



Des Moines Mutual Aid Monthly

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Bro, Can't You At Least Update Your Propaganda With The Times?

BY COMRADE JUDE

In the words of President George W(anker) Bush, *“And our mission is clear, to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein’s support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people”* (March 22, 2003).

In the words of President Donald J(ackass) Trump, *“Iran can have a much brighter future—but we’ll never allow America and its allies to be threatened with terrorism or a nuclear attack. The choice is theirs to make. We want them to be a successful country...but they cannot have a nuclear weapon”* (May 13, 2025).

You’ve probably noticed by now that America is built largely on propaganda. What you may not have noticed is that America is incredibly lazy about producing that propaganda. The Iraq war was predicated on “prevention,” over two decades ago and now, a potential US war with Iran is being framed the exact same way.

This is not new or unique. Propaganda against trans people mirrors that of gays and lesbians throughout the 20th century. Propaganda against immigrants mirrors that of Black and Brown people when Nixon declared the War on Drugs. Propaganda against Palestinian advocates mirrors that of students protesting against South Africa’s apartheid state.

A few decades ago, gay people were who the greater society didn’t want in bathrooms. In the 1970s, it was Black and Brown people harming Americans after Nixon declared the War on Drugs. In the 1980s, it was students being vilified for protesting South African apartheid. Now, it’s trans people. Now, it’s immigrants. Now, it’s Palestinian advocates. The rhetoric doesn’t change. Only the target.

Don’t let the recycled propaganda fool you. A war with Iran will benefit you, an average American, just as much as the eradication of transgender people, or the mass incarceration of Black and Brown people, or the demonization of Palestinian advocates: Which is to say, it won’t. ■



AI, Learning, and the Struggle Against Capitalism



The difficulty of learning is the learning, and to use AI or anything else to skip this process is to avoid learning.

BY COMRADE JENOTS

A certain educated, thoughtful, usually sharp thinker recently expressed the following sentiment about artificial intelligence: “One should not use AI either in learning or in work, because learning itself is not something obstructed by difficulties, rather—it is those difficulties, so we should not stand in their way.”

In the case of learning, this is true. It is an observation accepted by the most hardworking students, and by virtually all educators: learning is a physical process that takes place in the brain. In order to learn something, one must rewire that brain. This requires practice, repetition, detail, and effort. As of now, there is no surgical procedure that allows one to bypass this. The difficulty of learning is the learning, and to use AI or anything else to skip this process is to avoid learning.

To apply the same reasoning to work is to conflate two things. On one hand, there is a kind of human activity across all of history that is often a means of self-development: what we do in our home garden, what we do when we build

a loved one a bookshelf or read a book. On the other, there is what we do for our boss: activity that is not ours, in an environment that presses us to work more and have less time for our own lives. It’s not obvious how AI might harm the often necessarily tedious process of self-development, let alone why we should avoid using it to fight back against the tedium of wage labor. There is a much larger discussion needed regarding AI technology and the workplace, and who benefits from what. That would require getting into the weeds.

Left wingers tend to be technophobes, to everyone’s detriment. They refuse to seek ways to exploit technological innovations against their enemy. This probably boils down to a lack of curiosity, some kind of generalized depression. If this continues, we are doomed. Capitalism will not be defeated by repeatedly stating how terrible technology is and citing one’s humanities degree to support the claim. The idea that AI, or some other technology, cannot in any imaginable way be used against capitalism is preposterous and unsupportable by any evidence. There is simply a lack of will, and of creativity—and a comfort in the familiar, that we cannot afford if we want to win.■

ASK

DES MOINES
MUTUAL
★ AID ★

Dear Des Moines Mutual Aid,

What is the role of landlords in a communist society?

-F. Hubbel

Dear F. Hubbel,

Fertilizer.



Dear DMMA,

Is the water safe to drink?

-B. Stowe

Dear B. Stowe,

No.

Central Iowa Water Works claims municipal water nitrate levels are just below federal thresholds for cancer causation. A study by this same organization has suggested that nitrate levels below the federal threshold could still be hazardous.

Moreover, any admission by CIWW that Des Moines’ drinking water is unsafe to drink would foment an immediate political crisis for the local government and necessarily find fault with the state’s most powerful constituency, factory farm owners (whose pollution causes nitrate spikes). You cannot trust the government to tell the truth if nitrate levels in tap water become dangerous.

Water is life, this water is poison.



Thanks for the great questions everyone, keep sending them to us at **desmoinesmutualaid@protonmail.com**.

As always, in Love and Rage,

—Des Moines Mutual Aid

This edition’s answer committee was comprised of Subcomadante Jade, Comrade Pat, Subcomadante Ameneza, Subcomadate Ronnie, and Brother Josh. ■



Buy a Drone and Learn How to Use It

BY COMRADE PATRICK

After the first use of airplanes to drop bombs in 1911, air power gave rich, technologically advanced states a huge military advantage. It is relatively simple for a guerilla group to copy the design and production of a rifle. It is far more difficult to procure the needed material and design capacity needed to produce aircraft. This chasm meant rich countries could bomb and surveil poor countries at will, that death from the sky could come at any moment for enemies of empire.

Modern drone technology has

diluted this advantage. Fighter planes cost \$22,000 per hour of flight. Iran produces attack drones with comparable capabilities which cost less than \$2,000 per unit. Practically every modern military or militia has the ability to buy and use drones. Importantly for our purposes, drone technology is so ubiquitous that high-quality drones can be had on the civilian market for just hundreds of dollars.

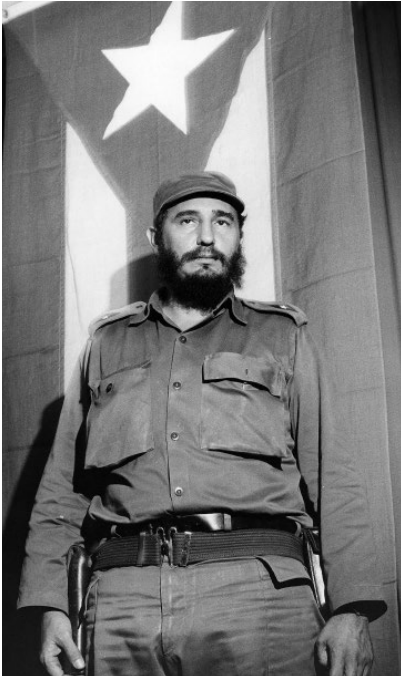
We should use this to our advantage. The US left has mostly shed the liberal hesitation around gun ownership for the purpose of individual and communal self-defense, a welcome

development. More important in any number of likely scenarios, however, is the availability of and expertise in the use of drones. An AR-15 will not help you assess the extent of major flooding after a natural disaster, nor will it tell you anything about the size and disposition of police or other opponents during the next uprising. There is a role for drone ownership in the movement, particularly for comrades who cannot own guns.

We would do well to follow the example of resistance movements worldwide and take seriously the advantages these devices offer. ■

History Spotlight: The 26 July Movement

BY COMRADE BETSY



The 26 July Movement was a vanguard revolutionary organization led by Fidel Castro during the Cuban Revolution. Named after the failed attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953, the movement aimed to overthrow the US-backed dictatorship of Batista. Although it was initially unsuccessful and many were killed or captured, it marked the beginning of organized resistance against Batista’s regime.

Fidel Castro, imprisoned after the attack, later delivered his famous speech, “History Will Absolve Me.” After he was released in 1955, Castro went into exile in Mexico, regrouping with other revolutionaries like Che Guevara. In 1956, they returned to Cuba on the *Granma* to launch a guerrilla campaign against Batista.

The 26 July Movement (or M-26-7) was a movement that aimed to bring liberation to Cubans after Batista’s overthrow, particularly for women and the Afro-Cuban minority. Women disproportionately participated in the M-26-7 during the Revolution in many ways, including the manufacturing of propaganda, picketing, and demonstrations.

After years of guerilla warfare and increasing support for M-26-7 among peasants, workers, and students, the movement succeeded in toppling Batista on January 1st, 1959. The victory marked the start of a socialist transformation in Cuba, with the movement’s revolutionary ideals shaping the country’s political, economic, and social direction for decades to come. ■

So You Went to a Protest: Now What?



BY COMRADE JUDE

It is obvious to most with eyes that holding signs outside of the capital is not an effective political act. Many of us want to engage more meaningfully with our communities, but we all know it’s difficult to figure out how to do that. If you are looking for more effective, fulfilling, and sustainable methods of resisting, here are some real, tangible ways you can do that:

1. Talk to your neighbors. Build relationships with the people around you and try to fulfill some of the smaller, everyday needs of your community members. Bring food to someone you know is struggling, offer support to your trans friends, spread resources for the immigrants in your neighborhood.
2. Join ICE watch platforms and inform the public of any ICE activity you see: stopice.net, People Over Papers ICE Watch Map.
3. Get involved with a local organization - reach out to Des Moines Mutual Aid at @dsm.mutualaid on Instagram, download the Supply Hive Food Rescue app to find opportunities to pick up food donations from local businesses and bring them to community fridges, follow the Des Moines Abolition Coalition on Instagram and come to the next monthly meeting.
4. Stock a community fridge (find local fridges at @thesupplyhive on Instagram)
5. Keep cold water bottles (other great additions: Liquid IV, Gatorade or Powerade, granola bars or other non-perishable foods) in your car for unhoused people you pass on your route.
6. Support BDS. The Boycat app offers a detailed breakdown of various companies’ ties to Israel.
7. Wear a mask.
8. Start a book club! Or a film club, or a knitting group, or whatever – pick an interest to get people together and build community.
9. For those most privileged, consider how willing you are to put yourself in harm’s way for your community. Determine your own comfort zone in resisting any intense situations you may find yourself in, then push yourself outside of that comfort zone. ■