



COVID-19:

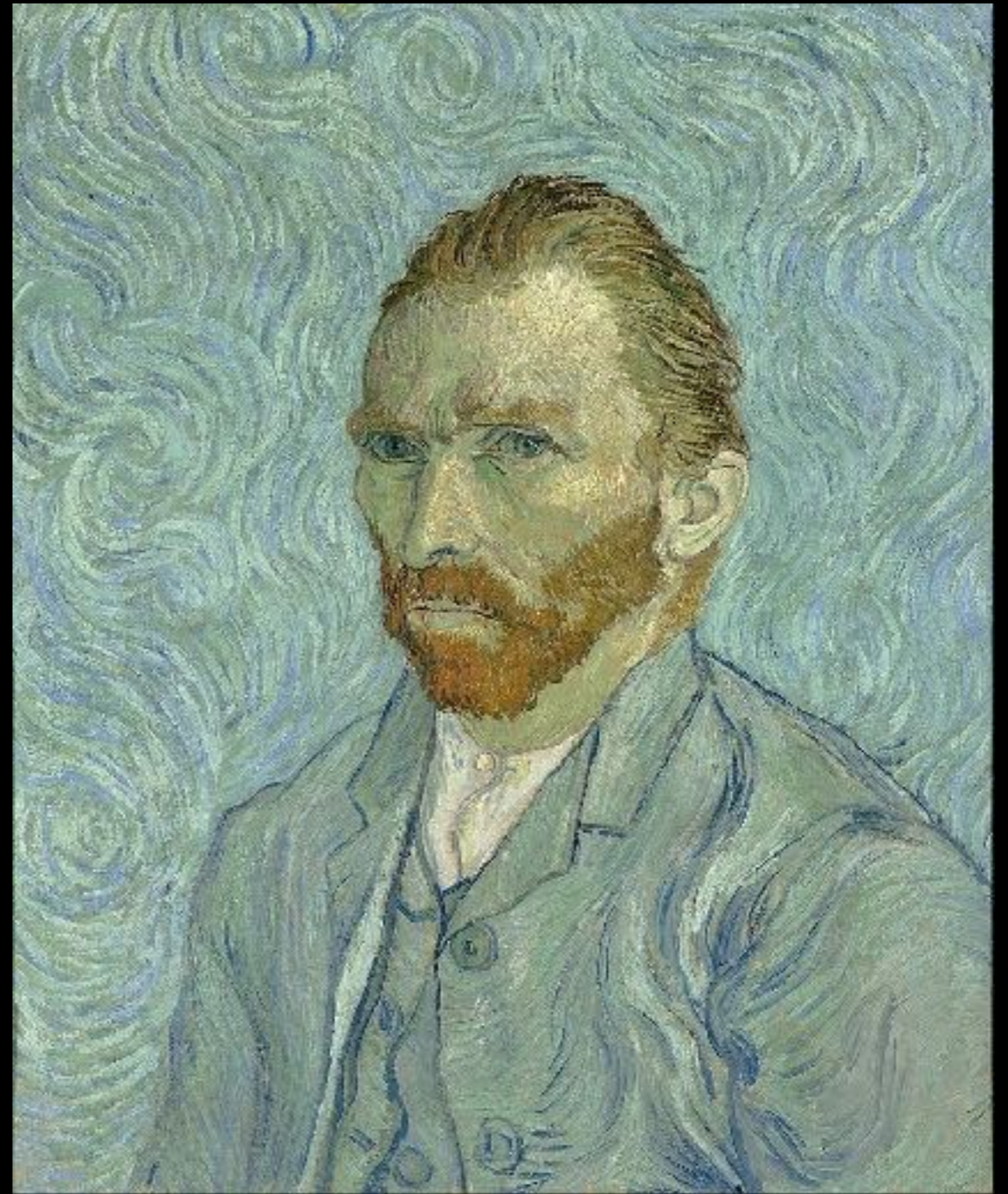
Moving the narrative -
and the struggle -
upstream

Howard Waitzkin

IIPPE
September 19, 2021

Declare your disabilities
at the beginning!!!







*They'll soon discover I'm
a FRAUD!*

11 Strategies to Overcome IMPOSTER SYNDROME

projectbliss.net

Questions

- What are the upstream causes of COVID-19 and (all) similar epidemics/pandemics, and how can they be changed?
- What is the meaning of revolutionary transformation in the pandemic era?

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- We struggle to lessen the many downstream effects of COVID-19, through dangerous and sometimes heroic efforts.
- We also must try to maintain a clear and relentless focus upstream on the root causes of the pandemic.

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Clarity about the upstream causes rarely emerges in current discussions of the pandemic:
- scientific and public health communities - limited
- hardly ever from institutions on which we rely:
 - the World Health Organization (WHO)
 - U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
 - Pan American Health Organization
 - Gates Foundation

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

As opposed to reductionist, very profitable, downstream technical interventions like vaccines and medications



Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Deemphasis on Agriculture in Public Health
 - Partly due to financial support
 - Chronic budgetary crisis of UN and WHO
 - Lower proportion of WHO's budget from member countries

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Deemphasis on Agriculture in Public Health

- As just one example:
 - Annual operating program budget of WHO for the whole world:
 - About \$4.4 billion
 - Operating budget of a large medical center in the USA: New York Presbyterian Hospital:
 - About \$8 billion^{11,12}

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

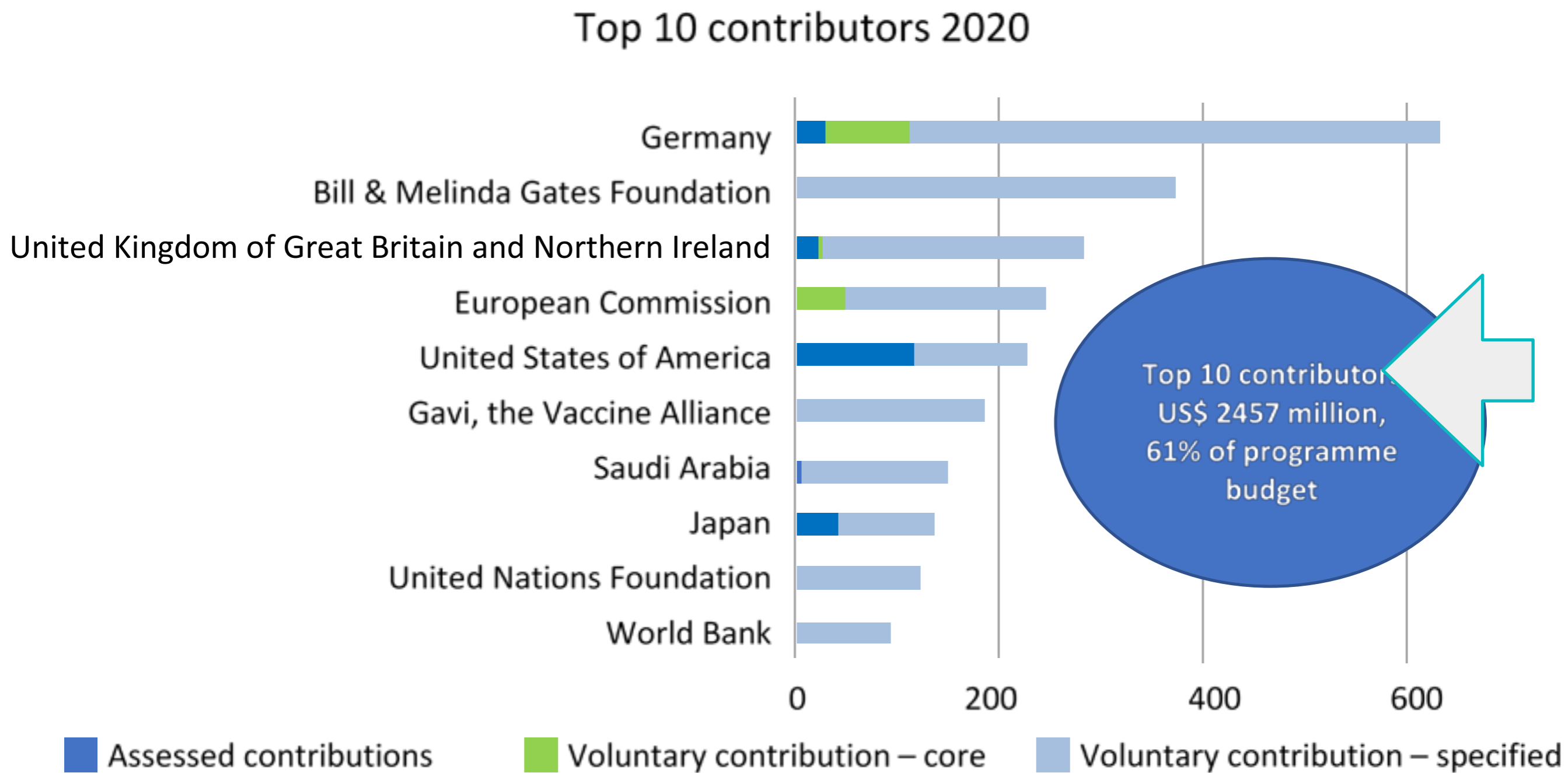
- Deemphasis on Agriculture in Public Health
 - Into the financial crisis of international health institutions have stepped:
 - World Bank
 - International Monetary Fund
 - Gates Foundation
 - Other agencies of “philanthrocapitalism.”
 - Their financial priorities and ideologies dominate the policies and practices of WHO and its affiliated organizations worldwide.

Audited Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2020



Fig. 5. Top 10 contributors to WHO for 2020, assessed and voluntary contributions (US\$ millions)

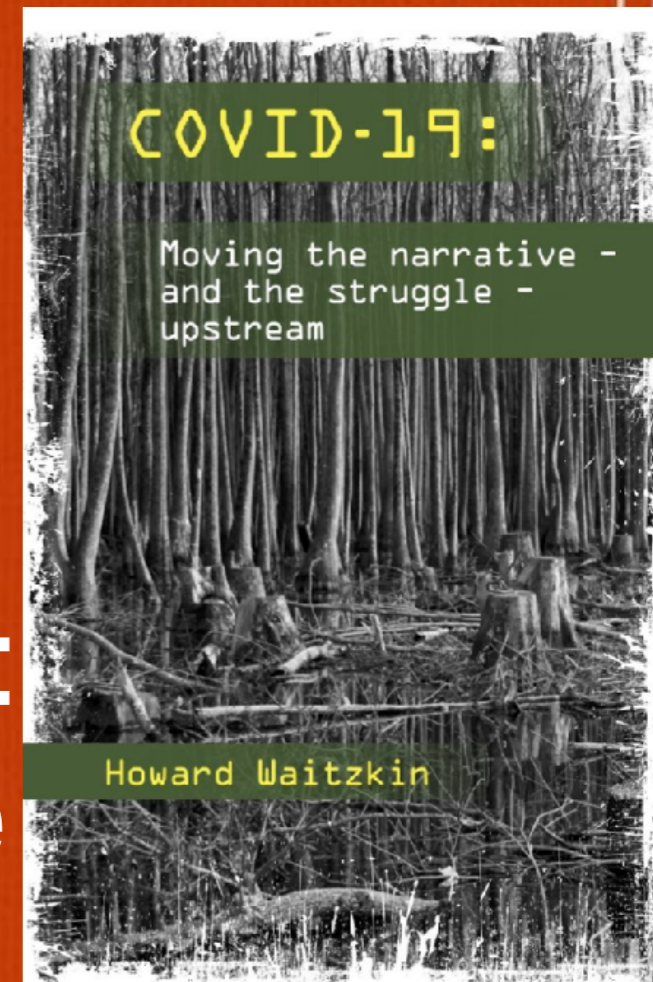


Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Due to the pandemic's magnitude, one would expect that the upstream causes would be crystal-clear for all to see, so we could address them directly, but amazingly this is not the case.

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Upstream Causes in Agriculture
 - This pandemic and every other important emerging viral epidemic in the recent past and predictably into the future come from the same upstream causes:
 - capitalist industrial agriculture
 - destruction of natural habitat
 - production of meat



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Robert G. Wallace

Farming Human Pathogens

Ecological Resilience and Evolutionary Process

 Springer

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DEAD EPIDEMIOLOGISTS

On the origins of COVID-19

ROB WALLACE

Crafting in real time a political-economic ecology of pandemics
in the age of climate change and agribusiness.

– Edgar Rivera Colón, co-author of
Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Natural forest habitat previously provided ecological control for microbes such as SARS-CoV-2 and their hosts, such as bats.
- Clearing habitat for industrial agriculture emerged as China “liberalized” after Mao Zedong and joined the capitalist world economic system.

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Similar zoonotic sources of transmission from destroyed habitats:
 - China: Prior severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS -1)
 - Africa: Ebola
 - Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere: Zika
 - Africa: HIV

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Capitalist industrial production of meat
 - Especially for pigs and chickens but also other species
 - Unsanitary, dangerous factory conditions with little regulatory oversight and control

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow



Smithfield Farms logo at the time of the swine flu pandemic of 2009, <https://www.abolitionistapproach.com/media/links/p586/article.pdf>



Partial view of Smithfield Farms meat processing facility, Smithfield, Virginia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smithfield_Foods#/media/File:Smithfield_Foods_processing_plant_from_Ivy_Hill_Cemetery.jpg

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Capitalist industrial production of meat



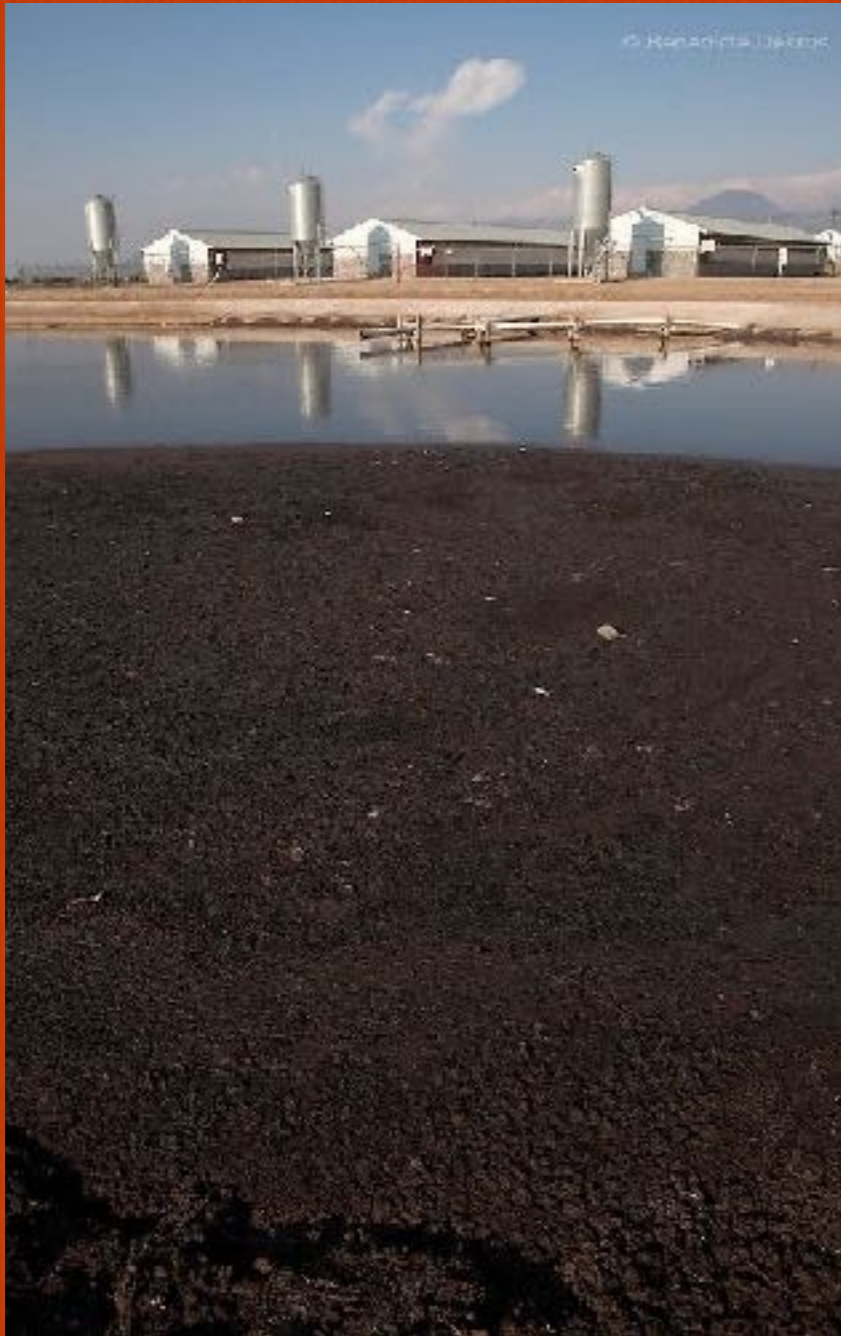
Images from factory farms during the swine flu epidemic, 2009. <http://veggierevolution.blogspot.com/2009/04/smithfield-blamed-for-swine-flu-by.html>, http://i.cdn.turner.com/ireport/sm/prod/2009/05/01/WE00251756/491621/Anon1241201423-SmithfieldHogFarmsIsThisUSCompany540750_lg.jpg



Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Capitalist industrial production of meat
- Swine flu epidemic of 2009
 - Began within one mile of Smithfield Foods' notorious industrial pig farm operation in a rural area of Veracruz state in Mexico.
 - Smithfield Foods had outsourced this operation from the USA partly to avoid occupational and environmental cleanup requirements.

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow



Smithfield Farms subsidiary in Veracruz state, Mexico, during the swine flu epidemic of 2009, showing lagoon where unprocessed waste products were dumped. <https://benedictedesrus.photoshelter.com/image/I0000b7mz22vAVoM>, <http://litbrit.blogspot.com/2009/04/swine-flu-smithfield-foods-statement-vs.html>

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- Swine flu epidemic of 2009
 - Mexican public health authorities and investigators reported this epidemiological association between swine flu and capitalist industrial agriculture.
 - But CDC, WHO, and all other international health organizations pursued reductionist strategies like a vaccine, rather than confront radical change in the meat processing industry.

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- COVID-19 epidemic of 2020
 - Hong Kong-based investment corporation, WH Group Ltd, had acquired Smithfield Foods in 2013.
 - In 2018 Smithfield executives in Virginia welcomed the ongoing epidemic of African swine fever because a reduced global supply of pork would lead to major increases in prices and profitability for the corporation.

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- COVID-19 epidemic of 2020
 - Smithfield executives reassured U.S. consumers that the corporation did not import pork from China but instead exported U.S. pork to China, where prices were higher.
 - A Smithfield pork processing plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota became one of the largest COVID-19 hotspots in the United States.

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- COVID-19 epidemic of 2020
 - Rapid spread of the infection to workers because of similar unsanitary working conditions threatened to close other meat-producing plants as well.
 - An order by President Trump required Smithfield and other meat industry workers to work as essential work, although most production went to China.

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- **Better Ways to Produce Food**

- Is there an alternative to capitalist industrial agriculture?

- **YES!!!**

- Around the world, often against resistance from corporations and governments, farmers are returning to peasant/“smallholder” agricultural practices.

- A whole body of research has shown such practices are not only safer than capitalist agriculture but actually more efficient and productive as well.

Earthscan Food and Agriculture

earthscan
from Routledge

Jan Douwe van der Ploeg

The New Peasantries

Rural Development in
Times of Globalization
Second edition

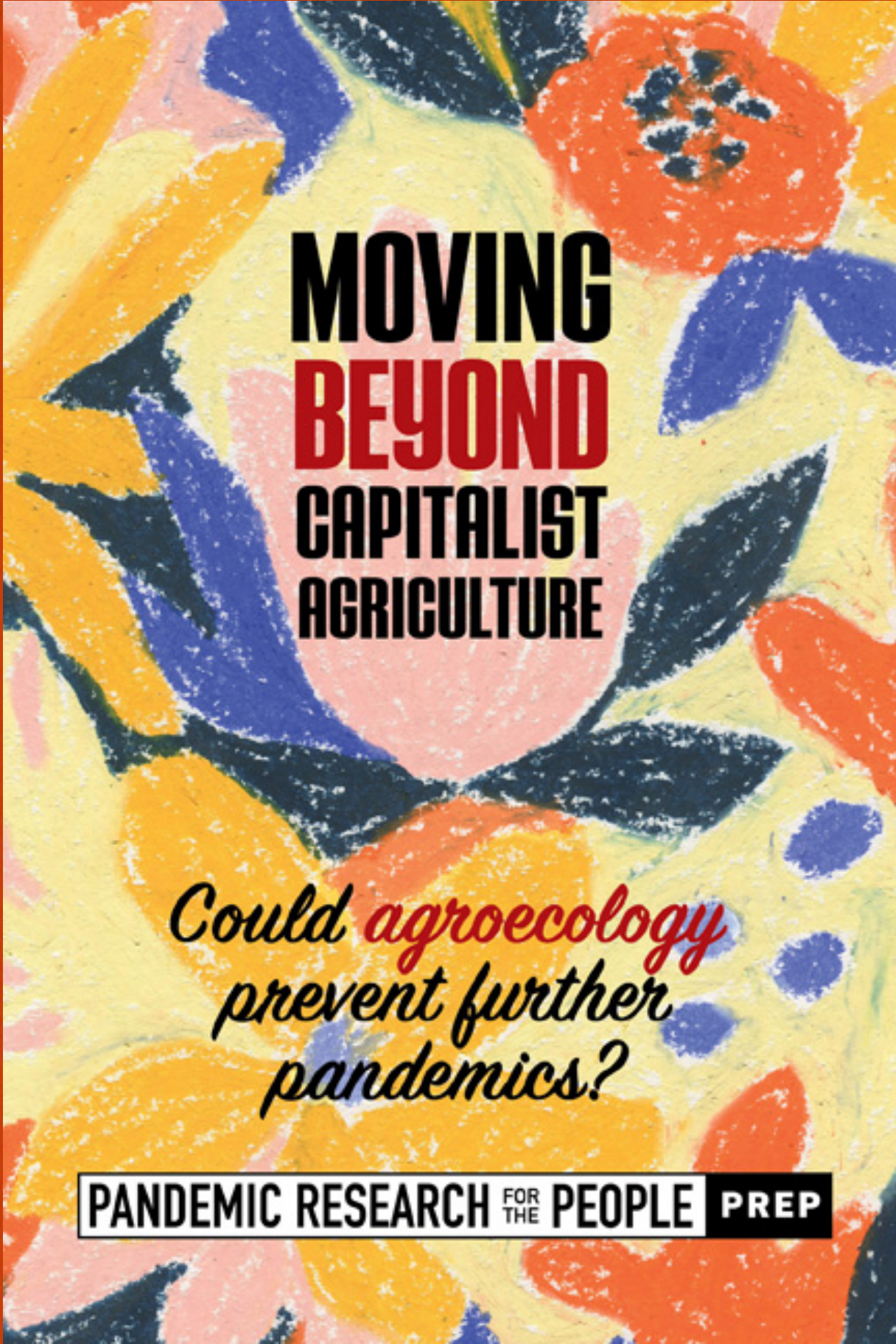


An abstract artwork featuring bold, thick black outlines and vibrant colors including yellow, orange, blue, and pink. The shapes are organic and somewhat geometric, creating a dynamic and textured composition. The artwork is set against a solid orange background.

Abolitionist Agroecology

***Food Sovereignty
and
Pandemic
Prevention***

Maywa Montenegro de Wit



**MOVING
BEYOND
CAPITALIST
AGRICULTURE**

*Could agroecology
prevent further
pandemics?*

PANDEMIC RESEARCH FOR THE PEOPLE **PREP**

Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- **Better Ways to Produce Food**
 - Millions of people worldwide already are making this transition, often because they/we see no other choice.
 - Capitalist agriculture – with its tendency to overproduce and even destroy surplus food while hunger and food insecurity worsen – is ill suited to feed the world's peoples.

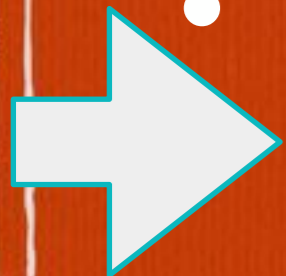
Confronting the Upstream Causes of COVID-19 and Other Epidemics to Follow

- **Better Ways to Produce Food**

- Changing the upstream causes of epidemics like COVID-19 and others yet to come becomes a key scientific and practical priority, considering the future of humanity and other inhabitants of the planet.
- If that transformation doesn't happen, we can expect even more devastating pandemics, coming from the same upstream causes.

Questions

- √ What are the upstream causes of COVID-19 and (all) similar epidemics/pandemics, and how can they be changed?
- What is the meaning of revolutionary transformation in the pandemic era?



Questions

- What is the meaning of revolutionary transformation in the pandemic era?

LISTENER BEWARE:
DISCRETION ADVISED!!

TIME FOR A BATHROOM BREAK?
OR A RECREATIONAL
BEVERAGE??

Rinky-Dink Revolution

- One path among others
- Not “the truth”

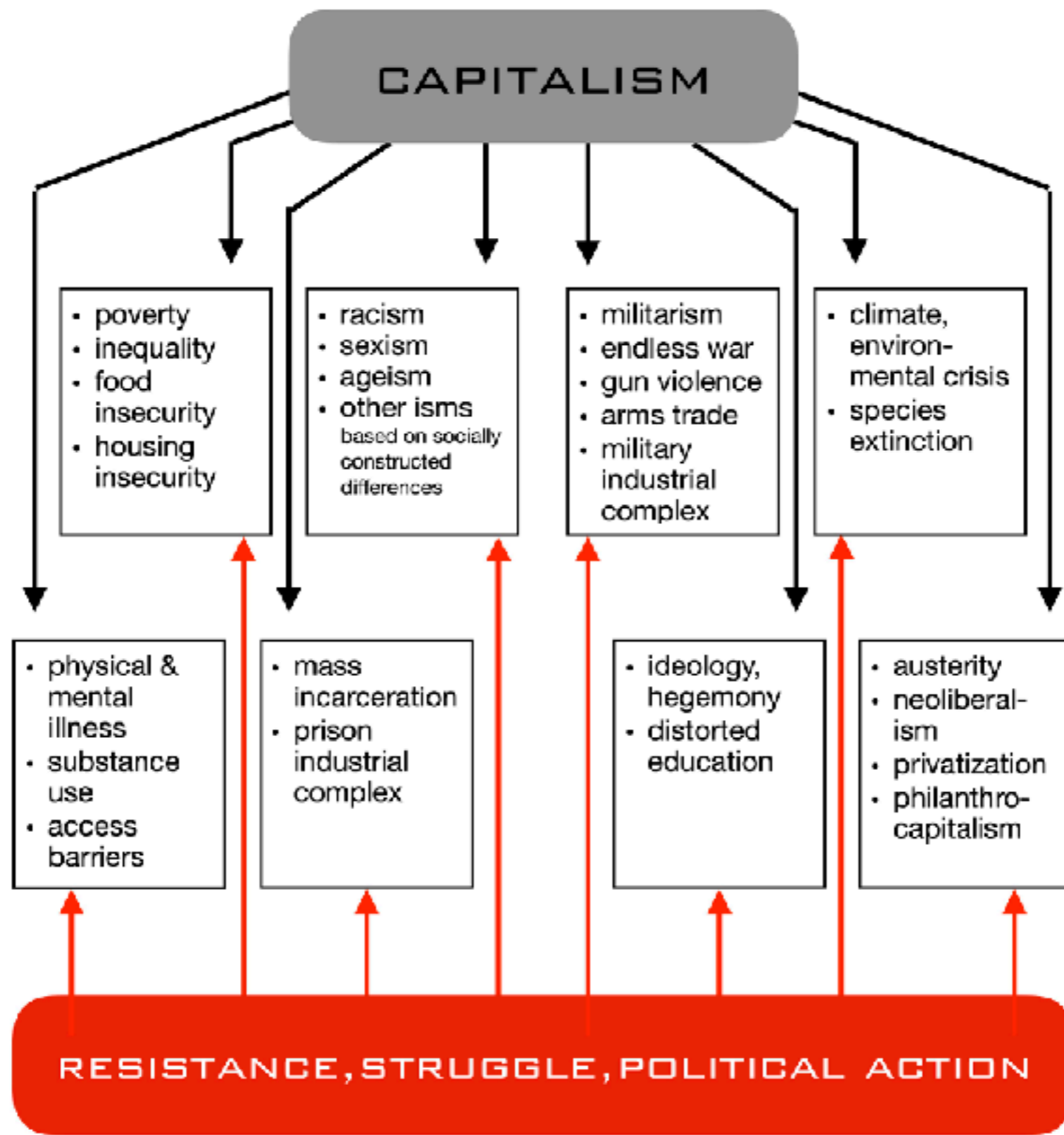


Figure 1. Peculiar Ways of Struggling to Improve Our Key Problems Without Confronting Capitalism

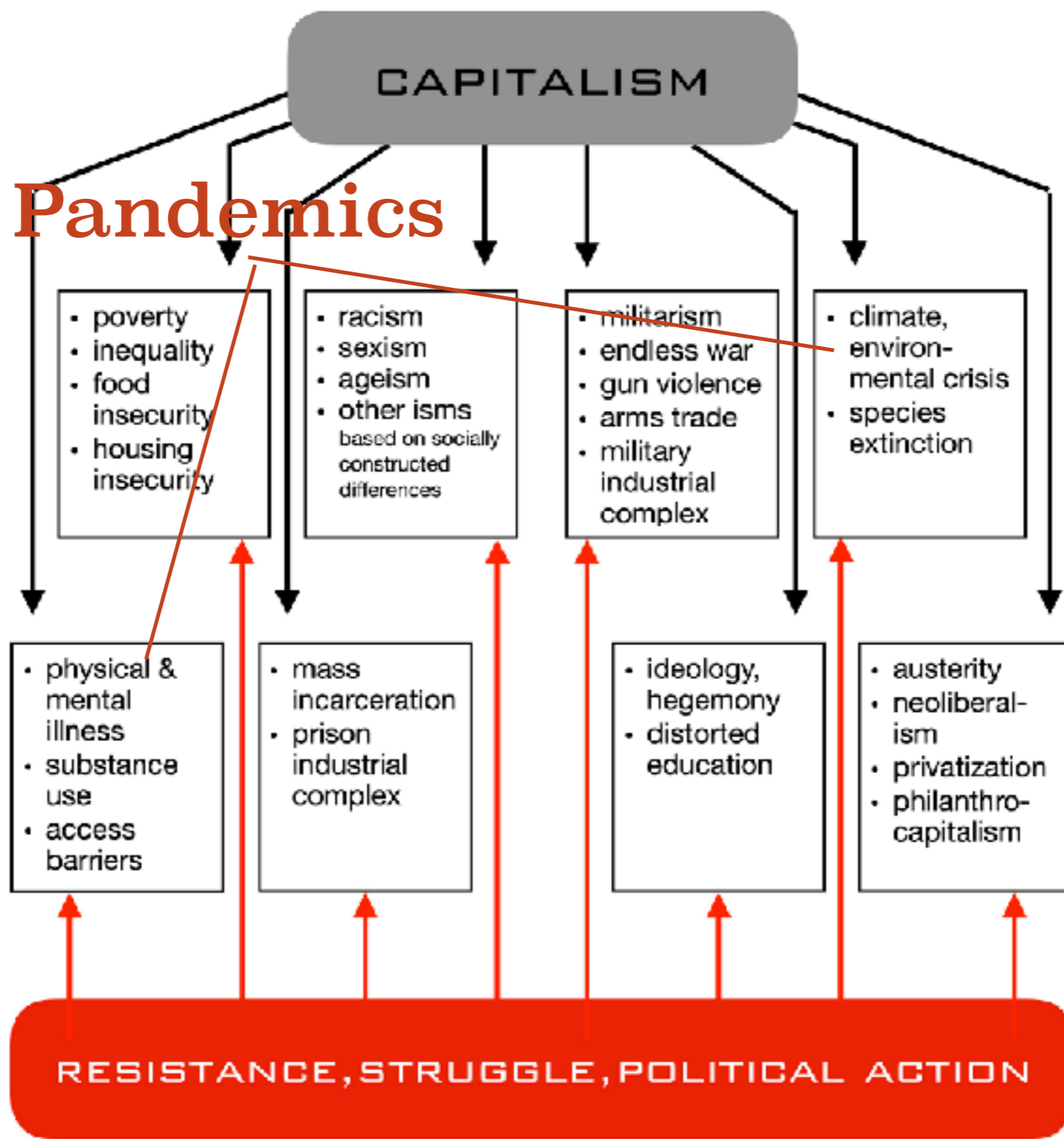


Figure 1. Peculiar Ways of Struggling to Improve Our Key Problems Without Confronting Capitalism



**RINKY-
DINK
REVOLUTION**



Moving Beyond
Capitalism by
Withholding Consent,
Creative Constructions,
and Creative
Destructions



Howard Waitzkin


This pamphlet tackles the question: how do we get from A to B, capitalism to post-capitalism? **Rinky-dink revolution** involves actions and inactions that are easy, safe, mundane, unglamorous, and feasible within every person's life.

Howard Waitzkin presents a clear, straightforward intervention for revolutionary change in the global capitalist economic system. He covers much ground, with sophistication, while keeping the argument grounded. His focus on ways to facilitate a challenge to capital and to build further revolutionary transformation is crucial at this historical juncture. The discussion of creative constructions and creative destructions is particularly useful.

— Brett Clark, Professor of Sociology, University of Utah, and author of *The Robbery of Nature: Capitalism and the Ecological Rift*

The end of capitalism is possible. Waitzkin takes us a step further in the creative process for transformation. Through specific examples from organized groups within the United States and abroad, this work constitutes a practical guide for everyone. Waitzkin encourages our creativity for organized, safe acts and omissions to transcend capitalism.

— Nylca J. Muñoz Sosa, lawyer, public health leader, and activist focusing on health justice and decolonization in Puerto Rico



This pamphlet tackles the question: how do we get from A to B, capitalism to post-capitalism? **Rinky-dink revolution** involves actions and inactions that are easy, safe, mundane, unglamorous, and feasible within every person's life.



Vision statement:
**Moving beyond
capitalism—now!**

Howard Waitzkin and Firoze Manji

<https://darajapress.com/categories/moving-beyond-capitalism-now>

HEALTH CARE | ECONOMICS | CURRENT EVENTS | SOCIOLOGY

"It takes courage to challenge core concepts that everyone around you accepts as a given. This book does exactly that."—**SANDRO GALEA**, Dean and Robert A. Knox Professor, School of Public Health, Boston University

"Offers fresh insights into the . . . ties between social justice and the people's health."—**NANCY KRIEGER**, Professor of Social Epidemiology, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health

"Shows how medical care has turned into a privileged field of capital accumulation and super profits at the expense of our health."—**ASA CRISTINA LAURELL**, Former Secretary of Health, Mexico City

"Unravels the deep institutional roots and serious flaws of this failing system."—**NOAM CHOMSKY**, Institute Professor Emeritus, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

"This tour-de-force opens up space to forge new dreams."—**CHARLES BRIGGS**, Alan Dundes Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley

"Provides a valuable vision of how health care could be reorganized to serve the needs of the people of the world."—**CHRISTOPHER CHASE-DUNN**, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, University of California-Riverside

"Indispensable for understanding how we . . . can outflank the capitalists."—**STEVE BROUWER**, author, *Revolutionary Doctors: How Venezuela and Cuba Are Changing the World's Conception of Health Care*

"A must-read, given the capitalist assault on the public's health and well-being."—**JOHN MARCIANO**, Professor Emeritus, SUNY Cortland

"A light bulb for health care workers looking for new directions."—**DAVID G. LEGGE**, People's Health Movement, Australia

"Putting the interests of capital over all other considerations leads to an authentic disaster. It is time for that to change. This book will help end the silence."—**VICENTE NAVARRO**, Professor, Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health

HOWARD WAITZKIN is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of New Mexico and Adjunct Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Illinois. He has been active for years in struggles for national health programs in the United States and Latin America and is the author of *Medicine and Public Health at the End of Empire*, among other books.

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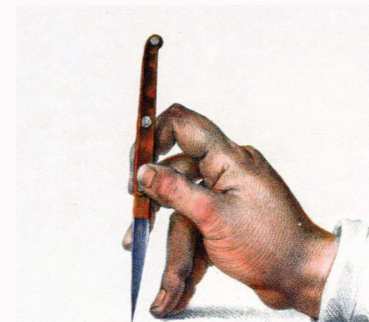
HEALTH CARE UNDER THE KNIFE
Moving Beyond Capitalism for Our Health

HOWARD
WAITZKIN
and the Working
Group on Health
Beyond Capitalism

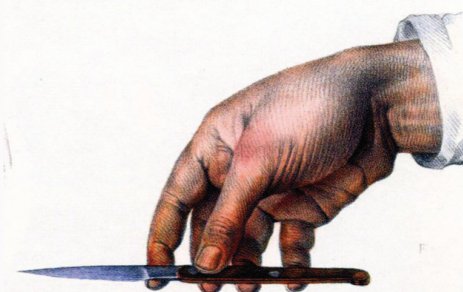


MONTHLY
REVIEW
PRESS

HEALTH CARE UNDER THE KNIFE



Moving Beyond Capitalism for Our Health



HOWARD WAITZKIN
and the Working Group on Health Beyond Capitalism

Social medicine has the power to transform how we understand health and practice medicine. This excellent introduction points to the future, showing how a better understanding of social medicine can actually improve the health of populations.

Sandro Galea, *Dean & Robert A. Knox Professor, Boston University School of Public Health*

This comprehensive book on social medicine provides a hopeful basis for organizing a more humane and democratic global society.

Christopher Chase-Dunn, *Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Director of the Institute for Research on World-Systems at the University of California, Riverside*

The authors ask health workers to grapple with how capitalism, imperialism, income inequality, racism, and sexism have harmed people's health and health care systems – and present revolutionary proposals for imagining and creating a more equitable, post-capitalist, and healthier future.

Nancy Krieger, *Professor of Social Epidemiology, American Cancer Society Clinical Research Professor, Harvard University T. H. Chan School of Public Health*

Social medicine shows that social conditions affect health and illness more than biology does (as in COVID-19), and social change affects the outcomes of health and illness more than health services do. In this critical introduction to social medicine, the authors draw on examples worldwide to show how principles based on solidarity and mutual aid help people construct health-promoting social conditions.

Howard Waitzkin is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of New Mexico and practices internal medicine part time in New Mexico and Illinois. He has worked on social medicine in the United States and Latin America. His prior books include *Health Care under the Knife: Moving beyond Capitalism for Our Health* (2018) and *Medicine and Public Health at the End of Empire* (2011).

Alina Pérez is a community-based physician in New Bedford, Massachusetts. After graduating from the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford, she completed her emergency medicine residency at the Beth Israel Deaconess Harvard-Affiliated Medical Center in Boston. She is pursuing interests in health policy, global health, and social medicine.

Matthew Anderson is Associate Professor in the Department of Family and Social Medicine at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and the Montefiore Residency Program in Social Medicine in the Bronx, New York. He is Founder and Co-editor of the bilingual online journal *Social Medicine/Medicina Social*.

Cover image: © Beatriz Aurora, "A World Where Many Worlds Fit"

SOCIOLOGY / SOCIAL MEDICINE

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SOCIAL MEDICINE AND THE COMING TRANSFORMATION

Howard Waitzkin, Alina Pérez, and Matthew Anderson

Routledge

SOCIAL MEDICINE AND THE COMING TRANSFORMATION

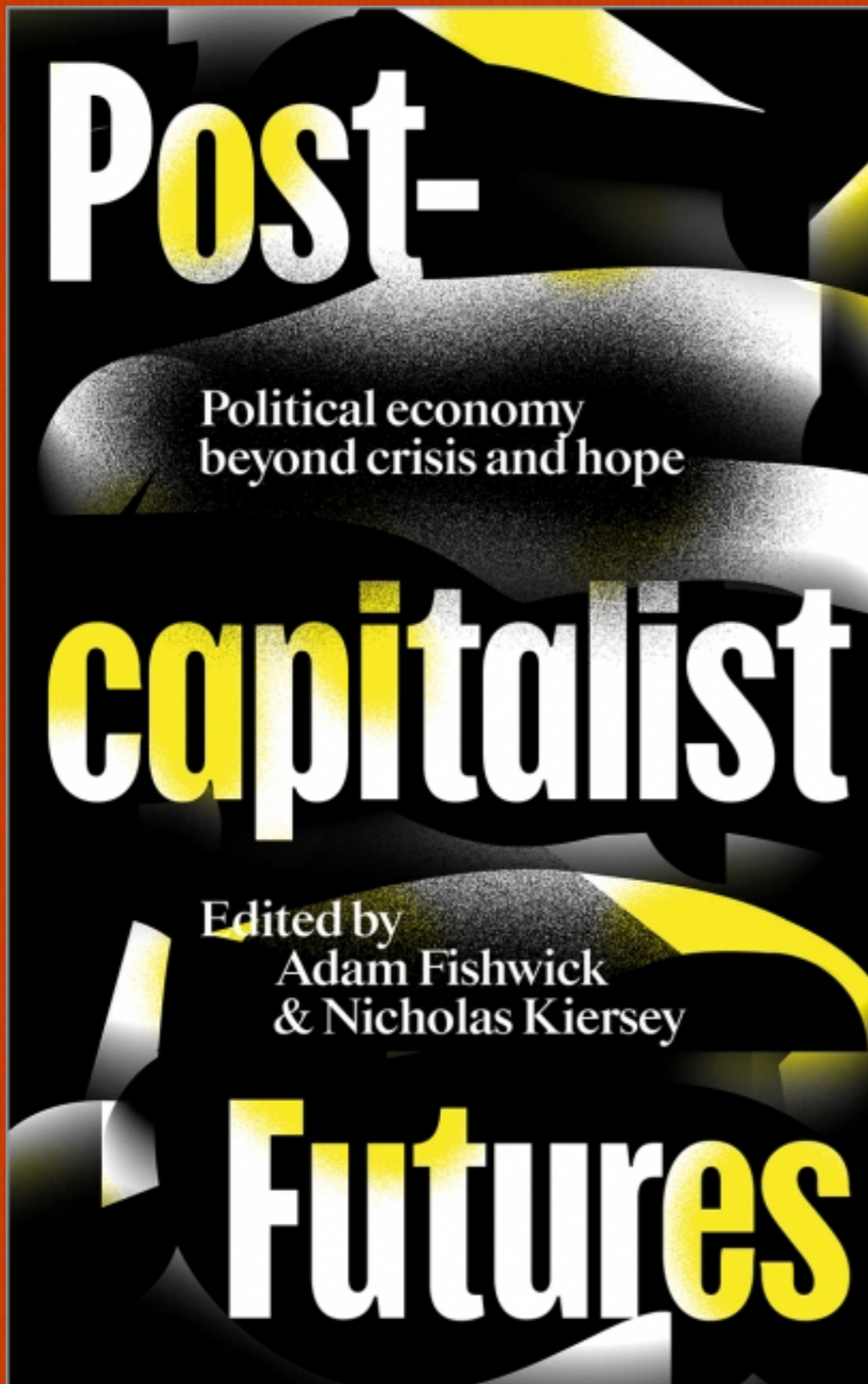
Howard Waitzkin, Alina Pérez, and Matthew Anderson



FREDRIC JAMESON

“It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of our economic system.”

But that is our task.



FREDRIC JAMESON

“It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of our economic system.”
But that is our task.

From A to B

- How to move from A to B, capitalism to post-capitalism, is the question we must answer.
- Critical period of history, when the destructive forces of the capital system threaten the survival of humanity and other forms of life.
- *We can't delay this struggle for future generations.*

From A to B

- Our current historical period contains tremendous dangers:
 - global warming and other environmental catastrophes
 - nuclear war
 - fascism
 - structural racism/ racial capitalism
 - a world based on the deepening exploitation of nature, inequality, repression, and suffering

From A to B

- But the present also contains unprecedented global resistance and social movements that seek to create a world based on:
 - harmony with nature
 - relations of mutual aid
 - decision making by ordinary people about the directions that our societies will take

Observations

Two main observations emerged:

- *First, elections are not the point.*



“If voting changed anything, they’d have made it illegal long ago.”

- Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*

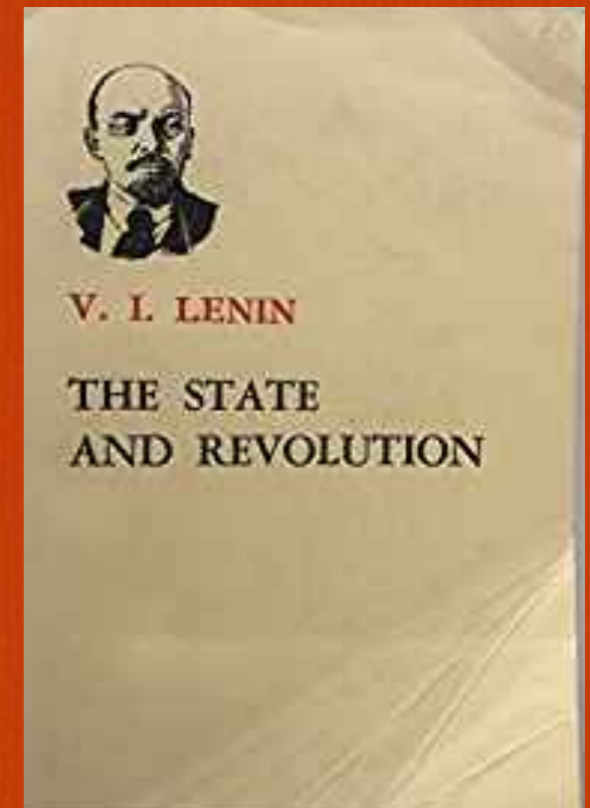
Observations

Two main observations emerged:

- *First, elections are not the point.*

“Every once in a while, the oppressed are allowed to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class will represent them and oppress them.”.

- Karl Marx, quoted by V.I. Lenin,
The State and Revolution



Observations

Two main observations emerged:

- *First, elections are not the point.*
- Possible exception: “dual power”
 - Local, regional
 - Control of local funds
 - Control of police

Observations

Two main observations emerged:

- *First, elections are not the point.*
- *Second, revolution is the point.*

Observations

Two main observations emerged:

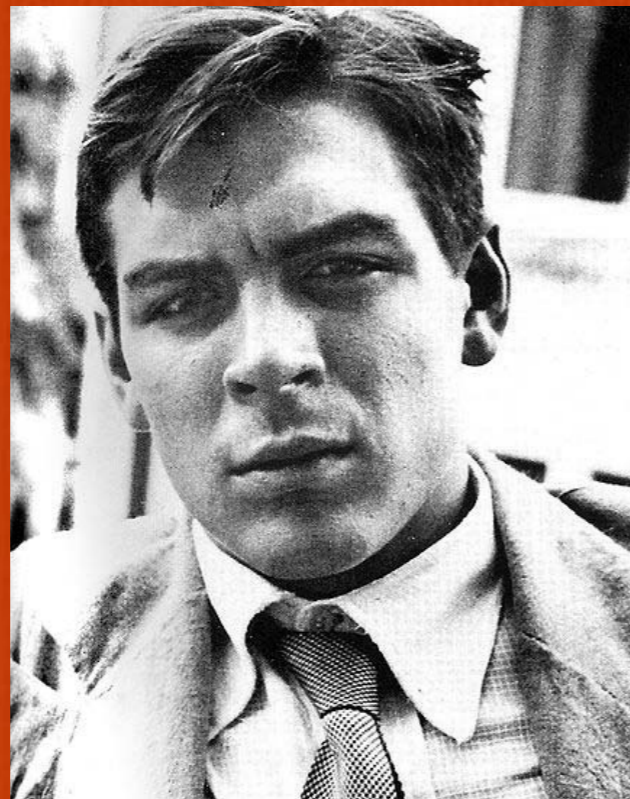
- *Second, revolution is the point.*
 - It is time to move beyond our illusions that electoral politics and reforms of the capitalist state can achieve the revolutionary changes that we know are necessary.
 - So the time for revolution actually has arrived, and it is time to act. But how?

Observations

- The old categories (electoral democracy, working class, left party, revolutionary vanguard, violent takeover of the state, etc.) will not work and may never have worked.
- We need to move creatively towards a new way of communicating about and making revolution.

What Revolution?

- Prior revolutions don't give much guidance for now.
 - Violent revolutions: e.g., Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Angola; bigger predecessors: Russia and China
 - Dr. Ernesto "Che" Guevara
 - Revolutionary medicine: doctor's bag versus the gun



What Revolution?

- Non-violent revolutions: “the peaceful road”
 - Chile
 - Pink tide countries: contradictions of winning electoral control of capitalist state



Some Ways to Make a Revolution in the U.S. and the Global North

- Non-violent/ non-military route
 - Exciting possibilities, but aim is to stop business as usual in the capitalist system
 - 3.5-5% of population
 - Versus huge, peaceful demonstrations with police permits
 - Symbolic politics



Women's March on Washington, 1/2017



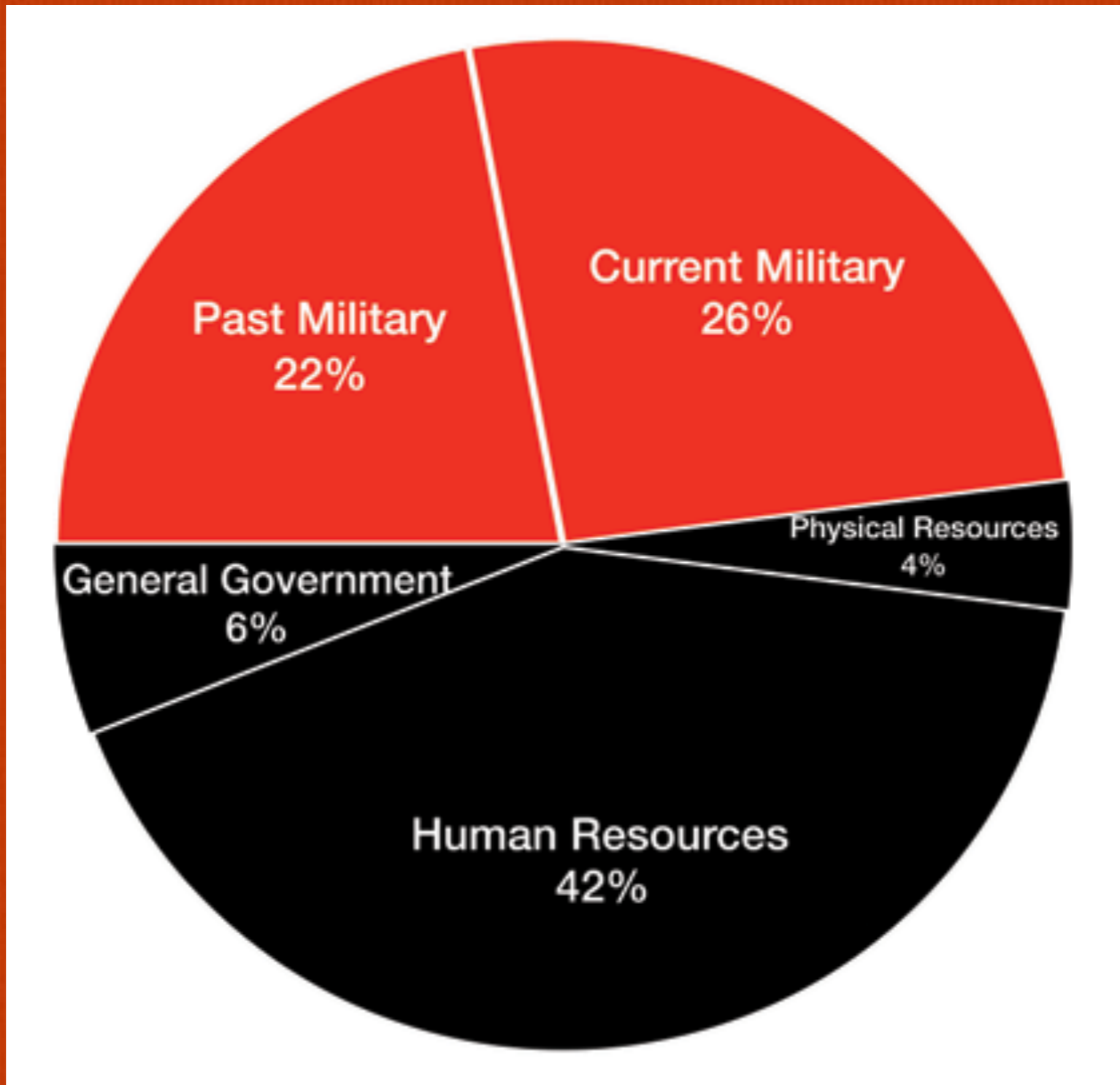
Who are they? Who are we?

- "They" represent less than 1% of the world's population that benefit from global capitalism, do not recognize its adverse effects, and resist change.
- "We" are the millions who want a post-capitalist society that does not destroy mother earth, humanity, and other life forms.

Who are they? Who are we?

- “We” are the main financiers of the capitalist economic system through our consent (Gramsci) and our financial decisions:
 - taxes (50% of income taxes go to the military)
 - investments (savings, retirement accounts, mortgages)
 - purchasing (credit cards, internet)

Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes: U.S. Federal Budget, 2020 Fiscal Year



Source: War Resisters League. For methodology:
https://www.warresisters.org/sites/default/files/images/fy2020pie_chart-low_res_bw.pdf

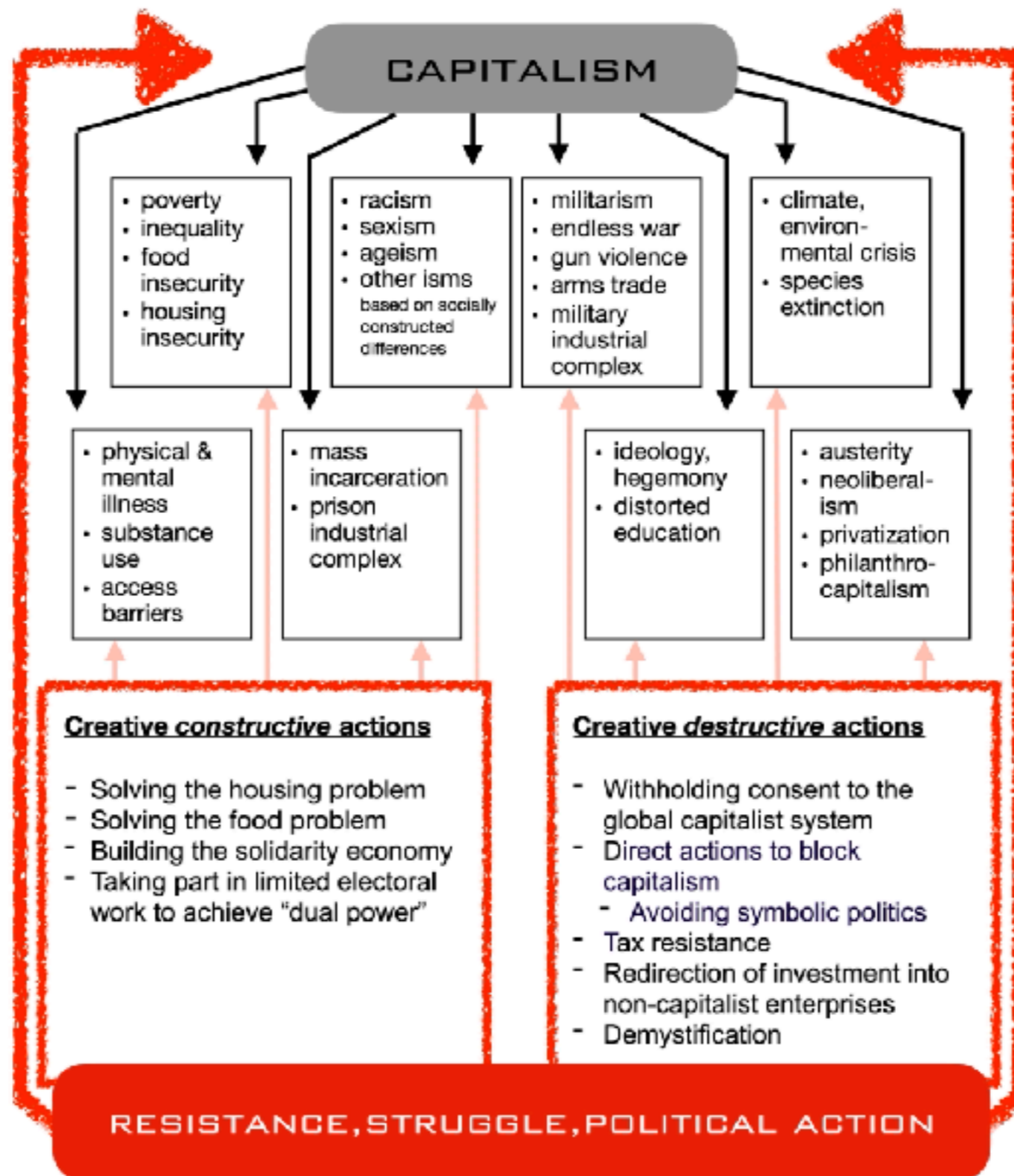


Figure 2. Rinky-Dink Revolution: Struggling to Improve Our Key Problems By Confronting and Moving Beyond Capitalism

CAPITALISM

Creative *constructive* actions

- Solving the housing problem
- Solving the food problem
- Building the solidarity economy
- Taking part in limited electoral work to achieve "dual power"

Creative *destructive* actions

- Withholding consent to the global capitalist system
- Direct actions to block capitalism
 - Avoiding symbolic politics
- Tax resistance
- Redirection of investment into non-capitalist enterprises
- Demystification

RESISTANCE, STRUGGLE, POLITICAL ACTION

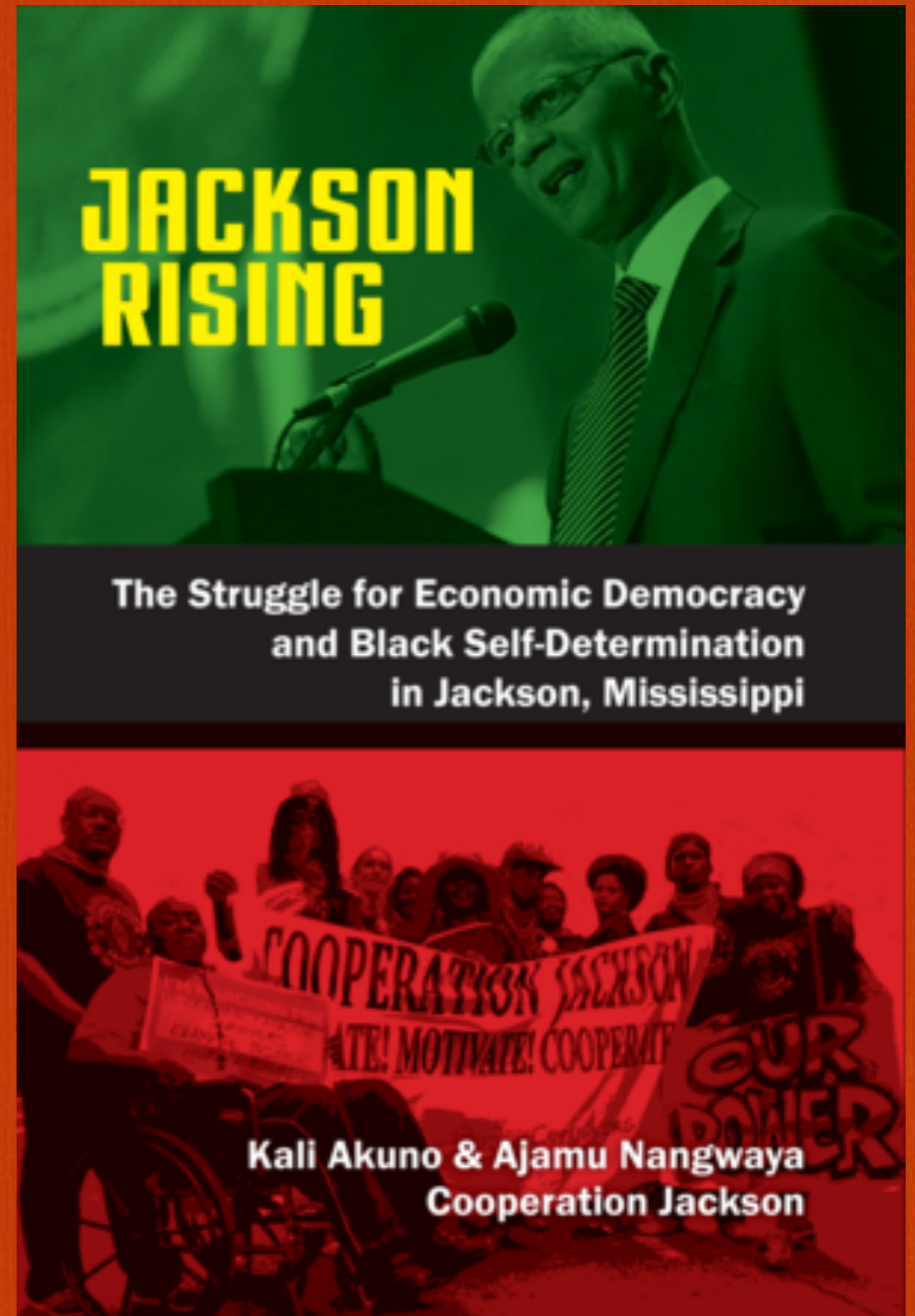
Figure 2a. Rinky-Dink Revolution: Struggling to Improve Our Key Problems By Confronting and Moving Beyond Capitalism

THE SOCIETY THAT WE WANT TO CREATE AND HOW TO GET THERE

- Building the solidarity economy outside capitalism (<https://neweconomy.net>)
 - Cooperation Jackson/ Jackson Rising (<https://cooperationjackson.org>)
 - Horizontal Stateline Autonomous Region (<https://www.facebook.com/HorizontalStateline/>)
- Around 170 organizations trying to achieve the solidarity economy in the USA, thousands worldwide (<https://neweconomy.net>)

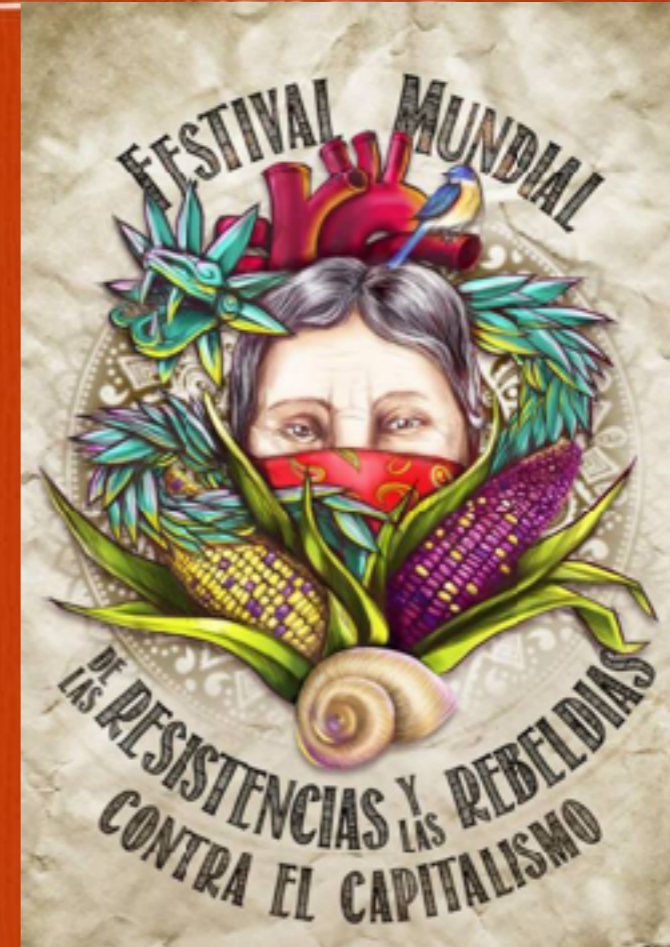
JACKSON RISING:

- Building the solidarity economy in Mississippi
- Roots in the Afro-American organization in the south
- Principles of nationalism, anti-capitalist struggle, and popular power by revolutionary activists such as Malcolm X, Chokwe Lumumba, and Kali Akuno
- Focuses on housing, food independence, and environmental sustainability,
[https://
cooperationjackson.org](https://cooperationjackson.org)



HORIZONTAL STATELINE AUTONOMOUS REGION

- Building the solidarity economy in the Rustbelt Midwest
 - “Horizontal” is based on anarcho-socialist principles that achieve democratic and communal self-government without a state apparatus.
 - Influenced by the Zapatista revolution and the Rojava revolution in northern Syria
- “Here you are in the Zapatista territory in rebellion. Here the people rule and the government obeys.”



“We are the termites that advance the decaying of bourgeois institutions, and we are the builders that will build new ones from grassroots people power.” <https://www.facebook.com/HorizontalStateline/>



SCENES FROM THE HORIZONTAL STATELINE AUTONOMOUS REGION



THE DEATH OF CAPITALISM AND THE BIRTH OF SOMETHING DIFFERENT

- We are experiencing a shifting paradigm for understanding revolutionary transformation.
- As in scientific revolutions, we see diverse people in diverse settings reaching similar new conclusions:
 - “Moving beyond capitalism”
 - “Solidarity economy”
 - “Post-capitalist society”
 - “Mutual aid”
 - “Bang versus whimper”

THE DEATH OF CAPITALISM AND THE BIRTH OF SOMETHING DIFFERENT



Referring to Jayati's talk:

found image of capitalist society's leaders. Although Eliot's prediction about the end of the world has been interpreted in several ways (including climate crisis, the great recession of 2008, and a stock market crash³), the whimper more persuasively refers to the death of capitalism and the birth of something else, after a necessary, inevitable, and victorious rinky-dink revolution:

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper.

THE DEATH OF CAPITALISM AND THE BIRTH OF SOMETHING DIFFERENT

- The rinky-dink revolution is simple, safe, and available to anyone who has the gumption to change her or his way of life a little bit.
- ... and it's fun!
- We can realize the joy of stopping our consent and unwitting support of a system that we know destroys our own health, well-being, and happiness.
- It mainly requires that we stop doing many things that we hate doing anyway.

THE DEATH OF CAPITALISM AND THE BIRTH OF SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Obviously, this is a collective work in progress

- we welcome your constructive suggestions and your helping us all “move beyond capitalism – now.”