

# RU PARTICIPATING

MEMBERS | NETWORK PROJECTS | SOLIDARITY

## From the Education & Skills Team

- **RU 2 book:**

Chapters and shorter submissions for the book are coming in. Team has carefully looked through the submissions that arrived until now for the RU2 book. We made some comments and suggestions and will ask the authors to try and take them into consideration. The deadline for the submissions is prolonged until the end of December so people can still submit essay, chapters or art work.

If you have an idea but are not sure about how to approach it or if it fits with the book concept please contact E&S team. We are happy to discuss any ideas.

- **Work on kinship:**

Team is working on developing kinship and will continue to do so through December. We hope for this work to result in a chapter of the RU 2 book. Interested members are welcome to join the sessions where we develop the theory.

- **Framing of Jeremy Corbyn:**

The session on the topic of how Jeremy Corbyn was sabotaged and framed for antisemitism will be postponed and presumably held in January.



## For Auld Lang Syne, my dear

### Urška Breznik

On this Noam Chomsky Day and with 2022 coming to a close the December issue of RU Participating seems to (inadvertently) reflect the introspections that are common for this part of the year.

Marcia is envisioning a society where homeless people are not blamed for their life circumstances that are often the result of deep structural injustice and reflects on the incorrect reasoning of people connecting homelessness with laziness or “not working hard enough”. Something the remuneration part of the participatory economy has lots to say about. In the interview Joe encourages us to “engage, research, criticize, develop” and shares his hopes about the future of RU and the Left. Ken writes about Christmas being a capitalist holiday while Jesus probably was living “a life based on sharing and caring with other members of the community, a lifestyle that essentially renounces the quest and accumulation of material wealth”. In the concluding article Travis highlights the importance of a concrete vision of what we ultimately want to replace capitalism with and the immense hope that this vision offers. As always we have some excellent Members’ picks that you can explore in depth during the holiday season and solidarity appeals that you can join. At the end we hope to make you laugh (or cringe) with some carefully curated memes...

Let’s make sharing and caring and laughing and engaging part of RU vision for 2023.

## From the Site Team

- **Map updates:**  
New members locations have been added onto the map.
- **Restructuring teams work:**  
Team discussed indentifying categories that each member could take a lead on maintaining the site. Mark will prepare a proposal for next meeting.
- **Actively seeking content:**  
Team discussed actively seeking content on theory, vision and strategy from the membership. Particularly material that relates current affairs to this body of work. Eugene will develop this idea further and bring it back to the next meeting.

Team considered adding members interviews to the site. Would need to ask each member first.

- **RU Facebook page:**  
Discussed Ken's proposal to set up a FB page for RU.

## From the Outreach and Events Team

- **Script about Parsoc:**  
Team in continuing work on Parsoc presentation video. Progress is made on the script.
- **RU Library blitz campaign:**  
Fintan talked about his RU library Blitz campaign. He will present the idea at the RU council meeting.
- **Florian Zollman session:**  
Mark will recontact Florian Zollman about doing a talk for RU on framing Jeremy Corbyn maybe early in the new year.

# As Mayor

## Marcia Bookstein

As mayor, the first thing I would do is acknowledge to the homeless population in my city that they are not at fault, and that they are deserving of as much respect and autonomy as any other citizen in our City.

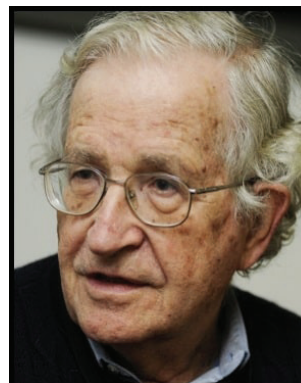
That's right. What does "deserve" or "deserving" mean when speaking of life's circumstances? If you were born with a disfigurement that the medical industry won't correct because of our for-profit medical system, so that, when older, nobody will hire you, is that your fault? If you were born to a mother who didn't know she was pregnant, drank alcohol, and therefore caused you to be born with fetal alcohol syndrome, is that your fault? Or if you were born into a family where your father regularly beat you, is that your fault? And if society values a banker more than a poet, is that your fault?

Because of our system of economic power, there are winners and losers. If you are one of the losers, does that mean you are condemned to a lousy life while watching the winners drive their fancy Porches past you, wrinkling their noses?

To rectify this situation I would ask homeless people what they would want and need. Yes, ask them. And then enlist their help in making it happen: food, housing, a job with benefits, community, purpose. Of course I would have to deal with the anger of the people who would complain, "But they don't deserve that! They haven't worked and struggled like I did to get what I have!" And how do you know how much they struggled and worked? I have learned, not as mayor, but as an ordinary citizen, how some of them struggled and failed to not be homeless. Some of them don't want to be a burden on their families. Or, during a divorce they let the wife stay in the house. Or they work and don't get paid. It's a sorry place to be, and I'd want all the people with homes to make a list of all that they are grateful for, including a bathroom nearby, their magnificently complicated brains, and the fact that we are no longer one-celled animals. Carol Tavris, in her book *Anger: the Misunderstood Emotion*, addresses the anger we feel at societal injustice. More often than not people are willing to blame the victim, in this case, the homeless, for their situation. They took drugs, were lazy, made wrong choices. This is the indolent way to think. It's the system that is the cause of homelessness. And what is to be done about the system?

That is a much bigger question with a much more difficult solution. Our economic system is utterly entrenched. So, as mayor, I would take care of all of my constituents

as if they were my closest friends; with care, understanding, empathy, and an engaging attitude so that everyone can feel good about pitching in, helping others to live their best lives.



**States are not moral agents, people are and can impose moral standards on powerful institutions.**

**Noam Chomsky**

# Why RU Participating, Joe?

## Joe Barnwell

I'm Joe Barnwell. I was born on the winter solstice 80 years ago in Erie, Pennsylvania. I have since traveled over much of the country and I've been living in Crescent City, California, for the last 17 years. Crescent City is located on the extreme northern coast of California and is best known for its tsunamis.

I was last employed as a group home counselor to severely emotionally disturbed teenagers. I wasn't any good at it. Counseling is all about social relations, and I was operating with an undiagnosed autism (asperger's). I was a paint-by-the-numbers counselor in the human world of schmooze.

The natural world has always been my refuge from human failings (mine and others'), and I'm an amateur naturalist of sorts. Seeing a sandhill crane probe for sandcrabs on a beach can make my day, and so I was primed to apply life's organization to humans and human social systems once the science appeared.

This brings me to my favorite book: Fritjof Capra's *Web of Life* (1996). Web brings the mysterious new sciences of organizational relations to earth for popular comprehension, and chapter 7 introduces what I call "Capra's Triangle," a miraculous tripartite model of life's universal pattern of organization. I firmly believe Real Utopia could learn to use Capra's Triangle to design revolutionary participatory social programs and birth them. This would be an earthshaking development.

The preceding reflections bring me to my presence and purpose at RU. I've written a 2800-word mini-manifesto, "Getting Organized," that introduces Capra's Triangle and points to a red-green revolutionary organizing theory the Triangle suggests. I believe "Getting Organized" does a decent job introducing Capra's Triangle and the revolutionary organizing theory, and I'd like some RU members to take a look. Engage, research, criticize, develop, etc. I have no computer skills other than the ability to transmit a

document via email, so interested persons can contact me a fierygreenjoe@gmail.com to get a copy. And then ....?

I believe asperger's and its attendant socializing difficulties resulted in my developing an outsider's perspective and identification with the underdog in early childhood. From there I grew into a social justice crusader and rebel against authority.

Then I audited the classes of Marxist professor Richard Lichtman at UC-Berkeley after my 1968 discharge from the Air Force. Lichtman taught me to look beneath surfaces for the forces and relations that give rise to events. The nakedness of capitalism and its emperors became ever more apparent.

I've long been searching for groups open to an anti-capitalist program that might also engage a brand new approach to revolutionary organizing. So far, I've found only one such group: RU, and Mark Evans, the interviewer, has been the source of most of the openness.

RU seems to have an effective internal organization as well as being open to anti-capitalist organizing, and so I joined late last year. The absence of other such groups says a lot about the current state of the left. The quality of the "left" has been miserable and I haven't found a group worth joining other than RU for several decades.

I was in the Revolutionary Student Union at UC-Berkeley in the late 1960s and thoroughly explored the extensive menu of radical groups active back then.. I also spent time on the staff of the Oleo Strut, an anti-war GI coffeehouse outside Fort Hood, Texas. In retrospect, none of these groups had a clue. We just wanted to kick ass and had nothing to offer in place of capitalism. All practice, no theory, no way.

Then in 1996 I served as a faithful soldier in a successful grassroots campaign that prevented the California Department of Transportation from bisecting a state park with a Highway 1 bypass that would have opened the coast south of San Francisco to overdevelopment. This campaign deeply impressed me with the joy and rewards of creatively coming together with others in good cause. I may be autistic, but I'm not crazy.

I would like to be part of RU developing the opening moves in a growing movement of personal and social transformation. Our human species is currently going down without a fight. We must learn to consciously organize and live in the pattern automatically employed by all other living beings, and some people, some group must get this going. If not RU, who?

## From the Membership Team

- **RU Gym:**  
We are still looking for a person that would take point on organizing RU Gym.
- **1 on 1 meetings:**  
One on one meetings between members are back in swing with 24 members participating at the moment. If you would like to join please write to Matic so he can add you to the list.

# Was Jesus a socialist?

**Ken Bank**

As the Christian holiday Christmas approaches we are all reminded of what the spirit of Christmas is all about. For most it is simply a celebratory occasion to reunite with relatives most of us would rather not relate to the rest of the year, and to engage in an orgy of commercial, material acquisition and exchanging, benefiting no one except corporate retailers and other predatory capitalists seeking to enrich themselves mostly at the expense of working class and even the poorest segment of consumers.

Despite the blatant commercialization of what is supposed to be a holy day, there is some underlying sentiment expressing the original beliefs from thousands of years ago that emphasized the sharing of material goods, especially among the lower classes of society. The central figure in all of this, of course, is the prophet Jesus Of Nazareth, widely known as Jesus Christ, who preached a more simplistic faith based on mutual emotional and material sharing among all members of society, especially the most unfortunate among them.

Very little is known about Jesus until he actively began preaching his message of obedience to God, the Commandments, and biblical scripture. The biblical testaments say very little about the early life of Jesus but historians have speculated for hundreds of years as to when and how Jesus formulated not only his message of eternal salvation but the more controversial aspects of living a life based on sharing and caring with other members of the community, a lifestyle that essentially renounces the quest and accumulation of material wealth in favor of asceticism and observance of traditional rituals.

There seems to be some evidence that Jesus spent many years traveling outside of Palestine where he may have been exposed to other religious traditions and beliefs, including Buddhism and other Eastern religious traditions that formed the basis for early Christianity. According to other theories and historical speculation, however, Jesus likely spent a good deal of time living with and practicing with a large group of observant Jewish believers who became known as the Essenes. The Essenes were numerous throughout Palestine, numbering many thousands of followers, but were mostly concentrated in the area around Jerusalem and what is now the West Bank of the Jordan River. Since Jesus spent most of his adult life preaching in the same region where the Essenes were concentrated, it seems more than probable he would have had some exposure to Essene beliefs and practices, even if he did not actually live with them.

There is also some historical speculation that John The Baptist had also spent some time living with the Essenes and would have been exposed to their beliefs. This would

have occurred before John established his ministry along the Jordan River. It seems likely that assuming both Jesus and John lived with the Essenes, they may have left the group because of their desire to spread their gospel among those who did not embrace Essene beliefs and practices.

Most of what we know now about the Essenes came with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1940s and 1950s from caves and other similar locations concentrated in the West Bank region of Palestine, east of Jerusalem and north of the Dead Sea. Although the scrolls were not in complete or good condition, the fragments they contained gave historians, archaeologists and other biblical scholars some glimpse as to how they lived and practiced their beliefs. There are also a few contemporary sources of information about the Essenes, mostly from the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, a first century CE writer who provided a comprehensive history of the Jewish people during the Roman era.

Based on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the writings of Josephus, historians have concluded that the Essenes were a strictly observant religious sect within Judaism. Along with their somewhat radical, extreme and fundamentalist religious beliefs, the Essenes repudiated the accumulation of wealth and material possessions. For all practical purposes they renounced private property and emphasized a lifestyle of poverty, community ownership of all capital assets, and the sharing of all property including care for the sick and needy among their adherents.

There seems to be little doubt that even if Jesus did not actually live with the Essenes, he must have known about their beliefs and practices and would have been influenced by them. We can see this from the gospels that in addition to redemption from sin, Jesus also emphasized a non-material lifestyle, the repudiation of accumulated wealth, the sharing of common property and resources including the distribution of assets among the poor, needy and sick members of the community.

The best example of Essene influence came when Jesus entered the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and violently attacked the moneychangers who would extract a confiscatory fee from pilgrims who were seeking to enter the holy Temple and receive the blessings of the high priests in exchange for making sacrifices. He accused the merchants and tradesmen of greed and avarice for maintaining a house of merchandise and a den of thieves. The impact of Jesus physically assaulting the moneychangers and damaging their business property was deeply felt by not only the high priests of the Temple but the Roman occupation as well, who feared that any disturbance, no matter how justifiable, would spread to

civil unrest and create serious difficulty for the Roman administrators. When Jesus accused predatory capitalists at the Temple for taking unfair advantage of poor people and pilgrims unable to afford the excessive fees for worshiping at the holy place, there seems little doubt he was influenced by Essene beliefs concerning the evils of taking material wealth at the expense of poor and unfortunate pilgrims, instead of sharing their assets and wealth with those who needed it.

If Jesus was alive today and preaching, he would likely be as angry at vulture capitalists as he was against the moneychangers at the Jewish Temple for squeezing the poor and working class for every nickel and dime in the name of celebrating and honoring the birth of their professed lord and savior. Even worse, greedy capitalists have no hesitation at enticing the gullible and unfortunate

masses into going in debt to spend money for making rich capitalists even richer. It is always a “Merry Christmas” for predatory retailers using images of Santa Claus to promote their products and squeeze even more money from the pockets of already overburdened with debt consumers.

I think we can only speculate whether Jesus would be going into Macy’s department store on Fifth Avenue in New York City and smashing the window displays, counters and other images of rampant commercialization. Would Jesus proclaim Macy’s, Harrods Of London, and other vulture retailers, financial predators and other corporate palaces of materialism as nothing more than immoral and sinful “Houses of Merchandise, a “Den of Thieves”? Perhaps. That is the question that needs to be considered. this holiday season.

# Developing a Socialist Vision is Crucial to the Success of the Left

**Travis Froberg**

When trying to convince people that capitalism needs to go in order for humans to truly flourish — and for that matter just avoid extinction — I always get back three main types of questions, in this order:

1. Can’t we just reform what we have now, without actually overthrowing capitalism, until it works for everyone?
2. Okay, I’m convinced that capitalism is unsustainable, but what would you even replace it with?
3. All right, I see how that vision could possibly work, but how would we get there? The rich control our political institutions, making a task as big as replacing capitalism impossible.

Broadly, what they are asking me to provide is a critique of the current system, a vision for what I want, and a strategy for how to get there. These are all fair questions. I believe the left has been quite successful in recent years, and at other times throughout history, in convincing many people that capitalism has enormous flaws that cannot be fully resolved through reforms. My mother, a very apolitical person, recently remarked, “If there was a way to make capitalism work for everyone, they (the powerful) should have been able to figure it out by now.”

I don’t need to provide you with a bunch of polls to convince you that beliefs like this are becoming more common; you have probably heard similar remarks.

But while socialist critiques of capitalism are becoming more palatable, many people are still not quite willing to identify as socialists. They may be stuck in the belief, most famously summarized by Margaret Thatcher, that there is no alternative (TINA). “Sure, things suck, but what is the other option?”

This is where vision comes into play. Vision goes beyond short-term goals. It’s the end result we are fighting for. For socialists, this means being able to describe the features of a post-capitalist economic system that will fulfill our values. It doesn’t have to be a blueprint. It could just provide the basic features and institutions of the system, making it more of a scaffold than a blueprint. And of course, vision does not apply only to the economy; it also applies to the political system and other spheres of life, like community or kinship.

The left, as a whole, has not done well in the present or the past in offering a concrete vision of what we ultimately want to replace capitalism with (that is not to say concrete visions do not exist, they do). We may call for great reforms, like universal healthcare, or promote worthy values, like equity and liberty, but most of us have not been able to describe the institutions that could be used to make sure these values get fulfilled and sustained. It is at this point that the left is currently stuck, and it is one of the main reasons we cannot garner enough support to replace current systems of oppression, yet.

The rest of this article argues why vision is important. The point is not to convince you to subscribe to one vision or another, but simply to convince you that thinking about vision is crucial.

First, vision gives people hope. It can be draining to hear how terrible the world is and that organized human life could be over within this century. While it is important to be honest about these admittedly horrific problems, focusing too much on them can depress us and cause us to fall into a nihilistic attitude. It also isn't very attractive to many people we are trying to bring into our movements. They may feel that getting involved is going to take too much of a toll on their emotional wellbeing: "If everything is going to end anyway, why not just try to enjoy my life and not worry about it?" But what if we can give them something positive to believe in? A vision that allows them to have a clear goal that they can strategically fight for and believe they can eventually achieve, or at the very least say, "Even if we don't end up winning, at least I can go down fighting for something I believe would have made the world a truly better place."

Developing a vision also clarifies your goals. Research is clear that having clear goals helps people be more productive and contributes to well-being. And while much of this research focuses on short-term goals, it is also important to have ultimate goals. Personally, having a socialist vision makes me feel less overwhelmed. It gives me a focal point to aim for, allowing me to relax, knowing that all I have to do is keep moving toward that point while making strategic decisions that get me closer. Having a vision also informs a good strategy, helping you to orient your activist activities in a way that will ultimately lead to your desired goal. For example, you may try to incorporate elements of the vision into the work of activist organizations you are a part of.

You can figure out whether a certain policy, say raising the minimum wage, will get you closer to your ultimate goal or not. Does raising the minimum wage one time ultimately help you reach your true goal? Not really, if you win and then everyone goes home. But what if you fight for the minimum wage increase while at the same time realizing you need people to stay involved to win not only more wage increases, but a host of other policies that will bring the ultimate goal closer to fruition?

With this expanded perspective, you are more likely to incorporate political education into your movement and make use of the energy around raising the minimum wage to introduce concepts relating to your ultimate vision. As one example, people who support the vision of "participatory economics" support what they call "equitable remuneration": the idea that people should get paid for effort, sacrifice, and need, which includes how long they work, how hard they work, the unpleasantness of their work, and their basic needs. This is opposed to getting paid for bargaining power or for simply already having property, which is how people are remunerated in capitalist markets.

If you want to learn more about vision, I recommend the *New Systems Reader*. It consists of essays by many socialist visionaries. Topics include Gar Alperovitz's vision of a pluralist commonwealth, David Schweickart's vision of economic democracy, and Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel's vision of participatory economics. The organization *Real Utopia* and the podcast *RevolutionZ* have also taught me a lot.

First published in *The Detroit Socialist*

## 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

Please, contact us.

# Member's Picks

## Books:

Overcoming Capitalism: Strategy for the Working Class in the 21st Century  
by Tom Wetzel

Overcoming Capitalism is a book about strategy, particularly how the powerless can get the upper hand. And it's written for everyone—not a specialized, self-selected audience. Tom Wetzel carefully explains how capitalism works and how the structure is stacked against us with an eye toward where power lies and how we can tip the scales.

The Trial of Julian Assange  
by Nils Melzer

Nils Melzer, the current UN Special Rapporteur on Torture initially declined to get involved in Assange's case. But as he writes in his new book, when he started to look closely at the facts he found Assange to be a victim of political persecution.

Soccer Vs. The State: Tackling Football And Radical Politics  
by Gabriel Kuhn

## Articles:

Anarchist Antimilitarism and Myths About the War in Ukraine

IMZ: 10 Years of Citizens Assemblies

The Campaign to Free Julian Assange Is Akin to the Campaign to Free Nelson Mandela

## Films:

All Quiet on the Western Front  
(Im Westen nichts Neues)

Close to 100 years after Erich Maria Remarque's anti-war novel "All Quiet on the Western Front" was published, Emmy nominee Edward Berger adapts the World War I epic. The film powerfully and eloquently shows the horror and utter futility of war.

## TV Series:

Flowers (2016-2018)

There are sitcoms. There's dark comedy. And then there's Flowers. Starring Olivia Colman and Julian Barratt, the series explores the themes of depression, suicide, and mental illness like no other. One wouldn't have thought possible to laugh as much as one did given the show's central themes. A comedy with a mental illness (says its writer and director Will Sharpe).

Real Utopia: Foundation for a Participatory Society



## Videos:

Everyone Everywhere Needs Waymond Wang

Everything Everywhere All At Once is a genre bending multiverse movie but it's also one of the most challenging and subversive representations of masculinity.

The Chris Hedges Report: Dr. Gabor Maté on trauma, addiction, and illness under capitalism

Dr. Gabor Maté joins The Chris Hedges Report to discuss his new book, The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture.

## Solidarity section:

We stand in solidarity with the Progressive International's campaign for an International Green New Deal

The Progressive International is committed to building a climate movement that is as internationally organized as its opponents in the fossil fuel industry. If you are a climate activist or community organizer that would like to get involved with the Progressive International — or organize actions related to this campaign — please write to [movement@progressive.international](mailto:movement@progressive.international). You can read more about this campaign [here](#).

We stand in solidarity with the Don't Extradite Assange campaign

After a successful #FreeAssange and #HumanChain event last October we are going to take the streets of London for a **Night Carnival**. Bring torches, lanterns, masks, drums, pots and pans!

# RU Serious?

... *it's memeing time.*

My response to anything work related in the next month



Do y'all remember, before the internet, that people thought the cause of stupidity was the lack of access to information? Yeah. It wasn't that.

**Attention: New group rules. Please read the fine print carefully.**

