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GreenforAll.org

A volunteer from YouthBuild/Service Nation at the September 27, 2008, Green Jobs Now National Day of Action, sponsored by Green for All.

The Long Hurricane

The New Orleans Catastrophe Predates Katrina

By Darwin BondGraham

Five years after Hurricane Katrina and the “federal flood,” as locals call the disaster, the *new* New Orleans is as much the product of decades of antiwelfare ideology in local and national governments as it is of the unique circumstances of the disaster. Since the storm, a resurgent racist business elite has gained power in the city and region, and instituted a new era of urban renewal—or, as community activists termed it the first time around, in the 1960s, “Negro removal.” Privatization of New Orleans’ public sector has proceeded to a degree that real estate, banking, and industry leaders in other regions only dream of. Federal disaster subsidies have enabled reinvestment in the state’s major economic sectors—oil and gas, shipping, military, and tourism. Characterized by low wages and ecocidal byproducts, these industries dominate state and city politics. Yet New Orleans is held up as a model of

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Beyond Green Jobs

By Julie Quiroz-Martinez

Everyone wants to be green. Fossil fuel companies tout their commitments to the environment, with BP sporting its green and yellow flower logo and Chevron scooping up a Green Apple award for promoting public-school energy efficiency.¹ In 2009 Exxon-Mobil got itself named *Forbes* magazine’s Green Company of the Year for stepping up its natural gas production.²

Mix “green” with “jobs,” and everyone ought to love you. In fact, a 2010 Harris Interactive survey found that 72 percent of respondents believed that expansion of green jobs would help preserve a higher quality environment, and 61 percent agreed that expansion of green jobs would have a

positive outcome for the U.S. economy.³ As a candidate, Barack Obama promised to create five million green jobs, arguing that “green jobs are the jobs of the future,” and that they would “help reduce our dependence on foreign oil and save this planet for our children.” As president, Obama has directed \$500 million toward green jobs training as part of the federal stimulus funding authorized in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

But organized opposition to green jobs does exist; in fact it thrives among conservative thought leaders and business groups,

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DON'T SCORN, ORGANIZE

For the Democratic Party, the midterm elections could have been worse—but not much. Christine O'Donnell and Sharon Angle lost (we never dreamed we would find ourselves rooting for the centrist, pugilistic Harry Reid [D-NV]); Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) are in. Here in Massachusetts we retained our Democratic governor and congressional delegation, while our junior Senator Scott Brown (R-MA) has gone from Tea Party hero to Tea Party villain in less than one year.

However, at the same time, Russ Feingold (D-WI) is out. Rand Paul (R-KY) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) are in. The proud obstructionist John Boehner (R-OH) is poised to become House majority leader. And the Republican takeover of state legislatures post-census means they will be drawing the next decade's election districts.

The questions on our minds in the aftermath are, "How could this have happened?" less than two years after the inspiring inauguration of the country's first Black president, and "Now what?" How it happened is of course wildly complicated—an unholy mix of Wall Street venality, media distortions, economic recession, racist backlash, nativism, and the focusing of peoples' grievances onto scapegoats.

President Obama and the Democrats failed to communicate their accomplishments: the passage of health insurance reform and financial re-regulation; withdrawal from Iraq. At the same time, Republicans, conservative pundits, and business leaders had no compunctions about spreading lies about death panels, defunding of Medicare, the ineffectiveness of the stimulus, and so forth. Many people are convinced that during the Obama administration taxes on the middle class have risen—they've gone down—and that the economy has shrunk—it's grown, albeit slowly.

It's notable that although turnout in the November election was generally high, both African Americans and young people voted in significantly lower numbers than they had in the Presidential election. It may not have been so much the *zeitgeist* that shifted as it was the large number of voters who saw no hope for change and thus no reason to vote.

And then of course, there are the Tea Parties. We believe that dismissing them as Astro-turf—fake grass roots—or deriding them as crazy is inaccurate and dangerous. Social movements are often volatile, especially in their early stages. Given another economic downturn or major terrorist attack, Tea Party militants could be attracted to the growing, armed, citizens-militia movement. Even without a provocative "trigger event," Tea Partiers are in a position to demand worrisome concessions from the Republican Party.

According to Michael Barkun, a scholar who studies apocalyptic and conspiracist movements, part of the explanation for the emergence of the Tea Parties is that "income inequality has been rising for nearly thirty years but was masked for most of that time by the availability of easy credit and rising home values, which allowed people to use their houses as ATMs." After the recession hit, with "credit constricted and home prices collapsing, the reality of income inequality began to sink in" for a lot of people. That reality, says Barkun, "has been there for a long time. But the perception is new, a product of the crisis of the last three years, and that perception is shared by both the employed and the jobless."

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Who's Colonialist?

African Antigay Politics in the Global Discourse

By *Kapya Kaoma*

In August 2010, more than 400 African Anglican Bishops gathered in Entebbe, Uganda, for their second All-Africa Bishops Conference, which attracted global media attention because of the debates on LGBT rights. Bishops from Rwanda, Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya used the conference as an opportunity to speak out in favor of criminalizing homosexuality. Their antigay statements gave new life to Uganda's notorious Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which would mandate the imprisoning and in some cases the execution of homosexuals. The bill was introduced into the Ugandan Parliament in 2009 after a seminar in March of that year in Kampala called Exposing the Homosexual Agenda, led by U.S. religious conservatives such as Scott Lively, a Holocaust revisionist who argues that LGBT-rights movements are inherently fascist, and Don Schmierer, the director of the Exodus Institute, which claims to convert lesbians and gay men to heterosexuality. Henry Orombi, a friend of Rick Warren, the well-known pastor of the Saddleback megachurch in Orange County, California, is reported to have told the conference, "Homosexuality is evil, abnormal, and unnatural as per the Bible. It is a culturally unacceptable practice. Although there is a lot of pressure [from the West], we cannot turn our hands to support it."¹ Nevertheless, two African provinces, or districts, at the conference distanced themselves from such attacks: the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and the Church of the Province of Central Africa. They issued a counterstatement saying, "The majority

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Uganda's *Rolling Stone* newspaper printed photos and personal information about what it called "Top Homos." Subheadings read "We Shall Recruit 1,000,000 Innocent Kids by 2012," and "Parents Now Face Heart-Breaks as Homos Raid Schools."

**"Homosexuality is evil,
abnormal, and unnatural
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of the provinces at this conference are being ambushed by an agenda that is contrary to the beliefs and practices of our various provinces."² Downplaying the counterstatement, the Ugandan media, which often presents Africans as united in their denunciation of LGBT people, predicted that the bishops' voices would help pass the Anti-Homosexuality Bill.³

The Anglican religious leaders are not alone in their condemnation of LGBT people. On October 10, the *Rolling Stone* newspaper of Uganda (which has no relationship to the U.S. magazine, which has demanded that the Ugandan paper stop using its name) published the names of people it called "top" homosexuals, revealing their addresses and places of work. The article called for their hanging, claiming that "gays were recruiting 1 million children by raiding schools."⁴ One person whose picture appeared in the paper was attacked, while others "have received threats," according to Frank Mugisha, the chair of Sexual Minorities Uganda.⁵

Global Influence

During the past decade, U.S. religious conservatives have stepped up their work with African religious and political leaders to incite hatred against LGBT people. Right-wing pastors such as Warren have cultivated Ugandan religious and

political leaders. Working across denominational boundaries, they have succeeded in impeding the social-justice activism of mainline churches and provided both ideological and financial backing to their African allies, in order to increase their own political power. While promoting their religious values in Africa, they present themselves as defenders of African traditions and liberal religious groups as imposing alien ideas on the continent.

Yet many western Christian teachings are un-African—for example, the western definition of “family” as father, mother, and children, which family-values “defenders” have used to organize their opposition to homosexuality. For Africans, “family values” means upholding community responsibilities and each person’s relationship to other members of clan. African family values recognize that human beings cannot survive in isolation; they can be summed up in the Bantu word *ubuntu*, which means “I am because we are.” The individualistic, nuclear family that western conservatives promote is foreign to Africans.

In addition, most Africans view the goal of human sexuality as procreation and tend to see same-sex relationships as unproductive. They condemn childlessness, regardless of the cause. Yet traditional African communities did not beat or abuse their LGBT members. Some even believed LGBT people had extraordinary powers. Christian and Islamic fundamentalists, who blame homosexuality on the West, are using the remnants of European colonialist attitudes and laws to exacerbate violent homophobia in Africa.

U.S. conservative religious leaders such as Lively and Warren have traveled to Africa to spread homophobia, using rhetoric and tactics from this country’s culture wars. In May 2010, Lou Engle, an American evangelical from Kansas City and the founder of The Call Ministries, who terms homosexuality a “spirit of lawlessness,” joined the parade of U.S. conservatives warning Ugandans about the so-called homosexual agenda. According to Josh Kron of the *New York Times*, Engle praised Uganda’s “courage” and “righteousness”

for introducing the Anti-Homosexuality Bill into parliament. Engle told Ugandans, “Today, America is losing its religious freedom. We are trying to restrain an agenda that is sweeping through the education system. Uganda has become ground zero.”⁶

The Anti-Homosexuality Bill affirms some long-held stereotypes of Africa, both in the West and among Africans themselves. For many, Africa is a continent where democracy, women’s rights, sexual rights, and even children’s rights are luxuries. Rather than seeing these rights as fundamental, to be defended and respected, some argue that they are un-African and

African family values can be summed up in the Bantu word *ubuntu*, which means “I am because we are.”

even un-Christian. They dismiss human rights advocates as puppets of the West who would destroy traditional African values. U.S. religious conservatives who wish to transform African states into “western Christian colonies”—Christian at least according to their lights—promote these stereotypes.

Engle and others like him claim that western governments, mainline churches, and the United Nations are forcing homosexuality on the continent, thereby acting as neocolonialists. This amounts to turning history on its head. In fact, it was U.S. mainline churches that worked tirelessly with African religious and political leaders to condemn racism and support African liberation struggles—while U.S. conservatives, including Mark Tooley, the president of the neoconservative Institute on Religion and Democracy, opposed these struggles.

And until the introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, most western governments and mainline churches had avoided defending the rights of sexual minorities in Africa. Just as U.S. conservatives sided with oppressive White governments, they are now partnering with African conservatives to promote antigay sentiment and legislation.

Spreading Antigay Bigotry Around the Continent

Although a Parliament committee recommended against passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill last spring, and the bill’s supporters are scrounging for votes, the Anti-Homosexuality Bill is not dead.⁷ Mugisha noted that Minister of Ethics and Integrity James Nsaba Buturo said, “They are going to pass the bill soon.”⁸ Although Buturo just lost his parliamentary seat, he warned that this does not mark “the end of our war on homosexuality and pornography.... I am still here.... It is our stand as a government, and we are not going to shift even an inch from it.”⁹

The bill still has a good chance of passing in one form or another.¹⁰ And if it does, many African countries will probably follow suit with similar laws. Despite the international condemnation the bill has received, antigay laws have been introduced in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi. In each, the laws’ supporters spread the myths that homosexuality originates in the West, and that there are LGBT people in Africa now because of western influence.

On May 18, Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga, a Malawian gay couple, were convicted of “unnatural acts” and “gross indecency.”¹¹ The BBC reported that before handing down the fourteen-year prison sentence, Judge Nyakwawa Usiwa-Usiwa told the pair, “I will give you a scaring sentence so that the public will be protected from people like you, so that we are not tempted to emulate this horrendous example.”¹² International pressure forced Malawian President and current African Union Chair Bingu wa Mutharika—who has called same sex-relations un-African and disgusting—to pardon the couple.¹³ How-

ever, the Malawi Council of Churches (MCC), a group of about 22 Protestant churches, urged the government not to give in to alleged donor pressure to accept gay rights in exchange for aid. In a statement released on May 19, the MCC called on the international community to “respect Malawi’s cultural and religious values and refrain from using aid as a means of forcing the country to legalise sinful acts like homosexuality in the name of human rights.”¹⁴

Meanwhile, in Zambia, political and religious leaders are calling for criminalizing homosexuality in the new constitution. Former President Kenneth Kaunda, Pentecostal Bishops Joe Imakando and Joshua Banda, and Anglican Bishop Robert Mumbi of Luapula Diocese made statements against homosexuality. Mumbi claimed that homosexuality “violated Christian beliefs and African values,” and stated that the “church would not take western cash to support its development projects if required to endorse the campaign to mainstream homosexuality.”¹⁵ Reinforcing the notion of western intervention, the government newspaper the *Times of Zambia* claims that western donors are offering their support to the opposition leader Michael Sata in his presidential bid in return for a promise that he will come out in favor of reversing a constitutional clause that declares Zambia a “Christian nation” and will support LGBT rights.¹⁶

A Blessing in Disguise

Despite the virulence of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill campaign, it is in some ways a blessing in disguise for sexual-rights activists. For one thing, it has forced into the open the hidden relationships among U.S. conservatives and African political and religious leaders. U.S. religious conservatives had always denied funding African churches, and according to the *Uganda Monitor*, when the bill’s sponsor David Bahati was asked whether he received western funding, he replied, “not a penny.”¹⁷ However, Jeff Sharlet, the author of *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power* (2008), revealed

that the conservative U.S. politicians collectively known as the Family or the Fellowship trained and supported Bahati.¹⁸

Bahati is not the only African leader to deny receiving funding from U.S. conservatives while secretly benefitting. Others who claim they’ve never received such funding include Stephen Langa, the head of the Family Life Network, which organized the March 2009 antigay conference, and Martin Ssempe, the pastor of the Makerere Community Church and a leading promoter of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill (he regularly screens pornographic gay videos in his church to stir up disgust and hatred). An examination of their tax doc-

Traditional African communities did not beat or abuse their LGBT members. Some even believed LGBT people had extraordinary powers.

uments shows that they received funding from Right-leaning U.S. churches.¹⁹ On May 29, 2009, the *New Vision*, the Ugandan government newspaper, concluded that money from religious conservatives in the U.S. and Europe was fueling the gay war in Uganda.²⁰

Although many Africans still believe that Europeans and Americans recruit Africans into homosexuality, the bill has made some more aware of the humanity of gays. As LGBT people have come out in Uganda and other African countries, Africans have realized that LGBT people are found not only in the West but also in Africa, where they are citizens and church members.

Finally, the Ugandan bill has opened up discussion of human sexuality across the continent. Africans are generally reluctant

to discuss sexual issues; however, the introduction of the bill forced African theologians and politicians to change their stance. The first dialogue on Christianity and Human Sexuality was held in Cape Town in November 2009. The meeting was attended by 77 people from all over Africa, 35 of whom were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

Religious Conservatives Respond to Criticism

Jeffrey Gettleman of the *New York Times*, Jacqui Goddard and Jonathan Clayton of the *Times* of London, Tara Carman of the *Vancouver Sun*, and reporters from ABC News and National Public Radio have each independently confirmed the contention in a November 2009 report issued by Political Research Associates, *Globalizing the Culture Wars*, that conservative U.S. Christians are using homophobia to advance their agenda of taking over African churches. Right-leaning U.S. missionaries and pastors have consistently promoted hate in Africa.

And, as Rachel Tabachnick observes on the Talk2Action blog, the influence goes both ways:

The relationship between American Religious Right leaders and Uganda goes far beyond a few visits and presentations. Apostle John Mulinde, for instance, has a U.S. branch of his ministry and is advertising his ministry’s work with both the Orlando and Baltimore police forces. ... Apostle Julius Oyet works extensively with the College of Prayer, which is headquartered in the Atlanta suburbs and has branches in West Palm Beach and in Ontario, Canada. ... Julius Oyet was recognized by the Ugandan

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Parliament when the antigay bill was initially introduced.²¹

According to Michael Wilkerson of the Religion Dispatches blog, Oyet argued that “homosexuality is an import of the West” that “recruits” new members primarily by bribing children. “Father, our children today are being deceived by the West. To buy them, to give them school fees so that they can be homosexuals. We say no to that.”²² Ironically, Oyet himself has received money from U.S. Christian Right groups.²³

While many African scholars and Christians read *Globalizing the Culture Wars* with interest, western conservatives attacked it, claiming it is neocolonialist, imperialistic, racist, and insulting.²⁴ David Virtue, the founder of virtueonline.org, which calls itself “the voice for global, orthodox Anglicanism,” accused *Globalizing the Culture Wars* of being “designed deliberately to add credence to the ‘fact’ that Africans still hover in the Dark Ages.” Africans are highly educated, says Virtue, and to maintain that “western Anglicans have imposed their views of sexual morality on Africans is not only a colonialist mentality it is also racist.”²⁵ Meanwhile, the IRD’s Tooley said the report portrayed African Christianity “as primitive and easily manipulated by conservative U.S. religionists.” In addition to maintaining that it “is patronizing to African religious leaders,” Tooley said it failed to “understand African Christianity’s own worldview, rooted in Scripture, orthodox church teaching, and responsibilities beyond the self.”²⁶

Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden of Anglican Mainstream, a conservative wing of the Church of England with links to breakaway U.S. Episcopalian churches and some African archbishops, claim that “sexual rights campaigns” are foreign to Africa, since “there has been no movement generated by gay people in Africa for their place in society.”²⁷ They go on to argue that “the western approach of individual rights” should not be “forced” on Africans since “African culture has long resisted the notion that western norms are in any way universal norms” and that “the

Church has been a bastion of this resistance.” They conclude that “far from going beyond colonialism, this report falls back into it by universalizing the local culture of the United States.”²⁸

Samuel and Sugden fear that *Globalizing the Culture Wars* may affect European and U.S. funding for African churches. Noting that the report “appeared on the desks of officials in the aid and development sector,” they said, “[i]ts purpose appears to be not to get media coverage but to influence governments and aid institutions. And it appear[s] to be making some progress here.” They continue, “The thrust of the paper is to discredit the African

Money from religious conservatives in the U.S. and Europe is fueling the gay war in Uganda.

churches, especially in the eyes of those who make governmental grants to assist them.”²⁹ Possible disruption of funding may be conservatives’ true objection to the report.

Who’s Colonialist?

In fact, Africans do not oppose western ideas and values: African economies, governments, churches, and even constitutions are informed by the West. Africans’ acceptance of western religious teaching suggests that they may be equally accepting of new definitions of human rights, including those of sexual minorities.

It is U.S. conservatives who have continually patronized Africa. *Globalizing the Culture Wars* shows that they have rewritten African religious leaders’ documents, spoken on behalf of African churches, and as with the Ugandan bill, imposed their ideologies on Africans. They seem to believe that it is fine for African conservatives to fight for the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in

Uganda but wrong for African sexual minorities to fight for their human rights. What they oppose is not the involvement of westerners in Africa, but the involvement of religious progressives committed to the social gospel.

Right-wing Christians from the U.S. have exploited Africans’ internalized colonialism. In Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi, among others, a successful person is said to have become a *muzungu*, or White man. In this environment, Americans visiting Africa have enjoyed great power and influence. The Kenyan-American journalist Edwin Okong’o attributes the excellent reception Rightists have among many Africans to the colonial inferiority complex wrought upon Africa. Africans, he says, “staunchly believe in the supremacy of the white man. Ill-informed Christians . . . place the white man immediately below the Holy Spirit, a belief with its roots in the colonial era.”³⁰

The Hand-Washing Strategy

Just after Scott Lively’s African tour in March 2009, he explained the purpose of his trip to his followers:

The campaign was to teach about the “gay” agenda in churches, schools, colleges, community groups, and in Parliament. . . . The international “gay” movement has devoted a lot of resources to transforming the moral culture from a marriage-based one to one that embraces sexual anarchy. Just as in the U.S. many years ago, they are leading with pornography to weaken the moral fiber of the people and propagandizing the children behind the parents’ backs.

He went on to say that on Ugandan television, “We exposed a book distributed to schools by UNICEF that normalizes homosexuality to teenagers.”³¹ Lively reported that he expected “a massive protest by parents, who are mostly not aware that such materials even exist in their country, let alone in their children’s [classrooms].”³² He boasted that his campaign would increase “pro-family activism in every social

sphere...Our campaign was like a nuclear bomb against the 'gay' agenda in Uganda."³³ Yet Lively told *Christianity Today* that linking the Anti-Homosexuality Bill to him or other U.S. conservatives is insulting:

That's really a racist perspective that these guys are pushing, somehow that a couple of little-known American commentators on cultural issues, that our opinions can outweigh the combined resources of a sovereign nation on an issue It's as if the Africans are unable to shape their own public policy, and somehow they're swayed by foreign influences."³⁴

When the bill became embarrassing, Lively disclaimed responsibility. Likewise, Exodus International's Don Schmierer told the *New York Times*, "I feel duped."³⁵ Despite having previously told Ugandans that "gay rights are not human rights," Rick Warren denounced the bill on December 10, 2009, calling it "unjust, extreme and unchristian towards homosexuals."³⁶ Bill promoter Martin Ssempe, feeling betrayed, demanded a formal apology from Warren for his "inappropriate bully use of your church and purpose-driven pulpits to coerce [Ugandans] into [homosexuality]."³⁷

The bill is based on the teachings of U.S. conservatives. For them to turn around and condemn it is hypocritical. They are engaging in what the writer M.S., on the *Economist* blog, calls a "hand-washing strategy,"³⁸ disclaiming culpability. "It's one thing to recognise that Africans are responsible for what happens in African societies," M.S. writes:

But it would be silly to claim that therefore, no one besides Africans bears any responsibility for anything that happens in African societies. That's using a faulty anti-imperialism argument to wash your hands of all responsibility.

Some academics also minimize the influence of U.S. right-wing Christians in Africa. For instance, Philip Jenkins, a professor of Humanities at Pennsylvania State University,³⁹ suggested at an event spon-

sored by the conservative-leaning Ethics and Public Policy Center that the Anti-Homosexuality Bill can be traced not to U.S. Christian influence but rather to Ugandan Christians' rejection of what he called an "Arabic pederasty culture."⁴⁰ This, he said, led, in the 1880s, to the killing of converts to Christianity who refused to engage in same-sex relations with their king, Kabaka Mwanga. For Ugandan Christians, he says, the issues of Islam, tyranny, and homosexuality are historically intertwined; hence antigay activism is "not something that was dropped on the Ugan-

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dan Christians from America." However, King Mwanga's reign is just one event in a long history, and if Ugandan culture were as broadly antigay as Jenkins claims, Mwanga would probably have been dethroned.

U.S. religious conservatives accuse their critics of neocolonialism. As an African, however, I believe that questioning the Right's dealings with African politicians and Christians is an important scholarly undertaking. As long as the Right continues to use its religious ideologies as the basis for policies in Christian Africa, the continent is likely to see more and more bills that are detrimental to human rights. ■

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THE LONG HURICANE *cont'd from page 1*

redevelopment, its innovations made possible by an unfortunate storm called Katrina.

Concurrent with this neoliberal economic project is a neoconservative cultural project, the goal of which is to remold impoverished Blacks and other underclass people—who are portrayed by the redevelopers as living in a pathological state of dependency, turned into irresponsible burdens on society by decades of failed big government—into “productive citizens.” Foundations both liberal and conservative have converged on New Orleans to experiment with housing, schools, parks, and economic development.

The results of the economic attacks and philanthropic experiments have been mixed. On balance, though, the urban poor have become more vulnerable and their lives more difficult as the prices of everything from housing to healthcare have increased, wages have stagnated, and the welfare state has been dismantled, replaced by a punitive police state riddled with corruption and violence.

The Demographic Shift

New Orleans first became a majority Black city in the late 1970s. Driven from the agricultural economy by mechanization, sharecroppers left rural Louisiana and southern Mississippi by the thousands and headed for the Crescent City. This demographic shift coincided with a period of economic stagnation for New Orleans that reached its nadir in the mid-1980s with the bust of the oil industry.¹ The city’s White political and business elites eventually agreed that the source of their collective malaise was not a flawed economic development model that had bet first on shipping, oil, and gas, then on burlesque, alcohol-fueled tourism, and casino entertainment; rather, they decided, it must be

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Members of Survivors Village, an organization of displaced New Orleans public-housing tenants, and their supporters occupy the Columbia Parc rental office in June 2010.

Pam Nath

Tens of thousands of New Orleanians, most of them poor, have joined a permanent and involuntary Katrina diaspora.

all those poor Black people living in public housing, filling the public schools, and relying on the public hospital.

Under the logic of the free market and the political reality of enduring racism, concentrated Black poverty cannot be “solved” by establishing a more egalitarian economy and society. After all, that would undermine the sources of wealth upon which many urban regimes base their growth: rents and low-wage service workforces disci-

plined by the racial divide. Therefore, the problems must originate inside poor communities, with their “underclass” values. The solutions are always experimental and affect only the poor, never the middle class and the majority of Whites, who actively maintain segregation, nor the banking and real estate sectors of the economy, which exploit poor communities of color and exclude them from the wealth and social goods their labor produces.²

Liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans alike believe, to varying degrees, that the public sector has failed. The best the state can do is to yield to or stimulate the market, while forcing individuals to accept personal responsibility and a work ethic. Very much a southern city, New Orleans has always been averse to building up the public sector, defending workers, and leveling racial inequalities.

Privatizing Public Housing

The privatization of public housing across the United States began in the 1990s. President Clinton embraced the recommendations of his predecessor George

H. W. Bush's National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing. The commission's members had included real estate entrepreneurs such as Richard Baron, whose company, McCormack Baron and Associates, had created a business model that called for enclosing and privatizing urban public land and public housing; and political officials such as Alphonso Jackson, the industry-friendly head of the Dallas Housing Authority and a socially conservative darling of the Republican Party. Stacked with such "reformers," the commission recommended various means of privatizing public housing. Their marquee program was Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI), which provided large federal investments in developer-owned and -managed homes built on the sites of demolished public housing projects. The commission also recommended the mass voucherization of housing assistance. New ventures led by urban redevelopers, banks, and landlords, some of them for-profit, others nonprofit, received large subsidies, as governments divested from traditional public housing. In all, these programs have constituted the transfer of hundreds of billions of dollars from the public to the private sector. Even though HOPE VI was supposed to create opportunities for poor families, studies show that it harmed them instead.³

Nonprofit corporations and foundations proclaiming their interest in remolding the life chances of impoverished Blacks and other tenants of inner-city public housing paved the way for profit-driven companies to gentrify urban neighborhoods and to produce revenue streams that flowed from low-income renters and governments to corporations and banks. The sociology of scholars such as William Julius Wilson and Xavier Briggs was simplified and used to justify notions of deconcentrating poverty and transforming the poor with exposure to middle class norms.⁴ Pseudoscientific theories of poverty and cultural capital identifying "pathological cycles" and "subcultures" were invoked to portray the whole exercise in mass displacement and gentrification as a gift to the poor. Thus began a now two-decades-long

effort to disrupt, break apart, incarcerate, discipline, and finally purge majority working-class Black communities from cities.

In New Orleans, there were 6,000 public-housing apartments in the late 1990s, down from a high of 14,000 in the early 1980s. By 2004, only about 5,000 New Orleans families lived in public housing.⁵ However, just prior to Katrina, the physical presence and political power of public housing residents prevented further mass demolitions. The controversial 2001 demolition of the St. Thomas development—at that time the city's largest

Liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans alike believe, to varying degrees, that the public sector has failed.

public housing community—had alienated residents as well as working-class Blacks across the city. The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), real estate developers, the city council, the mayor, and nonprofit groups involved in privatization knew that any additional demolitions would be met with massive resistance.⁶ The demolitionists had hit a wall, their previously effective system of undercutting resident and community resistance discredited and impotent.⁷

In contrast to the divestment from and disappearance of public housing during the 1980s and 1990s, the number of beds in Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) grew by 1,000 percent. In 1974, when White voters, reacting to the militance of the New Orleans Black Panther Party and other Black Power activists, elected Sheriff Charles Foti on a tough-on-crime platform,

the population of OPP stood at about 800 prisoners. During Foti's thirty-year tenure, which coincided with the decline of the Port of New Orleans and disappearance of other major industrial employers, as well as with White flight to the suburbs, OPP became the largest per-capita urban prison in the United States, with more than 8,500 prisoners.⁸

The cause and dynamics of the Katrina disaster must be understood in this context. When the hurricane hit, New Orleans' political and business leaders, White and Black, saw it as an opportunity to purge the city of its most conspicuous concentrations of Black poverty, with the added benefit that they could redevelop these cleansed zones into highly profitable housing and tourist attractions.

The End of The Bricks

The June 2010 issue of the National Apartment Association's magazine *Units* carried a cover story entitled "Rebirth On the Bayou." The feature waxed enthusiastic, declaring, "New Orleans' Columbia Parc has revitalized a former public housing site destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, proving for some that you can go home again."⁹ This is false. In fact, tens of thousands of New Orleanians, most of them poor, have joined a permanent and involuntary Katrina diaspora. In the five years since the hurricane, the city's population has shrunk by roughly 100,000, from its height of 455,000 one month before Katrina.¹⁰

Columbia Parc was conceived in the days after the storm, as a group of New Orleans business leaders and foundation executives gathered to take advantage of the opportunity inherent in the displacement of virtually the entire Black working-class population of the city. They incorporated as the Bayou District Foundation, a private nonprofit redevelopment authority with a board of directors that included some of the region's top real estate, tourism, and banking leaders, and patched together a plan to socially, economically, and geographically remake a large swath of the city's 7th Ward.

The federal Department of Housing and



Pam Nath

Protesters occupy the Columbia Parc rental office with a banner reading, "Housing is a Human Right."

Urban Development (HUD) cooperated readily with the Bayou District Foundation and other developers interested in privatizing public housing. In June of 2006 HUD announced its decision to demolish the city's Big Four public housing projects: the C.J. Peete, B.W. Cooper, Lafitte, and St. Bernard, which together comprised a total of more than 5,000 apartments.¹¹ Contracts were soon cut with developers to build mixed-income developments on the sites.

The contract for the 900-unit Columbia Parc, to be built on the site of the St. Bernard, was awarded to Columbia Residential, an Atlanta-based firm owned by the developer Thomas Cousins. Constructed immediately after World War II, the St. Bernard was a sprawling 1,464-unit apartment complex that was made up of dozens of two-story buildings interspersed with giant oak trees and lush lawns. Locals called it The Bricks. Like many public housing developments, it acquired a troubled reputation in the 1970s, due to White flight, capital flight, the dismantling of the welfare state, and other countermovements against the Black political and economic

Pseudoscientific theories of poverty identifying “pathological cycles” and “subcultures” have been invoked to portray mass displacement and gentrification as a gift to the poor.

gains of the mid-twentieth century. Nevertheless, the St. Bernard community persevered through the disinvestment and reactionary politics—at least until the hurricane season of 2005.

The Bayou District Foundation and Columbia Residential's redevelopment plan for St. Bernard included a promise that

one-third of the units constructed would be public housing. Former residents of the St. Bernard are quick to point out, however, that there will be ten times fewer public housing units built on the site than the number in the original development. Fewer than 100 public-housing apartments are ready to be occupied, and only some of these will go to former residents.

In addition to tearing down the St. Bernard, the Bayou District Foundation drew up plans to privatize local schools, using charters, and to take over a portion of City Park and turn it into an eighteen-hole, PGA-level golf course and country club.

St. Bernard residents were locked out of their former homes between 2005 and 2007. In 2007 the St. Bernard's bricks fell to a demolition company's bulldozers. Columbia Parc's first few apartments were not built and rented until late in 2009.

Philanthropy With a Purpose

In March 2010, Warren Buffett, the world's third-wealthiest man, arrived in New Orleans to join Thomas Cousins on a widely publicized tour of Columbia Parc. They were joined by Alex Robertson, the son and representative of Julian Robertson, a hedge-fund manager and the financial backer of Cousins's philanthropic projects. Their visit was part of a public relations junket for another Cousins scheme, Purpose Built Communities. Cousins had founded Purpose Built Communities after his work during the 1990s on Atlanta's East Lake Meadows public housing development, where he gentrified a mostly Black, low-income neighborhood into a de-densified, “planned community” of market-rate houses and apartments, a charter school, and a private golf course—all the while using a discourse of philanthropic assistance for the poor. In the organization's own words, its mission is to: “help local lead organizations develop the strategies and partnerships they need to effectively address all issues that trap a neighborhood and its people in inter-generational poverty.”¹² Purpose Built Communities advises local developers on massive urban redevelopment schemes that

go beyond housing or commercial real estate; its specialty is the master planning of entire districts using public subsidies and private capital, keeping rents and land-use decisions in private hands.

Walking around the privatized, demolished, and freshly redeveloped St. Bernard, Buffett, Cousins, and Robertson extolled the new homes and the plans for the surrounding neighborhood, and explained their development strategy. Cousins remarked, “Children that grow up here are going to be good citizens—taxpayers not tax users.” Buffett added, “We are changing a lot of lives,” and predicted, “New Orleans is going to prove [Purpose Built Communities] can be replicated.” (Ironically, at the same time that the senior Robertson was lending his name and personal assets to Purpose Built Communities, ostensibly to provide housing and economic opportunity for the urban poor, his vast private wealth was invested in a series of hedge funds that were reaping enormous profits from the subprime mortgage meltdown by short selling mortgage-backed securities.¹³)

Send the Poor to Charm School

“Mixed income” housing assemblages are a major aspect of pseudoscientific (and real-estate industry friendly) social engineering. Distributed among “normal” middle-class residents, the urban poor will supposedly alter their pathological behavior, and learn to accumulate wealth and obey the law. Rules for aspiring tenants are spelled out on the Columbia Residential website www.stbernardnow.com, whose “Frequently Asked Questions” section tells displaced residents:

No. Columbia Residential will NOT develop a new “housing project.” A new mixed-income apartment community will be built where people from a mixture of incomes will live in attractive and healthy neighborhoods.

The website goes on to tell applicants:

- Unless disabled or elderly the head

of household and co-head of household, if any, must be legally employed with verifiable income.

- All adult residents in the new community who are not disabled, elderly or the primary care giver for minor children must be working, in school or in an approved training program.

In contrast to the divestment from public housing during the 1980s and 1990s, the number of beds in Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) grew by 1,000 percent.

- All school-age children must attend school.
- Drug use or drug dealing or a history of criminal activity can disqualify any applicant.
- Every person in the household 18 years of age or older must have a clean criminal background. Each situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- There must be a good, verifiable landlord history and if you have received a subsidy in the past, you must be a “resident in good standing” with the Housing Authority of New Orleans.¹⁴

Stephanie Mingo, a former St. Bernard resident and mother of four who has led fellow residents in opposing Columbia Residential and the Bayou District Foundation’s plans for the 7th Ward, says

that many in her community are choosing not to apply for a home in Columbia Parc because of objections to Columbia Residential’s rules and regulations. “They’re insulting, unfair, and probably not even legal,” Mingo says of the company’s work requirement, criminal background and credit checks, and behavioral rules that ban residents from having guests for extended stays, sitting on their porches at certain hours, or playing music.

Columbia Parc’s rules are not unique. At other redeveloped public housing sites in New Orleans, residents must sign leases that require them to work and prove an income, allow home inspections, and adhere to similar behavioral standards. Public housing in New Orleans had been known for its lively street life, socializing on stoops and porches, kids and teens playing in the commons, large picnics, and dance parties in the courts. Some of the developments, such as the Lafitte and C.J. Peete, were important parade sites for the Mardi Gras Indians on Fat Tuesday and St. Joseph’s Night. To the city’s politicians, business leaders, and White middle class, however, none of this mattered: the projects were frightening zones of drugs, mayhem, and murder. If the community itself could not be physically removed from the city, they reckoned, then its members could be alienated from themselves and from the vitality of their own culture, and its norms and values.

Creating a Housing Crisis

As a substitute for project-based public housing, HANO executives are now promoting landlords’ favorite housing subsidy: vouchers. Because vouchers do not interfere with the maintenance of high real-estate prices, they are popular with developers and property managers—unlike traditional public housing, which directly intervenes in the market and can reduce all rents in a given area. Vouchers are susceptible to all kinds of abuses, by everyone from slumlords who receive government funds but maintain run-down housing to HANO staff who have embezzled hundreds of thousands from the federal Section 8

voucher program.¹⁵

After Katrina, public housing residents who had lived in traditional project-based public housing were provided with emergency housing assistance through several disaster voucher programs administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and HUD. When their homes were condemned and demolished to accommodate schemes like Columbia Parc, many residents were either transferred to the Section 8 voucher assistance program or forced into the private market after slipping through the cracks of the HANO bureaucracy.

In addition to voucherization, two programs have exacerbated the New Orleans housing crisis. The first is the Road Home Program. Now mostly paid out, Road Home was a \$10 billion fund for homeowners, who were given the choice of receiving a one-time lump sum either to rebuild their damaged houses or to move out and allow their houses to be demolished. Renters, who made up more than half of the New Orleans population in 2005,¹⁶ received nothing under Road Home, and there was no comparable multi-billion dollar commitment to rebuild affordable rental housing in the region. Furthermore, the Road Home Program was racially discriminatory. Remuneration was based on pre-Katrina home values. Homes of the same age and size, with the same yard space and amenities, were valued differently depending on whether they were located in a Black or a White neighborhood. The average claims paid out to Black homeowners were well-below the average claims paid to Whites.¹⁷

The Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005 (GO-Zone) gave developers of privately owned rental housing tax credits they could use when assembling financing packages. Congress passed the legislation as a “market-based” approach to reconstruction, but only a fraction of the credits allocated to New Orleans for low-income housing have been used. Tax credits worth many millions, supposedly meant for low-income housing construction, languished as developers chose to invest instead in lux-

ury condos and apartments in the expensive Warehouse District or avoided building in Orleans Parish entirely, focusing instead on the booming exurbs of St. Tammany and Jefferson Parishes. Ultimately the biggest benefactor of GO-Zone Act bonds could prove to be cancer-alley industry; the state now proposes subsidizing the construction of a pig-iron factory with \$600 million in GO-Zone bonds, and another \$30 million from the Louisiana State Bond Commission.¹⁸

With the onset of the financial crisis, the tax credits lost much of their value, so much so that the few projects utilizing them

**At the same time that
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operators.**

in New Orleans to build affordable housing became imperiled and required more straightforward infusions of taxpayer dollars, in effect nullifying the original “market-based” approach. Stalled projects quickly exceeded the statutory time limit for their construction. At the former public housing developments B.W. Cooper and Lafitte, which were privatized using low-income housing tax credits, millions were spent to keep the developers afloat.¹⁹

Here Come the Charters

At the same time that New Orleans’ public housing was being privatized, nearly every school was placed in the hands of charter operators, many of which pay their executives hefty salaries.²⁰ The priva-

tization of schools is the result of many converging forces, from the lobbying of for-profit charter operators who seek to open up new “markets” to the good intentions of neoliberal philanthropists who believe the best way to reform public schools is to abolish everything public about them except the income stream. Justifying the charter takeover were the stereotypes that impoverished Black children and their parents did not value education and that public schools were failing because of unmotivated, incompetent staff. The reformers entirely ignored the inequalities built into the divides between public and private parochial schools, and between the underfunded, urban, majority-Black Orleans Parish district and the wealthier, suburban, majority-White Jefferson Parish, St. Tammany, and other districts.

The charter takeover was the largest in U.S. history.²¹ After Katrina, Louisiana’s Recovery School District (RSD) was empowered by the legislature to take over 107 Orleans Parish schools, which it then handed over to charter operators. The Orleans Parish School Board’s contract with the United Teachers of New Orleans was not renewed, in effect banning union teachers from the new schools. A cheap labor pool of new educators was readily available in the thousands of young, idealistic college graduates flocking to the city to help in its recovery, many of them volunteers with the New Teacher Project, Teach for America, and similar nonprofits.

After four years of operation, New Orleans’ experiment with charters has produced results roughly equivalent to those nationally, which were summed up recently in a report by Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes (which included Louisiana schools in its survey data):

Seventeen percent provide superior education opportunities for their students. Nearly half of the charter schools nationwide have results that are no different from the local public school options, and over a third, 37 percent, deliver learning results that are significantly worse than their



A colorful banner at a New Orleans tenants' "right to return" protest in May 2010.

students would have realized had they remained in traditional public schools.²²

Even so, the New Orleans charter experiment shows no signs of abating. Schools continue to be consolidated around charter operators, and measures to increase competition between schools and to improve teacher performance with merit pay remain popular, as do demands that students and parents take greater responsibility for education.

The charter schools are maintaining the segregation of the pre-Katrina New Orleans school system, when public schools were virtually all Black and the majority of students came from low-income families. Whites and students from wealthier families overwhelmingly went to private schools or to a few select, suburban public schools. Although enrollment in the charter schools is, in theory, open, the charters find ways around this. Underperforming students, typically those from poor neighborhoods, are expelled for nonacademic behavior, such as tardiness, or "counseled out," as the school argues that it cannot provide them with appropriate services. This selectivity has created a hierarchy among the charters. The sociologist Jay Arena summed up the charter system's ability to reinforce pre-existing inequalities:

Lifting of local control allowed maybe the most blatant racist takeover of all: the chartering of the formerly all-black, low-income Fortier High School, located next to

Tulane University, by the elite, "magnet," selective-admission Robert Lusher [charter school], appropriately named after a post-Civil War-era segregationist. Fortier, taken over through collaboration with Tulane University, denies entry to the former students, while guaranteeing admission, in a typical phony "antiracist" neoliberal multicultural form, to students of full-time

employees of the historically Black universities of Dillard and Xavier as well as Tulane and Loyola Universities. This school, which before Katrina regularly went without even toilet paper, now operates in a renovated facility, with plenty of amenities, and a "progressive" multicultural student body, which excludes, in a neo-apartheid manner, the former low income Black students, many of whom remain in the post-Katrina diaspora.²³

The charter movement is linked both ideologically and practically to the privatization of public housing. Both movements have relied heavily on nonprofit corporations and foundations to support and execute their plans. Both have utilized the same neoconservative rhetoric of responsibility and accountability. At Columbia Parc the link is quite direct: the Bayou District Foundation has incorporated a charter school into its plans for the 7th Ward and intends for residents of Columbia Parc to send their children there. Whereas with housing the targets of the privatization efforts are primarily Black women (who are the majority of leaseholding tenants), in the schools the targets are children.

The Taj Ma-Hospital

After Katrina, Louisiana State University (LSU), the administrator of the state's Charity Hospital, the largest campus of which was located in downtown New

Orleans, shuttered the building and moved to replace Charity Hospital with a new, LSU-administered hospital. Charity Hospital had become synonymous with the problems affecting other public-sector institutions. It was seen as the hospital of last resort, with poor services and long waits, its halls filled with the indigent uninsured.

Supporters of the plan, such as Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, believe eliminating the hospital will also eliminate a drain on state coffers. Unlike Charity Hospital, the new hospital will supposedly attract insured, paying customers seeking the best medical care. Its boosters promote it as the catalyst for the rebirth of a two-and-a-half-square-mile section of the city, to be called the Greater New Orleans Biosciences Economic Development District (GNOBEDD). City leaders and real-estate speculators dreamed of a central business district filled with research institutions and small- and medium-sized biotechnology and medical companies, anchored around the new LSU and Veteran's Administration (VA) hospitals.

One of the most serious consequences of closing the city's main trauma unit and central source of healthcare for the uninsured was an increase in mortality rates in the area. Medical researchers have found that as many as several thousand people have died as a result of lack of care. One study concluded that:

A significant (47%) increase in proportion of deaths was seen compared with the known baseline population. From January to June 2006, there were on average 1317 death notices per month for a mortality rate of 91.37 deaths per 100,000 population, compared with a 2002–2004 average of 924 deaths per month for a mortality rate of 62.17 deaths per 100,000 population.²⁴

Additionally, in order to build the new hospital, LSU and the VA gained permission to demolish an entire neighborhood, 27 square blocks containing 249 homes and dozens of businesses. Ironically, these homeowners and businesses had struggled to come back after Katrina, received

assistance from the state and federal governments through the Road Home Program and others, and were then told to vacate upon announcement of the biomedical district plan.

The leader of the GNOBEDD is a real estate executive, James P. McNamara. In anticipation of the new LSU and Veterans Administration hospitals, real-estate insiders bought up land throughout the GNOBEDD footprint, hoping to see hikes in value. McNamara has sold the GNOBEDD project to politicians and business leaders with the promise that it will generate 10,000 to 12,000 jobs, with salaries of \$70,000 per year and above.²⁵ Most native New Orleanians are, unfortunately, ill-prepared for these kinds of positions, and it is unlikely that any but the most low-paying service jobs will be available to them, while the salaried scientific, technical, and medical jobs will go to highly educated newcomers. Instead, the project aims to attract young professional-class and “creative class” workers to the city.

Local activists and healthcare advocates have led an effort to reopen Charity Hospital but face the same argument that public housing residents confronted: LSU claims that the building was ruined in the hurricane and required replacement. Surprisingly, the Bush administration disagreed and refused to give Louisiana the hundreds of millions it asked from FEMA to build what critics had by then started calling the “Taj Ma-Hospital.” In the end, however, the Obama administration delivered the funds.

The Party Zone

In addition to the GNOBEDD scheme, several other high-profile plans for economic development are taking shape in New Orleans that will drastically remake large sections of the city. The Benson family, which owns the Saints football team, is attempting to build a “sports entertainment” or “party” zone and shopping mall, adjacent to the GNOBEDD. It would be financed using state and city subsidies, in cooperation with the Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District, a state board operated by

prominent real-estate investors.

Another tourism industry project is Reinventing the Crescent, a plan to build parks and entertainment facilities along a 4.5 mile stretch of the Mississippi River. Run by a City Council-created nonprofit called the New Orleans Building Corporation, the plan has sparked land speculation. The project’s head, Sean Cummings, claims that it “could trigger \$3 billion in private investments, add 4,500 permanent jobs, and increase the city’s tax revenues by \$40 million a year.”²⁶ Cummings and his family happen to own at least twenty properties within a stone’s throw of Reinventing the Crescent.²⁷

New Orleans remains, even after Katrina, highly disorganized and corrupt at all levels.

Whether any of these schemes will come to fruition is anyone’s guess, because the fiscal situation is continually worsening, and because the city remains, even after Katrina, highly disorganized and corrupt at all levels.

The Prison-Industrial Complex

At least one major public sector is receiving investments and rapidly expanding: the warfare or penal state.

The New Orleans Federal Alliance, a nonprofit corporation, secured agreements from the marine corps and the navy to locate two large military installations within Federal City, a large development in New Orleans’ Algiers neighborhood. The alliance claims the project will improve the economy of the entire city, even the country, saying, “Federal City offers an approach that could make it a National Model for the future configuration and operation of

small- to mid-sized [Department of Defense] installations, the decommissioning of military installations, and large-scale urban development.” Project proponents claim that one of Federal City’s innovations is its incorporation of housing for military and civilian workers: “All tenants will share Federal City’s amenities and gain the advantages of the force protection features that will be provided,” says the project’s website.²⁸ Federal City’s 10,000 military, contractor, and civilian-support employees will work and live in a virtual Green Zone—only in New Orleans rather than Baghdad.

A “correctional complex” proposed for the current Orleans Parish Prison and Criminal Court area has been linked to the GNOBEDD and framed as yet another anchor around which the city’s new economy can take shape.²⁹ Companies building large apartment complexes in Mid-City are advertising their proximity to the correctional complex, hoping to lure in the prison, court, and police workforces as tenants. The New Orleans City Council has already approved a significant expansion of the jail, which is operated by the Orleans Parish sheriff. The number of beds in the jail will be increased by 5,832, which will solidify OPP’s status as the largest per-capita jail in the nation. Before Katrina, the jail had 7,500 beds but regularly housed more than this number of inmates. The sheriff’s office receives \$22.39 per day per prisoner from the city, and in 2010 the city paid OPP more than \$20 million to lock up mostly young Black men for nonviolent offenses.³⁰

Expansion of the city’s prison is poised to happen just as the New Orleans Police Department is under investigation by the Department of Justice for brutal murders and cover-ups during the weeks after Katrina.³¹ But despite the thoroughly corrupt police force, many developers and economic strategists are hoping the militarization of New Orleans will accomplish two goals: it will serve as an economic base around which to build housing and amenities for police officers and corrections staff; and it will lock up the city’s surplus

population, including those who returned home despite policies designed to force their chronic displacement.

The Struggle Over Development

One journalist recently noted that “There Was Nothing Good About Katrina,” and advised policy makers to “stop suggesting that Hurricane Katrina provided an opportunity to improve New Orleans.”³² Government officials and business leaders, however, seized on the storm as an opportunity.

The sudden disappearance of the city’s poor provided city officials and business elites—who had decided decades before to purge the city of poor people, particularly working class Blacks in and around public housing—with an unprecedented opportunity. Whether it involved urban planning, reductions in public housing, closure of the public health system, privatization of the schools, or other plans to transform New Orleans into a lean, neoliberal metropolis, mass displacement worked in the favor of privatizers and the White middle class.

If five years have proven anything, it is that the Katrina story is about development, in the broadest sense of the term. The storm only intensified a conflict over the role of government and the shape of the region’s economy. And while the picture looks bleak, the story is by no means over. New Orleans remains a Black majority city, and tens of thousands of its working-class citizens have returned, in spite of all the exclusionary obstacles and dangers. Movements to re-establish the public schools, health system, and affordable housing are opposing privatization and continuing to organize. But the city also remains terribly imperiled, as the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster reminds us. ■

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BEYOND GREEN JOBS *continued from page 1*

who view any push for an environmentally sustainable economy as simply an excuse to further regulate business. The influential Heritage Foundation, for one, claims that a green economy is a contradiction in terms, an approach that will eliminate more jobs than it would create.⁴ Heritage also argues that green jobs are anti-free enterprise, propped up by government subsidies. It even pokes fun at green jobs, asking, as Peter Brookes and J. D. Foster do on the Heritage website, “What could be greener than a rickshaw?”⁵

Such levity, however, belies a well-funded strategy for manufacturing and promoting ideas that strengthen the fortress protecting the fossil-fuel economy. At the heart—and bank account—of this strategy are corporations such as Koch Industries which, according to a 2010 Greenpeace report, contributed \$24.9 million in funding over three years to “support organizations and front-groups opposing progressive clean energy and climate policy.”⁶ Koch Industries is hardly a household name, but Greenpeace reports that “it is a conglomerate of petroleum and chemical interests with approximately \$100 billion in annual sales, operations in nearly 60 countries and 70,000 employees.”⁷ It is currently ranked as the second largest privately held company in the United States. Two brothers, Charles and David Koch, own the majority of the company, channeling their influence through three foundations that gave grants to forty organizations at the forefront of efforts to stop green jobs and climate legislation. Their donations included \$5 million to the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, a leading group behind the Tea Party movement; \$1 million to the Heritage Foundation; and \$360,000 to Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy. The Kochs also run a political action committee that has spent \$2.51 million on contributions to federal candidates.⁸

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As part of their overall effort to influence public understanding and public policy regarding pollution and climate, the Kochs have funded efforts to discredit green jobs ideas and programs. According to the Greenpeace report, their dollars supported the widely publicized “Spanish study”—2009 research by an economics professor from Madrid arguing that Spain’s policy commitment to renewable energy development had cost the country 2.2 jobs for each clean-energy job created. With initial support from the Koch-funded Institute for Energy Research, the study gained fol-

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lowers in key venues such as a Heritage Foundation briefing in Washington, DC, and a Congressional Western Caucus hearing, in which Phil Kerpen, the policy director of the Koch-funded Americans for Prosperity (AFP), testified. While the Department of Energy and others have challenged the validity of the study,⁹ it continues to bounce around the Internet and public debate.

Of course, the most visible story of the Right and green jobs is the 2009 resignation of Van Jones, President Obama’s special adviser for green jobs, enterprise, and innovation. As the *New York Times* reported in September 2009, Jones’s resignation was “a victory for Republicans and the Obama administration’s conservative critics.”¹⁰ While FOX television talk-show

host Glenn Beck enjoyed the spotlight in the attack on Jones, organizations such as AFP played a crucial role in the ambush. Days after Jones’s resignation, Kerpen commented that the campaign against Jones was “one of the most significant things I’ve ever had the honor of being involved in.”¹¹

Racism + Xenophobia = Opposition to Green Jobs

Right-wing leaders are also going after green jobs by stirring up one of their favorite messaging cocktails, a blend of racism and anti-immigrant fear. Indeed, an Internet search of “illegal immigrants and green jobs” turns up a multitude of hits, including a 2008 *New York Times* Green Blog article summarizing local newspaper reports that “illegal aliens” are employed in green jobs. The article concludes, “[J]ust as the ‘green jobs’ machine starts revving up, another hot political issue is arriving at its doorstep: illegal immigration.”¹² And while the argument that Mexican immigrants generate more carbon dioxide (CO²) when they come across the border may seem laughable, the Right can nonetheless wave a scholarly article in the faces of those eager to hear such claims.¹³ As Colin Rajah of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights explains, the Center for Immigration Studies, a right-wing think tank, “started talking about climate about eight years ago”:

They put out “scientific” studies showing that immigrants have higher birth rates and that immigrants from Mexico increase their CO² emissions when they migrate to the U.S. They argue that sending immigrants home is a way to cut global CO² emissions. Basically they are preserving overconsumption for the U.S. while feeding racist notions.

Roy Beck, the head of the anti-immigrant policy center Numbers USA, even managed to get himself invited to speak at the Tenth National Conference on Science, Policy, and the Environment: The New Green Economy, an annual gathering

whose 2010 aim was to explore “how investment in green education, research and jobs can help solve both the economic and environmental crises.”¹⁴ The conference is sponsored by the National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE), which seeks “to improve the scientific basis of environmental decision making,”¹⁵ and has hundreds of university affiliates including Yale, Brown, and Duke. To the shock of progressives who know Beck, the NCSE invited him to present his views on a panel about “greening the tax code.” Despite letters of protest—including one from the Apollo Alliance,¹⁶ a national leader on green jobs—Beck remained a speaker. According to one workshop attendee, Beck framed his usual assertion that immigration is causing overpopulation¹⁷ as part of a commitment to a green economy, as well as suggesting that tax incentives be offered to encourage families to have fewer children. Beck leveraged his small role as a conference panelist for significant impact: his call for a Bureau on Population and Consumption was adopted by the workshop attendees and incorporated into the conference’s list of recommendations.¹⁸

What’s the Fight About?

Most people understand a “green job” to be one that benefits both the economy and the environment. Yet, interpretations and arguments over the meaning of “green jobs” abound.

The term “green jobs” was first written into law in the title of the Green Jobs Act of 2007, legislation signed by George W. Bush. According to the bill’s co-author, for-

mer Congresswoman (and current Secretary of Labor) Hilda Solis, the bill was designed “to establish national and state job training programs, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, to help address job shortages that are impairing growth in green industries, such as energy efficient buildings and construction, renewable electric power, energy efficient vehicles, and biofuels development.”¹⁹ According to the bill, a job was considered green if it was located in one of these industries.

Green for All, the organization co-founded by Van Jones, had a different take. Green for All emerged in 2007 as one of many players seeking to take control of the green-economy agenda. First in line were the wide array of corporations who

“Decisions are being made all the time. Progressives’ response needs to be more than ‘Oh my gosh!’”

define themselves as “clean energy” and who seek to expand that sector with more profits, subsidies, and workers. Next came organized labor and its economic-justice allies, such as the Apollo Alliance, who had long advocated for family-wage green jobs as part of a strategy to revive the devastated U.S. manufacturing sector. A range of social-justice organizations such as the NAACP have also entered the debate, seeking to ensure that green jobs benefit traditionally marginalized people of color and women.

Within this constellation, Green for All has carved out a role as a champion of green equity, seeking to “build an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty” and hold “the most vulnerable people at the center of our

agenda.”²⁰ Green for All is guided by Jones’s 2008 book, *The Green Collar Economy*, in which he advocates harnessing green-business energy and channeling it toward support for “family-supporting, career-track, vocational, or trade-level employment in environmentally friendly fields.”²¹

Green for All also sought to establish itself as an important political player willing to work with allies outside the progressive infrastructure. “Green for All sits in a broader political landscape than just social-justice organizations,” explains Vivian Chang, Green for All’s director of state and local initiatives. “Green businesses may not care about equity, but we are building relationships with them that we can leverage,” she says. The alternative, believes Chang, is a progressive sector that watches from the sidelines. “Decisions are being made all the time,” she argues. “Progressives’ response needs to be more than ‘Oh my gosh!’”²²

The new green jobs framing was powerful, says Penn Loh, a Tufts University Urban and Environmental Planning professor and the former director of Alternatives for Community and Environment in Boston. “We were inspired by Van,” reflects Loh. “He put out an opportunity framing on how fundamental shifts are coming, and we need to take leadership on the issue and decide our own opportunities within that. Van framed something positive to work for.”²³ Loh and others point out, though, that while the term “green jobs” is relatively new, the idea of linking the needs of communities of color with the pursuit of a greener economy is not.

Shrinking from Racial Justice

“Long before the green-development movement became trendy,” writes Brentin Mock in a 2009 *American Prospect* article,²⁴ “environmental-justice groups had a significant history with federal employment programs related to the environment, even before they were labeled as ‘green jobs.’” Mock points to programs such as the 1995 Minority Worker Training Program, which targeted minority youth for work in environmental fields

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and included a program in which they were trained in the cleanup of brownfields, or polluted properties.

“When the Green for All conception of ‘green jobs’ was rolled out in 2007 it was framed in a way that would not ruffle feathers and trigger an outcry from the Right,” says Robert Bullard, the director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University. “In its inception, in order for ‘green jobs’ to move forward politically and strategically, its scope needed to be limited,” observes Bullard.²⁵

“‘Green jobs’ was a great reframing of a good environmental justice idea,” argues Karlos Gauna-Schmieder, communications strategist with the Center for Media Justice. “But pulling out only the ‘jobs’ piece diluted the analysis of racism that environmental justice brought to it.”²⁶

“Progressives were framing green jobs as ‘race neutral,’” agrees Bullard. “Green jobs came at a time when antidiscrimination measures like set-asides and affirmative action had been dismantled. Without those how do you mandate that people of color have access to green jobs? Very few communities have sat down and written out antidiscrimination protections. Everyone’s skittish due to concerns about the Right.”²⁷

“If you pay attention to history,” asserts Makani Themba-Nixon, executive director of the Praxis Project, a nonprofit organization that helps community groups organize around issues of public health, you find that things like green retrofitting and weatherization and federal initiatives going on now were going on in the nineties. There were subsidies, but once they disappeared folks were subject to the same market racism as before. Without addressing how race structures opportunities and outcomes, people get lifted up then dropped.²⁸

In the Green Jobs Equity Toolkit, the Applied Research Center, a leading racial-justice advocacy organization, makes a similar point:

[T]here are too many instances where so-called green jobs are low-wage and dead-end, where women and

people of color are excluded, and where working conditions are unsafe and workers’ rights are ignored. When policy makers and green firms don’t consciously weave equity into a strategy for developing the green economy, green jobs are not guaranteed to be any more equitable or sustainable than jobs in the gray economy.²⁹

Indeed, the challenge of targeting green jobs to low-income communities of color remains formidable. In a 2010 report, *ARRA One Year Later: Failing to Address*

The Right’s attack on Van Jones was part of a larger strategy of “using race to take mainstream concepts and make them seem marginal and scary.”

Joblessness for Marginalized Racial Populations, the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity concluded that “the scale and scope of the [economic] crisis has overwhelmed the federal response. The Administration should now consider more significant actions” including “an equitable jobs bill” that “would ideally support community development in urban and minority-majority areas, which have been damaged most severely by the recession and credit crises.”³⁰ The report calls for renewed efforts to “ensure that marginalized communities are brought fully into the green economy, as ‘green job’ initiatives begin to take shape in both federal and state policy.”

The irony, maintains Bullard, is that “the Right has been willing to focus on race even if progressives aren’t. That’s what hap-

pened to Van.” Themba-Nixon agrees: “The attack on Jones was a test case for America’s right wing,” she writes in *Fair Game: A Strategy Guide for Racial Justice Communications in the Obama Era* (2010).³¹

[The Right] easily leveraged racial stereotypes and long-time phobia of Black men and left-thinking progressives to gain his ouster. More casualties followed as the Right used this potent combination of racism, anti-Jewish sentiment, and fear of left ideas to frame other appointees as un-American.³²

While the Right’s attack on Jones was part of a larger strategy of “using race to take mainstream concepts and make them seem marginal and scary,” observes Themba-Nixon, undermining the popularity of green jobs was also an aim. “The Right uses race in subtle ways: their message is ‘These aren’t jobs, they’re regulations. You are being fooled by people who want to give something to ‘undeserving’ people of color.’” Shying away from racial justice, it seems, has both weakened the effectiveness of green-jobs efforts and made the green-jobs agenda vulnerable to right-wing assault.

Progressive Visions for the Future

A growing number of progressive organizations are pushing to expand the idea of green jobs beyond what has been politically possible thus far. “The way green jobs are defined suggests that we can continue to have expanding growth if we have an economy that is based on clean energy and solar panels,” says Gopal Dayaneni of Movement Generation, an organization that works on environmental justice issues in the San Francisco Bay Area. “It’s not challenging who controls those jobs. It legitimizes overconsumption.”³³

“‘Green jobs’ isn’t the right framework,” says Loh, “It’s too narrow. If the shifts coming are really that big, then ‘green the economy’ is not just about capitalism fixing itself. It’s also about shifting who ben-

efits from and who controls the economy.” Dennis Rhoden, head of the Energy Democracy Program for the Center for Social Inclusion, asserts, “We have an opportunity to think about green jobs *and beyond*. Even working in a traditional market structure, we still need to try to turn the market idea on its head.”³⁴

“We have to make more of a distinction between corporate-led greening and community-led greening,” agrees Loh. “There are certain elements that really do think all we have to do is put competitive economic markets to work to solve all our problems.” Loh describes how “community-led greening” is beginning to work in his liberal state of Massachusetts.

During the 2008 Green Jobs Act we saw green venture-capital and high-tech start-ups going for the bulk of the subsidies in the bill. The speaker of the House [Sal DiMasi, now under indictment for corruption] was with them but the legislators pushed back and really questioned those companies on how they were creating jobs for the inner city. Their arguments for a green, Ph.D.-based innovation economy backfired with committee members from economically depressed communities.³⁵

Darlene Lombos, co-director of Community Labor United (CLU) in Massachusetts, was one of the authors of *The Green Justice Solution* (2008),³⁶ which asserts that the bottom line for success is “building community capacity and ownership for greening.” She says,

We must start from the question: “What does it take for a community to develop the capacity to green its own economy and environment?” Although the public sector and businesses have major roles to play in creating new energy and efficiency opportunities, greening our communities is not something that can come from outside, something that can be “done to” or “done for” us. Each family, each work group, each neighborhood and congregation has

a critical role to play.³⁷

Like Loh, Lombos believes, “We need to reframe green jobs to be not just jobs but collective power and community building in a green economy.”³⁸ This could, of course, mean many things. For Dayaneni it includes immediate choices, such as using federal stimulus funds “to incubate local worker-owned collectives, not just jobs for local residents.”

“We need to reframe green jobs to be not just jobs but collective power and community building in a green economy.”

The 2010 report, “Environmental Justice and the Green Economy,”³⁹ which Loh co-edited, offers three key principles to guide the building of a just and sustainable economy: full and meaningful participation of all communities in spending decisions; investment only in truly sustainable infrastructure and economic development; and creation of economic alternatives that can generate shared green wealth.

A Green Economy from the Bottom Up

Lombos points to her work with the Boston Green Justice Coalition on the federally mandated increases in energy efficiency for utilities. The coalition ran a campaign to ensure that these mandates would result in low-income communities’ access to rebates and incentives as well as “high road” green jobs. “Cost effectiveness,” Lombos points out, “is usually defined only in terms of energy reduction, not in terms of social and economic benefits.”

For example, utility companies often offer rebates for homeowners who weatherize—but this doesn’t help low-income families who cannot put up the initial investment. Moreover, says Lombos, utilities are creating weatherization jobs that are intermittent and not concentrated in one geographic area; they are temporary and often out of reach for low-income communities. Utility companies “use market-based solutions for what [they see as] market-based problems,” concludes Lombos. “The result is green-economy marginalization of communities of color who have been systematically marginalized by the fossil-fuel economy.”⁴⁰

Recognizing this, the Green Justice Coalition ran a successful campaign to establish a publicly funded pilot project to make energy-efficiency resources available to low-income communities and create real employment opportunities for residents. The project establishes neighborhood-based weatherization programs, through which resources can be accessed collectively. Weatherization projects get “bundled” in time and location in an effort to create steady employment. A union partnership seeks to ensure that the weatherization jobs will be high quality. While the coalition continues to struggle with the utility company, Lombos believes “this campaign helped us break apart the market-based ideology while we were pushing for real impacts. We need to find more opportunities like this, to really shape what a community-defined green economy looks like.”

Native communities are leading some of the most innovative work on the green economy. “Our definition of green jobs challenges every aspect of the mainstream green jobs definition,” says Nikke Alex, director of the Black Mesa Water Coalition in Flagstaff, Arizona, the organization that launched the Navajo Green Economy Coalition.⁴¹ In 2009 this coalition won the enactment of the Navajo Green Economic Plan, which created a structure through which tribes control the influx and use of green jobs funding, directing it toward local economy projects such as wool mills

and farmers' markets. "For us, green jobs means revitalizing tradition that has been lost," maintains Alex. "White environmentalists' definition of green jobs is at large, regional scale. It doesn't work. Every community needs to define green jobs for itself, neighborhood to neighborhood, around cultures and lifestyles."⁴²

Alex describes the difference between the coalition's green-jobs efforts and the interests of wind and solar companies seeking access to Indian land. "Renewable energy companies are really interested in tribal lands. There were two wind-energy companies trying to come in; one was approaching one part of tribal government and the other was approaching another. Both were promising jobs. It was a big diversion from the Navajo Green Economy Plan," she says.

"Renewable energy companies come in and give tribes horrible deals," continues Alex. "They're just as bad as coal." Alex believes that without grassroots-directed energy policies, marginalized people are vulnerable to exploitation. "Tribes need strong energy policies that focus on helping grassroots people rather than on having huge renewable-energy companies come here."

Getting Bold

In the face of right-wing attacks, expanding the green-jobs agenda may seem unwise. Some argue, however, that now is the time. Progressives must put forth "a coherent alternative vision that people can get behind," argues Loh. "We can't win that much without challenging market-based ideology." Dayaneni, too, urges green-jobs advocates to openly challenge corporate-defined "green" solutions. "Green venture- and renewable-energy capital—usually thought of as wind or solar—is getting into crazier things like synthetic biology and novel microbial life forms," he says. "These are not only false solutions, they are also scary."

Colin Rajah, at the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) agrees, noting, for example, that the "green corporations want cheap

immigrant labor. They want expansion of a guest-worker program for green jobs. Guest workers are needed for seasonal jobs, some of which could be classified as 'green.'" Rajah points to the construction of solar panels as an example of seasonal work "creating a temporary demand for exploitable labor."⁴³

"We need a loud voice making it clear that the drive for growth is at the heart of

the problem," maintains Dayaneni. Progressives, he adds, should challenge the policies and ideas of the Right directly, in order to widen the spectrum of political debate. "Progressives need to say 'we won't solar power our way out of this' so the Right will attack us, not the center, and the debate will shift toward real solutions rather than just what is politically possible at this time."

California Green Economy Hopes Survive Right-Wing Attack PROPOSITION 23 GOES DOWN TO DEFEAT

In one of the few bright spots for progressives in the November election, California voters strongly rejected the proposed "dirty energy" initiative funded by big oil companies—including a \$1 million contribution from Koch Industries—and supported by Tea Party activists in the state.² Proposition 23 sought to suspend the state's 2006 Global Warming Solutions Act until the unlikely event that unemployment in the state fell to 5.5 percent for at least one year. With 97 percent of precincts reporting, defeat of the initiative was officially declared with a 61 percent "no" vote.³

The arguments for Proposition 23—that while "we all want to do our part on global warming ... protecting jobs and the economy should be our first priority"⁴—were crafted to demonstrate concern for communities hard hit by the recession. While exit polls will need to be reviewed for a full analysis, California voters of color may prove to have been decisive in the defeat of Proposition 23.

Findings on the views of communities of color have varied depending on the polling questions and methods. However, a Field poll in July showed a majority of Asians, African Americans and Latinos in favor of the proposed initiative.⁵ An October poll by the Public Policy Institute of California found statewide opposition to Proposition 23 had grown,⁶ and support appeared to be falling among groups such as Latinos.⁷ One poll found that 53 percent of African American voters surveyed opposed Proposition 23.⁸

"We knew from the start that our communities could be the key swing votes," says Ian Kim, the campaign manager for Communities United Against the Dirty Energy Prop, a coalition of environmental-justice organizers and green-jobs advocates that targeted voters in low income communities of color. "We mounted a massive effort to educate Californians of color, and all signs are that it made a big difference."⁹

—Julie Quiroz-Martinez

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Ultimately, says Loh, progressives need to develop a deeper long-term strategy. “We are doing incremental work,” he says, “but we need to answer, ‘What is the framework that should undergird the work?’” Bullard agrees. “The green economy cuts across a lot of policies, programs, and ideas. We on the Left haven’t done a lot of thinking across all those sectors. We need to roll out initiatives that see the connections across areas.”

“We’re not being bold enough,” says Lombos. “We’re too careful, too worried about making moderates look bad.” She believes it’s crucial “to build coalitions with communities of color as decision makers. These create a path to a deeper analysis of what a green economy means.”

Reuniting Green Jobs and Environmental Justice

In early October, Van Jones joined the longtime environmental-justice leader Pam Tau Lee and the farmworker organizing legend Delores Huerta to throw support behind a new effort, Communities United Against the Dirty Energy Prop,⁴⁴ a grassroots campaign to defeat Proposition 23 in California’s November election. [See sidebar, page 21]

The group feared a tight race as advocates such as the Koch-funded Pacific Research Institute once again trotted out the Spanish study to stir up fears of job loss.⁴⁵ California Tea Party activists had turned out to support Proposition 23, even organizing a protest at the state headquarters of the California Air Resources Board waving “Save Jobs” placards.⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, an election-eve Field poll found that voters who identified strongly with the Tea Party movement favored Prop. 23 by 61 percent. Voters who identified somewhat with the Tea Party supported the initiative by nine points.⁴⁷ Against this backdrop, Communities United, representing more than 130 community organizations and renewable energy businesses, launched to galvanize voters in low-income communities of color. “If we don’t jump in,” explained Mari Rose Taruc, the state coordinator, who is based at the

Asian-Pacific Environmental Network, in an interview prior to the election, “this would be the usual fight between white environmentalists and industry. That’s not okay, because low income communities of color are the most impacted by pollution and climate change. Our leadership needs to be central in this fight.”⁴⁸ According to Taruc, the campaign focused on “talking directly to voters, doing field work, not ad campaigns, taking interaction with voters to a deeper level that turns people around and gets them fired up to go to the polls.” With Jones, Lee, and Huerta co-chairing, Communities United sought to inspire African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Latino voters with its bottom-up vision of community health and green jobs. Over the course of the campaign, Communities United held over 250,000 one-on-one conversations with voters through door-

“We need a loud voice making it clear that the drive for growth is at the heart of the problem.”

knocking and phone-banking and sent direct-mail letters in English, Spanish, and Chinese to more than 280,000 households of color.⁴⁹

Remarkably, less than a year has passed since a cross-section of environmental-justice leaders from across the country signed an open letter to Jones criticizing him for his published comments that environmental justice groups were too focused on gaining “equal protection from bad stuff,” while his green jobs allies sought “equal access to good stuff.”⁵⁰ The threat of Proposition 23 encouraged collaboration between environmental-justice and green-jobs leaders.

“The work against Proposition 23 is one of the most exciting and aligned places between environmental justice and green jobs in a long, long time,” observes Taruc. “Because Proposition 23 has two clear sides it made it easy to lift up environmental justice concerns around the negative health effects of pollution and climate, as well as the new opportunities that good green jobs can offer.”

But the campaign against Prop 23 is more than just a united front, maintains Taruc. Through Communities United, environmental justice organizers and green jobs advocates forged a direct working relationship, with space for dialogue and creative tension. “Because environmental justice folks are working alongside green jobs folks,” explained Taruc, “the [environmental justice] people are reminded that we have ideas for green jobs too. We’re allowing ourselves to articulate those ideas, to imagine alternatives.” Neither fighting against each other nor compromising their principles, both sectors are seeing and hearing other points of view. For example, said Taruc, “When we’ve brought the green jobs folks to a community next to a refinery they have been really moved. They’ve gotten a better sense of the urgent problems we’re fighting against, and seeing how these are the same communities they’re trying to work with on green jobs.”

The defeat of Proposition 23 is cause for celebration. At the same time, larger questions loom as to how progressives can win on offense as well as defense. Answering these questions will be neither quick nor easy, and it will require leadership from the communities most harmed by a fossil-fuel economy as well as bold articulation of a green-economy agenda that challenges the confines the Right has successfully imposed. It will require candid reflection on recent history and development of strategy that starts immediately but spans decades. The Communities United experience, Taruc concludes, offers a glimpse of possibility, a moment in which progressives came together “not just about green jobs but about what green jobs are for.” ■

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.....Reports in Review.....

REPORT OF THE MONTH

The Tea Parties' Racist Edge

Tea Party Nationalism

by Devin Burghart and Leonard Zeskind
Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, October 2010, 94pp. <http://www.teapartynationalism.com/>

You are not alone if you are confused about the organization of the Tea Party—or more accurately, the *Tea Parties*—and what they stand for. Are they run from above by “astroturf” groups that pretend to be grassroots, or are they a genuinely insurgent, right-wing populist phenomenon? Are they representative, as they claim, of mainstream America? Do they just want smaller government and lower taxes? If so, why do some members come to rallies sporting guns and waving hateful signs? This timely report tackles these questions, rekindles the debate about racism in the Tea Parties’ ranks, and asks a few pointed questions of its own.

The Tea Parties have wrestled with criticism about their attitudes toward race since their beginnings in 2009. Last summer the NAACP challenged Tea Party leaders to repudiate their openly racist comments and to ask their members to stop using language that promotes White supremacy. The reactions of various Tea Party groups ranged from denial and righteous indignation to purges of overtly offensive spokespeople.

The collection of groups that identify as the Tea Party is arguably the most vigorous social movement of the decade, a backlash against Barack Obama’s successful presidential campaign and legislative agenda. It emerged from the ranks of overwhelmingly White working- and middle-class disaffected voters who are worried about their economic, political, and sometimes social status. While they have rallied around small government, lower taxes, and more freedom, this report reveals that many Tea Party spokespeople are also motivated by a fear of losing White privilege.

Authors Burghart and Zeskind published their important and relevant research less than two weeks before the midterm elections of 2010. Their report examines six Tea Party organizations, from the top-down Freedom Works group led by former Congressman Dick Armey, to grassroots groups such as the Tea Party Patriots, to Tea Party Nation, a for-profit group that organized a February 2010 convention keynoted by Sarah Palin.

Tea Party Nationalism argues that while most members of Tea Party groups are “sincere, principled people of good will,” as the fore-

word by NAACP President Benjamin Jealous states, the leaders and spokespeople of five of the six factions described in the report have histories with anti-immigrant, nativist, “birther,” or other racialized ideologies. Not only do Tea Party groups have crossover membership with racist groups such as the Council of Concerned Citizens, but they also repeatedly use bigoted language to present their vision of America as a place that values Whites above all others. The 1776 Tea Party, or TeaParty.org, has close associations with the anti-immigrant Minutemen. Dale Robertson, 1776’s founder, infamously carried a sign to a Tea Party rally that said, “Congress = Slaveowner, Taxpayer = Nigger.” According to the report, ResistNet, another group, has stated on its website, “We are at a point of having to take a stand against all Muslims.” The report’s evidence is damning, although in the immediate aftermath of its well-publicized publication, Tea Party representatives vehemently denied their racism.

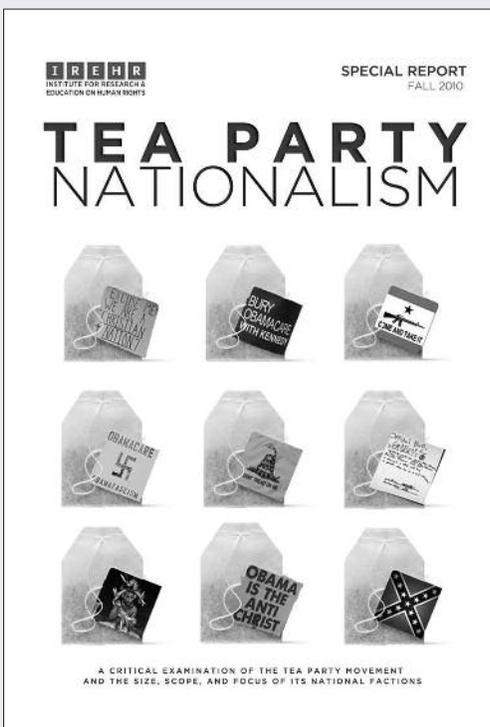
Tea Party members are not motivated only by racial resentment, however. A University of Washington poll showed that one-third of Tea Party supporters strongly opposed allowing gay men and lesbians to adopt children or to serve in the military. Information like this rounds out a picture of the Tea Parties and should help activists design more effective strategic responses.

Analysts and progressive advocates are still trying to get a handle on the phenomenon of the Tea Parties. Why does it matter whether the Tea Parties are astroturf or grassroots in their

structure? Top-down control indicates a national structure, presumably with access to money, trying to manage the messaging and influence of a political movement. Grassroots organizing suggests a more decentralized, harder-to-control movement. As it happens, the report makes a convincing case that both approaches are at play simultaneously. The implications for activists include the need to monitor the leading players as they jockey for power over the movement and to recognize that grassroots insurgencies are hard to manage, like the proverbial task of herding cats.

At this early moment in the development of the Tea Parties, their future remains unclear. How will they influence electoral politics? If they continue to attract members who are susceptible to overt or coded White supremacist ideas, the growth of such a movement would not portend well.

—Pam Chamberlain



Other Reports in Review

Better Together: Research Findings on the Relationship between Racial Justice Organizations and LGBT Communities

Rinku Sen, Seth Wessler, and Dominique Apollon
Oakland, CA: Applied Research Center, 2010,
20 pp., http://www.arc.org/images/lgbt%20report_091710_final.pdf

A lot of talk circulates among activists these days about the value of organizing at the intersections of political issues, for example, looking at racial justice through a sexuality lens and vice versa. While progressive activists assume that this cross-sectional work is a good idea, according to this breakthrough report, very little of it actually occurs in our movements. Organizations do not focus on intersectional work often enough to overcome the inevitable barriers it meets. Nor do such groups develop what this report calls “strategic clarity” about why intersectional work is a good idea in the first place.

The researchers surveyed eighty organizations. About half were self-identified racial justice groups, and half were lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender groups that focused on people of color. To tease out how to strengthen the relationships between racial justice and LGBT groups, the researchers also interviewed more than thirty LGBT activists who are working to improve that relationship.

The report looks at logistical questions about how racial justice and LGBT groups work, both together and side by side. How much is being done now; what barriers prevent enhanced cooperation; and what funders can do to support this effort were the central research questions. These are answered con-

cisely in a set of commonsense recommendations:

- 1 Increase support for LGBT groups of color and for collaborations among racial justice and LGBT groups.
- 2 Support research about LGBT people of color that will contribute to useful strategy designs.
- 3 Provide substantial leadership development for LGBT leaders of color.
- 4 Publicize important research results about LGBT people of color and build media and communications strength among racial justice and LGBT people-of-color organizations.

But *Better Together* poses an important strategic question for movement organizations seeking to strengthen connections between racial justice and LGBT constituencies. Although these groups would seem to have a natural connection because of common enemies and even common causes, the report suggests that groups do not make the commitment to doing cross-sectional work unless they have first reached “strategic clarity” about such activities. In other words, an organization will have a better chance of success if it knows why it is setting the goals it does. This process is of crucial value to any group, and the report is right in highlighting its importance. Its shortcoming is in not digging deeper to find out how to enable groups to reach a clear understanding of their shared agendas.

The report clearly describes the barriers to a nuanced understanding. For instance, half of the racial justice organizations polled said that LGBT issues were “not central to the organization’s goals.” Yet the policy issues central to racial justice, from education and health-care to housing, employment, immigration, and criminal justice, are also issues of concern to LGBT communities. The activists interviewed report that although homophobia in some racial justice and religious communities, and lack of racial diversity in LGBT organizations, can be barriers, when groups buckle

down and share work they can also learn to overcome such obstacles.

Reaching “strategic clarity” remains elusive for many groups. The report suggests two remedies: first, generate more data that demonstrates LGBT concerns in a racial justice lens; and second, explore the “sexuality dimensions of traditional racial justice issues.” While important, these research activities are not a substitute for the in-house, honest review of goals and strategies in relation to other progressive issues that many activists report has been the turning point for their organizations. In fact, progressive groups can benefit from both aspects of collaboration: shared work and internal commitment to cross-issue activities. While *Better Together* does discuss the value of working together across issues, it would have been improved by highlighting how a group can facilitate that necessary internal self-examination.

—Pam Chamberlain

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COMMENTARY *cont'd from page 2*

Despite their rhetoric, the Tea Partiers are not really antigovernment; most undoubtedly want schools, roads and public transportation, sanitation and stewardship of the environment, protection from crime, fire, and natural disasters—and their enthusiasm for military spending is generally undimmed. They're just against a government that, as they see it, drains away their money in taxes and redistributes it to the undeserving poor. Devin Burghart and Leonard Zeskind, in their report *Tea Party Nationalism* [see page 25], debunk the Tea Parties' self-invented myths, particularly their supposedly sole concentration on budget deficits, taxes, and the power of the federal government. In the ranks, an abiding obsession with Barack Obama's birth certificate is often a stand-in for the belief that the first Black president of the United States is not a "real American."

They find the "Tea Party ranks to be permeated with concerns about race and national identity." In a study of the Tea Party, the University of Washington political scientist Christopher Parker found that many Tea Party loyalists harbor troubling biases against Blacks, Latinos/Latinas, immigrants, and LGBT people.

Newly elected Tea Partiers' loyalties are not to their political party but rather to their ideology, haphazard though it often seems. They may refuse to cooperate not only with Democrats but also with Republicans. This may diminish the Republicans' ability to pass legislation and tempt Boehner to keep the Tea Partiers out of his hair by unleashing them in congressional investigations—of Obama's birth certificate, voter fraud, Muslim "terrorists," immigrant "anchor babies," and other hot-button issues.

Even with Tea Party support, though, the Republicans will have trouble delivering on their promise of small government and balanced budgets, since the military allocation is for them sacrosanct, and

Medicare and Social Security the proverbial third rails. All that's left is the minuscule area of social programs, which even if it were eliminated altogether would barely make a dent in the deficit.

The Democrats, for their part, will find themselves between a rock and a hard place. Cave to Republican demands for immigration "reform" that's all prisons and barbed wire with no path to citizenship, for example, and they lose the support of Latinos and others in their base. Resist, and they are accused of undermining the American worker.

In exit polls, more than 25 percent of voters said they were angry and frustrated with government, and some 85 percent of them voted for Republicans in House races. Many, however, are not yet Tea Party true believers. To reach out to these people, the Democrats must shed their historical terror of being called soft on defense, unpatriotic, tax-and-spenders, liberals, coddlers of lazy, shiftless parasites. Holly Sklar, a progressive strategist, told *The Public Eye* that one way to gain a foothold among the White working class, small-business owners, and many white-collar workers is for progressive organizers to breathe new life into the slogan that the U.S. economy should help "Main Street not Wall Street." Democrats should hammer on the realities of the U.S. budget; the benefits that education, healthcare, housing, childcare, and other social programs bring to everyone in society; the wisdom of investing in sustainable technologies; and the security guaranteed by responsible membership in a global community. Unfortunately, if past performance is any predictor, the Democrats are more likely to tack to the center in pursuit of the Republicans than to chart a new course.

PRA's founder and President Emerita Jean Hardisty has long said that the political Right started listening to grievances from the grassroots just as the Left stopped. PRA allies Suzanne Pharr and Paulina

Hernandez, along with other shrewd progressives, call on those who want real change to get together with others who "experience similar conditions and share their desires for a different world." Depending solely on Internet organizing and Get Out the Vote campaigns is not enough, they say, because "no base is built, no community power is increased." In contrast, groups such as Working America showed in the recent election that door-to-door, face-to-face campaigning can pull people away from their attraction to Glenn Beck and the Tea Parties.

In other words, say Pharr and Hernandez, "Organize! Organize! Organize!"

—Chip Berlet, senior analyst
Amy Hoffman, editor, *The Public Eye*

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Eyes RIGHT

TEA-PARTY KIDS

Wayne Bell, the publisher of Coloringbook.com, is promoting a Tea Party coloring book, which he says is selling so quickly he cannot keep it in stock. A blurb on his website (www.coloringbook.com) describes the book:

A very pleasant song, coloring and activity book on Liberty, Faith, Freedom and so much more! Get involved, participate, self reliance, freedom of choice, work, government-of-for-by the people, Leadership, Ingenuity, Jobs and responsibility! [sic]

On the *Los Angeles Times* Culture Monster blog, Christopher Knight characterized the book as “[c]heerful in tone, semi-literate in its writing and factually challenged... Run-on sentences are rife,” he added, “which would have caused my third-grade teacher, Mrs. Adams, apoplexy.”

Bell says that he is not promoting any particular political point of view, noting that Coloringbook.com also publishes a Barack Obama coloring book. He claimed on FOX News that he’s received death threats because of the book.

BRINGING UP BABY-TERRORIST

The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, originally passed to guarantee citizenship for freed slaves by insuring that anyone born in the United States is a citizen, is coming under increasingly heavy fire since the passage of Arizona’s anti-immigrant law, SB1070. Representative Brian Billbray (R-CA) was a sort of anticitizenship pioneer: since 1995, he has filed yearly bills in Congress that, in contravention of the amendment, would deny citizenship to children born here whose parents are not citizens

(Billbray’s mother was not a citizen, but his bill contains an exemption that would grandfather him in).

Congressional Representative Louie Gohmert (R-TX) stepped up the rhetoric even further. In a late-June speech to the House of Representatives, he introduced his notion that terrorists were sending pregnant women to the United States to have their babies. Then, he said, the women take the babies home, “to be raised and coddled as future terrorists.” They could come back in 25 years, Gohmert said, “and blow us up.”

Gohmert elaborated in an interview with Fox Business News host Eric Bolling on July 1. When Bolling asked Gohmert about his “theory,” Gohmert replied, “It’s not just a theory.” Citing the attempted bombing of Manhattan’s Times Square by a Pakistan-born U.S. citizen, Bolling agreed that Gohmert’s fear was reasonable. “Start from the cradle,” he said.

More recently, Gohmert proposed a new solution to poverty. Speaking on the floor of the House of Representatives in September, he suggested giving farmland to welfare recipients. According to Media Matters’ Political Correction blog, Gohmert said, “We’ll give you so many acres that can provide land where you can live off of it, make a living and we’ll give you seed money to start, but you have to sign an agreement that you’ll never accept welfare again. How ’bout that? We got plenty of land.” Gohmert serves on the Subcommittee for National Parks, Forests and Public Land.

NO ISLAM IN TEXAS

Following a May vote to adopt new curriculum standards that will enshrine Christian nationalist ideas in the Texas social studies curriculum [see *The Public Eye*, Summer 2010], the Texas State Board of Education passed a resolution in September to reject what it calls “pro-Islamic distortions” in history texts. The resolution claims that books formerly used in the Texas schools “devoted more lines of text to Islamic beliefs and practices than Christian beliefs and practices.”

Although board member Patricia Hardy pointed out that the books under discussion were no longer used, her lame-duck colleague Don McLeroy, who lost the Republican primary and was serving out the final

months of his term, said that current textbooks have the same bias. “The biggest problem I saw was their overreach not to be ‘ethnocentric,’” McLeroy said of one world-history text. “It’s a very, very, very, very biased book. Christianity didn’t even make it in the table of contents.”

Gayle Fallon, a representative of the Houston Federation of Teachers, told the board, “I was a social studies teacher, and, I’m sorry. History is what it is. It happened.”

The resolution was written by Randy Rives, a businessman who is not a board member, having been defeated by a more moderate candidate. It is not binding.

However, commented Kathy Miller of the Texas Freedom Network, “Once again, without consulting any real experts, the board’s politicians are manufacturing a bogus controversy.” Board members, she said, are “putting politics ahead of just educating our kids.”

Eye LASHES

“[O]ur President is trapped in his father’s time machine. Incredibly, the U.S. is being ruled according to the dreams of a Luo tribesman of the 1950s. This philandering, inebricated African socialist, who raged against the world for denying him the realization of his anticolonial ambitions, is now setting the nation’s agenda through the reincarnation of his dreams in his son.”

—Dinesh D’Souza
“How Obama Thinks” in *Forbes* magazine,
September 27, 2010,
http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2010/0927/politics-socialism-capitalism-private-enterprises-obama-business-problem_5.html

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