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## The Pacific Sentinel, October 2020

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the PACIFIC SENTINEL  
Volume VI Issue I October 2020



POLICE VIOLENCE, THE LASTING HARM OF CS GAS, SEA  
ROBOTS VS CYBORG JELLYFISH + MORE

Welcome back!

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illustrations by Elisa Hung

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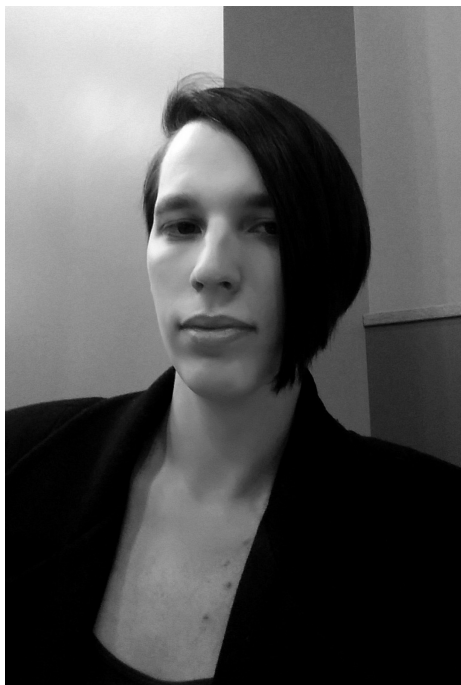
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## A Letter of Introduction from the Executive Editor



To our returning readers, I wish you a familiar comfort in this time of unparalleled estrangement. To our new readers, I bid you welcome with my fondest sincerity. Let these pages serve as your introduction to Portland State University and its journalistic tradition.

This has been a Summer of action, one defined by prolonged demonstrations for justice and a blossoming anti-racism previously unseen on this scale in Portland. This has been a Summer of voices, voices that defy the structures of privilege upon which this nation was founded and has continued to enforce through the mechanisms of oppression. This has been a Summer of fear, defined by a pandemic that has raged in this country with an unmatched severity. This has been a Summer to reflect, one in which we have all found an absence for which we were unprepared to cope. This has been a Summer of imperative, one that has informed us individually and uniquely, but one that has also impacted *The Pacific Sentinel* as a magazine, as a team, and as a member of the community. As I undertake the position of Executive Editor with this issue, I am moved to capture the power of this Summer within its pages.

“We seek to uplift student voices and advocate on behalf of the marginalized.” This is the extant credo of *The Pacific Sentinel*. For too long, this magazine has uplifted student voices without sufficient regard for the marginalized and underrepresented within and beyond the PSU community. There has been a potent absence of certain voices advocating for themselves and their own communities. Rather, there exists even embedded within our credo a self-defeating haughtiness by way of presuming to represent without inclusion, without equity. The absence of self-representation harms us all; as writers and consumers of media, we have a duty to prioritize the voices of those with the greatest direct experience on the matters we

cover. Self representation is the cornerstone of understanding.

This Summer, in my considerations over the future of this magazine, it has been clear from the start that we must push to reflect the diversity of the PSU community in its full splendor. We must be active in promoting the voices of the marginalized, the underrepresented, and the misunderstood. We must serve as a platform for self-advocacy. We must emphasize, not simply feature, a diversity of perspectives in our magazine, but we cannot succeed in a vacuum. We cannot succeed without you.

I invite you to join us on this mission to build a more just and equitable society through our place in the media landscape. As a community of readers and an ever-expanding cadre of writers, it is within us to drive change and lead a broadening conversation in our communities. May *The Pacific Sentinel* be known not only as a source of news and entertainment, but a source of revelation, one in which you may find yourself.

Kind Regards,  
Vivian Veidt  
*Executive Editor*



# Waiting to Exhale

The stress of unemployment and governmental stalemate

by Conor Carroll

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2020 had the highest rate of unemployment nationally and the largest month to month increase since data began to be recorded in January of 1948. Oregon was no different: in February 2020, the official unemployment rate was 3.3%, in April, the number jumped to 14.9%. This jump coincides with Gov. Kate Brown's "Stay Home, Save Lives" executive order issued March 23. Parts of Oregon have begun to reopen, though with mixed results, as several coronavirus spikes have hindered some counties from going back to normal. The same issue can be said for the country at large, as many states are still seeing a rise in cases and fatalities.

Late August has seen a small dip in coronavirus cases nationwide, though a reduction in testing indicates the figures may not be accurate. With the pandemic continuing at an unrivaled rate and incoherent messaging from the federal government, states are left to make difficult decisions about unemployment without federal guidance. Many states have been unable to process unemployment claims at a pace sufficient for people struggling to keep up financially and mentally with the crisis still gripping the nation.

The pandemic and subsequent unemployment for many is making depression a far more regular occurrence. According to a U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey conducted in May, 48% of respondents are feeling "down, depressed or hopeless." Suicide, especially among teens, was on the rise even before the pandemic. Oregon is not immune from these trends, and has seen an increase in suicide during the pandemic. Calls to Oregon's domestic abuse hotline have spiked in recent months, and according to a new report, Oregon

has the highest rate of depression per capita in the nation.

The Oregon Employment Department was sued in July by 13 individuals who struggled to get benefits. The Oregon Law Center and Legal Aid Services of Oregon filed the petition on their behalf, asserting that hundreds of thousands of claimants have yet to receive unemployment insurance since being laid off or furloughed. According to the lawsuit, "The current delays facing Oregonians who have applied for traditional unemployment insurance, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation are patently unreasonable." Acting director of the OED, David Gerstenfeld, in a press briefing early July, confirmed the lawsuit and that many claimants had waited for weeks to receive benefits.

Many have waited for 12-14 weeks for even a response from the OED. Since July, there have been no hearings on the matter, and the case is ongoing. The state did offer a \$500 stimulus to individuals that were eligible, but as Oregon Public Broadcasting reported, that money ran out in less than three days, and "financial hardship was in plain view as tens of thousands of Oregonians braved exposure to coronavirus for the chance to take home \$500."

In late August, the OED stated that it was awaiting federal approval for the Lost Wages Assistance Program, provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The program would provide \$300 in weekly assistance for Oregonians on unemployment insurance, with \$400 total available if the state can cover a quarter of the cost. State legislators have not approved such a measure, and Acting Director of the OED David Gerstenfeld has recently stated that "While well-intended, this program

does not meet the needs of unemployed Oregonians. We need Congress to pass a much more robust program to give Oregonians the help they need and deserve in this pandemic."

The U.S. Department of Commerce reported in late July that the U.S. GDP in Q2 of 2020 contracted the most it has in its entire history of record, 32.9%. That is nearly quadruple the second worst contraction, recorded in 1958, according to a NPR analysis. Despite the downturn, from March through August, the Forbes list of 643 billionaires grew their collective wealth by \$685 billion, according to a recent analysis by Americans for Tax Fairness and the Institute for Policy Studies. According to the same report, just 0.00019% of the population controls \$3.6 trillion in collective wealth.

*If you or a loved one are experiencing thoughts of suicide, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available at 1-800-273-8255*

*If you or a loved one are experiencing domestic violence, the Call to Safety Crisis Line is available at 1-888-235-5333 and more resources are available at [www.oregon.gov/dhs/abuse/domestic](http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/abuse/domestic)* ●

## The lasting harm of CS gas

by Vivian Veidt  
illustrations by Haley Riley

In the months since nightly demonstrations began in Portland following the police killing of George Floyd on May 25, the deployment of CS or 2-chlorobenzylidene malononitrile has become a customary practice by Portland Police Bureau. Though the immediate harms of CS are well documented, the lasting impact of CS exposure is not. This is of particular concern as the menstrual health impacts of CS have come into focus. In Portland, allegations that the crowd control munitions have led to irregular menstruation have erupted on social media and on signs at the nightly protests.

CS is a chlorine containing powder that activates the TRPA1 receptor in humans. Upon contact, CS causes severe pain, irritation, burns, and nausea. Though CS is touted as a non-lethal compound, lethal toxic pulmonary damage leading to pulmonary edema has been a known risk of exposure since a study released by the British Home Office in 1969. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognize that exposure to CS spray may lead to long term health effects including glaucoma, cataracts, and possibly asthma. At this time, research on the reproductive and menstrual impacts of CS exposure remains limited.

In the absence of clinical research on the menstrual health effects of CS exposure, a link can be identified by observing miscarriage data following periods of prolonged CS spray use. In 2011, Chile suspended use of CS after research conducted by the University of Chile showed that the chemical may cause miscarriages. Similarly, Physicians for Human Rights linked miscarriages in Bahrain to CS exposure in a 2012 report.

In Portland and across the United States, demonstrators exposed to CS have raised awareness of the issue of menstrual side effects by speaking out about their personal experiences. We interviewed one such individual, whose name has been changed to Sarah to protect her privacy.

**PS: Before the night of the protest (May 30), did you know that you were pregnant?**

Sarah: “No, I was under the impression that I couldn’t be.”

**PS: You were out as a protester, but you say your exposure to CS was incidental at most?**



Sarah: “Yeah, I didn’t take a cloud of it to the face or anything.... At that point I didn’t have any protective gear, I didn’t have goggles, I had a cotton face mask for COVID, but I didn’t have any proper equipment. I didn’t really know what I was getting myself into.... It didn’t go off near me, I just walked through it.”

**PS: Could you walk us through the events leading up to your exposure to CS?**

Sarah: “I was really far back... and I remember hearing some little pops. Far off in the distance I saw the clouds and people started backing up, some people were running, and then the clouds came forward and dispersed... that’s when I caught the whiff.”

**PS: How long after your exposure to CS did bleeding begin?**

Sarah: “I went out the next day to a protest.... By the end of the march I was almost doubled over, it was so painful. That night I started bleeding, but it was pretty obvious that night that it didn’t feel like a normal period. The cramps were way more intense.... The bleeding went on for two days, two days of really bad pain, really big clots... this isn’t my period, this is something weird.”

(In a supplementary message, Sarah described the unusual clotting as “lemon-sized.”)

**PS: And did you seek medical attention?**

Sarah: “I made a call to Planned Parenthood and I did end up going in.... Based on the timeline that I gave them... versus everything that I described to them, [Planned Parenthood] said ‘it was clear that you had a very early miscarriage.’”

**PS: Could you describe what you were feeling in that moment**

Sarah: “Honestly, I was just really shocked.” “On one hand I was like, what are the odds that this happened, but I was also relieved to

some degree because I don’t want to have a baby.... It was still weirdly heavy.” “It was very surreal, the whole situation was very surreal.”

**PS: At what point did you link the miscarriage to CS exposure?**

Sarah: “I bled from that for a few days... and had very intense pain. Somewhere around [the seventh or eighth day], I protested again and had stopped bleeding when I went to go protest.” “That night, I took a bath and while I was in the bath realized that I was bleeding into the bathtub... and I think that’s when I was like, huh, because I had definitely caught some of it again that night. I don’t think I really put two and two together 100% until that night or maybe a couple of days later when I was scrolling through Instagram and someone had posted something to their story that was a link to this article that said that in Chile they had put a ban on CS gas because so many women were having miscarriages... after I read that, that’s when it really started going.”

**PS: Are there any points about the lack of research in this area that you want to transfer to the public?**

Sarah: “I think it’s messed up that myself and all of the other women who are experiencing this have to play detective on our own and piece together what’s happening to our bodies when that’s not our job, especially when there are really no resources for us.”

“It’s becoming known that this is a thing, but it’s not actually being acknowledged by anyone with authority.”

In a supplemental journal of her experience, Sarah described irregular menstrual symptoms corresponding with each protest at which she was exposed to CS. She noted that symptoms lasted approximately one and a half months, paused after her normal menstrual cycle would have taken place, and resumed after the next protest she attended four days later.

On September 10, Mayor Ted Wheeler instituted a ban on the use of CS at the ongoing demonstrations in Portland. ●



# SWIMMING ROBOTS VERSUS CYBORG JELLYFISH

by Sophie Meyers

Illustration by Bailey Granquist

Jellyfish cover the ocean, they can survive in varying temperatures, salinities, oxygen concentrations and below 3700 meters deep (about 2.3 miles). Scientists are currently researching ways to use live jellyfish as a means to explore the depths of the ocean by attaching a prosthetic to the bell of the 4-8 inch moon jellyfish. This prosthetic not only collects data about where the jellyfish swims, but also allows scientists to alter the speed and direction of the jelly.

A lead scientist creating the cyborg jellyfish, Nicole W. Xu at Stanford University, explains the differences in current technology for exploring the ocean. Xu notes models based on aquatic fish, manta ray and jellyfish. Xu explains that by mimicking “how animals naturally move, we can create more energy efficient aquatic vehicles.” She goes on to announce “[t]he solution that I’ve been working on is to create a bio-hybrid robot by using the animal itself as a natural scaffold.”

Xu explains the importance of greater ocean monitoring to “track changes in temperature, acidity and concentrations of nutrients to detect and prevent situations such as coral bleaching and algal blooms.”

Along with Nicole W. Xu, scientist John O. Dabiri has created a prosthetic with attached sensors which document the ocean. This method of oceanic exploration has proved much more effective than previous seafaring drones and may be 10-1000 times more energy efficient than swimming robots.

The scientists have been able to increase the average speed of the jellyfish three times with only two times greater metabolic expenditure. This will require jellyfish to eat more than usual when attached to the prosthetic but nowhere near previous estimates of up to nine times more energy expenditure.

Jellyfish are incredibly energy efficient animals. The swim controller prosthetic proposed by Xu and Dabiri harnesses the natural swim pattern of the jellyfish. The device details a battery powered dual electrode which is inserted into the jellyfish via a small wooden pole. The pulsing of these electrodes has been shown to stimulate the muscle contractions of the jellyfish, making it contract its bell. The jellyfish propels itself with each contraction, allowing for the remote operators of the prosthetic to control the speed of the jellyfish. Xu explains the electrodes

create “an all or nothing muscle activation.” This allows for one pulse from an electrode to stimulate the entire jellyfish stroke, no matter the placement of the electrode.

The device uses the animal’s preexisting metabolism as a power source, greatly reducing the power required of the prosthetic in comparison to swimming robots. Additionally, scientists can harness the muscles of the jellyfish for specific maneuverability. Compared with swimming robots, the cyborg jellyfish is at lesser risk of being damaged due to the regenerative abilities of jellyfish.

Researchers have rebutted the ethical concerns of implementing this prosthetic, arguing jellyfish lack a brain and central nervous system necessary to feel pain. Moreover, when stressed jellyfish have been documented to secrete a thick mucus. This mucous has yet to be seen with the implemented prosthetic. Additionally, upon extraction of the prosthetic, jellyfish return quickly to normal. Xu explains the prosthetic “doesn’t seem to harm the jellyfish in the long term.” She elaborates that once the prosthetic is removed, jellyfish have been reported to return immediately to typical function. ●

# Crisis in Brazil

## Indigenous communities of Brazil under compound threat

by Sophie Meyers

illustrations by Greer Siegel

The Indigenous communities of Brazil have recently been impacted by government incursions onto Indigenous lands and have been disproportionately affected by the novel coronavirus.

Across Brazil, coronavirus cases are rising. As of June 7, Brazil has the second highest number of recorded cases worldwide and the third highest number of coronavirus related deaths behind the U.S. and U.K. Researchers from a Brazilian consortium of universities predict that the actual number of coronavirus cases may be 12 to 16 times higher than the official numbers. Brazil began to see coronavirus cases in February in São Paulo.

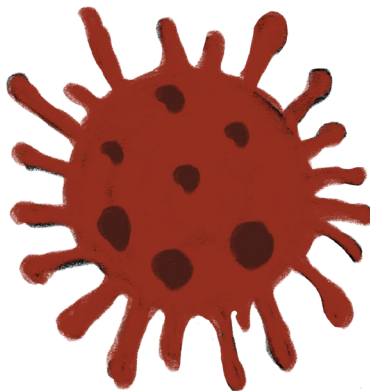
Brazil's state of Amazonas has the second highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases relative to population size and the highest number of deaths per million in Brazil. Amazonas is home to the majority of Indigenous peoples in Brazil. This is not the first time Brazilian Indigenous communities have seen disproportionate frequency of disease. During the 2009 H1N1 influenza outbreak, the death rate for Indigenous communities was 4.5 times higher than that of the general population. Before then, upon first contact with non-Indigenous peoples in 1969, Indigenous communities suffered greatly from introduced diseases.

Social, medical and environmental factors make Indigenous populations more susceptible to contracting coronavirus and developing COVID-19. These areas have unsafe drinking water, malnutrition, few hospitals and limited access to medical supplies, as well as a high frequency of tuberculosis and malaria. Additionally, the government continues to allow evangelical Christian groups into Indigenous communities, increasing the risk of spreading the virus.

In Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, coronavirus infection has overrun hospitals and funeral homes. Cemeteries have been forced to create mass graves as coronavirus deaths overrun their capacity. Manaus' largest cemetery began to dig graves large enough to accommodate 5 coffins, however they fear they may soon run out of coffins. In response to reporters' questions about Brazilian President Bolsonaro's take on the state

of Manaus, he replied in translation, "So what? I'm sorry, but what do you want me to do?" adding that he could not "work miracles."

Bolsonaro continues to downplay risks of coronavirus. His response to the virus goes directly against the World Health Organization's recommendations.



In an interview with the BBC, Mayor of Manaus Arthur Virgilio Neto expressed the city's need for "planes with tests, ventilators and medical protective equipment," saying "[w]e don't want miracles." The Brazilian government has approved monthly aid of \$115 USD (600 reais) to vulnerable populations. However, this money can only be collected in cities, forcing people to leave their villages and increasing their risk of contagion and contracting coronavirus. According to an article by Science Magazine, safeguarding the Indigenous populations is not only important for the survival of those communities, but also for the greater population of Brazil and the Amazon, which will affect climate change worldwide.

On February 6, Bolsonaro submitted a bill to Brazil's National Congress that would allow Indigenous lands to be used for mining, oil and gas extraction, hydroelectric dams, ranches, farming practices and tourism. The bill would allow mining operations to exist on Indigenous land without approval by the Indigenous communities. If this bill passes, it would create



increased risk to Indigenous populations, violate their rights, and create further harm in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

As demonstrated by the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science, the proposed bill is in direct violation of Brazilian legislation and International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, which requires free, prior and informed consultation with Indigenous peoples concerning any actions that may affect them. However, this legislation has been largely ignored. Additionally, Indigenous communities have the right to receive a portion of the earnings from material exploitation of their land.

Brazil's Environment Minister Ricardo Salles suggested that now, with the public focused on the coronavirus pandemic, is the time to focus on "run the cattle herd" on the Amazon.

In opposition of the legislation, according to German MEP Anna Cavazzini, spokeswoman for the European Greens trade policy, Salles's statements were "inconceivably blatant confirmation that the Bolsonaro government is dismantling, step-by-step, the protection regulations of the Amazon, while the world fights the Coronavirus."

The Minister denies this interpretation of his statements, claiming his statements about simplification and deregulation were in reference to previous decades of national and international organizations' rules and Brazil's lack of competitiveness, not the Amazon. ●







by Sophie Meyers

Since its founding in 2013, Black Lives Matter protests have been shining a light on the inequitable treatment of marginalized communities in America. This is a necessary step in the process to heal or recreate policing in America. A poll conducted by the data science firm Civis Analytics found 62% of Americans support the Black Lives Matter movement in some way. Despite a large number of Americans actively participating in protests and spreading awareness of the problems with policing, the various culprits and the solutions to repair or abolish this system are many and regularly disagreed upon. A Civis Analytics poll shows that only 27% of people are in favor of police defunding initiatives, and a large percentage of those in favor include younger demographics; people from 18-34 who are typically less likely to trust police.

While 13% of the population in the U.S. is Black, Black Americans make up 31% of those killed by police. A study conducted by Cody T. Ross from the University of California Davis research shows that it is more than three times more likely for an unarmed Black person to be shot by police than an unarmed white person. When comparing white to Hispanic and Latinx populations, it is 1.67 times more likely an unarmed Hispanic or Latinx person will be shot compared to a white person. This average number fluctuates depending on location. For example, in Miami-Dade County, Florida, unarmed Black people are “22 times as likely to be shot by police than unarmed white individuals.” The trends of higher death rate among Black and Hispanic and Latinx communities persists in armed situations: the probability of a Black armed individual being shot by police is 2.94 times that of the probability of a white person in the same situation. When compared to whites, Hispanic and Latinx populations are 1.57 times more likely to be shot by police while armed. Moreover, a study of

North Carolina’s statistical data conducted by researchers at Stanford University found that Black and Hispanic and Latinx populations were searched more often compared to white populations during traffic stops. In Multnomah county, arrests of Black individuals are 3.3 times higher than among whites. Across Oregon, some counties see Black people as much as 11.7 times more likely to be arrested than whites. Additionally, Oregon, like 23 other states, does not currently open police misconduct files to the public. In the U.S only 13 states have this information available to the public, while the remaining 14 states have limited public access to these files.

The threat of violence persists beyond that of the specific individuals harmed by police injustices, finds one study published in the American Sociological Review. The study shows police violence against specific Black or other marginalized people impacts the entire surrounding community when police actions are seen as unjust by that community. The lack of trust in law enforcement results in the community avoiding contacting police for matters of personal and public safety. The study goes on to illustrate one specific event where the beating of Frank Jude, an unarmed Black man in Milwaukee, Wisconsin likely resulted in a loss of approximately 22,200 calls to 911, half the number of the typical calls to law enforcement. Without the intended protection of police, community members are more vulnerable to threats of increased violence. In place of local law enforcement, many communities create their own justice system that can often be just as

fraught as the one they are trying to avoid.

Trust in policing is currently low across America; especially in low income, marginalized communities and among younger populations. According to an experiment conducted by researchers at Yale University and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), this unease results in more incidents of escalated violence between the public and the police.

To remedy the problem of distrust in local law enforcement, one study conducted at Princeton University suggests positive contact is key. The study calculated the effects of positive police contact among all communities and the results showed that positive contact with police officers increased feelings of trust and compassion toward police.

Another strategy that has been implemented to remedy distrust in police systems is the widespread use of body cameras. According to the same study published in PNAS, body cameras were met with a 95% approval rating by Americans.

Arizona State University, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, conducted a study that showed the use of police body cameras changed police behavior. With body cameras, stop and frisk incidents and arrests reduced, and citations and police initiated encounters increased.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020 passed in the House in late June, spurred by the more recent protesting “To hold law enforcement accountable for misconduct in court, improve transparency through data collection, and reform police training and policies.” The policy aims to implement training in racial profiling issues among other ways to remedy the racism in policing.

On July 1, the Ending Qualified Immunity Act was issued to congress by senators Sanders and Warren. This act will eliminate the defense of qualified immunity under the good faith argument.

It would allow for “government employees or those acting with state authority” to be held more accountable for their actions in court. ●





# Abolish the Department of Homeland Security

The department is ripe for executive overreach, and it shows disregard for basic civil rights and liberties.

by Nick Gatlin

Photos by Justin Grinnell



This ruling is terrifying. The courts, supposedly a check on executive abuses of power, show a striking degree of deference to the federal government and law enforcement in general in situations such as these. In Seattle, a judge issued a temporary restraining order blocking an ordinance that banned the use of tear gas by police—an ordinance passed unanimously by Seattle City Council. If the judiciary will side with law enforcement over their civilian overseers, what else is there to do?

The DOJ Inspector General has opened an investigation into excessive use of force by federal agents, which is welcome news. It should be noted that the investigation was only opened a day after Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler was tear gassed by the agents. Previously, the federal agents had beaten a Navy veteran, tear gassed the “Wall of Moms,” shot a protester in the head with “crowd control munitions,” and allegedly violated the 10th Amendment by arresting protesters off of federal property.

None of this is intended to let the Portland Police Bureau off the hook. They are hiding their names as well, concealing officers’ identities behind a bureaucratic maze seemingly intended to shield them from accountability. Portland Police have been using similar tactics to the federal officers for months. In fact, they had even been coordinating with federal agencies, despite claiming otherwise. Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty has argued that the actions of PPB, as well as Mayor and Police Commissioner Wheeler’s reluctance to rein in the police’s use of force, paved the way for federal officers to enter the city.

But the actions of DHS agents in Portland are more worrying still. Here’s a striking quote from an NBC News article written on the subject:

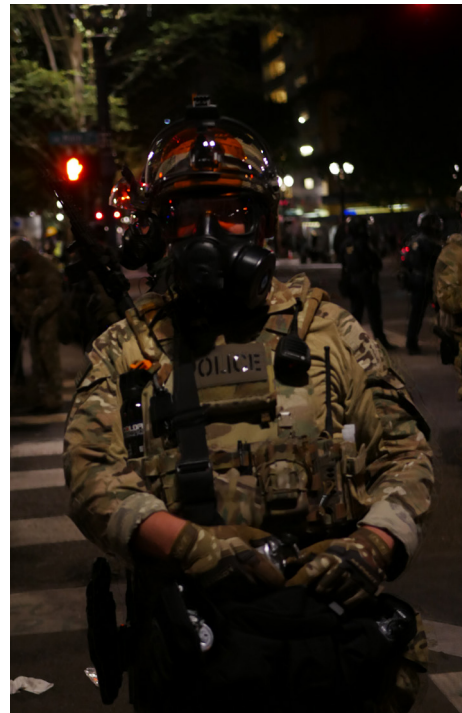
*“We came out here dressed in T-shirts and twirling Hula-Hoops and stuff, and they started gassing us, so we came back with respirators, and they started shooting us, so we came back with vests, and they started aiming for the head, so we started wearing helmets, and now they call us terrorists,” Mac Smiff, a local Black organizer in Portland, said. “Who’s escalating this? It’s not us.”*

While the militarization of police is an ever present issue, these agents’ actions are above and beyond that. They are explicitly part of the War on Terror response structure, designed to be a defense against foreign threats, not internal dissent. The semantics matter here. Police crushing a protest is one thing; the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection crushing one is another. It is but another small step from federal agents to federal troops, as the president has repeatedly threatened.

The Acting Secretary of DHS, Chad Wolf, said on CBS This Morning that federal agents “have the absolutely expressed right and authority” to arrest protesters, who he called “violent criminals,” even if they were “a block, two blocks, maybe three blocks from [the federal] courthouse.” He also said in an interview with Fox News, “I don’t need invitations by the state, state mayors or state governors to do our job. We’re going to do that, whether they

like us there or not.” State and local officials have repeatedly told DHS they did not want their agents there, to which Wolf responded, according to Mayor Wheeler, “[He’s] basically told us to stuff it.” And to drive home the point that these deployments are politically motivated, President Trump said around the same time, “We’re looking at Chicago, too. We’re looking at New York. All run by very liberal Democrats. All run, really, by the radical left.” The use of federal power to quell dissent is a very slippery slope.

I hesitate to bring a dictionary definition into the discussion, but I believe it’s appropriate here: Webster’s New World College Dictionary defines “fascism” as “a system of government characterized by rigid one-party dictatorship, forcible suppression of opposition... belligerent nationalism, racism, and militarism, etc.” The federal officers in Portland are not “safeguarding”



the protesters, their homeland, or their values—far from it. Instead, they are enforcing, through violence and force, a vision of the United States that has no place for protest or dissent. They are imposing, with the power of the federal government, the full force of the U.S. security apparatus, on states that want nothing to do with them. The President has already signalled that Portland is a test run, threatening to send federal agents to Detroit, Chicago and New York, among other cities, emphasizing, “These are anarchists, these are not protesters.” I don’t believe it’s a stretch to say we have already had, in the words of sociologist Bálint Magyar, an autocratic attempt, and possibly soon an autocratic breakthrough. It’s still possible to defeat Donald Trump, and the ideology he embodies, at the ballot box. That will require not just voting him out of office, but voting for pro-democracy candidates up and down the ballot. Institutions must be constantly maintained and protected, and that includes taking an active interest in the politicians we elect and their anti-democratic tendencies. There may soon come

a time when we cannot defeat Trumpism—authoritarianism, fascism, whatever word you want to use—at the ballot box. We must recognize the signs of creeping autocracy and stop it in its tracks, while we still can.

Of course, no discussion of the department can be complete without examining the horrors of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an agency of DHS. According to the Global Detention Project, the United States has the largest immigration detention network in the world, with over 200 detention facilities nationwide holding around 30,000 people every day. In their own Enforcement and Removal Operations statistics, ICE estimated that officers arrested about 143,000 undocumented immigrants, and removed more than 267,000 from the country in FY 2019. This is an operation of gargantuan proportions.

Though they mainly arrest, detain and deport immigrants for the civil violation of crossing the border illegally, they couch their actions in the rhetoric of criminality—in that same report, ICE Acting Director Matthew Albence wrote, “... ICE remains committed to removing dangerous, recidivist criminals from our communities and restoring integrity to the nation’s immigration system.” The criminalization of immigration is a topic far too complex to fully discuss in this article. Suffice it to say that this rhetoric of protecting American citizens from big, bad, scary criminals coming across the border is yet another way in which DHS assists in the weaponization of nationalism and racism to push regressive public policy outcomes. Think of the uproar in 2018 around the “Caravan,” which the President claimed was filled with “very bad people” coming from Mexico and Central America.

Criminalizing immigrants—painting all people crossing the border with the broad brush of criminality, danger and fear—is the first step to dehumanizing them. Immigrants detained in the United States face horrific, disgusting conditions unfit for any human being. ICE detainees often spend time in CBP holding cells known as “freezers,” or hieleras, frigid cells where women and children sleep on the floor with nothing but a thin Mylar blanket. Additionally, women and children, teenagers, and adult men are held in separate cells, meaning families are often separated when detained there. Dr. Lucio Sevier, inspecting one McAllen, Texas facility after a flu outbreak in 2019, described conditions including “extreme cold temperatures, lights on 24 hours a day, no adequate access to medical care, basic sanitation, water, or adequate food,” comparing them to “torture facilities.” 193 people have died in ICE custody since 2004.

The danger of these policies is especially apparent during the coronavirus pandemic. Acting against public health experts’ advice, ICE has continued to transfer detainees between detention centers, allowing COVID to spread among and between the populations there. ICE is alleged to have used a harmful chemical disinfectant in one California facility over 50 times a day, causing skin burns, rashes and severe bleeding among detainees. One inmate said, “When I blow my nose, blood comes out. They are treating us like animals. One person fainted and was taken out, I don’t know what happened

to them. There is no fresh air.”

ICE refuses to release detainees at high risk of dying from COVID-19 if they have any prior criminal conviction. According to a CBS News interview published in July, this includes one woman with diabetes, high blood pressure, and gallbladder inflammation—a green card holder—who is eligible for deportation due to a 1996 law that includes nonviolent misdemeanors as justification for removal. Social distancing is often impossible in these facilities, and mounting evidence that the coronavirus can spread through aerosols could mean that any amount of social distancing is meaningless in such a crowded indoor environment.

ICE also instituted the now-infamous policy of family separation, taking children from their detained parents, who had no way to track their whereabouts or reunite with them because the government itself failed to create a system to track them. This is perhaps one of the cruelest policies this administration, or any administration, has instituted. As recently as this year, ICE agents gave detainees a choice: keep their children detained with them, or put them up for adoption. The parents were denied access to a lawyer, and language interpretation was not provided. One parent reportedly said, “We felt like they were really enjoying watching us suffer.” This is horrifying beyond words. As the director of The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) said, “A choice to be separated from your child is no choice at all.”

I apologize for using another dictionary definition, but this one is just as important: Webster’s defines “concentration camp” as “[a] camp where persons are confined, usually

without hearings and typically under harsh conditions, often as a result of their membership in a group the government has identified as suspect.” Encyclopedia Britannica defines them as “internment centre[s] for political prisoners and members of national or minority groups who are confined for reasons of state security, exploitation, or punishment, usually by executive decree or military order. Persons are placed in such camps often on the basis of identification with a particular ethnic or political group rather than as individuals and without benefit either of indictment or fair trial.”

As I see it, ICE detention facilities meet the dictionary definition of “concentration camps.” But on a more visceral level, they evoke many of the same conditions as German camps, or American camps detaining Japanese-Americans. To be clear: these are not extermination camps. But they are concentration camps, by the clearest of definitions.

Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez invoked the term “concentration camps” in relation to these facilities to emphasize the meaning of “Never Again.” When we see actions in this country leading to monstrous outcomes, we must stop them at the source. We know the progression from demagoguery to dehumanization to holding camps to death camps. We have seen this before.

Michael Zank, director of Boston University’s Elie Wiesel Center for Jewish Studies, seems to agree. He said to BU Today, Boston University’s news website, “The phrase ‘never again’ cannot just mean ‘never again the Holocaust.’ The past does not repeat itself, but it can be investigated and learned from... [T]he Holocaust did not begin with

extermination camps.” The Holocaust was allowed to occur in the first place “because people didn’t care about the fate of the Jews, because they were taught to see them as enemies, and because most people never witnessed the actual killings.... Indifference allowed Jews to be systematically deprived of their rights, deported, dehumanized, enslaved, and mass-extermiated. Indifference is the issue.”

In this light, AOC’s comments were right to provoke her audience. The invocation of “concentration camps” with regards to U.S. policy is meant to ensure that a horror of that scale never happens again. Zank notes, “A better slogan, instead of ‘never again,’ is the German *‘Wehret den Anfängen,’* which means: ‘Resist the beginnings.’” We must resist the beginnings of fascism and dehumanization wherever they arise.

The Department of Homeland Security is a dangerous weapon. It uses the language of war to suppress dissent and invade states and cities that do not want it there. It uses the specter of terrorism to detain and dehumanize migrants. It creates an air of paranoia in the country, causing many to fear when it is their turn to be kidnapped—brutalized, detained, deported—without any consideration to their rights or their humanity. It has sent secret police to patrol city streets. It is a department explicitly designed to bring the War on Terror home. It has no place in any moral nation, much less one which claims to respect every person’s self-evident rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It must be abolished, with every semblance of its inhumanity washed away. We must resist the beginnings. ●

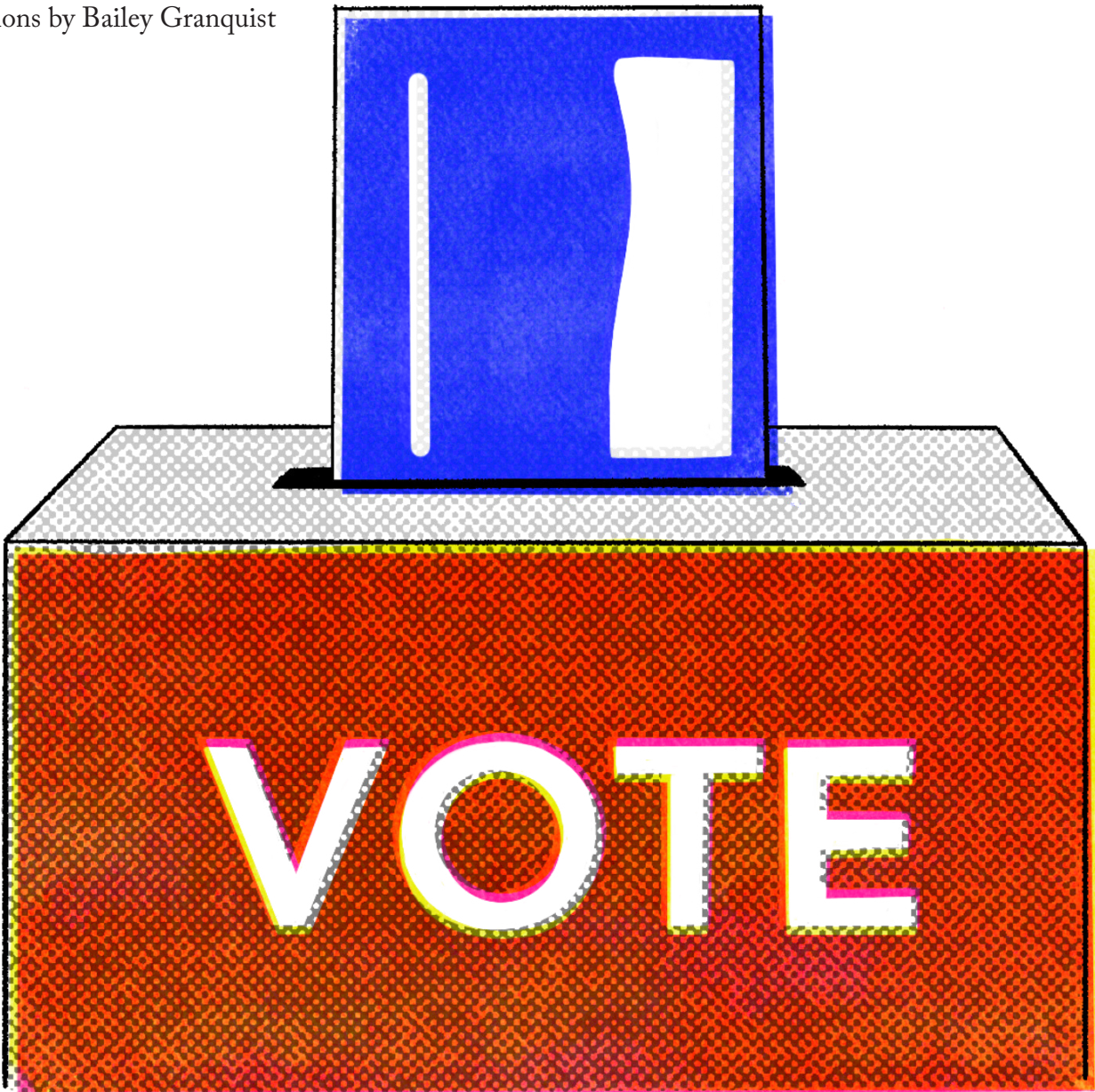


# I'm Voting For Joe Biden. He's Still a Flawed Candidate.

We need to remove Trump from office—  
but that doesn't mean we're not allowed to criticize Joe Biden.

by Nick Gatlin

Illustrations by Bailey Granquist



Joe Biden is the Democratic nominee for president in 2020. That's a fact we all have to live with. When we all fill out our ballots this November, either in a voting booth or in the comfort of our homes, two names will be on that piece of paper: Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

I'll be honest—this is a depressing choice. This election feels like the trolley problem, where we have to choose to run over one person or five. Obviously one choice is better than the other, but are either of them *good*?

Let me start by saying: Joe Biden is a much better candidate than Donald Trump. *Politico* ranked all the Democratic primary candidates on the issues in March, and there are some areas where he's genuinely progressive. He supports eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug offenses, abolishing the death penalty, eliminating private prisons, and raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr. I cannot emphasize enough: Donald Trump would be orders of magnitude worse on all of these issues, and his future appointees to the Supreme Court and lower federal courts would immeasurably damage the progressive movement for generations.

But this article isn't about praising Biden for the few issues where he's mainly fallen in line with the Democratic Party at large. In countless other areas, Biden has fallen behind even the median Democratic position, erring conservative in a party increasingly driven by the progressive youth movement. This is where I take issue with the mantra of "vote blue no matter who." Where do we draw the line? How conservative is too conservative?

In a June piece for *Current Affairs*, former Press Secretary for the Bernie Sanders 2020 campaign Briahna Joy Gray posed the question,

*Is there a single issue, or an approach to governance, or a character deficit, or a past vote that you would consider to be disqualifying for a Democratic presidential nominee? A commitment to preserving the for-profit healthcare system, perhaps? Waffling on the right to choose? A yes vote for the Iraq War? Would you decline, maybe, to vote for a candidate who had accepted corporate money to fund their campaign? Or one who had been credibly accused of sexual assault?*

Assuming politics is a battle of ideas—of policies and principles we believe are best for the country—it is entirely reasonable to require some degree of policy commitment from a candidate in exchange for giving them your vote. For example, I can't say I would ever vote for a candidate who supported stop-and-frisk policing. Michael Bloomberg, who ran for the Democratic nomination this year, faced strong criticism for his support of the policy after giving an apology many saw as insincere. At the first debate he appeared in, Elizabeth Warren famously described him as "a billionaire who calls women 'fat broads' and 'horse-faced lesbians,'" a deliberate comparison to Donald Trump. "And no, I'm not talking about Donald Trump, I'm talking about Mayor Bloomberg," she clarified.

That exchange underscores why litmus tests are good, and needed. If a "blue no matter who" voter would even vote for Michael Bloomberg,

under the sole justification of kicking Trump out of office, they have no policy principles. If they would vote for a New York billionaire who supported discriminatory policies against people of color and the working class, they do not care about the candidate. They only care about their team winning the election.

If Democrats are to hold themselves to a higher standard, they must stand for at least some unshakeable principles. I think most Democrats would agree that the party's nominee must unequivocally support a woman's right to choose. In 2020, a clear affirmation of *Roe v. Wade* is the bare minimum for a national Democratic candidate.

But there are also different wings of the party, with different policy preferences. Kamala Harris, the current vice presidential nominee, wrote in July 2019 about the current American healthcare system, "The next Democratic president needs a clear, transformative, and achievable vision of how we finally change this broken system for good." She supported a version of Medicare for All, saying, "In America, health care should be a right, not a privilege only for those who can afford it. It's why we need Medicare for All." She also cited a study from the National Bureau of Economic Research that found 15,000 Americans died between 2014 and 2017 because their states did not expand Medicaid. To Kamala Harris, the stakes for universal healthcare are clearly life and death.

Except it's not quite that simple. When Harris first signed on to Bernie Sanders' Medicare for All bill in 2017, she called it the "right thing to do," echoing a moral refrain in support of universal healthcare. But when she joined the Democratic primary, her position became unclear as she backtracked from government-run insurance, ending up with a middle-road plan that left a bad taste in many voters' mouths that made them question what she believed in the first place.

Harris now serves as Joe Biden's running mate, and Biden is clearly and loudly opposed to Medicare for All. To give him credit, Biden has formed a "Biden-Sanders Unity Task Force," and the model platform they released has some progressive policy concessions, like free pre-K for 3 to 4-year-old children. But in many ways, it just looks like Biden's platform.

While some writers have argued that Biden has moved left since the primaries, many of his policies are still woefully inadequate to the moment we live in. The platform states that "...as Democrats, we recognize that health care is a right," but in the same breath calls for "affordable" health insurance. As long as healthcare is still for profit, even if it is "affordable," there will be some people who cannot afford it, or some who have to choose between health insurance and other

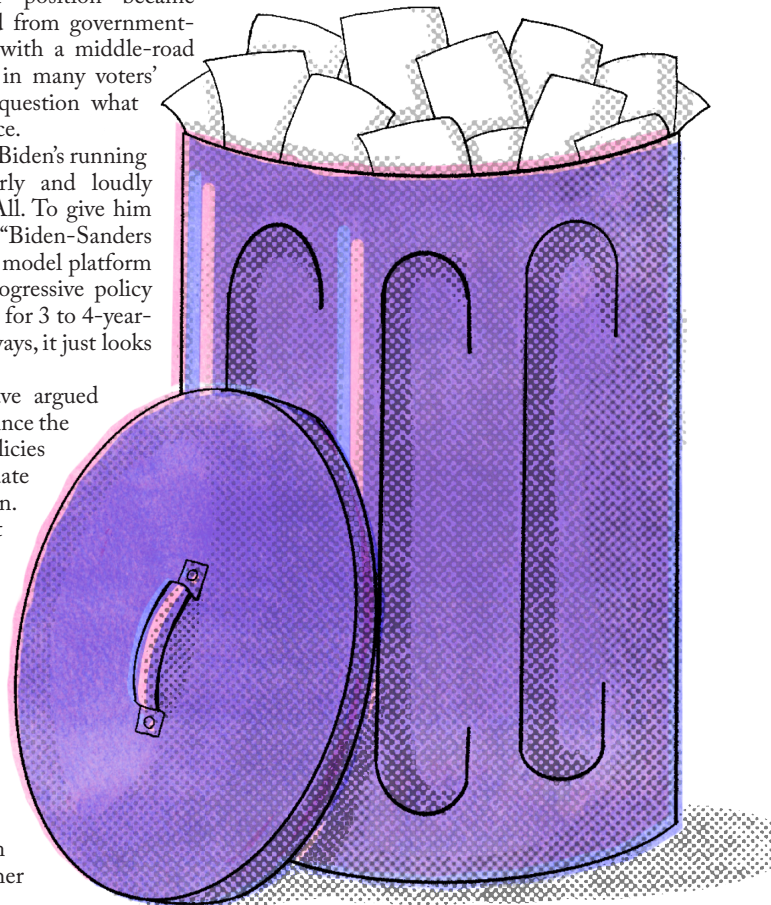
essentials. The vast majority of voters support Medicare for All. Why doesn't the Democratic Party platform?

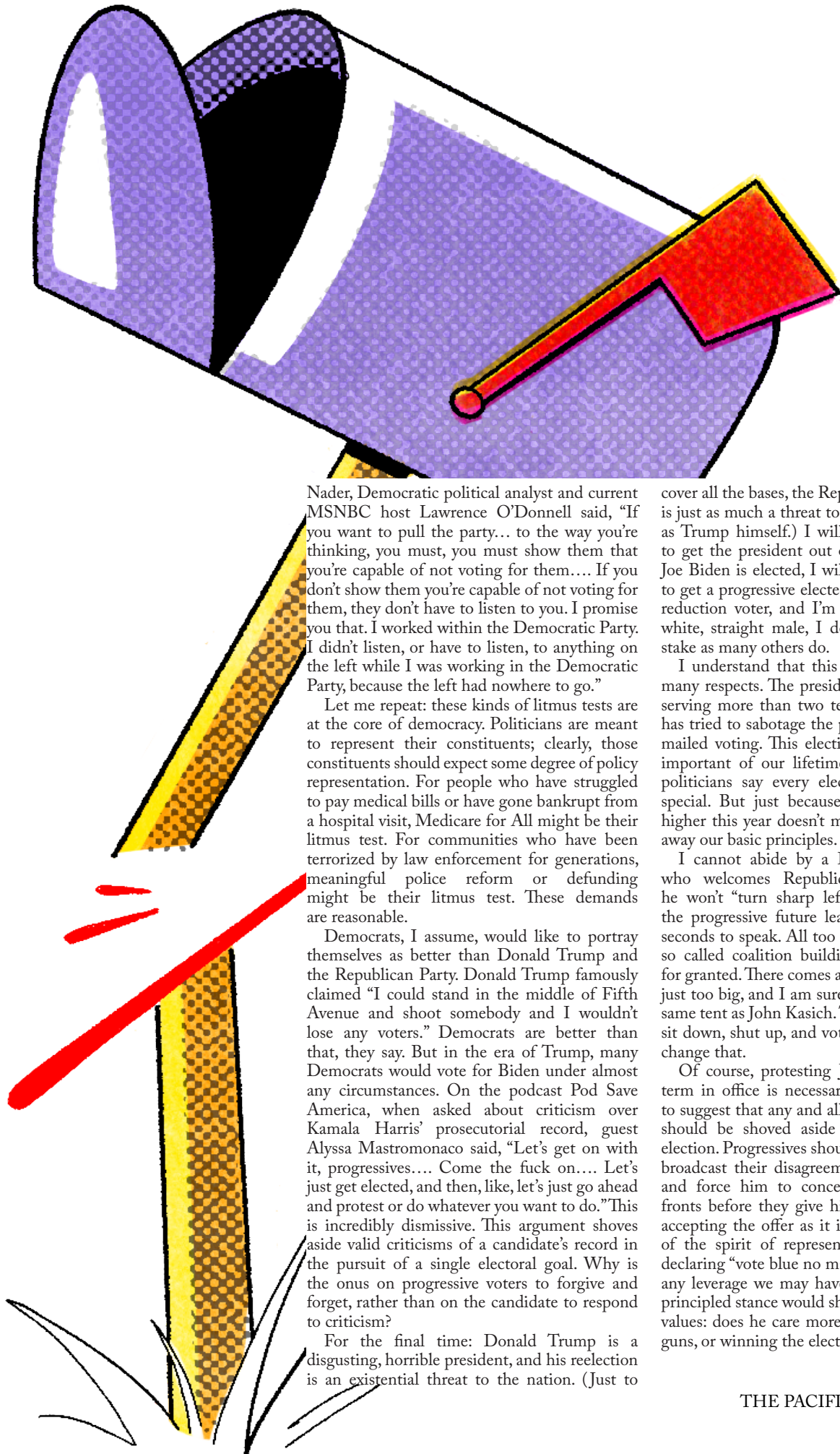
On other issues, Biden also seems to lag behind many Democratic voters. The Unity Task Force calls for "reining in the doctrine of qualified immunity"—not abolishing it outright, which even Libertarian Representative Justin Amash supports—and requiring body cameras and "community policing," which many reformers claim are inadequate. Biden himself says he supports even *more* funding for police, not less. Despite two-thirds of Americans—and a majority of Republicans—supporting marijuana legalization, Joe Biden opposes federal legalization.

The point I'm trying to make is that Joe Biden, like any other candidate, has his own policy preferences, many of which are baked in. The only way to change those policy commitments is to negotiate, offering something in exchange. For a democratic society like ours, the currency citizens use to influence politicians is their vote. The negotiation goes like this: "If you support *X policy(ies)*, I'll vote for you."

"Vote blue no matter who" throws that formula out the window. Proponents of such a vote pledge claim that once Biden gets into office, *then* we can pressure him. How does that make sense? If you give up your one negotiating tool—your vote—and *then* ask for concessions, what reason does he have to give them? If Biden knows that nothing he can do would lose your vote, he has free license to support whichever policies he wants. The only bargaining chip a voter has is to threaten to withhold their vote if certain policy goals are not met.

Speaking in a 2006 documentary about Ralph





Nader, Democratic political analyst and current MSNBC host Lawrence O'Donnell said, "If you want to pull the party... to the way you're thinking, you must, you must show them that you're capable of not voting for them.... If you don't show them you're capable of not voting for them, they don't have to listen to you. I promise you that. I worked within the Democratic Party. I didn't listen, or have to listen, to anything on the left while I was working in the Democratic Party, because the left had nowhere to go."

Let me repeat: these kinds of litmus tests are at the core of democracy. Politicians are meant to represent their constituents; clearly, those constituents should expect some degree of policy representation. For people who have struggled to pay medical bills or have gone bankrupt from a hospital visit, Medicare for All might be their litmus test. For communities who have been terrorized by law enforcement for generations, meaningful police reform or defunding might be their litmus test. These demands are reasonable.

Democrats, I assume, would like to portray themselves as better than Donald Trump and the Republican Party. Donald Trump famously claimed "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters." Democrats are better than that, they say. But in the era of Trump, many Democrats would vote for Biden under almost any circumstances. On the podcast Pod Save America, when asked about criticism over Kamala Harris' prosecutorial record, guest Alyssa Mastromonaco said, "Let's get on with it, progressives.... Come the fuck on.... Let's just get elected, and then, like, let's just go ahead and protest or do whatever you want to do." This is incredibly dismissive. This argument shoves aside valid criticisms of a candidate's record in the pursuit of a single electoral goal. Why is the onus on progressive voters to forgive and forget, rather than on the candidate to respond to criticism?

For the final time: Donald Trump is a disgusting, horrible president, and his reelection is an existential threat to the nation. (Just to

cover all the bases, the Republican Party at large is just as much a threat to American democracy as Trump himself.) I will do everything I can to get the president out of office, and if/when Joe Biden is elected, I will do everything I can to get a progressive elected in 2024. I'm a harm reduction voter, and I'm fully aware that as a white, straight male, I don't have as much at stake as many others do.

I understand that this election is unique in many respects. The president has "joked" about serving more than two terms in office, and he has tried to sabotage the post office to suppress mailed voting. This election is likely the most important of our lifetimes—and not the way politicians say every election is. This year is special. But just because the stakes are even higher this year doesn't mean we should throw away our basic principles.

I cannot abide by a Democratic president who welcomes Republicans who assure us he won't "turn sharp left," while only giving the progressive future leaders of the party 60 seconds to speak. All too often, it feels like this so called coalition building takes progressives for granted. There comes a time when the tent is just too big, and I am sure I don't belong in the same tent as John Kasich. Telling progressives to sit down, shut up, and vote for Joe Biden won't change that.

Of course, protesting Joe Biden during his term in office is necessary, but it is ridiculous to suggest that any and all policy disagreements should be shoved aside for the sake of the election. Progressives should loudly and proudly broadcast their disagreements with Joe Biden, and force him to concede on certain policy fronts before they give him their vote. Simply accepting the offer as it is would be a betrayal of the spirit of representative democracy. By declaring "vote blue no matter who," we give up any leverage we may have had. Taking a more principled stance would show us what Joe Biden values: does he care more about sticking to his guns, or winning the election? ●





## UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT

by Wallace Milner  
illustrations by Haley Riley

This November, something rather remarkable will be available to Multnomah county voters. A ballot initiative, but more importantly, an unprecedented demonstration of mobilization capacity, and a measure with the potential to define post-coronavirus Oregon politics.

The initiative is a referendum on universal preschool in Multnomah County. If passed, it would provide publicly available, high quality early childhood education throughout the county, creating scores of good, union jobs and bolstering an education system bracing to defend against brutal austerity and education cuts.

Universal preschool is a good program. It has been tried and proven in other countries, including France and Norway. It has been demonstrated by child psychologists to benefit young children. Students who attend early education were less likely to face mental health and legal issues later in life. Programs like Head Start have been found to yield positive health benefits, possibly as a result of the food and nutrition services Head Start provides. It would also bring positive economic impacts. Universal Preschool is more cost-efficient than means tested programs, and it works best when

teachers are well compensated.

If this were just an article on just the question of the merits of universal preschool, it would be a short one. In every conceivable way, a universal public program that supports young children of all income levels is worth supporting. But, far more than just the initial question of whether the initiative will appear on the ballot, and if it will be passed, it is the circumstances of how the Universal Preschool Now campaign came into being that represents the changing face of Portland electoral politics.

UP NOW, as the campaign is often stylized, is the product of a coalition of progressives, radicals, labor unions, and community organizers. Key to the project is the Portland chapter of Democratic Socialists of America.

While earlier forays into voting have seen DSA back candidates—Bernie Sanders, Albert Lee, and Paige Kreisman in the last election—the UP NOW campaign represents a new kind of step for the organization. Oregon's robust ballot initiative system, a product of its trailblazing progressive activism in the 1910s, allows the public to grab control over policy itself, bypassing corrupt or stagnant political systems and wielding direct democratic control.

What makes the UP NOW campaign so remarkable, though, is how its organizers dealt with staggering adversity. Faced with a pandemic that made in person canvassing almost impossible, the campaign's hopes seemingly received a hammer blow when a lawsuit from corporate political interests kept the measure tied in legal limbo for months. Despite these setbacks, the campaign announced on July 7 that they had successfully filed a sufficient number of signatures.

So how did the campaign accomplish this incredible task? One key was union support. Dr. Jennifer Kerns, chair of the Portland State University chapter of the American Association of University Professors, and a faculty member with PSU's History department said, "Early in the process of this ballot measure, our legislative committee and executive council endorsed this."

The measure was so appealing because of the wide range of benefits, Kerns said. "We saw this as a benefit to our members, especially our lower paid members, and our students"

For Portland State, UP NOW would provide childcare for teachers and students with young children; a burden of care, Kerns noted, which typically falls on women.

It would also offer wages starting at \$18 dollars an hour, and a plausible career path for graduates of the school, who go on to pursue education or caregiving. Child care is often a field staffed by underpaid women of color, particularly recent immigrants. Professionalizing the field would offer caregivers better wages and reduce the exploitation of workers.

But just as important, Kerns explained, are the benefits universal preschool offers children. Unions, Kern said, “want to advance the social good.”

“If we can eliminate poverty, we can improve educational outcomes,” Kerns said. “Just because a person is poor doesn’t mean they can’t achieve outcomes in school, it means there are barriers”

It is this universality that makes UP NOW such a potent demonstration of the socialist project, and such an optimistic sign for the city’s future.

All the problems we face are interrelated. The same forces that cut teacher wages force students to work long hours to get through college, privatize child care and increase the burden on the already marginalized.

When we fight against these problems together, we, the average people in the city, the teachers, students, families and workers, can show our real power. Unions represent one key to this movement. By joining together, workers can take on their bosses and the financial elite to defend their interests. Socialist organizations like DSA are another. By uniting as members of the producing or exploited class, all the people who have been left behind or taken advantage of can come together and flex their muscles.

The neo-liberal political machine of Portland is powerful, but mass movements like UP NOW have something they lack: a genuine base of support. Universal programs benefit everyone, and they can gain a volunteer base that money could never buy.

The coronavirus pandemic has divided us in so many ways. It has left us isolated in our own homes, asking us to sacrifice seeing friends and family and to forgo the very act of engaging in public spaces for the common good.

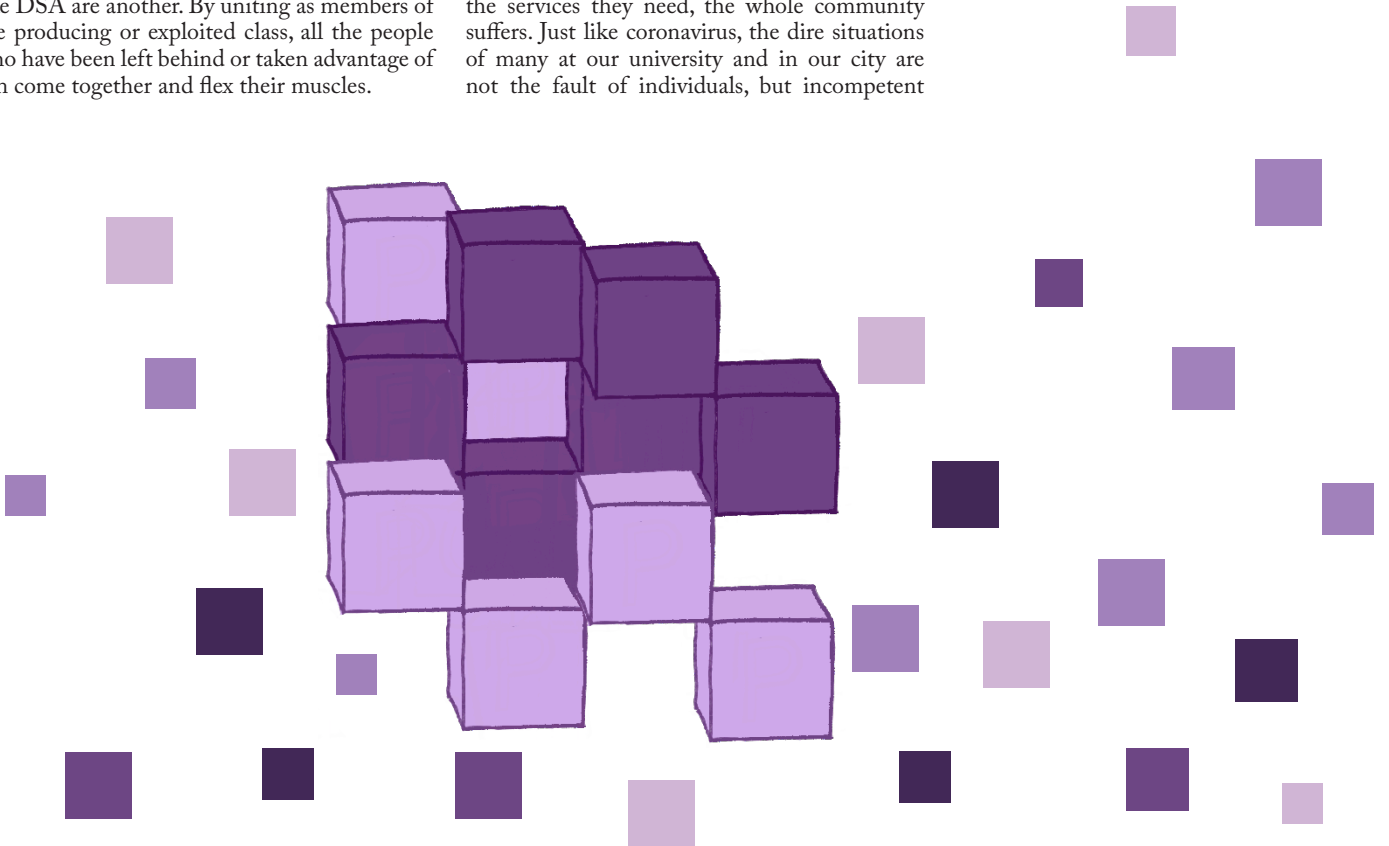
It has also inflicted terrible suffering, taken thousands of lives and left thousands more forever affected by lingering bills or health issues. It has destroyed the already fragile economy, left many millions without a paycheck, ruined generation old businesses, left breadlines stretching around blocks and driven unemployment to numbers not seen since the Great Depression.

It would be easy to write off the pandemic as a tragic act of god, an awful accident none of us can control, but that would be mistaken and UP NOW shows why. When we work together, it is still possible to provide for everyone, even in the face of the pandemic.

We are not lacking for wealth. America has more money and more power than almost anywhere else in the world. We could provide for everyone. To do it, we need to understand that all our interests are wrapped up together. Someone else’s suffering is not just a tragedy, it is a direct threat to you. Just like when someone can’t stay safe from sickness, they might get you sick, when someone is being left without the services they need, the whole community suffers. Just like coronavirus, the dire situations of many at our university and in our city are not the fault of individuals, but incompetent

or malign government action, which has left us without the universal services and programs we should be able to rely on.

Universal preschool would be something to be proud of. It would be something to share. It would be something won by masses of regular people fighting for their common interests, working together as a community to win a program that would help everyone. And if we’re going to make it out of the nightmare of violence, poverty and sickness we find ourselves in, we’re going to need to be willing to take a lot of actions like that. ●



# Looking Through the Overton Window



## On Representation and Neutrality in Journalism

by Vivian Veidt

There are three primary schools of thought on neutrality in journalism. The first aspires to true neutrality, a second declares its biases and encourages the reader to determine which brand of biased journalism to procure, and a third, propaganda, passes pronounced bias onto the reader as if neutral fact. As I have undertaken the executive editorship of *The Pacific Sentinel*, I have pondered the identity of the magazine and how to maintain a cohesive neutrality in all areas outside of the opinion pages.

First came the dismissal of propaganda as a legitimate pathway for the *Sentinel*. Indeed, an important role for us as journalists of a more or less free press and as academics is to counter propaganda where it exists. The method of declared bias has been attempted in the past, but left me rather uncomfortable as a writer for a regime I may have disagreed with. I certainly do not wish that discomfort upon any of the writers contributing to this magazine, nor do I wish to alienate readers. Naturally, the decision would then be to declare an aspiration toward true neutrality, a noble, though futile

endeavour wherein presents the problem of the Overton Window.

The Overton Window, for those uninitiated, is the limited spectrum of political thought that is considered palatable by the general public. For example, the average American values the political ideology of democracy, in one of its many forms, and would find an alternative ideology like monarchy (even constitutional monarchy) or military fiat repulsive. That is a rather crude example of the Overton Window in practice. This concept, however, is a relative one. For example, in much of the Commonwealth of Nations, where I have spent much of my life, the constitutional monarchy is accepted alongside democratic institutions and not, except by abolitionists, treated as if they are at odds.

The Overton Window does not apply simply to the broad ideologies of political discourse, however. The concept also applies in relation to the spectrum of representative government and the ideals of party politics. In essence, the Overton Window is the breadth of polit-

ical ideals in which politicians are allowed to engage. To that end, our humble publication encounters a troubling conundrum: how do we represent political ideas in the context of the United States?

The United States features perhaps the most limited political spectrum of any nation I have personally witnessed, barring the three party (yes, three) system in place in North Korea. As the executive editor of this magazine, I am charged with representing news, culture, and opinion pieces within the United States from a perspective accustomed to a wider Overton Window. That makes the decision of how to engage with journalistic neutrality a troubling one. To explain the dilemma, allow me to review the political parties of Canada, a nation not terribly dissimilar from the US, in contrast.

In Canadian Parliament, the best represented parties are the Conservatives, the Liberals, the New Democratic Party, the Green Party, and the Bloc Québécois. By platform, both the Democratic and Republican parties of the United States align more closely with the



Conservative Party of Canada than the others. Though the Democratic Party platform strays closer to the Liberal Party in places, on important issues like healthcare and taxation, the Democrats and Republicans are far closer to each other, and even beyond the far right of Canada, so that they are not comparable to the other parties. The Liberal Party of Canada falls noticeably to the left of the Democrats, and the Green Party (with some policy exceptions) and the New Democratic Party fall left of the Liberals in an area of the political spectrum that falls beyond the Overton Window of the United States.

In the United States, there is functionally no organised left to the political spectrum. There is no centre-left, and scarce distinction between the centre, centre right, right, and far right across only two major parties and a smattering of third party options that more or less serve to endorse one of the majors on the federal scale. There is an old British joke about American politics, that the Democrats are similar to the left wing of the Conservative Party, and the Republicans are akin to the right wing of the Conservative Party. That joke is the fulcrum upon which I have made my decision as executive editor and the reason I write about the Overton Window today. As executive editor of this magazine I am forced to make a choice to either shutter my own experience with the breadth of political philosophy available to a free and civil society or to advance a political spectrum beyond the Overton Window of the United States. I have chosen to educate and expose our readership to the unfamiliar. Moreso, I have chosen to resist the decay that has occurred in the Overton Window of the United States since the end of the Great Depression.

Foreseeing accusations ahead, allow me to define the stance of this magazine. Our job is to provide factual news and fair access to publish opinions within our pages. We are not a mouthpiece for any political agenda, nor are we to cultivate an agenda of our own. We are a magazine interested in presenting the truth, and the truth often extends beyond the perspective to which Americans are accustomed. Furthermore, we are a magazine for the representative body of students at this university, and our job is to include the full diversity of this campus community without prejudice.

This will mean an expansion of the ideas presented in this magazine, and a shock to some. We may appear, by writing on subjects and policies aligned with the left, center-left, and centre of other nations' political spectrums, to skew to the left of the political spectrum when we maintain no such explicit endorsement. What we intend to do is expose our audience to the breadth of political discourse in contemporary nations to better prepare our readers to engage in discourse of their own.

To wit, remaining neutral as journalists will mean pursuing a centrist perspective, but one that adopts as its centre the position found by averaging the Overton Windows of the United States and contemporary nations around the world. Consider this an invitation on the part of The Pacific Sentinel to engage with the world by reading, and perhaps writing, from a new perspective. ●

Illustrations by Mckinsey Carroll



# Keep the Conventions Virtual

*This year's political conventions had to adapt to the strangest conditions in recent memory—were they better for it?*

by Nick Gatlin

illustrations by Mckinsey Carroll

This year, because of the world-altering pandemic and the requisite social distancing requirements, the Democratic and Republican National Conventions were held virtually. And I loved it.

Truth be told, I didn't watch the RNC, because I can't be bothered to hear Rudy Giuliani, Charlie Kirk and six different Trumps speak. However, I did watch the DNC, and to my surprise, it was... good.

The first night started a little shaky, with a cringey National Anthem singalong, choppy video, and John Kasich standing at a literal crossroads (well, technically a fork in the road, but I digress). But as the night progressed into its second hour, the program improved dramatically. Bernie Sanders' speech in support of Joe Biden was masterful, with this cutting one-liner: "Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Trump golfs."

Of course, Michelle Obama perfectly understood the format with her speech closing out the night. Really, it didn't feel like a speech

as much as a conversation between her and the viewer. It felt like she sat you down and spoke to you right in your living room, saying, "I know a lot of folks are reluctant to tune into a political convention right now, or to politics in general. Believe me, I get that.... Donald Trump is the wrong president for our country. He has had more than enough time to prove that he can do the job, but he is clearly in over his head. He cannot meet this moment. He simply cannot be who we need him to be for us."

This speech set the tone for the rest of the convention. Obama spoke directly to the camera, to the viewer, as if she were having an intervention. There were no applause lines, no waving to the crowd. It was just her, with her V-O-T-E necklace and out-of-focus "Biden-Harris" sign on the mantle. It was intimate, and it was raw.

The roll call on night 2 was magnificent. After months of quarantine, taking a virtual trip across this country's states and territories was at times breathtaking and heartwarming. It showcased everything that makes this country special, and let every state participate in their own unique way. We got to see Indigenous party representatives from New Mexico, North and South Dakota, and Hawaii; tall cacti and rocky buttes in Arizona and Colorado; vast cornfields and cattle ranches in Iowa and Montana; and who can forget the "calamari comeback state" of Rhode Island?

If nothing else, I hope the Democratic Party keeps this format for future roll call votes. It was infinitely more interesting than the usual vote on the convention floor, and injected a much-needed dose of joy and wonder into the proceedings. That vote was the most "traveling" I've done since March, and boy, was it enjoyable.

Barack Obama's speech on night 3 was arguably the standout of the entire convention. It was both apocalyptic and aspirational, as he pleaded, "...I am also asking you to believe in your own vability—to embrace your own responsibility as citizens—to make sure that the basic tenets of our democracy endure. Because that's what's at stake right now. Our democracy."

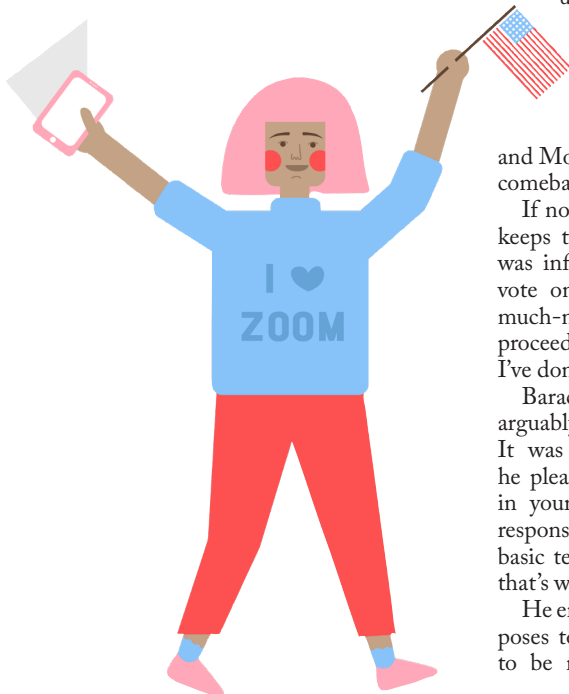
He emphasized the threat that Donald Trump poses to democracy, but also urged Americans to be more engaged in the process: "[T]his



president and those in power—those who benefit from keeping things the way they are—they are counting on your cynicism. That's how a democracy withers, until it's no democracy at all. We can't let that happen. Do not let them take away your power. Don't let them take away your democracy." It was a stirring speech, all the more impactful because he gave it in an empty room. Like Michelle's speech, Barack had no pauses for applause or crowd-pleasing kickers. His speech was somber, and serious. It had the gravitas of an Oval Office address that would have sounded out of place at any other convention.

Finally, Joe Biden officially accepted his party's nomination on night 4. That speech, like so many others, took full advantage of the virtual format. For starters, without applause or other distractions, Biden's speech was refreshingly short at 24 minutes—the shortest acceptance speech since 1984, when Walter Mondale spoke for just over 30 minutes. The speech was also a bit of a downer, with lines like, "The current president has cloaked America in darkness for much too long—too much anger, too much fear, too much division." At times, it sounded a little like a line out of *The Lord of the Rings*, like when Biden said, "Here and now, I give you my word: If you entrust me with the presidency, I will draw on the best of us, not the worst. I will be an ally of the light, not the darkness."

This is a small point, but I enjoyed how short and to-the-point most of the speeches were. Because of the virtual, pre-taped format, speakers



couldn't go over time like they did in previous conventions. Hillary Clinton's 2016 convention speech was almost an hour. I certainly didn't miss the long speeches—though I could have done without the awkward, delayed Zoom applause this year.

One major benefit of the virtual format was the sheer number of ordinary people we heard from. Streaming from his home, we got to hear Brayden Harrington's story of how Joe Biden helped him overcome his stutter. We heard from small business owners, farmers, restaurateurs, and countless other average Americans. Getting to hear directly from them, in their homes and at their businesses, was much more impactful than I thought it would be.

And finally—this one may sound petty, but bear with me—I liked having the same access

as everyone else. With the exception of a few dozen journalists who traveled to Milwaukee to see the live speeches in person, I got to see as much of the convention as any TV pundit or politico. There were no back rooms or gated convention floors this year. Most major networks aired the proceedings in their entirety. Granted, the convention this year was essentially a DNC produced infomercial, but truth be told, I don't think it's a terrible thing for each party to spend 8 hours every four years telling their story how they want.

In summary: Keep the state-by-state roll call, living room speeches, and testimonials from regular people. Ditch the long speeches of conventions past, and keep the schedule tight. This year's Democratic convention was surprisingly good, even by non-COVID

standards. When we finally get back to in-person events, I hope the parties learn the lessons of 2020 and keep the things that worked. I, for one, look forward to what 2024 has to offer. ●





# Dear Nora, U.S.A

THE ENDURING CATHARSIS OF KATY DAVIDSON'S WISTFUL INDIE POP

by Morgan Troper

In the beginning, Dear Nora was an island. Despite being a stone's throw from Olympia, WA—a place where, according to songwriter Katy Davidson, “riot grrrl and other actually subversive things were still going down”—the group wasn't moored to any specific scene or sound. In the late '90s Davidson was still just a kid who went to college in Portland and liked the rock music they heard on the radio; they read SPIN for their music news, they listened to Weezer and Liz Phair, and they still hadn't heard of K Records.

Dear Nora's music was originally a reflection of its immediate environment—the “seemingly innocent milieu of '90s Portland,” as Davidson puts it, “a playground of vegan cafes and new-fangled 'expresso' [sic] shops like Coffee People.” And it was heavily informed by the universal dream of DIY: Create a simulacrum of your favorite thing on your own terms and budget.

Free from commercial artifice, elitist sensibilities, and external subcultural influence, Dear Nora's earliest recordings are devastatingly sincere, both aesthetically and compositionally. It is indie pop done without the silent but deadly irony characteristic of “twee.” It is merely the sound of kids yelling about their feelings over amplified instruments. As trite as it sounds, it is the essence of rock 'n roll distilled and crisply captured on a borrowed Tascam 8-track.

These early recordings comprise the first third of “Three States: Rarities 1997-2007”—a

69 Love Songs caliber boxset that was initially released on CD in 2008 and is finally getting the deluxe vinyl reissue treatment from Orindal Records. For incoming Dear Nora fanatics, Three States is a great place to start despite its daunting voluminousness. The hyper-accessible front end primes listeners for the band's slightly more challenging “later era,” which saw

Davidson pivot toward folksier and more impressionistic songwriting. As its title would suggest, Three States functions like a map—it circumscribes the different areas of Dear Nora's stylistically varied catalogue. It isn't a “greatest hits” collection so much as a complimentary set of musical annotations that expand on and contextualize the band's “proper” releases.

Three States also allows listeners to trace Davidson's own maturation—from the starry-eyed, indie pop bliss of those early singles all the way through to the subtly discordant dirge “When Things at Home Got Shitty.” Davidson's music has never been cynical, but the fatalistic “The Life of a Star” really does sound like their last stand against the crushing, inescapable weight of adulthood. (And it segues into a cover of the Zombies' “This Will Be Our Year” which somehow makes the whole thing even more depressing.)

In the last page of the Three States liner notes, Davidson says they aren't sure whether the end of their initial run as Dear Nora in 2008 was a “burn out” or a “fade away.” But the Dear Nora story didn't actually end there: Davidson reformed the project in 2017 on the heels of the “Mountain Rock” vinyl reissue and released

“Skulls Example”, their first full length release with the project in 12 years, to critical acclaim in 2018.

In recent years, Dear Nora's music has been breathlessly canonized by major music publications and bands like Joyce Manor and Girlpool have cited Davidson as a major musical influence. Davidson went from a SPIN-reading, Weezer-loving kid to cult hero and torchbearer for future purveyors of meaningful, melodic indie. We are a nation of Dear Nora acolytes and “Three States: Rarities 1997-2007” is our hymnal. The timelessness of this simple, beautiful music lends credence to what should by now be a very obvious artistic apothegm: Scenes and sounds come and go, but sincerity is eternal.

“Three States: Rarities 1997-2007” releases on vinyl via Orindal Records on September 18, 2020. ●

Photos by Josh Kaffer

# FUNNY PAGE

Comics by Josh Gates  
Follow him on instagram @joshgatesart



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