

# From the Editors

February 22, 2018

We wish our readers a Happy New Year, though we know that you take little joy in it, politically speaking. If we take no joy, we do sometimes find humor in President Donald J. Trump's proclamations by Twitter, such as his claim that he is a "stable genius." The current debate revolves around which of those two words is more ridiculous.

Under President Trump we are closer to nuclear war than at any time since the 1960s. We stand on the brink of planetary environmental catastrophe. And Trump and the Republican Congress have passed a tax plan that will further enrich the wealthy while having a devastating impact in the long run on working people and the poor. Trump's populist, white-nationalist rhetoric will be little comfort to millions in the middle and working classes who voted for him. At the same time, the Trump administration continues its racist policies aimed at disenfranchising Black voters and other likely opponents of the Republicans, and criminalizing and deporting millions of immigrants who have made homes and lives in America. The neglect of Puerto Rico is not only consistent with a government that despises and is ignorant of people of color, workers, and the poor, but also reflects the more than 100 years of colonial control over the island and its people.

The resistance, which began so dramatically with the millions who marched in Washington DC, throughout the United States, and around the world to protest Trump's election, has continued throughout the year with a "day without immigrants," a women's strike, and town hall meetings challenging Republican legislators. While the Republicans dominate most of the country, New York and California, two of the largest and most powerful states, have stood firmly against Trump on questions ranging from the environment to immigration. In elections in 2017, several progressives and a few open socialists gained office. All good. Keep it up.

A few movements have been particularly inspiring in the last year. The "Taking a Knee" protest by Black athletes and their teammates of all colors have shown us that sometimes we stand up for justice by kneeling down. And the "Me Too" movement of women who courageously spoke up against the men who accosted and abused them has driven those men from the chambers of the Senate, from the most powerful and wealthy news bureaus, from Hollywood movie corporations, and from many other positions of power. If not protests against Trump, these are protests against Trumpish values of racism and misogyny, and they too form part of the resistance. Then too there are the grassroots solidarity and survival efforts by the Puerto Rican people and those in solidarity with them. We are proud of them all.

Lamentably, the labor movement, divided in its loyalties, indecisive in its actions, fearful for its future, and unwilling to take risks, has remained with few exceptions absent from the resistance. Some 10 percent of working people still pay their dues to the unions, and some much smaller percentage remain fiercely loyal to just about the only organization that occasionally speaks up for them, but the labor officials have by and large failed to build the power of their organizations and turn it into a movement. That, it seems, will have to come from the rank and file.

Many polls suggest that in the midterm elections in November the Democrats could take control of the House and possibly of the Senate as well. While that would be an important step, perhaps putting a brake on some of the Republicans' plans, it would not stop Trump from ruling by decree through executive orders. The Democrats, still dominated by the neoliberal wing and its leaders Nancy Pelosi and Charles Schumer, have not been and cannot be expected to be champions of America's working people. The followers of Bernie Sanders in organizations such as Our Revolution

and MoveOn.org have placed their hopes in a reform of the Democratic Party, with uncertain prospects.

We focus in this issue on American politics. Kim Moody, Amelia Dornbush, Luke Elliott-Negri, Sam Lewis, and Michael Hirsch debate the challenges of engaging with the Democratic Party. Dan La Botz discusses Trump and labor. Nicole Fabricant examines the environmental justice movement in Baltimore. We also look abroad. Armando Chaguaceda and Lennier López look at the prospects for Cuban civil society. And Daniel Randall of the United Kingdom contributes to our on-going series on socialism from below. Nancy Holmstrom discusses Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* on its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We reprint here as well an article from the 1970s by former editor Julius Jacobson on neo-Stalinism in the anti-Vietnam war movement with an introduction by Aaron Amaral. And as always we have our Words & Pictures feature and some book reviews. Finally, Tom Harrison and Aaron Amaral remember our colleague Joanne Landy and her work.

We continue to believe that America needs the resistance, but also that the resistance must be turned into something much bigger and more powerful. We need something resembling a national civic rebellion. We need something like what happened in France in 1968 or in Poland in 1980 or in Iran in 2009. In France, remember, the movement forced de Gaulle from the presidency into retirement. That's the kind of movement we want. So there's a New Year's resolution for us. Let's get on it.

## CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE



"Every war already carries within it the war that will answer it. Every war is answered by a new war, until everything is smashed. That is why I am so wholeheartedly for a radical end to this madness and why my only hope is in world socialism." —*Diary, 1944*

"Old ideas die hard. We've had thousands of years of women having almost no rights. Parts of the world are in a struggle toward very basic human rights for women, and most of the world isn't even there yet. And it's going to take a long time to change these attitudes."

"While I drew and wept along with the terrified children I was drawing, I really felt the burden I am bearing. I felt that I have no right to withdraw from the responsibility of being an advocate. It is my duty to voice the suffering of man, the never-ending sufferings heaped mountain-high."

— Käthe Kollwitz, German socialist, anti-war graphic artist