

RU PARTICIPATING

MEMBERS | NETWORK PROJECTS | SOLIDARITY

From the Education & Skills Team

- RU2 book:**
 The team is still reading and giving feedback to submitted essays and chapters. Still waiting for some more to come. Also discussing various approaches to writing about kinship.
- Session on biodiversity with Ian Pfingsten:**
 The session will take place on Saturday, March the 18th. The invites will go out 10 days before the session. A good primer on the session would be reading Ian's article in previous RU Participating.

From the Site Team

- Internal task keeping:**
 The team discussed how to structure and keep track of their work that works for everyone. Decided to stick to Google Docs.
- New home page design:**
 Discussed a new home page design idea that the team would like to show to the rest of the members for feedback at the council meeting in due time.
- RU Twitter account:**
 The team is encouraging members with twitter accounts to engage with RU twitter account.



A room of her own

Urška Breznik

“A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction,” wrote Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, an extended essay originally written as two lectures given by the author in 1928 in the first two colleges for women in Cambridge. A cross between a feminist manifesto and literary criticism it touches upon the financial, social and educational disadvantages that women experienced at the time that killed their creativity and prevented them from growing and experiencing the world as persons not conditioned by their roles as wives, mothers, carers. Almost a hundred years later for most women things have not changed that much. Conservative forces of the past thirty to forty years have brought repatriarchalisation of the society even in the previously socialist countries. As we are approaching the International women's day and rereading Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Alexandra Kollontai, Emma Goldman, Vida Tomšič, Virginia Woolf, Ursula Le Guin... we can not feel but sad that their wonderful, in detail constructed visions of a different society, have not become a reality yet. But as participatory socialists we are dedicatedly and gratefully trying to build upon those visions so kindly laid before us to inspire and encourage us. That is why we are privileged that in this issue our member Bridget Meehan openheartedly shares with us her journey as a writer, hopefully with a room of her own big enough for many more novels to come, and another member Alexandria Shaner takes us on her activist path from a “fearless defender of the defenseless” first grader to the one of the most engaged and selfless Real Utopians you will ever meet (among her many others socially engaged activities).

In this issue you will also find Topaz's review of the Rupert Sheldrake book, a revolutionary poem by Slovenian poet, partisan and communist Karel Destovnik-Kajuh, some lovely members' picks with a free Clara Zetkin gift and the obligatory memes. Now it is time for you to find a room of your own and immerse yourself in reading.

From the Outreach and Events Team

- **Session with Michael Albert:**
The team is preparing a session on participatory theory with Michael Albert. The proposed date is March 11th.
- **Lonzi scheme:**
Lonnie sent out an email to some members for feedback. Next step is for him to polish the proposal and then to bring it to a council meeting.
- **Think tank teams:**
Lonnie suggests we start to form think tanks within RU on vision and strategy for each sphere or specific parts of vision and strategy, for example education. He will put together a proposal to further discussion, For example: Library socialism and Participatory economics. We plan to discuss this further at future meetings.
- **Structured RUG sessions:**
The team proposes that one of the RUG session is focused on a given topic.
- **Podcast:**
Discussed podcast idea with Matt. Agreed for a trial run on March 4th.

From the Membership Team

- **Alternative time RU Garden:**
Two "after hours" RU Gardens were carried out. New ones are planned.
- **Discussing fund needs:**
Team discussed what would be the necessary expenses that we should raise funds for.

A Writer's Journey

Bridget Meehan

First off, I'd like to thank RU for asking me to write this article about my fiction writing journey. Second, I want to point out that this is my first time writing in public about my fiction writing and its process. I'm in new territory here.

For people who aren't aware, I've written a novel called *The Last Good Summer* which is being published at the end of February under the pseudonym JJ Green.

I guess for all my life, since I was a child, I've wanted to be a writer, and I've been writing fiction for most of my adult life. After a long and often dispiriting journey on which I've gathered an impressive collection of rejection slips and emails from literary agents across every inch of the islands of Ireland and Britain, I'm finally having my first novel published.

My lack of success through the years has been down to a combination of poor writing on my part and the moving goal posts of the whims and desires of the dreaded literary agent. Looking back on my first novel, and even my second and third, I can see that they're remarkable...for the sheer volume of rookie mistakes crammed into them. I think they're textbook examples of everything you shouldn't do when writing a novel.

As I continued on my creative journey, I began to realise that, guess what, you didn't write a novel by just sitting down in front of a blank screen with your great idea and letting your fingers run wild. There was a craft involved, skill building, techniques, all of which had to be learned. That's so obvious to me now but back in those early days, I didn't know this and I had to find out the (really) hard way. You see, when you send a submission to an agent, you don't get feedback. They don't let you know (if they bother to reply at all) that your plot dies a death in the middle or that the characters are stereotypes or that your word count is 20K off the accepted minimum for the genre you're writing in (I made all these mistakes and more, including the word count calamity which took me four novels to discover). No, agents rarely say anything if they reply to a submission, so you never know how far off the mark you are. Right enough, it's not their job to critique the 100s/1000s of submissions they get. Your novel is supposed to be polished to within an inch of its life by the time you send it out.

Somehow, and I can't remember how exactly, but I decided I should actually learn how to write fiction. What a genius! My first step was to buy several books about writing. Some of these were good; some were not. But in reading them, I did improve my craft. I also looked around for courses I could do. Initially, there were only Masters degrees in Creative Writing which were completely inaccessible: they cost an arm and a leg and they were in-person affairs. After some years, I came across a creative writing school that was being run by one of the big literary agencies in London. Their courses were in-person but online too. And the costs were within my humble means. I enrolled. In fact, I ended up doing five of these courses in all. And they were worth every penny. The techniques I learned were invaluable and my writing improved beyond recognition. But more than that, in doing the courses I got to know other writers and vice versa, I shared my work with them and vice versa, I had them critique my work and vice versa. And with them, I dared to believe that yes, maybe, possibly, I could get published. I realised on those courses too that

I was already writer. I didn't have to wait until some agent said "I just love your work" or until I got a three-book publishing deal. I was already there. I just wasn't an author, was all. I read a quote somewhere that said "an author is just a writer who never gave up." Now, that was inspiring.

I should say too, that for years, and I mean years, I didn't tell anybody that was I writing. I was the literary equivalent of a closet drunk. Why? Well, I felt stupid. Why? Because poor people didn't become writers; they didn't have dreams like that; they focused on getting practical, sensible jobs where they could earn a living. And because I went to a school where the teachers drummed it into my head that I could never go to college, that I should learn to type so I could get an office job, or that sniggered at me for having the audacity to say I might like to be a teacher myself when I grew up. All of that sort of shakes a person's confidence. Actually, it punches a hole so big in your confidence that there's nothing left but a few trampled shards of self-belief that you try to pick up and keep with you until someday, you dare to resuscitate them.

Keeping my dirty little writing secret quiet, no doubt added years to my journey. Enrolling for my first course (my name's Bridget and I'm a paperback writer), was a major turning point and my writing, and my confidence, shot right up.

Of course, better writing and more confidence didn't guarantee anything. I still had to find an agent, get a publishing deal. When I finished *The Last Good Summer* (after several rewrites and polishing and getting the once over from a professional editor), I knew I had something publishable on my hands. It wasn't brilliant but it was a good as most other work you'd find on the bookshelves these days. I began, once again, the soul-destroying submissions process. This time, I was quietly confident I'd get some interest from agents: possibly rejections with a word of encouragement; maybe requests for the full manuscript; even, could I dare to hope, an offer of representation. I sent my pride and joy out again and... it was more of the same. No replies from most of them. Automated Dear Johns from the rest. Fuck!

It was around this time, when telling my tale of woe to one of my oldest and best friends, that she told me I should simply try one of the independent publishers and bypass agents altogether. Big publishers won't take unsolicited manuscripts which means you need an agent. But the smaller indie publishers will accept submissions directly from writers, no agent necessary. I'd been so hell bent on getting an agent that I'd dismissed the indie route. A writer friend who I met on one of my courses had gone down that route and was on his way to getting published. I hadn't followed him because I still had it in my head that an agent was better. It was my friend basically telling me to wise-up that jolted me out of my rut. So, that's what I did. And the rest as they say is history.



My journey to publication has been, how do I put this nicely, a bitch. But I often wonder how much of that is down to capitalism and the way it monetises and commodifies everything, and how different my journey might have been under Parecon. I'm exploring this very subject with my great friend and fellow RU member and writer, Lonnie Ray Atkinson. Going right back to school where the rot started, I believe that under a non-classist, non-profit-seeking economic system, I might have had the guts (or might have been nurtured to have the guts) to say I wanted to be a writer and not expect to be laughed at and told to know my place.

But that's a story for another day. For now, I'm just happy to have reached this point. What will happen next? Will I make any sales? Will my publisher want to print anything else I write? I don't know. I'm working on a second novel, almost finished it, and I have a third one (a mystery thriller which will feature Parecon) bubbling away in a little pot at the back of the stove. These might never see the light of day but I do know this: whether I sell one copy or a million, whether I'm a success by the standards of capitalism or a failure, I'm still a writer and always will be.

Why RU Participating, Alexandria?

Alexandria Shaner

I sat down to this interview and said let me bang this out real quick...then it became huge and somehow I feel like I gave a nonsensical snapshot that leaves out mostly everything. I know no one wants a biography, so I won't add any more. I'm already embarrassed by the length. But, I think this is a great idea for our membership and hope I have at least made myself accessible.

My name is Alexandria. I was born in Boston, but only lived there for about 6 months so I escaped the accent. I grew up in South Carolina until I was about 11, then moved around a lot. When I was a teenager I moved to St. Martin in the Caribbean, where I have now been for most of my life. I'm currently based in Carriacou, living on a wooden sailboat from 1928 called Ambler. She was originally an RNLI lifeboat (all you UK members might know what that means) and completed over 200 rescues during her commission. My partner and I have been working to restore her over the past few years and to get her ready for bigger passages. We hope to sail north and then cross west to central America next year. I have family in Havana, Cuba who I've only met once, and other family in Santiago who I've never met, so I hope to stop and visit on the way.

I have always done a big mix of work depending on what I find, where I find myself, how much money I need, etc. This may sound romantic and free and sometimes it is, sometimes not so much. These days I work on other people's boats (as delivery crew, as charter crew/chef/guide, doing maintenance and haul outs, cleaning, etc), teaching/guiding (surf, kitesurf, free dive, fitness), and online work (teaching English, tutoring, editing, bookkeeping). So, as you see, it's a bit of a hustler's mishmash.

Before Covid, I was working a lot more in tourism. Until 2019, I was the GM of a company that took people sailing and racing aboard old America's Cup Yachts called 12Metre Racing. We developed a very good team and even had a crew training program that was kind of like a balanced job complex, though not perfectly so. It was pretty cool, except for the corporate parent company and dealing with the cruise line mafia, I mean industry. It's a common thing we all come up against - plenty good people in a ruthless system. It's both heartbreaking and heartening, full of squandered possibility and full of opportunity.

I had also recently started a project/business called Uneath that was taking small groups on conservation and archaeology expeditions. I did an expedition in Guatemala in the Maya biosphere with an archaeology team, some shark tagging and reef monitoring expeditions in the northeast Caribbean, and a sea turtle & marine conservation project in Nicaragua. Again, it was all very

cool except for coming up against the eternal wall of capitalism and neo-colonialism. In the summer of 2017, hurricanes Irma and Maria smashing my home, social unrest in Nicaragua, and an archaeologist breaking his hip all conspired to cause upheaval for millions in the Caribbean, and specifically for me, to pull a handbrake on the Uneath project. In 2020, Covid put a nail in that coffin. By then I was really on the verge anyway of having zero interest in building another business based on the type of tourism that relies on Americans and Europeans flying south to have adventures for purchase, even if the funds did contribute to research and conservation and to enabling my own adventures. So, for now, I mostly work to keep fed/floating, and I put my mind and passion into the activism, which is almost always unpaid, but still work. I've done everything from scrubbing toilets to founding and running businesses - and not in a linear trajectory either.

I'm fortunate to have been given the luck and access to become a product of balanced work. I really do think I'm fortunate in this because I have family and friends from my more coordinator and capitalist class experiences (university, jobs on the fancier end of the spectrum) who seem to envy my experiences and even my worldview, though they often don't particularly want to adopt it. I think I am both more free, and more complete as a person because I don't consider performing rote or even undesirable tasks beneath me, or shameful. Quite the opposite. But I don't romanticize them either. My understanding of back breaking, boring, dangerous, and disgusting tasks is neither academic nor an old memory. On the flip side, I have other family and friends who never had the chance to become coordinators or capitalists, let alone to reject the opportunity. When I serve drinks, or scrape hulls, or clean rooms alongside my co-workers, it is not lost on me that though we work elbow to elbow, most of them have never been asked to participate in workplace decision making. Most haven't even been trusted with their own self-management on the job for things that really only affect them. So, while I serve, scrape, and carry, I am often simultaneously planning new ventures and strategizing how to make them come alive because I have made them come alive before and was raised and educated to expect this to be possible. This is a state of mind born, in no small part, of privilege.

There's a geographical element too, I'm an American citizen who left the country as soon as I could to live elsewhere, yet I am aware that this is also a luxury most people in the world could only dream of.

The reason I allowed myself the above ramblings is because this next section will be short: I have too many

interests and don't do favorites. All life is change and I am usually doing 5 things at once.

Did you have any significant events in your life that ignited your interest in politics and social justice?

I was once cleaning out a box of old things from my mother's house and found the year-end student evaluation card from my 1st grade teacher at Clemson Montessori. I don't remember the teacher or the evaluation, but I guess my mom had saved it. It wasn't long, it said some stuff about my progress in various things, and it ended by saying that I had a "very developed sense of justice and fairness and was a fearless defender of the defenseless". I'm not sure if the teacher saw me rescuing frogs and bugs from getting squashed by other kids, or if maybe I stood up for someone in a nice way. I don't remember, but that is a pretty nice thing to say – probably the best evaluation I've ever received. I like to think I didn't peak in 1st grade and that I've continued to live with a sense of justice ever since. Starting around that same time, my sister always called me bossy though – so perhaps I still have a ways to go on other fronts.

In all seriousness, I've tried various endeavors and paths, usually with a good bit of intensity – and I think I'm finally old enough or experienced enough to understand that they were not a series of disjointed and misguided failures, but a path leading to a political and human understanding of how the world is and how it might be better.

What attracted you to RU? Why did you join?

I was attracted to RU by the opportunity to meet, learn from, and organize with fellow advocates of participatory society. I joined after getting involved in some SSCC courses and meeting Michael, Matic, Cooper, and very briefly chatting with Mark. To be honest, at the time of joining I didn't think I'd be able to contribute much and would likely just be a name on a list of members. I'm glad (and sometimes bewildered and/or exasperated) that I was wrong. RU takes up much more of my time than I had planned, but I've gotten a lot more out of it than I assumed as well. I've grown to value it and its potential immensely.

Which aspect of RU appeals to you the most?

For the last 3 years I've traveled a lot and I was missing the feeling of organizing locally. I still engage in local activities wherever I am, but they are always temporary. I enjoy the fact that with RU, I have a community and an agenda that is long term and consistent, no matter where I am.

I also just like meeting people from around the world and talking about things that matter across all the spheres of life. It's kind of a special community in this way. That's one reason I joined the Membership Team and why I try to come to the RUG sessions as often as possible.

Are you engaged in any other organisations? If so, which ones? What appeals to you about them?

I am a (mostly) remote member of the Upstate SC chapter of the Climate Reality Project. We organize and advocate for local level climate legislation, education, and outreach. It's not the most radical organization, but on the local level, our chapter does good work.

I am also a (mostly) remote member of the Women's Rights and Empowerment Network (also in SC). We are an advocacy group for girls, women, and gender expansive people and are currently focused on reproductive justice.

Though I have lived most of my life outside the US, I am still a US citizen. When Trump was elected, I felt a bit of a wakeup call that I should somehow try to connect and participate in goings on in the US. I don't know if that's me engaging in trying to make myself feel better or if it truly is honoring a responsibility I was born into – but when in doubt, I tend to jump in.

In a weird twist of fate, due to some family issues, I happen to be spending a lot more time in the States recently anyways, so the timing to join these groups was good.

I used to work for many years with the Sint Maarten Nature Foundation doing field work and with SXM Paws animal rescue, but in 2019 I left the island and now I just help with occasional things remotely on demand. I was also part of a group called Engage Foundation that did a lot of intersectional events and organizing, but it dissolved shortly after I left. Traveling is wonderful but I do miss being able to dig into local projects.

What are your hopes for RU and the progressive left more generally?

Generally, revolution.

Immediately, to continue to grow as a "think and do tank". I would like to see us continue to develop and grow in numbers and commitment. I would like us all to continue to strengthen our confidence and increase our skills in advocacy and in experimentation.

There are infinite ways that activism, advocacy, outreach, organizing, and prefiguring can be done – and it is important to have a diversity of forces pushing for a better world in solidarity as a bloc. My hope is that we continue to grow as a network of people who make and sustain meaningful connections. These connections will inspire and support each of us to find our own ways to join in the struggle for a better world. We can become more than the sum of all our unique skills and efforts.

I have the same hope for the left broadly, to find the strategic and human necessity in solidarity and to come together to shake down Babylon and keep walking towards Utopia.

The Presence of the Past by Rupert Sheldrake

topaz

The name of the book alone carries weight. The Presence of the Past. The subtitle is almost poetic. Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature. To regard Nature as Nature has occupied philosophers, theologians, physicists, painters and poets for millennia. Perhaps the alchemists were closer than is suspected today. Rupert Sheldrake proposes that Nature exists almost as a wave. The morphic nature could be considered as an orchestra tuning strings before a concert. More tension here, less there, until the harmonic resonance creates a stillness - a singularity - a symphonic event.

Sheldrake refers to a Freud quote about the collective unconscious and processes displayed as in individuals. Perhaps the strands of individual ideas woven into a mesh of consciousness explains both why morphic resonance works as a representing Nature's memory and why 'the concept of purposive organizing principles has been reinvented again and again.' (Sheldrake 99) After all, what is the surface area of a conversation? How many cubic centimeters of friendliness are contained in a chipper cheerio?

Using examples of Paralastor wasps, fruit flies and the chemical structure for sugar, Sheldrake systemically develops the idea that perhaps the unknown 'elements' of Nature exist in a

framework found just outside of the material realm. The parallels between his idea of how Nature develops complex chemical structures i.e. LIFE and how waves travel and interact are interesting. A number of times I was reminded of the book The Hundredth Monkey by Ken Keyes Jr. (For those of you interested in the idea of morphic resonance, yet without time to read an in-depth (390 pp.) scientific approach to the idea, Keyes' book contains remarkable symmetry.)

I was interested in Rupert Sheldrake's ideas since hearing his talk about how the Big Bang is accepted on faith, and his theories continue to drive new thought. His comments about how all political parties essentially started as a type of commons rings true to his ideas, and perhaps offer a new outlook on politics and social decision making. Lastly, his suggestion that Earth is the first of its kind in the universe creates a bright future, provided of course that social dogma doesn't prevent Nature from resonating, resolving and rebounding with the joie de vivre that Sheldrake expresses so vibrantly.

Sheldrake, Rupert. The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature. Park Street Press, 2012.

A la madre del partisano caído Karel Destovnik Kajuh

Cuando abrió sus manitas por vez primera,
cuando te estremeciste de alegría:
¡Ojalá... ojalá que no murieras!
Cuando aún dormía en tu regazo,
cuando le susurraste con ternura entre lágrimas:
imira, pronto te convertirás en todo un muchacho!
Se convirtió en ese joven que movería montañas
y que nunca renegó del llamado de la libertad.
Así cuando le diste la mano por última vez
y dentro de ti ardía: isí, va a regresar!
Ahora el viento regresa sus palabras,
escucha atenta las voces:
Es hermoso, sabes, mamá, es hermoso vivir,
isin embargo, por lo que he muerto, quisiera de nuevo
morir!

To the mother of the fallen partisan Karel Destovnik Kajuh

Then, when he first spread his tiny hands
Then you in joy timidly shook:
Just that you would not die!
Then, when he was sleeping on your chest
Then you in tears gently whispered:
Look, soon you will become a man.
He became such a man that he could move mountains
He never evaded the call of fate.
And so you reached into his hand for the last time
And it burned within you: Yes! He will return!
Wind is now spreading his words
Listen closely to hear the voices:
It is beautiful, you know mother, beautiful to live
But for what I died I would have died again.

*Karel Destovnik, pen name and nom de guerre Kajuh (1922 – 1944), was a Slovenian poet, translator, communist, partisan and Yugoslav people's hero.

Member's Picks

Videos:

278 – PIRATES (w/ Marcus Rediker)

This is a SRSLY Wrong podcast episode with pirate historian, graphic novelist, and playwright Marcus Rediker. They discuss history from below and pirates as a radical working class and direct democracy movement that was highly disruptive to capitalism. They also reenact an actual pirate satirical play and make stupid jokes, which some might enjoy or choose to fast forward. Lots of people will probably be reading David Graeber's new book *Pirate Enlightenment* now that it's out, and this podcast is a great class analysis compliment to Graeber's anthropological and feminist analysis.

And everyone loves pirates.

Grayson Perry's Full English

Grayson travels around the country, meeting all sorts, as he tries to uncover what Englishness means today.

Chomsky: A Stronger NATO Is the Last Thing We Need as Russia-Ukraine War Turns 1

It is becoming increasingly obvious that this is now a U.S./ NATO-Russia war, Noam Chomsky argues in the exclusive interview for Truthout that follows, excoriating the idea that, in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there needs to be a stronger NATO rather than a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

Class struggle today: Lessons and strategies for labor in Biden's America

Over the last several years, the labor struggle has dramatically increased. Strikes at Starbucks and the University of California garnered national news. Public approval for unions is at a historic high despite the low rate of unionization. New campaigns to organize have emerged in workplaces from Amazon to Trader Joe's. Formations like UAWD have emerged to topple old failed leaders and attempt to pursue more militant strategies and tactics.

Podcasts:

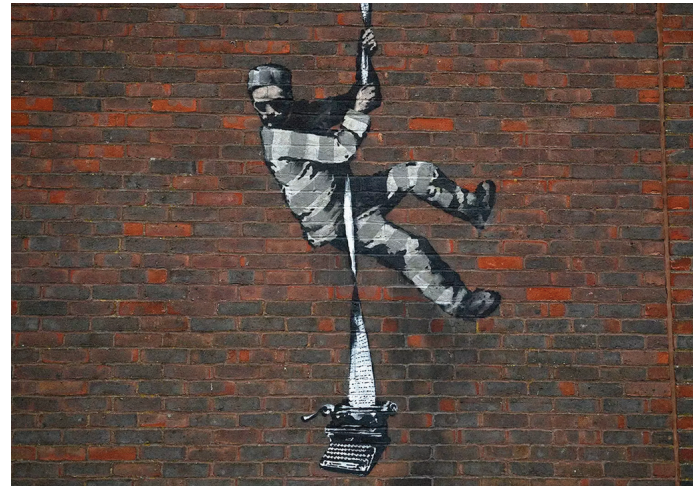
Revolution Z: The New School Students Rising with Cooper Sperling

Episode 216 of RevolutionZ discusses student/faculty organizing at the New School: Strike, Occupation, and ongoing organizing for a new university structure.

Songs:

Severa Gjurin (Bob Dylan cover): Not dark yet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRCFCMNFk3g>



Books:

The Divide, Penguin Random House, 2018 by Jason Hickel

Poor countries are poor because they are integrated into the global economic system on unequal terms. The aid narrative hides the deep patterns of wealth extraction that cause poverty and inequality in the first place: rigged trade deals, tax evasion, land grabs and the costs associated with climate change.

Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings (Haymarket Books, 2015)

An essential collection of essays and speeches from 1889 to 1933 on women's equality, labor, peace and socialism. Zetkin broke new ground by exploring the intersections of gender and class. In these writings, she describes the political process that ultimately allowed for socialized reproduction—namely the establishment by the Soviet revolutionary government of communal kitchens, laundries and child care facilities.

You can download the book [HERE](#).

“The major problem—one of the major problems, for there are several—one of the many major problems with governing people is that of whom you get to do it; or rather of who manages to get people to let them do it to them.

To summarize: it is a well-known fact that those people who must want to rule people are, ipso facto, those least suited to do it.

To summarize the summary: anyone who is capable of getting themselves made President should on no account be allowed to do the job.”

- Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*

“Colorful demonstrations and weekend marches are vital but alone are not powerful enough to stop wars. Wars will be stopped only when soldiers refuse to fight, when workers refuse to load weapons onto ships and aircraft, when people boycott the economic outposts of Empire that are strung across the globe.”

- Arundhati Roy, *Public Power in the Age of Empire*

RU Serious?

... it's memeing time.

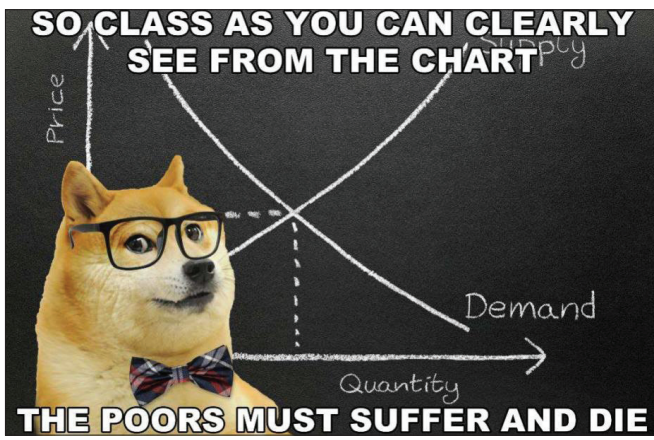


Asked why there's arbitrary penalties on Cooperative Ownership in an economics game about making citizens richer, dev says that it needs them for game balance otherwise it would be "strictly superior to capitalism"

Libra_Feather said:

Why laborers and machinists can not invest in cooperative ownership? There are no shopkeepers in factories when council republic is active.

This is a fair point and I would really just repeat that we don't want Cooperative Ownership to simply be the best economic law. Might be



Just had a call with someone on Forbes 30 under 30 list and came away really impressed.

He shared with me how he made VP at a top tech company before age 30:

1. 4:30 AM wakeup
2. Cold showers
3. Gratitude journal
4. Meditate
5. Dad owns tech company

