

RU PARTICIPATING

MEMBERS | NETWORK PROJECTS | SOLIDARITY

From the Education & Skills Team

- Kinship sphere sessions:**
 Lately we have been discussing Sophie Lewis podcast and youtube interviews available [here](#) and [here](#).
- Session with Michael Albert:**
 We held a session with Michael Albert »Differences about Participatory Economics« on Saturday, the 29th of October. The session was recorded and is available on google drive.
- Session with Peter Bohmer:**
 The team is preparing a session with Peter Bohmer of global justice which will take place in the middle of November.
- Session with Florian Zollman:**
 In collaboration with Outreach and events team we will prepare a session with RU member Florian Zollman about the ruthless campaign to destroy Jeremy Corbyn that will take place in December.
- Real Utopia 2 book:**
 We have sent out a reminder to the network about the deadline for submission which is 30th of November.
- Change of the meeting day and time**
 From late October forward the team meetings take place on Tuesdays at 22.00 CET/4pm EST.



Reimagining the Family, Thanksgiving and More...

Mark Evans

Along with the latest updates from the teams and projects, in this month's edition of RU Participating we have an excellent short pieces by RU members Eugene Nulman plus a great members interview with Eva Putzová.

In his article Eugene applies a complementary holist lens to Sophie Lewis' new book *Abolish the Family* (see members picks for details). Readers who are new to and interested in learning about participatory theory will find this a good introduction to some of the basic ideas. For members already familiar with complementary holism you will find a good example of the application of participatory theory to a particular topic. Eugene also uses this review as an opportunity to touch on some other issues, including the reason why developing vision for the kinship sphere might be more challenging than for other spheres. In her interview Eva Putzová tells us about her origins in Slovakia and how the Velvet Revolution of 1989 shaped her political views. Bringing things up to date, she goes on to talk about her important work in organised labour. Eva also informs us that it was RU member Emily Jones who introduced her to RU (nice work Emily!) and how many of the ideas around participatory society resonate with her. She finishes her members' interview by highlighting the importance of the "less glamorous", "on-the-ground organizing work" that needs to be done, with which I couldn't agree more!

In this issue we also bring you a couple of interesting pieces from two of our American members - one from RU member Marcia Bookstein and the other from RU member Ken Bank - on the topic of Thanksgiving.

Enjoy and let us know what you think!

From the Membership Team

- **RU Gym:**

We have revived the conversation about the RU Gym idea from the past. RU Gym was an idea for regular series of events where members would practice presenting, arguing for and defending the ideas of Participatory society so that we would be better able to represent them to the public in all manner of venues, including but not limited to public speaking, taking to the media, making presentations, engaging in debates, etc. Every member we spoke to seems to like the idea of RU Gym however, we need someone to volunteer to kick it off. If you would be willing to be that person or one of the persons that would take this up please contact us.

- **Survey follow up:**

We believe that more skills sessions to increase relevance and actions (forming coop, being a meeting chair, presenting vision, etc) are needed and more topical sessions (ex. 5 sessions in a row on climate change and parsoc) are wanted.

More time zone options
Membership team will launch an event for counter time zone members on one of the upcoming Saturdays.

- **Suggestion UTC should be announced time for events:**

As a courtesy to all time zones (esp w/ daylight savings) we propose in future RU schedules all events on UTC time so there is less confusion when different countries move to or from daylight savings time.

Thoughts on an interview of Sophie Lewis (author of Abolish the Family)

Eugene Nulman

Sophie Lewis's idea of abolishing the family has a provocative title which she states is a callback to a more radical Marxist feminist critique of the family that has been dismissed by the likes of Gloria Steinem and the voices that arose victorious after the battles for claiming what feminism is following the failure of the 1960's movements. Indeed, we can trace back this language to well before abolitionism became a mainstream concept, particularly in relation to prisons and police.

Lewis seems to be suggesting that abolition of the family is mostly about getting rid of a particular conception of the family which is formed primarily by capitalism as a safety net where care can be privatized. She argues that the family can only be »abolished« with the end of capitalism and a socialisation of care, but that we would not know what the family could or should look like without capitalist constraints. This seems to be an economic »monist« argument where economic forces shape other realms of society but there was little sense that the family was shaping capitalism - which would fit complementary holist view.

Lewis also seems to suggest that alternative family arrangements have been failures similar to the failures of socialist revolutions - which is to say it doesn't mean it was not worth trying and not worth trying again. For one she cites the kibbutzim but it is unclear what about it was a failure and what criteria she uses to make the point. Some argue that the failure of the kibbutz movement was due to the creation of the state of Israel, and from that it's deep relationship to the Israeli military. Even here, however, I am not sure what they mean by failure: growth? Happiness of individuals involved? Etc...

Lewis is primarily interested in viewing the family as a place of care that has been put into the private sphere rather than socialized. This follows the idea of social reproduction which takes place, in part, in the home but is often - everywhere - the remit of women (food preparation, cleaning, child rearing, schooling etc...). The idea of social reproduction seems to be over economic. That the processes of social reproduction are purely for purposes of smooth economic growth and continuation over generations. For Lewis, once food production - for example - or child care get socialized, the family will transform into another kind of entity. This looks at the family as the primary unit of physical wellbeing, whether that is for shelter from the elements (e.g. living under your parents' roof), sustenance (e.g. home cooking and where food is stored), protection from physical danger (e.g. stopping kids from putting their fingers into electrical sockets; safeguarding from abuse). Once shelter is a guaranteed as a right and thus a family is not needed to secure it (but as a child, how would you know this) and once food is collectively prepared and does not require the family to produce or store, and once protection from physical danger is socialized through some form of collective care - the purpose of the family, from a functionalist perspective, is no longer needed. For Lewis, this is why the family is crucial under capitalism because without having the family now we would be in an even worse state but without capitalism it can be transformed/abolished for these reasons.

From the Site Team

- **DiEM 25 COP OFF solidarity statement:**
The statement has been added to the site. The team also suggests sending a RU delegate to COP OFF.
- **Updates logo:**
The team updated the logo and added it to site - feedback welcome from members.
- **Weekly site update:**
We reminded ourselves that we should add 3 new items of content to the site each week - we'll also try to send social media messages each time we upload new items to let members know something new is on the site

From the Outreach and Events Team

- **Session with Florian Zollman:**
In collaboration with Education and SKills team we will prepare a session with RU member Florian Zollman about the ruthless campaign to destroy Jeremy Corbyn that will take place in December.
- **Liverpool Political Futures Conference:**
We sent out the invitation to RU members proposing that members come together to form a working group to investigate the possibility of presenting at the conference and what form that could take. Still waiting for a response from members.
- **Weekend event for RU:**
Talked about the team starting to take a lead on setting up regular public events. Such as with Tom Wetzels, Chris Spannos, Dave Rovics, etc.

I think the main point that is missing for Lewis is that the physical wellbeing that can be taken out of the private sphere and socialised in the public sphere under a different economic model would still not satisfy the primary role the family plays which has little to do with physical wellbeing. (First, as an aside, we can argue that all of the above suggestions for socializing the private sphere could still be done under capitalism, just have a more welfare style capitalism and as a result hurt profit margins. It is already doing this in terms of schooling and while not free at the point of delivery or consumption much of food preparation is socialised via widespread access and use of restaurants, work or school canteens, cafes, etc...). The primary role that the family plays is as a necessary emotional and psychological source of support (or lack thereof). People develop emotional and psychological relationships with the nuclear family because they are the primary providers of these necessary traits. They shape meaning for us as individuals regardless of the economic conditions and such drivers are also true across classes and individual economic situations. We know this because these attachments, emotionally and psychologically, are often maintained even under conditions where the family does not meet the conditions of physical wellbeing. Even where the nuclear family fails to provide shelter, or sustenance or physical security they may be critical to providing emotional and psychological meaning and support. Even where the family is actually the source of ongoing physical and sexual abuse (which predominately occurs within rather than outside of the family), they often still serve as a maker of emotional and psychological meaning. In this sense, the family is critical mostly because they are marked as 'the family' socially and privately. That is to say, this is not a matter of genetic endowment and connection (at least not purely). Adopted children or other forms of non-nuclear family arrangements could produce the emotional and psychological meaning that is an inherent part of humanhood. The formative years are obviously critical for this period, but - and closely related - they are also the years where you have least control over your own situation. Here the issue of the need for privacy and the need for public assurance of child safety becomes a tricky affair. In any case, my main argument here is that the primary role of the family is not something that can easily become "socialized". We cannot create an institution of love and emotional comfort, in a way, because institutions are structures that seemingly have a coldness to them that suggests the individuals involved can be replaced and the institution can continue. It seems that this would be going in the wrong direction because you cannot force love or emotional comfort and assume that it can exist between different individuals (including biological parents/children, siblings etc...). I think it is precisely because of these individual differences, and our desire to maintain the individuality within the collective - following anarchist principles - that kinship is perhaps the trickiest sphere to create vision for. It is the realm where privacy and individuality are positive desires and should - to some extent - be sought. This means that a plurality of institutions (e.g. kibbutz-style communes, nuclear families, etc...) could all be positive, desirable styles of living.

Now, seemingly leaving Lewis's work to the side completely, we have the problem of how our own rearing as children may shape our acceptance and understanding of the family styles available to us - once we have the diversity we are calling for. Assuming the revolution happens overnight, surely some of us would instantly join a commune despite never having had the experience previously, thinking, feeling, hoping or knowing that it would be the best option for our own personal desires and preferences. However, perhaps the majority of the people in the global north would continue with what they know - the nuclear family - only because they grew up with it. Perhaps what we would need in the kind of revolutionary transition are institutions that promote a diversity of experiences on a kind of experimental basis.

Why RU Participating, Eva?

Eva Putzová

Tell us a bit about yourself. What is your name? Where were you born? Where do you live now? What kind of work do you do? What are your interests? What is your all time favourite book, film or piece of music? Anything that you feel comfortable sharing.

My name is Eva Putzová and I was born in a tiny town in central Slovakia called Krupina. After finishing my master's from the University of Economics (Bratislava), I moved to the United States and have been living in Flagstaff (AZ) ever since, which at this point means for half of my life! Flagstaff sits at 2,130 m at the foot of Arizona's tallest mountain, Mt. Humphreys (4,264 m), has 300 sunny days a year, and is about 1.5 hours from Grand Canyon NP, 4 hours from Zion NP, and 6 hours from Bryce Canyon NP, making it a perfect place for hiking and backpacking. When I'm not meddling in politics, I love spending time outdoors. But it's involvement in public life that gives me fulfillment and meaning rather than the beautiful landscapes seen from a hiking trail.

The last few years I've been professionally active in the labor movement, currently in the role of National Political Director for ROC United, an organization that works to improve restaurant workers' lives by building worker power and uniting workers of various backgrounds around shared goals and values.

My greatest political accomplishment was leading a local minimum wage initiative, thanks to which Flagstaff minimum wage workers are among the best paid in the country. (On January 1, 2023, they will make \$16.80 per hour which is going to be the 4th highest rate in the country). If you are interested to read about the twists and turns of how we did this, here's a good overview.

From 2014 through 2018 I was a city councilmember and in 2020, I ran for Congress in geographically one of the largest districts in the country. While we (obviously) did not succeed against the incumbent ex-Republican-turn-Democrat with all the institutional power of Pelosi's club behind him, our campaign was immensely successful. With almost 42% of the vote, we were the third most successful progressive campaign nationally among those challenging the incumbents and ultimately losing in the primary. This was the only campaign I lost so far, but also the campaign I learned the most from.

As you can tell, I find real-life politics and public policy more interesting than any book, movie, or music. When it comes to those three – I just want to be entertained. I loved Big Little Lies (the series, not the book) and now I'm rewatching Mad Men and finding so many things that I

missed the first time around! Almost any 80's or 90's music will make me happy. My taste is pretty eclectic—I can go from AC/DC to Scorpions to Annie Lenox to Wham! and enjoy it.

I love to travel, eat fantastic food and desserts, and drink great cocktails. I'm a good cook and a decent baker. (I think Central/ Eastern European pastries are the best and no French, no Spanish, no Turkish, no Italian, and certainly no American desserts can compete.) I'm your typical Taurus, so whatever you read about the sign – the good and the bad – applies to me.

Did you have any significant events in your life that turned you on to politics and social justice?

The Velvet Revolution of 1989 made me believe in the power of freedom, peace, and solidarity. It shaped my political views and I wrote about it here.

What attracted you to RU? Why did you join?

I've been searching for a post-capitalistic vision for a society without a state or centrally planned economy. Emily Jones introduced me to RU and many ideas about a participatory society resonate with me. I want to explore these ideas and maybe experiment with them in the real world.

Which aspect of RU appeals to you the most?

The community aspect of the organization, the exchange of ideas, and how so many people are invested in doing the actual programmatic work of the organization—or at least that's my perception of RU. Unlike in so many volunteer organizations, RU seems to have quite a few very active members sharing the responsibilities of running the organization.

Are you engaged in any other organisations? If so, which ones? What appeals to you about them?

The organization where I work, ROC United, is really focused on what restaurant workers want and they drive the programmatic focus. Catch Fire Movement is a 501(c)4 organization that I co-founded. I believe that our political system needs courageous across-the-board progressives, but we will win only if we can run smart campaigns and are clear about the campaign goals. Catch Fire's mission is building progressive leadership from the bottom up.

What are your hopes for RU and the progressive left more generally?

That we don't give up, continue to experiment, and do the necessary on-the-ground organizing work, which is less glamorous than debating ideas in cyber space or creating media content.

Pilgrims and predatory capitalism: an interpretation about Thanksgiving

Ken Bank

The United States celebrates the Thanksgiving holiday as a national event to commemorate the founding of the American colonies, as well as to enable its residents to express their appreciation of a higher authority or simply to acknowledge their privileged status. The Puritans who settled the Plymouth Colony in 1620, known as Pilgrims, became a national symbol to glorify the subsequent European colonization of the American continent as well as the ethnic cleansing against indigenous people who were perceived as a roadblock to European expansion and economic exploitation.

When the Pilgrims arrived at their destination, they signed a contract of mutual support and common purpose which included references to their religious value system as well as a pledge of loyalty to King James I of England. The contract signed on November 21, 1620, which became known as the “Mayflower Compact”, implied an opportunity for all members to participate in the affairs of the colony:

“IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the northern Parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience. **IN WITNESS** whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape-Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Domini; 1620”

The list of signers included some non-Puritans, tradesmen and adventurers, who thought they were going to settle in the Virginia colony but because of extreme conditions were forced to stay with the Puritan majority in Plymouth and abide by the common laws enacted by the majority of settlers. William Bradford, who was spiritual leader and senior elder of the Puritan Congregation which settled the colony, assumed the role as de facto administrator and head of the small group of settlers. Eventually the settlers enacted their own laws based on the rules and regulations regarding the governing of individual

congregations, providing for majority rule and consent to be governed by those rules enacted by the majority, and also to provide for the resolution of disputes among the settlers.

The first contacts between Indigenous peoples and the early Pilgrim settlers were mutually beneficial. Europeans benefited from various agricultural techniques and products which they learned from local tribes and subsequently adapted to satisfy their own needs. There was also the beginning of a small trade and commerce between the Europeans and Indigenous, exchanging European tools and other useful products in exchange for native foods and some finished goods manufactured by local natives. The sharing of mutual interests between natives and settlers culminated in the first Thanksgiving celebration one year after the Pilgrims arrived. For the early settlers and their Indigenous hosts, the first Thanksgiving was a celebration of their mutual benefit and sharing the surplus value of their labor.

As time passed more settlers arrived, many of them attracted to land speculation and huge profits from trading and exchanging finished goods from Europe in exchange for agricultural products provided by the Indigenous population. The capitalist market between settlers and natives became very lucrative and profitable for both sides. However, arguments and disputes over the allocation of capital resources, notably land, became very serious and eventually led to violence between both sides. Eventually the European settlers, with the advantage of superior weaponry and technology, overcame the resistance of Indigenous peoples to their expanding settlement. Both sides experienced casualties, but the bloodshed inflicted by European militias against the native population was much greater than the loss of life on the European side. Those Indigenous inhabitants who survived the European offensives eventually fled their homes, or were taken as captives to be used as forced labor.

While the celebration of the first Thanksgiving among the Pilgrims and Indigenous American inhabitants symbolizes the benefits of sharing capital resources and productive assets between the two groups, in reality it was nothing more than a prelude to what would become ethnic cleansing and, in some instances, genocide against the native population as European settlers who were not motivated by professed Christian values as the early Pilgrim settlers were, expanded their takeover of land and capital resources that previously were used by the Indigenous residents of Massachusetts. The Thanksgiving holiday eventually became nothing more than an exercise in nationalist propaganda to cover-up European crimes against humanity as exemplified by the fate of Indigenous tribes that lived on the land prior to European settlement.

On Thanksgiving

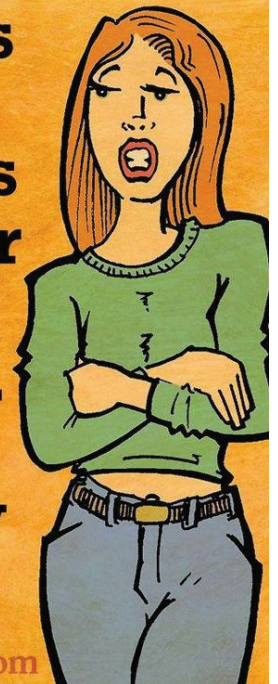
Marcia Bookstein

Have you heard of the children's book, *Stone Soup*? If memory serves me correctly, it's about a man, a very poor man, who needs to feed his family and has nothing left. This takes place in Medieval Europe, I suppose, as the pictures are of women in long, plain dresses, and the men are in breeches, wearing hats with buckles. But, he has an idea. He goes to the townspeople and announces that he has a recipe for a delicious new soup—stone soup! He has the stone, and everyone will bring whatever they have to offer, grown in their gardens. One neighbor will bring onions, another a green vegetable, someone else some carrots. That sounds great, the neighbors exclaimed, and they all brought what they had on hand, including a giant soup pot, kindling for the fire, and a huge spoon for stirring.

The townspeople added their ingredients after the man plunked his stone into the pot. The water was added, the man stirred and stirred and at last it was done. Everyone brought their own bowls and spoons and it was declared the best soup ever. Thereafter, every year at this time, the townspeople would gather together and share their wonderful soup.

The reason I'm telling you this story is because the daycare where my daughter Emily went, at UCSD, was originated by Herbert Marcuse. They did not celebrate Thanksgiving because of how the new settlers thanked the indigenous people after they were rescued from starving. Instead, the children were read *Stone Soup*. That was a revelation to me—that there was another way of celebrating Thanksgiving that didn't include overly dry turkey and literally stuffing

**So you always
give thanks
to the animals
who give their
lives so you
can eat them.
I'm sure
they all really
appreciate
that.** VeganStreet.com



yourself so that the only thing you can do after the meal is sit in a semi-comatose state watching people attack each other in a so-called game played with a misshapen ball made of the skin of another mammal. Really, people.

How do you give thanks? Besides waking up early in the morning, and, before getting out of bed, looking at the numbers on the clock, adding them up, and then using that number to count the animals, people, and things in your life that you're grateful for? You do it by looking at the myriad personalities around you, in every direction of your life, and thank your lucky stars that they are all different from each other, that you're different as well, and that you can all work together, adding up to a most delicious whole!

Newsletter Team

• Seeking new members:

We are looking for members to help out with the newsletter project. Our hope is to keep the newsletter going on a monthly basis but to do this we need more help. To help you to consider whether this is an option for you we have put together a simple chart that shows where we need help. If we can get six members to help produce the newsletter then it would mean that we would have to do only a small amount of work each month. If you are interested in helping out with this project and feel that you would like to take on board some of the responsibilities highlighted below then please get in touch.

- Layout (designing the newsletter)
- Editorial text (preferably rotating)
- Interviews with RU members
- Updates on RU teams' activities
- Images and Memes
- Members picks
- Articles - nudging RU members to submit articles

You can also join us at the meeting of Friday, the 4th of November at 17.00 CET/ 11 am EST.

Member's Picks

Books:

Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation

by Sophie Lewis

In this short and exhilarating text, Sophie Lewis takes the reader through the various histories of family abolition, from utopian socialists to queer, Black and indigenous feminists and into the future, imagining what life might be like after the family. Radical and utopian as it undeniably is, family abolition is the real movement working to undo the care austerity that fundamentally structures life under racial capitalism. The argument for family abolition has become even clearer under COVID 19 where the myth of the nuclear unit has been seen to be a fiction. We were told to keep a 'social distance' (from everyone... except family). Consequently, those without family were left alone, isolated and abandoned. There is no justice in these rules, which keep loved ones from being with one another, treat children like property, and shore up wealth (or poverty) within a class. What is the alternative?

Articles:

The movement for Sahrawi national liberation invites the Progressive International to bear witness to the struggle to decolonize Western Sahara.

by Oubi bouchraya Bachir

Chomsky and Pollin: Pushing a Viable Climate Project Around COP27

Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin share their thoughts and insights on the climate crisis conundrum by dissecting the current state of affairs and what ought to be done to stop humanity's march to the climate precipice.

Podcasts:

Library Socialism Q&A: Heirlooms and Motivation

The episode is a good exercise in asking/answering questions that are both specific and broad for how vision can give answers and also leave room for future people to self-manage. There is plenty crossover with parsoc vision and the hosts did a good job wrangling questions about a possible future.

Videos:

One on One with St. Louis Literary Award Winner Arundhati Roy

Winner of the Man Booker Prize in 1997 for her groundbreaking novel "The God of Small Things," Arundhati Roy is both an esteemed writer of fiction and nonfiction, and a bold political and environmental activist. Visiting St. Louis to receive the Literary Award, presented by the St. Louis Library Associates, Roy sits down with us to talk more in depth about her life and views on the world.



Interviews :

Participatory Economics (PT 1A) - Housing & Land w/ Prof. Robin Hahnel

In this interview, Prof. Hahnel talks to After the Oligarchy about housing, construction, and land, in a Participatory Economy.

A conversation with Stella Moris, Julian Assange's wife
Stella Moris speaks about the process against Julian as a punishment itself.



<https://internal.diem25.org/en/donations/to/copoff22>


RU Serious?

... it's memeing time.

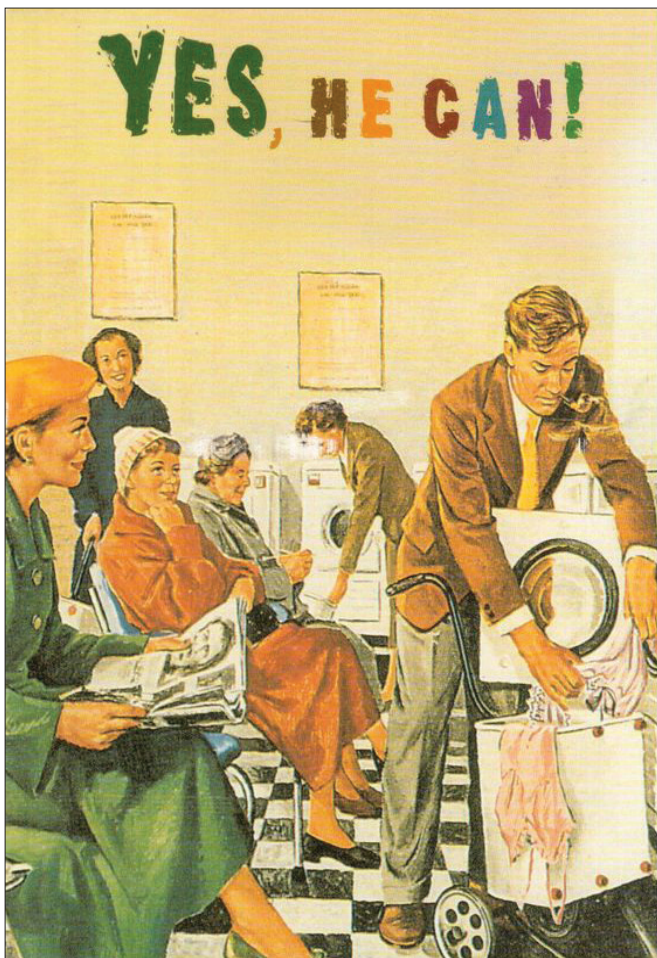
Feeling Sad and Depressed?

Are you anxious?
Worried about the future?
Feeling isolated and alone?

You might be suffering From CAPITALISM



Symptoms may include: homelessness, unemployment, poverty, hunger, feelings of powerlessness, fear, apathy, boredom, cultural decay, loss of identity, extreme self-consciousness, weight loss, disease, loss of free speech, incarceration, suicidal or revolutionary thoughts, death.



My bills ain't even bills anymore. They're grown... I call them Williams 😞

#sendhelp

I'm just going to put an out of order sticker on my forehead and call it a day.

