

Articles

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Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and Mass Incarceration: An Interview with David Gilbert on Contemporary Social Movements

The Sixties vol. 5, iss. 2 | December 2012

An interview with former SDS and Weather Underground member, as well as longtime political prisoner, David Gilbert about contemporary social movements. This interview was published in *The Sixties* and republished in *Organizing Upgrade*. Check it out!

The Prison and Its Metaphors

Chromatikon Yearbook VI: Yearbook of Philosophy in Progress | December 2010

Abstract: This paper examines the use of the prison as a strategic metaphor through which groups can name their feelings of "unfreedom." Since the 1970s, the prison has helped various individuals and organizations describe the oppression they face. Its metaphoric usage derives from the prison's normative invisibility: the fact the prison remains largely unseen allows us to project onto it the horrors we wish to challenge by invoking the prison. While I outline the broader utility of this metaphor, I focus specifically on its use as a metaphor for racial oppression. As the U.S. prison population disproportionately comprises people of color, especially black, the metaphor of the prison meets its material salience. The metaphor of imprisonment is therefore of greatest use to racial justice pursuits, precisely because it ceases to be purely a metaphor in the lives of millions of black and Latino people.

Of Black Panthers, Prisons, and a Life in Struggle for Social Justice: A Review of *The War Before* (by Safiya Bukhari, edited by Laura Whitehorn)

OpEdNews | January 2010

Excerpt: "'The War Before' deserves a wide audience--by activists and academics, history buffs and political neophytes. It is a fantastic contribution to the burgeoning history of the Black Panthers, all too rare in its grassroots spirit and emphasis on (re)building movements strong enough not just to withstand state violence but to overcome our own egotism and individualism." Read the full article

Constructing Crime, Framing Disaster: Routines of Criminalization and Crisis in Hurricane Katrina

Punishment and Society | October 2009 (The most downloaded article in *Punishment and Society* in 2010!)

Abstract: "This article argues that the media frames utilized in the first month after Hurricane Katrina legitimated punishment as disaster policy through lurid reports of individual crime. The application of prevailing state policies led to a quick embrace of punitive policing and incarceration, and journalistic routines ended up supporting this process. Although journalists openly expressed their disgust with state neglect, news conventions nonetheless criminalized much of the New Orleans population and suggested militarized policing and imprisonment as fundamental to restore order. Lacking credible sources, reporters relied on rumors and helped create a racialized "looter class" that aided state efforts to regain control through existing policies of mass incarceration rather than mutual aid or state welfare. Even though various media outlets recanted the more extreme elements of this coverage, the tropes they employed created a lasting effect. Building off Stuart Hall et al.'s (1978) analysis of a moral panic over mugging in 1970s England, this article examines both the conventions and consequences of this crisis coverage. The result, I argue, bolstered the existing crisis of incarceration." Read the full article

On July 4, Puerto Rico Calls for Independence

La Voz del Paseo Boricua | July 30, 2009

Excerpt: "July 4 in Puerto Rico was less a celebration of independence than a demand for it. That night, more than 100 people attended the closing event for *Not Enough Space*, an art show featuring the works of political prisoners Oscar López Rivera and Carlos Alberto Torres, as well as a replica of the small cells in which they have each spent almost 30 years." Read the full article

Rescuing Civil Rights from Black Power: Collective Memory and Saving the State in Twenty-First Century Prosecutions

of 1960s-Era Cases

Journal for the Study of Radicalism | Spring 2009

Excerpt: "[T]he current moment is a pivotal one in shaping how society perceives the history and impact of the black freedom struggle. ... [These cases are] being reopened in a post-civil rights world that has seen an immense retreat from racial justice ... these cases constitute spectacular intervention by the state in how the black freedom struggle is remembered." Read the full article

Defining Democracy: Coalition Politics and the Struggle for Media Reform

International Journal for Communication | Winter 2009

Abstract: The corporate consolidation of media has sparked a national bipartisan coalition struggling for media reform. This article attempts a critical overview of this phenomenon by analyzing its works and words to date. I argue that media reform has activated large numbers of people around vital but seemingly esoteric issues, and, in the process, has synthesized communication research and action for the democratic control of media policy. But this battle also exposes several potential limitations. In particular, I examine the populist nature of the media reform coalition's attempt to be a "nonpartisan democracy movement." Such an approach assumes an inevitable progressive basis to bipartisan coalition not demonstrated by historical examples. Further, this organizing model prioritizes formal institutional decisions at the expense of what is perhaps the media's greatest power: their ability to shape meaning through content. I conclude by analyzing several alternate models of media activism which join policy with production and forcefully articulate media reform as a vital component of broader struggles for social justice. Read the full article

Navigating the Crisis: A Study Groups Roundtable [with Chris Dixon, interviews with the Activist Study Circle, Another Politics is Possible, the LA Crew, and the New York Study Group]

Upping the Anti | issue 8 (Spring 2009)

Excerpt: "Our moment is marked by both crisis and possibility. Economies are plunging worldwide, and ecosystems are in undeniable danger. State repression is expanding, and the US, Canada, and Israel continue to wage wars of occupation. In this context, the recent US presidential election tapped into a reservoir of popular energy for change. However, mass movements in North America continue to be relatively demobilized. The left itself is in crisis and lacks clearly defined visions and strategies. Although progressive sympathies now run high, progressive options -- let alone radical ones -- are few." Read the full article

Chicago 10: Image Politics and Protest, From the Past to the Present

Toward Freedom | 9.18.08

Excerpt: "[W]hat better way to blend past and present, culture and politics, than an animated documentary of the (in)famous Chicago conspiracy trial, one of the most well-known events of the 1960s?" Read the full article

Off the Page and Into the Streets

Toward Freedom | 2.13.08

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WireTap | 7.19.07

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amazing...And now that it's over, the real work of the forum begins.

“An Even Newer Left”

The Nation | 6.30.07

Excerpt: It is a scene perhaps best captured in fragments rather than full sentences. Organizers. Housing. Immigrant workers. Vision. Prison abolition. Puppets. Speeches, newspapers, fliers, banners, flags, books, shirts. Laughter. Dance parties. Water. Media. Fundraisers. Collaboration. Resisting state and interpersonal violence. Imagining. Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, ghetto, barrio, reservation. The city. Youth. Networking. Strategy.

“Coming Out for the Palestine Solidarity Movement” (written with Nava EtShalom)

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Excerpt: The 40-60 anniversaries [in Israel and Palestine] offer the chance for a range of creative action across borders: a chance to renew and rethink international solidarity. It reminds us that visionary thinking often comes first from those whose lives most depend on it. And yet, we all have roles to play in realizing such a world.

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Z Magazine | Winter 2006

Excerpt: One of the biggest post-9/11 criminal cases involves the prosecution of 14 radical environmentalists on a slew of charges for property destruction (mainly arson) and conspiracy.

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Excerpt: And yet the fundamental lessons about the need for audacious resistance to the ubiquitous crimes of structural injustice, the recognition that politics is both local and global, and that privilege not only exists and helps shape political consciousness and material relations but affords people who have it with a tremendous opportunity to be engaged in vibrant struggles--these are the contributions and challenges that the Weather Underground and others helped make to the American radical legacy.

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Left Turn | May-June 2006

Excerpt: Political prisoners, if largely unacknowledged, are at the crux of debates over incarceration. Their presence testifies to the ongoing legacy of social problems, which in itself is central to the cycle of crime and punishment. As the anti-prison movement continues to grow in strength and stature, the question of political prisoners demands attention because these movement veterans remain part of current endeavors for social justice.

“Two Prisoners Named Williams”

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Excerpt: The memories Stanley Tookie Williams and Richard Williams invoked were, it would seem, more than the government wanted to deal with. But the issues their lives and deaths raise--the specter of Black Power, anti-imperialism, personal redemption and political commitment--will not be buried with them.

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(written by Dan Berger, with Lars Din, Zein El-Amine, and Kenyon Farrow)

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Excerpt: Both the globalization movement and the prison abolitionist movement have their roots in the political, economic, and social policies dating back to post World War II but that have intensified exponentially in the past twenty years.

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Excerpt: From 1800 until his execution for treason by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1859, John Brown lived white anti-racist struggle. A threat to the institutions of slavery and white supremacy, Brown's militant acts against United States racism terrified the white power structure and continue to frighten it. While highlighting his life and deeds helps us understand our history and shape our activism, his shortcomings must also inform our organizing. Only by critically viewing history - not romanticizing or dismissing it - can we hope to learn from it.

Also, I'm very happy to report that many of the contents of ONWARD , the anarchist newspaper Rob Augman and I co-edited from May 2000 to December 2003, are once again online (thanks to Rob). Check it out here.

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