

The Unreported Year – stories you might have missed in 2017

New

NI 509 January/February 2018
newint.org

Internationalist

The world unspun

China's enforced 'cure'
for homosexuality

Game over for trophy
hunters in Tanzania

The obscenity of
extreme wealth

WHAT'S LEFT FOR THE YOUNG?

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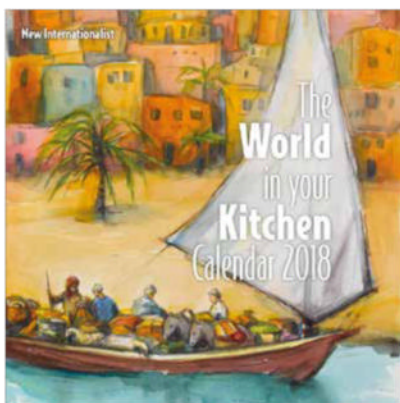
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THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST workers' co-operative exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless worldwide; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary to meet the basic needs of all; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for global justice.

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Forever young...



A sobering realization: I have 11 months left of being young. Well, to be more precise, I have 11 months left until my 16-25 Young Person's Railcard – a little orange voucher that entitles me to a third off ticket prices on Britain's dysfunctional railways – expires for good. I recently renewed it for the last time with a sense of wistful dread; I'll soon be cast out into the world of responsible adulthood.

Or will I? Only a few weeks ago, the rightwing Conservative government, desperate to rally young people flocking to the Labour opposition, announced a pilot scheme: the millennial railcard. This would introduce the same fare discount for people up to the age of 30. Just like that, I felt my youth extend by another five years.

The railcard is a telling development: you know the economy is in dire straits when even 30-year-olds can't be expected to pay adult rates. It relates to an idea that lingered in my mind as I researched this edition's Big Story: millennials are trapped in permanent adolescence, locked in a straitjacket of youth.

Speaking to and reading about under-employed and resourceful young people, from graduates in the Democratic Republic of Congo to migrants in Naples, I saw the outlines of an exhausted generation who want nothing more than to grow up.

The stereotype of millennials as work-shy and mollycoddled faded under scrutiny. As I hope this collection of stories demonstrates, they are a cohort who work ceaselessly: both to survive and, crucially, to create the conditions for a better future.

As this is the first issue of another Brave New Year it also carries the *Unreported Year*, which focuses on stories that were sidelined by the dominant media in 2017, such as indigenous resistance to mining projects in Brazil and 'artists' demanding peace in South Sudan.

At the back is a Q&A that evokes another generation of young radicals, as **New Internationalist's** founding editor, Peter Adamson, recalls how student campaigning in the early 1970s was the springboard for starting this magazine. ■

YOHANN KOSHY
 for the New Internationalist Co-operative
newint.org

This month's contributors include:



Meena Kandasamy is a Chennai-born poet, activist and writer based in London. Her latest novel is *When I Hit You: Or, The Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (Atlantic Books, UK).



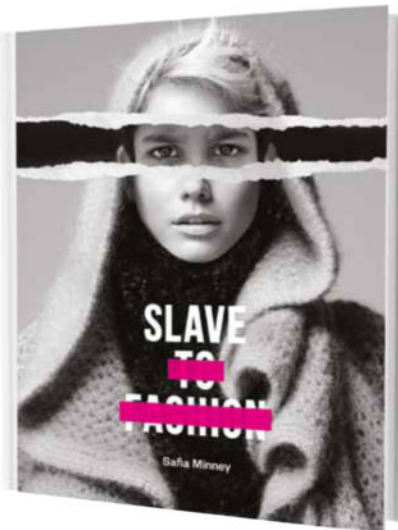
Wangui Kimari is an urban anthropologist based in Nairobi, Kenya. She is the participatory action research co-ordinator for the Mathare Social Justice Centre – an urban grassroots organization.



Edward Siddons is a freelance journalist whose work has been published by *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Independent*. He works as the Lead Writer on Violence Prevention at Apolitical, a policy platform for public servants.



Kelsi Farrington is the production editor at New Internationalist. She grew up in the Bahamas and is particularly passionate about fighting inequality, whether it be racial or gender-based, through words.



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— Livia Firth, Creative Director of Eco Age and ethical fashion ambassador.

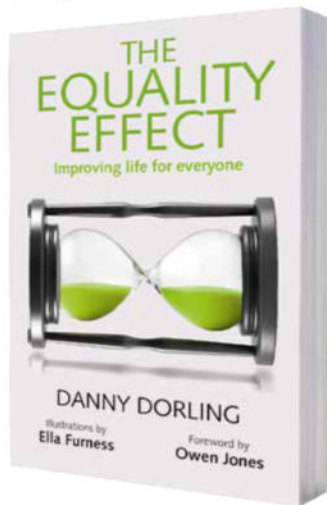


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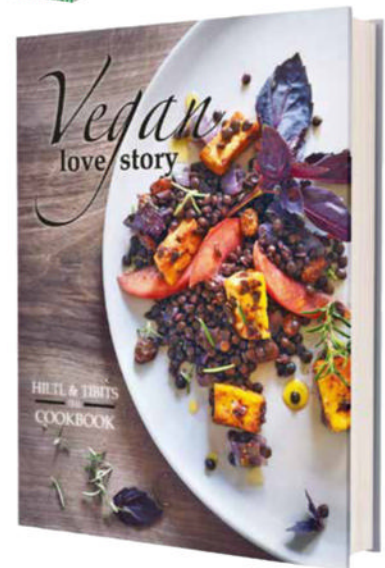
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tibits is one of London's top vegan/vegetarian restaurants and Hiltl, in Zurich, is the oldest vegetarian restaurant in the world. This successful partnership presents 80 recipes with influences from all over the world, beautiful photography and information about some of the key ingredients in vegan cuisine. Hardback. Size: 28cm x 21cm. 232 pages.



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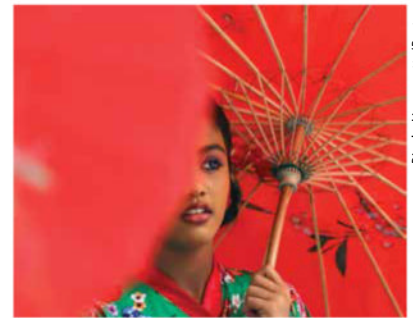


Guy Corbisley/Alamy Stock Photo

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Dinuka Liyanawatte/Reuters

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Sarah John

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Front cover illustration by Grace Attlee. Images used under a CC Licence, top to bottom: Xiaojun Deng; Chris Brown; U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. Fifth Fleet; attribution unknown – <https://nin.tl/2AB1NFJ>; Garry Knight; Michael Coghlan; Alberto Vaccaro.

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Praise, blame and all points in between? Give us your feedback.

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They might be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Letters should be sent to letters@newint.org or to your local **NI** office. Please remember to include a town and country for your address.

Unwarranted hyperbole?

The destruction of the coal-fired power stations in Port Augusta (as reported in NI 508), may well bring good things to that town: cleaner air and jobs in the solar industry. But you fail to mention that we South Australians pay the highest price for our electric power in the world. The Federal Government is heavily subsidizing 'renewable' power production (with taxpayer money, of course) to fulfil its aim to source 23.5 per cent of our power from such sources by 2020. Since Australia contributes about 1.3 per cent of the world's atmospheric CO₂ emissions [*actually 1.8 per cent for just 0.3 per cent of the world's population – ed*], reducing it to 1.2 per cent will have a negligible effect on the greenhouse effect.

If the provision of electric power to homes is a human right, the building of power stations in India fuelled with Adani coal from Australia could well be seen as strongly positive. Emotive phrases like 'carbon bomb', and the assertion that that bomb will increase the dreaded greenhouse gases by 20 per cent, causing a temperature increase of 5-6 °C, is unwarranted hyperbole. Time will tell.

Alasdair Livingston Pasadena, Australia

Transformative learning

Bad Education (NI 505) highlighted how education is being appropriated by the interests of those who seek to reproduce neoliberal, unequal systems and relationships of power. This trend is getting worse, as large corporate organizations such as Pearson and Bridge become increasingly dominant in both the governance and delivery of education. This is an issue not just at primary and secondary levels: we can also see the impact on further and higher education.

As a group of teachers, researchers and activists in further and higher education, we have seen the damage that can be done by this model in our own workplaces. However, we have also seen the possibilities of challenging it by offering truly emancipatory and critical educational opportunities.

Universities and even progressive colleges are increasingly subject to the neoliberal disciplinary and financial structures that insist students pay ever-increasing fees, and yet lecturers are under pressure to spend less time actually teaching students. Teaching is often carried out by poverty-stricken, hourly paid lecturers, and lecturers are under pressure to publish in journals, often at the cost of their own wellbeing and academic integrity.

In this context, we at the RED Learning Co-operative (Research, Education and Development for Social Change), see the opportunity to re-create a space for truly transformative and emancipatory learning, based on the pedagogy of Freire and on our belief in the engaged and embedded knowledge of activists and change-makers. We value educational achievement for its contribution to a broader social good, which releases us from the need to hit targets based on 'employability' and other such blunt metrics. We are joining with others in a working group to take forward these ideas and create a Co-operative University.

As long as there are those who think differently, there will be real knowledge.

Tracy Walsh, Fenella Porter, Caroline Holmes, Ian Manborde, and Cilla Ross The RED Learning Co-operative, Oxford, England

Great snapshot

Your *Country Profile* is always immediately informative and a great way to get a snapshot of a country, but times are such that I think an additional inclusion in the 'At a glance' and 'Star ratings' should be 'Climate Change'. The baseline could be 1970, when NI was created, and when the impacts of climate change hadn't begun to bite.

Paul Downton Australia

OPEN WINDOW

Each month we showcase the work of a different cartoonist – in collaboration with cartoonmovement.com

THIS MONTH: Steve Bonello from Malta with 'Ways of Seeing'

Steve Bonello is a freelance artist, cartoonist and illustrator based in Attard, Malta. He has contributed a weekly cartoon to the Maltese *Sunday Times* since 1991. He previously worked in the aviation business and commuter transport for 30 years.



The weighted scales of justice

Being on the wrong side of suspicion can have extreme consequences, realizes AMY BOOTH on a visit to a prison.

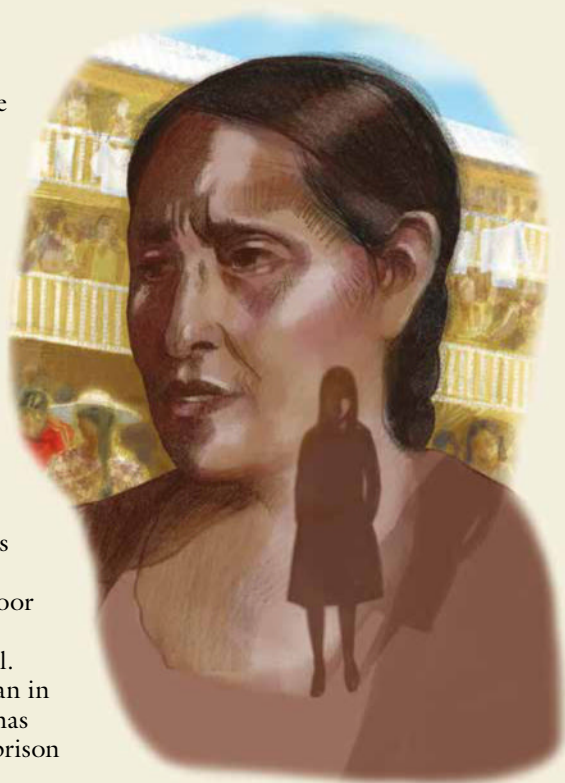
The patio of San Sebastian women's prison looks for all the world like a food court. The place is tightly packed with families sitting at plastic tables as if to have a picnic. Women hawk bottles of soft drinks and *empanadas* from little stands: in Bolivia, prisoners need a way of making ends meet, because nothing – not even their cell – is free.

My friend Angie guides me through the throng to Florencia. Greeting each other warmly in Quechua, Angie delivers potatoes and vegetables bought fresh from the market, which she stows away on the floor beneath the row of grimy little electric hobs that lines one wall. Florencia is a slim, petite woman in a traditional *pollera* skirt. She has been sentenced to 30 years in prison for murder.

Florencia and her companion Ana are from a remote pastoral community near Capinota, where they used to make a living pasturing goats. In June 2013, a 13-year-old girl was raped and murdered, her body dumped in an irrigation channel. The following night, Florencia and Ana were dragged from their homes by a furious mob: they and their husbands were the prime suspects. Florencia was separated from her husband, but that didn't matter to the mob.

For hours, the women were beaten. Men put sacks over their heads and held knives to their throats, threatening: 'We'll do to you what was done to the girl.' The mob lit bonfires and threatened to burn them alive. To save herself from the flames, Florencia confessed. Hours later, the police arrived and took the women into custody.

Many people have little faith in the formal justice system; Bolivia was ranked 113 out of 176 in Transparency International's 2016 corruption



perception index. Moreover, for people in remote areas who only speak indigenous languages, formal justice can be hard to access. There are legal provisions for community justice in certain circumstances in Bolivia, but lynching is illegal. Nonetheless, cases of violent and gruesome mob killings carried out on the basis of little or no evidence crop up with alarming frequency. It is common to see life-size dolls hung from lamp posts as a warning to would-be criminals, sometimes accompanied by slogans like 'Thief caught, thief lynched'.

The women and their husbands spent nearly three years in prison awaiting their fate until, in April 2016, the sentence was handed down. The court concluded that the husbands had been having a relationship with the victim. This had caused Florencia and her husband to split up was the reasoning, and the pair went on to kill the girl. Florencia and her husband were sentenced to 30 years in prison

for murder, and Ana and her husband to 15 years for being accessories. The women were the last to understand what was to become of them because they only speak Quechua.

According to the court documents, Florencia's mother said Florencia went out at around nine on the night of the crime and didn't return until the next day, leaving her with no alibi. However, Florencia and Ana say there was no official translator present to dispute this detail. Although samples of hair were found on the victim's fingers, they were never taken for DNA analysis. The evidence available proved how the girl died, but there was no proof that Florencia, Ana and their husbands were the ones who committed the murder.

The defence also points out that forensic evidence shows the victim had had sex with others, including her teenage uncle, before the murder – but at the investigators' discretion, any link between the victim's uncle and sexual abuse suffered by the victim had been left out of the investigation.

Florencia and Ana have always protested their innocence. Angie met them while working on a project about prison conditions. Horrified by their story, she has helped them launch an appeal. Following her repeated requests, the public prosecutors in Capinota admitted that they had lost the investigation notebooks and other documents pertaining to the case.

Our visit is brief. There are no long chats; it feels like there isn't much to say. Angie offers them a few words of support in Quechua, introduces me and leaves the food she has brought. Then we head back into the outside world.

Meanwhile, with the original case documents lost, there is no date for an appeal hearing – and the victim's killers could still be at large. ■

Amy Booth is a freelance journalist and circus instructor living in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

DOMINICA
Gone with the wind

'It's all mashed up.' Dominicans used to reserve this expression for bus crashes, often accompanied by a 'so sorry for you' for the hapless victims. Now it could be used to describe the entire island.

Last September, Hurricane Maria swept through the eastern Caribbean, lingering for six deadly hours over the lush forest cover and vulnerable villages in Dominica, one of the region's poorest countries.

Maria's 280-kilometre-an-hour winds almost wiped out the island's flimsy housing stock, destroying 62 per cent of all dwellings and severely damaging the electrical grid. It stripped away most of the vegetation, turning the island's green shades brown. Dominica's small population of 71,000 has been depleted by 57 casualties and the departure of hundreds of residents, at least temporarily.

Dominica, like many small islands in the Global South, has become 'a canary in the mine' for carbon-induced climate degradation. Whether it's Fiji and the Marshalls in the Pacific, the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean or Haiti and Saint Martin in the Caribbean, islanders are paying a huge price. Research confirms that rising sea temperatures incubate super-storms and hurricanes such as Maria.

Add to this recurrent droughts, floods and rising sea levels that threaten to make low-lying islands disappear and you have a little discussed eco-catastrophe.

The Prime Minister of Dominica, Roosevelt Skerrit, is



Post-Hurricane Maria, it's a long, slow road to recovery for small-island states of the eastern Caribbean.

emerging as a champion of these frontline small-island states. Addressing the UN General Assembly after Maria, he said: 'We in the Caribbean do not produce greenhouse gases or sulphate aerosols. We do not pollute or overfish our oceans. We have made no contribution to global warming that can move the needle.'

Dominica is now rallying to rebuild in a more climate-appropriate manner: renewable energy based on solar and thermal power, buildings better able to withstand extreme weather, and agricultural self-reliance through climate-smart technologies and irrigation systems. For, as Skerritt told *AI-Jazeera* recently: 'This is a practical situation [not a theoretical one]... this is our life, these are our livelihoods.'

Richard Swift

Communications team of Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit. Public Domain

TANZANIA
Game over for hunters

After a 25-year struggle, Maasai activists are hopeful that they will return to traditional grazing grounds that were lost to big-game trophy hunters.

Last November, Tanzania's newly appointed Natural Resources Minister Hamisi Kigwangalla revoked the licence of a hunting concession granted to the Ortelo Business Corporation (OBC) – which is owned by the Dubai royal family – and ordered the arrest of its CEO on corruption charges.

Back in 1992, the government granted OBC the rights to hunt wild animals such as antelopes, lions and leopards on 4,000 square kilometres of traditional lands of nomadic Maasai herders in Loliondo, which lies east of the Serengeti National Park.

In 2008, the corporation was

allowed to take more Maasai land. The following year saw brutal mass evictions with houses burned down and Maasai cattle impounded.

The Maasai have campaigned strongly to return, using a range of awareness-raising methods, including traditional media, online organizing and participatory video – at one point attracting 2.2 million signatures for their cause through an online petition.

'We saw our struggle as a clash between money and life,' says Samuel Nangiria, a leading Maasai campaigner who says he was arrested 10 times and had to flee the country for a time after death threats.

The government's anti-corruption efforts have given the Maasai campaign a new momentum. The head of OBC in Tanzania faces a number of charges, including bribing ministers; Minister Hamisi Kigwangalla has stripped the company of its hunting licence, and says it will not be

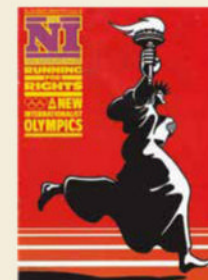
granted one again.

Now that the tables have turned on OBC, the Maasai will focus on making sure the land comes back to them.

'We have been there for centuries: our people are buried there,' says Samuel. 'We will keep fighting.'

Nick Dowson

30 years ago...



...was both an Olympic year and the 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights (as this year is the 70th). So we decided to put the two things

together and run our own Olympics, offering medals to those countries that had improved most in key areas of human



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What to do about
North Korea, Mr Trump?

CHINA 'Curing' homosexuality

It's not a crime to be gay in China but LGBT+ people are being forced to undergo 'conversion treatment' throughout the country.

LGBT+ people are still subjected to 'forced confinement, medication and even electric shocks to try to change their sexual orientation,' says Graeme Reid from Human Rights Watch (HRW).

More than 20 years since China decriminalized homosexuality, public hospitals and private clinics are offering the 'treatment' to parents who request it for their children, according to a recent HRW report.

Conversion therapies are illegal under China's 2013 Mental Health Law, which establishes that any medical treatment must respect basic rights and dignity, and that there can be no intervention for something that is not classified as a disorder – homosexuality has not been classified in this way since 2001.

But Chinese authorities have never taken effective steps to stop hospitals from providing the 'therapy'.

Some of the HRW report's interviewees say they underwent electroshock sessions aimed at associating pain or discomfort with images, videos or descriptions of gay sex. Some report being forced to take medication without being told of the effects or possible risks.

Almost all interviewees reported verbal abuse by medical staff. They also, without exception, describe intense family and societal pressure, and had chosen not to file complaints. ■

Alessio Perrone

rights, plus votes of censure to those that had gone downhill (nin.tl/NIOlympics). The idea had enough life in it that we revived the exercise at the start of two subsequent Olympic years, 1992 and 2008.

Zimbabwe received a silver medal for the right to food as black farmers gained access to their own land – this may seem astounding now, given how things later developed under Robert Mugabe, but the award reflected the optimism of those first years of liberation from white control. Fiji received a vote of censure because of its recent military coup – and you can find out what has happened in

Introducing... Jacinda Ardern

In a pleasant change for this column from first-past-the-post, an exercise in proportional representation has brought a 37-year-old Prime Minister to power in New Zealand/Aotearoa – the country's youngest in 150 years – with the support of the Green and New Zealand First parties.

The charismatic and relentlessly positive Jacinda Ardern came out of nowhere to snatch victory from Bill English's conservative National Party. While Ardern's Labour Party finished around seven percentage points behind the front-running Nationals, her ability to make common cause with the other two main parties put her in the driver's seat, charged with bringing about a change for the 56 per cent of New Zealanders who had voted for one.

Ardern is a longstanding Labour activist and a former Mormon who left



the church over its stance against LGBT+ rights. A strong advocate for decriminalizing abortion, tackling child poverty and stopping foreign speculation in the real-estate market, she has referred to capitalism as a 'blatant failure' in the face of rampant homelessness in New Zealand and opposed the National Party's plans to cut taxes for the rich.

Her challenge will be to maintain the coalition that supports her minority government with just a paper-thin majority of seats. To keep the Greens on side, she will need to take convincing action against climate change and keep her promise to increase funds for conservation. At the same time, she will need to placate the curmudgeonly Winston Peters and the quirky brand of populism of his New Zealand First Party. Her decision to make Peters Deputy PM may help. Interesting times ahead. ■

Richard Swift

MOZAMBIQUE Men tackle domestic violence

On the fringes of FEIMA arts market in Mozambique's capital, Maputo, people crowd around as a man yells angrily and punches the man standing next to him, who is wearing a skirt.

The onlookers do not intervene. Instead, they let out a collective laugh. The man in the skirt bows down to his

attacker, whimpering melodramatically and falling to his knees.

This is performance theatre, presented by non-profit HopeM. The all-male drama draws the public in with slapstick comedy that is designed to 'teach men that violence is not the way', according to HopeM project worker Albert Panera.

It's one of HopeM's many art initiatives aimed at ending violence against women in Mozambique, where men dominate society and nearly half of all girls are married before they turn 18.

'I sing wherever I can, in schools, at community meetings, to teach men that this is not right for our daughters. This is not how to be a strong man,' says singer songwriter Joao Rabeca, cradling his guitar. He takes pride in using the power of music and storytelling to try to end child marriage in the Jago region, 320 kilometres north of Maputo, claiming: 'I am the only man who does this.'

Mozambique's government launched a national strategy in 2016 to end child marriage and reduce economic inequality between the sexes. ■

Rebecca Cooke

the years since by reading this month's country profile on page 36. Meanwhile, Burkina Faso received a gold medal for its stellar reduction in infant mortality rates, which we attributed to the immunization and primary healthcare achievements of the revolution led by Thomas Sankara. He had just been assassinated – and I wrote a heartfelt obituary. Little did I know that, far from being forgotten, Sankara's reputation would continue to rise through the subsequent decades so that he is now widely seen as one of Africa's most inspiring leaders (nin.tl/sankaraobit). ■

Chris Brazier

7 reasons why we should have open borders

Palestine, 100 years after Balfour

How creativity is killed in the Majority World



COLOMBIA

War on coca farmers continues

US-fuelled conflict between coca-growing farmers and the state is threatening to undermine Colombia's recent peace settlement with Marxist guerrillas FARC.

The accord between President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC leaders, which ended over 50 years of civil war, committed the state to invest in long-neglected rural communities.

In particular, the deal included the provision of economic alternatives to coca-growing farmers through 'a development framework', which is backed by the United Nations.

But voluntary crop-substitution programmes are being sabotaged by an impatient Trump administration, which has urged Colombia to crack down – or face 'bilateral political problems'.

The government has now intensified forced eradication of crops – with deadly results. In October, security forces opened fire on subsistence coca farmers in southwest Nariño province as they protested, killing at least seven people and injuring 30.

In the remote green hills of Danubio, in Colombia's central Meta province, rural communities are already deeply mistrustful of the state. Arnulfo Perdomo, 63, set up a small farm after being displaced by the war. He barely makes ends meet by growing coca – which brings in less than \$56 per month – but high production costs rule out growing food.



Illicit crops are still the only option for farmers like Arnulfo Perdomo.

Shahidul Alam / DRK

When hundreds of police entered Danubio last June to destroy coca fields, they met fierce resistance. The locals drove them away with bats and machetes and temporarily took one officer hostage. 'If they pull out our coca, what are we going to live off?' asks Perdomo.

The economy of cocaine production and trafficking is deeply rooted. Voluntary crop substitution and alternative development, which are supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, need to be given time if they are to work, says Pedro Arenas, director of the Observatory of Crops Declared Illicit.

He warns of the consequences of 'shameless' interventions by the US that will lead to more crop destruction in rural communities primed to expect development projects. 'As people lose faith in substitution agreements, the peace agreements are delegitimized,' he says.

As long as farmers see no options for leaving coca behind, a stable peace for the people of Colombia will remain elusive. ■

Bram Ebus

GEORGIA/AZERBAIJAN

No room for dissidents

Last May, in a café in Tbilisi, Georgia, Afgan Mukhtarli phoned his wife to say that he was on his way home. She told him to pick up some bread. But Mukhtarli, an investigative journalist, never made it back. By the next day

he was being held in neighbouring Azerbaijan, facing charges of smuggling €10,000 (\$11,800) in cash across the border and resisting arrest.

Leyla Mustafayeva, Mukhtarli's wife and a journalist herself, insists that Azerbaijani and Georgian state forces kidnapped her husband and took him across the border. This is backed up

by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, which have dismissed the charges against Mukhtarli as politically motivated.

Mukhtarli had been living in Georgia since 2015 to escape his government's crackdown on critics. He investigated subjects such as corruption in the Azerbaijani ministry of defence. From Georgia, he carried on his work to expose powerful interests, revealing the ruling family's links to businesses.

'In light of the Mukhtarli case and other developments, there are grounds for concern about pressure by Azerbaijan on Georgia to stop providing a safe haven for Azerbaijani dissidents,' says Giorgi Gogia, Human Rights Watch's South Caucasus Director.

Georgia was once hailed as a 'beacon of democracy' by Western powers, following the 2003 Rose Revolution. But geopolitics and economic interests have taken priority over human rights. Georgia depends on Azerbaijan for 90 per cent of its natural gas supplies; likewise, Azerbaijan depends on Georgia to be able to export oil to Europe. One of the world's largest oil pipelines runs through Georgia and provides Azerbaijan with a huge source of revenue.



BURUNDI

Radio in exile

'When the government destroyed our independent media they thought they had silenced us,' Patrick Nduwimana says from exile in Kigali, the capital of neighbouring Rwanda. 'But we're still here and we still defy them.'

More than 400,000 Burundians have fled since 2015, including dozens of journalists whose radio and TV stations were violently shut down.

In order to reach audiences back home, Nduwimana has co-founded Radio Inzamba ('trumpet' in Kirundi, Burundi's national language), which broadcasts two news programmes daily from Kigali, online and via WhatsApp.

Together with Télé Renaissance and RPA-Humura, Radio Inzamba is one of the few media outlets that dare to report on abuses in Burundi, whose government actively hunts down dissenters at home and abroad.

Radio Inzamba relies on a network of clandestine reporters and trusted sources whose identities remain anonymous, with their voices digitally

altered for broadcast. Their news bulletins are shared in secret by reliable networks of people with smartphones, and deleted immediately afterwards.

'I didn't agree with the way the state radio was working. I hated censorship,' says Patrick Nduwimana. 'Here we're committed to supporting human rights. We're for the people, against oppression. I guess that makes us human rights defenders.'

The crisis in Burundi exploded in April 2015, when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced he would run for a third term – a move that is illegal under the constitution and contravenes the Arusha peace agreement, which was signed in 1993 after the 12-year-long civil war.

Thousands of Burundians took to the streets, defying a state ban on demonstrations. They were met with brutal force, which has since increased. Government forces are now under investigation by the International Criminal Court for numerous killings, forced disappearances, abductions, torture, rape and arbitrary arrests. ■

Giedre Steikunaite inzamba.org

Māori revival

Radio and TV presenters in New Zealand have begun using Māori words, two decades after it was made an official language. Kanoa Lloyd, of Māori descent, was the first to introduce words like Aotearoa, for New Zealand, in her TV reports. Other high-profile journalists have followed suit. Lloyd has brushed aside complaints that this excludes some viewers: 'The change has already happened. The Earth isn't flat, climate change is real... we're speaking Māori.'

Lighting up the slums

A pioneering new scheme has brought solar lamps to 100,000 households in Indian slums across cities including Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kolkata. As well as representing a healthy alternative to highly polluting and harmful traditional kerosene lamps, the lack of ongoing fuel costs means the lamps will also bring down household costs. Pollinate Energy uses micro-financing and 'micro-entrepreneurs' to promote the lights, with families purchasing the lamps over five to eight weeks at the same rate they had been paying for kerosene. The scheme will now be rolled out in India's 52 largest cities.



Uncaged beasts

The use of wild animals in Irish circuses is to be banned from 1 January. Coming shortly after Italy banned all animal acts in November, the decision follows a decade of campaigning in Ireland, including a 2016 circus protest which saw seven people arrested. Agriculture minister Michael Creed said the move reflected public opinion and a growing commitment to animal welfare. 'Coming in line with modern welfare standards will mean greater numbers of the public will be more comfortable with going to the circus,' he said.

Nick Dowson

Despite calls from the US government for a 'full, transparent, and timely' investigation, the Georgian Prosecutors Office has not released any details on Mukhtarli's arrest. Not only was Mukhtarli's passport left at his apartment in Tbilisi, but CCTV footage on Mukhtarli's route to the border 'appears to have been doctored', according to the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project.

'My general impression is that the Georgian government does not have any interest in investigating anything,' says Ghia Nodia, a prominent regional analyst. 'This is either because it is implicated in the abduction, which I find quite possible, or because it does not want to complicate relations with [Azerbaijan] by saying that [their] secret services abducted a person from downtown Tbilisi.'

Georgia recently rejected the asylum request of another Azerbaijani, activist Dashgin Aghlari, despite acknowledging that he would face persecution in his home country. Meanwhile, Azerbaijanis who in recent years have sought refuge in Tbilisi are leaving for EU countries. At the time of writing, Mukhtarli's trial has yet to conclude. ■

Onnik Krikorian

WORLD

Underwater meadows

Citizens are coming to the rescue of endangered seagrass meadows – a vital habitat for species as diverse as seahorses, turtles and even Atlantic cod – in a new global citizen-science programme that is mapping vital information about the species.

An online platform, SeagrassSpotter, helps volunteers to locate and document the meadows, collecting data and photos that can be used for targeted conservation efforts. Complete with a 'Pokémon-Go' style smartphone app, this provides scientists with reliable, geo-referenced data. So far, over 750 observations have been recorded from around the world.

Seagrass meadows serve as nurseries for many fish species and, along with mangrove and salt-marsh habitats, play a key role in locking up carbon and storing it in ocean sediments. They are under threat from disease, human pollution and disturbance from dredging and development.

While no substitute for government protection, projects such as this will be vital to fill in gaps in our knowledge and protect key habitats in the future. ■

Nick Dowson



Arrested

Development

Millennials have been condemned to a life of permanent adolescence. Despite the obsession with all things shiny and new, **YOHANN KOSHY** argues that young people are using old-fashioned ideas to chart a way forward.

The demonstration strayed from its path

and came to a pause at the base of a nine-storey office block, half-a-mile from the Houses of Parliament. Many in the crowd of 50,000 students did not know the building's significance. A few made their way past the thin line of police officers and entered the foyer, throwing things about and making a mess of its marbled interior. Those without the bravado to cross the threshold – most of us – cheered them on, reaching a triumphant pitch when a group appeared on the roof and unfurled a red banner. By this point someone next to me had noticed a sign that listed the building's occupants: oh, so that's what it is – the ruling party's headquarters!

'The occupation of the Conservative Party's offices in 2010 fractured the consensus at the heart of British politics: that young people were apathetic,' says Matt Myers, author of *Student Revolt: Voices of the Austerity Generation*. The day's events, which took politicians, the media, the police and even its own protagonists by surprise, precipitated one of the most significant student movements ever known in Britain – a country without a strong culture of student revolts. It was mobilized in opposition to the Liberal-Conservative government's plan to triple university tuition fees, cut budgets and eliminate Education Maintenance Allowance – a lifeline for working-class high-school students. It lasted for a few intense months, deploying street protests, occupations and direct action. 'More than anything it was a line in the sand, after which young people could never be framed as indifferent to their fate,' says Myers.

Even at the time it was clear that the British example was just one expression of a global awakening. From 2009 to 2013, student protests engulfed campuses in Chile, Quebec, California, the Philippines and over 50 other countries. The specific circumstances differed but they were united by a reaction against neoliberal agendas: government cuts, privatization, and the transfer of education costs from the state to students. The 2013 protests in the Philippines, for example, were sparked when a 16-year-old took her own life by drinking silver cleaner, 'after she had been forced to withdraw from university due to her inability to pay the 10,000 pesos (\$230) that she owed in tuition fees'.¹

Young people also played a key role in the generalized revolts against economic and political regimes in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. The April 6 Movement, made up of Egyptian students, was one of the most active groups in the 2011 revolution. Young faces were at the forefront of Occupy in Britain and the US, and dominated *Geração à Rasca* (Trashed Generation) in Portugal and *Juventud sin Futuro* (Youth without a Future) in Spain. These new formations rejected hierarchy,

leaders and explicit ideology. They inspired wide-eyed praise from those who saw in their digitally charged structures a new way of doing politics; the journalist Paul Mason, writing in 2012, noted the participants had a 'visceral distaste' for 'anyone who sounds like a career politician, anybody who attempts rhetoric' or 'espouses an ideology'.¹

But the young radicals did not take over the world. They did not even achieve their immediate aims: the tuition fee rises went ahead in Britain; Occupy fizzled out as a political force; and southern Europe was shackled by austerity regimes that continue to produce youth unemployment rates in Spain, Italy and Greece that range between 30 and 40 per cent.

But since then, a fragile generational unity has emerged. It stems from a collective recognition of having come of age at the worst of times. And this cohort of youngsters now has a name, albeit a contested one: millennials.

Children of the crash

Like all generational categories, millennials is a hazy term, nominally describing those born between 1980 and 2000. It was not coined by young people but by the marketing industry, specifically two US business consultants William Strauss and Neil Howe in 1991.² Capitalism needed a name for this emerging demographic that it was going to sell things to as consumers and exploit as workers. And rather than provide a meaningful analysis, those who used the term 'millennials' early on – mainly the media and advertisers – spoke only of their supposed tastes and values.

This is why millennials often laugh off the label: it almost always prefaces the most ridiculous claims. 'Millennials are killing vacations by refusing to take time off work!'; 'Millennials are killing the housing market by not buying houses!'; 'Millennials are killing old jobs by insisting on being freelance!' the newspapers blare. Too often, this generational discourse gets it the wrong way round. Rather than acknowledge how this era of capitalist crisis in the West has made young people poorer than their parents, or how short-term work contracts benefit employers, it blames the insecurity of contemporary life on choices made by millennials.

Yet the reality of young people's lives is largely determined by economics, not free will. 'The biggest factor facing millennials today is the total fall of wages in relation to the amount we produce at work,' says Malcolm Harris, author of *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials*. 'We've also seen a rise of contingent work and "bad jobs". We've associated this with the millennial character as if the two were existentially tied.' The stereotype of this generation being lazy and work-shy does not chime with Harris' analysis

**The
'freelancing'
spirit of
millennials
is really a
survival
mechanism**

Guy Corbishley/Alamy Stock Photo



Students in Britain protest proposed increases to university tuition fees, 9 December 2010.

either, which finds that millennials are, in fact, ‘damn good workers with unprecedented levels of education’³

In the West, the decline in trade union membership, coupled with the nature of the post-crash economy, has led to stagnant and decreasing pay-packets, particularly for the young; by the time they are 31, Britons born in the 1980s have only half the wealth that those born in the 1970s had at the same age.⁴ In Australia, discourse has reached parodic proportions, with a Melbourne-based partner with accountancy giant KPMG declaring that if young people want to buy a house – millennials there have the second-lowest home ownership rate in the world – they should stop spending money on smashed avocado sandwiches in hipster cafes. That Australian ‘house prices have grown by more than 10 per cent in the past 12 months, while real salaries were only projected to increase by 1.6 per cent’ did not figure in his analysis.⁵

Over-educated, over-worked and undervalued – these are the characteristics that stick to young people, who have neither the time nor energy to demand a better future because they are always on-call: ‘Millennials are experiencing the abolition of the life/work division in a way that tends towards total work,’ Harris says. ‘We’re working all the time: whether it’s being buzzed on your phone, always on the computer, always looking at advertisements.’ Growing up in societies that make individualism the highest virtue and solidarity a quaint artefact, millennials are best understood as the jittery, tired children of neoliberalism.

Waiting for adulthood

‘Life for someone in their twenties is desperate in the [Democratic Republic of] Congo,’ Bwenge (not his real name), a young graduate, tells me. ‘If they had the chance to go to school

and university, they either don’t have a job, or they are doing very bad jobs. My friends from university today are selling airtime phone cards on the roadside, goods at the market, and others are working as security guards where they are paid \$100 a month for working 50-hour weeks.’

Across parts of Africa and the Middle East, people speak less of millennials and more of ‘waithood’. In this new purgatory stage, men find themselves excluded from the social recognition that comes with the trappings of adulthood: finding decent work, buying or building a home and providing for a family. In rural, post-war Rwanda and Burundi, women describe how they also suffer while men lack the means to build a house – a prerequisite for marriage – as ‘they cannot be socially accepted *as women* until they have a formal marriage and children’.⁶ Looking at the life chances of young people in urban Madagascar, academic Jennifer Cole concludes that for some in the Global South, “‘youth” is a stage they cannot escape’.⁷

Again, neoliberal economics has played, and continues to play, its part. Decades of structural adjustment policies, pursued as a condition of development loans from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, have decimated domestic industries in the Global South and led to de-industrialization. Africa has a lower share of the world’s manufacturing output than it did almost 50 years ago.⁸ This is one important reason why there are fewer jobs than there should be in a continent where 33,000 young people join the search for employment every 24 hours.

In this light, the ‘freelancing’ spirit of millennials around the world can be seen for what it really is: a survival mechanism. ‘A term that we’ve started using in Congo is “*se debrouiller*”,’ Bwenge explains. ‘It means do whatever you can to sell yourself, to survive at all costs.’ Young Mozambicans use a similar expression, *desenrascar a vida*, which means ‘to eke out a living’. In Senegal they talk of ‘youthmen’, those who drift through their twenties and thirties in not-quite-adulthood, doing bits of work here and there. Behind the upbeat ‘Rising Africa’ narrative, that fetes economic growth on the continent, the lives of the majority of young people are still marred by frustration.

The 380-million millennials in China live beneath a similar cloud of despondency. Feeling the pressure of single-child households, rising housing costs in cities, and an economic slow-down, they have turned to ironic defeatism in the form of ‘*Sang*’. This social-media subculture uses jokes to express a quasi-nihilistic despair about the future – ‘I wanted to fight for socialism today but the weather is so cold that I can only lie on my bed and play with my mobile

phone’ – and is named after a Chinese character associated with the word ‘funeral’.⁹

Caught in a precarious world, it is easy to be tempted by reactionary politics. In the US, millennials buoy the alt-right, which gives a pseudo-intellectual buffer to Donald Trump’s presidency. Harris also worries about ‘misogyny [acquiring] a countercultural sheen’ as young men struggling to find well-paid work start to blame ‘feminists, working women and just women in general’ for entering the job market.³ As Karl Mannheim, the original generational-politics theorist, observed, ‘nothing is more false’ than the assumed correlation between young people and progressive politics.¹

But many young people *are* embracing positive tactics. They are charting a way forward that is not dependent so much on any new-fangled technology or horizontal form of organizing – as some might have supposed, based on the wave of youth revolt in the early 2010s – but by updating what were once considered ‘old-fashioned’ strategies and ideas: trade unions, 20th-century ideologies and party politics.

Youngsters of the world, unite

Take the strike action over Deliveroo – a venture-capital backed app that provides bicycle and moped courier services in 84 cities across the world. Typical for a ‘gig economy’ firm, Deliveroo does not consider its ‘riders’ to be employees but ‘independent contractors’ – a sleight of hand that allows them to get away without providing a minimum wage. To justify this, Deliveroo often point out that many of their riders are students who *desire flexibility* in their lives.¹⁰ One way of ensuring you can trample on the rights of workers is to frame their job as little more than a youthful hob by. And what young person doesn’t enjoy cycling?

But riders in France, Germany, Italy, Britain and elsewhere are taking the company on, through strikes and legal challenges. Often organized through secret groups on the instant messaging service WhatsApp, in Britain these small-scale actions have fostered solidarity between young workers doing part-time work and older, more militant migrant couriers, many of whom have families to support.

‘Although there have been some legal defeats, we’ve been pretty successful wherever we’ve managed to organize,’ says Callum Cant, a 23-year-old former Deliveroo rider and union rep at the Independent Workers of Great Britain, a small union that specializes in precarious labour. ‘It was interesting that a lot of the younger cyclists had never been in a trade union or gone on strike before. Their political experiences came from social movements, like the student or anti-austerity movements.’

The gig economy is new and so too is resistance to it. But this flurry of labour activity

What is Intergenerational Justice?

The idea of intergenerational justice (IJ) forces us to think ethically about the relationship between generations.

In practice, it means governments keeping in mind the interests of both its older and younger citizens – and future generations – when enacting policy. Although this may sound like common sense, it’s a ‘relatively new concept’ in legal and political arenas, according to a UN report.*

IJ is often evoked in relation to the welfare system. The 20th-century model of taxing a working population to fund pensions is unsustainable in an age of stagnant economic growth, massive tax avoidance and higher life expectancy; by 2050, the number of people over 60 is projected to be 50 per cent of the population in the rich world and is expected to triple in the Global South. This means young people will be paying out for something from which they are unlikely to reap the benefits.

It also lies at the heart of climate change. Thinking about the destruction of the environment as an act of what climate activist Naomi Klein calls *intergenerational theft* helps frame it from the perspective of those who will have to deal with the consequences. It also lays the blame with those in power who have failed to act.

* Report of the Secretary General, ‘Intergenerational solidarity and the needs of future generations’, UN General Assembly, August 2013.

– which includes challenges against the use of zero-hour contracts by large employers that target young people, such as McDonald’s and retail-chain Sports Direct – is a hopeful sign for a demographic who have grown up in an anti-union culture. Callum hopes that small struggles, like those carried out by Deliveroo riders, could be a ‘stepping stone for an entire generation to re-learn how to fight as a class’.

Back to the future

Over in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Bwenge has also refused to succumb to pessimistic fatalism. Five years ago, he joined the newly formed social movement LUCHA (Struggle for change), which was spawned to challenge the corruption of DRC’s political elites, the moribund domestic economy and the UN’s inability to secure peace in the war-torn nation. Although they do not keep a ‘list of members’, he tells me there are up to 1,000 LUCHA activists, with an average age of 21.

Along with ‘petitions, letters, protests and marches’, LUCHA has reinvigorated the tactic of *ville-mortes* (‘dead cities’), which was used by previous generations to resist the 32-year reign of dictator Mobutu Sese Soko. ‘It’s a kind of civil disobedience where people stay at home instead of going to work, schools and markets,’ he explains. ‘When it’s successful, it results in lost tax incomes. It’s a non-violent way of opposing a government that is very repressive.’ Social media and mass SMS texting has proved invaluable too since it is ‘easy to use and almost free, at least in the big cities’.

LUCHA members are also bound together by a collective appreciation of Africa’s anti-colonial past. Carlos Lopes, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic

Generational discourse blames the insecurity of contemporary society on millennial lifestyle choices

Across parts of Africa and the Middle East, people speak of “waithood”, a new purgatory stage in the lives of the young

Commission for Africa, observes that the continent’s youth seems to have more respect for the Pan-African movement – the generation of leaders, mainly from the 1950s and 1960s, who led independence struggles against European colonizers – than their own corrupt politicians. Lopes describes a distinguished panel he attended on African Intergenerational Youth in Ethiopia in 2013 where the young crowd jeered every second-generation head of state present, but maintained a reverential silence for the then 89-year-old Kenneth Kaunda – the first President of an independent Zambia – when he got up to speak.¹¹

Bwenge says the same is true of DRC. ‘One of our problems is the lack of positive role models for young people,’ he explains. ‘So the figure of Patrice Lumumba [the first leader of an independent DRC, assassinated with Western support] is very important. We share his thoughts and discuss his speeches. And those of Thomas Sankara, [the revolutionary leader] of Burkina Faso and Martin Luther King. We don’t always agree with everything they say, but apply them to our contexts and to our own vision of the world.’

Party time

Let’s return to the dramatic scene at the Conservative Party offices in 2010. If you had told the crowd that in seven years’ time many of them would be voting for, joining, and even campaigning for the Labour Party, you would have been dismissed as a clumsy prophet. Labour, after all, was the party of the Iraq War, ASBOs – an aggressive classist measure that criminalized ‘anti-social’ young people – and had introduced university tuition fees in the first place.

And yet this is exactly what has happened. In the 2017 general election, Labour, under the embattled leftwing leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, deprived the Conservative Party of a parliamentary majority. Its policies included the abolition of tuition fees and zero-hour contract work – a break with the economic system that makes young people’s lives miserable.

The result has been called a ‘youthquake’: 62 per cent of 18-24-year-olds who went to the polls cast their vote for Labour, with that figure increasing to 70 per cent for low-income young people. A striking example of this youth politicization was the #Grime4Corbyn campaign, which promoted the party with a free concert and endorsements from the stars of grime music – an urban, working-class genre that tends to be disengaged from, and actively critical of, formal politics.

Young people have also voted *en masse* for Podemos in Spain, a party that emerged from the networked *plaza* occupations of 2011; some have percolated through its ranks to become elected local and national representatives.

Finding the US Democratic Party intransigent, many of the post-Occupy Wall Street cohort have flocked to the Democratic Socialists of America. The party, which now counts 30,000 members, recently won a slew of positions in local and state elections across the country, including a city council position in Illinois by a 28-year-old former delegate for Bernie Sanders’ 2016 presidential bid.

Old habits

This post-crash decade of youth revolt often gets compared to the 1960s: the last time that a disaffected generation made their voices heard across the world, from the protests in Mexico City to the *evenements* of May 1968, Paris. One difference with that era is that intergenerational inequality – (see ‘intergenerational justice’ box on page 15) – is much more pronounced today. Another is that young radicals no longer celebrate their youth as an irreverent virtue; ‘Don’t trust anyone over 30!’, a popular slogan of the *soixante-huitards*, does not resonate.

The charge made by young people today is that they are sick of being young. The demand – let us grow up! – is a symptom of society’s failure to provide what it promised; belying the post-Cold War truism that there is only one viable system left, which offers a clear path through life to all those who work hard enough. A recent YouGov survey found that millennials in the United States, the free market’s holy land, now have a more favourable view of socialism than capitalism.

What will this generation accomplish? Millennials are hardworking, forced to be creative and seize the moment in order to survive – qualities that make them the ideal vanguard in waiting. It is often those who have been promised a better life, and then been frustrated, who have the confidence to make revolutionary demands. And it is precisely because the shiny new world bequeathed to millennials leaves so much to be desired that many are drawn to the old-fashioned idea that another one is possible. ■

1 Maysoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock, *Youth Rising? The Politics of Youth in the Global Economy*, Routledge, New York, 2015. **2** The Editors, ‘Meh-lennials’, *n+1*, Issue 22: Conviction, Spring 2015. n1n.tl/2BFWJh3 **3** Malcolm Harris, *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials*, Little, Brown, 2017. **4** Institute for Fiscal Studies, September 2016. n1n.tl/2AxuXWz **5** Naaman Zhou, ‘Australian millennials have world’s second-lowest home ownership’, *The Guardian*, 7 April 2017. n1n.tl/2AY8ltC **6** Marc Sommers, *The Outcast Majority: War, Development, and Youth in Africa*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 2015. **7** As quoted in: Michelle J. Bellino, *Youth in Postwar Guatemala*, Rutgers University Press, 2017. **8** European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2016. n1n.tl/2i6U1c2 **9** Yawen Chen, Tony Munroe, ‘For Chinese millennials, despondency has a brand name’, Reuters, September 2017. n1n.tl/2ApFAbI **10** Anna Isaac, ‘Gig economy companies claim flexibility essential for growth’, *Daily Telegraph*, 10 October 2017. **11** Royal African Society annual lecture, delivered by Carlos Lopes at SOAS University in London on 17 October 2017.

Fear of a young planet

Young Africans need to resist the way they are being spoken about, argues WANGUI KIMARI.

Young Africans are pushing against the narrative that frames them as a threatening bulge

Africa is obsessed with talking about the ‘youth bulge’. Pundits and politicians are engaged in an endless conversation about the vast and growing population of young people on their continent, where there are set to be almost a billion under-18s by 2050.

But the ‘youth bulge’ is not a neutral demographic discourse. It has become a highly suspect way of thinking about young people, inflected by long-standing preoccupations with African birth-rates and a dystopic image of ‘coming anarchy’.

The problem is generally considered to be that there won’t be enough jobs for this swelling demographic; as a consequence of being ‘idle’ and unemployed, the restless youth could, in the words of a recent article on the UN’s *Africa Renewal* website, fuel the ‘fire of political violence and civil unrest’.

Young people in the West (with the notable exception of the ‘urban youth’) have the luxury of being depicted in empathetic terms: as rebellious or uncouth millennials, naïvely challenging the world. But this generous interpretation doesn’t extend to Africa: a landscape of dangerous and now, in the era of Somali Islamists Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, ‘radicalized’ young people, who are regularly portrayed as a ‘ticking time bomb’ or ‘peril’.

The bulge discourse is also used to attack African women for continuing the very African folly of being too fertile – a longstanding colonial trope. As a 2012 billboard from

the Uganda Health Marketing Group put it: ‘256,700 youths can’t find jobs every year: smaller families will improve our quality of life.’

Solutions offered by the UN, African Development Bank and national governments to the youth bulge talk about how to return a ‘demographic dividend’ from this vast reserve of potential labour. One suggestion, from the World Bank and UN Development Programme, is that African youth should engage in agriculture. But it offers nothing on how young people will access land owned by elites.

The solutions pushed by multilateral institutions and their African partners always seek to enrol youth in mini-capitalist ventures while ignoring structural change; they never talk about shifting power from landowner to tenant, from ruler to ruled, from adult to young.

In Kenya, where over 70 per cent of the population is under 35, young people only feature as a solution when they become vectors of social entrepreneurship (read: neoliberal foot soldiers), or join government training programmes such as the pseudo-military National Youth Service (NYS). Kenyan youth have smartly encapsulated this tendency with the mantra, *kazi kwa vijana na pesa kwa wazee* (‘jobs for young people and money for the adults’).

And what jobs are on offer here? As a young unemployed Kenyan recently asked me, what’s the point of a programme to ‘empower youth’ that only employs them as street sweepers and small-scale construction workers?

If all African elites can think of is letting the youth become self-employed *boda boda* (taxi) drivers, dairy farmers and sweepers then they are showing an extreme lack of attention to what young people are asking for: rights to education, land distribution and a fairer economic system.

Young Africans are pushing against the narrative that frames them as a threatening bulge. Groups like LUCHA (Struggle for Change) in Congo and *Y’en a Marre* (We’ve had enough) in Senegal are using protest, art and everyday mobilizations to reconfigure the status quo.

As they do this, they chart their own future: one that sees young people as neither a security risk nor a resource for neoliberal exploitation. It is these movements – for water, land and inclusive political and economic systems – that suggest a ‘demographic time-bomb’ may be just what the continent needs. ■

Wangui Kimari is an urban anthropologist based in Nairobi, Kenya.

A public billboard produced by the Uganda Health Marketing Group.



Jenny Matthews / Panos

Kids at work

What is life really like for millennials? What kind of jobs do they do? What do they make of their precarious futures? We look at the lives of three young people across the world: a Gambian migrant in Italy, a Dalit student in India, and a trans vlogger in the UK.

Musa Fata, Italy

'People are talking about me in Gambia,'

Musa Fata says, as he takes money on the door of a basement bar in Naples, where he is putting on his first club night.

It's true: boys back home are eager to know what life is like in Europe. They tune in to the 24-year-old Afrobeat DJ and promoter's regular Facebook Live soliloquies on music and fashion, where he shows off his box-fresh sneakers, pristinely ironed clothes and sharply cornrowed hair.

Musa arrived in Italy as part of the great wave of migration that Europe has experienced in recent years. He crossed the perilous desert into Libya where he washed car windows in Tripoli to raise 500 dinar (\$360) to pay a smuggler to cross the Mediterranean. In August 2015, as his dinghy drifted off in the wrong direction, he was intercepted by the Italian coast guard and made landfall in Europe.

For two years he lived in refugee accommodation – a former hotel 150 kilometres south of Naples – while he waited for his asylum status to be granted. Rendered invisible without documents, Musa lived in the shadows along with hundreds of other asylum seekers.

Most of the 400 or so residents spent their time 'sleeping, eating and chatting with friends back home on WhatsApp' – but not Musa. He focused on trying to make, and save, money. He was determined to keep a 'stable mind', even when it became clear that Italy was no land of opportunity, with Italians themselves struggling to find work.

Musa spent his first winter standing on the roadside outside the defunct hotel in the hope that someone would drive up and offer him work. 'I kept trying every day,' he says. 'But only lucky people found a little work?'

The following year he was finally picked up and taken to a restaurant in a nearby seaside town to wash dishes. He worked hard and charmed the owners. They kept him for the summer, but without a contract, making irregular cash payments that amounted to little more than a few euros per hour.

When he wasn't washing dishes, he would make the long haul into Naples, taking two buses and a train, to buy black-market cigarettes. Ever the 'entrepreneur', Musa



would sell them, one by one, to other refugees. Although the work was informal, he had a roof over his head and an evening meal thrown-in.

Musa has since been granted asylum. But in the short term, things are likely to get harder. He now shares a double-bed in a tiny street-level apartment in central Naples near the train station. He can work legally, but finding a job is difficult in a place where the unemployment rate for young people hovers between 40 and 50 per cent and many Neapolitans, in Musa's words, 'don't like us blacks'.

The success of a recent party he put on has given some substance to his dream of becoming a 'big, big, big DJ'. There are only a couple of nightclubs that asylum seekers in Naples feel comfortable going to. One was happy to let Musa organize his first event on a Sunday night and split the entrance fee 50/50. He has plans to promote other Gambian DJs and musicians who have come to Italy as asylum seekers, taking advantage of Afrobeat's popularity in mainstream culture.

But, for now, Musa has no choice but to be flexible. Whether he is wandering the beaches selling bikinis (one of his many jobs so far) or coming up with another 'business plan', the future remains uncertain.

Sophia Seymour & Daisy Squires

Ravali Medari, India

Ravali Medari has come a long way. Once a softly spoken teenager, whose elder brother had to fill out her university application form on her behalf, she is now a fierce and charismatic student activist. ‘I was not *this* Ravali when I first came here three years ago,’ she says.

University in India is hard work, with levels of studying, competition and stress that prove overwhelming for many students. 22-year-old Ravali has balanced these while at the same time fomenting a revolution; over the past two years, the University of Hyderabad, where she is pursuing a Master’s degree in anthropology, has become a crucible of student revolt.

The university hogged national headlines for several months after the death of Rohith Vemula, a young Dalit PhD student who took his own life on 17 January 2016. Rohith’s suicide provoked a backlash all over India, opening raw wounds concerning freedom of expression, state repression, and caste hegemony.

He and four other Dalit students had dared to speak up against rightwing Hindu extremism. In response, the university administration suspended the students, evicted them from their accommodation and stopped Vemula’s monthly stipend.

Dalits form the lowest rung of the Indian caste system and face discrimination in all areas of life. In many ways, the university’s treatment of Rohith and his comrades resembled the caste ritual of excommunication. As an act of public shaming, it was meant to crush their spirit and strike at the core of their identity.

Ravali – who is also a Dalit – remembers the events vividly. The heartbreaking and radical suicide note left behind by Vemula, which was reproduced in newspapers across the country,

led to her political awakening. ‘I think that the message of Rohith was that we should speak up for ourselves,’ she says. ‘It was a letter for his right to live.’

Ravali was at the heart of the protests which put the university into lockdown, with police and armed paramilitaries deployed on the sprawling, green campus. A star singer and performer in a progressive theatre group, her fiery speeches made her stand out.

‘People are intolerant towards Dalits speaking up,’ Ravali says, recalling the days of tumult on campus. ‘The institution was intolerant. With all that police presence on the campus, yes, they were trying to intimidate us. But that’s because they are scared of us. That’s why they try to curb our rights.’

Initially she was vice-president of the Marxist group Students’ Federation of India at the university, but the underlying caste aspect of the struggle led her to join the Ambedkar Students Association to which Rohith Vemula belonged – named after the revolutionary Dalit leader from the era of Indian independence.

Under an image on a calendar of Dr Ambedkar, the only decoration that graces the bare walls of her student room, I ask Ravali how she balances activism with academia. Like most students at university in India, her course load is heavy; I had to wait for over a fortnight until she could manage to fit in the time for this interview. She brushes off the question.

‘Sometimes I read a lot, staying inside my room,’ she says. ‘When I go out and meet people, we end up talking for hours. Each of my friends on the campus is associated with some student organization or the other, so we always have lots to discuss.’

Whoever came up with the stereotype about



millennials being selfish has not met Ravali. There seems to be no line between where her education ends and her efforts at changing the world begin.

‘All this politics, listening to debates, helps me with my studies, helps me understand the world around me,’ she says.

Ravali knows the barriers erected against Dalit communities in rural India. Her family live in a small town called Manthani in Karimnagar district, which is about six hours by car from Hyderabad. Ravali says that despite the thousands of children, there are only three high schools that teach in English there, and she had to travel outside town each day to attend an English-speaking missionary school.

The ability to speak English in a rapidly globalizing India is important, but access to English-language schools is often determined, in practice, by caste and class.

‘I have seen a few of my fellow [Dalit] students who struggle with English leave the university, feeling alienated,’ she says. ‘It is

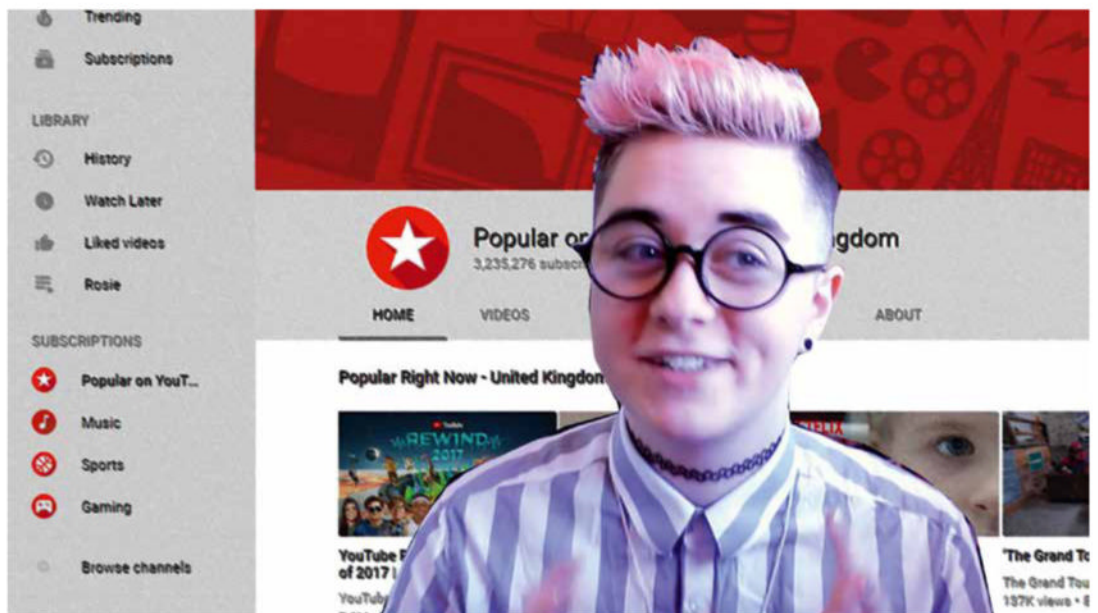
inevitable that they develop a complex. But I think it is important that we stay on and show that we are not inferior.’

We discuss the rat race for university places that seems to dominate the concerns of young Indians. Her analysis is astute: ‘The competitiveness is created by the market. Universities work like markets themselves, on a first-come, first-served basis. They tend to look at an elite family where the third-generation is entering higher education as equal to someone who is the first from their family to do so – using the individualistic politics of merit to justify this.’

Ravali reveals that she has a PhD on the horizon, but not for a while. ‘I need a break,’ she says, before adding, ‘but I’ve already selected my topic of research: protest music.’

On her plans for the near future, there is nothing definite. ‘I will be doing what I’m doing now,’ she says. ‘Countering caste and capitalism, both.’

Meena Kandasamy



Jake Edwards, United Kingdom

‘The fact that the current system has failed so much in our lifetime means that a university degree means bugger-all now,’ Jake Edwards says. ‘Nothing is guaranteed anymore so if you have something special that people want to pay you money for, you should just sit back and take it.’

‘Vlogger’, ‘YouTuber’ and ‘content creator’ are all terms that Jake uses to describe his uniquely millennial career, though none quite seems to fit. The 21-year-old flits between the three, nervous that his line of work doesn’t qualify for a title.

‘I don’t know if you can call it a profession,’ he muses, sweeping a green shock of fringe from his forehead. ‘Sometimes it feels like a hobby

that I’m accidentally earning money from.’

Jake makes videos. In some, he sings. In one, he tries baking with his boyfriend. In others, he discusses gender dysphoria and his hard-fought transition. (Jake is transgender: assigned female at birth, he now lives as a man.) With over 145,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel and a newly minted record deal, the lack of a job title seems unimportant.

Jake started YouTubing aged 16. His gender dysphoria had spiked when he transferred from an all-girls school to a co-ed sixth-form college and, a few months in, realized he was a man. YouTube was an escape, a hobby pursued without an eye to any long-term success.

Sixth-form didn’t work out. He eventually dropped out without any formal qualifications.

He maps his difficulties with full-time education directly onto flashpoints in his transition. ‘I just didn’t care,’ he recalls. ‘Being queer and trying to find my place in that community was the most important thing at the time.’ While he regrets not getting any A-levels, it was during his struggles at college that he realized the value of his online following.

Jake’s transition caused ructions with his family and he was about to become homeless. In the hope of avoiding destitution, he set up a project on Kickstarter – an online crowdfunding site. His followers delivered: people he had never met in person donated enough to keep him off the streets. ‘That’s when I realized what I do matters to people,’ he says.

It has taken three years of graft to build his six-figure following. But after hundreds of videos, collaborations with other YouTubers, and appearances as a speaker at events to increase his fan base, cash-flow remains an issue.

‘I still have to work in a petrol station,’ he’s quick to point out. ‘Matched with my green hair, the purple and orange uniform makes me look like a fucking carrot.’

For now, part-time retail work (and a 10-per-cent discount on meal deals) keeps him going. YouTube doesn’t yet pay the bills and it’s getting even harder to make a living from videos alone. Like most online media producers, from fellow vloggers to newsrooms, Jake has fallen prey to the unintelligible whims of digital advertisers.

‘A while back, I would make decent money from ad revenue,’ he remembers. ‘But then the “ad-pocalypse” happened.’

In short, advertisers became wary that their brands were popping up on videos showing ‘inappropriate content’, including YouTube’s growing swarm of fascist-leaning commentators.

In response, YouTube started ‘demonetizing’ certain videos. The process is carried out by an algorithm, and many rule-abiding vloggers saw their incomes decimated by its miscalculations.

The nature of Jake’s content poses other difficulties. Videos categorized as ‘gay’, ‘trans’ or ‘queer’ are regularly registered as restricted content, despite YouTube’s supposedly progressive ethos. Under-18s are sporadically blocked from seeing his videos, making ad revenue even less reliable.

Despite being at the mercy of a company like YouTube that some analysts have valued at over \$70 billion, Jake seems too grateful for his popularity to dwell on the precariousness of his situation.

‘I still find it baffling that people want to watch my stuff,’ he says, grinning.

That said, he hopes weekend shifts at the petrol station will soon become a thing of the past. ‘I don’t know how long that will last, but even if it’s only a few months that I can give up retail, I’ll be happy.’ ■

Edward Siddons

75%

of millennials across the world are working more than 40 hours a week.¹

25%

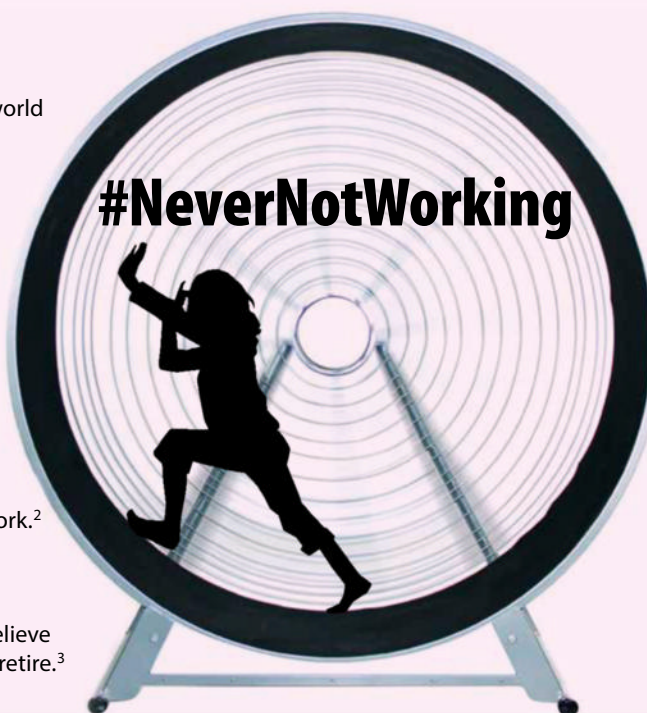
of millennials are working two or more paid jobs.¹

146%

US elementary school-children have seen a 146-per-cent increase in time spent doing homework.²

37%

of Japanese millennials believe they will never be able to retire.³



1 student

commits suicide every hour in India – academic failure and economic anxiety are cited as factors behind this.⁴

3 millennials

have made headlines recently after dying from overwork: Mita Diran, a 24-year-old Indonesian copywriter; Li Yuan, a 24-year-old Chinese ad agency worker; and Moritz Erhardt, a 21-year-old German banking intern. Erhardt had a seizure after a 72-hour shift. Shortly before dying, Diran posted on Twitter: ‘30 hours of working and still going strooong.’

¹ Manpower Group, ‘Millennials Careers: 2020 Vision’, 2016. ² Malcolm Harris, *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2017. ³ Manpower Group, ‘Millennials Careers: 2020 Vision’, 2016. ⁴ Devanik Saha, ‘Every hour, one student commits suicide in India’, *Hindustan Times*, May 2017.

Protestors celebrate the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes from the University of Cape Town, April 2015.



Over the rainbow

A new generation of black activists in South Africa don't have the 'patience' of their parents. CHRIS WEBB looks at how the education system has become a flashpoint of struggle.

In October 2015, university and college campuses across South Africa erupted in protest over a proposed 10-per-cent increase in tuition fees. Dubbed the 'FeesMustFall' movement, the protests have become something of an annual occurrence. Each year brings the prospect of fee increases and the campaign picks up again – at the time of writing many institutions remain closed due to protest activity.

Many herald these demonstrations as the dawn of a new generation of youth activists, comparable to those who struggled against apartheid. The difference is that this time the discontent is not with the legal racial order but with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and its perceived acquiescence to economic and racial inequality. Some go further, describing the flurry of action as a 'decolonial movement', after students at the University of Cape Town (UCT) successfully called for the removal of a statue of the ultimate imperialist – and arch-white-supremacist – Cecil Rhodes.

But while the protests certainly highlight a profound frustration among young people, they have not fundamentally challenged the inequality that defines South African society.

What they do reveal is how the education system serves to entrench division and has become a space of political struggle.

Bad education

Under apartheid, education in South Africa was racially stratified. 'Bantu' education policy at the primary and secondary level was meant to prepare black South Africans for low-wage work and servitude. In higher education, non-white institutions trained a limited number of public-sector workers, like nurses and teachers; whites-only universities, on the other hand, produced highly skilled graduates who would move on to well-paid work.

While this system reproduced racial divisions, it also had some unintended effects. The 1976 Soweto protests by high-school students occurred after the rapid expansion of education for black children, while the South African Student Organization, led by visionary anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko, was a key organization in challenging the regime.

Since the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, South Africa has seen an expansion of free basic education at the primary and

secondary levels, although inequalities persist. Formerly white-dominated private schools became deracialized but were allowed to increase their fees. In so doing, they preserved their privileged position *vis-à-vis* whites and created a *de facto* two-tier education system.

Likewise, reforms to the university system failed to address massive disparities between well-resourced, historically white universities and largely black universities, with the latter suffering from limited budgets due to lack of research funding or private-sector support.

As with many eras of student revolt across the world, the FeesMustFall movement was preceded by a massive increase in people entering, and wanting to enter, higher education for the first time. The deracialization of universities has led to increased demand, with the enrolment of black students increasing from 59 per cent in 2000 to 71 per cent in 2015. The death of Gloria Sekwena who, in 2012, was trampled while waiting in line with her son to register at the University of Johannesburg, is a tragic testimony to the scale of this demand.

The family burden

Like the student protests that shook the United Kingdom in 2010 or Quebec in 2012, debt is a key point of contention. Siya is a second-year engineering student at UCT. He lives in Khayelitsha, a township on the edge of Cape Town, and is the first from his family to attend university. Siya's fees are among the highest in the country and he is financing his education through student loans.

'With the debt we have to ask ourselves, what about our parents?' he tells me. 'They are having hope on us that we will help them when we work.'

For thousands of students from poor households, attaining a degree is not an individual pursuit, but one that carries with it the aspirations of entire families and communities. It is seen as a panacea to a range of problems affecting marginalized communities that are themselves outcomes of South Africa's racial capitalism. Such expectations place an enormous burden on these students, one not shared by wealthier white students.

It is little surprise that Siya describes FeesMustFall as a movement that 'motivates' him. 'But debt is killing us,' he adds. 'They say you will enjoy [university], but these debts are increasing each year.'

Although material concerns are a priority, the protesters are also aware of the way they are realigning traditional political affinities. Sechaba is a student activist with the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a party that emerged from an ANC split and taps into youthful frustration at the slow pace of change.

'As youth of South Africa, we were cheated or betrayed by the previous leaders of the ANC,' he says. 'We were sold a dream of a "rainbow

nation" where everyone will be happy: we must go to white kids and white kids will come to us [and] we must act like nothing happened.'

The idea of the rainbow nation captured the spirit of reconciliation that pervaded after the 1994 democratic elections. Yet it does not square with the lived reality of many young black South Africans, who lack adequate schooling, housing and employment. This has given rise to a widespread scepticism of the 1994 negotiated transition and encouraged the notion that the ANC 'sold out' by choosing political over economic reform.

More radical than our parents

Sechaba says youth are no longer bound by an allegiance to the ANC. 'We are more radical,' he says. '[Young people] don't have the kind of patience that our fathers and mothers have'. For him, this idea is borne out by the rising popularity of groups like the EFF who make the radical-left demands that the ANC stopped making a generation ago, calling for the expropriation of land and nationalization of mines.

The only option for young people is to make their voice heard through disruption, Sechaba claims, adding: 'In order for us to make change, we have to make sure we create disorder – to make things ungovernable.'

The tactic of creating disorder links FeesMustFall to another set of less-reported protests, driven not by students but by communities. Described as 'service delivery protests', they have been happening for a decade and involve neighbourhood groups disrupting traffic and public services to pressure the state to improve access to clean water, sanitation, housing and employment. These actions show that even with equal citizenship, the poor continue to have limited access to the official channels that effect change.

FeesMustFall does not yet signal a turning of the political tides in South Africa. But it does capture a deep frustration at the pace of socio-economic change, specifically among young people. It has also led to a revival of interest among young South Africans in black revolutionary thinkers, such as Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon, who may offer clues as to how the past can help them navigate the future.

As Fanon, an anti-colonial theorist, wrote in his seminal text *The Wretched of the Earth*, 'Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil or betray it.' Moving from episodic protest to bringing about fundamental change will take a more sustained and multi-layered struggle, not just against higher education fees, but the structures that maintain and reproduce inequality in all its forms. ■

Chris Webb is a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto. He is a Research Associate at the International Labour Research and Information Group in Cape Town.

'In order to make change, we have to create disorder'

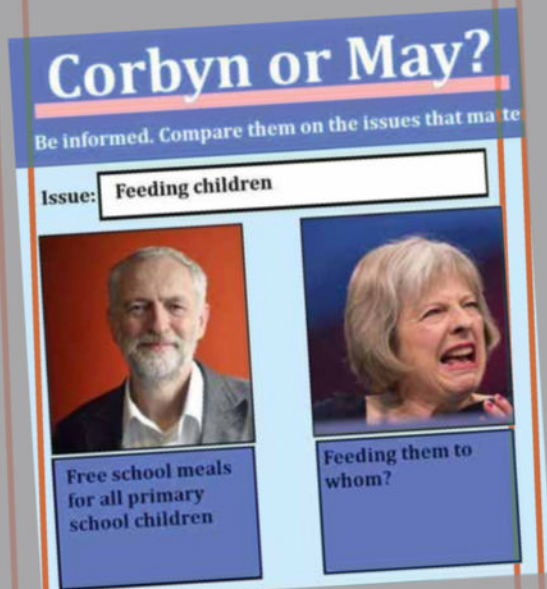
Seize the memes of production

Like flyers of old, internet memes have become a popular way to disseminate political ideas. The most popular ones spread like wildfire on social media but also reach audiences through email forward chains and online discussion forums.

Memes can take many forms, including cartoons, videos, real-world activities and catchphrases. The central element is often an image taken from popular culture and placed in a new context.

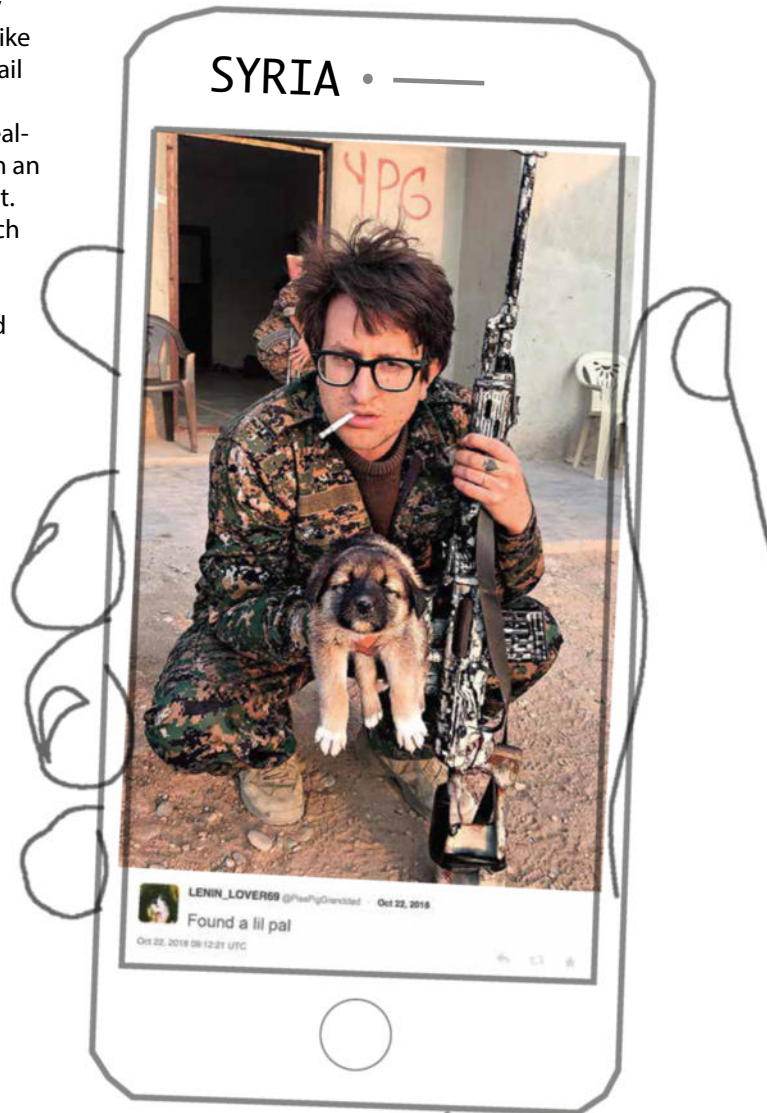
There is nothing inherently progressive about memes, which can be used to spread racist tropes as easily as radical ideas. We've put some of the most popular progressive memes in the spotlight – to show how they bring ideas into collision and consolidate political communities.

United Kingdom: The general election in June 2017 has been referred to as a 'youthquake', after the majority of under-40s voted for Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party. This meme was shared in different formats on the highly popular 'June 8 Shitposting Club' group on Facebook – 'shitposting' referring to an irreverent use of social media. It parodies the policies of the two main candidates in Top Trumps form, gauging their opinions on a different 'issue'. Each time Corbyn is portrayed as affable, while the Conservative candidate Theresa May comes across as cruel and odd.



Influence: reached a peak of **3.8 million** views on a single day three weeks before the election

UK

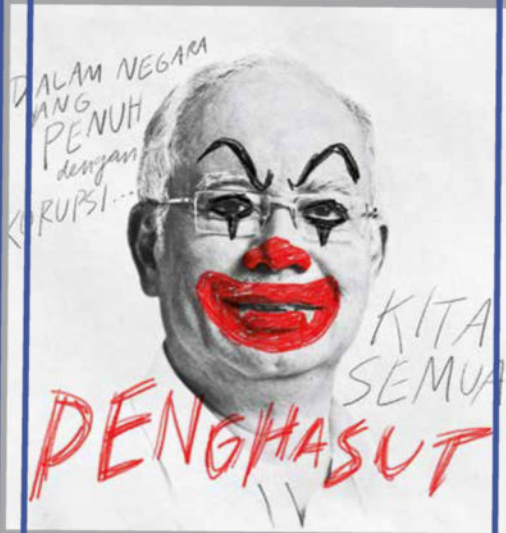


Syria: Brace Belden is an American millennial who made headlines when he left his job as a florist in San Francisco to volunteer for the Kurdish Peoples Protection Units (YPG) and fight ISIS in Syria. His Twitter updates from the frontline, which combined pictures of cute dogs with a caustic sense of humour, made him into something of a living meme. His online presence helped promote the cause of Kurdish autonomy in northern Syria and even inspired the pre-production of a Hollywood biopic starring Jake Gyllenhaal.

Influence: **37,000** followers at its height before Twitter suspended the account



MALAYSIA • —



Malaysia: A crackdown on memes shows how much they vex the ruling class here. The government prosecuted artist Fahmi Reza for sharing an image on social media that depicted rightwing Prime Minister Najib Rawak as a clown. This only encouraged the meme to spread further, inspiring copycat versions, posters and t-shirts, and an online campaign against the state's use of sedition laws. 'It connects... with the younger generation who are buying and wearing the t-shirts proudly,' Reza told reporters after he was released on bail.



Brazil: Last year's soft coup against the ruling Workers' Party (see **NI 506**) has helped consolidate Brazil's leftwing meme community. One video on the Brazilian Revolutionary Memes Facebook page, published while the Senate was passing anti-worker reforms, shows a parrot getting angry with its wealthy owner; the allegory clicked with Brazilians, who watched it over two million times. The image below, 'How to go back to the past', compares two ways of time travelling: the DeLorean car from *Back to the Future* and a set of rightwing politicians, homophobic preachers and other figures who it suggests will send the country back to its history of regressive, military rule.

Influence: 89,000 followers on Facebook

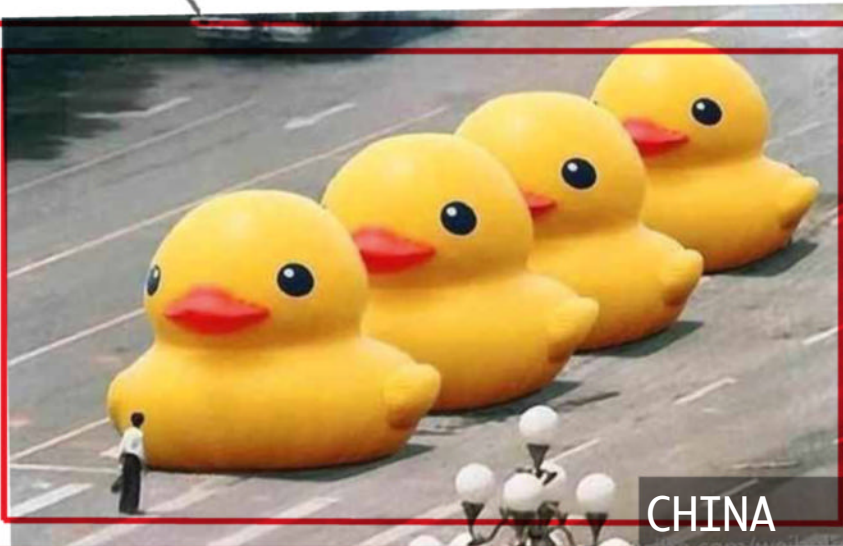
BRAZIL • —

Como voltar ao passado



China: Memes are a tool for tiptoeing past censors on China's main social media platform Weibo. Images of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre are famously censored by the government; this led to the creation of a commemorative meme in which the square's iconic tanks are replaced by harmless, giant rubber ducks. Later variations have included Lego dioramas and other characters from Chinese pop culture. It was so popular that 'big yellow duck' has been added to a list of censored search terms.

**B*G
Y*!!*W
*UCK**



CHINA

A group of one's own

HUSSEIN KESVANI
reports on how young Muslim women are using social media to create a safe space to self-educate and share ideas.



'Are you going to hold his hand?!'

'Make sure you look at him directly when you speak to him!'

'Do you think you'll kiss?'

It's late at night and Fatima*, 15, is doing what she always does at the end of the day: talking about boys on the internet. The Malaysian high schooler has had a crush on a boy in her class for months and he recently asked her out. It's her first-ever date and she doesn't know what to do.

On her blinking laptop screen, she types replies to her friends' questions: 'I do not know how to!' A few minutes later, Fatima is sent links to YouTube videos of popular romantic anime shows – the type of cartoons that girls her age use as a reference for their rites of passage.

There is nothing new about young girls chatting about first dates. But to do so freely in such frank terms is a fairly new phenomenon in Malaysia, which has a conservative attitude towards gender roles. Even more novel is that Fatima's online friends don't live in Malaysia: two are in Pakistan and the other is in Thailand.

The girls have never met in person – some have never even heard each other's voices – but they are Fatima's best friends, 'the people [she] talks to about everything'. She says these

international friendship groups, made through Facebook profiles, Tumblr blogs and Twitter accounts, are the norm for girls like her.

In the past few years, hundreds of private Facebook groups, blogs and message boards on Viber and WhatsApp have been set up by young women living in Muslim-majority countries. The groups deal with everything from marriage woes to national politics, acting as safe spaces to talk freely, without the need for mainstream media platforms.

Until recently Fatima had stuck to simple chat applications like WeChat, largely to speak to her schoolfriends about homework – but after getting Facebook she 'experienced a bigger world'. It's safe to assume others feel this way too: Malaysia has one of the highest proportions of 'digital natives' – those aged between 15 and 24 with at least five years of internet use – of any Global South country, and, with over 11 million users, one of the largest Facebook populations in southeast Asia.

'It was so amazing to see so many people all over the world, who liked the same things as me,' she tells me over an instant messenger program. 'In my school, people can be shy and feel embarrassed, so it [was] difficult to talk [to them].'

Fatima used Facebook to follow groups that were linked to her favourite anime shows



Photograph: Michael Coghlan under a CC license, adapted by Yohann Kosky

before stumbling into a fan-fiction group, where young women write new stories featuring their favourite fictional characters. More often than not, the narratives revolve around relationships and sex. Fatima didn't want to divulge the contents of her fan fiction but she was happy to admit that they 'made [her] life better'.

'I had questions about myself and my body,' she says. 'In Malaysia, women are not told about [their] bodies until [they are] much older, when they are about to get married. Parents won't talk, teachers won't talk... so we learn from the internet.'

Many conversations about the impact of social media in Muslim countries tend to be deterministic and one-dimensional – either patronisingly fixated on its ability to 'bring democracy' to autocratic states, such as during the failed revolutions of the 'Arab Spring', or obsessed with the phenomenon of Muslims being 'radicalized' into joining Jihadist groups. Little attention is paid to the way most young Muslims actually use social media.

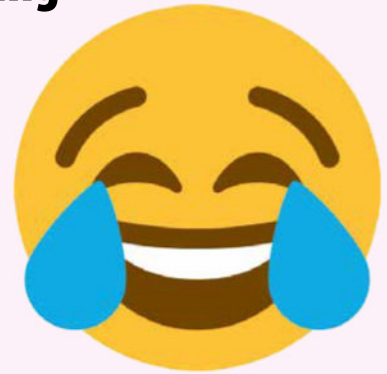
Zainab*, a blogger from Saudi Arabia who moderates the group 'Fierce Women of Riyadh', tells me over Facebook that the group tends to attract women who are 'smart, funny and bright', who are not able to study or go to work.

'For the women in our group, everyone is equal to say what they want or think – there

Laughing and crying

Despite the practical benefits

we are afforded by social media platforms, like finding interesting news stories and keeping up-to-date with your baby nephew's first steps, there is also a common belief that they are bad for us. This may be well founded – recent research has shown that depression, anxiety, loneliness and body insecurity are all connected to regular social media use.



Twitter under a CC license

Facebook in particular has come in for criticism. A study in 2013 showed that Facebook usage was linked to both a short-term decrease in subjective wellbeing and a longer-term decrease in life satisfaction. A 2012 study found that 'the longer people have used Facebook, the stronger was their belief that others were happier than themselves'. Another, from 2009, found that Facebook 'may be responsible for creating jealousy and suspicion in romantic relationships'.

But a simple model of cause and effect does not tell the whole story when it comes to social media's effect on mental health. For starters, more often than not, scientific studies stop short of establishing a causal link.

For example, a large-scale longitudinal study – one of the most thorough to date – conducted in February 2017 by two US-based researchers simply concluded that the use of Facebook, including posting updates, liking other people's posts, and clicking on links posted by other users, 'was negatively associated with wellbeing'.

Another study of Facebook use among students in South India found a 'significant positive correlation between severity of Facebook addiction and extent of experience of loneliness', but again, failed to show causation.

Of course, a lot depends on how a social network site is used: one study found that the greater the number of strangers you follow on picture-sharing network Instagram, relative to friends you know, the more likely Instagram use is to be associated with symptoms of depression. But stick with following your friends and it might even 'trigger positive feelings'.

A global study of social media from University College London found that in Northern Chile, where men often work for extended periods away from their families, social media provided a way to stay connected.

Perhaps a better question to be asking ourselves is, what makes social media so appealing in the first place? There are other factors implicated in making people miserable in various ways, and in fact one of the main drivers of social-media use, at the very least in capitalist societies in the West, may be compensatory: people are seeking an escape from a lonely, unfulfilling, overworked reality, particularly in urbanized consumer societies.

This was borne out when I recently asked a room full of young people in Bristol, UK, why social media was so hard to resist. 'You can sort of avoid your own company,' one young woman said. 'It's something to distract you,' said a young man.

But this is not to let social-media companies off the hook. Similar to tobacco and pharmaceutical companies, these corporations exist not to provide salve, but to exploit our anxiety, loneliness and boredom while simultaneously making them worse – creating a powerful cycle of dependency and extracting valuable data about our deepest desires in the process. ■

Marcus Gilroy-Ware is the author of *Filling the Void: Emotion, Capitalism and Social Media* (Repeater)

are no rules, other than no men... It's a space where you can be honest, which is difficult to find in Saudi Arabia,' she says.

Zainab says that the group had also been a space where several women could safely talk about renouncing Islam. 'Obviously it's very dangerous to do any of that here, so the women find a refuge in this group. They are brave, but you can see why we are very careful about who we let in.'

This isn't a phenomenon limited to women living in Muslim-majority countries. There are many groups with members who feel they exist on the fringes of mainstream Muslim life, and for whom the internet has provided a way to reconcile their relationships with faith. One such group is a support network on Tumblr for young Muslim women in Britain to help each other with sexual-health issues, including seeking medication for sexually transmitted diseases and accessing safe abortions.

'On the internet you can get more privacy by being anonymous,' explains Sobia Faisal, a post-doctoral researcher who specializes in Muslim femininity in online spaces. 'You can also be more open because you're talking to people your own age, which, of course, is better for many young girls than to talk about things with their parents or at religious schools.'

Faisal also warns that social media can pose dangers. 'I think most young women in the West know about trolls, they know about being careful online and being wary of people's identities. In many of the countries where young Muslim girls use the internet a lot, this

culture is still relatively new – so there is a concern [there].'

A BBC report found that young Malay-Muslim women on the internet often find themselves receiving misogynistic abuse from anonymous men. In a recent case, a 15-year-old girl was targeted on Twitter for not wearing the hijab after she 'voiced her dream of becoming the country's first female prime minister'.

While Fatima acknowledged that risks exist online, it didn't seem to be something that she or her friends took seriously.

'I speak to new people all the time [on social media], and met my best friends on here!' she says. 'You can usually tell who is real and who is not... I have definitely seen people who are fake, because they all have the same kind of profile picture and they all ask for your picture.'

For Fatima, social media offers a space where questions of identity can be asked and answered. She and her friends have made it into a therapeutic medium, offering a model of social interaction the long-term effects of which will only become clear as they – the post-millennial cohort known as Generation Z – get older.

I ask if she feels her online identity allows her to be a more authentic version of herself. She stops typing for a few minutes, before replying:

'It lets me be the person I want to be.' ■

**Not her real name*

Hussein Kesvani is a London-based journalist. His forthcoming book (Hurst Publishers) is about Muslim identity on the internet.

Anti-social media



127

people across the world accidentally killed themselves while trying to take selfies between March 2014 and November 2016.¹



66%

of teenage girls have been bullied on Facebook.²



5 hours and 12 minutes:

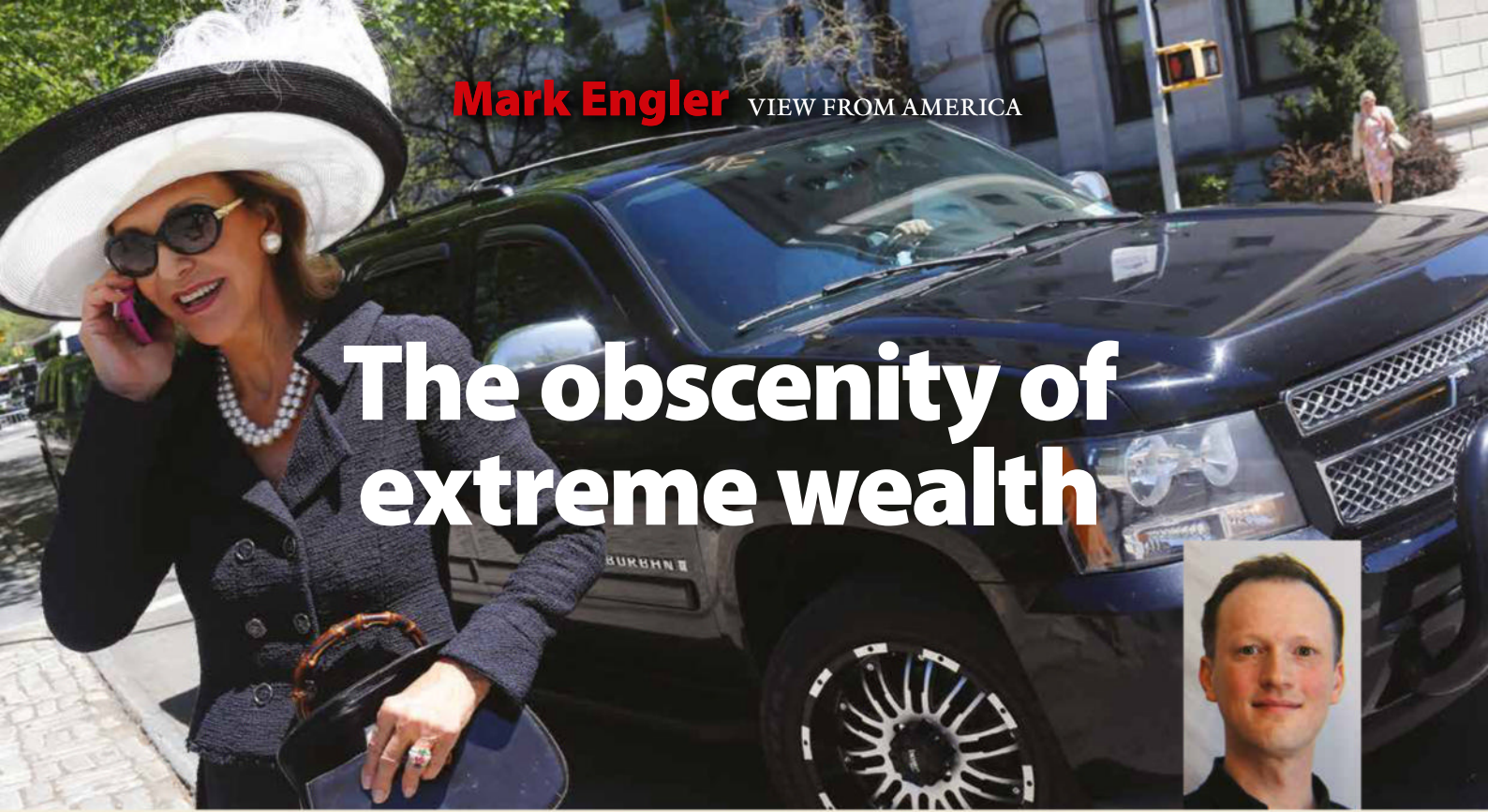
the average time US millennials spend on their smartphone daily.³



1 dollar/hour:

the alleged rate of pay for workers in the Philippines who review the images and videos that users upload onto Facebook to make sure they don't violate 'community standards'.⁴

¹ Hemank Lamba et al., 'Me, Myself and My Killfie: Characterizing and Preventing Selfie Deaths', Carnegie Mellon University, 2016. ² Katy Steinmetz, 'Teen girls describe the harsh rules of online popularity', *Time*, August 2014. ³ Marcus Gilroy-Ware, *Filling the Void*, Repeater Books, London, 2017. ⁴ Stephen C Webster, 'Low-wage Facebook contractor leaks secret censorship list', *Raw Story*, February 2012.



The obscenity of extreme wealth

Let us take a moment to reflect on the vulgar reality of extreme wealth...

In the 1930s, during the depths of the Great Depression, populist Louisiana politician Huey Long inserted some pointed questions into the barnstorming speeches he gave across the US. Addressing audiences of manual labourers and the unemployed, he asked how many of his male listeners owned at least four suits of clothes. Not a single person would raise their hand. Then Long would ask how many had three suits. Again, no one.

Two suits? Still no hands.

Finally, in a dramatic flourish, he would call out of one of the country's wealthiest financiers: 'I want you to know,' Long would exclaim, 'that J P Morgan owns more than a hundred suits!'

Long had his faults, but he knew how to make a point. His rising popularity pressured President Franklin D Roosevelt to include expanded work programmes and more progressive taxation in the government's New Deal reforms.

Today the gap between those at the top and everybody else has grown so vast that it's hard to even conceptualize.

For almost two years, the lifestyle website *Refinery29* has published a series called 'Money Diaries', in which millennials from a range of incomes describe exactly how they spend their money over a seven-day period. Last October, the series profiled a 34-year-old finance executive whose annual household income, that is her salary

and her husband's combined, totals \$1,250,000. With this, the couple support themselves and a daughter in pre-school.

These people are merely millionaires, not billionaire tycoons. And yet the diary documents an *astounding* level of consumption. Even excluding regular expenses – mortgage, cars, school loans, utilities, a gardener, pool cleaner, laundry service, wine shipments to the house – we watch the executive fritter away \$6,200 in one week of casual spending. This covers handbags and catalogue orders, tickets for a Hawaiian vacation and a trip to Disneyland. There's a \$175 sushi dinner and a \$185 birthday cake. All whims fulfilled without worry or compunction.

As one might expect, the *Refinery29* profile generated considerable revulsion on the internet. 'You can argue whether increased taxes on the wealthy will have useful consequences,' wrote *Current Affairs* editor Nathan Robinson, a leader in spotlighting the diary. 'What I don't think you can argue is that increased taxation would deprive people in any serious way.'

One interesting revelation, Robinson noted, was that, even at their wanton rate of weekly spending, the couple would only manage to blow through about half a million dollars per year.

After a certain point, one has to be creative in inventing new material wants, since any reasonable day-to-day need has already been met: a well-appointed home in an exclusive

postcode; expensive schools and tennis lessons for the kids; constant dining out; housekeepers to tend to domestic chores; plus enough exotic vacations to make your personal carbon footprint bigger than the paw marks of the fabled Siberian Sasquatch. All this can be had for a small fraction of the income of the super-rich, who are hundreds or even thousands of times more prosperous than our millionaire diarist.

In its November 2017 Billionaire Bonanza report, the Institute for Policy Studies documented that the US's richest 400 individuals own more wealth than the bottom 64 per cent of the country combined – more than the entire GDP of the UK.

This news comes as Donald Trump proposes to eliminate the estate tax – a cut that would benefit those who inherit more than \$5 million, when countless Americans fear losing health-care access.

Statistics about the stark disparities we face become so commonplace that they lose their ability to shock. Which is why an even comparatively modest diary of excess provides a helpful reminder.

The injustice of extreme wealth and runaway inequality is an increasingly central part of US politics, and global politics as well. We should not allow ourselves to forget its obscenity. ■

Mark Engler's latest book is entitled, *This Is An Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-first Century* (Nation Books). He can be reached via the website DemocracyUprising.com

THE UNREPORTED YEAR

Stories you might have missed in 2017

SRI LANKA A schoolgirl performs during an event to mark World Children's Day on 1 October in Colombo, Sri Lanka. On the same day, UNICEF released three short films featuring real-life 'shocking experiences all too common in Sri Lanka' to call on citizens to protect children and young people from all forms of violence. In 2016, there were over 9,000 reports of violent acts against children, the vast majority perpetrated by persons known to the victims. Sri Lanka has joined 12 'pathfinding countries' committed to ending all forms of violence against children by 2030.

Photo: Dinuka Liyanawatte/Reuters



SOUTH ASIA

(right) **INDIA** Farmers from the southern state of Tamil Nadu pose half-shaved during a protest to demand a better drought-relief package from the federal government in New Delhi, India. Having recently experienced one of the worst droughts in over 140 years, 150 Tamil Nadu farmers took to the streets in March armed with props, skulls, mice and snakes – performing one desperate act after another for an entire month. In mid-April, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and his Bharatiya Janata Party, announced the provision of debt-relief to 21.5 million farmers, despite criticism from some economists. Photo: Cathal McNaughton/Reuters



(left) **BANGLADESH** Healthcare products for sale in a shop in Palong Khali refugee camp near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Between August and December more than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims fled their native Myanmar for neighbouring Bangladesh, after thousands were murdered, raped and had their villages torched by Burmese government troops and ethnic Rakhine Buddhist vigilantes. Although they have lived in the region for centuries, the Muslim Rohingya people are denied citizenship rights by the government of Buddhist-majority Myanmar. As refugees in the camps in Bangladesh, they end up working for Bangladeshi traders who pay them little. Photo: Hannah McKay/Reuters

The Unreported Year
is compiled by
Kelsi Farrington



MIDDLE EAST

(above) **ISRAEL** Free to feed: thousands of migrating Great White Pelicans can once again make a pit-stop in Israel. In October, the Agriculture Ministry bent to pressure from farmers and environmentalists to continue its funding of a project to feed pelicans who fly over the country. Centralizing the feeding ground at a reservoir has decreased the risk that the birds will harm the livelihoods of farmers by taking fish from nearby breeding grounds. Israel's nature reserves authority welcomed the decision, saying it hoped funding would continue for the sake of both farmers and pelicans. Photo: Ronen Zvulun/Reuters

(left) **YEMEN** Street artist and activist Haifa Subay is photographed in action as she paints a mural depicting the suffering of the women and children during war. The 'Silent Victims' campaign champions artists, mostly women, to use street art to express how they have been affected by war. A famine survey released in mid-November revealed that thousands of Yemenis could die daily if a Saudi-led military coalition does not lift its blockade of the country's key ports. Some 2.5 million people in Yemen's crowded cities have no access to clean water, increasing the risk of cholera. Photo: Mohamed al-Sayaghi/Reuter

(right) **PALESTINE** An escape of sorts: a Palestinian youth demonstrates his parkour or free-running skills at the seaport of Gaza City. According to a member of the parkour team, young people come to look at the sea to take their minds off the 'difficult situation' in the occupied territory. 'They want to go out, they want to see the world.' For now that is a pipedream. Youth unemployment is over 40 per cent and until some kind of resolution can be found to the Israel-Palestine conflict, Gaza youth will remain trapped and frustrated. Photo: Mohammed Salem/Reuter



THE UNREPORTED YEAR



(left) **SPAIN** Steady on: a helmeted child climbs a precarious human tower where he will help the final participant – an even younger child – to climb to the very top. This is all part of the Saint Ursula festival, held on 22 October, in Valls, Catalonia. There are challenges for the two teams, as towers collapse, and celebrations when the human *castells* are completed. Since the death of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 Catalan culture has experienced a resurgence, as have calls for independence from Spain. In September voters taking part in a controversial independence referendum were violently attacked by Spanish police. Photo: Sean Gallup/Getty



(above) **UKRAINE** For 900 stray dogs, thought to be the descendants of family pets abandoned in the aftermath of the 1986 nuclear disaster, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and exclusion zone is home. Veterinarians and radiation experts are taking part in a voluntary initiative called 'The Dogs of Chernobyl' to safeguard the strays by examining their radiation exposure and vaccinating them against parasites and diseases, including rabies. The dogs are tagged and then released back into the exclusion zone. Some are fitted with special collars with sensors and GPS receivers in order to map radiation levels across the zone. Photo: Sean Gallup/Getty

EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA



(left) **GREECE** Precious cargo: a man carries a dog and a cat he rescued from a tree following devastating flash floods in the town of Mandra, Greece, in November. Residents said the devastation was 'unprecedented' after an overnight deluge flooded industrial towns located in the foothills of a mountain just west of Athens. At least 20 people lost their lives and Greece declared a day of national mourning. Rainfall on this scale is unusual in Greece and poor infrastructure leaves citizens especially vulnerable to such impacts of climate chaos. Photo: Alkis Konstantinidis/Reuters

(below) **NORTH KOREA/CHINA** Choi Sang Kyun, head of Gallery Pyongyang, poses with a North Korean propaganda poster which reads: 'For the new world without nuclear weapons!' in the Chinese border town of Dandong. The Mansudae Art Studio, run by the North Korean state, supplies work from the country's artists and sells it in China – responding to a growing demand. With all profits going directly to the state, a UN report released in February claimed that a sector of Mansudae called 'Mansudae Overseas Projects' was a front for North Korea to dodge sanctions and spend on military installations. Photo: Kim Hong-Ji/Reuters



(above) **AUSTRALIA** An Australian green tree frog, named Godzilla, nestles on the hand of a member of the Frog and Toad Study Group during the launch of the Australian Museum's national frog counting phone app 'FrogID' in Sydney. The Museum and computer giant IBM say they have developed the world's first smartphone app designed to let users non-intrusively record and report frog calls, croaks and chirps. Frog populations are in decline around the world and Australia's frogs are especially vulnerable. According to the country's Department of Environment and Energy, this is due to a toxic mix of climate change, pollution, newly introduced species and urban development. Photo: David Gray/Reuters

EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC



(left) **CHINA** Practice makes perfect: around 1,000 primary school students take part in a mass Chinese calligraphy class in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. In recent years, schools have been urged to offer more classes in calligraphy because computer use and text-messaging is 'ruining children's writing style'. The digital age affords little time for the traditional skill of hand-drawing a Chinese character with care and accuracy and dwelling upon its meaning. Photo: VCG/Getty

THE UNREPORTED YEAR

UNITED STATES Fashion model and former refugee Halima Aden, who is breaking boundaries as the first hijab-wearing model gracing magazine covers, poses during a shoot at a studio in New York City. Within weeks of his inauguration, President Trump signed an executive order to ban visas and entry for anyone, including US nationals, born in Muslim-majority countries such as Iran, Iraq and Somalia (Aden's birthplace). Trump's Islamophobic stance resurfaced in late November, when he retweeted several anti-Muslim videos posted by a British far-Right group – sparking international outrage. Photo: Brendan McDermid/Reuters



AMERICAS

(right) **CHILE** A member of a feminist organization is arrested by riot police during a rally against sexual harassment and gender violence in Santiago on 24 October. In the run-up to the December elections, Chile has experienced mass protests over a wide range of issues. Despite the country's thriving economy, 61 femicides were recorded in 2017, and 36 women had committed suicide with *violencia intrafamiliar* (domestic violence) a prevalent issue. On 25 November, a crowd of 5,000 joined a two-hour march organized by the Chilean Network against Violence towards Women, calling for an end to gender-based violence around the world. Photo: Carlos Vera/Reuters



(left) **BRAZIL** Waiapi children watch a video of traditional dance on a mobile phone in Manilha, a village in indigenous territory in the Amazonian state of Amapá. The Waiapi people, who number around 1,200, are resisting moves by the Brazilian government to open up a region of pristine rainforest known as Reserva Nacional de Cobre e Associados (Renca, National Copper Reserve) to international mining companies. The Waiapi are one of the most traditional communities in Brazil's Amazon, but modern life is edging nearer and the forest dwellers use technology to help them navigate between two worlds. Photo: Apu Gomes/AFP/Getty



(left) **BENIN** Back by spiky demand: freshly cut, gold-fleshed Cayenne pineapples take centre stage in a field in Soyo, Benin. In December 2016, Benin's government rolled out a self-imposed ban on all pineapple exports to international clientele after repeated warnings from the European Union that – despite being Africa's fourth-largest exporter of the fruit – Benin pineapples contained 'unsafe' levels of ethephon. The pesticide is commonly used to speed up ripening – or the appearance of ripening. After eight months of training programmes and mass testing, farmers in Benin were given the green light, but resumption of trading has been slow. Photo: Yanick Folly/AFP/Getty

(right) **NIGERIA** Equipped with high-pressure hoses and shovels, workers remove dead mangroves and crude oil – the aftermath of two catastrophic oil spills that took place as long ago as 2008 on Bodo Creek, Rivers State, Nigeria. Backed by local communities and scientists, the comprehensive clean-up is expected to last three years. It follows a decade of legal battles and international pressure to resolve divisions between locals, the government and oil companies. The Bodo clean-up area is just 10 square kilometres in size, a small fraction of the region affected. Environmentalists fear it will take 21,000 years to rehabilitate the entire Delta. Photo: Afolabi Sotunde/Reuters



AFRICA



SOUTH SUDAN For four years, South Sudan has been divided by conflict and unrest. But for 'artists' like Manasseh Mathiang (pictured) – who played an active role in mobilizing fellow South Sudanese to vote in the 2011 referendum – art is the perfect platform for teaching tolerance in times of division and hate. The 33-year-old is a founding member of 'Ana Taban' (Arabic for 'I'm tired') – a group of musicians, fashion designers and poets who use regular open-air performances to demand peace and educate fellow citizens about non-violent conflict resolution. Photo: Andreea Campeanu/Reuters

Fiji

‘The heart of the South Pacific, Fiji is blessed with 333 tropical islands that are home to happiness.’ So says the official Tourism Fiji website with perhaps understandable hyperbole. The late Pope John Paul II notoriously advanced an even more hyperbolic position during his visit to the country in 1986: ‘Fiji, the way the world should be,’ he remarked, saying that the coexistence of islands’ various ethnic groups represented ‘an outstanding example of harmony and peace’.

Only a year after the Pope’s visit that image of harmony was shattered as the undercurrent of ethnic distrust boiled over. The iTaukei indigenous majority is predominantly Melanesian, though with Polynesian elements, while the substantial minority of Indians are descendants of people brought over by the British colonial authorities in the 19th century as labourers on the sugar plantations. A democratically elected government dominated by people of Indian descent was removed in two military coups led by Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka in 1987 that aimed to entrench political control by indigenous Fijians. Rabuka’s move opened a Pandora’s box – since its independence from Britain in 1970, the country has endured four coups, four constitutions and ten prime ministers.

The most recent coup, however, may have turned a different page. Current

Prime Minister Voreqe (usually known as ‘Frank’) Bainimarama, a naval commodore who first seized power in 2000 then repeated the feat in 2006, ultimately promised that ethnic division would no longer be tolerated. At the UN General Assembly in 2007 he said, ‘Policies which promote racial supremacy... must be removed once and for all’. He backed up the assertion by announcing a common identity for all, regardless of ethnicity. Any citizen of Fiji was henceforth to be a Fijian, a term that had previously been exclusively reserved for the indigenous population. The ethnic-based communal voting system was, moreover, replaced by a proportional system based on one person one vote. In 2014 this new system was employed for a general election that saw Bainimarama win comfortably.

Bainimarama’s human rights record, however, does not match his inclusive rhetoric. Amnesty International has listed myriad repressive tactics used by the Fijian military and police since Bainimarama’s 2006 coup. These include harassment of human rights defenders, limitations on freedom of expression and association, arbitrary arrests and detention. At least five Fijians have been beaten to death while in police or military custody, including 19-year-old Sakiusa Rabaka who was beaten and sexually assaulted. Eight

police officers and one military officer were eventually convicted over Rabaka’s death and sentenced to prison terms but all were released within a month. Fiji’s 2013 Constitution granted immunity to any government and military action between 2006 and 2013.

The economy is also in trouble. The sugar sector, which employs 200,000 Fijians, or almost 25 per cent of the country’s population, is declining with cane production failing to meet demand. The devastation of sugar crops and mills by Cyclone Winston in 2016 was one factor but another was the abolition in September 2017 of the preferential prices hitherto paid by the European Union for Fijian sugar. Despite these overwhelming challenges, the Fijian government is committed to reviving the ailing industry, using bailouts if necessary, recognizing that the collapse of the sugar sector would be a national disaster.

It is fair to say that Fijians – whether chatting in the markets of the capital, Suva, or sitting around their basins of *kava*, the slightly narcotic (but completely legal) beverage that most favour – are experiencing a mounting sense of frustration with the government. Opposition parties have sought changes to electoral rules that they claim militate against the chances of free and fair elections due in 2018. ■

Wame Valentine

At a glance



Leader: Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama

Economy: GNI per capita \$4,840 (Tonga \$4,020, UK \$42,390).

Monetary unit: Fijian dollar.

Main exports: sugar, garments, gold, timber, fish, molasses, coconut oil, mineral water. Fiji has rich forest, mineral and fish resources in addition to its sugar-cane industry but the trade imbalance continues to widen as exports fail to keep pace with imports. The return to parliamentary democracy in 2014 has led to an increase in international investment. Tourism earnings are also vital – there were almost 800,000 visitors to the islands in 2016.

Population: 899,000. People per square kilometre 49 (UK 271). Annual population growth rate 0.7%.

Health: Infant mortality rate 19 per 1,000 live births (Tonga 14, UK 4). Lifetime risk of maternal death 1 in 1,200 (UK 1 in 5,800).

HIV prevalence rate 0.1%.

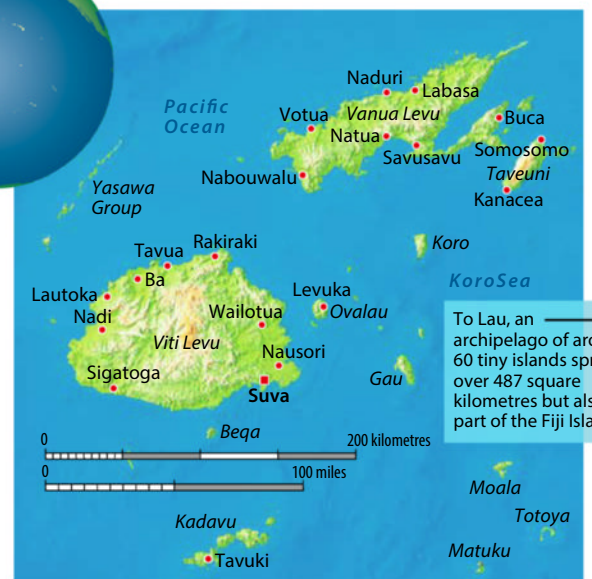
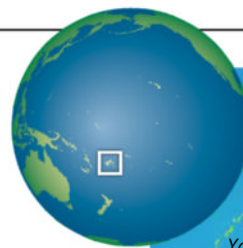
Environment:

In the past two decades around 30% of Fiji’s forests have been felled by commercial interests. Like many other Pacific islands Fiji is gravely concerned about rising sea levels caused by the burning of fossil fuels worldwide.

Culture: iTaukei 57%, Indian 38%, Rotuman 1%, other 4%.

Religion: Protestant 45%, Hindu 28%, other Christian 10%, Roman Catholic 9%, Muslim 6%, other 2%.

Languages: English and Fijian are both official languages but Hindi is also widely spoken.



Human Development Index: 0.736, 91st of 188 countries (Tonga 0.721, UK 0.909).



Clockwise from top left: **A billboard celebrating multiculturalism on the main street of the capital, Suva; selling mangoes by the roadside; temporary housing on the outskirts of Suva for Lau islanders who have come to the main island of Viti Levu seeking work; Ape Maleki, a farmer from the village of Vunaniu, tending his cattle; and 'Frank' Bainimarama, pictured at the time of the 2006 coup.** All photos by Jocelyn Carlin / Panos Pictures.

Star ratings Last profiled November 1998

NI assessment



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★

According to the Asian Development Bank, 28.1% of the population live below the national poverty line with many more living on or just above.

1998 ★★



FREEDOM ★★

According to Amnesty International, accountability for torture and other ill-treatment is hindered by immunities enshrined in the Constitution and the lack of political will to prosecute cases. Arbitrary restrictions on the right to freedom of expression remain.

1998 ★★



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

70 years (Tonga 73, UK 81).

1998 ★★★★★



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★

Gender inequality index 0.368 (Tonga 0.659, UK 0.131). 16% of parliamentary seats are currently held by women. The leader of the opposition, Ro Teimumu Kepa, is also female.

1998 ★★



LITERACY ★★★★★

The most recent estimate for adult literacy is 92% but the government does not report data for this to the UN and this may therefore underestimate levels of illiteracy. Primary net enrolment is 97%.

1998 ★★★★★



SEXUAL MINORITIES ★★★

Homosexuality was legalized in 2010 and some anti-gay discrimination is outlawed. There is, however, no formal recognition of same-sex unions.

POLITICS ★★

Bainimarama has enjoyed widespread support for more than a decade but that seems to be slowly diminishing. His vision of a progressive Fiji free of any racial stereotypes is admirable but, with another election looming in 2018, whether this will be enough to stifle dissatisfaction with the economic situation and with human rights issues remains to be seen.

1998 ★★

★★★★★ EXCELLENT
 ★★★★ GOOD
 ★★★ FAIR
 ★★ POOR
 ★ APPALLING



Almee Neat

The rebranding of a rotter

Showbiz, like medicine, has the power to heal. Okay, it's useless if you have a verruca or diabetes but it does have the power to rehabilitate the most toxic of public profiles. Last year we observed just such an operation at the Emmys where talk-show hosts Stephen Colbert, James Corden and others performed the first phase in the complex cosmetic procedure of detoxifying Sean Spicer – Donald Trump's notorious ex-press secretary.

This is a man who massaged the truth like a sadistic physiotherapist, routinely lying and defending lies from the lectern of the White House briefing room. Who can forget his risible claim about Trump's swearing in? 'This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe.'

It so wasn't.

Yet Spicer's punishment for this outrageous degrading of US democracy was a glitzy platform at the Emmys and a chance to rebrand himself as a lovable, self-deprecating pantomime villain – when he is, in fact, the real thing! The sight of 'Big Daddy Showbiz' wrapping its gropy old hands around him and welcoming him into the fold as a naughty but nice national treasure was grotesque. A more appropriate reception would have been some form of Cersei's walk of shame à la Game of Thrones.

So instead of being cast into the wilderness, Spicer is raking it in as a novelty turn on the after-dinner circuit of elite events – making jokes, laughing it up and making light of his role in Trump's White House fiasco. There are even reports that he's been offered his own reality TV show. It's yet to be made but has already received the largest audience

to ever witness a reality TV show, period, both in person and around the globe...

And it's not just Spicer. A stint in Trump's West Wing is like appearing on Big Brother: you spend the entire time lying, fighting and screaming obscenities at whoever will listen until your inevitable, unceremonious exit. But then, instead of the boos and jeers you deserve, the world of celebrity embraces you as a self-aware, lovable 'TV personality'.

Anthony Scaramucci, ex-White House director of communications, didn't even last long enough for people to learn how to pronounce his name properly, yet is now a host on showbiz gossip site, TMZ. Within weeks of leaving the West Wing, I confidently expect to see Kellyanne Conway launching her own range of perfume on QVC... 'Kellyanne's *Eau d' Collusion: The scent of Kremlin.*' If she can sell Trump's policies, she can sell anything.

I hate it when showbiz rehabilitates proper rotters like Sean Spicer. He shouldn't be allowed to be in on the joke. He should be ostracized for his part in attempting to undermine democracy. What incentive does it give public figures to behave well if they know there are no reputational or lifestyle consequences for lying?

People like Spicer might be morally bankrupt, but it turns out that in showbiz and politics a soul is not a vital organ; you can do very nicely without one. ■

Steve Parry is a comedy writer, performer and political activist. He is Welsh and lives in north London. You can contact him on Twitter: @steveparry



Best of 2017

Film



Barry Jenkins' **Moonlight** (NI 500) was a magnificent drama about a boy growing up gay in Miami, who ends up dealing drugs and whose only real friend gets back in touch. It was about a life of anguish and withdrawal, but with, finally, the possibility of fellowship, intimacy and happiness. **A Quiet Passion** (NI 501), by Terence Davies, depicted the poet Emily Dickinson – a smart, funny, caring young woman, so full of life – buried by loneliness and the expectations of her time and place.

In Between (NI 505), a splendid debut feature by Maysaloun Hamoud, told the story of three young Palestinian women, from several cultures, sharing one flat. Poignant, impressive, fierce and tender. Rahul Jain's doc **Machines** (NI 503) went into a Gujarat textile factory. This unforgettable fly-on-the-wall doc followed, showed, listened – and depicted an exploitation that has tentacles reaching far into a shopping centre near you.



Music



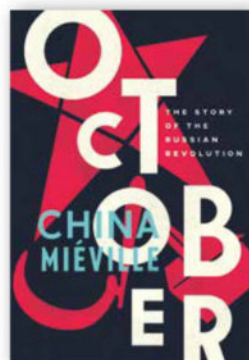
From Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda finally getting the credit that's due her on **The Ecstatic Music of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda** (*Luaka Bop*, NI 502) to some blistering post-Trump truths from Algiers on **The Underside of Power** (*Matador*, NI 503), it's been a good year

for musicians urging a necessary change of global direction. **Economic Partnership Agreement** (*Pingipung Records*, NI 508) from Sven Kacirek and Daniel Mburu Muhuni examines how the terms of global trade trample the weaker partner (in this case, Kenya): it is a textbook for bringing together the power of music and of testimony. It was environmental concerns that motivated Saltland's **A Common Truth** (*Constellation*, NI 501) and gave this album its devastating power. Off-stage, its cellist-composer Rebecca Foon (right) is an ecological activist; on stage, she conjures up wild and elegiac soundscapes of the land that now faces such great danger. Easily the record of the year.



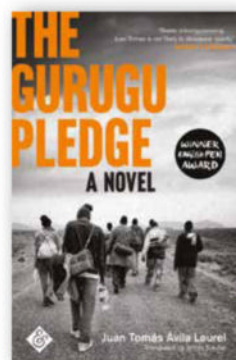
Books

Oceans of ink have been spilled telling the story of the 1917 Russian Revolution. But China Miéville's **October** (*Verso*, NI 502) stands out, with a narrative that bowled along, offering insights into this hinge-moment of history, refreshingly free of sectarian bile.



He threw new light on some hoary questions and even managed to gesture towards glimmers of lessons learned for our current generation. Swedish author Elisabeth Åsbrink was also in historical mode and her **1947 – when now begins** (*Scribe*, NI 508) was an original, highly readable snapshot of a 'seminal'

year that, she contends, shapes our 'now'. In terms of fiction, **The White Book** (*Portobello Books*, NI 507) was Korean novelist Han Kang's worthy successor to *Human Acts*, exploring similar themes of loss and memory, in a deeply personal way with which we can all identify. By turn heart-



breaking and humorous, **The Gurugu Pledge** (*Other Stories* NI 506) by Equatorial Guinean novelist Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel, is a work of fiction right on the frontline of the refugee crisis and a stinging and necessary rebuke to those who believe that walls and fences are a solution rather than a shameful reminder of abject failure.

Mountains May Depart

(126 minutes)

directed by **Jia Zhangke**

This is a brilliant, clever, grounded film about the new entrepreneurial China, which has changed everything, empowering some, destroying others.

On the eve of the New Year in 1999, shopkeeper's daughter Tao has two suitors – Zhang, who's a coalminer, and is quiet, kind and easy-going; and Liangzi, a pushy graduate entrepreneur. Liangzi buys a BMW, takes Tao for drives and lets her drive. Tao chooses him. He names their child Dollar, buys the mine where Zhang works and sacks him.

Fifteen years on, they have divorced and Liangzi, now very well-off and remarried, has custody of their seven-year-old son. Tao only sees him when her father dies and the boy returns for the funeral. Meanwhile, Zhang, with a young wife and child, has lung cancer. The story is close to classic melodrama, but it's so well-grounded in circumstance and character that it's absolutely convincing.

In the third section, set in 2025, Dollar lives in Australia but has no sense of belonging or what to do with his life. Communication technology has moved on somewhat and



Liangzi woos Tao, with the help of a BMW, in Jia Zhangke's brilliant *Mountains May Depart*.

people have become separated from themselves, and others, and what they might be. Enterprise culture has empowered the selfish who destroy other people's lives.

This is a great-looking, brilliantly acted film with a sense of humour, a sense of the everyday, a sense of history and a sense of tragedy.

★★★★★ ML

FILM

Makala (96 minutes)

directed by **Emmanuel Gras**

Swinging a slender axe, a young man is chopping down a massive tree. It's hot, he sweats a lot. From a large plastic



flagon, he drinks litres of water. A young woman, with a baby, prepares a meal, grilling a rat over an open fire.

He fells the tree and reduces it, over the following days, to a neatly stacked log-pile. He lays turf and soil over this, leaving air gaps, sets the wood alight and lets it burn for two weeks. *Makala* is Swahili for coal or charcoal and the young man, Kasongo, is a charcoal maker.

He talks with Lydie, his wife. When he sells the charcoal in Kolwezi, he hopes to buy 12 roofing sheets for the house they're planning to build. He loads the charcoal into plastic sacks. Their most valuable possession, his bicycle, disappears beneath the mass of sacks he ties around and about it. Lashed to the handlebars, and jutting beyond the sacks, is a sturdy branch that he uses to steer the bike. While it's still dark, he sets off, pushing the load over rough tracks and untarmacked roads, to Kolwezi. It is four eventful days and nights away.

This is a simple, profound, compelling documentary. It's a man with an axe and a bike – and it's a whole world. Of unremitting labour; of honest people and thieves; of love and indifference; of aspiration and disappointment.

★★★★★ ML

Simple and compelling – Emmanuel Gras's doc about a Congolese charcoal maker.

Plunge

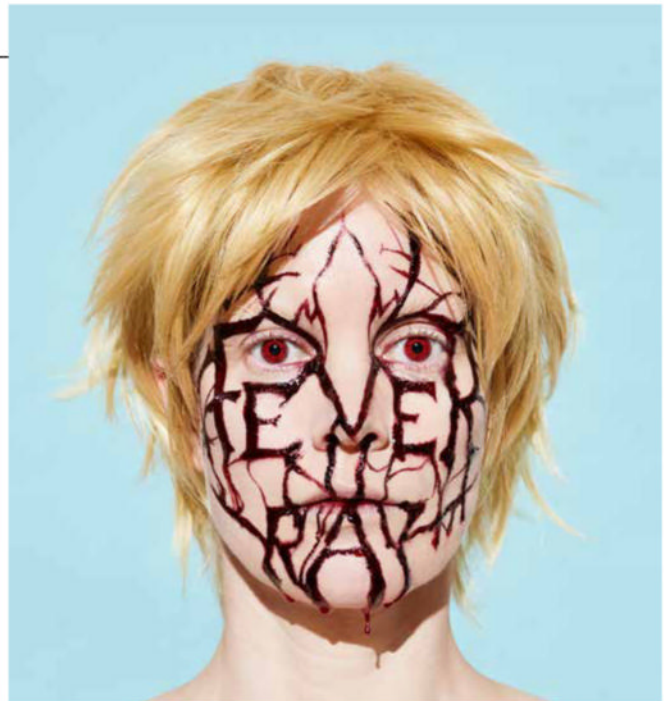
by **Fever Ray** (Rabid Records, *RABID061T*, CD, LP and digital)

Beyond all other musics, electronic is the best vehicle for artful manipulations – especially those that surround gender and sexuality. This is not exactly news for Karin Dreijer, the Swedish artist behind, first The Knife, and most recently, Fever Ray.

Plunge sees her articulating these ideas with commendable boldness. Eight years in the making, it's a stunning piece of work that spans Dreijer's personal liberation into a more fluid sexuality. This album is a dive into the waters of queer desire, a delirious pool flooded with the currents of social power structures. An online manifesto, co-written with conceptual artist Hannah Black, makes this clear.

As in the past, Dreijer presses her case through songs framed by digital beats, off-key twangings, scratchy, tactile, sonic textures, minor-chord synth washes and a voice which is often flanged to accentuate her unsettling presence. **Plunge**'s 11 songs slide an explicit sexuality into a discourse informed by feminism and Foucault. This comes out most clearly on 'This Country' with its call for sexual and political freedom. When she shouts, 'No nuclear!' it's not atomic power she's thinking of.

'Red Trails', with Sara Parkman's tense violin lines overlaying a pattering electronic beat, focuses on a



Karin Dreijer – bold, sexy, fluid and knowing.

derailed love which to wait for is like waiting 'for a drug that never kicks in'. A song that's painful in all the right ways, it's also Fever Ray at its most beautiful and it frames **Plunge** as a powerfully sexy and knowing album.

★★★★★ LG
feverray.com

MUSIC

Bondeko

by **Toto Bona Lokua** (*Nø Førmåt!* NF39, CD, LP and digital)

A little bit of birdsong gives **Bondeko** its insouciant kick-start – a nice touch to this gentle, feel-good album from Richard Bona, Lokua Kanza and Gerald Toto. **Bondeko**

(the word means friendship in Ligala) celebrates not only the relationship between the trio of musicians – they are from Cameroon, the DR Congo, and the French Antilles respectively – but a *mélange* of musical heritages. Sung in a mixture of French and Ligala, the lingua franca here is actually a smooth and breezy showcase of vocal mastery.

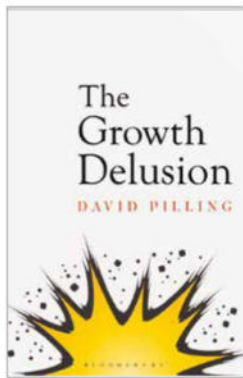
Toto Bona Lokua achieve much with a minimum of instrumentation: tightly woven acoustic guitars and some light percussion characterize the jazzy, rhythmical music, while closely harmonized vocals drive the songs forward. This is most evident on songs like 'Love Train', an acapella that fits Kanza's lead vocals around the chugging and hooting of the train; or on the lovely 'Youwile', a track that murmurs and sighs its quiet progress.

This is the second album from the trio whose 2004 debut, *Totobonalokua*, established them as musicians capable of surfing through various styles with agility. Between trio duties, each musician works with such artists as the French-Algerian rai singer Faudel, Bobby McFerrin and Quincy Jones – these two latter names giving an idea of the slinky smoothness of **Bondeko**.

★★★ LG
noformat.net



Feel-good slinky smoothness from the Toto Bona Lokua trio.



The Growth Delusion

by **David Pilling** (Bloomsbury, ISBN 978 1 408893 708)

This is a rare beast: a book on economics that is well written, accessible and – whisper it – entertaining! David Pilling advances the notion that our means of measuring economic growth is neither accurate nor moral. He points out that the standard yardstick, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is not only wildly arbitrary in what it counts, but also a

relatively recent invention – the brainchild of US economist Simon Kuznets in the 1930s as a strategy to tackle the Great Depression. Kuznets himself became dissatisfied with what he saw as a blunt instrument. He realized that, in measuring growth *per se*, it fails to distinguish between desirable and undesirable growth, valuing drug use and rising crime equally with the construction of hospitals or schools. Pollution is good for GDP, war is even better. Voluntary work, housework and

childcare are unquantified and therefore, in GDP terms, invisible.

As the author says, this wilful inclusion and exclusion of whole swathes of activity makes GDP anything but an accurate picture of society – which is somewhat worrying when you realize how much of public policy is predicated on it.

Pilling argues that we should take heed of other metrics of human endeavour, citing such examples as the Genuine Progress Index, which factors environmental impact into its calculation, or the Human Development Index which gives due weight to wellbeing and the social good. Witty, widely travelled and well-informed, David Pilling is an excellent guide to the pitfalls and shortcomings of GDP and a trenchant exponent of the need to move beyond the ‘cult of growth’.

★★★★★ PW
bloomsbury.com

BOOKS The Unmapped Country

by **Ann Quin** (*And Other Stories*, ISBN 978 1 911508 144)

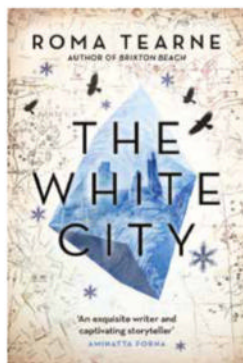
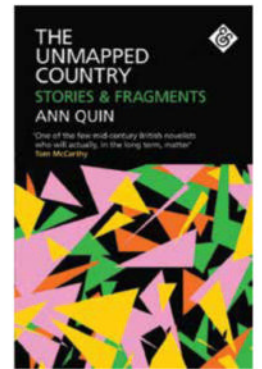
Readers familiar with the 2010 film *Howl* will nod their heads in recognition if I say that Ann Quin’s writing, as showcased in **The Unmapped Country**, is reminiscent of the urgent, rhythmic recital within that film of Allen Ginsberg’s poem: ‘I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness...’ Quin, who suffered devastating periods of mental illness and committed suicide in 1973 at the age of 37, is no longer a household name, despite having been a cult writer in the 1960s. The release of this collection will introduce her writing to a new audience, who will discover that it tackles issues just as relevant today.

Quin’s experimental narrative style, as much as her themes of disorientation and disillusion, places her alongside the Beat writers as a British representative of a counterculture generation dissatisfied with the

mundanity and materialism of the modern world and the lack of opportunities afforded it. A common thread in Quin’s stories is the endless waiting for fulfilment, for real life to begin, underscored by the fear of a descent into madness.

If this all sounds horribly grim, a lot of it is. Quin doesn’t mince her words, but her stories are all the more powerful for that. There are moments of humour, particularly in the title story, which is based in a psychiatric ward, but for this restless writer (as Quin called herself) there was no escape from ‘the absurdity of coping with day-to-day living’.

★★★ JL
andotherstories.org



The White City

by **Roma Tearne** (Gallic Books, ISBN 978 1 910709 429)

London, the White City, had been so named by the mayor to emphasize its cleanliness (in contrast to the surrounding countryside, riddled with animal-borne disease). But now it is also white because it has been encased in snow and ice for 27 years.

The moniker is a slap in the face to Londoners such as narrator Hera, Muslim by birth but atheist by

conviction. She recalls how, three decades ago, a government powerless in the face of an emerging environmental catastrophe turned its attention to an enemy it thought it could defeat: radical Islam. Her brother is arrested and sent overseas to the Guantánamo-like Arena camp, with devastating consequences for her family. Hatred and suspicion are rife,

tearing communities apart. Hera (who shares her name with the Greek goddess of women and marriage) falls in love with Raphael, but he has been so scarred by his years spent living under a dictatorship that he cannot reciprocate.

Then the snow arrives and London and its inhabitants, along with the climate, descend into ‘stagnant apathy’ and ‘languid indifference’. Survival is all – religion, nothing. Until 27 years later when the thaw begins and painful memories resurface.

Roma Tearne’s novel is a beautiful tale of love, loss and hopeless longing. It is also a warning: the events leading up to the big freeze described by Hera are uncomfortably close to today’s reality.

★★★★★ JL
gallicbooks.com

Old Demons, New Deities – 21 short stories from Tibet

edited by **Tenzin Dickie** (OR Books, ISBN 978 1 682191 002)

Amazingly **Old Demons, New Deities** is the first anthology of contemporary Tibetan fiction available in English – and it’s a treat worth waiting for. Tenzin Dickie, who is both editor and contributor, describes the book as a kind of ‘coming out’ of the Tibetan short story.

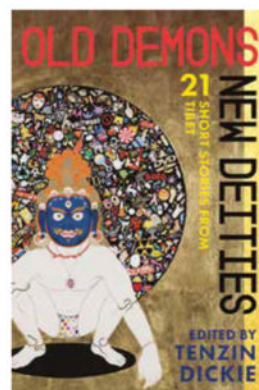
The vivid and haunting tales are written, originally in Tibetan, Chinese and English, by 16 respected Tibetan writers, female and male. Some are living in Tibet, others in Nepal, India, China and the West, and the settings of these richly varied stories reflect this.

Some explore life for Tibetans under Chinese occupation – Tsering Dondrup’s ‘Valley of the Black Foxes’ is a poignant and chilling tale of an unsuspecting peasant family cheated out of their traditional homelands to make way for a ruinous coalmine. Others focus on the refugee experience, the tussle between tradition and modernity and the complex politics of Tibetans in exile. But even when

dealing with big themes, the stories in this anthology are wonderfully intimate, personal and compelling as works of the imagination.

There is much to enjoy in the writing. A keen observation and delight in nature and a robust attitude to life and sex, for example. And a dark humour – not least Pema Bhum’s ‘Wink’ which explores, through the eyes of a young father of a toddler with a perilous penchant for playing with Mao memorabilia, the rollercoaster of life under a capricious communist dictatorship. Echoes of Albanian maestro, Ismail Kadare, may be heard.

★★★★ VB
orbooks.com



Also out there...

MUSIC Being made redundant bounced the musical couple Kip Winter and Dave Wilson into making music their full-time profession – and they’ve never looked back. *Far Off on the Horizon* (Winter Wilson), is the latest release from **Winter Wilson** and its crafted, folksy sweetness is as good as you’ll get anywhere.



Winter Wilson – looking ahead.

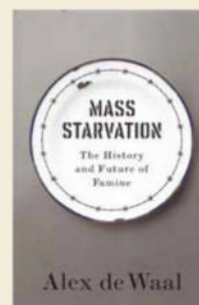
Mavis Staples is one of the greatest voices not only of US soul music but of the civil rights movement, and her latest album, *If All I Was Was Black* (Anti-Records), shows a deep understanding for the continued fight for justice. Written with her long-time collaborator Jeff Tweedy, this mighty album, its stripped-down style echoing the message anthems of the civil rights era, draws inspiration from many sources, including Michele Obama, and rightly recognizes that justice sets us all free.

Singer and activist Erykah Badu has curated a limited edition, seven-LP box set of **Fela Kuti** albums (Knitting Factory), which comes with posters, essays and unseen photos of the inventor of Afrobeat, whose provocations remain important.

FILM The chilling charm of the bourgeoisie is crystal-clear in Michael Haneke’s bleakly comic Calais-set **Happy End**. The more precarious selfishness of Russian professionals emerges in Andrei Zvyagintsev’s disturbing, powerful **Loveless**. When a divorcing couple’s son runs away, the search for the boy, by volunteers, offers a chink of light. There’s Hollywood, Bollywood – and Nothingwood, as unforgettable larger-than-life auteur-actor Salim Shaheen calls the hard-up cinema of his native Afghanistan. Sonia Kronlund’s

The Prince of Nothingwood films him filming his own early life story, with a six-foot-four cross-dressing actor playing his mum. A tribute to his, his troupe’s, and Afghanistan’s, generosity, bottle and *joie-de-vivre*, and to the power of cinema. Greg Barker’s easy-going doc, **The Final Year**, follows three key personnel in the final year of Obama’s presidency – Samantha Power, academic turned UN Ambassador; Ben Rhodes, Obama’s speechwriter; and John Kerry. They come across as decent, caring people.

BOOKS The latest book by Alex de Waal, renowned expert and most elegant of writers, is the grimly titled but timely **Mass Starvation – the history and future of famine** (*Polity*). It’s both a celebration of the achievements of humanitarian aid, and a powerful warning: mass death from hunger stalks the earth once more – not due to overpopulation or natural disaster, but political decisions and failings.



Elderly women in Uganda strip naked to shame the authorities that are trying to seize their land. A Colombian mayor fires all his city’s corrupt traffic police and then retrains them as clowns, who do the job much more effectively. Much thought and imagination has gone into **Beautiful Rising: creative resistance from the Global South** (*OR books*) edited by Juman Abujbara et al. There are scores of stories from five continents, but also extraction of key theory, key tactics, analysis of what works and why – and all presented in an innovative and highly accessible format. Wonderful and useful in equal measure.



REVIEWS EDITOR: **Vanessa Baird** email: vanessab@newint.org
Reviewers: Louise Gray, Hazel Healy, Jo Lateu, Malcolm Lewis, Peter Whittaker

STAR RATING

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR

Gina Lopez

The Philippines' maverick environmentalist waging war on the powerful mining industry speaks with VERONIQUE MISTIAEN.

'We have the most beautiful country: 7,000 islands with coral reefs, mountains, rivers and forests with rare medicinal plants. We have the highest biodiversity on the planet. But our people are not benefiting from it. It is being destroyed because someone wants gold or nickel,' says Gina Lopez in one long gulp, on a Skype interview from the Philippines.

Lopez, the country's former environment secretary, has made it her mission to protect the immense biodiversity of the Philippines while, at the same time, promoting social justice – a daunting task in a country where big business calls the shots.

Within days of taking office, the fiery and fearless minister challenged the powerful mining industry, which is polluting the islands' vital watersheds.

'Yes, mining creates a few jobs and perhaps a few schools, and a few people enrich themselves, but thousands suffer and water sources are polluted for generations afterward. Mining is just greed and selfishness.'

The maverick daughter of one of the country's wealthiest and most prominent families, 64-year-old Lopez is both an environmentalist and a philanthropist. She fled the Philippines in 1972 to avoid political persecution under the Marcos regime, but returned in 1986 after being educated in the US, becoming a yoga master, and then working with disadvantaged communities in Africa. In 2017, she received the Seacology Prize, awarded to those showing exceptional achievement in preserving island environments and culture.

For more than 15 years, Lopez has championed social and environmental causes, spearheading the clean-up of the Pasig River, which was choked by trash and sewage, and campaigning to save La Mesa Watershed, which contains the last rainforest in Manila, as well as a reservoir used by 12 million people for drinking water.

In 2010, on a visit to the Edenic Palawan Island, she discovered the destructive nature of open-pit mining. 'When the chopper took me there, I saw a huge hole in the ground. I was horrified. The farmers and fishermen were crying. They couldn't fish, they couldn't grow food. And there were some 100 new applications for open-pit mining, so I set up the Save Palawan movement to oppose them.'

In 2016, Lopez was appointed as acting secretary of the Philippines' Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) by the then newly elected, authoritarian President Rodrigo Duterte. She established the first-ever forums for consultations between the DENR and indigenous groups, and shut down illegal fish pens in



Courtesy of Gina Lopez

the country's largest lake. But her strongest actions were directed at mining operations.

The DENR had a reputation for feeble oversight of the Philippines' lucrative mining industry. But during her 10 months in office, Lopez banned open-pit mines and moved to shut down more than half of the operations of the country's mining companies, after audits showed massive violations against the environment and the law.

'What is needed is greater realization and awareness of the damage some economic activities (mining, logging and rampant quarrying) inflict not only on our economic potential, but on our wellbeing as a people. What is needed is a total economic valuation (monetizing the costs, the benefits) of these activities and then asking the very pertinent question: is it worth it?'

Taking on the country's mining industry cost Lopez her job in May 2017, when the Congressional Committee refused to confirm her appointment. Some members of that committee have strong ties to mining companies.

Many of the islands are still suffering from the effects of mining, and mining permits are still being filed in core protected areas. However, Duterte has restated his broad support for the ban on open-pit mining.

But inside or outside the government, Lopez has vowed to keep fighting to end 'mining poverty' and protect the nation's environment. She has already started I LOVE (Investments in Loving Organizations for Village Economies), to help lift Filipinos out of poverty by building green businesses at the grassroots level.

'I believe that through care of the environment and adequate marketing, communities can get out of poverty in record time. The mainstream performance indicators are way more impressive than that of mining, which has been going for over a hundred years and has nothing to show for it, except the enrichment of a few and the destruction for generations to come.' ■

Veronique Mistiaen is an award-winning journalist, writing about global development, human rights and the environment. @VeroMistiaen therighthuman.blogspot.co.uk

Puzzle Page by Axe

The crossword prize is a voucher for our online shop to the equivalent of £20/\$30. Only the winner will be notified. Send your entries by 20 February to: New Internationalist Puzzle Page, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK; or email a scan to: puzzlepage@newint.org
Winner for 226: Andrew Siddons, Ellesmere Port, England.

Crossword 228

CRYPTIC Across

- 8 Wine, dry, is brought in for firm (8)
- 9 Bigot maybe introducing Riot Act when detaining illegals at the border (6)
- 10 Cigar butt clipped to have with port, ultimately, at place in Hampshire (6)
- 11 Hear cocaine half that old's a blast (8)
- 12 Artefact, perhaps the first of lots stored, hidden on Fair Isle's Bronze Age settlement? (8)
- 13 Scandinavian detectives return with new golden lead (6)
- 14 Critical accent used to trap Romeo on the line (9,6)
- 18 A bridge too far here where American navy hits border? (6)
- 20 Something magical managed, without spades, for African peoples (8)
- 23 Eastern city, brown cow said, is becoming Westernized... (8)
- 24 ...it's how Americans familiarize with the East (6)
- 25 One who desecrated a museum, the first in London (6)
- 26 Like many in solidarity movement, we obtain 5 American capital (8)

CRYPTIC Down

- 1 Trench beginning to be excavated in ancient Persia south of the Amu Darya (6)
- 2 Returned first class after post's switched in Egyptian city (8)
- 3 Put a stop to the whisky (6)
- 4 'Go rot, Blackfriar': sick evidence of Britain's antagonism to Catholic Spain (4,2,9)
- 5 Place in Ulster's bottomless container set up for brandy (8)
- 6 This confection's an odd vehicle for OT priest to get into (6)
- 7 Escape, before one's dragged into exam, to Philip's old place in Spain (8)
- 15 Part of Afghanistan is brown after stream gets backed up (8)
- 16 Clan's base north of British (English) lines... (8)
- 17 ...here in Worcestershire encountering communist trench... (8)
- 19 ...massed ranks: tough to get round, encircled using tanks in the end (6)
- 21 'I' omitted (the only vowel) in scattered lines about the Greek god (6)
- 22 Name a shelter after

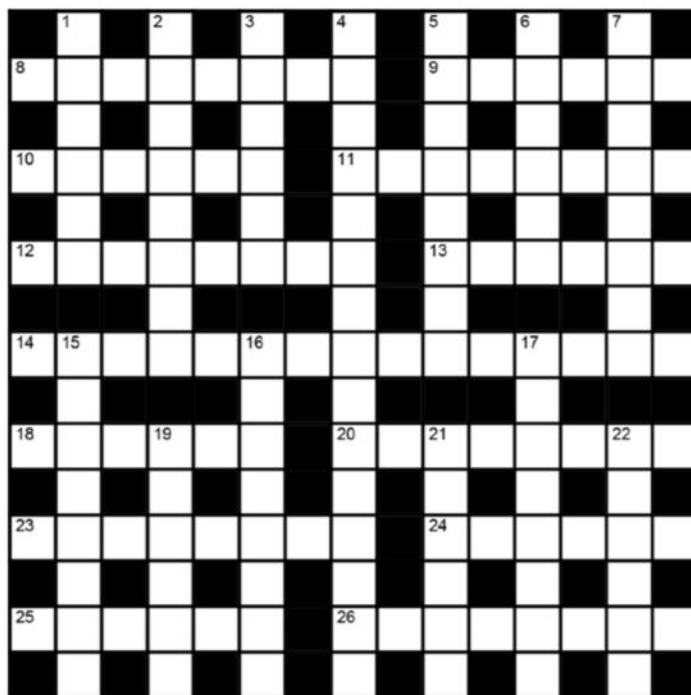
boreal documentary subject (6)

QUICK Across

- 8 Italian sparkling wine (8)
- 9 One who discriminates against others on the basis of ethnicity (6)
- 10 Hampshire coastal town east of Portsmouth (6)
- 11 Scene of a huge volcanic explosion in 1883 (8)
- 12 Shetlands Bronze Age settlement (8)
- 13 Scandinavian (6)
- 14 66 degrees 30 minutes South, on a map (9,6)
- 18 Dutch city, the final objective of Operation Market Garden in 1944 (6)
- 20 Nationals of a landlocked African Rift Valley country (8)
- 23 Today's name for the capital of the Ottoman Empire (8)
- 24 The East (6)
- 25 Member of the Germanic tribe that sacked Rome in 455 AD (6)
- 26 Capital of Paraguay (8)

QUICK Down

- 1 Part of old Iran south of the Oxus R (now Amu Darya) (6)
- 2 Egyptian city west of the Suez Canal (8)



- 3 Description of goods (not people!) from a distinctive part of the UK (6)
- 4 One of the Pillars of Hercules (4,2,9)
- 5 Brandy associated with Gascony (8)
- 6 Torpedo-shaped cream cake (6)
- 7 San Lorenzo de El ----, religious and royal complex NW of Madrid (8)
- 15 Remote province of NE Afghanistan, formerly

- Kafiristan (8)
- 16 Fort -----, large US Army base in Kentucky (8)
- 17 Worcestershire birthplace of John Bonham (Led Zeppelin), Tony Martin (Black Sabbath) and Harry Styles (One Direction)! (8)
- 19 Stockpiles (6)
- 21 Greek god of the winds (6)
- 22 ----- of the North: (Robert Flaherty, 1922) acknowledged to be the first documentary film (6)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Common, 4 Wealth, 8 Upstate, 9 Bismark, 11 Mt St Helens, 12 Guam, 13 Lassa, 14 Padishah, 16 Acapulco, 19 Rerun, 22 Finn, 23 Antarctica, 24 Belarus, 25 Eclipse, 26 Nairas, 27 Ithaca.
Down: 1 Capital, 2 Mutates, 3 On the ball, 5 Emirs, 6 Limoges, 7 Haryana, 10 Deep South, 15 Dordrecht, 17 Crimean, 18 Punjabi, 20 Retsina, 21 Nicotia, 23 Abuja.

Sudoku 74

The Sudoku that thinks it's a word game!

7	1	5	8	2				
			4	9	5			
2								
	3			4	8	2	5	
				6	7		3	9
9		7	5					6
3	2					6	1	
5					6		7	2
6				8		3		5

Now, using the key below, substitute letters for the numbers in the north-eastern block...

1=A; 2=R; 3=E; 4=N; 5=S; 6=B; 7=Y; 8=K; 9=D

...and make as many words as you can of four letters or more from the nine letters in the keyword, the extra clue to which is: 'Azov port in December, Dyan skated through'. You cannot use the same letter more than once, nor use proper nouns (excepting the keyword), slang, offensive words, abbreviations, participles or simple plurals (adding an 's' or 'es').

GOOD 75 words of at least four letters, including 20 of five letters and 8 of six letters or more.

VERY GOOD 85 words of at least four letters, including 25 of five letters and 10 of six letters or more.

EXCELLENT 95 words of at least four letters, including 30 of five letters and 12 of six letters or more.

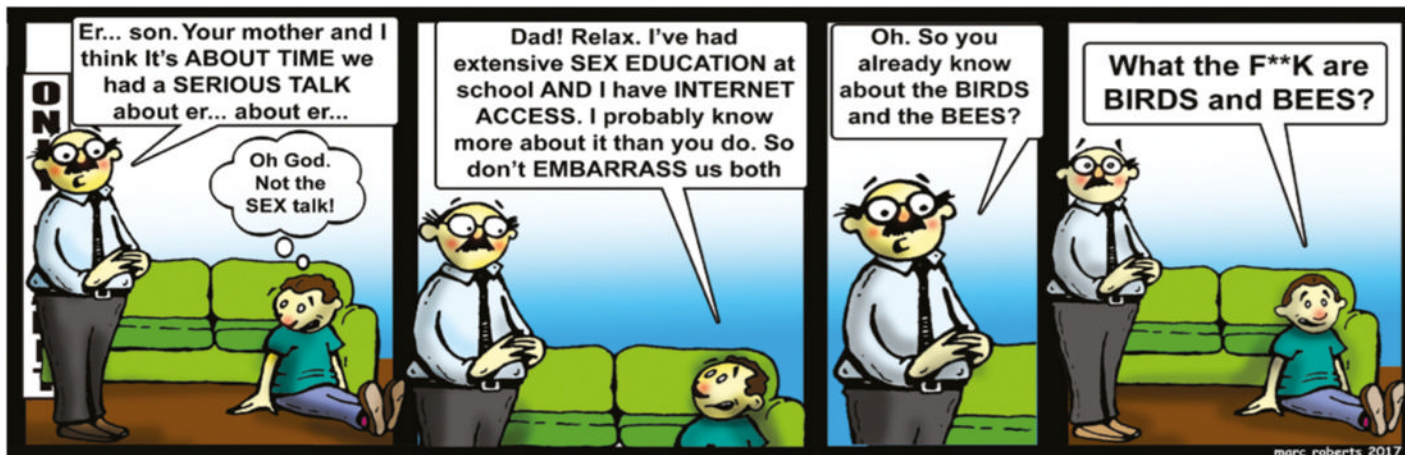
Last month's Sudokey keyword: 'South Bank'.

Solution to Wordsearch 73: The 15 Canadian cities were: Calgary, Halifax, London, Moose Jaw, Ottawa, Quebec, Regina, Saskatoon, St John, Sudbury, Toronto, Victoria, Whitehorse, Windsor, Winnipeg

Wordsearch 74

Find the 17 traditional English county towns hidden here.

E	A	D	N	A	R	C	K	W	U	U
X	L	R	O	O	X	F	O	R	D	U
E	N	O	T	S	D	I	A	M	O	J
T	W	F	N	O	T	S	E	R	P	Y
E	I	D	U	R	H	A	M	M	L	B
R	C	E	A	G	F	N	K	A	E	E
H	K	B	T	R	U	R	O	H	W	L
W	Y	B	R	E	D	I	Z	K	E	P
L	I	N	C	O	L	N	K	A	S	P
R	E	T	S	E	H	C	R	O	D	A
N	T	I	I	P	S	W	I	C	H	Z





Peter Adamson

The founding editor of *New Internationalist* magazine talks about his subsequent work campaigning with UNICEF – and his latest novel.

How did the idea of *New Internationalist* (NI) magazine first arise?

At the time, we were campaigning door-to-door in British universities to ask students to give one per cent of their income to organizations such as Oxfam. Thousands of doorstep conversations showed us that nearly all students, including ourselves, knew next to nothing about world poverty.

As we made the transition to understanding poverty as a political rather than a charitable issue, we saw that we needed to work not just for donations but for more understanding of the causes of malnutrition, ill-health and illiteracy. That was the springboard for the NI.

If you had been given a glimpse then of the magazine in 2018, do you think you would have been pleased by its longevity or distressed that the core world problems it deals with are still so similar more than four decades later?

The optimists gave it six months, so I would have been delighted to be answering questions in its pages nearly half a century later. But I would certainly have been disappointed to see poverty on today's scale after 50 years of increasing capacity. Progress has been enormous, but so uneven – and I think the primary measure of progress

from now on should be 'what happens to the poorest 20 per cent'.

You left the NI to work closely with the Executive Director of UNICEF, James P Grant, through the 1980s until his death in 1995. What was it like to go from campaigning journalism to being at the heart of a UN organization?

My experience with UNICEF was not typical. Jim Grant was a one-off. So unbureaucratic. So idealistically motivated. So driven to bring about big changes for the world's poorest children. So determined, in particular, to halve child deaths in the world by lifting the immunization rate from 20 per cent to 80 per cent. So it was a great privilege to work with him and many of those whom he enlisted in that cause.

Even so, I had misgivings about leaving the 'real struggle' – exchanging campaigning on political and economic issues for vaccines and sachets of oral rehydration salts. But complexity can itself be a kind of bolthole, an excuse for a kind of hand-wringing paralysis. And there was no denying the urgent, terrible injustice of millions upon millions of children dying every year – and having their normal physical and mental growth undermined – when the world had the means to prevent it at so very little cost.

These things may be symptoms, but they are also causes in that they help perpetuate poverty and powerlessness.

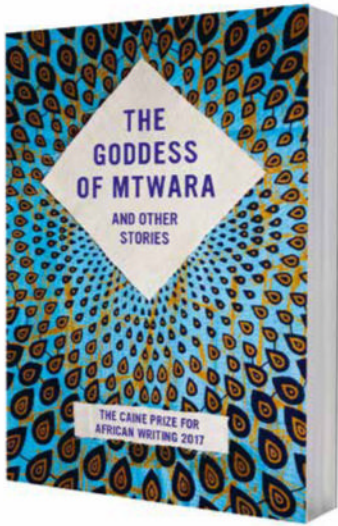
Why did you start writing fiction and what can it achieve that journalism cannot?

Much of my writing has been about people *en masse*. As one of my characters says, 'the poor always have too many noughts on the end'. Fiction, on the other hand, is about individuals and concerns itself with the intimate details and dilemmas of their lives. My first novel, *Facing out to Sea*, was a conscious attempt to write in this different way about one family living in a Colombo slum.

Your new novel *The Kennedy Moment* seems in some ways to bring together all the strands of your life.

It concerns many of the same issues, but I also set myself the challenge of writing a full-on page-turner with interesting characters and a strong, suspenseful plot. But a thriller about a serious issue is a big ask and only readers will know if I came close. ■

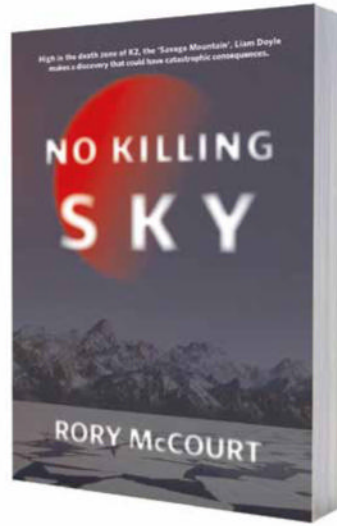
The Kennedy Moment will be published by Myriad on 22 February in the UK and is available now from the Ethical Shop, at the special price of £10.99 (rrp £14.99). nin.tl/KMoment



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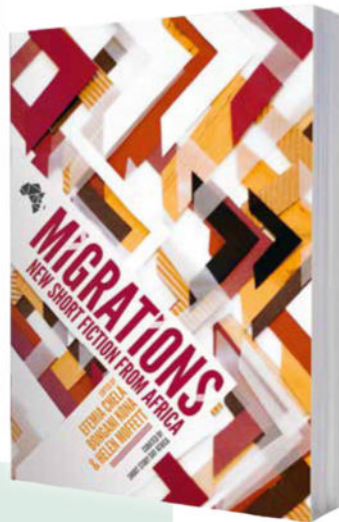


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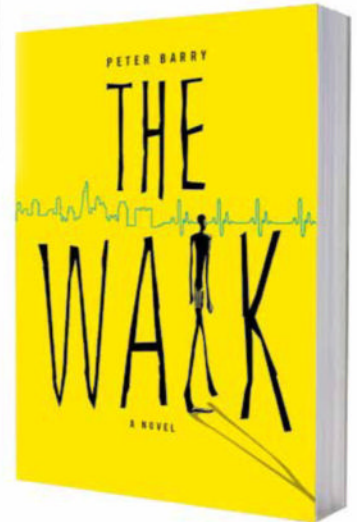
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Concerned about the future?



**Wildlife filmmaker
Richard Brock says:**

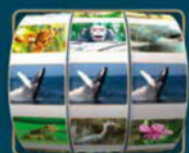
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*As part of the BBC's prestigious
Natural History Unit, Richard has
witnessed the changing threats
to the natural world first hand.
His credits include work on the
landmark series **Life on Earth**
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