

Wages of Rebellion

The Moral Imperative of Revolt

We live in a revolutionary moment. The disastrous economic and political experiment that attempted to organize human behaviour around the dictates of the global marketplace has failed. The citizen has become irrelevant. He or she can participate in heavily choreographed elections, but the demands of corporations and banks are paramount (p1).

Governments that cater exclusively to a narrow interest group and redirect the machinery of state to futher the interests of that interest group are no longer capable of responding rationally in times of crisis (p1).

Blindly serving their masters, they acquiesce to the looting of state treasuries to bail out corrupt financial houses and banks while ignoring chronic unemployment and underemployment, along with stagnant or declining wages, crippling debt peonage, a collapsing infrastructure, and the millions left destitute and often homeless by deceptive mortgages and foreclosures (p1).

A bankrupt liberal class, holding up values it does nothing to defend, discredits itself as well as the purported liberal values of a civil democracy as it is swept aside, along with those values. In this moment, a political, economic or natural disaster - in short a crisis - will ignite unrest, lead to instability, and see the state carry out draconian forms of repression to maintain "order". This is what lies ahead (p2).

The preconditions for a revolution are a unified solidarity in opposition to a tiny, discredited power elite; a refusal by the press, scholars and intellectuals to continue to defend the actions of the ruling class; an inability of government to respond to the most basic needs of citizens; and a steady loss of will within the power elite to rule (p2).

It is never the poor, however, who make revolutions. The idea that the very oppressed and poor are important as initiating and maintaining revolutions is a bourgeois one. No government has ever fallen before attackers until it has lost control over its armed forces or lost the ability to use them effectively (p3).

While violence and terrorism are often part of revolutions, the fundamental tool of any successful revolt is the non-violent conversion of the forces deployed to restore order to the side of the rebels. The superior force of despotic regimes is disarmed not through violence but through conversion (p3).

The most important component of revolt is the intolerable gap between what people want and what they get - the rapidly widening gap between expectations and gratifications. Socioeconomically deprived poor people are unlikely to make a successful rebellion, a revolution, by themselves. It is rather the disenfranchised middle class and alienated members of the ruling class who orchestrate and lead a revolt (p4).

It is the cycle of heightened expectations, economic improvement, and then the frustrated hopes that lead to revolt. Today this key component of revolution - the gap between what people want, and indeed expect, and what they get - is being played out in the United States and many states in Europe during a new age of mounting scarcity, declining wages, joblessness, government-imposed austerity measures, and assaults on civil liberties (p5).

Hedges, Chris (2015). Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt. Nation Books. New York.

The neoliberal version of the promise of rising living standards is based on the fallacy of economic deregulation and financialization. Let us be rich, the elites say, and you will share the spoils. All you have to do is work hard, obey the rules, and believe in yourself. This myth is disseminated across the political spectrum (p6).

It is the essential message peddled by everyone from Oprah and the entertainment industry to the Christian Right and positive psychologists. But this promise, as the masses of underemployed and unemployed are discovering, is a fiction (p6).

The revolutionary ideal, the vision of a better world, the belief that resistance is a moral act to protect the weak and the poor fuses with the sense of loss and betrayal engendered by a system that can no longer meet expectations (p7).

The revolts and revolutions that have convulsed the Arab world and the unrest in Greece and Spain share these vital characteristics. The primacy of corporate profit in a globalized economy has become universal. So have its consequences (p7).

The 46.5 million people living in poverty in 2012 was the largest number of poor counted during the fifty-four years in which the decennial census has calculated poverty rates. The realization that our expectations for a better future have been obliterated, not only for ourselves but more importantly for our children, starts the chain reaction (p8).

Once the foot soldiers of the elite - the police, the courts, the civil servants, the press, the intellectual class, and finally the army - no longer have the will to defend the regime, the regime is finished. The veneer of power appears untouched before a revolution, but the internal rot, unseen by the outside world, steadily hollows out the edifice state. And when dying regimes collapse, they do so with dizzying speed (p9).

These moments engender not simply new ideas but new feelings about established power and human possibilities. The past few years, particularly since 2011, have witnessed popular uprisings exploding in waves around the world (p10).

In the Arab world, protests overthrew in quick succession the governments in Tunisia and Egypt and convulsed Morocco, Yemen and Bahrain. Massive street protests have rattled Turkey, Greece, Portugal, Spain, the Ukraine, Georgia and the United States. Movements feed off other movements (p10).

The uprisings of the Arab Spring and the Portuguese and Spanish Indignants in the Iberian Peninsula morphed into Occupy encampments in the United States (p10).

The great wave of revolution that took place in 1989 with the collapse of the Soviet Union was the last revolutionary wave before the Arab uprisings in 2010. In all these countries, a significant portion of the population had abandoned their faith in the ideological constructs of power, just as a previous generation had abandoned the belief in the divine right of kings (p16).

They lost hope for a better future unless those in power were replaced. And they seized in a revolutionary moment upon an ideal - one that was often more emotional than intellectual - that allowed them to defy established power. This revolutionary sentiment, as much a mood as an idea, is again on the march (p16).

Rebels share much in common with religious mystics. They hold fast to a vision that often they alone can see. They view rebellion as a moral imperative, even as they concede that the odds of success is slim and at times impossible. Rebels are men and women endowed with a peculiar obstinacy. Willing to accept deprivation and self-sacrifice, they are not overly concerned with defeat (p18).

They endure through a fierce independence and courage. Many, maybe most, have difficult and eccentric personalities. The best of them are driven by a profound sense of empathy, even love, for the vulnerable, the persecuted, and the weak (p18).

The closer one gets to the street during a revolution, the messier it becomes. movements within the revolutionary body frequently compete for power, fight over arcane bits of doctrine, and engage in self-defeating power struggles. The state uses its resources to infiltrate, monitor, vilify, and arrest or assassinate the movement leaders - and all uprisings, even supposedly leaderless ones, have leaders (p19).

When they are authentic, these movements express a fundamental truth about societies in decay that even those who cannot articulate it are often able to feel. This is the secret of their power. They offer new possibilities, a new language and vocabulary, to those who are being abused by failed systems of governance. Once this truth is unleashed, once it can be expressed, it is very hard to silence (p19).

Doomed Voyages

As poorer societies around the globe unravel - many of them no longer able to impose the order of organized states - and as our own depressed communities are wrecked, shoddily patched back together, and then wrecked again, the same inchoate hatreds and bloodlusts for vengeance and retribution in disintegrating states such as the former Yugoslavia are unleashed (p27).

Recent migrants, religious and ethnic minority groups, undocumented workers, foreign nationals, and homosexuals, indeed all who do not conform to the idealized image of the nation, will become the enemy and, for many, the cause of our distress (p27).

No act of rebellion can be effective, much less moral, unless it first takes into account reality, no matter how bleak that reality. Speculators, meanwhile, have seized control of the global economy and the levers of political power. They have weakened and emasculated governments to serve their lust for profit (p31).

They have turned the press into courtiers, corrupted the courts, and hollowed out public institutions, including universities. They peddle spurious ideologies - neoliberal economics and globalization - to justify their rapacious looting and greed (p31).

They create grotesque financial mechanisms, from usurious interest rates on loans to legalized accounting fraud, to plunge citizens into crippling forms of debt peonage. And they have been stealing staggering sums of public funds. They feed like parasites off the state and the resources of the planet (p31).

Speculators at megabanks and investment firms such as Goldman Sachs are not, in a strict sense, capitalists. They do not make money from the means of production. Rather, they ignore or rewrite the law to steal from everyone, including their own shareholders (p31).

They produce nothing. They make nothing. They only manipulate money. They are not different from the detested speculators who were hanged in the seventeenth century, when speculation was a capital offence. The obscenity of their wealth is matched by their utter lack of concern for the growing numbers of the destitute (p31).

In early 2014, the world's 200 richest people made \$13.9 billion, in one day, according to Bloomberg's billionaires index. This hoarding of money by the elites, according to the ruling economic model, is supposed to make us all better off, but in fact the opposite happens when wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals and corporations, as economist Thomas Piketty noted (p32).

Government, in the hands of speculators, is a protection racket for corporations and a small group of oligarchs. And the longer we play by the rules the more impoverished and oppressed we become. But even as our economic and environmental systems unravel we lack the emotional and intellectual creativity to shut down the engine of global capitalism (p33).

Men and women of stunning mediocrity and depravity assume political control. Today charlatans and hucksters hold forth on the airwaves, and intellectuals are ridiculed. Force and militarism, with their hypermasculine ethic, are celebrated. An the mania for hope requires the silencing of any truth that is not childishly optimistic (p33).

Hedges, Chris (2015). Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt. Nation Books. New York.

Our major preoccupation is pleasure. We're doomed by hope. The mantra is to be positive, to be happy. This mania for optimism - for happiness - leads to fantasy being mistaken for reality. Reality is dismissed when it is unpleasant (p33).

Culture and literacy, in the final stage of decline, are replaced with noisy diversions, elaborate public spectacle, and empty cliches. The gap between who we are and who we think we are is steadily expanding (p34).

For those of us who have spent years in wars, it is the suffering of children that most haunts us. If, as a society, we see that our principal task is the care of children, the next generation, then the madness of the moment can be dispelled. But idols have a power over human imagination that defies reason, love, and finally sanity (p41).

Technological advancement and wealth are conflated in capitalism with human progress. All aspects of human existence that cannot be measured or quantified - beauty, truth, love, grief, the search for meaning, and the struggle with our own mortality - are ignored and ridiculed (p42).

Capitalism is essentially a religious phenomenon albeit one that no longer seeks to connect humans with the mystery of life. And it is the religion of capitalism, the maniacal quest for wealth at the expense of others, that turns human beings into beasts of prey (p42).

A religion may be discerned in capitalism, that is to say, capitalism serves essentially to allay the same anxieties, torments and disturbances to which the so-called religions offered answers. Capitalism has called on human societies to embark on a ceaseless and ultimately futile quest to find fulfillment in the endless amassing of money and power (p42).

This quest creates a culture that is dominated by guilt, a sense of inadequacy, and self-loathing and that enslaves nearly all its adherents through wages. Capitalism is a purely cultic religion, perhaps the most extreme that ever existed. Things have a meaning only in their relationship to the cult. Capitalism has no specific dogma or theology. Rather, utilitarianism acquires religious overtones (p43).

There are no weekdays. Everyday is a feast day filled with consumption. With every acquisition the starting point for new desires, capitalism leaves human beings with a sense of never being able to achieve equilibrium (p43).

Capitalism is probably the first instance of a cult that creates guilt, not atonement. It is entirely without precedent, in that it is a religion that offers not the reform of existence but its complete destruction. It is the expansion of despair, until despair becomes a religious state of the world in the hope that this will lead to salvation. God's transcendence is at an end (p43).

The barbarism of our new Dark Age will hold out Faustian pacts at the expense of others; first the poor in the developing world will be sacrificed, and then the poor at home. Communities and communal organizations that manage to break free from the dominant culture will find a correlation between the amount of freedom they enjoy and the amount of independence they attain in a world where access to land, food, and water has become paramount (p43).

Such communities that share the burdens of a disintegrating society, such as the ad hoc one formed in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, are our best hope for sustaining the intellectual and artistic traditions that define the heights of human culture and permit the common good (p43).

Hedges, Chris (2015). *Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt*. Nation Books. New York.

As those who build these communitarian structures discard the religion of capitalism, their acts of charity and resistance will merge - and they will be condemned by the corporate state (p43).

The Post-Constitutional Era

The courts were perhaps the last institutions that liberal reformers had faith in before they too fell victim to the demands of corporate power. There are no institutions left that provide the citizen with a voice. Extraordinary rendition by our government of US citizens on US soil is legal (p51).

It means that the courts, like the legislative and executive branches of government, are now exclusive servants of corporate power. It means that the consent of the governed is a cruel joke. It means that if we do not rapidly build militant mass movements to overthrow corporate tyranny, including breaking the back of the two-party duopoly that is a mask of corporate power, we will lose what remains of our liberty (p51).

The courts have overturned nearly 150 years of case law that repeatedly holds that the military has no jurisdiction over civilians. Now a U.S. citizen charged by the government with “substantially supporting” al-Qaeda, the Taliban or those in the nebulous category of “associated forces” is lawfully subject to extraordinary rendition on U.S. soil. And those seized and placed in military jails can be kept there until the “end of hostilities” (p52).

When a citizenry no longer feels that it can find justice through the organs of power, when it feels that the organs of power are the enemies of freedom and economic advancement, it makes war on those organs. Those of us who are condemned as radicals, idealists and dreamers call for basic reforms that, if enacted, would make peaceful reform possible (p53).

But corporate capitalists, now unchecked by state power and dismissive of the popular will, do not see the fires they are igniting. The longer citizens are locked out of and abused by systems of power the more these systems become targets (p53).

The cornerstone of control is the state’s system of surveillance, exposed by Edward Snowden. The Stasi did not set up massive death camps and gulags. It did not have to. Its network of as many as 2 million informants in a country of 17 million was everywhere (p54).

There were 102,000 secret police officers employed full-time to monitor the population - one for every 166 East Germans. The Nazis broke bones. The Stasi broke souls. The East German security apparatus pioneered the psychological disintegration skills that torturers and interrogators in America’s black sites have honed to a chilling perfection (p54).

The goal of wholesale surveillance is not, in the end, to discover crimes, but to be on hand when the government decides to arrest a certain category of the population. And because Americans’ emails, phone conversations, web searches, and geographical movements are recorded and stored in perpetuity in government databases, there will be more than enough “evidence” to seize us should the state deem it necessary (p54).

This information waits like a dormant virus inside government vaults to be released against us. It does not matter how trivial or innocent that information is. In totalitarian states, justice, like truth, is irrelevant. Any state that has the capacity to monitor all its citizenry, any state that has the ability to snuff out factual public debate through the control of information, any state that has the tools to instantly shut down dissent, is totalitarian (p54).

Hedges, Chris (2015). *Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt*. Nation Books. New York.

The state may not use this power today. But will use it if it feels threatened. Those who sweep up all our financial data, our tweets, our transfers, our live chats, our medical data, our criminal and civil court records, those awash in billions upon billions of tax payer dollars, those who have banks of sophisticated computer systems, those who have obliterated our anonymity, our privacy and our liberty (p54).

No one who lives under constant surveillance, who is subject to detention anywhere at any time, whose conversations, proclivities, and habits are recorded, stored, and analyzed, can be described as free. This is a relationship of masters and slaves (p55).

Yet the state assures us that our rights are sacred, that government abides by the will of the people and the consent of the governed, that our right to privacy is protected. And so begins the surrealist nightmare. The vast distance between perceived reality and the official version of reality is characteristic of totalitarian systems (p55).

The state abolishes liberty and rights while claiming to uphold and defend them (p55).

The most effective tyranny crushes its marginalized and harassed opponents and, through fear and the obliteration of privacy, incapacitates everyone else. The object of efficient totalitarian states is to create a climate in which people do not think of rebelling, a climate in which incarceration and state-sanctioned murder are used against only a handful of unmanageable renegades (p55).

The totalitarian state achieves control by systematically shutting down all human spontaneity through fear. This fear and loss of spontaneity keep a population traumatized and immobilized and turn the courts into mechanisms that legalize the crimes of state (p55).

This legal sleight of hand is how our most basic constitutional rights have been obliterated. The Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the Constitution, which were established to protect us from unwarranted intrusion by the government into our private lives, may still technically be law but they have been judicially abolished (p55).

The Fourth Amendment was written in direct response to the arbitrary and unchecked search powers that the British had exercised through general warrants, which played a significant part in fomenting the American Revolution (p55).

The amendment limits the state's ability to search and seize to a specific place, time and event approved by a magistrate. It is impossible to square the bluntness of the Fourth Amendment with the arbitrary search and seizure of all our personal communications (p55).

The courts and legislative bodies of the corporate state now routinely invert our most basic rights to justify corporate pillage and repression. They define corporate lobbying as the people's right to petition the government (p56).

And according to the new laws and legislation, we can be tortured or assassinated or locked up indefinitely by the military, be denied due process, and be spied upon without warrant. The U.S. Constitution has not been rewritten, but steadily emasculated through a dirty system of judicial and legislative reinterpretation. We have been left with a fictitious shell of democracy and a totalitarian core (p56).

Once the state has the power to intrude into the private lives of its citizens, it becomes omnipresent. It listens and collects everything, no matter how arcane or trivial. The NSA bugged the conclave that elected the new pope. It bugged the phone of the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and in fact it has bugged most of the leaders in Europe (p56).

NSA officials also bugged their own ex-lovers, wives and girlfriends. A technical system of surveillance designed to monitor those considered to be a danger to the state have been turned against you, in the words of the NSA whistle-blower William Binney. Thomas Paine described despotic government as a fungus growing out of a corrupt civil society. This is what has happened to us (p56).

But our corporate totalitarian rulers deceive themselves as often as they deceive the public. Politics for them is public relations. Lies are told not to achieve any discernible goal of public policy, but to protect the image of the state and its rulers (p56).

James Clapper, the director of national intelligence lied under oath to Congress about the pervasive state surveillance of the citizenry. This spectacle was a rare glimpse into the absurdist theater that no characterizes American political life. The committee members knew he was lying but to protect their security clearances, they said and did nothing (p57).

The state's ability, through comprehensive surveillance, to prevent outside inquiry into the exercise of power engenders a terrifying intellectual and moral sclerosis within the ruling elite. The citizenry cannot take self-corrective measures because it is denied factual information. And when the unchallenged elites soon come to believe their own lies, the state descends into dysfunction, terror, and burlesque (p57).

Totalitarian states use propaganda to orchestrate historical amnesia, a state-induced stupidity. The object is to make sure the populace does not remember what it means to be free. And once a population does not remember what it means to be free, it does not react when freedom is stripped from it (p57).

The tightening of the corporate totalitarian noose would have continued without legal or public debate if Edward Snowden had not jolted the nation awake. Snowden revealed through his leaks of NSA documents evidence of what former vice president Al Gore said "appears to be crimes against the U.S. Constitution (p57).

Snowden's revelations triggered, for the first time, a genuine discussion about mass surveillance. U.S. District Judge Richard J. Leon ruled that the bulk collection of metadata probably violates the Fourth Amendment and is "almost Orwellian" in its sweep (p57).

Before Snowden, we were not even able to get a hearing in court. Some members of Congress expressed dismay at the extent of the NSA's activities and the weakness of its promised reforms. To rebel requires that elusive virtue that Snowden exemplifies - moral courage (p59).

Very few of the bravest warriors have moral courage. The person with moral courage defies the crowd, stands up as a solitary individual, shuns the intoxicating embrace of comradeship, and is disobedient to authority, even at the risk of his or her life, for a higher principle. And with moral courage comes persecution (p59).

Moral courage is always defined by the state as treason. Daniel Ellsberg had it. Martin Luther King had it. What those in authority once said about them, they say today about Snowden. Those of us who have

been fighting against mass state surveillance for years have made no headway by appealing to the traditional centers of power (p59).

It was only after Snowden methodically leaked documents exposing crimes committed by the state that genuine public debate began. Elected officials, for the first time, promised reform. None of this would have happened without Snowden (p59).

His critics argue that he could have reformed the system from the inside. He could have gone to his superiors or Congress or the courts. But Snowden had numerous examples to remind him that working within the system is fatal (p60).

Snowden had watched as senior officials, including Obama lied to the public about internal surveillance. He knew that the president was willfully dishonest when he assured Americans that the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court is “transparent” (p60).

He knew that the president’s statement that Congress was “overseeing the entire program” was false. He knew that everything Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told the press, the Congress, and the public about the surveillance of Americans was a lie (p60).

He knew that the information he possessed could be made available to the public only through a few journalists whose integrity he could trust. There is no free press without the ability of reporters to protect the confidentiality of those who have the moral courage to make public the abuse of power (p60).

If we do not immediately dismantle the security and surveillance apparatus, there will be no investigative journalism or judicial oversight to address abuses of power. There will be no organized dissent. There will be no independent thought. Criticisms, however tepid, will be treated as acts of subversion (p61).

The public’s inability to grasp the pathology of our oligarchic corporate elite makes it difficult to organize effective resistance. Compliant politicians, entertainers, and our vapid, corporate-funded popular culture and news media hold up the elites as leaders to emulate (p61).

We are repeatedly assured that through diligence and hard work we can join them. We are taught to equate wealth with success. This narrative keeps us from seeing the truth. The rich are different. The cocoon of wealth and privilege permits the rich to turn those around them into compliant and expendable workers, hangers-on, servant, and sycophants (p61).

Once oligarchs achieve unchecked economic and political power, as they have in the United States, the citizens too become disposable. And that, in the eyes of the elite, is what we are. Aristotle argues in Politics that the impoverished underclass can revolt and overthrow the oligarchs to rectify the imbalance of wealth and power, or they can submit to the tyranny of oligarchic rule (p61).

The public face of the oligarchic class is carefully crafted by publicists and a compliant media. It bears little resemblance to the private face. This is hard for those who have not been admitted into the intimate circles of the elite to grasp (p62).

George W. Bush’s life is a case study in the insidious affirmative action for the rich. The rich have a disdain for the poor, despite carefully publicized acts of philanthropy, and a haughty dislike of the

middle class. The lower classes are viewed as uncouth parasites, annoyances to be endured, sometimes placated, and always controlled in the quest to amass more power and money (p63).

Oligarchs are schooled in the mechanisms of manipulation - subtle and overt repression and exploitation to protect their wealth and power. Foremost among their mechanisms of control is the control of ideas. Ruling elites ensure that the established intellectual class is subservient to the ideology of neoliberalism and globalization (p63).

The blanket dissemination of the ideology of neoliberalism through the media and the purging, especially in academia, of critical voices have permitted our oligarchs to orchestrate the industrial world's largest income inequality gap. In our democracy, 1% of the nation's people take nearly a quarter of the nation's income (p64).

Oligarchs do not believe in self-sacrifice for the common good. They never have and they never will. And now that they have full control of the economy and the legal system, they use power as a blunt instrument for personal enrichment and domination (p64).

The ancient Greeks and Egyptians, the Romans, the Mayans, the Hapsburgs all died because they were unable to control the appetites of their elites. The elites were able to exploit ecosystems and human beings until these civilizations self-destructed (p65).

As there is less and less to exploit, this quest for wealth leads to mounting repression, increased human suffering, infrastructure collapse, and, finally, death. It is the self-deluded on Wall Street and among the political elite who are foolishly held up as exemplars of intelligence, success and progress. This is the mark of a civilization that has gone insane (p65).

The National Alliance on Mental Illness calculates that "one in four adults experience mental illness in a given year", which seems a reasonable reaction to the future being constructed for us by our corporate masters (p65).

The rich, throughout history, have found methods and subterfuges to subjugate the working class. And workers have cyclically awoken throughout history to revolt. The founding fathers, largely wealthy slaveholders, feared direct democracy and enthusiastically embraced the slaughter of indigenous peoples to seize their land and resources (p65).

They rigged our political process to thwart popular rule and protect the property rights of the native aristocracy. The labouring classes were to be kept at bay. We had to fight for our rights and our voice. Hundreds of workers attempting to form unions were killed and thousands wounded in our labour wars. Tens of thousands were fired and blacklisted (p65).

Our radical movements, repressed and ruthlessly dismantled in the name of anticommunism, were the real engines of equality and social justice. Now that unions have been broken and sweatshops implanted in the developing world, the squalor and suffering inflicted on workers by the oligarchic class in the nineteenth century is mirrored in the present (p66).

Dissent is once again a criminal act. The modern corporate incarnation of this nineteenth century oligarchic elite has created a worldwide neofeudalism under which workers across the planet toil in misery while corporate oligarchs amass hundreds of millions in personal wealth (p66).

Rebellion against this global oligarchic elite, however, percolates across the planet (p66).

Hedges, Chris (2015). *Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt*. Nation Books. New York.

Class struggle defines most of human history. Marx got this right. The seesaw of history has thrust the oligarchs upward. We sit humiliated and broken on the ground. It is an old battle. It has been fought over and over in human history. The only route left to us, as Aristotle knew, is either submission or revolt (p66).

The Invisible Revolution

Did you ever ask yourself how it happens that government and capitalism continue to exist in spite of all the evil and trouble they are causing in the world? If you did, then your answer must have been that it is because the people support those institutions, and they support them because they believe in them (p67).

Revolutions, when they begin, are invisible, at least to the wider society. They start with the slow discrediting and dismantling of an old ideology and an old language used to interpret reality and justify power. When the old ideas are shattered, the institutions that buttress the ruling class deflate and collapse (p67).

Human beings are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. Our inability, as citizens, to influence power in a system of corporate or inverted totalitarianism, along with the loss of our civil liberties weakens the traditional political vocabulary of a capitalist democracy (p68).

The descent of nearly half the country into poverty or near-poverty diminishes the effectiveness of the rhetoric about limitless growth and ceaseless material progress. It undermines the myth of American prosperity. The truths are dimly apparent. But we have yet to sever ourselves from the old way of speaking and formulate a new language to explain us to ourselves (p68).

Until this happens, the corporate state can harness the old language like a weapon and employ the institutions of power and the organs of state security to perpetuate itself. This is a moment when the reigning ideology is bankrupt but has yet to be replaced by a new one (p68).

The cult of rationality in the hands of technocrats has become an absolutist ideology. Technocrats are slaves to dogma and hedonists of power. If we do not free ourselves from this cult we will be vanquished by these technocrats. Their obsession with structures and their inability or unwillingness to link these to the public good make this power an abstract force (p69).

The technocrats are unable to question the systems they serve while society foolishly reveres them. As specialists and bureaucrats, human beings become tools, able to make systems of exploitation and terror function efficiently without the slightest sense of personal responsibility or understanding (p70).

They retreat into the arcane language of all specialists to mask what they are doing and give to their work a sanitized, clinical veneer. They are capable of anything, no matter how heinous, because they do not reflect upon or question the ultimate goal (p70).

Resistance is first about learning to speak differently and abandoning the vocabulary of the "rational" technocrats who rule. Once we discover new words and ideas through which to perceive and explain reality, we free ourselves from neoliberalism, which functions like a state religion (p70).

This effort will take place outside the boundaries of popular culture and academia, where the deadening weight of the dominant ideology curtails creativity and independent thought. The entire system, but above all the media, plays the game of creating celebrities who it later destroys if they don't yield to its designs (p71).

Corporate capitalism has launched a war against us. The shift from violence to non-violence was what gave the Zapatistas their resiliency and strength (p75).

An adherence to nonviolence will not save us from violence of the state or from the state's hired goons and vigilantes. But nonviolence makes conversion, even among our oppressors possible (p76).

A just-world theory posits that the world is just. People get what they deserve. The catholic church is a just-world theory. Fascism was a just-world theory. The point is not that good people get the good things but bad people get the bad things. Neoclassical economics, our principal source of policy norms, is a just-world theory (p77).

The point about just-world theory is not that it dispenses justice, but that it provides a warrant for inflicting pain (p77).

That the Soviet Union had to use so much coercion undermined the credibility of communism as a model of reality. The USA is a society that elevates freedom to the highest position among its values but it is also has one of the largest penal systems in the world relative to its population (p78).

It also inflicts violence all over the world. It tolerates a great deal of gun violence and a health service that excludes large numbers of people. As larger and larger segments of the society are forced to become outsiders, the use of coercion will probably become more widespread (p78).

There are two core doctrines of economics, one is individual self-interest, the other is the invisible hand - the idea that the pursuit of individual self-interest builds up for the good of society as a whole. This is a logical proposition that has never been proven (p78).

A silent revolution took place in economics during the 1970s. That was a time when economists discovered opportunism; a polite term for cheating. Before that, economics had been a just-world defense of the status quo. But when the status quo became the welfare state, suddenly economics became all about cheating (p78).

Game theory was about cheating. Public-choice theory was about cheating. Asymmetric information was about cheating. The outcome depends on how successful the cheating is. And one of the consequences of this is that economists are not in a strong position to tell society what to do (p79).

The old norms of economics continue to inform our policies, as if the cheating norm had never been introduced. When those in authority expound their doctrines, the genuine insight provided by the economics of opportunism is that we cannot assume it is being done in good faith (p79).

Our current economic model will be of little use to us in an age of ecological deterioration and growing scarcities. We cannot be certain that growth will continue. If standards of living stagnate or decline, we must consider other models for the economy (P79).

Clinging to the old neoclassical model could erode and perhaps destroy social cohesion and require the state to engage in greater forms of coercion. Adam Smith wrote that what drives us is not individual selfishness but reciprocal obligation. We care about other people's good opinions. Reciprocity is not altruistic. Obligation to others means that we do not always seek to maximize economic advantage. If we cling to our current model, which is "every man for himself", it will require serious repression (p80). The revolutionary theorists of the past invested tremendous energy in looking for the triggers of revolt, although nearly all were caught off guard by the eruption of the revolutions they championed and

Hedges, Chris (2015). Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt. Nation Books. New York.

organized. It is impossible to predict the time and progress of a revolution. It is governed by its own more or less mysterious laws. But when it comes, it moves irresistibly (p81).

The history of human thought reclass the swinging of a pendulum which takes centuries to swing. After a long period of slumber comes a moment of awakening. The mass clings to its masters, loves the whip, and is the first to cry Crucify! The revolutionists of history counted on a mobilized base of enlightened industrial workers and common laborers (p82).

The building blocks of revolt, they believed, relied on the tool of the general strike - the ability of workers to cripple the mechanisms of production. Today with the decimation of the US manufacturing base and the dismantling of our unions and opposition parties, we will have to search for different instruments of rebellion (p82).

Unlike past revolutionary struggles in industrial societies, we cannot rely today on the industrial or agrarian muscle of workers. The dispossessed working poor, along with unemployed college graduates and students and unemployed journalists, artists, lawyers and teachers will form our movement (p82). Workers in Asia and the global south will have to organize and fight the industrialists through the traditional tactics of strikes, work stoppages, and unionizing. The fight for a higher minimum wage is crucial to uniting service workers with alienated college-educated sons and daughters of the old middle class in the United States. Bakunin would have recognized these pivotal declassé intellectuals in the Occupy Movement (p82).

Once they unite, those who have had their expectations dashed and concluded that they will not be able to rise economically and socially will become our triggers of revolt. This consciousness is part of the self-knowledge of service workers and fast-food workers. It is also part of the consciousness of the swelling population of college graduates caught in a vise of low-paying jobs and obscene amounts of debt (p82). Many of the urban poor have been crippled and broken by a rewriting of laws, especially drug laws, that has permitted courts, probation officers, parole boards, and police to randomly seize poor people of colour, especially African American men, without just cause and lock them in cages for years (p83). In many of our most impoverished urban centers mobilization will be difficult. Many African Americans, especially the urban poor, are in prison, on probation, or living under some kind of legal restraint. Charges can be stacked against them, and they have little hope for redress in the courts, especially as 97 percent of all federal cases and 94 percent of all state cases are resolved by guilty pleas rather than trials (p83).

Poor people of colour are subject to daily abuse by omnipotent police forces. Police are permitted to strip them of their most basic rights and are either authorized to use deadly force or protected by their departments and the legal systems in most cases when they do, even against unarmed suspects (p83). We have created a criminal caste system. This caste system controls the lives of not only the 2.3 million people who are incarcerated but the 4.8 million people on probation or parole. Millions more people are forced into a permanent second-class citizenship by their criminal records, which make employment, higher education, and public assistance difficult or impossible (p83).

The militarization of the police, which includes outfitting the police departments with heavy machine guns, magazines, night vision equipment, aircraft, and armoured vehicles, has effectively turned urban police into quasi-military forces of occupation (p83).

Because revolution is evolution at its boiling point you cannot 'make' a real revolution any more than you can hasten the boiling point of a tea kettle. It is the fire underneath that makes it boil; how quickly it will come to the boiling point will depend on how strong the fire is (p86).

If a nonviolent popular movement is able to ideologically disarm the bureaucrats, civil servants, and police, non violent revolution is possible. But if the state can organize effective and prolonged violence against dissent, then state violence can span reactive revolutionary violence, or what the state calls "terrorism" (p86).

Violent uprisings are always tragic, and violent revolution always empowers revolutionaries, who are as ruthless as their adversaries. Violence inevitably becomes the principal form of coercion on both sides of the divide (p86).

Social upheaval without clear definition and direction, without ideas behind it, swiftly descends into nihilism, terrorism and chaos. It consumes itself. This is the minefield we have to cross. By the time ruling elites are openly defied, there has already been a nearly total loss of faith in the ideas that sustain their structures of power (p86).

The process of understanding can take years, but once people do understand it, the slow, quiet, and peaceful social evolution becomes quick, militant and violent. Evolution becomes revolution. We live in a system that is incapable of reforming itself. The first step to dismantling that system is to dismantle the ideas that give it legitimacy. Once that is done, it will have been given a mortal blow (p87).

Many ideas, once held to be true, have come to be regarded as wrong and evil. There was a time when the whole world believed those institutions such as the divine rights of kings, slavery and serfdom, to be right, just, and unchangeable. Those ideas became discredited and lost their hold upon people, and finally the institutions that incorporated those ideas were abolished (p87).

We know already that they were useful only to the master class, and they were done away with by popular uprisings and revolutions (p87).

Conversion

The goal of the counterrevolutionary is to physically eradicate the insurgents' logistic base of operations, disrupt their communication, and shatter their organization. Counterrevolutionaries seek to dry up popular, financial, and material support for the revolutionaries (p93).

They hunt down and decapitate leaders. Counterrevolutionaries create rival organizations to discredit and purge the rebel leadership and infiltrate the movement to foster internal divisions and rivalries. They provoke the movement by forming front groups that carry out repugnant acts to alienate the wider populace from the insurgency (p94).

Meanwhile, the counterrevolutionaries churn out shadowy propaganda that the mainstream press often runs uncritically. Finally, they offer a political alternative that appears reformist but is ultimately under the control of the state (p94).

The tools to break resistance are similar whether those movements are violent or nonviolent. The physical eradication of the Occupy encampments, the attempt to marginalize the protesters from the wider society - all these strategies fit the classic outline of a counterrevolutionary agenda (p94).

Counterinsurgency campaigns, although they involve arms and weapons, are primarily about hearts and minds. The goal is to win back, or at least render passive, a disaffected population. And the tactics employed by our intelligence operatives abroad are not dissimilar from those employed by our intelligence operatives at home. In fact, these operatives are frequently the same people (p94).

But once violence is added to the mix, whether to defend the state or destroy it, something poisonous and insidious takes place. Violence is directed against society not to convert but to eradicate. All aspects of civic life are targeted. The goal is not to control territory but to control populations. Terror, assassination, imprisonment, and death become the glue that replaces the tissue of social cohesion (p94).

Society is mutilated. Civic life is destroyed. And in wartime each side uses violence to attempt to shape civil society to its own ends. We do not have the tools or the wealth of the state. We cannot beat it at its own game. We cannot ferret out infiltrators. The legal system is almost always on the state's side (p94).

If we attempt to replicate the elaborate security apparatus of our oppressors, even on a small scale, we unleash paranoia and fracture those who build movements. If we retreat into anonymity, hiding behind masks, then we provide an opening for agent provocateurs who deny their identities while disrupting the movement (p94).

If we fight pitched battles in the streets, we give authorities an excuse to fire their weapons and demonize the movement to the public. All we have is our powerlessness. And that powerlessness is our strength. The ability of the movement to overthrow the corporate state depends on embracing this powerlessness (p95).

It depends on two of our most important assets - utter and complete transparency, and a rigid adherence to nonviolence, including respect for private property. These assets permit us to live in truth. And by living in truth, we expose a corrupt corporate state that perpetrates lies and functions by deceit (p95).

Hedges, Chris (2015). *Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt*. Nation Books. New York.

The attempt to live within truth brings with it ostracism and retribution. Punishment is imposed in bankrupt systems because of the necessity for compliance, not out of any genuine conviction. And the real crime committed is not the crime of speaking out or defying the rules, but the crime of exposing the charade (p96).

Those who do not carve out spaces separate from the state and its systems of power, those who cannot find room to become autonomous or who do not “live in truth”, inevitably become compromised. Movements that call on followers to “live in truth” do not always succeed (p96).

Power elites who stubbornly refuse to heed popular will and resort to harsher and harsher forms of state control provoke counterviolence. A resistance movement’s most powerful asset is that it articulates a fundamental truth. A this truth is understood by the mainstream - “the 99 percent” - it gathers a force that jeopardizes the credibility of ruling elites (p97).

If the resistance movement is effectively severed from the mainstream, it is crippled and easily contained. Other, more militant groups may rise and even flourish, but if a mass movement is to retain its hold over the majority, it has to fight within self-imposed limitations of nonviolence (p97).

We would not have a movement if violence or property damage were used from the outset. People are not drawn to violent movements. Such tactics shrink rather than expand the base of support. Property damage justifies police violence to many Americans. Disciplined nonviolence is often more difficult because anger and emotion lead people to strike back at the police when they are violent. But disciplined nonviolence is the tactic that is most effective against the violence of the state (p97).

Of the slogan used by the Black Bloc anarchists, “Diversity of tactics” becomes an easy way to avoid wrestling with questions of strategy and accountability. It lets us off the hook from doing the hard work of debating our positions and coming to agreements about how we want to act together (p98).

It becomes a code for ‘anything goes’, and makes it impossible for the movement to hold anyone accountable for their actions. The Occupy movement includes people from a broad diversity of backgrounds, life experiences and political philosophies. Some of us want to reform the system and some of us want to tear it down and replace it with something better. Our one great point of agreement is our call for transparency and accountability (p98).

We stand against the corrupt institutions that broker power behind closed doors. We call to account the financial manipulators that have bilked billions out of the poor and the middle class. We ourselves must be accountable and transparent. Some tactics are incompatible with these goals, even if in other situations they might be useful, honorable, and appropriate (p98).

We can’t be transparent behind masks. We can’t be accountable for actions we run away from. We can’t maintain the security culture necessary for planning and carrying out on property and also maintain openness that can continue to invite a true diversity of new people (p98).

It was strikes and boycotts, along with organizing work by nonviolent groups that were the best instruments for crippling the apartheid regime in South Africa. Armed attacks frightened white liberals - who were natural allies in the anti-apartheid movement - and were used by the apartheid regime to justify state violence (p99).

It was the growing use of “noncooperation” by the black majority that brought the economic engines of the country to a halt. The tactic of nonviolent protest also garnered support from the international community, which eventually imposed sanctions (p99).

If the ANC had invested all its energy in an armed movement rather than mass mobilization, it would never have triumphed. Mandela, although he never renounced violence, understood by this time that the movement had become a civil insurrection rather than an armed insurrection. And it was this transformation that allowed the movement to triumph (p99).

As societies unravel, as desperation becomes worldwide, it may happen that neither nonviolence nor violence will do very much to alter our impending self-destruction. Violence, in moments when we face near certain annihilation, can become a final affirmation of human dignity. But by then the game is over (p100).

The Rebel Caged

Mumia Abu-Jamal is America's best known political prisoner. He was transferred in January 2012 to the general prison population after nearly thirty years in solitary confinement. He had been sentenced to death in 1982 for the killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. His sentence was amended to life without parole (p108).

The authorities have attempted to silence him in prison. Pennsylvania banned all recorded interviews with Abu-Jamal after 1996. The state is very clever in terms of keeping track, especially of the courageous and visionary ones, the ones who are long distance runners (p109).

Abu-Jamal's venom is reserved for liberal politicians such as Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, whom he excoriates for callously disempowering the poor and the working class on behalf of their corporate patrons. And he has little time for those who support them (p110).

It was Clinton that made possible the explosion of the prison-industrial complex, he said. Most of these people wouldn't be here if it weren't for Bill Clinton. The United States has the highest documented incarceration rate in the world - 743 adults per 100,000. Of the 2.3 million adults incarcerated in federal and state prisons and local jails, nearly 60 percent are nonwhite (p111).

He who has not been in jail does not know what the state is, Leo Tolstoy said. The mass incarceration and mass repression impact every community to make people afraid and compliant. Abu-Jamal saw hope in the Occupy movement, largely because white middle class youths were beginning to experience the cruelty of capitalism and state repression that had long been visited on the poor and people of color (p113).

We must recover our past if we are going to effectively resist. We must connect ourselves to the revolutionaries, radicals, and prophets who fought injustice before us. We must defy the historical amnesia that the corporate state seeks to cement into our consciousness (p113).

The effort to silence Abu-Jamal is part of the cultural drive to crush the remnants of the black prophetic tradition (p113). The black prophetic tradition expressed radical truths with a clarity and moral force that have eluded most other critics of American capitalism. Obama first displayed his fear of this tradition when he betrayed his pastor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright (p114).

The black prophetic tradition has been emptied out. Its leaders have either been murdered or incarcerated. A lot of political prisoners who represent the black prophetic tradition are in jail. They have been in there for decades. Or we have leaders who have completely sold out. They have been co-opted. With sold-out leaders, you get a pacified followership or people who are scared (p114).

The black freedom movement puts pressure on the American empire in the name of integrity, decency, honesty, and virtue. The tradition is sustained by a handful of beleaguered writers and intellectuals. It is understandable why this tradition frightened Obama. It exposes him for what he is. Obama's message to the black underclass in the midst of the corporate rape of the nation is drawn verbatim from the Booker T. Washington playbook (p115).

He tells them to work harder, to get an education, and to obey the law. Obama is the highest manifestation of the co-optation that took place. It shifted the black political class. The black political Hedges, Chris (2015). *Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt*. Nation Books. New York.

class found itself unable to tell the truth, or if they began to tell some of the truth, they were put under surveillance, attacked, and demonized (p115).

Forty percent of our babies are living in poverty, living without enough food, and Obama comes to us and says quite whining. He doesn't say that at the Business Roundtable. He doesn't say that to the corporate elites. This kind of neglect in policy is coupled with disrespect in his speeches to black folk, which the mainstream calls tough love (p115).

He is a shell of a man. There is no deep conviction. There is no connection to something bigger than him. It is a sad spectacle, sad if he were not the head of an empire that is in such decline and so dangerous. If you criticized Obama you became a race traitor and an Uncle Tom. A lot of that came out of the Obama machine, the Obama plantation (p115).

The most pernicious development was the incorporation of the black prophetic tradition into the Obama imperial project. Obama used Martin Luther King's Bible during his inauguration, but under the National Defense Authorization Act, King would be detained without due process (p115).

He would be under surveillance every day because of his association with Nelson Mandela. We see the richest prophetic tradition in America desecrated in the name of a neoliberal worldview, a worldview King would be in direct opposition to. Martin would have been against Obama because of his neglect of the poor and the working class, because he is a war president, because he draws up kill lists (p116).

We are talking about crimes against humanity - Wall Street crimes, war crimes, the crimes of the criminal justice system in the form of Jim Crow, the crimes against our working poor that have their backs pushed to the wall because of stagnant wages and corporate profits going up (p116).

The distinctive feature of any empire in decline is its indifference to criminality. That is a fundamental feature of our time. An indifference to criminality, especially on top, wickedness in high places. This is not personal. This was true for George W. Bush. It was true for Bill Clinton. We are talking about an imperial system, manifest in Obama's robust effort to bomb Syria in 2013 (p116).

We are talking about a corporate state and a massive surveillance and national security state. It operates according to its own logic. Profit, on the one hand, and secrecy to hide imperial policy on the other (p116).

Jesse Jackson was the head house Negro on the Clinton plantation, just as Sharpton is the head house Negro on the Obama plantation. But there is a difference. Jesse was willing to oppose Clinton on a variety of issues. He marched, for example, against the welfare bill. But Sharpton loved the plantation. He did not say a critical word. It was sad and pathetic. We are living in the age of the sell-out (p116).

The black prophetic tradition believes that we proceed because black people are worthy of being free, just as poor people of all colors are worthy of being free, even if they will never be free. That is the existential leap of faith. The dominant response is "I am wasting my time fighting a battle that can't be won". But that is not what the black prophetic tradition is about (p117).

The tradition has been diminished by the emaciation of the black press that once amplified the voices of black radicals. The decline of the black press and the consolidation of the media into the hands of a few corporations has shut out those who have remained faithful to this tradition (p117).

Because the black prophetic tradition is rarely taught in schools, including primarily African American schools, it is at risk of being extinguished. The black prophetic tradition no longer has a legitimacy or significant foothold in the minds of the black masses (p117).

With corporate media and the narrowing of the imagination of all Americans, including black people, there is an erasure of memory. This is the near-death of the black prophetic tradition. It means that the major roadblock to American fascism, which has been the black prophetic tradition, is gone. We already have the infrastructure in place for the police state (p117).

Black intelligence and black suspicion is still there among the masses. Black people are not stupid. They are not completely duped. Just scared. They don't think there is any alternative. This is the re-niggerization of the black professional class. They have big money, nice positions, comfort and convenience, but are scared, intimidated, afraid to tell the truth, and will not bear witness to justice (p118).

Those who are incorporated into the black professional and political class are willing to tolerate disrespect for the black masses and sip their tea and accept their checks and gain access to power. That is what niggerization is - keeping people afraid and intimidated (p118).

Until we deeply recognize that the prison system's bottom line is social control and creating a business from bodies of color and the poor, nothing can change. More than half of those in the prison system have never physically harmed another person, but just about all of these people have been harmed themselves (p119).

Not only does the criminal justice system sweep up the poor and people of color, but slavery within the prison system is permitted by the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This provision is at the core of how the labour of slaves was transformed into what people in prison call neo-slavery (p119). Neo-slavery is an integral part of the prison-industrial complex, in which hundreds of thousands of the nation's prisoners, primarily people of colour, are forced to work at involuntary labour for pennies an hour. If you call the New Jersey Bureau of Tourism, you are most likely talking to a prisoner at the Edna Mahan Correctional Institution for Women who is earning 23 cents an hour and who has no ability to negotiate working hours or working conditions (p119).

The bodies of poor, unemployed youths are worth little on the streets but become valuable commodities once they are behind bars (p119).

Prison affects the lives of millions of people who have never been arrested. There are an estimated eight million minors who have a parent incarcerated. Two million children have a mother or father in prison. Millions of Americans have been condemned to "civil death", stripped of their voting rights, rendered ineligible for student loans, food stamps, and public housing, because of criminal convictions (p120).

And the explosion of the penal system, accompanied by expanding rural poverty, means that it is no longer a black-white issue or form solely of racial control. There are mounting incarceration rates for women, poor whites, Latinos, and immigrants. The carceral state, unable to satiate itself with black bodies, is consuming other groups and ethnicities (p120).

The criminal justice system works perfectly, just as slavery did, as a matter of economic and political policy. How is it that a fifteen-year-old in Newark who the country labels as worthless to the economy, who has no hope of getting a job or affording college, can suddenly generate \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year once trapped inside the criminal justice system (p120)?

The expansion of prisons, parole, probation, the court and police systems has resulted in an enormous bureaucracy which has been a boon to everyone from architects to food vendors, all with one thing in common - a paycheck earned by keeping human beings in cages. The criminalization of poverty is a lucrative business, and we have replaced the social safety net with the dragnet (p120).

In 1913 Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary discontinued its isolation cages, which had driven prisoners insane. Prisoners within the US prison system would not be held in prolonged isolation again in large numbers until the turmoil of the 1960s (p120).

The rise of the antiwar and civil rights movements, along with the emergence of radical groups saw a return to systematized abuse within the prison system. Those held in the isolation unit were rarely there because they had violated prison rules. They were there because of their revolutionary beliefs - beliefs that the prison authorities feared might resonate with other prisoners (p121).

Once you disappear behind prison walls, you become prey. Rape, Torture, beatings, prolonged isolation, sensory deprivation, racial profiling, chain gangs, forced labour, rancid food, children sentenced and imprisoned as adults, prisoners forced to take medications to induce lethargy, inadequate heating and ventilation, poor health care, draconian sentences for nonviolent crimes, endemic violence (p121).

The techniques of sensory deprivation and prolonged isolation were pioneered by the Central Intelligence Agency to break prisoners during the cold war. Interrogators found that mere physical pain, no matter how extreme, often produced heightened resistance. So the intelligence agency turned to the more effective mechanisms of sensory disorientation and "self-inflicted pain" (p122).

One example of self-inflicted pain is to force a prisoner to stand without moving or to hold some other stressful bodily position for a long period. The combination, government psychologists argued, would cause victims to feel responsible for their own suffering and accelerate psychological disintegration (p123).

Sensory disorientation combines extreme sensory overload with extreme sensory deprivation. Prolonged isolation is followed by intense interrogation. Extreme heat is followed by extreme cold. Glaring light is followed by total darkness. Loud and sustained noise is followed by silence (p123).

The fusion of these two techniques, sensory disorientation and self-inflicted pain, creates a synergy of physical and psychological trauma whose sum is a hammer-blow to the existential platforms of personal identity (p123).

Prisons are at once hugely expensive and hugely profitable. Prisons function in the same way the military-industrial complex functions: the money is public and the profits are private. Privatization in the prison industrial complex includes companies which run prisons for a profit while at the same time gleaning profits from forced labour (p124).

One recent explosion of private industry is the partnering of Corrections Corporation of America with the federal government to detail close to 1 million undocumented people. Using public monies to enrich private citizens is the history of capitalism at its most exploitive (p124).

Those released from prison are woefully unprepared for reentry. They bear the years of trauma they endured and often suffer from the endemic health problems that come with long incarceration, including hepatitis C, tuberculosis, and HIV. Many of them lack access to medications upon release to treat their physical and mental illnesses (p124).

Finding work is difficult, and they feel alienated and are often estranged from friends and family. More than 60 percent end up back in prison. How do you teach someone to rid themselves of degradation? How long does it take to teach someone to feel safe, a sense of empowerment in a world where they often come home emotionally and physically damaged and unemployable (p124)?

Prisoners collectively present a litany of inhumane conditions including cold, filth, callous medical care, extended isolation often lasting years, use of devices of torture, harassment, brutality, and racism. The worst torment is the psychological pain caused by “no-touch torture”, which includes humiliation, sleep deprivation, sensory disorientation, extreme light or dark, extreme cold or heat and extended solitary confinement (p125).

These techniques are consciously designed to carry out a systematic attack on all human stimuli (p125). Sensory deprivation is used against Islamic militants, jailhouse lawyers, and the some 150 political prisoners, many part of radical black underground movements in the 1960s that advocated violence. A few, such as Abu-Jamal are well known but most have little public visibility (p125).

Those within the system who attempt to resist the abuse and mistreatment are dealt with severely. The for-profit prison companies have created an entrepreneurial class like that of the southern slaveholders, one dependent on the poor and on bodies of colour as a source of income (p126).

As long as profit remains the incentive to incarcerate human beings and our corporate state abounds in superfluous labor, there is little chance that the prison system will be reformed. Our prisons serve the engine of corporate capitalism, transferring state money to private corporations (p126).

These corporations will continue to stymie rational prison reform because the system feeds corporate bank accounts. At bottom, the problem is not race, although race plays a huge part in incarceration rates, nor is it ultimately poverty. It is the predatory nature of corporate capitalism itself (p126).

And until we slay the beast of corporate capitalism, until we wrest power back from corporations, our prison industry and the horror it perpetuates will only expand. African American radicals were targeted first. Muslim radicals were targeted next, especially after the attacks of 9/11 (p127).

Special Administrative Measures (SAMs) are the state’s legal weapon of choice when it seeks to isolate and break prisoners. They were bequeathed to us by the Clinton administration, which justified SAMs as a way to prevent Mafia and other gang leaders from ordering hits from inside prison (p129).

The use of SAMs expanded widely after the attacks of 2001. They were frequently used to isolate terrorism case detainees before trial. SAMs, which were renewed by Barack Obama, severely restrict a prisoner’s communication with the outside world. They end calls, letters, and visits with anyone except attorneys and sharply limit contact with family members (p129).

Hedges, Chris (2015). *Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt*. Nation Books. New York.

Classified Information Procedures Act (CIPA), begun under the Reagan administration, allows evidence in a trial to be classified and withheld from those being prosecuted. The extreme sensory deprivation used on political prisoners is far more effective in breaking and disorientating detainees than physical abuse is (p132).

It is torture as science, the dark art of gradual psychological disintegration. Constitutionally protected statements, beliefs, and associations are now a crime. Dissidents, even those who break no laws, can be stripped of their rights and imprisoned without due process (p132).

It is the legal equivalent of preemptive war. The state can detain and prosecute people not for what they have done, or even for what they are planning to do, but for holding religious or political beliefs that the state deems seditious (p132).

Justice has become unattainable for Muslim activists and black radicals in the United States. The draconian legal mechanisms that condemn African Americans and Muslim Americans who speak out publicly about the outrages we commit in our impoverished urban ghettos have left many wasting away in cages (p133).

The state has no intention of limiting its persecution to African Americans and Muslims. They were first, we are next (p133). The cruelty of power can't hide in prison like it does on the outside. You get America, every thing America has become, especially for poor people of colour in prison (p113).

The Occupy Wall Street movement was not only about battling back against the rise of a corporate oligarchy. It was also about our right to peaceful protest. The police in cities across the country were deployed to short-circuit this right. The police often blasted pepper spray into faces from inches away, temporarily blinding the victims (p134).

This violence, carried out against nonviolent protestors, came amid draconian city ordinances that effectively outlawed protest and banned demonstrators from public spaces. It was buttressed by heavy police infiltration and surveillance of the movement (p134).

When the press or activists attempted to document the abuse by police, they often were assaulted or otherwise blocked from taking photographs or videos. The message the state delivered was clear: Do not dissent. The corporate state, unwilling to address the grievances and injustices endured by the underclass, is extremely nervous about the mass movements that have swept the country in recent years (p140).

If the protests erupt again, the state hopes it will have neutralized much of the potential leadership. Being an activist in a peaceful mass protest is the only real "crime" these people commit. In drug rehabilitation programs in prison, the instructors feed "positive" and Christian thinking to the inmates, some of whom are Muslim. It is all about the power of positive thinking, about how they made mistakes and bad choices in life, and how they can correct those mistakes by taking another road, a Christian road (p141).

This focus on happy thoughts pervades prisons. There is little analysis of the structural causes for poverty and oppression. It is as if it was all about decisions made, not that are made for us. And this is how those in power want it. This kind of thinking induces passivity (p142).

Vigilante Violence

Any rebellion must contend with endemic American violence, especially vigilante violence, as well as the sickness of the gun culture that is its natural expression. As it has done throughout American history, the state, under siege, will turn to extrajudicial groups of armed thugs to repress popular movements.

Radical change in America is paid for with blood (p144).

There are some 310 million firearms in the United States, including 114 million handguns, 110 million rifles, and 86 million shot guns. The United States has the highest rate of gun ownership in the world - an average of 89 per 100 people (p144).

By contrast, Canada has 31 per 100 people. Canada usually sees under 200 gun-related homicides a year. Our addiction to violence and blood letting, which will continue to grow, marks a nation in terminal decline. The view of ourselves as divine agents of purification anointed by God and progress to reconfigure the world around us is a myth that remains firmly embedded in the American psyche (p144).

We suffer from a dangerous historical amnesia and self-delusional fantasies about the virtues and goodness of ourselves and of empire. We have masked our cultural propensity for widespread and indiscriminate murder. The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic and a killer. It has never yet melted (p145).

Violence in America is not restricted to state violence. There is a tradition of vigilante violence that is used to crush dissent, to keep repressed minorities in a state of fear, or to exact revenge on those the state has branded as traitors. It is a product of hatred, not hope. It is directed against the weak, not the strong. And it is deeply ingrained in the American psyche (p145).

America has been formed and shaped by slave patrols, gunslingers, gangs of strikebreakers, hired gun thugs, company militias, and the American Legion - originally right wing World War I veterans who attacked union agitators, especially those belonging to the Industrial Workers of the World (the "Wobblies") (p145).

The influence on the country of the White Citizens' Council, the White League, the Knights of the White Camelia and the Ku Klux Klan, which boasted more than 3 million members between 1915 and 1944 has been equally profound (p145).

More recently, heavily armed mercenary paramilitaries, violent Cuban exile groups, and armed militias such as the Oath Keepers and the anti-immigration extremist group Ranch Rescue have perpetuated America's seamless tradition of vigilantism (p145).

These vigilante groups have been tolerated, and often encouraged and utilized, by the ruling elite. And roaming the landscape along with these vigilante groups have been lone gunmen and mass killers who murder for money and power or to appease their own personal demons (p146).

Vigilante groups in America do not trade violence for violence. They are mostly white men who often prey on people of colour and radicals. They are capitalism's ideological vanguard, its shock troops used to break populist movements and tyrannize the oppressed (p146).

They will be unleashed against any mass movement that seriously threatens the structures of capitalist power and calls for rebellion (p146).

Hedges, Chris (2015). Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt. Nation Books. New York.

The long struggle to abolish slavery, then to free blacks from the reign of terror after the Civil War, and to build labour unions and organize for workers' rights - these movements flushed from the bowels of American society the thugs who found a sense of self-worth and intoxicating power in their role as armed vigilantes (p146).

In America, such thugs have always worked for minimal pay and the license to use indiscriminate violence against those branded as anti-American. Vigilante groups working on behalf of coal, steel, and mining concerns gunned down hundreds of unarmed labour organizers. Thousands more were wounded (p146).

The United States had the most violent labour wars in the industrialized world. The murderous rampages by these vigilante groups were sanctioned even though no American labour union ever publicly called for an armed uprising (p146).

There is no American immigrant group, from Chinese laborers to the Irish, who have not suffered the wrath of armed vigilantes. And African Americans know too intimately how judicial systems work to protect white vigilantes and police who gun down unarmed black men, women and children (p147).

There is a long, tragic continuum of the murders and lynching of blacks. The longer this continues the more likely become random and violent acts of retaliation, which the state will label terrorism and use to justify odious forms of repression (p147).

Once this eruption happens, as American history has illustrated, white vigilantes, along with the organs of the state security, are given carte blanche to attack and even murder those who are demonized as enemies of the state (p147).

Vigilante thugs serve the interests of the power elites. These vigilantes revel in a demented hypermasculinity. They champion a racist nationalism and sexism. They have huge megaphones on the airwaves, funded by the most retrograde forces in American capitalism (p147).

The gang violence in poor, urban neighbourhoods in cities like Chicago or Detroit credentializes these vigilante groups and stokes the inchoate fear of blacks among whites that lies at the core of the gun culture and American vigilantism (p147).

The reason given by vigilante groups for the need to bear arms is that guns protect us from tyranny. Guns keep us safe in our homes. Guns are the bulwark of liberty. But history does not support this contention. The communist party during the rise of fascism in Nazi Germany did not lack for weapons. Throughout the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, citizens had assault weapons in their homes (p147).

The engine of vigilante violence is not fear of government. It is the fear by white people of the black underclass and of the radicals who champion the cause of the oppressed. The black underclass has been enslaved, lynched, imprisoned, and impoverished for centuries. The white vigilantes do not acknowledge reality of this oppression but at the same time they are deeply worried about retribution directed against whites (p148).

Guns, for this reason, are made easily available to white people, while gun ownership is largely criminalized for blacks. The hatred expressed by vigilante groups for people of colour, along with Jews and Muslims, is matched by their hatred for the college-educated elite (p148).

The vigilantes see people of colour, along with those who espouse the liberal social values of the college-educated elites, including gun control, as contaminants to society. A breakdown will be inevitable once workers realize that the government has no genuine interest in raising low and substandard wages, halting the exportation of jobs overseas, or curbing crippling debt (p148).

White collar workers, who are also being downsized, will turn to the far right and refuse to be taxed to provide social benefits. At that point, something will crack. The non-suburban electorate will decide that the system has failed and start looking for a strongman to vote for - someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, ricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and post modern professors will no longer be calling the shots (p149).

once such a strongman takes office, nobody can predict what will happen. In 1932, most of the predictions made about what would happen if Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor were wildly overoptimistic (p149).

America's episodic violence, while dwarfed by the campaigns of genocide and mass extermination carried out by totalitarian systems is nevertheless as American as cherry pie. We have always mythologized, even idolized, our vigilante killers. The Indian fighters, gunslingers, and outlaws on the frontier colour our history (p149).

Vigilantes and lone avengers are the popular heroes in American culture. They are celebrated on television and in Hollywood movies. Audiences yearn for the violent authority embodied in rogue cops in films such as Dirty Harry (p149).

President Woodrow Wilson held a screening of *The Birth of a Nation*. It was the first motion picture shown at the White House. Wilson praised Griffith's portrayal of savage, animalistic black men - portrayed by white actors in black face - humiliating noble Southern men and carrying out sexual assaults on white women (p150).

The film swept the nation. White audiences cheered the white vigilantes. The ranks of the Ku Klux Klan exploded by a few million following the film's release. The real expansion of the Ku Klux Klan began in the summer of 1920. By the middle years of the 1920s, the Klan may have reached a peak of 5 million members spread across the nation (p150).

A century later, our culture's long infatuation with guns and acquiescence to vigilante killings continue to inspire the lone vigilantism of gunmen such as George Zimmerman, who followed an unarmed black teenager, Trayvon Martin, through a gated community in Florida and killed him (p150).

The state's "stand your ground" law that allowed Zimmerman to be acquitted of murder is the judicial sanction of vigilante violence. In 1984 Bernhard Goetz, in one of the most celebrated cases of vigilante violence, used an unlicensed gun to shoot four black teenagers in a New York subway car. He claimed the black men were trying to mug him (p150).

Goetz was acquitted of attempted murder and convicted only of illegal possession of a firearm, for which he spent eight months in jail. The case strengthened arguments for less restrictive "concealed carry" laws. It was because of Goetz and the NRA that Zimmerman was legally permitted to carry the concealed pistol he used to murder an unarmed seventeen year old boy (p151).

On average, 32 Americans are murdered with guns every day. Another 140 are treated for a gun assault in an emergency room. Some 30,000 Americans die each year from gunfire - and about two-thirds of the shootings are suicides (p151).

The state has never opposed the widespread public ownership of guns because these weapons have rarely been deployed against the state. The U.S. has a heavily armed population and yet maintains remarkable political stability because our violence lacks both an ideological and geographical center; it lacks cohesion; it has been too various, diffuse, and spontaneous to be forged into a single, sustained, invertebrate hatred shared by entire social classes (p151).

Americans also have a remarkable lack of memory where violence is concerned and have left most of our excesses as part of our buried history. Most of our violence has taken the form of action by one group of citizens against another group, rather than by citizens acting against the state (p151).

The sheer size of the country, the mixed ethnic, religious, and racial composition of the people, and the diffuseness of power under our federal system have all tended to blunt or minimize citizen-versus-state conflicts and to throw citizen-versus-citizen conflicts into high relief (p152).

We are not a people with a revolutionary or an insurrectionary tradition. The war of independence, while it borrowed the rhetoric of revolution, replaced a foreign oligarchy with a native, slaveholding oligarchy. The founding fathers were conservative. The primacy of private property, especially slaves, was paramount to the nation's founders (p152).

The framers of the Constitution established a series of mechanisms to thwart the popular will, from the electoral college to the appointment of senators. George Washington, probably the wealthiest man in the country when the war was over shared exclusive economic and political power with his fellow aristocrats (p152).

This distrust of popular rule among the elite runs in a straight line from The Federalist Papers to the 2000 presidential election, where the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, received over half a million more popular votes than the republican, George W. Bush (p152).

The few armed rebellions were swiftly and brutally put down by a combination of armed vigilante groups and government troops. More importantly, these rebellions were concerned with specific local grievances rather than broad political and ideological disputes (p152).

Since our violence did not typically begin with anyone's desire to subvert the state, it did not typically end by undermining the legitimacy of authority. The universal, radical ideologies and utopian visions that sparked revolutions in Russia and Germany after World War 1 are alien to our intellectual tradition (p153).

Most American violence has been initiated with a "conservative" bias. It has been unleashed against abolitionists, Catholics, workers and labour organizers, Negroes, Orientals, and other ethnic or racial or ideological minorities (p153).

It has been used ostensibly to protect the American, the Southern, the white protestant, or simply the established middle-class way of life and high morals. Thomas Paine is America's single great revolutionary theorist. But we do not have a tradition of revolutionists. This makes Paine unique (p153).

No revolutionist can challenge power if he or she does not grasp how power works. Of Paine's contributions to the American Revolution, this understanding ranks as one of the most important. Most American leaders now believe they can work through traditional mechanisms of power, including electoral politics and the judicial system, to reform corporate power (p153).

Our corporate state has no interest in accommodation. Paine created a new, revolutionary political vocabulary. Common Sense, Rights of Man, and The Age of Reason were the most widely read political tracts of the eighteenth century. Civil society, Paine argued, must always act as a counterweight against the state in a democracy. Power, he warned, even in a democracy, carries within it the seeds of tyranny (p154).

One of the most important keys to radical social change is a change in the nature of language itself in the form of new words and new meanings for old words. Language is both a product of history and possesses a history of its own (p155).

The call for revolution advanced by Paine, were issued in the new language of secular rationalism rather than the older language of religion. Paine wrote in the everyday language of working people. He was the first political writer to extend debate beyond university halls, government office buildings, and elite clubs to the streets and the taverns (p155).

Paine knew that those who seek to monopolize power always use inaccessible and specialized jargon to exclude the average citizen. Paine broke that chain. Today, we will have to articulate our reality through the ideas of socialism rather than capitalism in an age of diminishing resources. And we will have to do this in a form that is accessible (p155).

Despotic regimes, like the corporate state, make war on reason and rational thought. They circumscribe free speech and free assembly. They marginalize and silence critics. They seek to subjugate all institutions to despotism. They use propaganda to rob people of the language to describe their daily reality and discredit those who seek radical change (p156).

The goal is to render a population politically alienated. Those who live under despotic regimes are denied the ability to communicate and discuss in a national forum their most basic concerns and grievances. and this suppression has consequences (p156).

Paine was relentlessly persecuted by the British state, and he would later be persecuted in France and in America upon his final return. Government spies tailed him constantly on London's streets. Those parts of the press that functioned as government mouthpieces pelted him with abuse. Open letters, often identically worded but signed with different pen names, were circulated through taverns and alehouses (p157).

Dozens of sermons and satires directed at Paine were published, many of them written anonymously for commoners by upper-class foes masquerading as commoners. Paine's power, like Orwell's, lay in his refusal to be anyone's propagandist. He told people, even people who supported him, what they did not want to hear (p157).

He was a fierce abolitionist and a foe of the use of terror as a political tool. Unchecked legislatures, he warned, could be as despotic as unchecked monarchs. His warning was prophetic. Paine hated the pomp

and arrogance of power and privilege. he retained throughout his life a fierce loyalty to the working class in which he was raised (p159).

Paine never veered from the proposition that liberty means the liberty to speak the truth even if the truth is unpopular. He did not seek anyone's adulation. And by the end of his life, like most rebels who have held fast to the vision that took hold of them, he was an outcast (p160).

Any revolutionary movement that builds a mass following will have to contend with the kind of state-orchestrated vilification and vigilante violence that plagued Paine's life. Vitriol and violence will be unleashed, with the tacit approval of the state, on all who resist, even nonviolently. These reactionary movements, while defining themselves as the guardians of patriotism and the Christian faith, will draw on the deep reserves of racial hostility (p160).

The hidden agenda of right-wing militias, the Tea Party, the lunatic fringe of the Republican Party, the national rifle association, and the survivalist cults is to ensure that guns will keep the home and family from being overrun by the crazed black hordes that will escape from their colonies in our urban slums (p160).

Scratch the surface of the survivalist cult in the United States and you expose terrified white supremacists. The inchoate terror of black violence in retribution for white, vigilante violence and state-sanctioned violence inspired Timothy McVeigh to bomb the federal building in Oklahoma city (p160). Perhaps it is well that Negroes try to be as unintellectual as possible, for if they ever started really thinking about what happened to them they'd go wild. And perhaps that is the secret of whites who want to believe that Negroes really have no memory; for if they thought that negroes remembered they would start out to shoot them all in sheer self-defense (p161).

The breakdown of American society will trigger a popular backlash, which we glimpsed in the Occupy movement, but it will also energize the traditional armed vigilante groups that embrace a version of American fascism that fuses Christian and national symbols (p161).

The longer we remain in a state of political paralysis, dominated by a corporate elite that refuses to respond to the growing misery and governed by an ineffectual liberal elite, the more the rage of the white male underclass will find expression through violence (p161).

If it remains true to the American tradition, this violence will not be directed at the power elite but will single out minorities, dissidents, activists, and scapegoats (p161).

The language of violence always presages violence. The impoverishment of a working class and the snuffing out of hope and opportunity always produce angry mobs ready to kill and be killed. A discredited liberal elite get swept aside (p161).

Thugs and demagogues play to the passions of the crowd. The unraveling of America mirrors the unraveling of Yugoslavia. The Balkin war was not caused by ancient ethnic hatreds. It was caused by the economic collapse of Yugoslavia (p161).

The petty criminals and goons who took power harnessed the rage and despair of the unemployed and the desperate. They singled out convenient scapegoats, from ethnic Croats and Muslims to Kosovar Albanians to Gypsies, and armed their own vigilantes (p161).

They set up movements that unleashed a feeding frenzy leading to war and self-immolation. There is little difference between the ludicrous would-be poet Radovan Karadzic and the moronic Glenn Beck or Sarah Palin. There is little difference between the Oath Keepers and the Serbian militias. We can laugh at these people. They are often idiots and buffoons. But they are also dangerous (p162).

These movements are not yet full-blown fascist movements. They do not openly call for the extermination of ethnic or religious groups. They do not openly advocate violence. But in Germany there was a yearning for fascism before fascism was invented (p162).

It is the yearning that we now see. If we do not swiftly reincorporate the unemployed and the poor back into the economy, giving them jobs and relief from crippling debt, then the nascent racism and violence that are leaping up around the edges of American society will become a full-blown conflagration (p162). Left unchecked, the hatred for radical Islam will transform itself into a hatred for Muslims. The hatred for undocumented workers will become a hatred for Mexicans and Central Americans. The hatred for those not defined by this largely white movement as American patriots will become a hatred for African Americans. The hatred for liberals will morph into a hatred for all democratic institutions, from universities to government agencies to the press (p162).

Beleagued whites, battered by a stagnant and flagging economy, are retreating, especially in the South, into a mythical self-glorification built around the Confederacy. This retreat resembles the absurdist national and ethnic myths that characterized the former Yugoslavia when it unraveled (p163).

Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim ethnic groups, out of work and plagued by hyperinflation, built fantasies of a glorious past that became a substitute for history. The ethnic groups, worshiping their own mythic virtues and courage and wallowing in historical examples of their own victimhood, vomited up demagogues and murderers such as Radovan Karadzic and Slobodan Milosevic (p163).

To restore this mythological past they sought to remove, through exclusion and finally violence, competing ethnicities. The embrace of non-reality-based belief systems made communication among ethnic groups impossible. They no longer spoke the same cultural or historical language (p163).

They believed in their private fantasy. And because they believed in fantasy, they had no common historical narrative built around verifiable truth and no way finally to communicate with anyone who did not share their self-delusion (p163).

Alabama sentences more people to death per capita than any other state. With no state-funded program to provide legal assistance to death-row prisoners, half of the condemned are represented by court-appointed lawyers whose compensation is capped at 1000 dollars (p165).

According to the Equal Justice Initiative, "in a state with a population that is 27% black, nearly half of Alabama's death row is black and 83% of the 757 people executed by Alabama since capital punishment began in the state have been black" (p165).

The Rebel Defiant

The police presence and the communications van outside of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London are the visible tips of the claws poking above the surface of the vast, secret global security and surveillance monster that has cornered Julian Assange and obliterated our privacy (p173).

An array of governmental and intelligence agencies from around the globe are working to destroy WikiLeaks and wrest Assange from the embassy so that he can be extradited to the United States, tried and imprisoned (p173).

Britain had rejected an Ecuadorean request that Assange be granted safe passage to an airport. Because he cannot get to the airport, he is trapped in an embassy room. Assange said it was like being in a “space station”. It is hard to envision how he will ever walk out to freedom (p174).

Assange, Chelsea Manning, and WikiLeaks, by making public in 2010 half a million internal documents from the Pentagon and the State Department, exposed the empire’s hypocrisy and indiscriminate violence, as well as its use of torture, lies, bribery, and crude tactics of intimidation (p174).

WikiLeaks fulfilled the most important role of a press when it turned a floodlight on the inner workings of the powerful, and for this it has become empire’s most coveted prey. All those around the globe with the computer skills and inclination to make public the secrets of empire, from Jeremy Hammond to Edward Snowden, are targeted (p174).

Australian diplomatic cables obtained by the Sydney Morning Herald described the U.S. campaign against Assange and WikiLeaks as “unprecedented both in its scale and nature”. At least a dozen U.S. governmental agencies, including the Pentagon, the FBI, the Army’s Criminal Investigative Department, the Justice Department, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and the Diplomatic Security Service, are assigned to the WikiLeaks case, while the CIA and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence are assigned to track down WikiLeaks’s supposed breaches of security (p175).

The global assault, which saw Australia, after pressure from Washington, threaten to revoke Assange’s passport, is part of the terrifying metamorphosis of the “war on terror” into a war on civil liberties. The dragnet has swept up any person or organization that fits the profile of those who can burrow into the archives of power and disseminate it to the public (p175).

It no longer matters if they have committed a crime. Aaron Swartz, an internet activist, was arrested in January 2011 for downloading roughly 5 million academic articles and documents from JSTOR, an online clearinghouse for scholarly journals. Swartz was charged by federal prosecutors with two counts of wire fraud and eleven violations of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (p175).

The charges carried the threat of 1 million dollars in fines and thirty five years in prison. Swartz committed suicide. With their fluency in computers and experience as the first victims of wholesale surveillance, WikiLeaks collaborators or supporters understood before the rest of us the reach of the security and surveillance organs (p176).

Those associated with WikiLeaks are routinely stopped at international airports and attempts are made to recruit them as informants. Following denunciations of WikiLeaks by the US government, financial

service companies, including Visa, MasterCard, PayPal, Bank of America, Western Union, and American Express, blacklisted the organization (p177).

Denial-of-service attacks on WikiLeaks infrastructure have been frequent and massive. All this has come with a well-orchestrated campaign of character assassination against Assange, including mischaracterizations of the sexual misconduct case brought against him by Swedish police (p177).

Assange sought asylum in the Ecuadorean embassy after exhausting his fight to avoid extradition from the United Kingdom to Sweden over the sexual misconduct charges. He and his lawyers contend that an extradition to Sweden would mean an extradition to the United States (p177).

And even if Sweden refused to comply with US demands for Assange, kidnapping, or “extraordinary rendition” would remain an option for Washington. Kidnapping was given legal cover by a 1989 memorandum issued by the Justice Department stating that “the FBI may use its statutory authority to investigate and arrest individuals for violating United States law, even if the FBI’s actions contravene customary international law” (p177).

This is a stunning example of the corporate state’s Orwellian double-speak. The persecution of Assange and WikiLeaks and the practice of extraordinary rendition embody the evisceration of the Fourth Amendment, which was designed to protect us from unreasonable searches and seizures and requires any warrant to be judicially sanctioned and supported by probable cause (p177).

Assange, who attempted to run for a seat in Australia’s upper house of Parliament from his refuge communicates with his global network of associates and supporters up to seventeen hours a day through numerous cell phones and a collection of laptop computers. He encrypts his communications (p179). Assange saw WikiLeaks’s primary role as giving a voice to the victims of US wars and proxy wars by using leaked documents to tell their stories. The release of the Afghan and Iraq “War Logs” disclosed the extent of civilian death and suffering as well as the plethora of lies told by the Pentagon and the state to conceal the human toll. The logs also unmasked the bankruptcy of the traditional press and its obsequious service as war propagandists (p179).

In every conflict, the press of the nation at war are an enthusiastic part of the machine - cheerleaders for slaughter and tireless mythmakers for the nation and the military. The few renegades within the press who refuse to wave the flag and lionize the troops become pariahs in newsrooms and find themselves attacked by the state (p180).

There is no free press without a willingness to defy law and expose the abuses and lies carried out by the powerful. As the traditional press atrophies with dizzying speed, our last hope lies with rebels such as Manning, Assange, Hammond and Snowden (p180).

WikiLeaks released after-action reports authored by U.S. diplomats and the U.S. military. The cables invariably put a pro-unit or pro-U.S. spin on events. The reality is usually much worse. Military units use after-action reports to justify or hide inappropriate behavior (p180).

And despite the heated rhetoric of the state about American lives being endangered by WikiLeaks exposures, there has been no evidence that any action of WikiLeaks has cost lives. Then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates conceded this point: “The initial assessment in no way discounts the risk to

national security. However, the review to date has not revealed any sensitive intelligence sources and methods compromised by the disclosure” (p181).

The New York Times, The Guardian, El Pais, Le Monde, and Der Spiegel printed redacted copies of some of the WikiLeaks files, but they have underreported the prosecution of Manning and entrapment of Assange (p181).

Do these news organizations believe that if the state shuts down organizations such as WikiLeaks and imprisons Manning and Assange, traditional news outlets will be left alone? Can't they connect the dots between the prosecutions of government whistle-blowers under the Espionage Act, warrantless wiretapping, the monitoring of communications, and the persecution of Manning, Assange and Snowden (p181)?

Haven't they realized that this is a war by a global corporate elite not against an organization or an individual but against liberty, the freedom of the press, and democracy itself (p181)?

“The national security state can try to reduce our activity”, Assange says. “It can close the noose a little tighter. But there are three forces working against it. The first is the massive surveillance required to protect its communication, including the nature of its cryptography (p181)”.

“Secondly, there is widespread knowledge not only of how to leak, but how to leak and not be caught, how to even avoid suspicion that you are leaking. There will always be people within the system that have an agenda to defy authority” (p181).

“The medium-term perspective is good”, he declared. “The education of young people takes place on the Internet. You cannot hire anyone who is skilled in any field without them having been educated on the Internet. The military, the CIA, the FBI, all have no choice but to hire from a pool of people who have been educated on the Internet (p182).

This means that they are hiring moles in vast numbers. And this means that these organizations will see their capacity to control information diminish as more and more people with our values are hired (p182)”.

We are living under martial law as far as our communications are concerned. We just can't see the tanks - but they're there. To that degree, the Internet, which was supposed to be a civilian space, has become a militarized space (p182).

The Internet has become not only a tool to educate but the mechanism to cement into place a postmodern surveillance dystopia that is supranational and dominated by global corporate power. This new system of global control will merge global humanity into one giant grid of mass surveillance and mass control (p182).

It is only through encryption that we can protect ourselves. And it is only by breaking through the digital walls of secrecy erected by the power elite that we can expose power. The corporate state will eventually effectively harness the power of the Internet to shut down dissent (p182).

The Internet, our greatest tool of emancipation has been transformed into the most dangerous facilitator of totalitarianism we have ever seen. Assange's gloomy vision of a future when all privacy will be eradicated is in stark contrast to the utopian rebellions in the past that promised a new heaven and a new earth (p182).

Hedges, Chris (2015). Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt. Nation Books. New York.

The sentencing of Chelsea Manning marked the day when the state formally declared that all who mane and expose its crimes will become political prisoners, or will be forced, like Snowden, to flee in exile. State power, the sentence showed us, will be unaccountable. And those who do not accept unlimited state power will be persecuted (p184).

Manning, if we had a functioning judiciary, would have been a witness for the prosecution against the war criminals she helped expose. She would not have been headed, bound and shackled, to the military prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (p184).

But the government effectively shut down Manning's defense team. The Army private was not permitted to argue that she had a moral and legal obligation under international law to defy military orders and to make public the war crimes she had uncovered (p184).

Manning was forbidden to challenge the government's unverified assertion that she had harmed national security. The Judge's refusal to permit information on the lack of actual damage from the leaks would eliminate a viable defense and cut defense off at the knees (p184).

Manning was also barred from presenting to the court her motives for giving WikiLeaks hundreds of thousands of classified diplomatic cables, war logs from Afghanistan and Iraq, and videos. The issues of her motives and the potential harm to national security could be raised only at the time of sentencing, but by then it was too late (p184).

These restrictions prevented Manning from appealing to the Nuremberg principles, a set of guidelines created by the International Law Commission of the United Nations after World War II to determine what constitutes a war crime (p185).

The principles make political leaders, commanders, and combatants responsible for war crimes, even if domestic or internal laws allow such actions. The Nuremberg principles are designed to protect those, like Manning, who expose these crimes (p185).

Under the Nuremberg principles, military orders do not offer an excuse for committing war crimes. And the Nuremberg principles would clearly exonerate Manning and c ondemn the pilots, shown in the "Collateral Murder" video, who fired on unarmed civilians in Baghdad, leaving twelve dead, including the two Reuters journalists (p185).

Our terror is delivered daily to the wretched of the earth with industrial weapons. But to us, it is invisible. We are not aware of the very natural lust for revenge against those who carry out or symbolize this oppression. We see only the final pyrotechnics of terror, the shocking moment when the rage eruts into an inchoate fury and the murder of innocents (p187).

And willfully uninformed, we do not understand our own c omplicity. We self-righteously condemn the killers as sub-human savages who deserve more of the violence that created them. This is a recipe for endless terror (p187).

Manning, by providing a window into the truth, opened up the possiblility of redemption. She offered hope for a new relationship with the Muslim world, one based on compassion and honesty, on the rule of law, rather than on the cold brutality of industrial warfare (p187).

But by refusing to heed the truth that Manning laid before us, by ignoring the crimes committed daily in our name, we not only continue to swell the ranks of our enemies but put the lives of our citizens in greater and greater jeopardy (p187).

Manning showed us through the documents she released to WikiLeaks what all Iraqis know. They have endured hundreds of rapes and murders, along with systematic torture by the military and police of the puppet government we installed (p187).

None of the atrocities from the leaked videos and documents were investigated. Manning provided the data showing that between 2004 and 2009 there were at least 109,032 “violent deaths” in Iraq, including those of 66,081 civilians, and that coalition troops were responsible for at least 195 unreported civilian deaths (p187).

In the “Collateral Murder” video, she allowed us to watch as a U.S. helicopter attacked unarmed civilians in Baghdad and as a U.S. Army tank then crushed one of the wounded lying in the street. Why should we respect a court system, or a governmental system, that does not respect us? Why should we abide by laws that protect only criminals like Wall Street thieves while leaving the rest of us exposed to abuse (p192)?

Why should we continue to have faith in structures of power that deny us our most basic rights and civil liberties? Why should we be impoverished so that the profits of big banks, corporations, and hedge funds can swell (p192)?

The hypocrisy of ‘law and order’ and the injustices caused by capitalism cannot be cured by institutional reform but through civil disobedience and direct action. Sometimes laws have to be broken to make room for change (p197).

The majority of people in prison did what they had to do to survive. Most are poor. They get caught up in the war on drugs, which is how you make money if you are poor. The real reason they get locked in prison for so long is so corporations can continue to make big profits. It is not about justice (p198).

Jail is essentially enduring harassment and dehumanizing conditions with frequent lockdowns and shakedowns. You have to constantly fight for respect from the guards, sometimes getting yourself thrown in the box (p198).

Resistance must be a way of life. The truth will always come out. In these times of secrecy and abuse of power there is only one solution - transparency. If our governments are so compromised that they will not tell us the truth, we then must step forward to grasp it (p199).

Provided with the unequivocal proof of primary source documents people can fight back. If our governments will not give this information to us, then we must take it ourselves. When whistleblowers come forward we need to fight for them, so others will be encouraged (p199).

When they are gagged, we must be their voice. When they are hunted, we must be their shield. When they get locked away, we must free them. Giving us the truth is not a crime. This is our data, our information, our history. We must fight to own it. Courage is contagious (p199).

The world has turned upside down. The pestilence of corporate totalitarianism is spreading over the earth. The criminals have seized power. It is not only Assange, Hammond, Abu-Jamal, Manning and Hashmi they want (p200).

Hedges, Chris (2015). Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt. Nation Books. New York.

It is all who dare to defy the destructive fury of the global corporate state. The persecution of these rebels is the harbinger of what is to come: the rise of a bitter world where criminals in tailored suits and gangsters in beribboned military uniforms hunt down and cage all who resist (p200).

Sublime Madness

The man who waged the first significant war in North America against hydraulic fracturing, commonly known as “fracking”, was an eccentric, messianic christian preacher named Wiebo Ludwig. The anti-fracking movement, especially in rural communities in Colorado, Pennsylvania, and upstate New York, is one of the most potent grassroots insurgencies in North America (p201).

The movement has been able to block the natural gas industry’s plans to exploit shale gas in New York state. And it is a huge stumbling block for the industry in many other parts of the United States and Canada. If the anti-fracking movement has a founding father, it is Wiebo Ludwig (p201).

Ludwig swiftly understood that environmental laws are not designed to protect the environment. The laws are designed, at best, to regulate the environment’s continued exploitation. It was futile, he argued, to spend energy attempting to improve or adjust these regulations (p202).

We might be able to slow or delay environmental degradation, but we would not stop it. Ludwig exposed the absurdity of attempting to build an environmental movement that had as its goal the more efficient oversight and regulation of the oil and gas industry (p202).

He realized that lobbying those in power, testifying in hearings, writing letters of protest, contacting celebrities to attract press attention, and organizing petition drives to get the government to intervene was useless (p202).

Corporations, he understood, determined and often wrote the laws that were designed to regulate their activity. Environmental laws were, he found, a circular joke on the public. The Big Green environmental groups that worked within these legal parameters were largely ineffectual and often complicit in the destruction of the ecosystems that they claimed they wanted to protect (p202).

Resistance, he argued, would have to be militant and it would have to be local. It could not play by the rules imposed by the corporate state. Wiebo felt that our society was in a spiritual crisis, rather than an environmental or an economic crisis (p202).

he felt that our addiction to fossil fuels, rampant consumerism and materialism, addictions, breakdown of family units, were all symptoms of a society that has lost its root connection to God. Further, he felt that we were in a kind of end times state, where the forces of good are in a terrible struggle with the forces of evil (p203).

That one of our era’s most effective figures of resistance against the oil and gas industry was a messianic Christian is perhaps not coincidental. He was propelled forward by a vision. Ludwig grasped the moral decadence of the consumer society, its unchecked hedonism, worship of money, and deadening cult of the self (p203).

The oil and gas companies began a massive drilling effort in the early 1990s. At first, like many other reformers and activists, Ludwig used legal and political channels to push back against the companies, which were putting down wells on the edge of his 160 acre farm (p203).

His war against industry illustrated the cost of our addiction to hydrocarbons: our materialistic way of life is based on the destruction of groundwater, the devaluing of rural property, the invasion of rural communities, the poisoning of the skies with carcinogens, and the fragmentation of landscapes (p204). Hedges, Chris (2015). *Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt*. Nation Books. New York.

Ludwig's first acts of sabotage were minor. He laid down nails poking up out of boards on roads to puncture the tires on the industry's trucks. He smashed solar panels. He blocked roads by downing trees. He disabled vehicles and drilling equipment (p204).

But after two leaks of hydrogen sulfide sour gas from nearby wells, and after the destruction of two of his water wells, he declared open war on the oil and gas industry. He began to blow up oil and gas facilities. He said he had to fight back to protect his children (p204).

The oil company brought in a "terrorism expert" from Toronto to speak at local town hall gatherings and the expert warned residents of the rising "terrorism" of religious cults led by fanatic, charismatic leaders. Ludwig was undeterred. Ludwig was never caught in an act of sabotage, but he probably had a hand in damage to hundreds of remote well sites estimated at \$12 million (p205).

Ludwig was finally arrested in 2000 on five counts of property damage and possession of explosives and imprisoned for nineteen months. Ludwig believed that if you fought for righteousness, you would always be assured of spiritual victory, even if you were defeated in the eyes of the world (p205).

There are reports of ongoing sabotage along the path of the XL pipeline and in the Alberta oil fields. It's one of the oil and gas industry's secrets. The industry doesn't make a big fuss because they don't want to encourage the response. But violence begets violence. And the more facilities Ludwig blew up, the harsher became the intrusion of the state (p206).

Meeting industrial violence against livestock and families with more industrial violence against oil and gas installations is not the answer. It is an act of frustration as well as a reflection of the captured state of regulators. And it submits an entire community to a reign of industry- and state-sanctioned terror (p206).

Ludwig, before he died at age seventy after refusing chemotherapy for esophageal cancer, denounced violence. The battle with the corporate state will take place not only in city streets and plazas but in the nation's heartland. Ranchers, farmers, and enraged citizens have united with activists to oppose fracking and the building of the Keystone XL tar sand pipeline (p207).

The Tar Sands Blockade (TSB), which is working to stop the northern leg of the Keystone XL from being built, is an example of this grassroots movement. The XL pipeline, which would cost \$7 billion and whose southern portion is complete, is a symbol of the dying order (p208).

If the northern section is built, it will pump 830,000 barrels a day of unrefined tar sand fluid from tar sand minefields in Canada to the Texas Gulf Coast. Tar sand oil is not conventional crude oil. It is a synthetic slurry, that cannot flow without being laced with toxic chemicals and gas condensates (p208). Tar sands are boiled and diluted with these chemicals before being blasted down a pipeline at high pressure. Water sources are instantly contaminated if there is a rupture. The pipeline, if built, would cross nearly 2,000 waterways, including the Ogallala Aquifer, course of one third of US farmland irrigation water (p208).

And it is not a matter of if, but when, it would spill. Keystone XL is part of the final phase of extreme exploitation by the corporate state. The corporations intend to squeeze the last vestiges of profit from an ecosystem careening toward collapse (p208).

Most of the oil that can be reached through drilling from traditional rigs is depleted. In response, the fossil fuel industry has developed new technologies to go after dirtier, less efficient forms of energy. These technologies bring with them a dramatically heightened cost to ecosystems (p208).

They accelerate the warming of the planet and contaminate vital water sources. Deepwater Arctic drilling, tar sand extraction, hydraulic fracturing, and drilling horizontally, amount to ecological suicide, given the cost of extraction and the effects of the environment (p208).

The pipeline has attracted construction crews and rebels alike. Surviving on canned food and bottled water, protestors carried out tree-sits in September 2012 to block the path of the pipeline near Winnsboro, Texas. Others chained themselves to logging equipment, locked themselves in trucks carrying pipe to construction sites, and hung banners at equipment staging areas (p209).

Private security companies employed by TransCanada, along with local law enforcement, aggressively detained and restricted reporters, including a New York Times reporter and photographer, who were attempting to cover the protests. Most of the journalists were on private property with the permission of landowners (p209).

Keystone XL is being built as an export pipeline for Canada to sell its dirty oil to foreign markets. This is not about energy security, it's about securing TransCanada's profits. The jobs estimates put forward by TransCanada are unsubstantiated and the project could actually destroy more jobs than it creates (p209).

Local resistance along the proposed pipeline has grown, especially as the project has begun to be put in place. And there have been reports of sabotage along the pipeline route. Activists dump salt into the gas tanks, slash the tires of construction equipment, and disable equipment. The companies don't want to talk about it because they fear the sabotage will grow if it is publicized (p210).

The invasive extraction of tar sands and shale deposits and the deep sea drilling in the Arctic, Alaska, and the Gulf of Mexico and on the Eastern Seaboard have been sold to the public as a route to energy independence, a way to create tens of thousands of new jobs, and a boost to the sagging economy, but this is another corporate lie (p210).

The process of extracting shale oil through hydraulic fracking requires millions of gallons of chemically treated water that leaves behind poisoned aquifers and huge impoundment ponds of toxic waste.

Extracting oil shale, or kerogen, for melting requires expending tremendous amounts of energy for a marginal return (p210).

It also involves vast open-pit mining operations and pumping underground that melts the oil with steam jets. Tar sand extraction, because it emits significantly more greenhouse gases than conventional oil drilling, will accelerate global warming (p210).

There comes a time when we must make a stand for the future of our children, and for all life on Earth. That time is here. That time is now (p210).

Reinhold Niebuhr wrote that those who defy the forces of injustice and repression are possessed by "a sublime madness" in the soul "which disregards immediate appearances and emphasizes profound and ultimate realities (p211).

Niebuhr noted that “nothing but madness will do battle with malignant power and ‘spiritual wickedness in high places’”. This sublime madness is dangerous but it is vital. Without it, truth is obscured.

Liberalism lacks the spirit of enthusiasm, not to say, fanaticism, which is so necessary to move the world out of its beaten tracks. It is too intellectual and too little emotional to be an efficient force in history (p211).

The prophets in the Hebrew Bible had this sublime madness. The words of the Hebrew prophets were a scream in the night. While the world is at ease and asleep, the prophet feels the blast from heaven. Because he sees and faces an unpleasant reality, the prophet is compelled to proclaim the very opposite of what his heart expected (p211).

It is impossible to defy radical evil without sublime madness. Sublime madness demands self-sacrifice and entails the very real possibility of death. Not that the rebel possessed by sublime madness wants to die. The rebel understands the terrible power of the forces arrayed against all rebels, and how these forces, once threatened, will go to silence rebels, and yet is so possessed that he or she is unable to conform (p211).

The rebel, dismissed as impractical and zealous, is chronically misunderstood. Those cursed with timidity, fear or blininess and those who are slaves to opportunism call for moderation and patience. They distort the language of religion, spirituality, compromise, generosity, and compassion to justify cooperation with systems of power that are bent on our destruction (p211).

The rebel is deaf to these critiques. The rebel hears only his or her inner voice, which demands steadfast defiance. Self-promotion, positions of influence, the adulation of the public, and the awards and prominent positions that come with bowing before authority mean nothing to the rebel, who understands that virtue is not rewarded (p212).

The rebel expects nothing and gets nothing. But for the rebel, to refuse to struggle, to refuse to rebel, is to commit spiritual and moral suicide. The rebel, possessed by “sublime madness” speaks words that resonate only with those who can see through the façade. The rebel functions as a prophet (p212).

He or she has what Leo Tolstoy described as the three characteristics of prophecy: “First, it is entirely opposed to the general ideas of the people in the midst of who it is uttered; second, all who hear it feels its truth; and thirdly, abov all, it urges men to realize what it foretells (p212).

The message of the rebel is disturbing because of the consequences of the truth he or she speaks. To accept that Barack Obama is, as Cornel West says “a black mascot for Wall Street” means having to challenge some frightening monoliths of power and give up the comfortable illusion that the Democratic Party or liberal institutions or a single elected official can be instruments for genuine reform (p212).

To accept that nearly all forms of electronic communication are captured and stored by the government is to give up the illusion of freedom. The rebel, by disseminating this truth, forces us to embrace a new radicalism. The rebel shows us that there is no hope for correction or reversal by appealing to power (p213).

The rebel makes it clear that it is only by overthrowing traditional systems of power that we can be liberated. The denunciation of the rebel is a matter of self-preservation for the liberal class. For once the callous heart of the corporate state is exposed, so is the callous heart of its liberal apologists (p213).

Hedges, Chris (2015). *Wages of Rebellion - The Moral Imperative of Revolt*. Nation Books. New York.

And the rebel, who has few friends, is the constant target of the liberal establishment. Socrates, for this reason, is reported by some ancient accounts to have stood mute when he was being tried for sedition and condemned to death (p213).

Socrates' judges could not grasp the inner compulsion - the sublime madness - that drove Socrates to risk his life for the truth. They failed to grasp the central Socratic paradox: that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. Socrates' call for individuals to eschew the claims of society and the state on the citizen was a form of civic heresy (p213).

His demand that we do what is right for its own sake made no sense to those confined by law. Because he saw the political system in Athens as ignorant and morally bankrupt, he said that it was impossible for a good person to participate in the charade of justice it perpetrated (p213).

And for speaking this truth, for challenging the legitimacy of a decadent system, he was sentenced to die, charged with corrupting the morals of Athenian youth (p213). Martin Luther King Jr.'s life was marked by this Socratic paradox. Christian theology calls the Socratic defiance of radical evil "bearing the cross" (p214).

And Christian theology warns that all those who are successful in their defiance pay a bitter price.

"When I took up the cross", King said less than a year before he was killed, "I recognized its meaning... The cross is something that you bear, and ultimately that you die on" (p214).

"I choose to identify with the underprivileged. I choose to identify with the poor. I choose to give my life for the hungry. I choose to give my life for those who have been left out of the sunlight of opportunity". The moral life, celebrated only in the afterglow of history and often not celebrated at all, is lonely, frightening, and hard (p215).

The crowd condemns you. The state brands you a traitor. You struggle with your own fears and doubts. The words you speak are often not understood. And you are never certain if your words and actions, in the end, will make any difference (p215).

The rebel knows the odds. To defy radical evil does not mean to be irrational. It is to have a sober clarity about the power of evil and one's insignificance and yet to rebel anyway. To face radical evil is to accept self-sacrifice (p215).

Resistance to Nazism was painfully rare, even as Germany was losing the war. The slightest whisper of dissent could mean death, as evidenced by the execution of the five Munich University students and their philosophy professor who were members of the White Rose resistance movement (p216).

The White Rose distributed thousands of anti-Nazi leaflets before they were arrested by the Gestapo and guillotined. The White Rose has been lionized by postwar Germans but resisters had little support among the public during the war (p216).

History has vindicated resistance groups such as the White Rose. They were desperately alone while they defied the law. Rebellion when it begins is not legal, safe, comfortable or popular. "Somebody, after all, had to make a start", one of the White Rose members, Sophie Scholl, said at her trial in a Nazi court.

"What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did" (p216).

The Jews were trucked in from the surrounding countryside, stripped and forced by the black-uniformed officers toward long, deep trenches. They were shot in their heads by an SS officer with a machine pistol, and then the next row was made to lie down and shot in their heads (p217).

It would not be until 1943, when it was clear that the Germans were losing the war, that a small group of officers began to plot to assassinate Hitler. The conspirators did not defy the Nazis on behalf of the Jews, but to save the country from defeat, dismemberment, and catastrophe (p217).

Those with sublime madness accept the possibility of their own death as the price paid for defending life. This curious mixture of gloom and hope, of defiance and resignation, of absurdity and meaning, is born of the rebel's awareness of the enormity of the forces that must be defeated and the remote chances for success (p219).

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. Optimism, especially the naïve optimism fed to us by the corporate state, engenders self-delusion and passivity and is the opposite of hope (p219).

Rebels who are self-aware, who are possessed of sublime madness, are often plagued by a gnawing despair. When the movie producer Abby Mann, who wanted to film Martin Luther King's life story, asked King facetiously, "How does the movie end?" King responded, "It ends with me getting killed". As Mann recalled, "I looked at him. He was smiling, but he wasn't joking" (p219).

Social and economic life will again have to be rationed and shared. The lusts of capitalism will have to be curtailed and destroyed. And there will have to be a recovery of reverence for the sacred, the bedrock of premodern society, so we can see each other and the earth not as objects to exploit but as living beings to be revered and protected. This recovery will require a very different vision of human society (p220).

In the presence of the natural world, all of the great visionaries have heard it speak to them. It spoke to Shakespeare, as it spoke to Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. This communion blurs the lines between the self and the world (p221).

It is what Percy Shelley meant when he wrote that poetry "lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world and makes familiar things as if they were not familiar. Too often this wisdom comes too late, as it does when Othello stands contrite and broken over the dead Desdemona, or when Lear lifts up his murdered daughter, Cordelia. The wisdom makes grace and transformation possible (p221).

In the kind of visions that were experienced by Black Elk and revered by Native Americans, the kind that inspire artists and rebels, the visionary encounters the strange, unexplainable, mysterious forces that define life. And visionary language speaks, as poets and rebels do, only in abstractions and allegory (p222).

Black Elk expressed the power and importance of the reality of human existence that lies beyond articulation. "Also, as I lay there thinking of my vision, I could see it all again and feel the meaning with a part of me like a strange power glowing in my body", he said, "but when the part of me that talks would try to make words for the meaning, it would be like fog and get away from me".

Chants, work songs, spirituals, the blues, poetry, dance, and art converged under slavery to nourish and sustain the imagination. “For art - the blues, the spirituals, the jazz, the dance - was what we had in place of freedom. It was sublime madness that permitted African Americans to resist during slavery and Jim Crow (p222).

It was sublime madness that sustained the defiance of Sitting Bull and Black Elk as their land was seized, their people slaughtered, and their cultures and means of existence decimated. The oppressed would be the first to admit that on a rational level it is absurd to think that it is only through the imagination that they survive - but they also know that it is true (p222).

It was sublime madness that allowed the survivors in the Nazi death camps to hold on to the sacred. Jewish inmates in Auschwitz reportedly put God on trial for the Holocaust. They condemned God to death. A rabbi stood after the guilty verdict to lead the evening prayers (p222).

African Americans and Native Americans, for centuries, had little control over their destinies. Forces of bigotry and violence kept them subjugated. The suffering of the oppressed was tangible, and death was a constant companion (p223).

And it was only their imagination that permitted them to “endure”. For oppressed blacks, the cross is a paradoxical religious symbol because it inverts the world’s value system with the news that hope comes by way of defeat, that suffering and death do not have the last word, that the last shall be first and the first shall be last (p223).

That God could make a way out of no way in Jesus’ cross was truly absurd to the intellect, yet profoundly real in the souls of black folk. Enslaved blacks who first heard the gospel message seized on the power of the cross (p223).

Christ crucified manifested God’s loving and liberating presence in the contradictions of black life - that transcendent presence in the lives of black Christians that empowered them to believe that ultimately they would not be defeated by the troubles of the world, no matter how great and painful their suffering (p223).

Believing this paradox, this absurd claim of faith, was only possible through God’s “amazing grace” and the gift of faith, grounded in humility and repentance. There was no place for the proud and the mighty, for people who think that God called them to rule over others (p223).

The cross was God’s critique of power - white power - with powerless love, snatching victory out of defeat (p223). King Lear, who after suffering and affliction is finally able to see, warns us that unbridled human passion and unchecked hubris spell the suicide of the species. “It will come,” Albany says in King Lear. “Humanity must perforce prey on itself/ Like monsters of the deep” (p224).

The human imagination has the power to make ideas felt. Poverty is the worst of crimes and all other crimes are virtues before it. Culture, real culture, is radical and transformative. Culture can express what lies deep within us and give words to our reality. Making us feel as we see, culture allows us to empathize with those who are different or oppressed (p225).

Even as it reveals what is happening around us, it honors mystery. It saves us from ourselves. The role of the artist then, precisely, is to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through the vast forest so that we

will not, in all our doing, lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place (p225).

Ultimately, the artist and the revolutionary function as they function, and pay whatever dues they must pay behind it because they are both possessed by a vision, and they do not so much follow this vision as find themselves driven by it (p225).

Otherwise, they could never endure, much less embrace, the lives they are compelled to lead. Rebellion requires emotional intelligence. It requires empathy and love. It requires self-sacrifice. It requires the honoring of the sacred. It requires an understanding that, as with the heroes in classical Greece, one cannot finally overcome fate, but we must resist regardless (p225).

Ours is a time that would have sent the Greeks to their oracles. We fail at our own peril to consult our own. This is a fight that in the face of overwhelming forces against us requires that we follow those possessed by sublime madness, that we become stone catchers and find in acts of rebellion the sparks of life, an intrinsic meaning that lies outside the possibility of success (p226).

We must grasp the harshness of reality at the same time as we refuse to allow this reality to paralyze us. People of all creeds and people of no creeds must make an absurd leap of faith to believe, despite all the empirical evidence around us, that the good draws to it the good (p226).

The fight for life goes somewhere - Buddhists call it karma - and in these acts we make possible a better world, even if we cannot see one emerging around us (p226).

