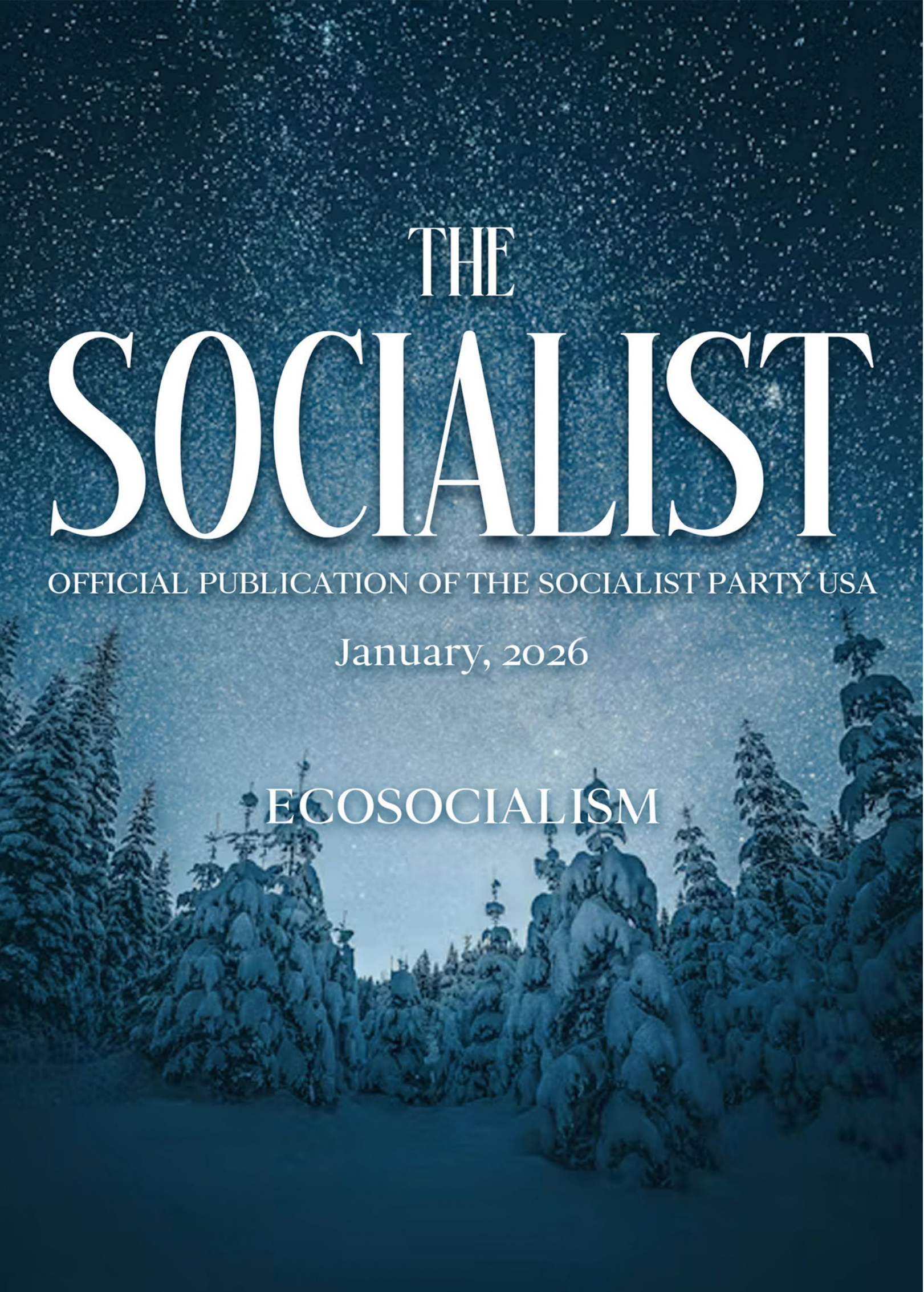

THE SOCIALIST

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY USA

January, 2026

ECOSOCIALISM

The Socialist is the official magazine of the Socialist Party USA. It is published twice per year. The magazine discusses Socialism and the Socialist Party in the everyday lives of working-class readers, whether it be labor, civil rights, health care, or environmental movements.

The magazine seeks to be a forum for discussion of essential questions of Party-building, movement-building, economic theory, and revolutionary praxis by both Party members and the general public. We are committed to stimulating the intellectual and ideological vibrancy of SP-USA and the US socialist movement with provocative essays, articles, fiction, and even poetry. We produce ***The Socialist*** to promulgate socialist ideas and because we seek to develop ourselves and our movement through intellectual labor.

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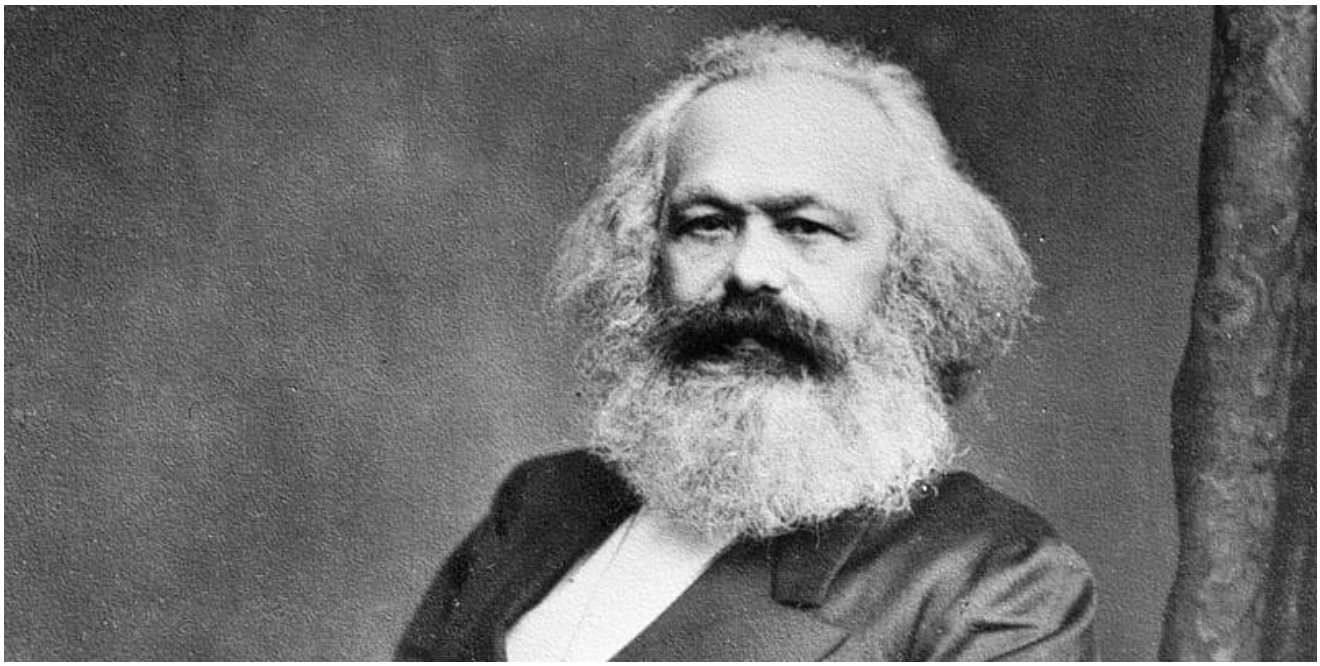

Karl Marx (5 May 1818 – 14 March 1883)

“What the working man sells is not directly his Labor, but his Laboring Power, the temporary disposal of which he makes over to the capitalist. This is so much the case that I do not know whether by the English Law, but certainly by some Continental Laws, the maximum time is fixed for which a man is allowed to sell his laboring power. If allowed to do so for any indefinite period whatever, slavery would be immediately restored. Such a sale, if it comprised his lifetime, for example, would make him at once the lifelong slave of his employer.”

“To say that ‘the worker has an interest in the rapid growth of capital’, means only this: that the more speedily the worker augments the wealth of the capitalist, the larger will be the crumbs which fall to him, the greater will be the number of workers than can be called into existence, the more can the mass of slaves dependent upon capital be increased.”

— Karl Marx

ARTICLES

Capitalism, Environment, Indigenous, and Marginalized Communities: Exploitation and Devastation

Aref Nammari

People of Color Commission

Two of the main characteristics of capitalism are continuous growth and the commodification of everything: everything in nature is potentially appropriated by the capitalist and exchanged for profit. “Capitalism is not simply a *world economy*, but also a world ecology that transforms human activity into commodified labor power, land into private property, and nature into an external object to be harnessed for the accumulation of capital” (Moore 2016). To sustain and maximize profit for the capitalist, production and exchange of commodities must continuously grow, while at the same time, the cost of production is reduced. To this end, capitalism was built and developed through the exploitation of not only local labor and natural resources, but globally through the subjugation of indigenous peoples, enslavement of Africans, and plunder of nature (Gonzalez 2021). Thus, the “exploitation of the planet and of people is not an unfortunate consequence, it is the very foundation of the world as we know it has been built” (Loach 2024). The result is environmental devastation and a climate crisis, the burden of which

is primarily borne by indigenous and marginalized communities, and the poor working class in the USA and globally.

Green Washing and Indigenous Communities

A cursory look at the history of capitalism is enough to indicate that the likelihood of governments and industry coming up with solutions to climate change is practically nil (Saito 2020). Instead of real effective solutions, the tendency has always been to shift responsibility, cost, and burden to the peripheries and to the consumers. Nothing illustrates this point as much as the car industry. To combat the rising emissions from cars, we are told that the solution is to shift to electric or hybrid vehicles. Instead of developing and promoting efficient public transportation networks, governments and industry have shifted responsibility to individual drivers. Electric and hybrid cars' source of energy is rechargeable batteries. One of the main components used in the production of those batteries is lithium.

The "lithium triangle", a region in Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia is home to native indigenous communities. It sits on vast reserves of the mineral: about 52 percent of known world lithium reserves. As the demand for lithium surged between 2021-2023, the extraction of lithium in this region increased dramatically threatening the very existence of those indigenous communities.

A common and cost-effective method of lithium extraction is the evaporative lithium brine process, which uses vast amounts of water. In Chile, ~~the~~ large lithium deposits are in the Atacama plateau, a dry arid desert where indigenous communities live and depend on subsistence farming. The diversion of water resources to lithium mining has forced the migration of those communities, as they can no longer survive and maintain their traditional way of life with what little water is left, let alone the contamination of the soil and destruction of vast areas of land resulting from those mining operations.

In the USA, large deposits of lithium were recently discovered in the Thacker Pass area in Nevada (Figure 1). This project is "tied to violent US settler colonialism and a new era of resource exploitation. The project sprawls over nearly 18,000-acres on Numu/Nuwu and Newe ancestral lands the US government stole from them" (HRW and ACLU 2025). The project was approved by the US government without any real or "meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples and without their free, prior, and informed consent" (HRW and ACLU 2025). The extent of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) contact with the Tribes was three rounds of mailings. No in-person meeting or discussion about the mining operation and its potential impact on the indigenous Tribes' rights. US courts have rebuffed the Tribes' effort to challenge the project which prevents the Tribes from accessing their ancestral lands and from practicing their traditions and practice their religion (HRW and ACLU 2025).

Cobalt is another component used in the manufacture of lithium-ion batteries used to power electric vehicles. 60 percent of the cobalt produced in the world originates from mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Cobalt and other metals mining is fueling the armed conflict between rival warlords and the government. In southern Congo, child and slave labor are prevalent. Forty thousand children as young as 6-7 years old are employed in those mines to extract cobalt and other minerals with their bare hands and using primitive tools: chisels and hammers (Saito 2020).

Those are some examples of the true cost of what is touted as a green alternative to fossil fuels. Greenwashing is nothing more than the displacement of capitalism's contradictions elsewhere, rendering them invisible as Marx has pointed out.

Environmental Racism: Marginalized Communities

Environmental racism refers to the disproportionate exposure of

marginalized communities to environmental hazards. Marginalized communities are groups that face and experience significant disadvantages and discrimination related to factors such as ethnicity, skin color, and immigration status. Being disadvantaged limits those communities' access to resources, political power, and opportunities, thus making them more likely to be exposed to higher risks, including environmental risks. It is very important, however, to note that socioeconomic status, disability, gender, and sexual orientation often compound discrimination and the impact of environmental racism.

Environmental racism manifests in various ways, which include:

1. The placement of polluting industries and landfills in communities of color.
2. Inadequate access to clean water and sanitation in indigenous poor rural areas.
3. Higher exposure to air pollution and climate change for marginalized urban populations (Adekunte *et al*. 2025

In the 1930s, the federal government designated minority and low-income neighborhoods as risky investment zones for mortgage insurance and were marked as red. This became known as redlining. To enforce the separation of the redlined areas from the "safe" ones, the government recommended and placed highways close to and through the redlined areas. Those redlined zones also became the sites for polluting industries such as oil refineries, chemical facilities, and plastics plants. Toxic waste dumpsites were also located close to or within those communities, which became known as sacrifice zones. A report by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published in 2021 concluded:

- Black and African American individuals are projected to face higher effects of climate change for all six impacts analyzed in this report, compared to all other demographic groups. For example, with 2°C (3.6°F) of

global warming, Black and African American individuals are:

- 34 percent more likely to live currently in areas with the highest projected increases in childhood asthma diagnoses. This rises to 41percent under 4°C (7.2° F) of global warming.
- 40 percent more likely to live currently in areas with the highest projected increases in extreme temperature-related deaths.
- This rises to 59 percent under 4° C of global warming.

● Hispanics and Latinos have high participation in weather-exposed industries, such as construction and agriculture, which are especially vulnerable to the effects of extreme temperatures. With 2° C (3.6° F) of global warming, Hispanic and Latino individuals are 43 percent more likely to live currently in areas with the highest projected reductions in labor hours because of extreme temperatures. Regarding transportation, Hispanic and Latino individuals are about 50 percent more likely to live currently in areas with the highest estimated increases in traffic delays due to increases in coastal flooding (http.www.epa.gov 2021).

In Flint, Michigan, the abandonment of the city by capital (GM moving its assembly work abroad), has made the city “increasingly poor and black” as affluent white people left (In 1970, Flint was 70 percent white, in 2016 37 percent of Flint residents were white). Not only was it abandoned by the capital, but it was also abandoned by the state, which is evident by the shrinking services and investment in vital infrastructure. The ensuing poisoning of the water supply for the city and the attempts of cover up and deflect responsibility by state officials left

thousands permanently impacted by lead poisoning. Children are especially harmed by the poisoning, and the effects will not be fully known for years.

Flint is just one example of how a community can be considered "disposable by virtue of being predominantly poor and black" (Pulido 2016).

Appalachia: Coal Boom and Bust

Appalachia extends from southern New York to Mississippi. It sits over large deposits of coal. This region produced two-thirds of the coal used in the USA. In central Appalachia, particularly, whole towns depended on coal mining. In fact, those towns were built by mining companies—a modern form of slavery where the earnings of miners went back to mine owners in the form of housing rent and services provided.

Mine workers' unions were strong and managed to get some gains for the workers; however, the mining companies, having strong relationships with local politicians managed to get laws passed restricting and seriously weakening the power of the workers' union and organizing. In addition, the local politicians were all too eager to attract mining companies under the pretext that creating jobs would result in developing the local economy and enriching the residents, causing the community that subsidized the coal mining industry to relax or ignore health and safety concerns.

As the demand for coal decreased, in an effort to cut costs, mining companies developed new techniques for extracting coal: mountaintop removal, where literally mountain tops were blasted away to access the coal seams. This resulted in laying off workers and serious damage to the environment in the form of loss of habitat, deforestation, and water pollution. Acid drainage, a byproduct of coal extraction has resulted in contaminating rivers, making them unable to sustain life as well as serious health risks to the local population (Zipper *et al*. 2011). The further decline in demand for coal and the challenges of

mountaintop removal methods made the cost of mining too high for the industry. As a result, many mining companies closed and relocated, leaving whole communities behind with no jobs and an environment scarred and polluted—unable to sustain life. Appalachia is a sad example of the co-modification of nature and labor, which is the hallmark of capitalism and a corrupt political system.

The above are but very small examples, illustrating the impact that indigenous peoples, marginalized, and poor communities experience as capitalism continues to exploit human and natural resources that further environmental damage and exacerbate the climate crisis.

Human life and everything in nature, as far as capitalism is concerned, has no value if it cannot be used to produce objects to generate wealth for the capitalist in the process of exchange. As a result, everything that has no value is disposable. This is the logic that underlies the capitalist system. Fighting environmental destruction and climate change cannot ignore the nature of the capitalist economic system responsible for creating the problem in the first place. Shifting responsibility from the industry and governments to the individual consumer is a smoke screen designed to make everyone believe things are being done when, in fact, further destruction of natural resources and communities under a new name and disguise continues unabated.

Indigenous, marginalized, and poor communities have been organizing across borders and communities to bring attention to their plight and demand justice. Environmental justice requires a shift of the power structure from corporations to communities, and the transformation of the oppressive structures and systems that inflict violence on people and the planet. Environmental justice means recognizing that capitalism as an economic system itself is the problem.

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Public Rail and Ecosocialism

Mary Nickum

` What does public rail have to do with Ecosocialism? To answer the question. Let's first define Ecosocialism. Ecosocialism brings together two complementary ways of thinking about humans and the environment they live in. The "eco-" in Ecosocialism comes from the science of ecology and its emphasis on the complex and dynamic interactions among the living and non-living components within an ecosystem. In particular ecologists understand how the life-supporting functions within an ecosystem can be disrupted by the behavior of one organism, and that organism is humans.

Ecology, however, lacks a social analysis; it has no way of explaining how economic and political forces drive human behavior and social change can take place. Ecosocialism combines the insights of ecology with the rich tradition of socialist thought and action, especially those associated with Marxism. Marxism shows that the ecological crisis is rooted in a destructive economic and political system, capitalism, and it provides ways of understanding how capitalism works and of envisioning a system beyond capitalism, in which production is driven by human need. At the same time, environmental disasters, such as Chernobyl and the Aral Sea remind us that challenging or even eliminating capitalism is not enough. Whatever else we may think of the "really existing socialisms" of the 20th century, we can

agree that with few exceptions, they failed miserably in ecological terms. Thus, Ecosocialists are fighting for a new sort of socialism, one that considers the place of human beings in the planet-wide biosphere (System Change Not Climate Change.

Ecosocialism is not a monolithic framework. In fact, a lively and healthy debate goes on among Ecosocialists, especially concerning short-term strategy. All Ecosocialists agree that capitalism has to go, but they also recognize that the only way forward is through collaboration with more mainstream organizations that are not socialist. They also agree that a range of environmental reforms must be pursued, especially those that radicalize the people fighting for them and that bring together disparate branches of the environmental movement (System change Not climate change 2024).

The landscape of post-capitalist alternatives has deepened in recent years as growing numbers of activists and scholars identify global capitalism and its dynamic of compound growth as the primary driver of the climate emergency. Ecosocialism is one of the foremost among them, which has become a worldwide movement that challenges the hegemonic project of "green capitalism" while also addressing the ecological weaknesses of earlier forms of socialist politics. Ecosocialists convincingly demonstrate that capitalism is incapable of resolving the climate and broader earth system crises in a genuinely sustainable, let alone just, manner.

Now, the second part of the question is what public rail is. Public rail is railroads owned by the government. Some advantages of public ownership include:

- **Limiting Monopoly Abuse** – One of the main advantages of public ownership is that it limits companies from using their monopoly power to abuse consumers in terms of pricing. This is especially true for natural monopolies with only one firm where it is hard for new firms to enter the market. That's because it is hard to scale up the production in such industries: think how hard

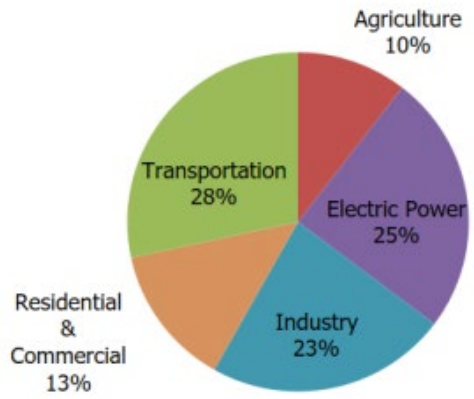
it is to build a network of electricity submission. Public ownership can scale up these industries without harming consumers.

- **Profit Goes Back to Taxpayers –** Because the government's money to fund investment in publicly owned companies and industries comes from taxpayers, these companies' profit goes back to the government, which is then invested in other public infrastructures such as railroads, schools, or hospitals. In this way, the public has an indirect return on its' tax money. If the company was privately owned, that profit would have been shared among shareholders.
- **Prioritizing the Long Term Over the Short Term –** State-owned enterprises tend to focus more on the long-term benefits than privately-owned companies. State-owned companies will be willing to incur some costs in the short run as long as they can have more benefits in the future. Moreover, the government will also consider maximizing the consumers' benefit. On the other hand, privately-owned companies will keep their focus on maximizing long-term profits. That is because they need to make their shareholders happy constantly. Otherwise, the company will be in some financial trouble.
- **Better Labor Conditions –** It is more likely people who work at a state-owned company will enjoy more benefits than those working in a privately owned company. This is especially true for unskilled work that a profit-maximizing firm could easily replace.
- **Positive Externalities –** When the government owns the railway system, they can reduce the ticket price even though it might mean that they are not making any profit. The reason for that is to provide the incentive for people to use public transportation to reduce pollution; however, this is not the case for a privately owned

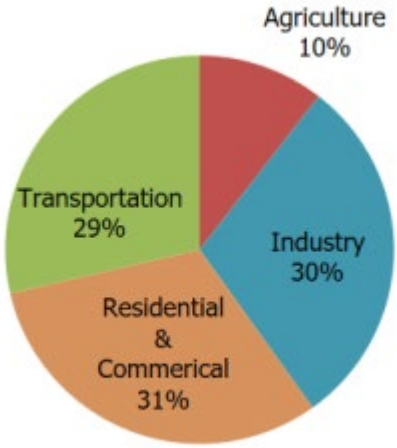
company (www.studysmarter.co.UK).

Public transportation and shipping to reduce pollution is the key “take away” of this article. Greenhouse gas emissions are the main culprit in our rising carbon footprint (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 Total U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector in 2022



Total U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector



Total U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector Including Electricity End-Use Indirect Emissions

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the greenhouse gas (GHG) emission trends are:

- Since 1990, gross U.S. greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by just over 3per cent. From year to year, emissions can rise and fall due to changes in the economy, the price of fuel, and other factors.
- In 2022, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions increased 0.2 percent compared to 2021 levels. In 2020, there was a sharp decline in

emissions largely due to the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on travel and other economic activity. In 2021 and 2022, the increase in total greenhouse gas emissions was driven largely by an increase in CO_2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion due to the continued rebound in economic activity after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In 2022, CO_2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion increased by 8per cent relative to 2020 and 1per cent relative to 2021. CO_2 emissions from natural gas consumption increased by 5 per cent compared to 2021. CO_2 emissions from coal consumption decreased by 6 percent from 2021. The increase in natural gas consumption and emissions in 2022 is observed across all sectors except for U.S. Territories, while the coal decrease in primarily in the electric power sector. Emissions from petroleum use increased by less than 1per cent in 2022 (www.epa.gov).

The following economic and ecological benefits were gathered and detailed by Public Rail Now (PRN) and the Climate and Community Institute:

Freight mode shift:

Rail reform and public rail ownership would have the potential to shift:

- Over 2,000 billion ton-miles from trucks to rail by 2050

For:

- An average of two thousand lives saved, and 70 thousand injuries avoided from fewer crashes,
- 130 million CO_2 of avoided carbon emissions,
- Over $10 billion in savings on road repair costs
- Over $11 billion in averted costs in traffic delays

Passenger mode shift

Rail reforms, especially when paired with investment in high-speed rail, have the potential to shift at least:

- 100 billion passenger-miles from flights to rail by 2050

- 300 billion passenger-miles from cars, trucks, and SUVs
  to rail by 2050

For:

- An average of two thousand lives saved, and 110 thousand injuries avoided from fewer crashes,
- 50 million CO_2 of avoided carbon emissions,
- $2 billion in savings on road repair costs
- Nearly $6 billion in averted costs in traffic delays
- Substantially reduced radiative forcing from passenger flights. Radiative forcing is a phenomenon associated with air flight that contributes more to climate change than direct greenhouse gas emissions from flights (every year)

Rail has a far lower impact than on-road and air transportation for both passenger and freight movement across all or nearly all these categories. With potential mode shifts for passenger and rail transit, the differential rates at which external costs are generated can be used to estimate total averted costs realizable from public rail ownership and associated reforms. These savings are substantial. In dollarized terms, the value of averted costs from realizable mode shifts could average up to about $140 billion a year (in real 2022 USD) and reach $190 billion a year by 2050.

AMTRAK

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation, better known as Amtrak, was created in the same era as Conrail to take over money-losing passenger routes from railroads across the country, many of which were facing bankruptcy. Amtrak would be given the right to operate over the entire national network and assume responsibility for providing passenger service. Even though Amtrak was taking over unprofit-able passenger services, for political reasons, Amtrak was charged with achieving profitability, a contradiction that has led to numerous issues in subsequent decades. As with Con-rail, Amtrak was formed as a quasi-public corporation with shares held by the federal government.

After a long series of debates about which passenger routes would be retained, 20 railroad companies opted to turn over their passenger services to Amtrak, which initially continued operations over 13 of these railroads' trackage. The first official day of Amtrak service began on May 1, 1971. Not all railroads initially handed over their passenger trains to Amtrak. Some, including the Southern Railway and the Rio Grande, chose to continue operating their own passenger trains—though they too eventually handed them over to AMTRAK. Companies that did hand over their trains paid a one-time fee or provided equipment to help AMTRAK start up service.

AMTRAK's subsequent history is complicated and worthy of much more detailed examination than can be provided here.

Despite frequent underfunding at a Congressional level, Amtrak has succeeded in providing crucial transportation links across the nation. Today, Amtrak provides passenger rail service to over 500 towns and cities across 46 states. Amtrak still operates three different categories of services: Northeast Corridor, State-Supported Routes, and Long-Distance Routes. Amtrak owns its own tracks in the Northeast, Wolverine, and Keystone Corridors. The remaining routes operate primarily mover Class I trackage, whose freight trains are a frequent cause of delays. Freight railroads often ignore statutory priority for AMTRAK passenger trains, forcing passengers to wait for long freight trains to pass.

After facing a sharp drop in ridership during the Covid-19 pandemic, Amtrak's trains are now setting ridership records as demand for climate-friendly travel options surges. With the injection of tens of billions of dollars from recent infrastructure laws, the FRA's study on restoring long-distance routes, and Amtrak's Connects US plan, America is poised for a passenger rail renaissance. Interference from Class I railroads remains one of the largest impediments to an otherwise promising landscape for passenger rail (Thomas 2024).

Decarbonization

Current plans to decarbonize transportation within the US, particularly on a timeline consistent with even 2° C of warming are extremely tenuous, to

the point of implausibility. Climate scientists warn repeatedly that even with the transition to EVs underway, we also have to reduce driving and Light Duty Vehicle (LDV) dependence to decarbonize personal transportation. Meanwhile, pathways to decarbonized air travel and long-haul trucking depend on rapidly increased uptake of technologies that are still mostly undeveloped, unproven, and/or uneconomical.

Given the rapid pace of decarbonization needed; the outsized and growing share of emissions that come from transportation, and the ease with which rail can be decarbonized with safe, proven, and easily deployed technologies (in contrast to trucking and air transportation), increasing freight and passenger transportation by rail is almost a certain necessity for decarbonization.

Achieving mode shifts in line with the ambitious forecast scenarios present a massive opportunity to make headway in decarbonizing this sector. On their own, the average annual emissions reductions from mode shift to rail estimated here would cut one-tenth from current sectoral emissions. By 2050, the total greenhouse gas emissions averted through mode shift to rail would reach nearly 5,000 MMT CO_{2e}—equivalent to 2 per cent of the world's remaining carbon budget to maintain a 50 per cent chance of staying within 1.5° C of warming, as of 2023 (Climate and Community.org)

The US railroad industry is structured currently as an underregulated, fragmented network of large regional monopolies or duopolies, in which private railroads have immense market power. A very basic tenet in economic theory is that monopoly power tends to result in reduced output at higher prices. Market power allows producers to focus on only their most profitable customers, reducing output but realizing higher-than-normal profits. This pattern is clearly visible in railroads in the US: reduced service, reduced investment, reduced workforce but higher prices and profits. Diminished output is visible in the data and consistent across metrics, while the

industry has been seeing far higher-than-normal profits

This is the capitalist approach we see that creates a process where the climate crisis cannot be solved. This process must be curtailed if the climate crisis is to be brought under control. Public Rail Now and the Climate and Community Institute have shown it is doable, but who will do it? The solution is Socialism, where the people are the government. The Socialist government acts in the name of the people, for the greater good. One important question remains: Will a Socialist government be installed in time to prevent climate collapse and other earth systems with it?

Public Rail is a perfect representative of Socialism. Public Rail certainly acts for the people, whether it is shipments by freight or passenger for work or travel, the people benefit from its consistent, inexpensive use. The environment benefits from the removal of much of the truck, automobile and airplane usage for freight and travel. Entire ecosystems then benefit consequentially from Public Rail.

A solution to the climate crisis rests in Socialism. Will the US be the first to attain a Socialist government and maintain it? Only time will tell, not too much time, we must hope. Currently, the SPUSA is working toward this goal. We must work tirelessly to outpace the climate crisis.

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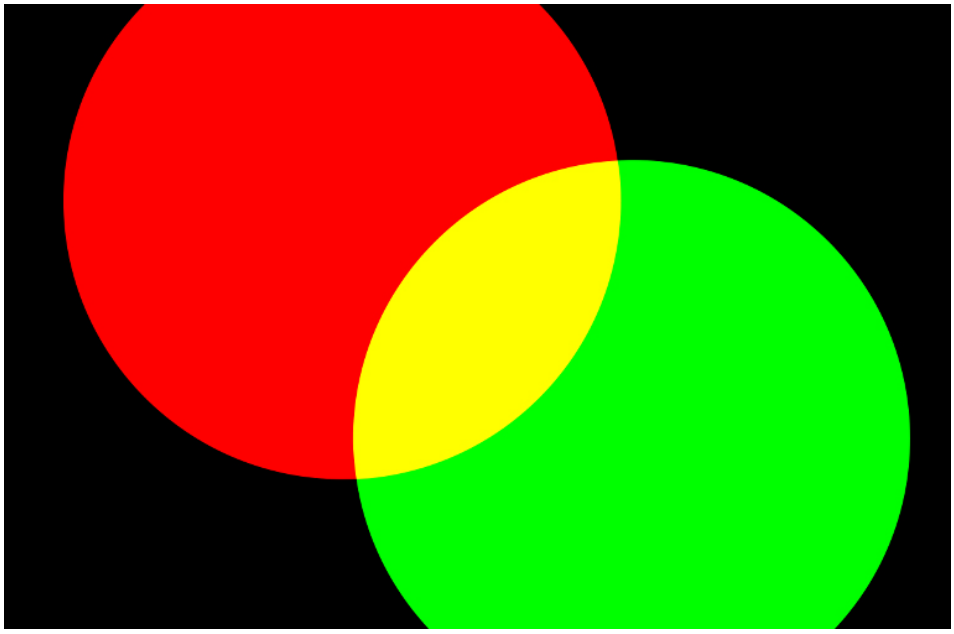

Waste is the Mission: The Consumption and Excess of the US War Machine

Jacob Stevens
Anti-War/Anti-Imperialism Working Group

I once powered up a 35-ton diesel vehicle to charge a cell phone. I faced no reprimand, and I was far from the only one in my unit to do so. Amidst the background of enormous excess and waste that all soldiers see, participate in, or hear about, it simply isn't a misdeed. Waste is the most pervasive, universal, tacitly accepted aspect of US Army service regardless of a veteran's military occupation, rank, or service era. It connects us all. The resources extracted for the manufacture of equipment, the fuel consumed by the military machine, the vast amount of surplus that goes underutilized or unused, are all incalculably staggering sums. A large part of my disillusionment with the military is the acceptance of the simple fact that the purpose of a system is what it does. The hopes, values, and oath I wished to impose on my service were ultimately meaningless. My role in the machine, the role of all soldiers from the privates to the generals, is to consume equipment, fuel, and supplies for capitalist gain, and all else comes secondary.

The US Army consumes an ungodly amount of fuel. The diesel for all our trucks, tanks, and a dizzying array of tactical vehicles, most of it burned during training exercises, amounts to roughly 322 million gallons a year. For comparison, the nation of Liberia is consuming about 92 million gallons of

petroleum a year for a population of about 5.7 million. If we include all the sworn active-duty soldiers, all the weekend warriors in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, all the civilian employees of the Department of the Army, we get a “population” of about 1.2 million people. This group of personnel manages to burn three and a half times the amount of fuel as the entire nation of Liberia. Astonishingly, the US Army, as wasteful and excessive as it is, accounts for only 7percent of the 4.6 billion gallons of fuel consumed by the US military annually. The Air Force accounts for just over half of all military fuel consumption, and the US Navy takes about a third. Laughably, all military branches developed plans under Obama to increase energy efficiency in an effort to combat climate change. The Department of the Army had a goal of getting some large military installations to net zero energy consumption. Surprising no one, the Trump administration has ended these energy efficiency goals as part of their effort to scrub anything regarding climate change from the entire federal government.

The American war machine does significant ecological damage just by virtue of being such a large consumer. It is an unavoidable fact that industry harms the ecosystem and human beings extracting resources that we very much need for a wide variety of uses. We need steel for everything from railways to rebar and inflict widespread ecological damage and the displacement of populations through the extraction of useable iron ore. It doesn’t take much imagination to think up a better use for hundreds of thousands of tons of steel than building the army’s tens of thousands M1 Abrams tanks. Even the generals have said they have no need for more of them, but they keep getting built because congress is politically incentivized to ensure their continued manufacture. Likewise, all the resources extracted to make the rubber, plastic, electronics, munitions, etc. for all the army’s inventory could be used far more beneficially than such vast squandering.

The US army is infamous for its high volume of surplus equipment. There is an entire industry of small businesses selling army surplus. One can even bid online on all sorts of vehicles no longer needed by the DoD. But the Army must get rid of more stuff than it can sell (or give away. Every municipal police department is awash in military surplus). Every soldier has heard stories of the destruction of perfectly good, even brand-new equipment. Tens of thousands of vehicles, billions of dollars in munitions, gear of all possible description all are destroyed. My company in the army reserve was issued equipment that a unit of our mission set would never need, that only saw the light of day during inventory layouts, and will one day be run through an industrial shredder, still new in the package, when it has been deemed obsolete. All of those manufactured goods, all of that human labor, all of that resource extraction, for plastic, steel, aluminum, microchips, completely wasted *at best.* At worst, a piece of army equipment contributed to needless death and the enforcement of the imperial capitalist system that we as a party labor against.

The ecological toll touched on so far is just the US Army working as intended; it doesn't even touch on the pollution it causes by accident or laziness. Water quality is bad at every Army instillation. The news sources say it is contaminated at a great many army bases, but soldiers have seen it so often, it's safest to just assume the water is contaminated at every single one. Every building owned by the US army seems to infect the tap water by virtue of being a US Army building. The reserve training center where I went to for monthly training was only a few years old when I started going there; It had posted notices about heavy metals in the water.

The PFAS or "forever" chemicals that have been making the news in recent years are a commonly found contaminant in US military installations' water supply along with benzene from leaky fuel storage containers and lead. Domestic military installations have provided the EPA a reliable source of

superfund sites in need of extensive clean-up. For all the American population puts up with living adjacent to these dangerously polluted facilities, it's nothing compared to what we do abroad.

The pollution and poor health outcomes caused by the mass burning of waste in the middle east is the most predictable and preventable disaster of the Global War on Terror. Surely, no serious person thought that the open air burning of plastic, rubber, electronics, all manner of textiles, and unexploded munitions via fires set with jet fuel was somehow safe. The phrase "burn pit exposure" in a VA compensation claim is nearly guaranteed to result in a disability rating. Sucking down a long list of unfiltered toxic chemicals has negatively impacted the health of an estimated 3.5 million military personnel over the years. Of course, this exposure only occurred for a deployment or two for these personnel, all of whom were medically assessed prior to their overseas duty to ensure good physical condition. There are no good estimates for the number of Iraqis, Afghans, and others in all stages of life who suffered downwind exposure day in and day out for years. We do know that civilian populations near US military bases in these regions suffered respiratory illness, cancers, birth defects, and damage to crops and livestock. We have caused irreversible harm to developing children and premature death among the elderly and infirm because the military thought it expedient to burn its surplus or damaged gear, and the true number of the harmed and dead will never be known because it wasn't even worth it to the military to track.

The purpose of a system is what it does. Coming to grips with this line of thinking did a lot to shake me from my complacency and tear away the security blanket of duty and mission that I clung to as a soldier. All US military personnel know of the wasteful, excessive nature of the US military; there is simply no denying it, but for most, this is an unfortunate biproduct of national security, a problem in the war machine that those higher up ought to solve

someday. Even most of my fellow socialists believe the US military is mission oriented; granted, they find that mission to be abhorrent, but it is an organization fulfilling a mission, nonetheless. I posit that the mission is secondary. Waste and excess are the main goals. Whether one believes that our army's mission is national security or the enforcement arm of American capital, in either case, *these* are the biproduct. The billions upon billions of dollars in annual expenditures fattening the bottom lines of a whole ecosystem of defense contractors is the most reliable outcome of our nation's army, and it has been a source of steady profits for a very long time.

A sampler of some of the juicy contracts that can be won by private for-profit companies: ManTech is the federal government's go-to private sector partner for just about any technological solution. In 2017 alone, they were awarded a five-year $847 million contract to maintain and support tens of thousands of Army MRAPs, a $200 million contract providing tech support for DARPA, an $80.3 million contract for US Naval Air Systems Command, and $152 million for supporting the US Army Communications and Electronics Command. The Department of Defense must have been very satisfied with their services, because the following year in 2018, they awarded ManTech another billion in contracts.

ManTech is a heavy hitter in the defense industry, but it looks like a small business compared to the $51.9 billion that Lockheed Martin did in DoD contracts last year. For the army specifically, Lockheed Martin just won a contract last September worth $9.8 billion for building thousands of new and improved interceptors for the Patriot missile defense system (no doubt inspired by the spectacular failure of that weapon system to defend against relatively cheap rockets and drones in recent conflicts).

Not all the big contractors are US companies. As a UK company, BAE Systems has extra hoops to jump through to bid on US defense contracts,

but it is highly lucrative to do so. Its American division did $13.6 billion in revenue in 2023 following two decades of gobbling up as many smaller defense companies as it can. Their most visible asset for the common soldier is the Bradley fighting vehicle.

Like all the great evils of our time, the unnecessarily high military expenditures are politically incentivized through lobbying efforts from the industry. The defense industry put about $69 million into its lobbying efforts in 2000, the year before the beginning of the Global War on Terror. By the end of the Bush era in 2008, they were spending $157 million on lobbying annually. It has been enormously successful; the Bush/Cheney administration provided generously for the war profiteers. Interestingly, the industry needed to spend slightly less on lobbying to elicit the Biden era pentagon budget, an unholy monument of bloat at a time that the administration was describing as “peace”. Notice that the sums described here for lobbying are paltry compared to the aforementioned contract amounts. It is challenging to find a better return on investment than the dollars the defense industry spends on lobbying.

The most effective of these lobbyists are former insiders. When looking up the career trajectory of former generals and admirals of all branches, it is more challenging to find one that *hasn’t* gone into the private sector wing of the military industrial complex. This revolving door galvanizes the perverse for-profit structure of America’s wars. Senior officers at the height of their power are incentivized to make the contractors happy to line up cushy jobs with those same firms.

A small sampling: Major General Kurt Lee Sonntag is a former special forces officer. He was the commanding general of the JFK Special Warfare Center and School; many comrades will recognize that storied institution as the birthplace of some of the worst malignancies of US foreign policy. The aforementioned ManTech proudly advertises all the senior military brass it has collected for its Defense Advisory

Board, General Sonntag among them.

General James McConville is a former Army Chief of Staff under Trump's first term and retained by Biden until his retirement from the military. This is the highest position attainable by a soldier in uniform answering directly to the secretary of defense and the president. Military drone manufacturer Edge Autonomy added quite a feather to its cap when it added him to the board of directors.

Brigadier General Jason Wallace holds a special place for me. He was the deputy commander in charge of operations of the 416th Theater Engineer Command. When I was deployed, he was effectively my fourth level boss. Even at this high level, he was still a reservist doing monthly drills like the rest of us when not activated for overseas duty. Yet even a weekend warrior like General Wallace has a cushy job waiting for him upon separation. He is a senior director at Dtech Mission Solutions, a subsidiary of Cubic Corporation, providing computer systems and support the military. Whether active duty, reserve, or guard, whether combat or support focused, every senior army officer can find himself a high paying position somewhere in the sprawling playground of the military industrial complex. There is enough pork in the appropriations bill to fatten them all.

US wars are about making money. This is not news to socialists, but again, one may be used to thinking of this from a mission focused framework. The US military is used to crack open foreign markets, destroy governments that dare to put their own national interests first, and enforce the rule of global capital, and certainly, it is used for these things. However, I would argue if these were the primary goals of the US military, this mission could be accomplished much more quickly, cheaply, and efficiently than it is managed at present. The class interests of the oil industry, the mining interests, and the other capitalists that enter the newly available foreign market following a US invasion are of secondary concern to the profits of the much more entwined defense contractors. In the last seventy-five years, our military has

perfected the profitability of war. Consider, the Korean War cost the US about $30 billion to prosecute, $352 billion in 2024 dollars. The war profiteers watched with glee as we dumped more ordnance on North Korea than we did during WWII. The Vietnam War cost the US somewhere in the neighborhood of $138.9 billion; the real sum is likely higher and may never be known. That's $766 billion in 2024 dollars. One need not say how happy the contractors were with the situation in Vietnam, a generation of folk singers already did. Iraq has cost the US (and again, it's probably higher) $1.9 trillion, and Afghanistan $2.26 trillion.

It's morbidly fun to imagine what could have been done instead with $2.26 trillion. Instead of needlessly destroying a foreign nation at the greatest possible cost for the sake of Raytheon's shareholders, it could have been invested in solar power. It costs about $20,000 to equip the average home with solar panels. $2.26 trillion could have provided solar power to 113 million homes, the vast majority of America's housing stock. In terms of wind power, it costs about $1.3 million per megawatt when building large wind turbines. The price tag of the war in Afghanistan could have provided us with 1.7 million megawatts of wind energy. Better mass transit is often cited as an effective means of addressing fossil fuel consumption and combatting climate change. Light rail is expensive to build in the US compared to other countries, but even at an estimated cost of $202 million per mile of newly constructed light rail, the cost of the Afghanistan war could have paid for over 11,000 miles, enough to replicate the Bay Area Rapid Transit system 83 times. The National Park Service costs $3 billion for fiscal year 2025 to run the entire system, and it more than pay for itself in visitors fees. The US National Park System is the envy of the world. The US could have modeled a global park system on the National Park System providing every other country on earth a first-class nature conservation and recreation service at the US's expense and still not gotten anywhere near $2.26 trillion.

Daydreaming outside the bounds of environmentalism for a moment, the government could have sent an entire generation of Americans to college for free, or given every single homeless American a free condo, or given every social security recipient a substantial raise. The only reason the boards and executives of Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, etc. aren't torn limb from limb by angry mobs is because the average American has not conceptualized the dollar cost of the Global War on Terror and what was robbed from the future.

The US Army, even if it did not wage constant war, is so big and intentionally inefficient, it does ecological damage just by the nature of its existence. It swallows up amounts of fossil fuel that dwarfs the annual consumption of entire nations. It demands the extraction of iron, aluminum, lead, rare earth minerals, and all the ecological fall out that results for the creation of equipment and machines that will *at best* sit and rot. The Navy and Airforce are even worse. The nature of its installations poisons the earth, water and people around them here at home and abroad. The opposition to US imperialism is necessarily an opposition to environmental harm. Any decrease in the defense budget is a decrease in resource extraction and fuel burned. Anywhere the US military is pushed out is territory not being directly blighted by polluting facilities. Anti-imperialists and environmental activists share common cause and should stand united.

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Poverty Resistance Garden

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The purpose of the garden is to enable families and communities to actively resist hunger and poverty through growth of their own food. Food production closer to home is more cost-effective, ~~more~~ reliable, and environmentally sustainable.

As I write from Kentucky, I'm fully aware that my own state faces extreme food insecurity; the formal and professional way to say poor and hungry folk. Many are children. So, as I write this, I do iso an attempt to help them, and you the reader feed your community.

The Poverty Resistance Garden of the SPUSA is a plan of action, repeatable and imitable, for a 5' x 10' plot (50 square feet) three-season garden designed to maximize calories, nutrition, and yield across the entire growing year. Its focus on heirloom varieties is <u>not</u> for nostalgia or tradition. It is for their proven genetic resilience, adaptability to poor soils, and superior nutritional profiles. These seeds are our collective inheritance, a biodiverse arsenal against hunger and malnutrition.

In the development of The Resistance Garden plan, 4 pillars were created to ensure its success.

1. Nutritional Density: this helps to fight the “hidden in sight hunger” so often found in the United States; malnutrition.

2. Caloric & Protein Security: *Via* growth of potatoes, dried beans, and winter squash the garden should help provide the carbohydrate and protein foundation missing from an impoverished diet and can perhaps help break the cycle of empty calories.

3. Economic Liberation: the garden should replace hundreds of dollars in grocery bills with a one-time investment in seed and soil. Heirloom seed saving makes this liberation permanent and self-replicating.

4. Traditional Knowledge as Power: Learning and practicing the traditional skills indigenous knowledge of planting, tending, preserving, and seed saving is knowledge that cannot be repossessed. It is a means of production, a cultural legacy, and a practical science under community control.

SEASON 1: SPRING (Cool Season – Plant as soon as soil can be worked)

First plant for quick greens, early roots, and early planting preparation for summer staples.

- Front Section (South-Facing):
    - Heirloom Lettuce Mix: (I'd recommend 'Deer Tongue' lettuce in the mix if possible): Plant a 2-ft row, harvest as "cut-and-come-again."
    - Heirloom Spinach: 2-ft row. High in iron, cold-tolerant.
    - Radishes: They grow fast (25-35 days). Plant between slower crops, recommend overseeding (planting more into space that is needed, you can thin out if need later)
    - Heirloom Walking Onions (Egyptian Tree Onions): Plant bulbils 1" deep, 6" apart along the outer edges

of the front (south of the garden). This is a perennial, so it replants itself. Harvest the green stalks all spring by snipping and using like chive.

- In late summer, harvest top-set bulbils, saving some for replanting and some for pickling. They spread slowly, but controllably; harvest bulbils to manage their "walking". These are safe to grow in most places but reach out to your state's Native Plant Society to be sure it's safe in your area.

- Middle Section:
  - Heirloom Kale, Greens, & Collards: 4-6 plants total of at least three varieties. This will be your vitamin and mineral nutritional backbone. They will yield into summer and even through winter. Make sure the varieties are the spring planting variety.
- Back Section (Against Trellis):
  - Potato Towers/Bags: Place 2-3 containers, with drainage, filled with vegetable garden potting soil or a compost mix planted with 2-3 varieties heirloom potatoes. This lets you start early indoors and move them to the garden, and because they grow up in the containers it frees up bed space. It's going to be tempting to use non-heirloom potatoes, but heirlooms will give you the greatest amount of nutrition and be the most prolific.
  - Heirloom Spring Peas: Plant along the base of the north trellis/cane poles. These will fix the nitrogen levels in the soil and give an early arvest.

SEASON 2: SUMMER (Warm Season – Plant after last frost late April or May most often)

- Goal: High-calorie staples, protein, and bulk for preservation.
- Trellis (Replace Peas):
    - Appalachian/Kentucky Heirloom or Local Heirloom Pole Beans: Direct sow. Your primary protein source. You can dry the excess for storage, use in the winter.
- Outer Edges Of The Garden:
    - Heirloom Herbs for Garden's Resilience: plant Oregano and Rosemary at the sunnier outer edges. These are perennial, pest-deterring, snippings add flavor to cooking, and they require almost no care but water.
- Middle Section:
    - Heirloom Sweet Potatoes: Plant slips in a mound in a dedicated corner of the middle part section of the garden. These are a caloric powerhouse and take up about as much space as the less reliable and more weather fussy tomatoes.
    - Heirloom summer squash: there is a great multitude of these, and I would suggest planting as many in the middle section as you have room for, both the number of plants and variety of heirlooms. It's important that you understand that non-heirlooms will not provide you the same nutritional value per space.
- Front section:
    - Heirloom Summer Chards: You can plant to replace your radishes. Chards can be grown in summer and into the autumn. You simply got what you need, don't pull, as they regrow. Plant as

many as you need to fill the space of the radishes.

SEASON 3: LATE SUMMER/FALL (Plant in the late to last of summer for autumn long harvest)

- Middle section:
    - Winter Squash: 1-2 plants of a compact, heavy-yielding heirloom variety like 'Delicata' or 'Bush Acorn'. Plant at the edge of the bed and let vines trail onto the path if needed.
- Refiller:
    - Plant more Heirloom Kale, Collards, & Spinach as needed. Directly sow the seeds into the ground. This provides for a continued fall/spring harvest, without wasted barren patches. Don't plant after mid-September
- Outer garden Edges
    - Plant Garlic cloves in October for harvest next July. Garlic also will help the next year's garden with pests.

Final Strategic tips:

- Verticality is Key: Install a sturdy 6-8 ft trellis on the NORTH side of the plot, or standing cane poles with garden twine tied to the top dangling down. This is your protein and calorie growing north wall. The north wall is chosen because in the northern hemisphere, planting it on the north side will prevent the wall from blocking sunlight from the rest of the garden.

- Grow Up, Not Out: All vining crops go on the trellis or polls. Space is limited and cannot be wasted.

- Succession is the Key of Survival: As one crop finishes, another is

ready to go in. The ground must never be idle; heirlooms do not strip all the nutrients.

- Heirlooms for Hardiness: select local heirlooms or select heirloom varieties bred for your growing zone. Select amongst those for flavor, storage, and hardiness, not for shipping.

- Save your own seeds to break the cycle of seed-buying dependency.

- Turn to local heirloom seed banks or heirloom organizations such as the Sustainable Mountain Agriculture Center, for your seeds, preferably the first season. This garden was designed to yield more than the sum of its parts, created to be both reliable in less-than-ideal conditions, and nutritional. It should provide you with the ability to produce fresh food in the spring and summer, and a vital store of calories and nutrition throughout the autumn and winter. It grows food, health, and community power- dig, grow, resist.

Urban Neurology: The Inner Oliver Sacks of Zohran Mamdani

Dr. Mark S. Malaszczyk

This paper advances the idea of “urban neurology” as a conceptual framework for understanding how contemporary political actors might draw—implicitly or explicitly—on modes of perception reminiscent of Oliver Sacks’ humanistic clinical practice. Using the newly elected New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani as a case study, the analysis explores how Sacks’ attentiveness to individual cognition can serve as a metaphor for the kind of detail-oriented, community-embedded political sensibility Mamdani practices in New York City. The article argues that although Mamdani and Sacks come from distinct professional traditions, both reflect commitments to seeing human subjects within their ecological, cultural, and structural contexts. This interdisciplinary comparison reveals the possibilities of political praxis grounded in narrative sensitivity, cognitive diversity, and urban relationality.

As a recently retired public educator [2023] looking back on a thirty-two-year career in New York State Secondary Social Studies 7-12, one thing I have been fondly reflecting upon is my sixteen years as an Advanced Placement Psychology teacher. Many of my students went on to major in psychology, and more than a few made it their life’s work. My favorite activity in the course was to introduce them to the work of Oliver Sacks [*The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, Awakenings, Hallucinations, The Mind’s Eye,* to name

a few]. I have recently taken up a personal re-examination of Sacks, which included penciling a three-act play of a fictional dinner between the good doctor and the Mayor-Elect of New York City. I recently had a revelatory question that I felt compelled to explore: ***What would the great "poet laureate of medicine"*** (Broyard 1990), ***a long-time New Yorker, feel about the election of Democratic Socialist Zohran Mamdani this past November?***

Sacks, renowned for his narrative sensitivity to patients' experiences, and Mamdani, an ascendant public servant, are linked by their contextual understanding—one in medicine, the other in politics. Mamdani's rise culminated in his recent mayoral victory, driven by his challenges to systemic inequity.

Though from distinctly different fields, comparing Sacks and Mamdani clarifies how political figures can adopt a *"clinical gaze"* [Sacks's words]—listening deeply and attending to detail. Sacks' empathy for patients parallels Mamdani's organic solidarity with cab drivers, exemplified by his engagement in the taxi medallion battle with the Bloomberg Administration and their subsequent hunger strike in the struggle for economic justice.

One might ask...what does this author mean by the concept of ***urban neurology***? I refer not to the literal brain science as applied to cities but rather to a style of *human perception* that treats the urban environment as a complex, interdependent system of social, cognitive, and emotional circuits. In this framework, the *"Inner Oliver Sacks"* of Zohran Mamdani becomes a bit of a symbolic lens through which to consider how a lawmaker might approach political work with a neurologist's commitment to narrative shading and human behavior. As such, I seek to explain Mamdani's approach to public life and how it resonates with larger debates in narrative medicine, urban anthropology, and political theory.

Sacks' influence extends beyond medicine because his work exemplifies a loving, narrative ethic: the practice of honoring the singularity of a person by

attending deeply to their story (Charon 2006, Sacks 1985). He actively resisted all reductionist biomedical paradigms by being passionately engaged in his patients' sensory experiences, emotional lives, and cultural contexts. This ethic may seem distant from the world of legislation, yet scholars of political theory note growing interest in narrative-based policymaking and the cognitive value of lived experiences (Flyvbjerg *et al*. 2023, Tronto 2013).

Mamdani's political practice, throughout his career, especially his frequent engagement with tenants, immigrants, and working-class residents, shares structural similarities with Sacks' attentiveness. Where Sacks spent an incredible amount of time with patients in clinical or everyday settings, Mamdani has engaged residents in community meetings, street-level conversations, and participatory assemblies. In both instances, a transcendent level of human understanding arises through attentive listening that treats individuals as complex subjects rather than simply data points or poll numbers. Although their methods differ in form and institutional setting, both Sacks and Mamdani reflect commitments to relational knowledge and ethical responsiveness.

"Urban neurology," as I choose to reference it, is the idea that cities, like brains, operate through dynamic relational networks. Both can be understood as *systems of pathways, circuits, signals, and feedback loops—social in one case, neural in the other* (Brenner and Schmid 2015). Sacks' writings often described neurological systems in ecological metaphors; his affinity for ferns and love for the periodic table of elements were reflected in many of his writings. Similarly, scholars of urban life emphasize the interdependence of coexisting dynamics (Simone 2021).

Applying my *'Sacksian'* analogy to Mamdani's work sheds light on the political complexity he has effectively navigated in Queens, one of the most linguistically diverse urban areas in the world. He decoded how housing policies

interacted with cultural norms, how transit failures shaped economic life, and how municipal systems interfaced with family networks. This, in effect, mirrored the manner in which Sacks interpreted how neurological disorders are connected with personal identity and social environment.

Within a framework of "urban neurology," Mamdani's approach resembles a neurologist's interpretive practice: diagnosing systemic dysfunctions (predatory real estate practices, transit disinvestment), tracing causal pathways, and working toward interventions that restore functional capacity at the collective level. This is not to assert that he knowingly models himself after Sacks, but rather to identify a conceptual parallel between humanistic neurology and community-centered urban politics.

One of Sacks' lasting legacies was his conviction that ***listening***—deep, sustained, open-ended listening—was itself a form of clinical knowledge production (Kleinman 2017). We could easily argue here that Sacks' mission to relate with his patients should be standard practice and a bedrock of modern medical school curricula. Consider all of the political theories that view listening as a prerequisite for democratic legitimacy and social repair (Das, 2020; Gordon, 2008). Mamdani's organizing style incorporates similar modes of listening, whether through participatory policy development or constituency services that foreground tenant narratives.

Listening in urban politics functions not merely as information gathering but as social cognition: it brings to awareness the often-unseen emotional and material burdens carried by residents navigating housing precarity, bureaucratic complexity, or economic instability. In this sense, Mamdani's political stance reflects an "Inner Oliver Sacks"—a metaphor for sensitivity to human difference, the ability to translate personal narratives into structural understanding, and the refusal to reduce individuals to typologies.

Sacks's lifelong engagement with

neurodiversity emphasized that cognitive difference enriches our understanding of what it means to be human (Fassin 2021). Political scholarship likewise argues that the plurality of human experiences within urban life can be a resource for democratic imagination and problem-solving (Berlant 2011). By representing one of the most diverse districts in the United States, Mamdani inhabited a political role that demanded recognition of cognitive, cultural, and linguistic variation; when he translated that experience into a mayoral run that focused on both affordability problems and bottom-up solutions, it undeniably resonated with large numbers of New York City residents across all major demographics.

In this context, the metaphor of a *"Sacks within Mamdani"* highlights a politics attuned to the human condition. Housing insecurity, eviction threats, and transit failures have physiological and psychological consequences; Sacks's insistence on the physical body's centrality to neurological conditions is a clarion call to policymakers that political structures also shape lived experience at the levels of perception, stress, and neurocognitive well-being.

Urban neurology thus becomes a framework for understanding how structural inequity produces embodied harm—and how policy can function as a form of collective care.

The author taught in Secondary Social Studies in New York State for 32 years and is currently an Adjunct Professor of History at two institutions.

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Guerrilla Garden Guide for Native Plants Pollinator Garden

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North American native plants are often overlooked or thought of as weeds, even though they're often more beautiful than many of the non-native flowers sold. Unfortunately, North American flora biodiversity is under threat. Entire ecosystems are awash invasive species, and some are killed at the root to serve capitalist enterprises such as corporate grain farms, urban/suburban sprawl, and parking lots. A number of American big box stores openly sell some of our most invasive plant species in North America. Doing so, because by pushing the same handful of non-native varieties can pursue cheap profit, because these plants are cheap to produce in bulk. Thus, people plant them everywhere too, because of availability. Mowers cut many native plants before they flower or seed, as the invasives grow faster. Spraying herbicide kills anything that isn't turfgrass, so that the plants that remain are the fast growing and easily spread invasive plants.

Many native plants feed the native insects that keep everything else alive, especially pollinator insects. They're hardy, adapted to local weather, and they don't need ~~your~~ continued care. So, you're not only planting native species to preserve biodiversity and native habitat, but you are also planting flora the pollinators can rely on.

How to Know What to Plant

Most U.S. states have "native plant societies". These are volunteer-run groups focused on protecting indigenous plants and teaching people what actually belongs in their region. They're excellent resources for the guerrilla gardener, especially one who wants to plant native, pollinator-friendly plants. These organizations keep local plant lists, run

seasonal sales, and often have someone who will happily answer a quick email or a phone call. If you're unsure what will survive in the soil or climate of your area, these are fantastic resources for you. They can point you in the right direction toward species and also tell you what to avoid inasmuch as invasive species are still frequently sold in big box stores.

why Pollinator Insects Matter

Pollinator insects keep entire ecosystems running. They move pollen from flower to flower, which lets plants produce fruit, nuts, seeds, and the next generation of plants. That feeds birds, mammals, and ultimately us. Most wild plants, and large shares of the food we grow, depend on the bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, and other pollinators to reproduce. When pollinators decline, the whole ecosystem weakens—fewer plants, fewer animals, even poorer soil, and less food security. They're small, but everything leans on them.

Pollinators do more than move pollen around. Their constant digging, nesting, chewing, tunneling, and plant-renewal work keeps soil from turning into a hardpan. As they help plants reproduce, those plants leave behind fresh organic matter every year—leaf litter, dying stems from perennials that regrow, shed roots, plus the insects' own bodies at the end of the season. All of that breaks down into food for fungi, bacteria, and other soil-dwelling insects, which in turn keep the soil open and aerated. The result is that the ground holds water better, drains better, and keeps nutrients instead of losing them. Without that cycle, soil gets compacted, starved, and weak.

Guerrilla Garden Work Kit

- Hand Rake- Perfect for loosening compacted soil in tight spaces and clearing debris quietly.
- Garden Rake- You don't have to have many; one solid rake handles leveling, debris clearing, and seed prep.
- Hoe- For fast weed removal and cutting roots when you need to move quickly.
- Trash Bags-Cleaning up junk gives you cover, makes the area look maintained, and keeps attention off your real purpose. Not to mention clean the local environment.
- Hand Spade- Useful for planting bulbs or deeper seeds
- Work Gloves- Avoid cuts, glass, hidden wire, and other such things in vacant lots.
- Slingshot (Optional)- For seed balls into inaccessible areas—lots, rail beds, embankments. Quiet, fast, effective.

How to Make Seed Balls

1. Mix 2 parts clay, 1 part compost, native seed mix.

2. Add a splash of water until it forms firm balls about marble-size.

3. Let them dry a day.

4. Ready to shoot them from slingshot into the targeted area.

What To Wear

These items aren't for hiding from anyone—they have real utility. The anonymity they add is just a side effect.

- Face Mask- Cuts dust, pollen, mold, diesel grit from the road. Also keeps you from being remembered.
- Sunglasses- eye protection from sun, dust, broken glass. Also makes you harder to read.
- Hat- Sun protection, rain protection, helps you look like a worker not a loiterer. Bright Orange or Yellow Work T-Shirt / Vest- This is old-school wisdom: if you look like you belong, you belong. People assume you're doing official maintenance.
- Sturdy Shoes or Boots- Obvious reasons: nails, glass, uneven ground.

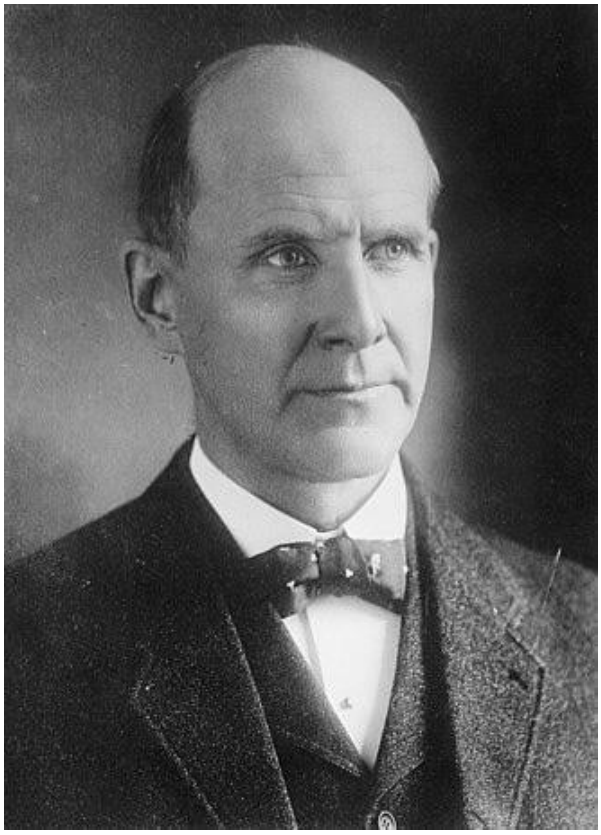
Helpful Hints-

• Your allies always are the working class. Some cool drinks or lunch can make some useful friends in the city maintenance crews. Who over time may be willing to leave some areas unmowed and even give a small helping hand.

• In your second season use some of the seeds collected from your first batches of plants to expand.

• Buy used tools, they're often cheaper, and not uncommonly better made. As they come from a time with less planned obsolescence.

Essay*



Eugene V. Debs
November 5, 1855 – October 20, 1926

*Essays are written from the author's perspective.

Environmental Practices for Ecosocialism in the US, an Essay

Mary Nickum

It is important to define Ecosocialism, so all readers are armed with the same beginning information. Ecosocialism (also known as green socialism or socialist ecology) is an ideology merging the aspects of socialism with that of green politics, ecology and alter-globalization or anti-globalization. Ecosocialists generally believe that the expansion of the capitalist system is the cause of social exclusion, poverty, war and environmental degradation through globalization and imperialism, under the supervision of repressive states and transnational structures (LibraryguidesBennington.edu).

Ecosocialism brings together two complementary ways of thinking about humans and the environment they live in. The “eco-” in Ecosocialism comes from the science of ecology and its emphasis on the complex and dynamic interactions among the living and non-living components within an ecosystem. In particular ecologists understand how the life-supporting functions within an ecosystem can be disrupted by the behavior of one organism, for example, humans.

Ecology, however, lacks a social analysis; it has no way of determining how economic and political forces drive human behavior and social change can take place. Ecosocialism combines the insights of ecology with the rich tradition of socialist thought and action, especially those associated with Marxism. Marxism shows

that the ecological crisis is rooted in a destructive economic and political system, capitalism, and it provides ways of understanding how capitalism works and of envisioning a system beyond capitalism, in which production is driven by human need.

Ecosocialists start with the premise that environmental degradation and social injustice stem from the same source: a world where profit is the highest goal. The emancipation of people from capital and its masters goes hand-in-hand with the emancipation of the earth and its biosphere from the cancer of capitalism. Thus, unlike most branches of the environmental movement, Ecosocialism provides an overarching framework that sees links between different struggles.

Ecosocialism is not a monolithic framework. In fact, a lively and healthy debate goes on among Ecosocialists, especially concerning short-term strategy. All Ecosocialists agree that capitalism has to go, but they also recognize that the only way forward is through collaboration with more mainstream organizations that are not socialist. They also agree that a range of environmental reforms must be pursued, especially those that radicalize the people fighting for them and that bring together disparate branches of the environmental movement (Systemchangenotclimatechange.org).

Ecosocialism in the United States

Though I don't believe most Americans think of many of these actions as Ecosocialist, they are. Many of those listed and described below are ecologically based. The preamble to most ecological legislation states "…are based on the best scientific information available." Of course, most legislation is also enacted with a political thought of how this will affect my chances in the next election. Ecosocialism is as far from the legislators' minds as it is from their constituents.

Nevertheless, the following is a list of the most known Federal legislation, to enact penalties on those who willingly

act against the specified object of protection:

Federal Regulations

- Lacey Act

Introduced by Iowa Republican congressman John Lacey in 1900, this bill is the cornerstone legislation that protects fish and game from illegal poaching. The first major federal legislation to protect wildlife in America, the Lacey Act bans interstate or foreign commerce involving any fish, wildlife, or plants taken, possessed, or sold in violation of state or foreign law. The Act has been amended to include a wider variety of prohibited plants and plant products, including some rainforest species, and to curb the transport of non-native pythons to the Everglades. In North Carolina, it is used to curb efforts to transport deer and feral hogs into the state. As the proliferation of non-native and invasive species continues, wildlife agencies are fortunate to have the Lacey Act in their toolbox.

- Clean Water Act

Established in 1972 under President Richard Nixon, the Clean Water Act set national standards for the quality of our streams and lakes. Just before the Act was passed, rivers like the Cuyahoga in Ohio were literally on fire and lakes like the Thonotosassa in Florida were experiencing the largest fish kills in history. Here in North Carolina, the mud choked French Broad River was described as “too thick to drink and too thin to plow.” The Clean Water Act empowered the Environmental Protection Agency to implement regulations on pollution discharges into our waterways. Water quality standards were established, and sewage treatment facilities were constructed. With the goal of “drinkable, swimmable, fishable water,” the Clean Water Act is critical to the nation and to North Carolina and has revived many of our waterways. With more sound and estuarine waters than any other lower 48 state besides Louisiana, and with a quarter-million

miles of rivers and streams, North Carolina needs the Clean Water Act protections restored and clarified to ensure the health and prosperity of our economy and our environment.

- Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act

Commonly known as Pittman-Robertson after its sponsors, this 75-year-old legislation established an excise tax on firearms and ammunition. Monies go into the Interior Department and are distributed to states, which match the funds with 25 percent of monies from hunting license sales. On average, North Carolina receives about $13 million per year for wildlife research, management, and habitat protection. Species such as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and wood ducks are shining examples of restoration supported by the legislation. This “tax legislation on sportsmen,” which actually was adopted during the Great Depression, is a shining beacon in the history of wildlife legislation and proves that dedicated revenue collections can indeed be accomplished. In the early 1970s, President Richard Nixon believed that conservation efforts were failing and inadequate and called on Congress to pass comprehensive reform. In 1973, what some call the Magna Carta of the environmental movement was enacted. The Endangered Species Act serves to protect plant and animal species in threat of extinction, especially as a “consequence of economic growth and development untempered by adequate concern and conservation.” The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service were fully empowered to implement the Endangered Species Act. The Act helps to protect our national heritage by preserving the biodiversity of plants and animals, such as shining success of the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and southern sea otter. An example of the Endangered Species Act at work in North Carolina includes the red wolf reintroduction at Alligator River National

Wildlife Refuge. North Carolina made history again when the Pinehurst Resort was the first to sign a Safe Harbor Agreement to support the endangered red cockaded woodpecker.

- Dingell-Johnson Act

The Dingell-Johnson Act, also referred to as the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, was enacted in 1950 to provide federal funding support to state fisheries management agencies. Similar to the Pittman-Robertson program, the fund was originally derived from a 10-percent excise tax on certain items of sport fishing tackle. In 1984, the Wallop-Breaux amendment expanded the types of fishing tackle subject to the 10-percent tax by placing a 3-percent excise tax on fish finders and trolling motors, collecting import duties on fishing tackle and yachts and other pleasure craft, and incorporating a portion of the fuel taxes attributed to motor boats. In fiscal year 2013, North Carolina's portion of the fund was more than $10 million. State fishing license receipts, boating registration fees and other non-federal money are used as matching funds ($3 federal for every $1 state) to support fisheries management in fresh and marine waters, boating access, boating safety and aquatic education. Apart from providing money to support aquatic conservation, the Act also has the little-known stipulation that if a state diverts any portion of its fishing license receipts to fund other programs, it will lose its entire allocation of Dingell-Johnson funds. For more than 60 years this provision has ensured that 100 percent of anglers' and boaters' license fees goes directly to support fishing and boating recreation.

- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

The Magnuson-Stevens Act was enacted in 1979 and has been amended several times. The law established a fishery conservation zone in ocean

waters that extends from the 3-mile state jurisdiction to the 200-mile federal jurisdiction. A critical element of the act was the creation of eight regional councils to manage fish populations within the conservation zone to prevent overfishing, allow overfished stocks to recover and manage all fisheries stocks in a sustainable manner. North Carolina is a member of both the South Atlantic and Mid- Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. In the South Atlantic region seven of the eight man-aged species groups are determined to be at sustainable levels.

- Migratory Bird Act/Migratory Bird Treaty Act

One of the first influential pieces of environmental legislation in the country was enacted in 1913. Before this law was adopted, bird species, nongame and game alike, had no protections and the fashions of the 1800s and 1900s were keen on bird feathers, especially herons and egrets, for hats. The trade in feathers took a tremendous toll—by most estimates, 200 million wild birds were killed per year. Populations of the most hunted species declined to dangerous levels. The Migratory Bird Act gave the federal government full authority to protect migratory birds with today nearly 800 species listed for protection. In 1918, the legislation was widened in an international convention agreement between the U.S. and Great Britain and subsequently with Canada, Mexico, Russia and Japan. Under the Act, the taking, killing, disturbing of nests, and possessing of migratory birds is highly regulated. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is granted the authority to set hunting seasons for waterfowl and other migratory birds based on species populations.

- National Wildlife Refuge System Act

This law, enacted in 1966 but founded on earlier legislation, provides for administration and management of all

areas in a national system of “wild-life refuges, areas for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife that are threatened with extinction, wildlife ranges, game ranges, wildlife management areas, and waterfowl production areas.” In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt established Florida’s Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge as the first parcel of what is now a system of more than 95 million acres within 556 National Wildlife Refuges across the Country. A major stimulus for the refuge system came in 1934 with the passage of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, commonly referred to as the “duck stamp act.”

National Wildlife Refuges secure, enhance, and manage in perpetuity this nation’s natural treasures of wild habitats, both aquatic and terrestrial, and populations of fish and wildlife that inhabit these habitats for all citizens to enjoy. North Carolina has 10 National Wildlife Refuges that provide homes for red wolves, waterfowl, bear, turkey, deer, shorebirds and native flora.

When an act has the mission to “administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the

United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans,” it has to make NCWF’s Top 10 fish and wildlife bills of all time.

- Land and Water Conservation Fund Act

This land-mark legislation was passed by Congress in 1964 and signed by President John F. Kennedy. Its objective is to balance the use of offshore oil and gas by allocating a small portion of energy leasing revenues to acquire important habitat and recreational land, and to improve public access to fish, wildlife and other natural resources. The Land and Water Conservation Fund

(LWCF) was set up to direct $900 million annually from offshore oil drilling revenues to pay for conservation projects in national parks and national forests, fish and wildlife refuges, local parks, and other public lands. The beauty of LWCF and its dedicated revenue stream from drilling leases is that no tax money is involved and only a small percentage of the lease fees are designated for the LWCF. Since the founding of the LWCF, however, it has rarely been funded at or near the annual $900 million statutory level as Congress has repeatedly raided the fund, taking dollars that should have been gone toward important conservation initiatives and using them for other expenditures. The annual diversion of LWCF funds to non-conservation purposes has left a long legacy of backlogged conservation projects across the nation. To prevent overdevelopment and increased pollution from continuing to threaten North Carolina's environment, a large effort is underway to restore dedicated revenues to LWCF, spearheaded by North Carolina Senators Richard Burr and Kay Hagan. This fund is the primary funding source in America for land preservation. In North Carolina it has helped protect the Roanoke River and Alligator River national wildlife refuges, the Croatan National Forest, and the Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout national seashores.

- Farm Bill (Conservation Incentive Programs)

This behemoth 1940s legislation covers agricultural production and distribution, as well as hunger issues. The Farm Bill, which can be called the greatest conservation law you've never heard of, added a conservation title leading to the nation's most successful voluntary conservation programs for private landowners and farmers interested in protecting wildlife habitat, controlling soil erosion and reducing polluted runoff. The program is based on technical and financial assistance from platforms, such as the Conservation and Wetlands

Reserve Programs. The Farm Bill is among the largest sources of conservation funding in the federal government, with hundreds of millions of dollars available to keep wetlands, grasslands, and other fragile lands protected as wildlife habitat. The bill, which is authorized in 5-year increments, gained even more value for conservation in 1990 when wildlife was emphasized. That change led to wildlife corridor protections and the conversion of marginal lands and other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as native grasslands, riparian buffers, using thinning and prescribed burns to manage habitats for upland habitat. Congress is marking up the next Farm Bill, and there are opportunities to ensure that the conservation programs of the Farm Bill are upheld, as well.

- The Endangered Species Act (ESA)

The ESA provides a framework for the protection of federally listed endangered and threatened species. Federal agencies must ensure actions they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize listed species or adversely modify the designated critical habitats of such species. Under the ESA, Federal agencies are also directed to utilize their authorities as appropriate, to promote the recovery of listed species.

In addition, the ESA prohibits all persons, including Federal agencies, from injuring or killing (“taking”) individuals of a listed animal species without authorization. Federal agencies must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service when their actions may affect listed species or critical habitat, and for any anticipated “take” to be authorized, limited measures specified by the relevant Service to minimize the take must be implemented.

- Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972

The MMPA was amended in 1981, 1984, 1988 and 1995: MMPA generally prohibits people and vessels under U.S. jurisdiction from “taking” or importing marine mammals and marine products without a permit from the Federal government. The Federal government will not grant permits for species designated as “depleted” unless the permitted takes are research related. Coastal indigenous Alaskans are exempt from the requirements of MMPA. The Departments of Commerce and Interior are responsible for administering MMPA.

- Pollution Prevention Act (PPA) of 1990

The goal of PPA is to reduce pollution by increasing efficiency and conservation of energy, water, and other natural resources. The President's Council on Environmental Quality has identified pollution prevention as an important principle for federal agencies to integrate into their project, planning and decision-making processes through environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act. The PPA establishes the following to be national policy initiatives for reducing pollution:

- Prevent or reduce pollution at the source,
- Recycle in an environmentally safe manner,
- Treatment of pollution in an environmentally safe manner,
- Dispose or otherwise release waste into the environment only as a last resort and do so in an environmentally safe manner when necessary.

State Regulations

States are, of course, required to implement all Federal regulations regarding species and land acts, where applicable. All states have

environmental agencies that regulate the use of the natural resources in that state. The state laws are enforced by police or wardens and perpetrators are taken to court and fined or jailed. In a predictable capitalist fashion, the fines are collected and often deposited in the state's general fund rather than placing it in the fund where the "crime" was committed. Therefore, allowing the general fund to grow
and forcing the agencies tasked with protecting the species to operate on a limited budget.

NGOs (Non-Government Organizations)

Most members of these groups are committed to saving and protecting a particular group of species. These NGOs number in the hundreds, far more than can be listed and discussed here. Members, for the most part, have their hearts and beliefs in the right place; but requiring dues, often quite high is still based on the capitalist principle that money can fix anything. The more raised and collected, the more that can be done for this unfortunate species.

Unfortunately, capitalism is written all over these organizations. To survive, they must conform to the existing capitalist form of operations. Ecosocialism is poised to refute this. Everyone living in a socialist state will work to maintain a healthy environment for all species, including humans. It will be a way of life.

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Statistics for Ecosocialism

Safeguarding our environment is not a numbers game. I posit the environmental degradation we witness is significantly occasioned by capitalist practices that exploit both human and nonhuman entities. Owing to the growing concerns over global warming, wildlife extinction, desertification, ozone layer depletion, and many other environmental issues, there has been a corresponding concern about the need for environmental sustainability.

In everyday usage, sustainability refers to the capacity to persevere in quality and quantity through time. From an ecological standpoint, it refers to the ability of ecological systems to remain productive and diverse over time. For humans, it describes the potential for long-term maintenance- both of individual/corporate well-being and the natural world, as well as the responsible use of the earth's resources (Weaver *et al*. 2000). Kuhlman and Farrington (2010) describe sustainability as an idyllic state of affairs whereby there is safe interaction and peaceful coexistence between human civilization and the earth's biosphere.

Environmental sustainability refers "to the conservation, management and rational utilization of natural resources in such a way as to maintain the integrity of each ecosystem, support all life, ensure the preservation of biodiversity and prevent environmental degradation" (Gbenda 2012), and John Morelli (2011) defines environmental sustainability as: "a condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs nor by our actions diminishing biological diversity."

A capitalist economy is founded on pillars such as private property, self-interest, competition, a decentralized market system moderated by the forces of demand and supply, freedom of choice in relation to consumption, and limited role of the government. In this free market economy, otherwise known as *laissez-faire* economy, markets function under little or no control (Jahan and Mahmud 2015). Yonghong Zhang (2013), notes throughout the history of human development, the increasing environmental depredation almost synchronizes with the capitalist industrialization and modernization process. In the context of economic globalization, research on ecological

crisis can't be separated from the analysis of the nature of capital.

Capitalism is then the problem. Environmental sustainability cannot be achieved in a capitalist system. The pillars prevent attaining it. With the advancement of capitalist economy globally, statistics reveal an ever-growing environmental degradation. In 1998, the Worldwide Fund for nature revealed that the earth had lost one-third of its natural resources from 1970-1975; the index of freshwater lowered by 50 percent; a drop in the index of the marine ecosystem by 30 percent; and a drop in the world's forest area and resources by 10 percent.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization statistics further revealed that the annual rate at which tropical deforestation is occurring is about 0.7 percent and this is constantly accelerating. Because of rain forest reduction, we are experiencing more floods, climate change, and rapid extinction of biodiversity. The excessive use of Freon and other related substances has greatly contributed to the depletion of the Ozone layer, making creatures on earth more susceptible to the dangers of increasing ultraviolet rays from the sun. There is also the immense release of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, CFCs, and others, which are exacerbating the current greenhouse effect, causing a rise in the global temperatures, and further resulting in the melting of glaciers and the rising of the sea level. Several organisms and natural habitats are being destroyed, and desertification is advancing rapidly (Zhang 2013).

Economics of Ecosocialism

Since the mid-nineties, several theorists have made attempts at merging socialist principles with ecological values in a bid to address environmental issues and engender sustainable communities. This need for an Ecosocialist framework to redirect the course of our approach to environmental issues happened in the wake of the

period when technological revolution, industrialization, and capitalism brought enormous economic prosperity and profit, but at the cost of environmental health and sustainability. As a political theory, Ecosocialism is understandably aimed at addressing the destructive tendencies occasioned by the capitalist exploitation of land and the labor of workers across the globe.

Thus, James O'Connor (2005) wrote: "What we need is not a rebranding of capitalism but a whole new system that emphasizes cooperation instead of competition, social good instead of personal interest, and care for the environment instead of an exploitation of the resources." This is a Socialist statement that all Ecosocialists should be working toward.

In synthesizing the basic tenets of ecology and the Marxist critique of political economy, Ecosocialism offers a radical alternative to an unsustainable *status quo*. Rejecting a capitalist definition of "progress" based on market growth and quantitative expansion, which, as Marx shows, is a destructive progress, it advocates policies founded on non-monetary criteria, such as social needs, individual well-being, and ecological equilibrium. Ecosocialism puts forth a critique of both mainstream "market ecology," which does not challenge the capitalist system, and "productivist socialism," which ignores natural limits completely.

As people realize how the economic and ecological crises intertwine, Ecosocialism has been gaining adherents. Ecosocialism, as a movement, is relatively new, but some of its basic arguments date back to the writings of Marx and Engels. Now, intellectuals and activists are recovering this legacy and seeking a radical restructuring of the economy according to the principles of democratic ecological planning, putting human and planetary needs first and foremost.

The economy must be based on production of the amount of goods

needed not on over production and convincing people they need more, creating an overabundance. If the amount of goods produced is geared to need, prices will remain stable. In this scenario, the people's need to horde will disappear. The capitalist phenomena of hoarding is a response by people's attempting to have goods available for fear of prices rising and some goods being unavailable. This will defeat the capitalist idea of guaranteed or planned obsolescence. Goods produced will be available in a product lifetime over several and, in many cases, many years. The aim of production will be high quality with any repairs need to be done by the owner, or with their comrades..

Conclusions

This essay shows that most of the work regarding what could be considered Ecosocialism in the US is a combination of government and private organizations sponsoring and passing legislation for protection of species and land. This, in itself, is heartening; but it doesn't go nearly far enough. These laws and attempts at protection are conceived and implemented in capitalist form for, in many cases, to aggrandize legislators or CEOs of organizations.

When Ecosocialism is brought to bear, the environment will be everyone's task and responsibility. The water all species drink, the air all species breath will be everyone's task to maintain. All products will be produced in small, localized businesses with a local overseer to maintain a watchful eye on the air, water and land quality as production proceeds.

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Drama

THE MAP OF APPETITES

A Three-Act Play

Dr. M.S. Malaszczyk

Anti-War/Anti-Imperialist Working Group

THE PEOPLE IN THE ROOM

- **OLIVER SACKS (70s):** A neurologist. Kind eyes, a slightly rumpled air, speaks with a gentle precision, but his curiosity is boundless. He truly *sees* people.
- **ZOHRAN MAMDANI (30s):** A local politician, community organizer. Energetic, quick-witted, passionate. Always listening, always observing, even when he's talking a mile a minute.
- **THE SERVER (Any age):** Friendly, efficient, mostly just trying to keep things moving.
- **THE CROWD:** The constant, vibrant hum of a busy Astoria restaurant.

WHERE & WHEN

A cozy, slightly chaotic restaurant in **Astoria, Queens**. Books crammed onto shelves, mismatched plates, a general sense of comfortable age. It's early evening, that time of year where the air is cool but the light still lingers, fading slowly.

ACT I: The Unfolding Map

SCENE 1 — First Impressions

(The restaurant is bustling. The clatter of plates, the murmur of conversations in multiple languages, the rich scent of spices and coffee. OLIVER SACKS enters. He pauses at the doorway, not lost, but taking it all in – a slight smile playing on his lips as if he's just discovered a new species of human in its natural habitat. He spots a small, round table tucked away and makes his way over, settling in with a sigh of contentment. He pulls a small notebook and pen from his jacket pocket, making a quick, almost imperceptible sketch.)

(A moment later, ZOHRAN MAMDANI bursts in, a bicycle helmet under his arm, slightly out of breath. He scans the room with purpose, his eyes quickly landing on Oliver. He navigates the tables with practiced ease, a quick nod to a few diners as he passes.)

ZOHRAN (Dropping his helmet onto an empty chair, running a hand through his hair) Sorry, sorry—the bridge was… well, it was the bridge. Always a lesson in patience. You been waiting long?

OLIVER (Looking up, a warm, genuine smile) Not at all. I was rather enjoying my wait. It's a remarkable place, isn't it? The sheer density of… *life*. The way the light catches the steam from the kitchen… I've already filled half a page.

ZOHRAN (Slightly amused, pulling out his own chair) Most people just call it "the place with the good lamb korma." But I like your version better. Are you sketching the lamps?

OLIVER (Chuckles softly) The *dynamics* of the lamps. The way the light sculpts the faces, the way the shadows dance. Every flicker tells a story if you pay attention. It reminds me a bit of the brain, actually. So much is going on, just beneath the surface.

ZOHRAN (Leaning forward, instantly engaged) That's a good analogy. Astoria's a bit like that, too. You see a bodega, but underneath, it's a whole ecosystem of families, politics, and history. Have you seen much of the neighborhood?

OLIVER Only in passing, mostly cabs. But I have always found myself drawn to places where worlds collide. Where the threads of different lives weave together. Like this room, now. What brought you to public service here, Zohran? Was it a single moment, or a slow dawning?

ZOHRAN (A wry grin) Oh, you don't just *decide* to get into politics in Astoria, Dr. Sacks. You're born into it, or you're pulled into it. It's in the air, the coffee, the arguments on the street corner. For me, it was… well, watching my mom, I guess. She's been organizing and fighting for this community for decades. I just picked up the baton. What about you? How does a neurologist end up writing books about… well, about the human condition?

OLIVER (His gaze drifts around the room for a moment, then settles back on Zohran, full of warmth) Ah, the human condition. I suppose for me, it was never a choice between the brain and the person. The brain *is* the person, in all their glorious, unpredictable complexity. My patients taught me that. Every syndrome, every unique way of experiencing the world, was a window into something universal. I just tried to describe what I saw.

(A SERVER arrives, holding menus.)

SERVER Ready to order, or do you need a few more minutes?

ZOHRAN (Looking at Oliver) You're the guest of honor, Dr. Sacks. What sounds good? The lentil soup is legendary.

OLIVER (Picks up the menu, but his eyes are still on the animated faces at a nearby table) Lentil soup sounds… grounding. But tell me, Zohran, what's the most surprising thing you've learned about human nature, working here? About what truly motivates people?

(The Server waits patiently, a small smile.)

ZOHRAN (Chuckles, then turns to the Server) We'll need a minute, thank you. (Back to Oliver, his eyes bright) Surprising? Hmm. I think it's how fiercely people hold onto hope, even when everything around them says they shouldn't. And how quickly they'll fight for someone else, even a stranger, if they see injustice. It's… exhausting, and inspiring, all at once.

OLIVER (Nodding slowly, a thoughtful hum) Yes. The enduring power of altruism. Remarkable. Truly remarkable.

(Oliver closes his menu, his eyes still shining with quiet observation.)

ACT II: The Rhythms of Life

SCENE 1 — Food and Philosophy

(Plates of food—fragrant curries, steaming rice, fresh bread—are on the table. Oliver delicately tastes his lentil soup, his expression one of quiet appreciation. Zohran eats with more practical vigor, gesturing with his fork as he speaks.)

ZOHRAN So, the gentrification… it's a double-edged sword, right? On one hand, you get new businesses, some investment, maybe better infrastructure. But then you're pushing out the very people who built this place, the small businesses, the families who've been here for generations. And the culture… it starts to get diluted. It's a constant tug-of-war.

OLIVER (Spoon poised, listening intently) A societal disequilibrium. And you're trying to restore a kind of… neurological balance? To preserve the unique 'synapses' of the community?

ZOHRAN (Laughs, nodding) Exactly! You get it. It's like, how do you integrate new inputs without erasing the existing memory? Without causing a kind of… urban amnesia?

OLIVER (Thoughtful) A fascinating challenge. The brain, too, is constantly integrating new information, forming new connections, whilst striving to maintain its core identity. Sometimes, though, new pathways are forged out of necessity, replacing old ones. Is there ever a case where the "new" development truly *enhances* the original culture, rather than simply displacing it?

ZOHRAN (Takes a sip of water) That's the dream, isn't it? The ideal. To build something truly hybrid. But it takes a conscious effort. It doesn't just happen. You must fight for it. Every zoning meeting, every community board vote, it's a fight for the soul of the neighborhood.

OLIVER (His eyes are sparkling with interest) And what is the soul of Astoria, then? If you had to distill it into a single essence, what would it be?

ZOHRAN (Without hesitation) Resilience. Definitely, resilience. And a stubborn refusal to be forgotten. People here have come from everywhere, leaving so much behind, to build something new. And they're not going to let it be dismantled easily. It's in our DNA. What about you, Oliver? After decades of looking inside people's heads, what's the most profound truth you've unearthed about what makes us… us?

OLIVER (He places his spoon down, wiping his mouth slowly with a napkin. His gaze is distant for a moment, then softens.) That we are all, each of us, utterly unique. And yet, beneath that uniqueness, there is a shared humanity, a capacity for connection, for joy, for suffering, that binds us all. I've seen people lose almost everything – their memory, their sense of self, their ability to move – and yet, a piece of them, their *spirit*, often remains. Indomitable. It's what gives me hope. That, and music. Music seems to bypass all the

damage.

ZOHRAN (Nodding slowly, quieter now) Music. Yeah. You hear it everywhere here, too. From the mosques, from the Greek bouzouki clubs, from the Bangladeshi restaurants. It’s the background score to everything.

OLIVER (Picks up his fork again, a small, knowing smile) Indeed. The brain, you see, is not a machine. It's a symphony. Sometimes a discordant one, but a symphony, nonetheless.

(The Server discreetly refills their water glasses, sensing the intensity of the conversation.)

ACT III: The Echoes

SCENE 1 — Last Thoughts

(The plates are mostly cleared, only a few crumbs of bread remain. The restaurant is still humming, but the peak dinner rush has softened into a more relaxed evening buzz. Oliver and Zohran both have cups of mint tea.)

OLIVER (Holding his cup, appreciating the warmth) You know, I once had a patient who had lost the ability to perceive color. Everything was shades of gray. But when he dreamt, he dreamt in vivid, technicolor hues. It was as if his brain, despite the damage, still held the *memory* of color, the potential for it.

ZOHRAN (Intrigued) So, even when something’s taken away, the imprint, the possibility, still exists? Like an old neighborhood that gets torn down, but the stories, the ghosts, they’re still there?

OLIVER (Nodding, a glint in his eye) Precisely. The brain, like a city, is constantly remodeling itself. And the memories, the patterns, they find new ways to express themselves, new pathways. It’s never truly erased. Only transformed.

ZOHRAN (Leans back, a thoughtful expression) That’s a powerful idea. In politics, we talk a lot about 'building' – building communities, building power, building coalitions. But maybe it’s also about 'remembering.' Remembering what was there, what was lost, and finding new ways to bring it back, even if it’s in a different form.

OLIVER (Sipping his tea, a contented sigh) Indeed. To remember and to acknowledge the unique narrative of each person, each place. That, I believe, is the truest form of connection. To see the individual within the collective, and the universal within the individual.

ZOHRAN (Looks at his watch, then back at Oliver, a hint of reluctance in his expression) Well, Dr. Sacks, this has been… genuinely thought-provoking. I don't often get to sit down and talk about urban neurology with my constituents.

OLIVER (A warm smile) Nor do I often get to discuss the synaptical structure of local politics. It’s been an absolute pleasure, Zohran. A true meeting of minds. Or perhaps, a meeting of… maps.

ZOHRAN (Standing up, pulling on his jacket) The Map of Appetites. I like that. We should do this again.

There's a new coffee shop on Ditmar Boulevard with a baklava that could change your life.

OLIVER (Standing slowly, gathering his notebook and pen. His eyes scan the room one last time.) I would like that very much. There are always more maps to explore.

(ZOHRAN gives a final wave to a couple across the room as he heads to the door. Oliver pauses for a moment, tucking his notebook away. He gives one last, lingering look at the vibrant, bustling restaurant, a knowing, gentle smile on his face, as if he's just confirmed a profound hypothesis about the human spirit.)

(He exits, leaving the restaurant to its own rich, echoing life.)

(FADE OUT.)

Book Review

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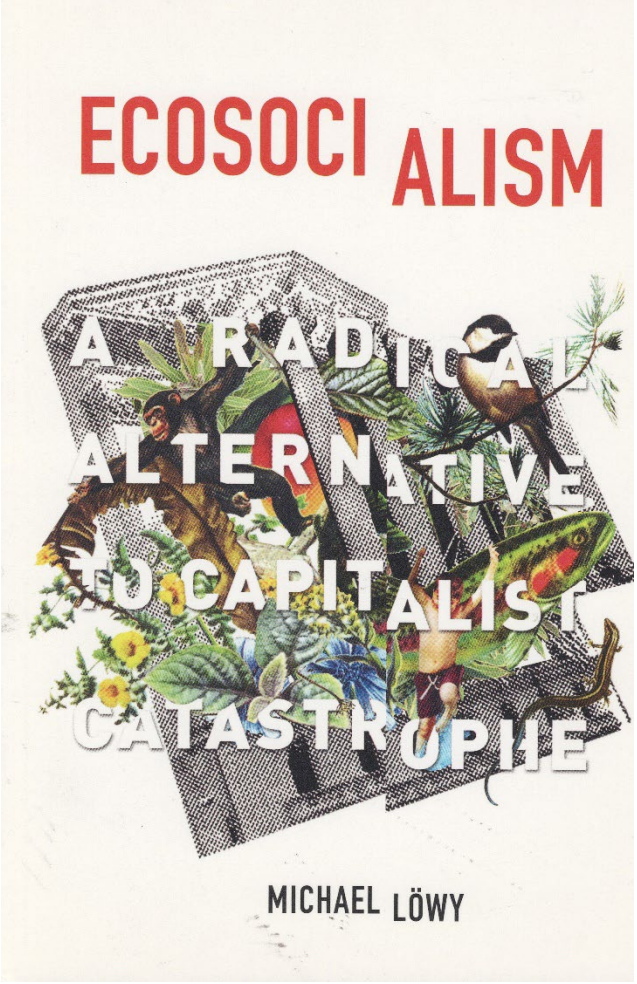
ECOSOCIALISM
A RADICAL ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALIST CATASTROPHE
MICHAEL LÖWY

Löwy, Michael. 2015. Ecosocialism, a Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe. Haymarket Books, Chicago, IL. 144 pages. 978-1608464715. Amazon $11.40 Paperback.

A steadfast critique of capitalism, this book, however, is not caught up in doctrinaire views; instead, Lowy argues with force (and data) that all "productivist" economic models by definition undermine ecological sustainability.

Capitalism is killing the planet, and the preservation of a natural environment favorable to human life requires a radical alternative. In this new collection of essays, long time revolutionary and environmental activist Michael Löwy offers a vision of Ecosocialist transformation. This vision combines an understanding of the destructive logic of the capitalist system with an appreciation for ongoing struggles, particularly in Latin America.

Löwy says in his introduction, "Ecosocialism is a political current based on an essential insight: that preserving the ecological equilibrium of the planet and therefore an environment favorable to living species, including ours is incompatible with the expansive and destructive logic of the capitalist system. The pursuit of "growth" under the aegis of capital will lead us in short range—the next decades—to a catastrophe without precedent in human history: global warming."

He follows with five essays that bolster his definition if Ecosocialism. These essays are a well-researched series on the connection between environmental justice and sustainability and the economic processes/system under which we conduct our lives; the fundamental point Lowy makes is that deep environmentalism implies socialism and socialism implies deep ecology and environmental stewardship.

Michael Löwy has long been working to integrate elements of socialist theory into the discussion of ecology and global development. He is well known as one of the organizers of the first Ecosocialist International meeting in 2017. Their goal was to undertake the collective construction of a program for the salvation of Mother Earth. This international meeting continues and is now into its eighth year.

There is a great deal of gold in this book. Löwy covers the genesis of Ecosocialism, pointing to the philosophers and theorists that have added to this dialogue over the years, including André Gorz, James O'Connor, Polanyi, Engels, and a dozen more. He also conveys a handful of examples of Ecosocialism in action, especially within indigenous communities, and highlights many small successes in the Western world- while simultaneously suggesting that such partial reforms are inadequate. The book is a steadfast critique of capitalism and is not caught up in doctrinaire views; instead, Lowy argues with force (and data) that all "productivist" economic models by definition undermine ecological sustainability.

I recommend this book to all readers who are searching for a concise discussion of Ecosocialism. It is a starting point for the exploration of Ecosocialism concepts and a path to becoming an Ecosocialist activist.

Writing For *The Socialist*

The Socialist Author Guidelines

The Socialist is the official magazine of the Socialist Party USA. It is published twice per year. The magazine discusses Socialism and the Socialist Party in the everyday lives of working-class readers, whether it be labor, civil rights, health care, or environmental movements. The magazine publishes two types of general articles – Feature and Short, which differ in content and length. Feature articles are 2,500 to 5,000 words (about 10 to 20 pages) in length and address multiple aspects of a broad topic area. Short articles are 1,500 to 2,500 words (about 6 to 10 pages) in length and focus on a specific topic. Both are written in the same style and format and can include photographs and/or sidebars.

The Socialist seeks to be a forum for discussion of essential questions of Party-building, movement-building, economic theory, and revolutionary praxis by both Party members and the general public. We are committed to stimulating the intellectual and ideological vibrancy of SP-USA and the US socialist movement with provocative essays, articles, fiction, and even poetry. We produce ***The Socialist*** to promulgate socialist ideas and because we seek to develop ourselves and our movement through intellectual labor.

Writing Style

Articles published in ***The Socialist*** must be written in plain English, with the intent to convey information to a generalist readership with basic knowledge of Socialism. Therefore, the article must be written in the everyday language familiar to readers of news magazines such as *Time, Newsweek* or *People*.

We prefer there be no more than three (3) authors for articles. Authorship acknowledges only those who ***write*** the article. Those who support the preparation of the article in other ways, such as reviewing or other writing assistance, must be listed in an Acknowledgments section.

The text must be submitted in electronic format as a Word document, attached to an e-mail message, or through a file transfer service such as Dropbox.

Manuscript

Prepare your paper double-spaced in Word to the best of your ability. Be sure your ideas are presented in a logical form: Introduction; description of the problem or idea, proposed solution to the problem or useful purpose of the idea; Conclusion.

Acknowledgments

This section immediately follows the text of your paper. It contains all recognition of special assistance and/or others associated with your paper**.**

Sources

List sources you used to develop the paper, immediately following the Acknowledgments section, by citing them in this format:

- For magazines: authors (surname, first name), year of publication, title, volume number, issue number, pages.

  Example for a magazine :
  Lane, Thomas. 2023. Climate change is here. Time 257(12):57-65.

- For books: authors (surname, first name), year of publication, title, publisher, city, state.

  Example for a book:
  Kane, George and Terrance Blake. 2020. Socialism for today.
  Random House, New York, NY.

Photos:
If the subject of your paper requires photos or other graphics, please note in your paper where they are discussed, for example: (Figure 1 Flooding). Submit the photos or other graphics in a separate file. All photos must have short captions and be submitted as .jpg at a resolution of 100+.

Submission

Submit all electronic files associated with your article to:

Mary Nickum, Editor
editor@thesocialist.online

The Socialist Party USA

WORKING GROUPS

Labor Working Group – brings together Socialist Party USA members to organize around labor issues, the labor movement and labor unions, providing members guidance in building a militant working class movement doing such actions as strike support, working with unions and working with other working groups in the SP USA.

Ecosocialist Working Group – is a group of Party members concerned with the environment and the future of life on this planet. We set to investigate the causes of climate change and its effect on the lives of people. Based on the best scientific information available, we seek to educate people *via* a webinar series available on You-Tube.

The Anti-War/Anti-Imperialism Working Group – has been established to aid the Party in organizing and educating against Imperialism, war, and oppression in all of its forms. Being in the heart of the Imperial core, we have an obligation to fight US Imperialism at home and abroad, from Gentrification to Genocide. "Peace is not the absence of war, but the presence of justice." **-** Rosa Luxemburg

Ballot Access and Electoral Working Group –

The Ballot Access and Electoral Working Group supports local and state ballot access efforts and campaigns for local, state and federal office. The party's Statement of Principles advocates participating in elections "to present socialist alternatives from a position of uncompromising independence from and opposition to the twin parties of capitalism". The BAEWG believes that winning and maintaining official status as a political entity is important to this independence. The Working Group provides support and expertise to Socialist Parties seeking legal recognition and helps them work for it within the party's rules and guidelines. The Working Group also provides support to candidates running on the Socialist Party ballot line or as independent candidates endorsed by the party. Anyone with expertise or an interest in learning more about Socialist ballot access and electoral campaigns can contact the Working Group by e-mailing spusa.bawg@gmail.com.

COMMISSIONS

Women's Commission is a place where members in good standing who face marginalization and systemic oppression due to their gender can organize, discuss, and reach consensus on all things specific to our emancipation from patriarchy. Comrades who are women (cis and trans), non-binary, agender, two- spirit and other queer and/or nonbinary comrades are

are welcome and encouraged to join! Contact Stephanie at cholensky.s@gmail.com

People of Color Commission – aims to enhance the representation of ethnic communities within the SP-USA and combat racism within all levels of society. We advocate for non-violent direct action and serve as an educational resource for SP-USA regarding people of color communities.

Join the Socialist Party USA

I, the undersigned, desiring to bring about, by democratic means, a new society based upon socialism, hereby apply for membership in the SOCIALIST PARTY USA, and subscribe to its principles.

Name: _____Address: _____

City: _____State: _____Zip: _____

Signature:_____Today's Date:_____

Gender Identity (not required): _____DOB: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____

E-mail:_____Tel# _____

Other political organizations to which I belong: _____

Union to which I belong (if any): _____

If a student, what school do you attend? _____

I'm interested in the following Working Groups:

[ ] Ecosocialism [ ] Labor [ ] Anti-War

Commissions:

[ ] People of Color [ ] Women's

[ ] Other interests _____

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Tier 1: $50 a year for annual incomes under $25,000 (monthly not available)

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Tier 4: $20 a month or $240 a year - annual incomes from $50,001 to $65,000

Tier 5: More than $20 a month or more than $240 a year - incomes over $65,000

Monthly dues will only be available through setting up a regular credit or debit card payment. If a member's credit or debit card is declined, they will be notified by the National Secretary and will immediately enter into the 30 grace period.

Make checks payable to: Socialist Party USA. If paying using monthly installments, please set those up at https://www.socialistpartyusa.net/join-the-party

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