying for an iPhone*

By Rick Mickschl

*"No one is free when others are oppressed."*¹

The basis, text and research of the book *Dying for an iPhone* orbits around this profound statement. It skillfully journals the oppression and mistreatment of workers in China at the global manufacturer Foxconn.

Foxconn derives its name from the claim to be able to produce connectors at fox-like speed.² Apple, the worldwide producer of the iPad, iPhones, iPods, Mac computers and other electronic devices, is Foxconn's largest customer. The relationship goes back to the inception of the Apple's entry into personal devices in early 2000's.

Foxconn serves a host of other electronic giants such as Google, Amazon, Cisco, Dell, GE, HP, Intel, Microsoft, Samsung, and many others. Foxconn has grown from a small connector factory in 1974 to a multi-billion dollar global supplier with more than two hundred subsidiaries and offices and plants in China, Asia, Americas and Europe.

Terry Gou ("Gou") is the founder of Foxconn.³ Gou led the company until 2019. Throughout the book, his leadership (I say that with most disgust) of the company, originated directly from his tyrannical vision. He has made the company symbiotic with Apple.

One of the founders of Apple, Steven Jobs, believed in and said to his workers "Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish." Gou's same reflection is "Hungry people have especially clear minds." I interpret the former to encourage people to work hard and enjoy life. I interpret Gou's statement to be predatory in nature, by keeping employees focused by sheer, deliberate oppression and domination. The book in plain terms codifies and sustains my perception.

With nearly one million workers, with most being in China, Foxconn has to leverage a quantity of labor not seen in many countries. The size of its plants are legendary. By example of one plant, you can walk one hour north to south or east to west and not reach the outer walls of the plant. The world moves manufacturing to China for the main reason of labor costs. In 1978, China wages were 3% of United States wages.

¹ *Dying for an iPhone*, page 228

² *Dying for an iPhone*, page 11

³ Originally Hon Hai Precision Industry Company

The book focuses upon the plights, living conditions and treatment of the workers in the Foxconn plants. This swirl of manufacturing, led by Gou, is a parallel to the slavery of the deep U.S. South. Total domination and control of your workforces is the bullseye. Workers at Foxconn are continually pressured for perfection, speed and exactness in high-speed moving assembly plants. They work twelve hour shifts, mandatory overtime, and one day off in two weeks. Even less time off is allowed if production rates increase during peak sales times. Twelve to fifteen hour shifts are commonplace. Notably, the workers must work in silence without any conversation as an enforced rule throughout Foxconn factories.

Most workers are housed in company dormitories that they rent from the company. Restaurants, grocery, department stores and others outlets are available to accommodate one's living. The downside is you are living with 8 (or more) other workers in the same dormitory room with a common area. Dormitories are single sex, so married workers must stay apart. Opposite sex visits are not allowed. Most dormitories are dirty, shoddy and poorly maintained. The dormitory life and rule are regulated, monitored and enforced by the company.

This constant company controlled pressure cooker affects workers. In 2010, eighteen workers tried to complete suicide. Fourteen workers succeeded with four others being scarred for life. All were in the ages of 17 to 25 years old. The company responded by installing suicide netting and window bars on dormitories to prevent these attempts. Company counseling was made available, however no change was made to working conditions. The book takes you through one female worker's thoughts and insights of her suicide attempt and the underlying emotional and physical pressures that pushed her to this mental health crisis.

The book journeys you extensively through Foxconn employment and hiring demands and schemes, questionable local and State government alliances, adverse environmental practices, and the abysmal treatment of the workers at work and their dormitories. It is a captivating story of company mistreatment of humanity and the emotional and cultural struggles that each worker faced while working for Foxconn.

There are further layers detailing the workers' revolts, strikes and their actions to change Foxconn from within. Best said by Cao Yi, a 20-year-old Foxconn worker activist, "Workers come second to, and are worn out by, the machines ... but I am not a machine."⁴ Even though some of their attempts at change had limited successes, the actual story of their path to stand up against all odds exhibits extraordinarily true courage.

⁴ Dying for an iPhone, page 181

When reading this, I am horrified by the thought that this book is about real people and their lives. They are Foxconn machines to the company; however, at the core, they are human beings. In my job as a union representative, I have seen companies treat their employees with disdain and hurt, but never to the contemptible level of Foxconn.

As I look to the personal quotes (below) of Gou, I can see how Foxconn [de] evolved into the global presence of today with the evident detachment from humanity. These quotations, in my opinion, capture the reason for Foxconn's directives, inhumanity and their aversion of simple decency.

 Leadership is being decisive

Leadership is a righteous dictatorship

Leadership is a battle between experimentation and practicality."⁵

Growth, thy name is suffering. A harsh environment is a good thing. Achieve goals or the sun will no longer rise. Value efficiency every minute, every second. Execution is the integration of speed, accuracy and precision.⁶

"Managing one million animals gives me a headache."⁷

This company compass was set in motion long ago in 1974 with Gou's beginnings in industry with his north star being profit, execution and speed of a manufacturing plant(s). It is the epitome of a complete disregard for flesh and blood, and mostly, compassion for a fellow human being. The book makes you realize how cruel a dictator can be if given the complete reins of a kingdom.

Foxconn labor shortages created deceitful hiring practices involving internships (150,000 interns in 2010) of local high school and vocational school students. Rural countryside⁸ migrant workers of China are being drawn deceptively into the cities to work to assemble electronics. The Oz-like sparkle of the cities and the lies of government "recruiters" telling high school or vocational school students to "intern" at Foxconn is merely a ruse to lasso labor into the factories in need of labor.

⁵ Dying for an iPhone, page 28

⁶ Dying for an iPhone, page 66

⁷ Dying for an iPhone, page 75

⁸ Akin to "The Empire of Cotton" countryside workers of India

The interns ended up being merely laborers putting in screws, inspecting screens and performing assembly of iPhones (and other electronics). Additionally, the interns were paid less and received no benefits of medical, housing or retirement. Furthermore, the cultural beliefs in China lead to deeper personal tolls. Sons and daughters are expected to support their parents and families back home. This takes precedent and emotionally burdens these “interns” to stay in Foxconn servitude.

The book points out how Apple, being Foxconn’s biggest customer did peripherally get involved when there was a worker action, strike, suicide or antagonistic social media. Their years of repetitively claiming “This is not Apple, it is Foxconn” worked for a while. It was not until boycotts and protests of brave workers at Apple locations visually brought the Foxconn atrocities to the evening news and dinner tables of the world, that Foxconn was exposed.

Apple finally provided oversight and inspectors at Foxconn facilities. The book points out that this was well-meaning of Apple for the social optics, but the inside deal did not accomplish much in benefiting the workers. As the parable goes...the fox [of Apple] was watching the henhouse [of Foxconn]. In 2016, Apple wrote “There’s a right way to make products. It starts with the rights of the people who make them.”⁹ Apple is manufacturing in a communist country where people have no imbedded or inalienable rights. These worthy words superficially sound good, however hollow they are.

As I serve as mental health awareness instructor for our union members, the book left me looking for a deeper dive into the mental health of the workers. The emotional and physical toll on the workers providing electronic devices that we all have in our pockets is enormous.

No talking, no laughing, no conversation, time limits on bathroom breaks, absolute perfection in work, speed at all cost and an incessant increase in production quotas sets the drumbeat for workers at Foxconn. The Gou model of perfection with speed is fed by our insatiable appetite for these iPhones and devices we hold in our hands, swipe at our dinner tables, read every morning, noon and night, and look at with each ping, ring or sound.

Dying for an iPhone has reminded me that there is a human cost in every piece of technology we have. This suffering and toll is very real, present and rooted. The question is: Is it worth it? Or can we improve our lives and societies with a better respect for the human in humanity? The authors of this book have adeptly and admirably asked us all these very questions.

⁹ Dying for an iPhone, page 221

The Good Citizen

by David White

One of the conversations that emerged in the wake of DC's 'Watchmen' was how it was the first time that many viewers had ever heard of the Tulsa Race Massacre. Commenting on this, HBO's 'Last Week Tonight' host John Oliver asserted that while white Americans were reacting with utter surprise at the existence of this historic tragedy, black Americans were in turn anticipating the surprise that whites would feel when they too learned of something that had been hidden from them in history class.

While Mr. Oliver employs this narrative to draw attention to the disparities that exist between whites and blacks regarding what each knows of black history, his approach is flawed at best and dishonest at worst. A cursory exploration of the question of why it is that so few people know of this bloody chapter of American history quickly reveals that the Tulsa Race Massacre was not simply "forgotten." According to Vox, black residents of Wellington, North Carolina who requested information about the white supremacist coup of 1898 were told for years that such records did not exist. This was a lie, the same lie in fact that black residents of Tulsa were told when they requested information about a rumored massacre that destroyed a so-called "Black Wall Street" in the 1920s. It was a lie maintained by white people who protected their version of events by deception and the outright threat of violent coercion (lynching).

My main take away from Ava Duvernay's '13th' is that the history of convict leasing and its impact on the entire generation of blacks who were born after slavery is the missing link to properly understanding the context in which the formerly enslaved live. Black children are taught a particular version of history by allegedly "well intentioned" teachers, who craft a narrative of inclusion. Thus, when black people read the founding documents of this country, we do not read them as they were written: to exclude. The 3/5 comprise excludes from blacks the possibility of full humanity in the same way as the State Action Doctrine excludes from blacks the possibility of federal redress if a violent mob overthrows its democratically elected government or a private club wishes to exclude them from membership (see: U.S. v. Cruikshank and the Colfax Massacre). It is this relationship of exclusion that informs the history of "racial relations" in the country, and anytime the Congress or the courts have indicated a willingness to expand the contours of citizenship to include blacks, violence on a massive scale has erupted, such as the Civil Rights Movement or Reconstruction in the South. Convict leasing is the chapter in between both of these episodes and was premised on excluding blacks from the protections of the 13th amendment, albeit in racial neutral ("coded") language.

There are, within the chapter of history that encompasses the period of convict leasing, many stories that likewise have been disremembered. There's the story of Isaac Murphy, James Winkfield, and the dominance of black jockeys during the late 19th century. There's the story of Sissieretta Jones, Bert Williams, and the first blacks to perform on Broadway. There's the story of hundreds of Black Wall Streets, many of which were similarly targeted for destruction by a white populace that disapproved of any semblance of so called "black progress" because of the threat it posed to their sense of security and self-worth. There's the story of Peter Jackson, the man who should have been the first black Heavyweight Champion of the World, had whites allowed him to win something that belonged to them. In this entire chapter lies a complete understanding of what it means to be black in a white man's country, and it is for this reason that black children are not taught this chapter. We are instead taught the Star-Spangled Banner, because a good citizen ought not question the motives a slave holder might have had in writing it.

A Review of *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*

by Gabrielle Rogano

Arundhati Roy has authored a book, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014), which provides a wider understanding of how deeply capitalism operates with a dependence on intimidation and coercion. The publication focuses necessarily on the various layers of capitalism suppressing and even strangling India today, which relates closely to the capitalistic foundation of the United States and the modern world we find ourselves a part of. A quote that stuck out to me was,

Being a strategic partner of the United States does not mean that the heads of state make friendly phone calls to each other every now and then. It means collaboration [interference] at every level. It means hosting US Special Forces on Indian soil. It means sharing intelligence, altering agriculture and energy policies, opening up the health and education sectors to global investment. It means opening up retail. It means an unequal partnership in which India is being held close in a bear hug and waltzed around the floor by a partner who will incinerate her the moment she refuses to dance.

When all the power and control is in the hands of the rich, workers are lost in its history as capitalists ride their backs with visions of a modern world.

Roy explains that India's source of wealth came from minerals along with land banks. Moreover, land was being acquired and handed over to private cooperation's for "Public Interest" while the locals and their peasant economy across rural lands were displaced.

According to Roy, capitalists used their force to prey on the weak by extending their interests and securing support from the state, military, judges, and institutions. Consequently, this force has embedded itself into the social hierarchy of families allowing the male to exploit his wife and children in order to survive. This capitalistic force was nothing short of horrific in all phases of its existence. In Kalingangar, villagers gathered to protest the inadequate compensation for their land being taken away to build the Tata Steel Plant. India's government funded the ground clearing operation and was subsidized by mining corporations for the construction of the Tata Steel Plant. Furthermore, the government sent ten platoons of police who opened fire on the protesters killing 13 people. In Chattisgarh, if locals didn't come out of the forest to be forced into police camps they were considered "Maoist Terrorists." How terrifying to be labeled a terrorist for sowing seed or plowing on your own land just as you have done for generations. Furthermore, locals who have managed

to stay hidden in the forests were now under attack from the Indian army and air force. "In India they don't call it war, they call it 'creating good investment climate'."

These tactics are similar to what Sven Beckert laid out in his book, *The Empire of Cotton* (2015). Beckert defines war capitalism as the, "violent appropriation of territory, slave labor and reliance on the imperial state to secure new technologies and markets." Similar to the workers in India, laborers lost access to their land moving rural workers to abandon their agricultural interests and home-based manufacturing into cities of textile factories.

Capitalists found it hard to recruit workers if they had access to other means of survival, like land. Families had to strategize in order to maintain the household ability to stay on their land. Additionally, the factory proletariat paid men more than women and children and, like India, the social hierarchy allowed the male head of household exploit their family for survival. What's more, the new norm for the peasant economy was to produce capital not to be self-sufficient.

This holds true to our world today and living through the COVID-19 pandemic opened a door that shined a light on the faults and negligence of our society. And for the first time in my 32 years of existence, I started to grow my own garden while stepping away from my own personal reliance on the State. 2020 is the first time I've experienced sheer trepidation and panic throughout the entire world to acquire supplies and how that ability directly defines your economic status and your dignity and worthiness of survival.

Compared to India's army preparing for war against the poorest, hungriest, most malnourished people in the world, the violent capitalistic foundation of the "empire of cotton" continues to mercilessly feed off the poor and weak. And in the meantime, we are forced to quarantine unless our jobs are considered essential, but this type of work usually places your life at risk. We have also received a one-time \$1200 stimulus check in which we have to pay rent, provide homeschool for our children, and provide food for our families. Our homeless and ever-growing poor community do not have credit cards to order food online nor do they have cars to drive through a drive through and public transportation isn't free. How do we expect the homeless and poor to survive when the odds have been historically stacked against you?

Because of my current studies at the SUNY, I have been able to look at this pandemic through a critical thinking/analytical perspective. Referencing back to one of our readings, "The Sociological Imagination," by C Wright Mills, humans are only invested in things that directly affect them and their everyday lives, this is what I call the "snow globe effect." Moreover, the pandemic has opened our snow globes to understand that our actions do indeed affect other people. Unfortunately, we have to have darkness in order to see the light.

History has shown that capitalism is constantly in a state of revolution but at what point do we stop using the poor as test subjects for coercion in the name of modernization?

In Arundhati Roy's book, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, is a reference to the 250,000 debt-ridden farmers who have killed themselves, and of the 800 million who have been impoverished and disposed to make way for us. Similarly, the foundation for the empire of cotton was also built on the backs of forgotten workers. These unsung heroes of our history are never written about because they spent their waking hours trying to hold their mind, body and soul together. Their forced sacrifice built a better life for so many and yet shattered the hopes and dreams of others.

In India, the elites believed people who couldn't afford to live in cities shouldn't live in them and considered the poor as pick pocketers and slum dwellers. Additionally, the minister boldly stated that migrants to cities were mostly criminals and surprisingly enough the middle class admired him for his forthrightness. In the same way, this message was carried on by our 45th president, Donald Trump, who publicly called immigrant's criminals and rapists. Just like the middle class in India, 62,984,825 US citizens in 2016 and 74,111,419 in 2020 supported his "Tell it like it is" attitude.

Furthermore, Arundhati Roy's book really opened my eyes to some of the deepest layers of capitalism, coercion and control through nonprofit organizations. Going by the name of "corporate philanthropy", capitalists created a system maintenance patrol and "among the first foundations set up in the USA were the Carnegie Corporation, endowed by profits from Carnegie Steel Company and the Rockefeller Foundation endowed by J.D. Rockefeller, founder of Standard Oil Company."

Corporate philanthropy spent large sums of money promoting good governance, (as long as they control the strings), and the concept of the rule of law (provided they have a say in making the laws). The Ford Foundation established the Fund for the Republic, which then morphed into the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions to thwart "the persistent communist effort to penetrate and disrupt free nations." These corporate or foundation-endowed NGO's were the pathway to buying into resistance movements, as shareholders or buying shares in companies, and then to control them from within.

It's nauseating to be aware and understand that even when we are fighting for justice, equality and liberty for all, the enemy is standing right next to you placing a limitation on how much freedom you're allowed. This rings especially true to my involvement in the Black Lives Matter Movement since I started my apprenticeship unionizing workers in South Carolina in 2013 to the protests in Seattle today. Reading about the Ford Rockefeller Foundations in the 1970s

donating \$15 million to “moderate” Black organizations, giving people, grants, fellowships, scholarships, job-training programs for dropouts, and seed money for Black-owned businesses. As Roy states, “Repression, infighting, and the honey trap of funding led to the gradual atrophying of the radical Black organizations.” I think this directly relates to why we as a society do not vote in our best interests. It’s almost impossible to see the reality of the hand that feeds you is also the one plotting your demise.

This brings me to the point of why it’s so important to get these types of books in as many hands as possible. We have to dig for the truth and once we know better we have to do better. Too many of us are just trying to survive, unable to see outside of our snow globe of reality to the bigger picture that was painted for us to accept. When all the power and control is in the hands of the rich, workers are lost in its history as capitalists ride their backs with visions of a modern world. I personally do not want any more people to live during a time where they are lost in history, which is why my career as a union organizer is so valuable to me. Unionization provides a voice for those who have been silenced for so long. And through my education, I am continually learning the intricacies and history of our resistance. It’s my duty to use these privileges that are denied too many to help the masses. If I have a better understanding of the world around me, I can help others understand, and perhaps we can build an empathy as a movement of society.

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