

RU PARTICIPATING

MEMBERS | NETWORK PROJECTS | SOLIDARITY

From the Education & Skills Team

- **Real Utopia 2:**

We have received a good number of titles from members who would like to contribute to the book. The deadline for finished essays (1000-5000 words), chapter (5000-20.000 words), and creative contributions is November 30th.

- **Developing Kinship Sphere:**

We have decided to work on developing the kinship sphere of Participatory Society. We are devoting every other weekly meeting to exploring and advancing the concept, resulting in a chapter for the Real Utopia 2 book. Any RU members that are interested in kinship are welcome to join. Up until now we have discussed various articles (21st Century Sexuality by Cynthia Peters...) and books (Commoning care, The Dispossessed...) that deal with kinship and community. Part of developing kinship sphere is also the upcoming event with Cynthia Peters.

- **Educational sessions in September:**

In September we will organize a session with Cynthia Peters on kinship and a session with Michael Albert on clarifying the edges of participatory economics. In October we are looking forward to Peter Bohmer's session on his view on European activism.



How to stop feeding the lion

Urška Breznik

With summer slowly coming to an end, RU teams are picking up the pace again (not that they were ever lazy) and a whole lot of new content and opportunities to be active are coming our way. You can dive into the kinship sphere with Cynthia Peters' session "Kinship Vision and How We Can Build Towards It Today", you can contribute an essay or a chapter for Real Utopia 2 book that will deal with vision and strategy for the participatory society, you can become an active member of one of the teams that are always looking for new comrades, join existing RU projects that you can find on our website or come up with new ones. At the same time RU greatly appreciates all the work and activism that its members are doing also outside RU and you can find more about it at RUG sessions, in Discord Members' Activism channel and in RU Participating.

"I would like RU to grow and with it I would like other organizations that share our political views to sprout up or for existing organizations to continue good work that there are doing but adopt some of our values, organizing principles and visions." says Eugene Nulman in the Why RU participating? interview in this issue. We invite you to share some of your activism with us for the next RU Participating and tell us how you try to incorporate participatory society vision in it.

From the Membership Team

- **Weekly Welcome Meetings and Informative sessions:**

We are hosting weekly Welcome meetings for new members or current members wanting a refresher on goings on. We are also hosting individually scheduled info sessions for prospective members. If you have a friend you would like to introduce to RU, let us know and we will set up a session with them.

- **1 on 1 meetings:**

Just to remind, we are facilitating random one on one meetings between members in order for us to get to know each other better. We are entering the seventh round of meetings and there is always a perfect time to get on board and get to meet our other members, discuss activism, politics, generally just have a nice chat or make international connections.

- **Exploring time factors for Participation:**

We are reaching out to members with the aim of finding out whether the times at which we hold events and meetings are holding some members back from participating. If it turns out that this is a significant factor we will try to suggest more appropriate solutions.

- **Proposal for a recurring newsletter section:**

Discussed and approved a new proposal to write a recurring newsletter section introducing new members/encouraging members to introduce themselves and proposed it to the Newsletter team.

Bitter Negroni

Eva Putzova

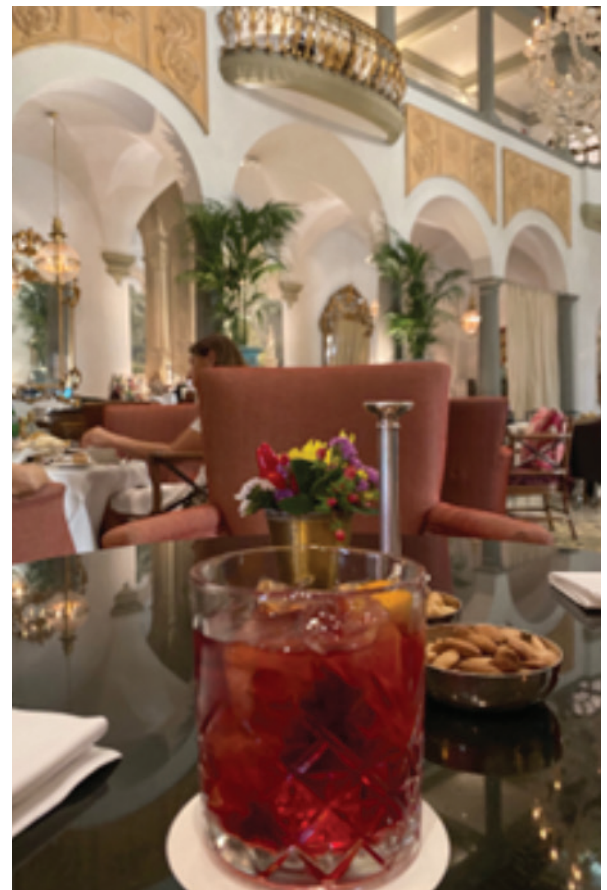
When you travel as a tourist, you mostly see a country and people that don't really exist. It's a fantasy; a very nicely produced, just-for-you experience. Very little of what is captured and shared through our phone lens is real life in a real world. We need fantasy and the make-believe world to feed our souls and our need to see beauty. We carefully curate our experiences and photos to freeze in time that moment of beauty, even if that beauty is just a replica or a masterfully delivered marketing campaign.

Occasionally, when you bask in the moment of a manufactured bliss, a dark shadow you can't ignore reminds you of your own purpose. For me that moment was in Florence in mid-August sipping negroni, the price of which was surprisingly not all that much higher than in average cocktail bars in a small northern Arizona city that I call home. I was in a beautiful, art deco, \$1,000-a-night St. Regis Hotel (and no, I didn't stay there), sitting near a table with five women and a toddler.

Everything suggested that home for four of them is one of the wealthy Gulf countries. The fifth woman was their Filipino nanny attending to the child the whole time these four were dining. You couldn't not wonder about the life of the Filipino woman dressed in sweatpants and a simple t-shirt rocking the toddler in a stroller, while her employers were having a grand time nibbling on delicate pastries. Did they pay her by hour? Why do four adults need a servant to take care of a single child? Was she there voluntarily or out of necessity? Could she leave if she wanted? Did she have her passport on her or was she forced to surrender it? In an Instagram perfect moment surrounded by beauty, you suddenly are reminded of the world that is unjust, exploitative, and cruel—a world of servants and wealth. I certainly don't know the circumstance of the arrangement

that played out in front of me, but one word kept creeping in: slavery. When people's lives are so unequal that one group can enslave another group of people (and it doesn't matter if we talk about physical or economic slavery), we have an obligation to be involved in politics, to care about politics, and to change the rules of politics.

That negroni was appropriately bitter.



From the Outreach and Events Team

- **Meet up:**
Looked into Meet up platform as a means of attracting new members and establishing local groups. Brought it up at the RU Business meeting on the 31st of August.
- **Reddit:**
Noticed that there is a participatory society Reddit page that is not in use and will look into it.
- **Meeting with Chris Spannos:**
Mark Evans met with Chris Spannos and updated the team about the meeting.
- **Short video presenting Real Utopia:**
Discussed Eva Putzova’s suggestion to produce a short video presenting Real Utopia. Some scripts are underway and will be shared with the broader members when ready.

From the Site Team

- **Website improvements:**
We have added new content, updated the map and members’ information.
- **RU Newsletter:**
The Newsletter has been added to the site.

Bylaws Team

- **RU Bylaws:**
Bylaws document successfully finished and adopted at the RU Business meeting on 31st of August.

Great Resignation, Great Transformation

Sean Michael Wilson

The phrase ‘The Great Resignation’ is common now, referring to the large increase in resignations from certain jobs.

Research in Australia, Canada, India, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States by McKinsey & Company indicates that people quitting their jobs voluntarily was 25 percent higher compared to pre-pandemic levels, and that 65 percent did not so far return to the same industry.

Why People Are Quitting Their Jobs

Most common reasons given for quitting previous job (Apr '21-Apr '22)



Based on a survey of 13,382 employees in Australia, Canada, India, Singapore, United Kingdom and United States. Source: McKinsey & Company



As the infographic shows, reasons given include: “Lack of career development/advancement”, “inadequate compensation,” “uncaring or uninspiring leaders,” and “lack of meaningful work.”

In other words: capitalism.

What these articles rarely go into is that these characteristics are central to capitalism and flow from the basic structure of that economic system. It is rarely mentioned because that is too radical and threatening. Instead they almost always focus on what companies can do to be more attractive or what employees can do as individuals. The research asks: “To close the gap, employers should try to win back nontraditional workers. But how?”

If we want to consider a real HOW, instead of just rearranging the furniture, then what about fundamentally changing the economic system? A deep and lasting ‘how’

will involve changing how workplaces function. The Kinsey research notes some thing that companies can do to attract staff and concludes that: “This doesn’t mean that organizations have to change their mission, values, or purpose.” But isn’t that exactly what is needed?

The mission needs to change away from the creation of profit for a tiny group of elite bosses and shareholders towards the creation of value for the whole staff and community. The values need to change away from the pursuit of profits regardless of damage to workers and the environment towards genuine sustainability of a type that is directly inconsistent with the core processes of capitalism. The purpose needs to become the creation of services and things which benefit people... which is not the central purpose under capitalism.

As to the top complaints: “Lack of career development/ advancement,” the main cause of this is the capitalist system, even though few focus on that. It’s a system that holds most people in jobs that do not challenge them, which are boring and monotonous. It’s a system that dangles the prize of moving up the hierarchy but does not deliver that to the vast majority and inherently can not because it has a strictly pyramid shaped hierarchy with, of course, less room at the top.

Whereas, the various non capitalist approaches are not held back like that (or BESS, Better Economic and Social System, as I normally say, for a easy catch all term). Because the key element of a BESS is the horizontal system in which there is no inflexible power differences between various staff in an organisation. Everyone in the organisation is involved in how it is run, in a democratic way. One advantage of this may be the chance to create what those who push for participatory economics call a ‘balanced job complex’, in which we get to take on various roles, at the same time, in a balanced mix of the various things that need done. Which is, in itself, a way to develop our careers and advance our knowledge and experiences. The recently formed group, REAL UTOPIA go into how we could create a better society in various interesting videos and articles.

As to “inadequate compensation,” the key problem in capitalism is the fact that our compensation is ALWAYS inadequate, by the operation of the central force of capitalism. Because in that system some percentage of what we produce is not received by us, it is taken away by the boss, the CEO, the shareholders. That is how they get so rich (and not because they work hard, even though many of them do work hard). So, it’s important that people unionise and fight for better wages, since that can make the difference between paying the rent or not. But getting a 3% pay rise is not enough to really makes things right. How about staff at companies get ALL the value that they produce? How about us not bothering with the layer of bosses, CEO’s, shareholder etc...and instead, the workers who do the work get the full benefit of that work. That’s a key aim of the various BESS plans. Anything else is ‘inadequate’, it seems to me.

As to the other key complaint, “uncaring or uninspiring leaders” — it should be clear by now what the solution to this is: lets have NO leaders. What that means is no fixed superiors who have near dictatorial power over their inferiors in a work place. No set hierarchy of power in which the lowly staff have to obey the decisions of those uncaring leaders.

Instead, we have a system in which everyone in the organisation is involved in how it is run, in a democratic way. That would mean there would be some temporary facilitators or experts or call them team leaders if you like. But they would be in positions that are fully accountable to the whole group, of which all the staff are equally powerful members. So that if those ‘leaders’ are uncaring and uninspiring or inefficient or corrupt...out they go. Booted out, that is, by the democratic decision of the whole staff collective. And leaving them the chance to do better. Though ‘better’ in this case would mean, to be more caring, more efficient, more decent, better organised, etc. Not to make more profit for the already rich bosses, as ‘better’ is measured now.

But perhaps most important of all, “lack of meaningful work.” In this survey 31% of people, which is a large slice, said they found their work lacked meaning. In many other studies the % is far higher than that. The NY Times article indicated that: “More broadly, just 30 percent of employees in America feel engaged at work, according to a 2013 report by Gallup. Around the world, across 142 countries, the proportion of employees who feel engaged at work is just 13 percent. For most of us, in short, work is a depleting, dispiriting experience, and in some obvious ways, it’s getting worse.”

So the majority of people feel their work lacks meaning, and a large slice think its pointless. Also, studies commonly find that people are willing to get less money if the work is more meaningful: “According to a 2017 survey of over 2,000 workers by BetterUp Labs, a San Francisco-based leadership development platform, 9 out of 10 career professionals told researchers that they would sacrifice 23 percent of their future earnings — an average of \$21,000 a year — for “work that is always meaningful.”

And how can work be made more meaningful? By ending capitalism, naturally! Because, again, it’s the capitalist system that holds most people down in meaningless jobs that have no point other than to make profit for rich elites. Jobs that give little chance to do something interesting, to learn, to be creative, to invent new ways and to investigate ideas. Capitalism fools us into thinking it provides all that, but for the vast majority of us, it simply does not. And it also take control of their working lives away from at least 80% of us; or even more, depending on how we define various terms. But a BESS has as a key aspect the fact that staff control their own workplaces, and that control is the crux of how we create a sense of meaningful work. We decide for ourself what we work on, and why and how and when. That is how we make work meaningful. Even difficult and dirty and annoying work can become meaningful if we feel the reason for doing it is important and valued...and that we ourselves are doing it the way we think it needs done. The non profit group DEMOCRACY AT WORK is a great place to learn more about the vision of: “...democratizing workplaces as part of a systemic solution.”

So, let’s make the Great Resignation into the Great Transformation, and get to work on something worth doing.

Why RU Participating, Eugene?

Eugene Nulman

I am Eugene Nulman. I was born in Ukraine when it was part of the Soviet Union and my family left the country as refugees when I was two years old. We were able to move to California where I grew up and completed my undergraduate degree, first at Santa Monica College and then transferring to UC Berkeley where I got a BA in Political Science. I then ended up moving to the UK to get my Masters and PhD from the University of Kent where I was supervised by Christopher Rootes. Since then I had a job as a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Birmingham City University and, putting my career on hold, I recently moved to Italy where my wife has a job as a medical doctor. I continue to research and write which are some of my passions, along with watching films. My favorite film is also the one that sparked my interest in cinema: Citizen Kane.

My MA thesis was about the pathways by which committed activists found their political calling and it was based on biographical and autobiographical texts of activists in Students for a Democratic Society. As part of this research project I read Michael Albert's article in which, if I'm not mistaken, he said something that basically indicated that he was not sure if there was any real connection between the moments in his childhood and the person he came to be. I hold similar uncertainties and believe if I ended up a right wing bigot I could have recalled moments of my life that led me down that path. That being said, those things I do remember that may have paved the way to my activism and political beliefs is that in about 1st grade I had co-founded an anti-Hitler club. I didn't know all that much about the Holocaust and Fascism but being Jewish I knew enough to hate him. Nothing else strikes me as particularly relevant until high school where in our Physical Education class we were playing basketball and the boys and girls were split. Some of the boys didn't care for sports and some of the girls were great athletes who loved basketball so I saw no reason why they should be divided. I don't remember if any of the girls complained but I do remember that I boycotted the class until they integrated our games. There was some pushback from some teachers but in about a week we were all playing together. A few years later, in my senior year of high school, I had an amazing US Government teacher. He was everyone's favorite and every senior had to take his class. The students loved him because he treated us like adults and he challenged and argued with us. He spoke with passion and he really cared about the subject. This is when I became really invested in politics and social justice. The teacher, Mr. Kropf, was a radical but he started off life as a working class conservative who joined the military. His experiences there and reading about the US military changed his political position and led him to teaching. Although I was living in a suburb with very little

options for political activism I started raising money for poverty in the Global South. As soon as I moved to LA for college, before I even went to a single class, I went to my first protest. It was against the war in Iraq. I then joined a political club at my college and became aware of radical critiques of capitalism and then the state. Since then I've always been active in one way or another.

I co-founded RU with Mark Evans because I believed that the ideas and values that underpin participatory theory, vision and strategy are important interventions in politics and within the left. I had experience with Marxist organizations and while I learned a lot being part of them, I was also put off in many ways, especially its top-down structure. I quickly went from being a self-described Marxist (though I was only just learning what that meant) to an anarchist who not only opposed the exploitation of capitalism but also the oppression of hierarchies. RU encapsulates both of those positions but it also goes beyond that to incorporate, fundamentally, the hierarchies related to identity politics: such as race and gender. This is a critical intervention for me, particularly at the time when I first really became wedded to the ideas of participatory theory. I was a member of the LA chapter of the Southern California Anarchist Federation. The Federation never got off the ground really and it had everything to do with race and gender politics. I won't go into details here but just as I was experiencing the effective demise of a promising endeavor because of a limited view of race and gender politics on the part of many of us white men in the federation, I came across Liberating Theory and the notion of complementary holism. The opposition to hierarchy and capitalism and the call for taking issues of political, economic, racial and gender as equally important were two important aspects of my interest in the ideas. Another was an argument I often came up against when I tried to argue with people about anti-capitalist politics. "What's the alternative?" The historical materialism within Marxism failed to really address this issue. No one spelled out how the economy would effectively function, or how political decisions would be made, or what would prevent racism or sexism from playing a major part in the future system. Parecon and Participatory Politics are attempts to address those questions and I think more work needs to be done in the community and kinship sphere to expand this vision.

Until my career break I was heavily active in my trade union branch where I was membership secretary. Our work was really geared toward small reforms for (largely) material gains for our members and it did not typically feel that it easily sat alongside my work with RU. However, more than most branches our branch was non-hierarchical

and attempted to be attuned to issues of gender and race, alongside LGBTQ+, immigration and disability issues. Our branch was run by a mix of political orientations but, for the most part, I felt that the fundamental values embodied in RU were also exhibited in our branch, even if our mission was much more short-termist and focused. Now, living in a small town in Italy and not knowing very much Italian I struggle to find other ways of being engaged. But RU has kept me sane by allowing me to be politically active remotely.

I think the first thing we need to hope for is a strong enough movement to really push for a significant energy revolution to (nearly) full renewable energy sources before climate change leads to a catastrophe. We are well on

our way to that catastrophe and I'm afraid we are still far behind on the movement. RU can play a role in this but what exactly it can do I am not sure. My hopes for RU is to really reach a wide range of progressives and radicals and sync with their values and persuade them with our ideas. I would like RU to grow and with it I would like other organizations that share our political views to sprout up or for existing organizations to continue good work that there are doing but adopt some of our values, organizing principles and visions. It is hard to stay hopeful in these dire times where it really looks like Margaret Thatcher might be right and maybe there really is no alternative. But I believe RU can provide a view of that alternative and be a beacon of hope.

Review of Johann Hari's Stolen Focus

topaz

The title of Johann Hari's latest book *Stolen Focus* got my attention right away, since I had written in my book *Post homeless Disorder*, about how people's notion of 'taking care of us' has been stolen. Of course, Hari's book has much more depth about our focus, our ability to entertain notions, is being stolen. The object which the ideas of stolen focus and stolen notions have in common is the phone. Hari talked with several experts from the technology field, including Tristan Harris, who was employed as Google's Design Ethicist, while my own observations from building phones at Intel, and being on Microsoft's IAM team helped to form my perspective. In short, phones are technology's MSG, designed to have 'customers' return sooner, shop more and actually stimulate the brain in ways which are not necessary for the phone to function.

The twelve cases which Hari researches in the book provide background, and with rare exceptions, create a sense of foreboding. The chapter on ADHD alone creates a comprehension of how law is being leveraged into being only an arm of Capitalism. I used the word notion, because of John Trudell's song – 'Rockin the Rez,' which, when describing the 'warmaker' states that 'his notion of taking care of us, not the same as, not even close to out notion of taking care of us.'

Case in point: 'Children are now fed a very different diet – one that lacks nutrients needed for brain development, and is full of sugars and dyes that negatively affect attention' (*Stolen Focus* 216). Interesting that a Native poet, would know of and sing about the attack on focus thirty-five years before Hari's book was written. I shudder to think of how the parallels between these different social circles may be drawing more people into a nexus of self-deprecation, dependence on machines (produced production) and complete disruption of cultural values which would fortify society against these devastating changes. Hari notes in the chapter 'The

Disruption of Mind Wandering,' that after a summer away from the internet – 'in the next few weeks, I started to post on social media – and I felt myself become cruder and meaner than I had been in the summer.' Perhaps, not only is our focus being stolen, it is being replaced by 'something thinner' (*Stolen Focus* 98).

From these ideas, the conclusion that Hari draws in his book, that technology can be designed to improve human potential instead of some man's pocketbook, is easily grasped. I feel that several; of you reading may have the interest in exploring some of the names and organizations that Hari lists and will add them to the member's suggestions. In the meantime, as you may have noticed, and to invoke feminist/egalitarian ideals with Laurie Anderson's song 'Beautiful Red Dress,' 'well, I could go on and on, but tonight, I've got a headache.'

Solidarity section:



Floods in Pakistan

War on want and Labour Education Foundation ask for donations for emergency supplies and medical care:

[DONATE](#)

Rising Up Down South: A Strategy for Radical Togetherness

Alexandria Shaner



A strategic focus on South Carolina, and other red states who are fighting for their lives against a regressive tide, could shed light on the crux of wider struggle and provide guidance for how to rise up, and how to win.

South Carolina has some of the worst reproductive health outcomes in the country, and many South Carolinians are already facing extreme economic hardships. South Carolina also has one of the widest gender and racial wage gaps in the country. Criminalizing abortion will push healthcare further out of reach and continue to widen already monstrous levels of inequality.

With the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, the institutional tentacles of a deeper regressive and anti-democratic movement are now very clear. Our hard-won freedoms and our budding multiculturalism itself is under attack via an instrumentalization of the courts and the weaponizing of “wedge issues” like abortion, designed to divide and conquer.

This reality affects the entire nation. Yet, a strategic focus on South Carolina, and other red states who are fighting for their lives against a regressive tide, could shed light on the crux of wider struggle and provide guidance for how to rise up, and how to win.

From D.C. to Columbia

For South Carolina, it started on June 27th. After being blocked by federal courts since 2021, South Carolina’s ban on abortion after six weeks of pregnancy (Senate Bill 1) took effect just 3 days after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned.

On August 16th, the South Carolina House of Representatives Judiciary Committee rushed to advance H.5399, a total abortion ban.

On August 30th, even after thousands of South Carolinians raised their voice in opposition via phone calls to House representatives and hundreds more packed the statehouse in protest, the House of Representatives passed the extreme abortion ban.

H.5399 will be debated on the South Carolina state Senate floor on September 7th.

During these last 2 months, there has also been a valiant effort to block anti-abortion legislation via the courts. On July 13, Planned Parenthood South Atlantic and Greenville Women’s Clinic sued the state over the unconstitutionality of the abortion bill.

Leaving aside whether there is merit, let alone justice, in the Federalist’s strict constitutional interpretation line of argument, it turns out that in South Carolina, the right to privacy is explicitly enshrined. Article 1, Section 10, of the South Carolina Constitution states: “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures and unreasonable invasions of privacy shall not be violated...” The legal logic enshrining privacy (and therefore a pregnant person’s right to privacy and autonomy in their healthcare decisions) is plain as day, yet the case is ongoing and has faced every hypocrisy and method of legal chicanery imaginable.

Give the People What They Want

At the national level, it is common knowledge that this harmful legislation is not reflective of the will of the people. A national poll by PRRI from July shows that 72% of Americans and 52% of Republicans oppose an abortion ban that would provide an exception only for the life of the pregnant individual.

What is not usually assumed, is that even in South Carolina, in the heart of the Bible belt, anti-abortion legislation is something being foisted upon the population. Activists must understand this dynamic, refuse to allow the likes of Fox News to control the narrative, and seek wide and diverse support for their organizing efforts. The popular support is there, it's only a question of organizing and leveraging it.

To drive home just how deeply unpopular this new abortion legislation is, Katherine Patterson of Public Policy Polling published this memo on July 6:

“A new Public Policy Polling survey finds strong support for abortion rights in South Carolina, with nearly two-thirds of South Carolinians (63%) saying it is important to them that women have access to all reproductive health care options, including abortion.

South Carolinians also oppose an abortion ban in their state with nearly two-thirds (61%) saying they believe that abortion should be legal, and just 8% saying they think it should be illegal in all cases.

Three in four (75%) respondents agree that women should have the right to make their own personal health care decisions.”

It doesn't get much more explicit than that. The people want women to have the right to make their own personal health care decisions.

The poll also finds that South Carolinians overwhelmingly want their legislators to stop focusing on abortion and get down to the business of supporting families and addressing the state's woefully inadequate social and healthcare program. Here is a cue to organizers to frame the conversation around positive vision. Effective mobilization will describe what reproductive justice, healthcare, and social support could look like and give people something to fight for.

After the August 30th rally at the Statehouse, Ann Warner of the Women's Rights and Empowerment Network, told the press, “The outcome of today's committee vote shows disrespect for the people of South Carolina who have not had sufficient opportunity to understand and weigh in on what's at stake with the proposed extreme abortion ban. Our state began enforcing the six-week abortion ban only a few weeks ago, and it is simply unfathomable why legislators would want to rush through an even more dangerous and radical ban at this point. Their votes to advance this dangerous bill indicate that they don't really care about our opinions or our lives. We must make sure they hear from us now.”

Yes, legislators need to continue to hear from us, louder and stronger than ever. But as legislative and judicial actions

continue to diverge ever more brazenly away from public opinion, we can also be more sure than ever that they are not listening, and that the dual-pronged approach of legislative advocacy and fighting in court will not be enough. We must organize at all the pressure points, going beyond calling and meeting with politicians, beyond rallying at the Statehouse, and beyond suing in court.

We need to stand up and raise some hell, and we need a strategy.

No Strategy, No Victory

When the South Carolina House of Representatives Judiciary Committee advanced H. 5399, as Judiciary Committee members debated the many consequences of the proposed legislation, many insisted that they were only at the beginning of this process and needed to hear from their constituents in advance of the vote on the House floor.

I joined a growing coalition of organizers and urged every single person in South Carolina to take them up on this invitation to call and email their House member immediately, telling them to vote NO on H. 5399 before the bill was debated on the House floor. Thousands of calls poured in. On August 30th, hundreds of people showed up to pack the Statehouse during the House debate, yet the bill was passed.

Many fellow activists will scoff at my suggestion that to call your representative is a worthy method of action. Well, I'll also tell folks to get out and vote. Cynicism must not cloud strategy. Local and state level officials are much more accessible than national officials via phone and in-person meetings, and dedicated advocacy campaigns can yield results. However, I agree that we can't stop there, just as we can't stop at voting every 4 years, or even every 2 years, and call it a day, or a democracy. The skeptics will again sigh and remind me that we can also protest all we want - 'they' are not listening. Again, I don't disagree. That has certainly been the case these past months. Protesters waited outside the Statehouse for 8 hours at a June rally and were denied even the opportunity to enter, let alone to give testimony.

However, strategists know the importance of understanding the wider context of “wins and losses”, to avoid snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Yes, we have been ignored by our legislators thus far, but abortion is what the mainstream media calls a hot button issue, and unlike many other issues that movements fight for, the media is giving it intense coverage. This is an opportunity to leverage media coverage to simultaneously spread awareness and increase pressure on our government officials until the social cost of ignoring us and denying us is greater than the cost of giving in to our demands. If our legislators are blind to our protests, we'd better make sure the media sees us. If we are outraged at being ignored, we can spread that outrage via media coverage - make the world watch us being ignored, and see how the pressure builds.

We have a chance to frame reality in the spotlight for what it actually is, an attack on our basic human rights, an attack on the remaining democratic mechanisms in our government, and an attack on the hope of multiculturalism. It is a stealth and illegal offensive via the courts, beginning with reproductive justice. This pattern of authoritarian rule will not stop at abortion and cannot be allowed to continue to operate in the shadows.

We should also learn from our neighbors in Latin America, who have shown, and continue to show, an unbelievable sticking power in each of their national social movements over recent years. Movements in Chile and Colombia, in Panama and Guatemala, with rumblings again coming from Brazil and elsewhere are models of sticking power and strategic organizing. A protest, occupation, or rally is not something that happens once and everyone can go home and expect to have won. We must come back again and again. We must stay and leverage all opportunities until we can no longer be ignored. And every time we gain an inch, we must be prepared to push for a mile.

To the argument that “a protest won’t do anything”, I say that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t protest, it means we must keep protesting, bigger, better, and smarter, with more community, more solidarity, more mutual aid, more voices, and more determination. And we must seek further creative and flexible tactics to advance our strategy over developing contexts.

Building a Bloc

In South Carolina, the Sept 7th Senate debate will be another opportunity for a rally. This rally should not be thought of as a protest to let off steam and generate photo-ops. It is an opportunity for community building, consciousness-raising, and intersectional solidarity. It will be attended by WREN, Planned Parenthood Votes South Atlantic, ACLU of SC, SC United for Justice and Equality Coalition, and other organizations and people from all around the state who stand together not just for reproductive justice, but beyond single issues for a better world. A protest can be a place both to be heard and to dream big.

There is an immediate and urgent need to fight for reproductive rights, and in doing so, to proactively defend further rights that have been not so subtly summoned to the executioner’s block. There is also an opportunity to escalate this fight to realms beyond abortion access. Yes, we want abortion access, but truly what we want is a vision called reproductive justice. We want feminist and gender justice. Why stop there? We want justice, full stop. We want a better world built on equity, solidarity, participation, self-management, diversity, and sustainability, for all.

The networks of solidarity and outreach that are forming around the issue of abortion must be solidified beyond a single issue coalition into a progressive power bloc. This bloc should be non-hierarchical and intersectional, taking leadership from the specialized areas of expertise of each of

its respective member groups, while fostering a commitment to preserving a diversity of thought and practice. This bloc would represent the robust sum of all of its membership, rather than a lowest common denominator coalition that can only get behind the measly scraps that remain after every disagreement and cancellation has run its course.

Such a progressive bloc would be equipped to simultaneously apply pressure on all possible points. It could achieve so much more than calls to representatives, lawsuits, and rallies alone - it could also demand a referendum, organize strikes, student walkouts, boycotts, public occupations, and other disruptive power plays available to a diversified portfolio of aligned organizations. It could seek out and target the underlying causes when representatives ignore constituents. Rising up through this fight for reproductive justice, a progressive bloc would then be ready to take on climate justice, labor issues, institutionalized racism, debt issues, money in politics, healthcare, education, and beyond from a position of organized and participatory power.

Dum Spiro Spero - While I Breathe, I Hope

The tired divide and conquer method has kept down, out, and divided our various communities, from working-class people, to women, to Black people, to Indigenous people, to LatinX people, to immigrants, to Muslims, Jews, Atheists, to LGBTQ people, to everybody - divide and conquer cannot be allowed a resurgence. To rise up above “wedge issues”, which are divisive by design, the solution is to come together in solidarity and community to stand up for justice for all. It is exactly this refusal to acquiesce to false divisions, this radical togetherness, that is our best strategy to win abortion access and every other victory we envision.

South Carolina’s lesson is everyone’s lesson—it is time to pressure every possible point and leverage collective power. Well-intentioned efforts in isolation will yield burnout rather than success. As those occupying the seats of power have already made clear, it will not be easy. We need to be strategic and let a wider positive vision guide us towards worthy alternatives in community with each other. We must be in a frame of mind fitted to run towards something that we want, rather than merely running away from all we don’t want. And we need to take care of each other while we carve this path.

The good news is that when we succeed in radical togetherness, the rewards are exponential and the possibilities for fundamental change open wide. The imaginary is powerful when we seek and engage with worthy vision to help guide our efforts, spark social innovation, and to inspire hope. Community is powerful when we embrace and organize diverse intersectional participation. The people are powerful, but only together.

Now is the time to forge a lasting strategic bloc to force hands that will not yield willingly nor play by the rules. Now is the time to change the rules.

They Feed They Lion

-
Philip Levine

Out of burlap sacks, out of bearing butter,
Out of black bean and wet slate bread,
Out of the acids of rage, the candor of tar,
Out of creosote, gasoline, drive shafts, wooden dollies,
They Lion grow.

Out of the gray hills
Of industrial barns, out of rain, out of bus ride,
West Virginia to Kiss My Ass, out of buried aunties,
Mothers hardening like pounded stumps, out of stumps,
Out of the bones' need to sharpen and the muscles' to
stretch,
They Lion grow.

Earth is eating trees, fence posts,
Gutted cars, earth is calling in her little ones,
"Come home, Come home!" From pig balls,
From the ferocity of pig driven to holiness,
From the furred ear and the full jowl come
The repose of the hung belly, from the purpose
They Lion grow.

From the sweet glues of the trotters
Come the sweet kinks of the fist, from the full flower
Of the hams the thorax of caves,
From "Bow Down" come "Rise Up,"
Come they Lion from the reeds of shovels,
The grained arm that pulls the hands,
They Lion grow.

From my five arms and all my hands,
From all my white sins forgiven, they feed,
From my car passing under the stars,

They Lion, from my children inherit,
From the oak turned to a wall, they Lion,
From they sack and they belly opened
And all that was hidden burning on the oil-stained earth
They feed they Lion and he comes.

The Poem at Planck's Wall

-
topaz

every night I choose no lover
I choose born again
not the post modern judeo-christian
join the flock or be condemned
born again
more like the surrealistic embryonic pillows
propped up in dream time
by Grace Slick's bustline
oh Music, where art thou?
casting aside burdens and dreams
easier said then breathing or being
what does it take to play the notes?
to fish through ears and bring soul home?
it may be a name
as Gregg and Duane have discovered
though tied to a whipping post
I've heard that All Man Brothers

Member's Picks

Articles:

Anatomy of a Propaganda Campaign: Jeremy Corbyn's Political Assassination

by Florian Zellner

Movies:

Hive (2021)

Hive is a Kosovar drama based on the true story of Fahrrije (Yllka Gashi), who, like many of the other women in her patriarchal village, has lived with fading hope and burgeoning grief since her husband went missing during the war in Kosovo (1998). In order to provide for her struggling family, she pulls together the other widows in her community to launch a business selling a local Balkan condiment ajvar. But their will to begin living independently is met with hostility in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society. Directed and written by Blerta Basholli.

"Blerta Basholli's film could easily have descended into sweeping melodrama, but is instead a quiet character study with stings and smiles along the way. The director favours showing the devastation of a community rather than overly romanticising the successes of her subjects. These are women left unanchored without their husbands, and the film does well to make sure their newfound independence doesn't eclipse their loss. The colours are muted and there is often no score, with silence permeating to emphasise that void." From Little White Lies review.

Blowback: The Road to Manchester (2022)

Twenty two people were murdered in a suicide bombing at a Manchester music concert in May 2017. 'Blowback' traces the long road to the Manchester Arena attack, exposing how UK foreign policy in Libya created the conditions for terrorism here at home. The documentary is available on Youtube.

Podcast:

Revolution Z, Episode 192

Episode 192 of RevolutionZ is another in the series of Ruminator episodes. This time, however, we have two Real Utopia ruminators - Michael Albert and Alexandria Shaner. Lots of ground is covered, all bearing on winning social change.

Music:

RU member David Rovics is on tour in Europe!

You can check the dates here: <https://www.davidrovics.com/tour/>

Websites:

Working Class History

"History is not made by the actions of a few rich and powerful individuals, like so much of the history we learn in school. History is made by the combined everyday actions of hundreds of millions of us: women, men, youth, people of colour, migrants, Indigenous people, LGBT+ people, disabled people, workers, older people, the unemployed, housewives – the working class."

[Real Utopia: Foundation for a Participatory Society](#)



Kinship Vision and How We Can Build Towards It Today, a session with Cynthia Peters

Sunday, 18th of September 2022,

1.00 PM EST/ 19.00 CET

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85787900517?pwd=OTFscWdjRjJianVPY0I2M0ZRd3YwZz09>

This session will include a short re-cap of some of the major elements of kinship vision and then a focus on sex and sexuality in a better world. Read this for background. Then we will look at some current issues in the kinship sphere:

- the war on reproductive justice,
- the struggle around trans liberation,
- and the question of sex workers (will we have them in a better society or will they be called sex therapists, and what would a balanced job complex look like for them?). If you enjoy a good movie and have the time, try watching "Good Luck to You, Leo Grande." If you don't have time, here's a review, and here's the trailer.

For all of these, I would like to discuss how we can fight for reforms on these issues today in such a way that we are building towards a more liberatory and systemically just society.

RU Serious?

... it's memeing time.

 **soup_**
@ambient_soup

why do billionaires care if they lose all their money? they'll just make it back with their superhuman work ethic, right?

12:36 AM · 29 Jan 21 · [Twitter Web App](#)

1,718 Retweets 25 Quote Tweets 11.2K Likes

 **matt** @matthillial · 7h
Replying to @ambient_soup

Besides, if they become the poors then all the money will simply trickle back down to them until they're rich again. Basic economics people

1 12 178

 **Olaf** @Sasooli · 6h

Or they'll just get on that sweet benefits train that's so cushy!

1 4 60

