

Wadham & Christ Church

Oxford Radical Forum 2017

March 3-5

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Friday

16:00 Housing Activism
17.45 Indonesia: 50 Years On
20.30 Digital Capitalism
[all Wadham]

4

Saturday

11.30 Feminism & Irish Republicanism
13.30 Rape and the State
15.30 Student Activism
17.30 Post-Brexit UK
[all Christ Church]

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Sunday

11.30 Peace in Colombia? [Wadham]
13.30 The Left in MENA Region [Wadham]
15.30 Radicalising the NHS [CHCH]
17.30 Fighting Trump [CHCH]
19.30 Corbyn, Labour and the Radical Left [CHCH]

Friday 3rd March

16.00 Homes Not Hostels - Housing Activism in the UK and Ireland

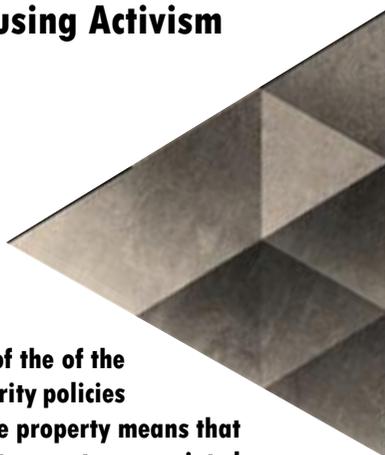
Old Refectory, Wadham

Ash Egan & Tom Ryan [Home Sweet Home]

Neo & Elise Benjamin [Iffley Open House]

Dave Stavris [Oxford Housing Crisis Group]

The drastic increase in homelessness is one of the most brutal consequences of the vicious austerity policies in the UK and Ireland. The ideology of private property means that thousands of habitable buildings lying vacant are not appropriated to alleviate the crisis. Home Sweet Home [Apollo House] in Dublin and Iffley Open House in Oxford have directly challenged this logic. Occupying unused buildings, they provided shelter for dozens of rough sleepers during the bitter winter of the British-Irish Isles. Crucially they focused not just on providing beds but also welfare support, dignity and a sense of community. Private rooms with proper amenities were constructed for residents and well-equipped recreational spaces were established. Inevitably the institutional drive to prioritise propertied interests over human need resulted in the eviction of both groups. However these radical direct actions gained wide public sympathy and international media attention. Dozens of students and locals volunteered to support Iffley Open House, and when Apollo House residents were due to be evicted, hundreds of people locked arms to block the entrance. In this session activists from Home Sweet Home and Iffley Open House will give us an insight into how their projects were organised and how broad public support might be instrumentalised going forward. They will also be joined by Oxford Housing Crisis Group to discuss the housing crisis in general, and future directions for housing activism.



17.45 The spectre of PKI: the Indonesian massacre of 1965/6 and its political legacy

Gillese-Badun Room, Wadham

Soe Tjen Marching [SOAS]

Odino da Costa

The extermination of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1965/6 was the founding act for the pro-Western New Order of General Suharto, and a template for further violence committed with impunity in the name of the Indonesian state – against East Timor and West Papua independence activists, unionised workers, peasants resisting landgrabs, and LGBT people. The mass murder has been covered up in public memory to the extent of being glorified. In this session we will hear from Soe Tjen Marching, the British coordinator of the International People's Tribunal on the 1965 Genocide in Indonesia, who has worked to expose human rights violations under the Suharto regime. She will be joined by Odino da Costa, a Timorese activist who will speak on the problem of stolen children in East Timor under the New Order.

The discussion will follow a screening of Joshua Oppenheimer's documentary *The Look of Silence*, the acclaimed sequel to his *The Act of Killing*. The film follows Adi Rukun as he tracks down the men responsible for killing his brother during the massacre and confronts his family, shedding light on the reluctance of both perpetrators and survivors to remember.

20.30 The New Panopticon: Surveillance and Organisation in Digital Capitalism

Gillese-Badun Room, Wadham

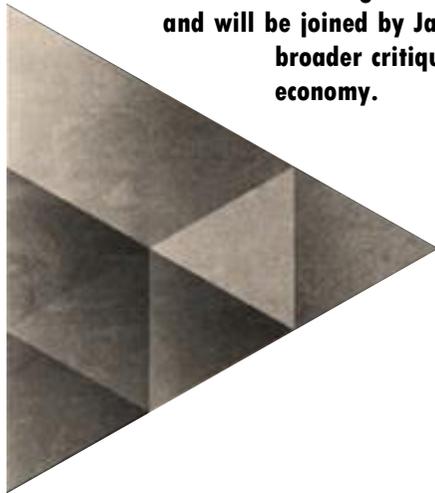
Jamie Woodcock [LSE]

Thomas Allmer [Stirling U]

Jim Benfield [IWGB]

New information and communication technologies have drastically altered the way capitalism manifests itself. Optimised surveillance of production and consumption alike critically affect social interaction, labour control and organisation. New technologies act in interplay with the liberalisation of employment regulations to generate new sections of the precariat, and maximise exploitation. In this context, the strike of Deliveroo couriers in London this autumn broke new ground, as they successfully organised despite the difficulties presented by the individualised and precarious nature of such new forms of work.

We will be hearing from IWGB on the Deliveroo industrial action, and will be joined by Jamie Woodcock and Thomas Allmer for a broader critique of the transformations of the political economy.



Saturday 4th March

11.30 Ní Saoirse go Saoirse na mBan - Feminism and Irish Republicanism

Blue Boar Lecture Theatre, Christ Church

Aoife Frances [Strike 4 Repeal]

The partition of Ireland and subsequent counter-revolution not only crippled Irish republicanism, but also the closely linked militant labour and feminist movements which had played crucial roles during Ireland's revolutionary period. As James Connolly predicted, 'a carnival of reaction both North and South' followed the formation of the border. Rigidly patriarchal social relations were codified in the southern Free State's constitution. Married women could not work in the public service until 1973, divorce was prohibited until 1995 and abortion remains inaccessible. Although much of the radical left response to this Irish conservative hegemony has emerged out of the republican tradition, mainstream republicanism has also failed to incorporate feminism. Only after the "no wash" protests in Armagh gaol did women's emancipation enter republican discourse, and even then it was never seriously prioritized. Both North and South, Sinn Féin still refuses to formally adopt a pro-choice stance despite pressure from its rather more radical youth wing. In this talk Aoife Frances will discuss feminist struggles in Ireland from a radical republican perspective, including the problematic relationship between feminism and mainstream republicanism, as well as current campaigns to achieve free, safe, and legal access to abortion.



13.30 Rape and the State

Blue Boar Lecture Theatre, Christ Church

Nancy Lindisfarne [SOAS]

Fiona Vera-Gray [Durham U]

Laura Tidd [Durham U]

Given the near universal status of rape as a crime, it is widely perceived that the correct way to tackle rape and rape culture is through recourse to the state. The last few years, however, have seen a revival in the use of rape as an expression of state power, as Bashar al-Assad seeks to exert his dominance over the Syrian people - and their bodies. At home as well, many are coming to argue, however, that the British state is at best largely ineffective as a force against rape, and at worst actively detrimental. Only a tiny minority of rape accusations will lead to a conviction, and the government has, in the last few years, drastically cut support for rape crisis charities. Even more damning are the revelations that many of those detained by the British State, in particular those held at Yarl's Wood, face sexual violence at the hands of government employed contractors, as well as the allegations that certain agents of the State may have been directly complicit in the cover-up of child sex abuse by celebrities and grooming gangs. These cover-ups are now being weaponised by those on the right, who are seeking to use them, and the racist rhetoric which surrounds them, as a tool for expanding the authoritarian capacities of the state to repress already marginalised groups, in particular Arab and Muslim migrants, without showing any signs of a commitment to instigating reforms that would actually benefit the victims and survivors of rape and sexual violence. Indeed, this expansion would likely serve to further facilitate violence against women such as those held at Yarl's Wood.

Speaking on these issues will be Laura Tidd, anti-rape activist and president of Durham University Feminist Society; Dr Fiona Vera-Gray, author of *Men's Intrusion, Women's Embodiment: A critical analysis of street harassment*; and Nancy Lindisfarne, anthropologist and blogger at *Anne Bonny Pirate* (formerly *xism Class Violence*).

15.30 Liberate Education! – Student Activism 2017

Blue Boar Lecture Theatre, Christ Church

Malia Bouattia [NUS] [tbc]

Aliya Yule [Preventing PREVENT Oxford]

Connor White [Warwick Free Education]

The past year has seen a reprise of the fight for Free Education, with Higher Education reforms threatening a further marketisation and privatisation of universities. Students are to be given a fictional 'choice' to pay tuition fees corresponding to the 'quality' of their education – inseparable from the further casualisation of academics as suppliers, and promising nothing other than a metric- and employer-driven education industry, with the bonus of life-time debt. In the same vein, PREVENT is a government policy specifically targeting BME and Muslim students and academics, sold as an 'anti-terrorism and extremism' measure. It is one of the most insidious pieces of legislation, licensing institutional racism and further marginalising already disadvantaged groups in the education system, by stifling dissent and instituting self-censorship. In December 2016, Warwick Free Education gained several significant concessions from university management after they successfully occupied a University building for two weeks. Preventing Prevent Oxford recently investigated the effects of Theresa May's policy at this university, highlighting the true scale of rights violations and panoptical surveillance this legislation instils. The recently launched NUS Libe8 Education campaign ties together the above and other issues of our education system, working to improve mental health, tackle sexual violence and shape a critical curriculum that truly reflects the diversity of students.

With inclusive and accessible education more than ever under attack, what is needed to take our campaigns to the next level? Student activism has always been a prime vector of political and social progress – so how we can situate these struggles in the larger context in which right-wing, racist, xenophobic attacks and exclusion are on the rise, and a government whose vicious austerity politics only fuels the fire?



17.30 Homegrown Trumpism? Post-Brexit UK

Blue Boar Lecture Theatre, Christ Church

Richard Seymour [LSE]

Farheen Ahmed [Oxford U]

The last year has hardly been an uneventful one, culminating in Brexit and again in Donald Trump's election. The parallels between these events have been amply explored, their driving demographics and discourses compared. Now, while the outrage over Brexit has taken a backseat as the first Presidential Executive Orders unfolded, it seems more pertinent than ever to examine the parallels with the current government and its tightening relationship with the Trump administration.

Are we in fact dealing with a political leadership not too different to the one in the US? Immigration 'reform' is not less brutal, economic policies no more coherent, and the right no less confident in its victory. As a result, what are the implications for resistance? How can mainstream protests – such as anti-Trump rallies addressing themselves to May – be seized to oppose this government, the liberal order and its right-wing reincarnation? And conversely, how can we support those communities which are now more than ever under attack?

Richard Seymour writes for the Guardian and Jacobin and blogs at Lenin's Tomb. He is the author of *Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics*. Farheen Ahmed is Co-Chair at the Campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality and recently elected OUSU VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities.



Sunday 5th March

11.30 Dangerous peace: Colombia after the failed 2016 referendum

Okinaga Room, Wadham

Nick MacWilliam [Alborada]

Lara Montesinos Coleman [Sussex U]

Seb Ordóñez Muñoz [War on Want]

On 2 October 2016, the peace agreement between FARC and the Colombian government, negotiated in Havana to end the 52-year-long conflict that made Colombia the country with the highest number of displaced people in the world (a grim record only recently surpassed by Syria), was voted down in a referendum amid a frenzy of right-populist outrage. The prospect of a legal investigation into the crimes committed in the civil war, bound to reveal more about the connections between the ruling elite, the drug lords and the murderous paramilitary gangs (all historically backed by the United States), proved more threatening to the landowning class and extraction businesses rallied around the ex-president Álvaro Uribe than the continued armed opposition of the FARC to the violence of primitive accumulation in the countryside. Once again, the spectre of 'castrochavismo' and 'narcoguerrilla' was conjured up to generate misplaced indignation. The paranoid tone of the mobilisation against the peace deal and its narrow victory in a consultative referendum evoked comparisons with the Brexit vote. The important difference was that the project so irresponsibly put to a crude yes-or-no vote carried genuine progressive potential. It was not without its problems, however, when addressing the political questions underlying the conflict. While the peace process was salvaged and the FARC began to disarm, with a revised treaty signed in December, the worst demons of the past came back to haunt its implementation. In a few months more than a hundred community leaders have been murdered by paramilitaries, reinforcing fears that the genocide of the legal left-wing party Unión Patriótica in the wake of the previous agreement of 1985 could be

repeated if the Left tried to come back onto the public scene. The government has failed to deliver on its promise to send troops into the conflict zones, which pushed local communities to block the passage of demobilised guerrilla units or plead with the rival group ELN for protection from the gangs eager to fill the vacuum. The Minister of Defence denies the systematic character of the killings and the existence of the paramilitaries. Was the peace a trap? How can the state be persuaded to deliver on the best points of the agreement against the interests of the elites?

13.30 Popular Protest in Time of Counterrevolution in North Africa and the Middle East

Okinaga Room, Wadham

Miriam Aouragh [U of Westminster/rs21]

Hamid Alizadeh [Socialist Appeal]

Chihab El-Khachab (Christ Church, Oxford)

Helen Lackner [SOAS]

In 2011 a series of popular protest movements swept across the Arab world. Since then the tide has turned to a phase of counterrevolution and reaction - yet desires for change and energies of protest persist and resurface across the region. This panel will examine what possibilities and resources remain for popular and protest movements, from Morocco to Egypt and Syria.



15.30 Radicalising the NHS

Okinaga Room, Wadham

Deborah Harrington [NHA]

Youssef El-Gingihy [NHS]

Mark Ladbrooke [Unison Oxford]

To speak of the impending complete abolition of universal healthcare is no longer a hyperbole, nor can it be regarded as an accident at a time when new walls are rising and new methods of brutal surveillance and exclusion are devised. This panel will delve into the relentless logic which fuels the new spate of attacks, taking the time to look at both established tactics (suffocating and draining the NHS financially, parcelling it out into private hands) and newer, more insidious, digital tools in the service of ever greater profit. We will ask if there is any area of medicine today – from research methodology to evaluation standards to delivery of medical care – which escapes the cost-benefit analysis of today's capitalism obsessed with immediate and measurable outcomes, and with transforming patients into consumers of their own health. And if the entire cycle is implicated, then the burning question becomes – how can we break out of it? Can more funding ever help if it ends up in the hands of the health business sharks? The panel will bring together three distinguished campaigners and writers in an effort to do a fresh assessment of the looming dangers and attempt to locate those gaps that can serve as exit routes. Join us on the very next day after the NHS national demonstration in London to think about how to prevent the NHS from falling prey to the exclusionary logic of the present right-wing turn.

Speaking on this topic will be Deborah Harrington, who is currently Head of Policy at the National Health Action Party); Mark Ladbrooke from Unison Oxfordshire and Keep Our NHS Public; and Youssef El-Gingihy, a GP and author of How to Dismantle the NHS in 10 Easy Steps.

17.30 Fighting Trump – The Combative Dialectics to Come

Blue Boar Lecture Theatre, Christ Church

George Ciccariello-Maher [Drexel U]

How should the Left respond to the rise to power of white supremacist nationalism in the West, accompanied by other fascisms globally? Can we use this conjuncture to not just stop those Nazis who hail Trump but to build a movement that will defeat them (and the establishment) politically? Are our strategies and tactics prepared for the historically specific brand of neo-Nazi mobilisation, exploiting “populist correctness” and self-described as “identity politics for white Americans and for Europeans around the world”? Is there a need for the Left to transform itself? How did we arrive at the point where someone like Trump can be elected president? And who is the collective Nazi-punching subject of decolonial dialectics – and of today’s struggle?

The keynote speech of the Oxford Radical Forum 2017 will be delivered by George Ciccariello-Maher. His third book, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, where he “formulates a dialectics suited to the struggle against the legacies of colonialism and slavery”, has just come out in February to inaugurate the book series *Radical Américas* he co-edits with Bruno Bosteels. George has written extensively on Venezuela (*We Created Chávez*, 2013; *Building the Commune*, 2016) and translated Latin American decolonial writings; he has taught at Berkeley, San Quentin State Prison and the Venezuelan School of Planning in Caracas. He is currently a professor of political theory at Drexel University in Philadelphia and lives in Mexico – he will use the Latin American perspective to look at the ongoing struggle against Trump. George will frame the questions in the context of developments from recent decades, struggles against neoliberalism, and the crisis of the present. He will turn to combative, decolonial dialectics to think about what we are fighting (global white supremacist capitalism) and how we fight it (in the streets, not shying away from direct struggle).

19.30 Corbyn, Labour and the Radical Left

Blue Boar Lecture Theatre, Christ Church

Rida Vaquas [Momentum, OULC, AWL]

Adam Booth [Socialist Appeal]

Max Leak [rs21]

Chair: Marius Ostrowski

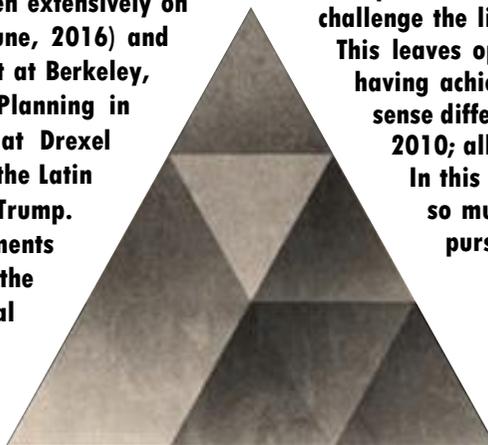
When Corbyn was first elected leader of the Labour party, it was largely viewed as a moment of triumph for the far left, and an opportunity for socialists, anti-racists, and peace campaigners to begin building a national movement capable of wielding influence in parliament itself. Hundreds of thousands of new members poured into Labour, and several socialist tendencies which had previously campaigned against the party now committed to supporting it under Corbyn’s leadership.

One and a half years on, the far-left has achieved a greater degree of influence in party politics than it has for decades, in a Labour party that is clearly more socialist than any since 1983 - and perhaps even earlier.

On the other hand, however, Corbyn’s Labour has slipped in the polls, appeared to compromise on principles such as free movement, and failed to properly challenge the liberal bureaucracy present under Blair, Brown and Miliband.

This leaves open the very real possibility that Corbyn will leave his post having achieved nothing, and bequeath a party which in no meaningful sense differs from the one so vociferously opposed by the left from 1997-2010; albeit now with a much diminished chance of election.

In this panel we will debate whether the Left has been right to place so much hope in Corbyn, and whether or not we must now turn to pursue socialism by non-parliamentary means.



BOOKSTALLS

Haymarket Books

Duke UP

IMPRESSUM

Finn Lees

Jack Kelly

Leonie Hoffmann

Peter Hill

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