

The Philadelphia Partisan

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knowledge is power

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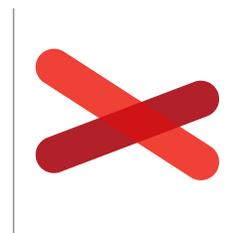
PHOTO BY JOE PIETTE



Temple paid arts and humanities TAs a stipend of \$16,927 in 2016-17; according to MIT, a living wage for a single adult in Philadelphia County is \$24,346.



Major banks continue to take 10% of the school district's budget, according to WHYY NewsWorks and Our City Our Schools.



Under Governors Ed Rendell (D) and Tom Corbett (R), state funding per public college student fell 33 percent and average tuition rose 19 percent (\$2,202) between 2007-08 and 2015-16, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

North Philly community and students unite to stomp on Temple's stadium plans

by K Daniel Bryan and Mackenzie Yoffe Morris



Despite its branding as a public institution, in reality the capitalist class calls the shots at Temple University. Patrick O'Connor, the chair of Temple's Board of Trustees, chairs the board of BNY Mellon Funds Trusts and board of Franklin Security Bank, and also serves on the board of Crowley Chemical Company and the board of the Philadelphia Police Foundation. He is also chairman of Cozen O'Connor, a giant corporate law firm that knows how to get around every state tax loophole and has a whole team of people to do it. Under the direction of people like this, it's clear where Temple's loyalties lie, and who its policies are designed to favor.

In order to thrive as such a capitalist institution, Temple University has resorted to an aggressive strategy of gentrification. This means nothing less than the forced relocation and breaking apart of Black and Boricua working class communities in North Philadelphia who have built strong cultural roots in the neighborhood over the course of decades. To replace them, Temple favors new real estate development and rising rents that cater to an increasing number of incoming Temple students from wealthy families. The university's ambitions are not to serve the community that built it, but to become an internationally renowned yuppie factory.

Two years ago, the Board of Trustees proposed the construction of a brand new football stadium... right in the heart of residential North Philadelphia. Despite its immense short-term financial cost, such a policy is clearly meant to build the long-term foundations for establishing a more serious reputation for Temple in the highly lucrative college sports industry. And, most importantly for those capitalists calling the shots, it is also an escalation of the university's intrusion into the way of life of a North Philadelphia community it has long considered disposable, an obstacle to facilitating capitalist profit. But now more than ever, the people are fighting back.

Enter Stadium Stompers

A historically unprecedented community-student coalition group called Stadium Stompers quickly sprung

up to resist the university's plans. Part of a pattern of increasing community discontent and student radicalization, this organization has grown into a strong pole of popular opposition that caught the Temple administration off guard. At first, Temple pursued a campaign of dishonest propaganda, portraying the stadium as good for the community. But the escalating direct actions taken by Stadium Stompers through 2016 disrupted the university's monopoly on the narrative and received national media attention.

the university's ambitions are not to serve the community that built it, but to become an internationally renowned yuppie factory

As is typical of contemporary universities, Temple's financial model has entailed taking on a massive debt burden as it sought an immense expansion of its honors program through the liberal use of scholarships. The inept president Neil Theobald, struggling to address budgetary issues, faced with mounting student and community discontent over the stadium plans he had promoted, and bungling his administrative obligations in the eyes of the Board of Trustees,

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Letters to the Editor: Cooperatives and Revolution

“Building a New Economy from Below” by Sasha Berkman appeared in the July-August issue of the Partisan

from Karga Fantasma

To the Editors:

I enjoyed the article, “Building a New Economy From Below: Cooperatives and Revolution,” by Sasha Berkman. I would like to offer some comments. First, the differentiation of different types of cooperatives. Consumer: owned by consumers who buy goods or services from their cooperative; Producer: owned by producers of commodities or crafts who have joined forces to process and market their products; Worker: owned and democratically governed by employees who become co-op members; Purchasing: owned by independent businesses or municipalities to improve their purchasing power; Hybrid: a combination of co-op types, where people with common interests band together; and Multi-stakeholder: a type of cooperative that has different classes of members.

Second, there is a pretty broad spectrum of democracy and ownership within cooperatives and democratic workplaces. Cooperatives are a business model, and their survival and benefits depend on the profits of the enterprise. I think it would be wrong to say that cooperatives by themselves will be the end of capitalism, so I agree with the author. There are many factors

that need to be addressed. Pretty often, worker cooperatives struggle with the cooperative culture, and their members are not necessarily committed to changing the social order or applying racial and economic justice principles.

There has been a pretty interesting development in worker cooperatives led by people of color and immigrants in the last five years. In cities where advocacy efforts have gained economic support from the government towards cooperative development, there has been a snowball effect on the creation of startups. They also share a lack of analysis, as well as top-down co-op development models, but there is a lot to learn from these cases. Cooperatives need a great deal of support to start. Managing a business takes a lot of time and knowledge, from legal to finances, from education in cooperative principles to governance. Sometimes the idealization of cooperatives forgets the commitment it takes to manage and own a business. Sometimes it takes a great deal of work for the workers to assume their responsibilities and peel off their skin as workers that follow orders, receive a check and don't have to think about the sustainability of the cooperative.

There is a real need to develop education and connections with other social justice movements. Even within the cooperatives in the US, there is a big disconnection with the needs of their own communities. I agree that there is a need to connect the labor movement with the cooperative movement, although it may be worthwhile to really understand and learn about the criticism with the Mondragon model, which has a reputation for being the more successful corporate model. There are many efforts within the US: the Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative, the Greater Dayton Union Co-op Initiative, LA Coop Lab, and the Union Co-op Council of the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives. The case of the unionizing and conversion of the Vermont Car Wash in Los Angeles is a great example of empowerment from the immigrant workers that took over the business after the owner abandoned the business without paying the workers. I think it would be great to start building bridges with the cooperatives that exist out there to learn from their challenges and from experiences that have built solidarity with the social justice movements in their communities. ✚

Social Power

from James Lyuh

To the Editors:

At a political education session for members of Philly Socialists, our comrade Tim Horras defined social power as *“the power to influence people and events, which stems from organized people using persuasion and (generally, but not exclusively nonviolent) social pressure.”*

I want to begin with a broader definition of power. In *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt writes,

Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act, but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together.

Any Marxist definition of power should be rooted in the collective aspect of power. Among other reasons, it foregrounds our organizing with a democratic political vision, rather than one rooted in “great leaders” or a revolutionary vanguard. Moreover, this definition of power clarifies that the ability to produce and reproduce a “group” is a power in itself. The Philadelphia Tenants Union social power does not lie in its ability to push forward legislation, but to bind tenants together for collective action.

I do not think that we should place organized persuasion at the center of our definition of social power. Rather, social power should be rooted in the production and reproduction of society. I would define social power as the ability to

bind and rebind groups of people, or to produce and reproduce social bodies.

While organized persuasion is certainly one aspect of reproducing social bodies, we should recall the experience of past revolutions and their communes and workers' councils (e.g., Paris, Russia, and Venezuela). The power of these bodies did not lie in persuasion, but their role in social transformation, their role in establishing new ways of binding people together and rebinding them. Moreover, the foundation for the struggle for political power is based in this kind of social power. The primary task of Philly Socialists and the PTU is to accumulate social power on such grounds—persuasion follows naturally from this course. ✚

Where does the march end?

Base-building and mass action as discrete moments in a singular process

by Tim Horras

In the past several months, there has been active discussion of a set of ideas loosely grouped under the heading of “base-building.” The present article makes no attempt to offer a comprehensive treatment of the subject matter, nor to clear up the many sincere misunderstandings. However, there is a pressing need to dispel some major misconceptions about the theory and practice of base-building.

Does base-building oppose mass action or protest? Do proponents of base-building argue that the left should focus solely on local action, and ignore national or international issues? How does base-building organizing relate to questions of community self-defense?

Riding the high tide, preparing in the low ebb

Prioritizing base-building and supporting organic grassroots upsurge and social movements are not antithetical, and in fact buttress and support one another.

A base-building perspective does not see large mobilizations as “not really revolutionary” or unimportant. We do not contrast huge marches and rallies as surface level or shallow mobilizing versus the deep organizing among a constituency. Some theorists do, including labor organizer Jane McAlevey and others, and the critique is well worth engaging.

However, unlike many on the left, we see large mobilizations as the *result* of cultivating a constituency who can turn out. Perhaps more importantly, we argue that while base-building and organizing efforts build up our power, large mobilizations tend to *expend* energy and effort, spending down resources rather than building them up.

Large mobilizations, when successful, tend as a whole to have a dynamic which activate the periphery of a social movement while exhausting and even burning out the activist core, the latter of whom have been working hard to prepare for the event. Afterwards, the core activists end up needing time to decompress after a big outing... at precisely the moment that new people need to be onboarded! This dynamic can be overcome, but it's rarely talked about, much less are we presented with solutions to these structural problems.

The practical tasks of base-building—door-knocking, one-on-one conversations, serving the immediate needs of the masses, fighting

the power of local oppressors alongside them—all offer activity to pull in new activists who have come into the movement during a period of mass movement, and provide them capacity-expanding organizing to engage in during times when, for whatever reason, people are not in the streets.

In this way, base-building is not counterposed to participating in and/or planning marches and rallies. Rather, base-building should be correctly counterposed to the strategy of *only* organizing rallies and protests or using mass action as the primary or sole tactic, instead of engaging in a *diversity* of tactics which maps onto the ebbs and flows of the class struggle.

working class life has a million and one facets

A case study in tactical rigidity

Let's take as one example the antiwar movement of the 2000s. The antiwar movement was probably the largest social movement in the United States in the days immediately following the global justice (aka “anti-globalization”) movement. Hundreds of thousands marched together against the invasions of Afghanistan and, later, in mass opposition to the war against Iraq.

The organized left was without a doubt a major player in these struggles, with various socialist organizations ensconced in leading roles within large antiwar coalitions. Dozens of mass demonstrations were called and answered, and marches on Washington, DC were supplemented by large local demonstrations in cities around the country.

In a period of mass struggle such as the antiwar movement of the 2000s, it was inevitable that thousands or perhaps tens of thousands from within the mass movement would come to identify as radicals, socialists or communists and would join the socialist organizations that were playing leading roles in resisting war and imperialism.

But, we need to ask ourselves: what became of these thousands or tens of thousands of activists radicalized by their participation in the antiwar movement? Where are they today? Why wasn't the existing socialist left able to *retain* these large

numbers of newly radicalizing activists?

Now, certainly political fortunes account for some element of this. The mainstream antiwar strategy of electing Democrats to Congress, culminating in the ascension of Barack Obama as the standard bearer of the antiwar wing of the Democratic Party, and the advent of the 2008 financial crisis certainly played important roles. Many socialist groups engaged in heroic organizing efforts to stop what in retrospect has been a catastrophic military occupation, even as public attention to the issue has declined.

But the left also shouldn't let ourselves completely off the hook, placing all the blame for our subsequent weaknesses solely at the hands of objective forces beyond our control. Our political methods and our strategic choices also played an important role.

Many veteran activists began to notice that the antiwar movement was starting to peter out rapidly in 2008 and afterward. At that time, the strategy of the socialist left, who had invested so much effort into the antiwar movement, was generally one of two lines: 1) that we needed to work harder to press for mass mobilization against the current of the overall lull in activity, a sort of “optimism of the will” approach, or 2) that we needed to find the next grassroots upsurge outside of the antiwar movement and latch onto that. Sadly, neither of these strategies allowed the socialist left to absorb and incorporate the massive layer of new activists who had cut their teeth in the antiwar movement.

Now, imagine if instead of following the “protest even harder!” or “find the next big thing!” approaches, we had recognized the situation and the limitations of the current moment and urged the radicalized militant elements to infuse themselves into the life of working class and oppressed communities.

What if this newly radicalized layer had thrown itself into the struggles of working people in our own communities, working alongside our neighbors and coworkers to fight against bosses, landlords, local developers, police and corrupt politicians?

I would argue that if we had successfully managed a turn toward base-building during the waning days of the antiwar movement, the socialist left would be significantly larger, stronger, and more deeply rooted than we were before. While there were notable exceptions, after the



The Coalition for REAL Justice's ongoing organizing campaign to remove the Frank Rizzo statue near City Hall got a boost from the upsurge of mass protest against racist statues after the events in Charlottesville. Megan Malachi addresses the crowd.

PHOTO BY DANIELLE CORCIONE

antiwar movement the left as a whole ended up right back at square one.

Tactics that live and breathe: Taking our cues from objective conditions

Being involved in “rooted” organizing work during a moment of mass movement doesn’t tie us down; successful organizing expands the capacity of our organizations as they learn and grow.

Mass movement moments create intense emotional energy derived from masses of people standing and marching together, interfacing with one another and recognizing their own power. Mass action has the ability to recharge us as we inevitably face the daily grind of organizing, and the excitement of participating in really big political questions helps give us perspective which would otherwise be lacking in parochial day-to-day struggles of the working class against oppression and exploitation.

On the other hand, from an emotional energy perspective, trying to make mass demonstrations happen when nobody wants to come out is demoralizing and can especially burnout new activists. Tactics must be shaped by careful investigation of mass sentiments.

There are even times when the local and the “big picture” merge to create flashpoints deeply entwined with one another: in Ferguson, Mo. or at Standing Rock. In these instances, local grievances synchronized with nationwide political issues to set off a perfect storm. It needs to be emphasized that these rebellions sprang from *deep social roots*—the depth and density of pre-existing social networks in these locations allowed these communities to rapidly cohere and self-organize in response to events, and to generate interest from a national and even international audience.

In order to make the best use of our limited time and energy, the socialist left needs to improve our ability to recognize the difference between popular grassroots movements and the sort of ambulance-chasing after single issues. Single-issue campaigns can appear to have features of popular movements, but often they are ultimately distinct and can lead the movement toward a reformist dead-end.

Ultimately, the left must learn to better differentiate between organic expressions of popular protest and carefully stage-managed campaigns concocted by liberal NGOs. This is especially tricky in that sometimes, in the early stages of a popular movement, jumpstarting this activity can seem mechanical and inorganic. All we can hope to do in these situations is to aim for a good grasp of strategy, and to improve individually and collectively as we succeed and fail.

socialists must find ways to fuse the interests and actions of the activist milieu with the most potent layers of the working class

For better or worse, there is no substitute for a correct assessment of a given political moment, campaign, or tactic. Our movement will live or die on the acumen or political judgment of our organizations’ cadre and leadership, and the depth and breadth of democratic discussions in our organizations and in our movement.

Our trend unconditionally endorses the right to self-defense by the working class and oppressed communities. One of the central historical reference points for a socialist base-building project in the USA is the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. We are not naively seeking to recreate these and similar formations from a different time; however, we do think that their model, which incorporated elements of armed self-defense and service to the people, is an essential component of socialist organizing in our day and age.

A movement as wide and deep as the working class itself

There are a million tactics we can use to weave socialism into the fabric of working class life, because working class life has a million and one facets. We can organize working class sports leagues, self-defense classes, provide after-school tutoring to youth, host block parties, formal dances, poetry slams, paint murals, set up worker cooperatives, engage in research and investigative reporting, organize tenants unions, copwatch, neighborhood meetings, union caucuses, provide legal support for community members, fight wage theft and more. And of course, we can and should march and rally, when tactically appropriate.

A correct understanding of socialist strategy would admit the need to incorporate both deep organizing as well as supporting spontaneous rebellions from below. To build the power of the socialist movement, and to achieve our political aim of total emancipation, socialists must find ways to fuse the interests and actions of the activist milieu with the most potent layers of the working class. To accomplish this merger, we must encourage a diversity of tactics as broad and variegated as the working class itself. 🇺🇸

Speech repression by the academy

By Danielle Corcione

Last May, Princeton University professor Keenanga-Yamahtta Taylor gave a commencement speech at Hampshire College. After the speech circulated on the web, Fox News produced a news segment of her comments calling President Trump the “racist, sexist megalomaniac” he is. She quickly received violent threats that she’d be lynched and raped—not only in her inbox, but through Princeton’s Department of African-American Studies. As a result, she cancelled a series of West Coast appearances for her *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* book tour. Although she’d been touring for a year and a half, she had never faced such violence quite like this before.

In the New York Times, she exposes the hypocrisy of the “free speech” debate: “When it comes to protecting the speech of people who are most vulnerable to being intimidated into silence—like people of color and gay people—conservatives either are suspiciously quiet or drive further intimidation with wildly negative news coverage. ... Most schools—including Princeton, where I teach—support their besieged professors. But in recent months, other progressive academics have been investigated, disciplined and even fired for comments they made outside of the classroom.”

Drexel University professor George Cicciariello-Maher is one person who was disciplined for certain tweets. Inside Higher Ed reports Cicciariello-Maher received a letter in May from provost M. Brian Blake, which explained an “appropriate review” would be conducted and “a special committee” would convene (alongside

the Faculty Senate) “to investigate [his] conduct and provide findings and recommendations to me concerning your extremely damaging conduct.”

Academics who vocalize their support and enthusiasm for Antifa have also recently been targeted. The Washington Post reports Dartmouth College has been institutionally distancing itself from lecturer and *Antifa: the Anti-Fascist Handbook* author Mark Bray, particularly after his guest media appearances following the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rallies. In an official statement, the Office of the President stated: “Recent statements made by Lecturer in History Mark Bray supporting violent protest do not represent the views of Dartmouth. As an institution, we condemn anything but civil discourse in the exchange of opinions and ideas ... however, the endorsement of violence in any form is contrary to Dartmouth values.”

Students and faculty alike also experience similar institutional repression when supporting the BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) movement. In fact, campus BDS activists are being proactive about their own safety by creating the Campus Antifascist Network (CAN). According to their website, the organization’s mission statement includes, “CAN brings together faculty, students, staff, and community members across US campuses to stem the rise of fascism, whether proudly displayed in hateful exclusionary slogans and posters, or disguised as “free speech.” We come together to stand with threatened members of our campus communities and oppose fascist mobilizations.” ✖

Reactionaries targeting campus BDS campaigns

By Andrew Sejong

During the 2015-2016 academic year, my campus Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) launched a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. By February, the *Wall Street Journal* had published articles accusing our college of supporting anti-Semitism. Zionist alumni inflamed the situation by supporting a witch hunt against Rutgers University gender studies professor Jasbir Puar for giving a lecture at Vas-sar on the Palestinian struggle. Soon every single person that was involved with SJP had their pictures and personal information placed on a Zionist website called *Canary Mission*.

I was personally targeted by Zionist and right-wing media. A photo of me wearing a hoodie depicting Leila Khaled—a famous female Palestinian resistance fighter—with the phrase “Resistance is not terrorism” began to circulate. I received threats of violence and a constant barrage of racial and homophobic slurs.

Additionally, several of our members faced anonymous hate as well. Many more faced personal battles at home and at their places of worship.

The administration told me to contact the police, or else they couldn’t take action. After I did and was told by the police that they could do nothing, we asked the administration to denounce Zionist attacks. They refused, saying that they needed to remain neutral.



PHOTO BY DANIELLE CORCIONE

Pessimism Is The End

D. Ted Tarnovski

To the pessimist pain
is just a part of punishment.
To the pessimist abuse
is just a price to be paid.

The end of history is
only inevitable to those
who leave imagination
behind. To turn away from dreams,
to deny the struggle its suspense...

To the pessimist life
is just an unfortunate fact of death.

Student Power:

Can Philly college students follow the examples of Quebec and the UK?

By James Lyuh



Quebec's student strike, May 2012.

PHOTO BY DAVID VILDER, CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 2.0 GENERIC.

Many undergraduate students at the University of Pennsylvania were shocked, over the summer, to find that the Student Financial Services office was not granting financial aid to those who had chosen to take a fifth year.

This information did not come from an official email, rather it came as a surprise when some students opened their financial aid package and discovered tens of thousands of dollars in loans where they expected to see scholarships or grant money. The rest received the news through social media.

With only months before the term began, students frantically sought answers. SFS claims that this has been a long-standing policy. However, students report that they had received written confirmation that financial aid would be extended to the fifth year. One anonymous Penn student said, "SFS confirmed to me in writing, back in March 2014, that I would be able to receive aid for this year, and while there could be loans, they would only be a 'few thousand dollars' [...] Instead, my financial aid package currently consists entirely of loans."

Students decide to take an extra year for a wide variety of reasons, such as mental health, financially supporting their family, or to pursue a dual-degree program. Students only made these decisions after consulting with SFS, sometimes years in advance. In return, SFS attempted to renege on its promise, potentially devastating the futures of its undergraduates with the choice of either crippling debt, or an incomplete degree: "This devastating debt is not an option. At this point, I am looking at not being able to complete my undergraduate degree, let alone my masters."

Rather than clearly announcing this change

in policy, SFS believed that by secretly reneging on its promise affected students would not be in a position to resist the change. This was an attempted cover-up of administrative neglect, done at the expense of students.

Despite the underhanded tactics of the administration, students have offered a mild set of demands: those entering into a 5th year in 2018 must be granted an exception to this policy due to miscommunication by SFS. They are not asking UPenn to change the policy; they are only asking that the university give those who had planned their lives around misinformation a pass and apply the new policy to those who have now been properly informed.

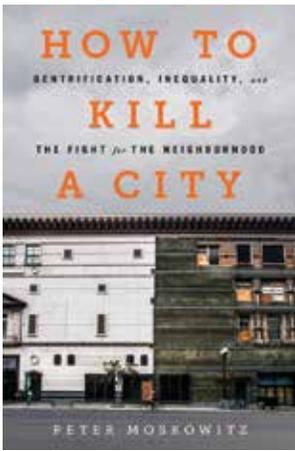
The University should eagerly accept such light demands. However, students have every right to demand more. The denial of financial aid for those who want to take a single extra year is nothing less than the university punishing those who grapple with mental health, are less wealthy, or find themselves dealing with unfortunate circumstances, such as a sudden family issue. It reinforces the divide between those who have enough to pay off tens of thousands in loans, and those who simply cannot afford to do so. It stigmatizes those who cannot complete a degree in four-years for reasons outside their control. It makes certain degrees accessible largely to those with the means to pursue a fifth-year with little financial aid.

However, the weakness of the US student movement means that students need to be pragmatic in the worst way – making the choices they must to move on with their lives. In other countries, this is not entirely the case. In 2010, in the U.K., the National Union of Students (NUS)

helped coordinate a series of protests against tuition increases. Over two months, the NUS occupied dozens of universities and the Conservative Party's London HQ, and brought hundreds of thousands of people out to march in the streets. In Quebec, in 2012, a similar threat of tuition increases led Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiant (ASSE) to launch months of protests that mobilized hundreds of thousands in the streets. The capacity of these student unions to launch massive demonstrations presents a constant credible threat to the administration and the State: they must respect the democratic rights of students.

Simply put, students have a *right* to determine the conditions under which they live. Students live – in the full sense of the word – for four years on campus. Yet, students are not given any say in how their campus is governed. Students do not have monopoly on this right – staff and faculty have this right as well – but they have some legitimate claim, in so far as their own lives are concerned.

If students had democratic rights, it is hard to imagine that a situation like the SFS debacle could have occurred. If students had power, it is hard to imagine that they would have to swallow the bitter pill of having to hand over an entire year of financial aid, to protect the futures of incoming fifth year undergraduates. At times, it is obvious that the goals of the administration and the Board of Trustees are the same as those of students. It is equally obvious that at times they are in opposition. And, in such a situation, who can students turn to but themselves? ❖



The Death of Cities:

Peter Moskowitz on Gentrification

by Peter Myers

The telltale signs of gentrification are easy to spot: luxury condos popping out of the ground like weeds; an influx of affluent white people into previously working-class and POC neighborhoods; sleekly branded businesses catering to these new residents. Given their visibility, it's these signs that discussions about gentrification tend to focus on. However, they're just a small part of a much larger story, one that began decades before that pricey tapas place replaced the bodega on your block. In *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality and the Fight for the Neighborhood*, journalist Peter Moskowitz gives us the long view of gentrification, from its roots in neoliberal economics and racist housing policy to its current logic of turning cities into glass-paneled citadels for the global elite.

How to Kill a City takes as its subject the history and current state of gentrification, weaving together sections of traditional reporting, historical research, and urban theory. The book is split into four main sections, each focusing on a different U.S. city. In New Orleans and Detroit, cash-strapped city governments have used disasters (Hurricane Katrina and a municipal bankruptcy, respectively) to open the floodgates to austerity and government-subsidized private development. In San Francisco and New York, surges of capital from tech and finance have made large swaths of each city unaffordable for all but the super-rich. These narratives are familiar, but what makes Moskowitz's book unique and vital is the way it demystifies them. The flow of capital may be immaterial, but the trail it leaves is tangible. *How to Kill a City* puts the pieces together to show how, beginning decades ago, government officials, nonprofits, and business interests colluded to set the stage for gentrification as we know it today.

Moskowitz doesn't discuss gentrification in Philly specifically, but it's easy to spot the paral-

els. With developers like OCF Realty throwing buildings up across the city, the self-appointed "condo king" Allan Domb on city council, and the recent approval of a Community Reinvestment Coalition that seems designed to streamline collusion between government, nonprofits, and developers, gentrification in Philly seems to follow the same lines Moskowitz outlines. And, given rising rents and skyrocketing eviction rates in neighborhoods all over the city, there's no sign of it slowing down any time soon.

Moskowitz doesn't offer a quick fix for gentrification because, quite simply, there isn't one. Nothing less than a mass movement demanding a profound shift in government policy will save U.S. cities. Those fighting against gentrification have long known this, but the portrait *How to Kill a City* presents makes it clear just how grim the situation is. But that can't discourage us—it simply means the work of organizing our resistance is even more necessary, more urgent. As Moskowitz puts it on the book's final page: "It's time to start building." *

[a full review can be found on phillypartisan.wordpress.com](http://phillypartisan.wordpress.com)



Toward a Marxist Center conference held in Philly

by Lee

On August 4-6, Philly Socialists held a national conference in Philadelphia entitled *Toward a Marxist Center: Base-Building in the Socialist Movement*. Socialist groups, mainly youth, came from Mobile, Alabama; Richmond, Virginia; Seattle and Tacoma, Washington; Sacramento, California; Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Austin, San Marcos and Houston, Texas; Colorado Springs; New York; Paterson, New Jersey; Pittsburgh, Lancaster, Haverford and Bucks County, PA; and, of course, Philly.

The focus was around base-building. These words from the website defined the conference: "Each group has its own unique character and history emerging from specific local conditions, but all of our groups possess in common two characteristics: ideological pluralism within a socialist framework and a political practice which focuses on base-building and the construction of 'dual power' institutions."

To break it down: Base-building is work among the people. Many people are asking

where to dig in and how to dig in. For us, we need to have conversations that build the muscle and bone of a beginning revolutionary movement. Without knowing how people live and their questions (and answers), without us communicating our strategy and ideas to them, without debating the big questions with them and among ourselves, we cannot lay the basis for a revolutionary movement that is actually revolutionary and is actually a movement.

The conference did this. It also raised some new questions. For example, what about internationalism? And after Charlottesville, one debate has become even more important than ever: How do we get rid of white supremacy?

People have asked, "What is dual power?" This is my answer: We do not have state power. But we can organize ourselves—in our communities and wherever we are. Tenant groups are a form of dual power institution. Campuses can have anti-fascist groups. There need to be movements to free prisoners, political or otherwise, and alliances to give sanctuary to immigrants and to stop the escalating attacks on immigrants.

People have also asked, "What is ideological pluralism?" I think it means we are open to different political philosophies. We welcome debate. How do we prepare for conjuncture—when things come together in a certain way and the result is like an earthquake—in our base-building and other moments that light the sky? I do think we need to study theory, and apply that theory to our practice. One or the other will not take us where we need to go.

We were not able to discuss at the conference, "How do we prepare to be ungovernable in 2017?" by Kali Akuno. For the future.

At the end of the conference, after some groups had to leave, those remaining came to some non-binding agreements. There are plans for a one-time theoretical journal stemming from the conference. This would include transcription of conference panels and conversations initiated by the conference. All this would include the questions, "What is base-building?" and "What is the dual power approach to socialist organizing?"

There was agreement on having a follow-up conference in 2018. There was also agreement on having both regional training camps and one centralized national training camp in Philly.

I think people are still summing up the conference, and this will continue. You can send your thoughts to the *Partisan* and to Philly Socialists on Facebook.

Congrats to the people who made this conference real. As we move ahead, let's debate what kind of world we want. We need a common language.

Seems a different day is approaching. This conference met the challenge by contributing to building the national movement needed.

Empires don't break up all at once. But there are some cracks here.

As an earlier writer to the *Partisan* said, "As we speed ahead in this era of uncertainty, we hope you'll join us."

Yes. Join us. To the Future! *

Different bodies, same expectations: how capitalism fails the disabled

By Maddie Rose & Zoe Belinsky

Ability across all people varies—from attention span, to walking long distances, to eyesight. Many abilities are demanded and expected: cognitively processing lectures, climbing stairs, holding conversations with strangers. The limited ways in which people are expected to think, move, and communicate are taken for granted. This makes disability a spectrum—always in relation to what is “normal” ability. You are not disabled in your body but made disabled through conditions that don’t align with your body’s abilities and needs.

Perhaps the biggest expectation is your ability to work. We all have different work capacities, and yet under capitalism your labor and my labor are measured according to the same standard—the wage. And one worker is exchangeable for another: If your boss is not satisfied with your work, they can fire you and replace you with another laborer. For this reason, despite being a completely different person, any other worker will have their labor measured according to the same standard. Those who can only labor under

certain conditions (only while sitting down, no face-to-face interaction with customers, or only for short periods of time) are considered just inadequate workers.

you are not dis-abled in your body but made disabled through conditions that don't align with your body's abilities and needs

You cannot measure able-bodied labor and disabled labor in the same manner without accepting the disabled people’s differing levels of productivity. Disabled people are people who—for various reasons—cannot produce at the same rate as abled people. But this is

seen as disruptive by the capitalist system.

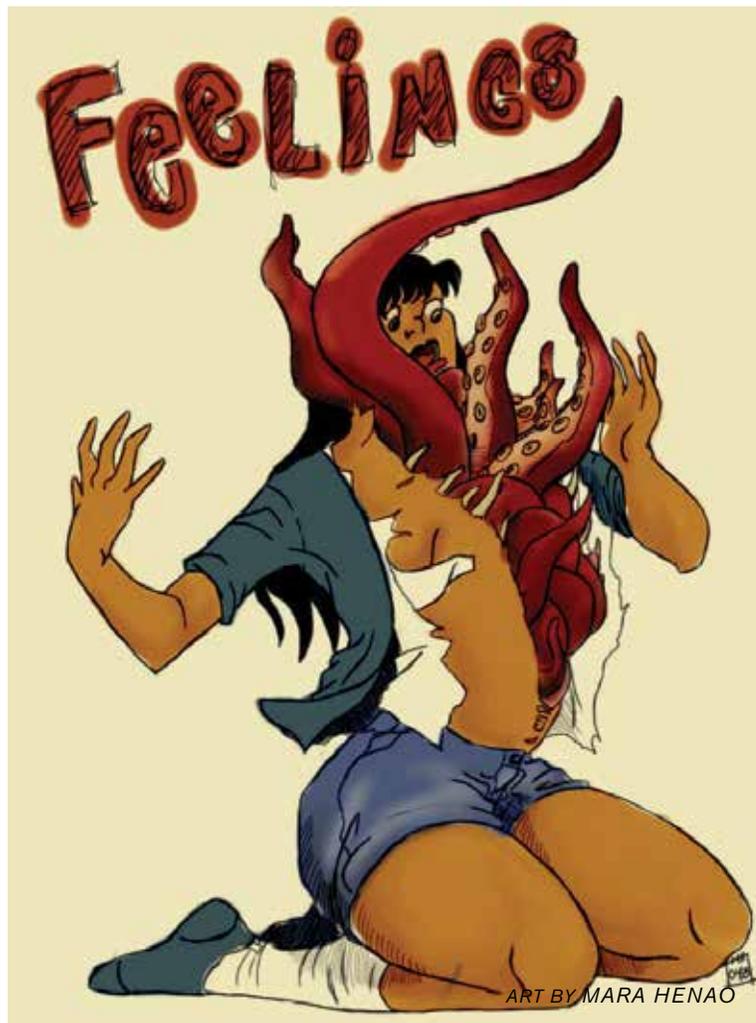
This extends to the work of able-bodied people as well. For example, workplace protections that exist for disabled people aren’t in place, because they don’t really exist for anyone. It may be technically illegal in some places for a transgender person to be fired for being transgender, but employees can be fired for any vague reason at the discretion of the employer. A person without enough money to own a car may lose their job when the bus is late one too many times. Similarly, a workplace may insist it is welcoming to disabled employees

but will still fire off the chronically ill for calling in sick one too many times. Under capitalism, we are expected to leave our needs and personal limitations at the door upon clocking in. But disabled people are simply unable to forget about their bodies and needs.

Furthermore, as demands rise, more bodies become disabled. The need to work 60 hours a week to support oneself with a body that can’t maintain that is a dis-abling condition. The requirement of standing at customer service jobs is a dis-abling condition.

But disabled people are brought into poverty in very specific ways. Disabled people are legally allowed to be paid below minimum wage, depending on the nature of their disability and the nature of the work. Further, obtaining publicly assisted housing and applying for food stamps or supplemental security income (SSI) is even more difficult for those with cognitive impairments and mental illnesses. The welfare state can only assist with meeting the needs of those who can work through the bureaucratic demands to receive help. What’s more, obtaining a diagnosis (which is needed for assistance) is often too expensive for those who cannot make regular specialist appointments. Fitting into the category of a diagnosis is also difficult—many people fall outside criteria for certain diagnoses and, as a result, aren’t covered for certain kinds of help. Misunderstood diagnoses like chronic migraines, fibromyalgia or bipolar disorder fall through the cracks. Stacked disabilities, where several illnesses considered minor add up into dis-abling circumstances, are also left unseen. Intersecting disabilities affect work capacities in ways that are unrecognized, much as disability is affected by the intersections of race and gender. The ability to be recognized by doctors is also tangled in racial and gender biases in which pain is not believed, or individuals are perceived as criminal rather than neurodivergent or mentally ill.

Disability, like race and gender, forms one of the contradictions of capitalism—disabled people fail to be incorporated neatly into our capitalist economic system. Followers of Bernie Sanders love to echo, “No one working 40 hours a week should be living in poverty.” The emphasis is meant to be on the latter half, but the former is revealing of liberal capitalist thinking. Why should that much labor be a requirement for having earned your share? Labor continues to be the starting point for deserving human status, despite our abilities to labor all varying. Ableism doesn’t need to be prejudicial—it can stem from oppressive economic conditions and from any ideology using labor as a starting point for humanity. *



Decades of Philly high school students resist privatization

By Suzy Subways

December 1991 Central High School students hold a demonstration against a bill to give parents \$900 vouchers from the state budget to send their children to private school. The bill fails, as reported by *The New York Times*.

May 23, 1996 Two thousand high school students walk out and march to City Hall, demanding the city return money it cut from education. Philly's schools have been ruled by a judge to be segregated and unequal, with the 134 schools that are overwhelmingly Black and Latinx getting fewer resources, experienced teachers and special programs, according to the *Philadelphia Public School Notebook*.

Dec 22, 2001 Despite daily protests by high school students, the state of Pennsylvania takes over Philadelphia's public schools and creates the five-member School Reform Commission (SRC) to run the school district. The state has just paid \$2.7 million to Edison—a private, for-profit company—for a study that recommends eliminating jobs and increasing class sizes to save money. Then it turns over management of 20 schools to Edison. Only massive protests led by the Philly Student Union and Youth United for Change stop the state's plan to let Edison manage the entire school district, according to the *Notebook* and *City Paper*.

2008 The SRC takes back six of the 38 Philly schools it had privatized, the *Washington Post* reports, because the six schools have not im-

proved compared to schools managed by the school district. Four of these had been under Edison's control. The SRC puts 12 other Edison schools on one-year probation, demanding they show significant improvement.

February 2011 The SRC hires Boston Consulting Group (BCG), which recommends closing 64 schools within five years, expanding privately run charter schools, major union concessions, and reorganizing schools into independently managed "networks." Students protest inside SRC meetings, and the SRC delays its vote on the plan. Later, the school district announces it is no longer considering BCG's recommendations, according to the Philly Student Union.

2011-2012 school year Pennsylvania cuts \$860 million from Philly's schools, which means \$410 per student, according to *The Nation*. In turn, 1,600 teachers and 2,100 other staff are lost. Some class sizes increase to 40 or even 60 students, PBS Newshour reports. Students in the Furness High School chapter of the Philly Student Union successfully organize to keep their high school from being closed.

2012 The SRC finds money for eight new charter schools, despite concerns about previous charters accused of fraud, corruption, and using secretive methods to exclude students who may not perform well on standardized tests, as reported by the *Notebook* and WHY NewsWorks. Charters are exempt from the city's

union contract rules.

December 2012 A dozen students enter a Wells Fargo branch and sit down for class, occupying the space as a teacher reveals how the bank's bad swap deals swindled Philly schools out of millions. After the financial crash in 2008, the U.S. government bailed out major banks to save them from the debts caused by their risky financial practices. But our schools were forced to pay their debt to the banks, including Wells Fargo. Video of the teach-in can be viewed at [youtube.com/watch?v=AiWHgMprVM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiWHgMprVM).

2013 The SRC closes 24 district-run (non-charter) schools, mostly in Black and Brown neighborhoods, to save money. The final decision is made in an auditorium full of outraged students and community members, with hundreds protesting outside and 18 arrested for blocking the auditorium's doors to SRC members, as reported by the *Notebook*.

May 2013 Hundreds of high school students walk out Tuesday, May 7 after the SRC votes to remove funding for all arts, music and sports and even more teachers, nurses, librarians and counselors from the schools, to save \$304 million, as reported by *The Nation* and *The New York Times*. By Thursday, the Philly Student Union and Youth United for Change have joined in, and 1,000 students take the streets. Thousands walk out on May 17, marching and shutting down traffic from school district headquarters to City Hall, NBC Philadelphia reports.

October 2014 Mayor Nutter blames teachers' health benefits for the budget crisis, and the SRC revokes the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers' contract. While the PFT clings to a strategy of offering concessions, relying on the courts, and refusing to mobilize its members, hundreds of students at Creative and Performing Arts high school and Science Leadership Academy walk out in defense of their teachers, the World Socialist Web Site reports.

2015 Philadelphia voters overwhelmingly approve a non-binding referendum to abolish the SRC, the *Philadelphia Tribune* reports.

2017 Major banks continue to take 10% of the school district's budget, according to WHY NewsWorks and Our City Our Schools. Edison founder Chris Whittle continues to live on an estate in East Hampton, which is listed as the seventh most expensive home in the country, at \$140 million, *27east.com* reports.

August 2017 Parents and other members of the Our City Our Schools coalition demand the SRC disband itself; Mayor Kenney's staff had promised a timeline for abolishing the SRC but later backtracked, the *Notebook* reports. ❖



Students walk out to defend their teachers' union benefits, October 2014.

PHOTO BY HARVEY FINKLE

Is grad school supposed to be miserable?

TUGSA fights for livable wages and benefits

by Ben Curtright

“Have you heard of RCM?” says Matt Ford, Director of Community Outreach for the Temple University Graduate Student Association (TUGSA). Ford is a Ph.D student in sociology and is in his early thirties; he has a walnut-brown beard and taps his foot slightly when he gets excited, which he is as he’s explaining the budgetary concerns Temple University are using to pressure TUGSA ahead of their upcoming contract negotiation. His blue backpack, half-open on the table in front of him, is fuller than you’d expect, considering that fall semester is still two weeks away. We are sitting at a picnic table outside Gladfelter Hall in the shade of an overhanging walkway. It is Thursday, August 17.

“Responsibility Centered Management,” he says. “It’s, if George Orwell wanted to make a joke about neoliberalism.” Before RCM was implemented at Temple University in 2014, university funding was more or less centralized, with each college or department contributing tuition collected to a general ‘tub’ that, along with state subsidies, would be distributed to cover the operating costs of the various schools. “From each according to his ability,” as Marx wrote in 1875; “to each according to his needs.”

RCM decentralizes the university budget, requiring instead that each college or program balance its own budget under threat of forced cuts. In a 1997 issue of *Thought & Action*, Temple Professor of Physics Leroy W. Dubeck predicted that RCM would depress salaries, encourage the use of more part-time faculty, and adversely affect the quality of instruction, all in the name of lowering costs. Twenty years on, liberal arts colleges have been, of course, the hardest hit.

“You have departments that don’t have a ton of students having to do things like not accept any new grad students, or cut funding, or eliminate tenure positions,” says Ford. “And the business school looks like Elysium where all the rich people live in the space station because they have so much money. It creates this unfair distribution of resources, but also the need to gather them in any way possible. It creates this tension that is in every department throughout the university.”

You also have, at Temple, 51 percent of instructors employed as adjuncts on tenuous six-month contracts without benefits; you have a dwindling number of full-time professors making average salaries of \$84,303 while adjuncts are paid, at Temple, \$3,900 per class; and you have hundreds of graduate students providing the cheap labor (Temple paid arts and humanities TAs a stipend of \$16,927 in 2016-17; according to MIT, a living wage for a single adult in Philadelphia County is \$24,346) that the university relies on to survive.

Broadly speaking, public universities nationwide are facing a crisis of funding. State legislatures, irrespective of partisan alignment, responded to the 2008 financial crisis by eagerly chipping away at education budgets; under Governors Ed Rendell (D) and Tom Corbett (R), state funding per public college student fell 33 percent and average tuition rose 19 percent (\$2,202) between 2007-08 and 2015-16 according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (a Washington-based think tank run by Carter-era Democrats, for whatever that’s worth). More money is needed; Democratic Governor Tom Wolf responded in 2017 by flat-funding university appropriations, despite desperate pleas from Pennsylvania’s public universities for more money.

Universities have responded by rejecting, in a manner familiar to gig-economy participants across industries, the idea that they should be responsible for ‘employing’ anyone at all. Tenured positions go unfilled as full-time instructors remain off tenure track. Adjuncts work on semester-long contracts in the name of ‘flexibility.’ And graduate students, who of course work for and are paid by the university, must continually, as proposed grad student labor union Graduate Employees Together—University of Pennsylvania have struggled to do over the past year, reassert that they are employees of the university, with the right to form a union and demand benefits. Pending elections and a National Labor Relations Board hearing, GET-UP hope to unionize Penn graduate students this fall; Temple’s graduate student workers have been represented by TUGSA since 1997 and were formally recognized in 2001.

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To be a graduate student, especially in the humanities, is to be caught in this terrifying double bind: the unique opportunity to pursue one’s intellectual interests while supported by the resources of the academic institution, whether the market gives a shit about those interests or not, comes only as that institution is hollowed out by neoliberal austerity policies, and only with the demand that you, the student, contribute to the driving-down of compensation by selling your labor to the university below market rate.

Though, as Ford reminds me, things used to be worse.

“Before TUGSA existed,” he says, “our health insurance was a \$400 credit per year, and I’m pretty sure it was only for catastrophes. Like, if you break your leg, they give you \$400. Now, we have health insurance, we have a monthly subsidy that’s over \$500, and that’s gone up since the first contract. The school ac-

tually uses health insurance as a recruitment tool now,” he says as he stubs out his cigarette in a blocky concrete ashtray. “When I got accepted, they sent me an email, like, ‘We will provide you with health insurance!’” Ford laughs. “But they don’t say, ‘By the way, we would prefer not to.’”

He pauses as a siren blares somewhere in the distance. Campus, in the absence of students, has been otherwise quiet, apart from the faraway clank of construction machinery on the site of Temple’s new \$170 million library.

“This is a little theory that I have,” he continues. “I think there’s this prevailing notion that grad school is supposed to suck. Like it’s supposed to be miserable and broke and sleepless.”

“And then there’s this thing in neoliberalism, this idea that we need to take these baby steps and that everything is incremental. That we need to treat compromise as a goal rather than a tactic. That we need to take a step back and be on the defensive constantly.”

“Because of the despair that comes from that situation and just seeing it every fucking day, I’ve gotten this idea that I need to try and focus more on local things. And that’s TUGSA, and that’s the Philly community, and that’s helping in any other ways that I can.”

Over the 2017-2018 academic year, TUGSA is hoping to expand its active membership. While all Temple graduate students are part of its bargaining unit, student workers interested in TUGSA membership have to actively sign up to pay dues. TUGSA’s usual meetings are held bimonthly, and it holds issues-related rallies, the next of which is on Oct. 23. TUGSA also hopes to expand through a series of informal social events, including a Quizzo series at the end of September and a kickball game in South Philly on Oct. 29. Ford hopes these gatherings will help to create and maintain a diverse community of graduate students who would otherwise have few opportunities to interact interdepartmentally.

Materially, a larger membership bloc improves TUGSA’s negotiating position as they fight to expand benefits, improve working conditions, and eliminate pay disparity for graduate workers in different departments. Socially, though, unions like TUGSA and GET-UP provide something simpler: an opportunity to get to know people you’d never meet otherwise. Unions fight against the atomization of American universities by providing a gathering-space for student workers from radically different fields to build relationships on the basis of solidarity and common class interest.

“That’s what TUGSA can offer people,” says Ford. “A chance to be a part of something university-wide that has a material effect on their present and their future.” 🇺🇸

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was dismissed in July 2016. The university's administrative crisis complicated its ambitious stadium plans, a situation the Stompers' mass resistance had pushed to a breaking point.

The incoming president, Richard Englert, was thrown into a tumultuous situation. Ultimately, the stadium plans were delayed, the university's propaganda effort was cooled down, and Englert met with community leaders involved with Stadium Stompers as a formal gesture of conciliation on the part of the beleaguered administration. The Stompers astutely recognize that these positive developments in the struggle are nothing more than a new public relations strategy on the part of a university that is still fundamentally committed to its project of gentrification. Rather than backing down as the struggle cools in intensity, the Stompers aim for an increasing consolidation of their coalition, with a commitment to the reality of a long-term struggle against a capitalist institution that could never be reformed overnight.

rather than backing down as the struggle cools in intensity, the Stompers aim for an increasing consolidation of their coalition

The role of public universities under capitalism

Under capitalism, learning is never as simple as an honest relation between teacher and student in search of knowledge for its own sake. When a society is built out of the commodification of as many things as possible, so that the owners of the private property used to produce the commodities can get richer and richer, no social institution can escape the logic of capital without a commitment to revolutionary politics. Establish-

ment universities are no exception to this rule. In fact, they have become an increasingly central support for the capitalist economy as the development of technology has made knowledge work more and more important for the accumulation of capital.

The state, as the armed repressive detachment of society through which the capitalist class exercises its political domination over the working class, can never get its hands off the university either. Temple University is a great example of this duality. It is both an institution designed for the realization of private capitalist profit and a state-funded "instrumentality of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania," to put it in the official legal terms. In the contemporary "neoliberal" order, the relentless expansion of STEM ("science, technology, engineering and mathematics") and business programs over and above the humanities is transparently portrayed as a pragmatic decision about available professional employment and capitalist profit-seeking. The myth of disinterested scientific objectivity is being exposed as more mythical than ever, as the reality of the university as a capitalist ideological state apparatus becomes increasingly obvious.

To the Stadium Stompers, this social order is unacceptable. They look forward to the ultimate defeat of the stadium plans, but even more promising than that is the radical mass struggle that has sprung up to win victories against a behemoth institution with the full force of organized capital behind it. Here's hoping the masses keep on fighting, and maintain this special organization into a future that demands a revolutionary alternative to capitalism. ✦



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 7

12pm

Socialists Physical Self Defense Training Session 1

PHILLY SELF DEFENSE

1333 N. FRONT

October 8

12pm

Action Planning Workshop

2341 N. FRONT

October 11

6:30pm

Philadelphia Tenants Union Membership Meeting

CHURCH OF THE ADVOCATE

1801 W DIAMOND

October 14

1pm

Philly Socialists General Assembly

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA

Cada miércoles

4:30pm

Clases de Ingles GRATIS

LUCIEN E. BLACKWELL LIBRARY

52ND AND SANSOM

Cada sábado

3:15pm

Clases de Ingles GRATIS

LUCIEN E. BLACKWELL LIBRARY

52ND AND SANSOM

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