

THE PARSOC BULLETIN

Members | Network Projects | Solidarity

From the Education & Skills Team

- ◆ Held an event focused on parpolity with Steven Shalom & 15 other RU members.
- ◆ Various questions and perspectives were raised during the conversation, including how we can use the vision of parpolity to inform our internal organizing and our pursuit of non-reformist reforms.
- ◆ The recording of the conversation will be used in developing new content about ideas and ways of communicating parpolity.

From the Outreach & Events Team

- ◆ Organizing a joint meeting of RU, [PEP](#), & [ZNet](#) to see how these groups might collaborate. 3 RU delegates will bring ideas from all the members to the joint meeting.
- ◆ Seeking volunteers to [join the team!](#)



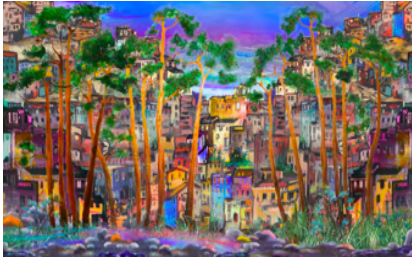
RU Ready?

Welcome to the second edition of The Parsoc Bulletin. The first edition was a crowd pleaser, and it was voted that this should be a monthly publication, instead of quarterly. So here we go again!

Like all RU projects, the newsletter is based on participatory values - all members are encouraged to submit content as often as desired. The project volunteers will also continue to pester you - I mean, try to illuminate the value of participation itself - to submit content when you might not yet have found a desire.

That being said, our network is in no shortage of news, analysis, and goes on so far in 2022. There are a few more long format pieces in this edition, plus lots of great links and reports.





From the Site Team

- ✦ Website improvements continue, & new content has been added, including the latest from the ongoing discussion between Michael Albert and Yanis Varoufakis about a post-capitalist economic vision
- ✦ Trialing collaboration software which might become useful for the whole network. Investigated software options to facilitate wider participation in things like collaborative writing projects etc
- ✦ Work on the future redesign of the website continues

From the Membership Team

- ✦ Hosting a weekly video call Welcome Meeting for new and prospective members every Tuesday at 4PM EST.
- ✦ Opened a Member Activism [channel](#) on Discord for sharing any and all of our projects, actions, etc
- ✦ Developing advocacy tools for members (templates, etc)

It was a pleasure reading and compiling all this news, even the parts that are not so happy, because I realized that if something is mentioned in The Parsoc Bulletin, it means that it is being engaged with by people who have a vision for a better world.

I hope you also find some solidarity and solace in these stories, questions, and actions - and that this publication can reach out as a hand across the physical spaces between us.

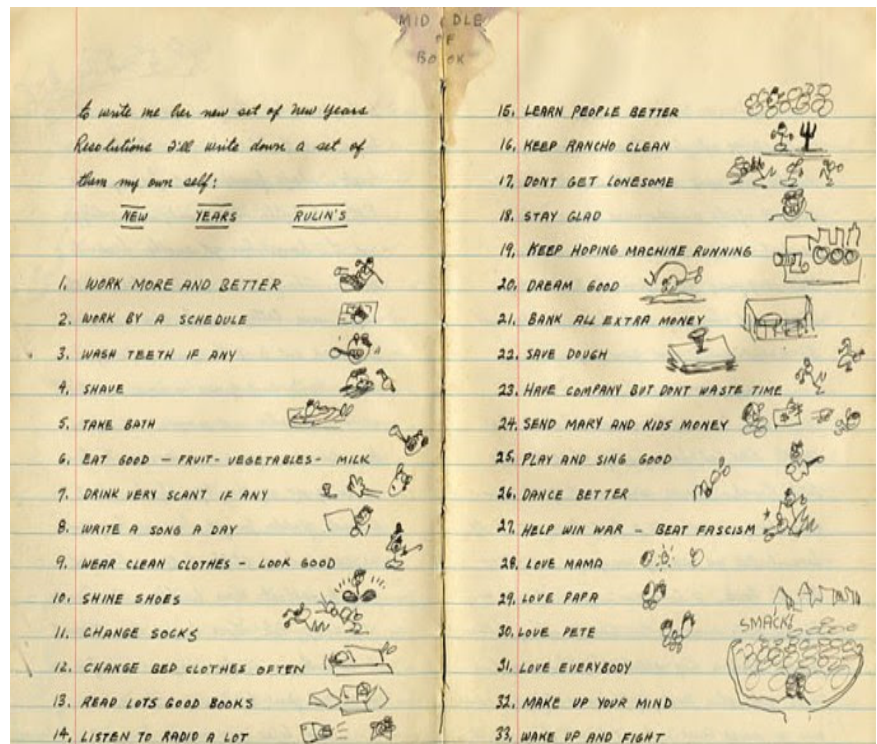
Your Fellow Utopian, Alexandria

If you'd like to volunteer to help facilitate the newsletter, email shaner.alexandria@gmail.com or contact via the Discord [channel](#). The task of compiling submissions and facilitating this publication is done by volunteers, and rotates every few editions.

Woody Guthrie's new years resolutions, 1942:

American singer-songwriter and one of the most significant figures in American folk music. His work focused on themes of American socialism and anti-fascism.

Bob Dylan once said, "You can listen to his songs and learn how to live".



Members' Picks

Film

- [United in Anger: A History of ACT UP \(2012\)](#) - Jim Hubbard
- [Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Always](#)

Talk

- [Organizing White People to Stop Another Jan 6th, Showing Up for Racial Justice \(SURJ\)](#)

Article

- [Revolution, Awakening, And Leaving Abusive Relationships All Happen In Unexpected Ways](#)
- [How anarchist architecture could help us build back better after COVID](#)
- [Deliberative Democracy Series](#)
- [How artistic activism can move us toward a better future](#)

Book

- [Orwell's Roses](#), Rebecca Solnit
- [Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency](#), Olivia Laing
- [Slouching Towards Bethlehem](#), Joan Didion
- [Floating Coast](#), Bathsheba Demuth
- [Cities of the Red Night](#), William S. Burroughs

Video

- [Questions on computer technology and socialism](#)
- [Why Student Debt Is So Hard to Forgive](#)
- [How We Can Make Solarpunk A Reality](#)

Continued on page 13...

Network News

Projects & Updates

The RU ByLaws Project

Richard Schuitema

It was decided at the RU network business meeting that some work should be done around drafting a “ByLaws” document for the Real Utopia Network. It would be a constitution of sorts, which aims to document any rules or norms that we are using to define our processes and structure. To pursue this, a few members volunteered to work on the project and have been collaborating in weekly meetings and discussing on a dedicated [channel](#).

The project has been making steady progress and is aiming to complete a draft document in the very near future. The draft will then be reviewed and deliberated at a network business meeting, and also emailed out for consultation with all RU members.

It has certainly been an interesting and fruitful project so far, with many factors needing to be considered in order to produce a document which can meet the requirements of a participatory and self-managed organizational structure.

RU Garden

Alexandria Shaner

RU Garden is an informal get together (over Zoom) every second Wednesday, and is open to all RU members around the globe. There is no chair, no agenda. We talk about current events, about organizing and activism, about culture, and share perspectives and ideas. We often use each other as a sounding board, ask for and share advice, vent, joke, connect. If you have a topic or question, you can bring it up. If not, just participate as you like.

As this project has been running for a few months now, I thought it could be a good time to talk about it, invite [feedback](#), and highlight it for those who haven't had a chance to participate yet.

Some recent topics raised: advice on student organizing, communication styles for advocacy and organizing, WTF is going on with Ukraine, movies/series as a medium for change and a reflection of culture, cancel culture dynamics and ways out.

Join in every other Wednesday, 4PM EST.



Members' Links

What are we publishing?

Article

Participatory budgeting is democracy in action,
Doug Hamilton, Daily Camera

Participatory Budgeting is getting some traction within our city council and I wrote this article about it in the local paper.

The Political Economy of the Pandemic in the U.S. and Moving Forward & The Case for a Non-Reformist Universal Basic Income, Peter Bohmer

Envisioning a Post Capitalism Worth Striving For,
An ongoing discussion/debate between Michael Albert and Yanis Varoufakis

Song

A Drive Through Delta County, a protest song by Travis Froberg

Podcast

Talking with Robert McChesney, Sotiris Mitralaxis, Jason Myles, & Anders Sandstrom on Revolution Z

Majority Report with Sam Seder & This is Revolution, No Bosses

Video

Activists of the Initiative for a City-Wide Assembly and Organization for Participatory Society in Maribor, Slovenia carried out a rewilding action on the Radvanje stream to improve the state of biodiversity and showcase a good practice of how the streams should be handled as part of trying to mitigate climate change impacts. We planted 280 autochthonous riverside trees and shrubs who will filter the pollutants, provide living space for many organisms and improve the quality of water.

Time lapse of the action Photo album of the action

A year ago, the same initiatives planted the first Miyawaki urban forest in Slovenia. The goals are to help fight climate change, reduce the heat island effect in the city, and boost urban biodiversity. This summer we have sown additional wildflowers and built nesting for birds and bats.

View: [time lapse 1](#) [time lapse 2](#) [time lapse 3](#)

Matic Primc & Urska Breznik

Course

SSCC is currently running the No Bosses: Life After Capitalism Course FREE for RU Members.

How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

Matic Primc

This January, I received confirmation that the first **participatory budgeting in a school** in Slovenia will go ahead. The pupils are going to be able to decide by themselves how to spend a part of a school's finances. I convinced a high school in Maribor to go for it, got funding from the Norwegian Fund to enable us to adapt some IT tools, and educate the school staff in how to carry out proper participatory budgeting.

It is supposed to be put into action in September 2022 with the start of the new school year. We have until then to figure out the legal framework and practical implementation.



How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

Travis Froberg

I recently formed a group in Detroit DSA that is focused on participatory society that meets bi-weekly. One of our members is going to be interviewing Michael Albert for the Detroit Socialist Podcast soon. I recently wrote a book review of *No Bosses* that was published in the Detroit Socialist newspaper and on Znet, and I gave an [online lecture about parecon](#) through Detroit DSA on January 30th.

In addition, there is a parecon animation in the works. I have given full editing control to the RU Education and Skills team and will hopefully start to make an outline for the animation soon; a fellow Detroit DSA member will be handling the technical aspects of the animation.

Another project that the DSA parecon group is working on is doing preliminary research to figure out how viable it would be to create a transitional parecon allocation system in Detroit. I created a simple simulation of participatory planning involving 16 actors to see how planning could work in a small system. This simulation consisted of me personally acting as each actor. I am now working on creating a computer simulation of the system, so that I can test situations with more actors. I don't know how successful this will be, but I am trying to use the parecon simulation examples in the book *Democratic Economic Planning* for guidance.



Solidarity, June 30, 1917. The Hand That Will Rule the World—One Big Union.



Additionally, over the past two years I created a board game. The goal of the game is to reach participatory society by using organizing strategies to defeat those in power. I will be doing the final tweaking of game mechanics in the next couple weeks.

Then I will most likely be sending it to a worker-coop in Chicago that helps people design their own games, so they can create the artwork and print it.

How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

A Personal Account of Dealing with Mainstream Media, Bridget Meehan



I'm an RU member based in Ireland and I'm involved in a campaign to establish a mutual bank in the northern part of the country. Having a mutual bank would allow us to retain the wealth that's generated here instead of that wealth being siphoned off by high street banks to invest elsewhere for the benefit of profit-seeking shareholders. A mutual bank can be classified as one of the non-reformist reforms that Peter Bohmer often talks about; and a step on the road to a participatory society. Mutual banks, if managed properly, also provide a way of keeping money in the productive economy where it's needed by ordinary people and local businesses; and keep it out of the reach of the finance sector where it's used by the wealthy elites to make even more profits.

But mutual banking isn't the focus of this article. What I want to write about is a recent experience I had with mainstream media.

My mutual bank campaign is now moving into a public phase where we're getting out our message far and wide. Part of this work means engaging with mainstream media. We reached out to a BBC journalist and she contacted us in early January to invite us for an interview on the local radio show, Good Morning Ulster. We said yes. No point in having a campaign and not taking any opportunity to promote it, right?

I was the person from the campaign who was to do the interview. I had a chat with our BBC contact ahead of the show to get a sense of what to expect. As we talked, she told me that an academic from Queens University Belfast was also going to be part of the interview. Queens is a Russell Group university (sort of like the Ivy League of the UK; and as an aside, the reason why a university in Ireland is in a British league table is because a bit of Ireland is still under British occupation, though hopefully not for much longer). Needless to say, the academics at Queens have a high opinion of themselves. I asked my BBC contact why they were bringing on this academic and she said it was for balance. She said that with a straight face too; even over zoom I could see that.

How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

From my media experience in the past, I've found that they aren't interested in genuine debate or giving time over to explanation. They want sound bites, superficial chit-chat, and maybe a good row. On top of that, they're often elitist and sexist. I predicted that would be the case this time round too: that the academic would be asked more questions than me and would get more airtime than me, because there would be an implicit assumption that he would know more than me (even about my own campaign) and that his opinion would carry more authority than mine. After all, he's male, he's at an elite university, and I'm just some random member of the public.

Was I being paranoid? Cynical? Let's see.

The morning of the interview arrived. The entire segment given over to the campaign lasted about 6 minutes. The presenter introduced me and the Queens expert. The first question went to me; and it was a two-part question. I had anticipated both questions and I had succinct, focused answers at the ready. Wasting no time, I began to answer the first part where I intended to make three points. I got as far as point two when I was interrupted, and I had to insist that I make my final point, which I was allowed to do. But the second part of the question was completely lost. I probably got about a minute-and-a-half.



Then, the presenter asked the next question to the expert. He was allowed to finish without interruption even though his answer took a lot longer than mine. She asked a third question, which I was sure it would be mine. Going back to me seemed like the logical thing to do as the interview was supposed to be about the campaign and I was the person representing the campaign. But no. She went to the expert for a second time. Again, he was given ample time to answer without interruption and again he took longer to answer than I had. As soon as he finished, the presenter gave a quick summary and with that, the interview was over. I never got another chance to speak or to respond to any of the comments the academic made. The listeners might even have forgotten I was there.



Sadly, my predications proved correct. There was no discussion, no debate, nothing beyond a few rushed statements. There was deference to the academic, the expert. But, hey, at least the radio show got a slot filled.

So that's how it all went down. I'd be interested in hearing whether other RU members have had any similar experiences with the media. Thanks for reading.

How RU?

Let's hear from the members...

Housing cooperative as an opportunity for Parsoc on a small scale, Urska Breznik

Since I believe it is easiest to imagine how we could implement participatory society through slowly implementing its principles in one's own daily life, I wanted to share with fellow RU members my vision of how some elements of participatory society could look, as implemented in a housing cooperative that (hopefully) I will be living in in a few years.

Together with my partner Matic and six of our acquaintances, we have started a housing cooperative named StanKoop in Maribor, Slovenia two and half years ago. The reasons behind forming a housing cooperative were quite a few, and all are tightly connected to the path of housing degradation that Slovenian politics sent us down three decades ago. After the so called independence, we embraced capitalism full on. But housing in Slovenia, formerly a part of Yugoslavia, was not always as unregulated as it is now.



In Yugoslav socialism, the state and the municipalities were the owners of residential buildings and of the apartments inside them. Everyone, no matter the income, had access to an apartment, and neighbourhoods were planned with a much deeper level of understanding of the needs and wishes of the people living there. There were mandatory playgrounds for children and young people alike, green landscapes carefully considered, cultural centres, farmers' markets, educational and healthcare facilities within walking distance and distributed in every district. Not to mention that many neighbourhoods and apartment buildings were planned by famous Yugoslav architects and sculptors, bringing specific styles and art to various parts of the town and the country. Now in Slovenia, the wealthy few are accumulating their wealth in part, through owning more and more homes. City centres and certain districts are being gentrified while others are being forgotten. Instead of green surroundings there are parking lots and abandoned construction sites. The buildings all look the same and the construction is usually of a much lower quality than it was before. Cultural and healthcare facilities in districts are closing down making life increasingly difficult for older and poor people. A large part of the population is facing an unsustainable housing situation. According to another housing cooperative from Slovenia, Zadrugator (Stankoop's big sister) that is doing a lot of research on Slovenian housing policies, "buying a home is completely out of reach for a growing number of people, and market renting is questionable not only because of the extremely high rents but also because of the high degree of insecurity it brings for tenants. While the market builds expensive housing, which is wrongly labelled as luxury in the name of profit maximization, the existing housing stock, the vast majority of which is over 60 years old, is gradually deteriorating. It is telling that we have one of the highest proportions of housing that is uninhabitable due to problems such as damp, mould, leaking windows and roofs. Yet many of them are occupied for lack of other options."

Now, let's come back to the reasons behind forming a housing cooperative with the above kept in mind. Cooperatives are autonomous and democratic organizations that follow the principles of fairness, inclusiveness and solidarity, and by doing so, are meeting the needs of their members. In the case of housing cooperatives, this is access to quality housing. Our cooperative advocates a rental housing cooperative model with indivisible assets, where members are at the same time collective owners of the cooperative apartment building and tenants of individual apartment units. Members of our cooperative are all reluctant to live in market dictated housing, meaning we do not want to pay commercial rents or buy apartments that are getting more and more expensive. Some of us do not even want to be owners of apartments/ houses since we do not want to take bank loans and generally want to avoid capitalist private property worship. What we want is to live in apartments where:

- we pay affordable rent directly to our cooperative that uses this money to pay off the loan to the bank (that we will have to take in order to build the building). After the loan is paid back, the rent will be only high enough to cover current expenses
- we want to manage our own apartment building instead of leaving the managing to the expensive private firms
- we want to work with an architect that would use participatory methods in planning the building, d) we want to build a building that would be sustainable with solar panels, roof garden and a green facade and preferably a lot of wood
- as opposed to private investment housing that maximizes marketable apartment space and includes no common areas, we want to instead have common spaces such as a big kitchen and living room (while still having a kitchen and a living room, only smaller, in our apartments), co-working space with indoor cinema, a workshop, a common washroom and a roof garden
- we want to build an intergenerational community based on solidarity and mutual aid
- we want to be close enough to the city centre in order to avoid commuting to work with cars
- we want housing units that we build to be forever removed from market speculation. This last point is important as we want the housing to be used by future generations. Once the coop pays back the loan, the rent will be extremely low for the occupants that will move in after we are gone.
- to ensure future coop members, who will move into the already paid off housing, can never sell the apartments, we set up the coop to have indivisible equity, meaning that even if the housing is sold the proceeds can never be distributed among members, thus removing the incentive to put the housing on the market in the future.



Wohnprojekt Wien housing cooperative in Vienna



StanKoop members visiting Wohnprojekt Wien roof garden



Cooperative Wohnprojekt Wien

With these arguments behind the decision of wanting to live in a housing cooperative we tick a lot of parcommunity boxes, but there is still more... Intergenerational momentum is often strong in housing cooperatives. There are cases of housing cooperatives organizing daycare for children or companion animals. There are also housing cooperatives with specific focus on the needs of their elderly inhabitants where they are assisted in daily chores by younger people living in the same cooperatives but paying lower rents. There are also quite a few housing cooperatives where one or two apartments are reserved for asylum seekers or impoverished people. Additionally, housing cooperatives usually have various councils deciding on the allocation of goods

(often finances gained either by renting out some of their commons spaces for seminars or renting space to another cooperative, perhaps a local organic food store) and then planning how to best use this money (decisions that could, I imagine, take place using a participatory budgeting mechanism), councils in charge of cleaning of the common spaces, councils in charge of receiving visitors interested in housing cooperatives and participatory architecture, and councils in charge of community events. On this smaller scale, we see that parpolity and parecon can also find a place in a housing community.

Housing cooperatives can be organized within the value framework of Parsoc, on a smaller scale true, but at the same time they can set a great example for how we can start to make a transition to a better society.



StanKoop members visiting Wohnprojekt Wien



Dear RU,

A section where we can write to one another about anything and everything

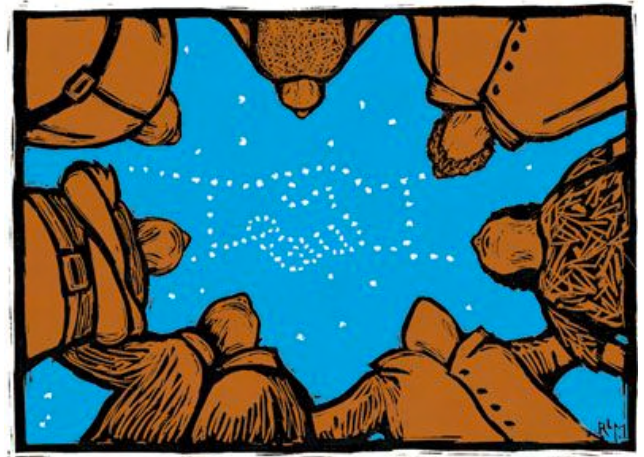
My time on the Kshama Solidarity Campaign in Seattle, WA

Ian Pfungsten

During the early part of December 2021, I was fortunate to visit Seattle and learn first-hand the organizing and strategy of the Kshama Solidarity Campaign. The campaign was in support of Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant, who is a member of Socialist Alternative and Democratic Socialists of America. Councilmember Sawant was elected to the Seattle City Council in 2013 and re-elected in 2015 and 2019 on a platform of raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, passing renter's rights legislation, and funding affordable housing projects with taxes on Amazon, which is headquartered in her district. But after the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, self-proclaimed Liberal Democrats, with the financial support of corporate landlords and major donors to Donald Trump, initiated a recall campaign to unseat her on spurious claims. While Kshama was not charged with any crime, the recall campaign claimed she allowed protestors into Seattle City Hall while COVID restrictions were in place, used her office to fund a ballot initiative to tax Amazon, and led a protest to Mayor Jenny Durkan's house. The recall petition was deliberately filed after the deadline that would place it on the regular November ballot, instead the recall vote was put on a special December ballot when voter turnout was expected to be lower. Despite the odds, Councilmember Sawant survived the recall by a little over 300 votes with the highest voter turnout from 25-34-year-olds! When you look at what Kshama has accomplished for the working class and renters with the support of constituents and some members on the City Council, it is not surprising that she was the target of a recall by Seattle's corporate elite.

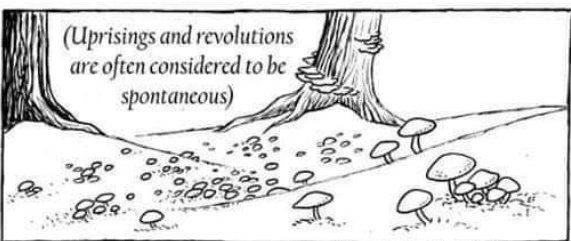
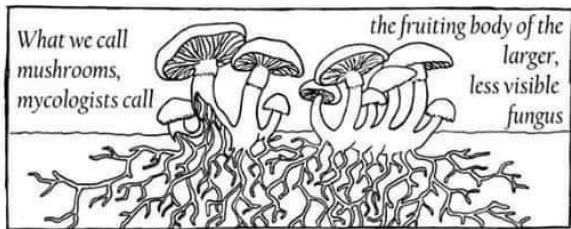
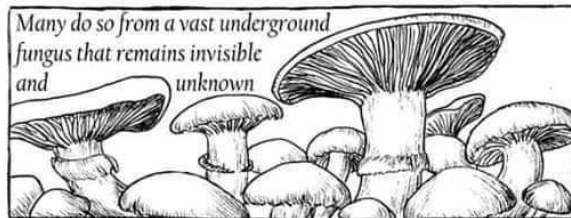
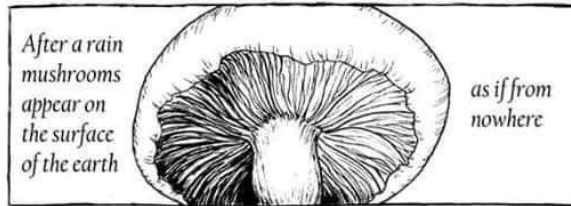
My time in Seattle was a little less than a week, during the final stretch of the campaign when volunteers were tired and running on fumes from working for months. On the weekend before the vote, more than 200 volunteers came out on a rainy, cold Saturday and stood at 75 tables throughout the district to register voters and help them cast their ballots via ballot printing stations that were legal under Washington's voter laws. I talked to supporters of Councilmember Sawant who voted in November but did not know about the recall vote, and to others who lost their mail-in ballots, only to be astonished that they could simply print out a new one. I also saw voter intimidation from the recall campaign who stood at ballot printing stations recording voters as they cast their legal ballots, and later complained alongside the Seattle Times editorial board that Washington State elections were too open to fraud by having ballot printing stations, which they too could have provided at street corners to voters if the recall campaign had interest in doing so. Instead, I witnessed posters being ripped down and yard signs being pulled, defaced, and trashed; this was the ground campaign of the so-called "Liberal-backed" recall effort-- voter suppression and intimidation. Still, the solidarity within the Kshama campaign was stronger and prevailed due to voting access the State of Washington provided. It was an incredible experience with dedicated volunteers and the strategy to win against powerful interests and their attempt to lower voter turnout. But would it have been as successful in a less voter-friendly State, and do other socialist candidates have the campaign stamina to endure future elections and recalls? Is this result in a large, left-leaning city an exception, and would lessons translate to cities nation-wide?

In the words of Councilmember Sawant, "If a small revolutionary socialist organization can beat the wealthiest corporations in the world here in Seattle, again and again, you can be sure that the organized power of the wider working class can change society."



RU Serious?

Mushroomed:



CEL - from Hope in the Dark, Rebecca Solnit



RU Done Yet?!

...Members' Picks continued from page 3



Music:

Sam Fender, album: Seventeen Going Under

Film

Joanna Hogg: Unrelated (available on MUBI), Archipelago, Exhibition, The Souvenir 1 & 2

Ken Loach: I, Daniel Blake & Sorry We Missed You

Sebastián Borensztein: La odisea de los giles (Heroic Losers)

Adam Curtis: Can't Get You Out of My Head

Peter Jackson: The Beatles: Get Back

Book

John Berger - Ways of Seeing

Arundhati Roy - Azadi: Freedom, Fascism, Fiction

Ursula Le Guin - The Dispossessed

Culture of Narcissism - Christopher Lasch

The Real Terror Network - Edward S. Herman

The Devil Finds Work - James Baldwin

Sally Rooney - Conversations with Friends, Normal People,

& Beautiful World, Where are you?

Article

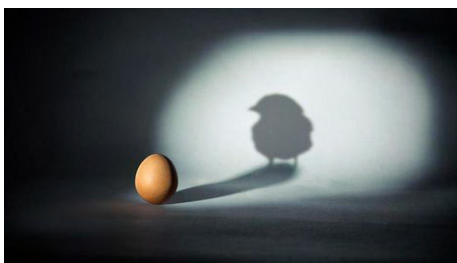
The Lesson of Covid: When People Are Anxious, Isolated and Hopeless, They're Less Ready To Think Critically

Caitlin Johnstone: The Secrecy of Evidence

Graphika: The Deep State's Beard for Controlling the Information Age

Mixed Feelings

.....
Want to stir it up? RU members have submitted the following, with question marks...



Series

Succession

Article

Gen X Was the Political Generation

What's Wrong With Economics

