




JOSHUA CLOVER

ON RIOTS AND

STRIKES

THE FINAL STRAW RADIO

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Joshua Clover is the author of seven books including *Riot. Strike. Riot* (Verso, 2016), which has been translated into six languages. Scott and Joshua talk about proletarian resistance to the capitalist economy through struggles against circulation of commodities and to fix their prices (riots) and struggles against exploitation and to set the price of wages in the workplace (strikes), how these methods are not as indistinguishable as we are told and the future of struggle against capitalism and extraction, for a new communist world.

Joshua also has the forthcoming book *Roadrunner* from Duke University Press. It's about exactly what you think it's about (but, if you're not familiar with or from Boston, or haven't ever seen a Stop&Shop at midnight from the beltway, it's about placing one particular song from one particular band within a wide and fascinating context. This'll be out in September!) He also shares a number of links, which can be found by searching for this interview title at <https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/> to find links to further resources on this topic, including:

“I think the best writing on the George Floyd Uprising has been by Idris Robinson, *How It Might Should Be Done*, and Shemon and Arturo, *Theses on the George Floyd Rebellion*.

...the poetry of *Wendy Trevino* and *Juliana Spahr*, both of whom take riots and insurrections as a main topic. Both of the books linked too are free.

Speaking of riots, people should always read Gwendolyn Brooks, *RIOT*.

I am always trying to get people to read *Red Skin, White Masks* by Glen Coulthard, which is a theoretical consideration on Indigenous struggle that eventually arrives at the fact and the logic of land blockades; it was written before Standing Rock.

I mentioned the work of Charmaine Chua on logistics, circulation, and decolonial struggle; [the site has linked] one useful essay.

Here is a link (<https://www.dukeupress.edu/roadrunner>) to the book I have coming out soon....”

TFSR: So you published *Riot Strike Riot* in 2016. And if anything, it seems like the last five years have really born out your analysis in many ways and that made me really excited to get to talk to you to hear about your perspective over the last five years of global uprisings. And so jumping into that, I wanted to set up the terms of analysis that you put forth in the book so we can get an understanding of the historical trajectory you trace, and then the theory of riot that you propose, which I think is super important for us right now.

So the historical context you focus on is broadly the time of industrial capitalism to now -- the onset of industrial capitalism -- with a dialectic you propose of transformation and popular resistance from riot to strike to a new or change form of riot, which you call “riot prime”. You define strike and riot as different forms that I’m gonna quote you “strike and riot are practical struggles of a reproduction within production, and circulation, respectively”. So I was wondering if you could go a bit into the distinction and the texture of the two forms of riot and strike, the different terrain they use the different relation to time and space, or what it means the struggle for reproduction -- the terrain of circulation -- as opposed to production?

Joshua Clover: So this is the big ticket theoretical question, and I’ll try to answer it without dodging theory, but in a way that tries to make it sort of useful and accessible in relation to particular. One of the goals of the book is to have a sort of theoretical apparatus that can be meaningfully descriptive of concrete events that we’ve lived through, our friends have lived through, and people we know have lived through. Speaking of that, the publication history that you mentioned and, even more strikingly, the original talk that this came out of where I started working through these concepts (from 2012, well before the Ferguson uprising.) That was something that happened while I was puzzling through the book and I could see immediately that it was super important and I got myself to Ferguson as quickly as I could, and tried to be involved in what happened

there and talk to people and so on. That was sort of the first, I don't know if confirmation is the right word -- it's hard to think of that dramatic a political episode is like, "Oh, well, good, it confirmed my theories" -- but it was certainly a moment where I felt like the things I was trying to think about, and what was happening in the world and the United States were converging pretty dramatically.

So to get back to this theoretical sort of framework...the circuit of capital in its entirety has these two interlocking spheres. One of them is the sphere of production: that's the place where capitalists bring together means of production, right? If you make clothes, you're bringing together textiles and sewing machines and needles in a factory and electricity, and bring that together with workers with labor power, and you make a commodity. That's the sphere of production. The commodity is launched out onto the market, it sort of makes its way to the marketplace, is exchanged, it's exchanged some more, it's consumed. That's all the sphere of circulation.

Those two spheres are, as I said, interlinked, and neither can exist without the other. But interestingly, almost everyone in the world is in the sphere of circulation, that is to say, we're what we call "market dependent": we have to go to the store to get food, or clothes, or whatever that we need to survive. Whereas only some fraction of the world is dependent directly, at least on wages in production for survival. So those are the two different sort of moments in which we reproduce ourselves, our families, our communities -- and here, I don't mean biological reproduction, right? I mean whatever you do to be alive the next day as a person, as a community.

If you have a wage, if you have a "formal employment," as we say, often you struggle in production, you struggle over the value of your labor, that is what a strike is, right? That's not the only kind of production struggle, that's not the only way people struggle there, they do all kinds of stuff. They do sabotage and factory takeovers, and who knows, those are production struggles.

Let's imagine you don't have formal employment, you don't have access to the wage. But still, you're pretty miserable, your life is pretty immiserated enough that you decide you want to fight back against that misery. Well, you're not going to struggle in production, because you can't, but you are out there in the space of circulation. You are still market dependent. So that's the other sort of large category of struggle that I look at in the book and that I focused on, which is circulation struggles more broadly.

Often, historically, these are over the price of market goods. If you go back to even before industrial capitalism, the 16th, 17th, 18th century, you get these what get called "riots" that are persistently over the price and availability of market goods. Famously the bread riot -- which a lot of people think of is like going down to the baker and liberating the bread -- but even more commonly took the form of blocking the road and stopping grain merchants from shipping grain out of your county to somewhere else where they could make a higher profit because people in your county are hungry, and they're like, "fuck that, the grain stays here, we need food." So that's sort of the origin of the circulation struggle of which the riot is the most famous kind. We can think about the blockade and the occupation, various other kinds of things. That is the form that comes before the strike, which rises to prominence as the main form of production struggle, as you say, with industrial capitalism in the early middle of 19th century.

By the late 20th century -- and here, I'm really talking about the early industrializing nations, sometimes called the "capitalist core" -- the strike and the historical labor movement has started to recede pretty dramatically. The riot begins to return to prominence, so much so that we talk about major political struggles in the West over the last several decades. Most regularly, we're talking about versions of riots from the small local event to the George Floyd uprising.

So those are the two categories of struggle, production struggle and circulation struggle, and their relationship to those two sort

of spheres of capital. I hope that wasn't too extended a framework. Once we have that, we can maybe get more down into practical events that we've all lived through.

TFSR: That's really helpful and kind of breaks it down in a way that makes sense. One of the things that you do in the book that I find really interesting is you sort of look at the way that riot and strike have been put into opposition as, like, opposed political actions. And this happens on all kinds of spectrums of political ideology, like left and right, or even just in popular representation, where riot is seen as like a non-political act, it's delegitimized. And strike is seen as maybe more worthy -- at least certain versions of the strike -- and gets kind of like put in the, like, toolkit of, like, peaceful protest, etc, as a legitimate way to get what you want politically, but there's also distinctions that we can see in how they bring down repression from the state. But what you do in the book is to show how these two forms of struggle have continuities, and therefore are, like, more tied to historical moments, rather than an essential difference. So I was wondering if you could kind of talk about that seeming opposition of riot and strike and where you think that they kind of connect and differ from your perspective?

JC: Yeah, that's a really helpful question and I think it has, for me, two important pivots in it. One is to think about the continuity between riot and a strike that's often obscured. And the other is to think about their historicity or historicality, I'm never quite sure of the technical term.

The first thing I'll say is that the strike originally arises very much out of a circulation of goods, the earliest use of the term "strike" has to do with sailors on boats that are delivering goods, refusing to deliver and "striking their sails," as it's called, taking down the sails, waiting and refusing to deliver goods. That's clearly in the space of transport of goods to market, arising from circulation struggles and that era of merchants, but it's the beginning of the strike.

The strike really arises out of these moments of circulation, and then becomes a kind of production struggle. And then as noted, the tide shifts the other way back toward the riot. I think it's hard to pin down dates, and I may have been overly specific in the book, but I don't know, the 60's, 70's somewhere in there. So two things, right? One is that continuity: it's not like anyone invented the strike, because they're like, "Nah, man, the riot's no good. Don't do a riot, do a [strike]." It didn't work that way, historically, that opposition arrives fairly late in the game. One emerges from the other in this real historical continuity, and as you suggested, they rise and fall and ebb and flow in relation to historical conditions. Again, like some sort of transhistorical idea that "X form of struggle is good, Y form of struggle is bad." Anytime you hear someone saying that, you should just say, "well, that's nonsense."

The kind of struggle that's going to emerge, whatever our sort of theoretical or moral judgments of it, the kind of struggle that's going to emerge is from concrete situations. When you have a massive increase of industrialization, the rise of the factory, the expansion of the formal wage, you're going to get increases in people struggling that way. When that mode of organizing society starts to recede with deindustrialization, disemployment, production of surplus populations at a global level -- and I'm sure we'll get to that technical term "surplus populations" -- then, of course, struggles in the sphere of circulation, where people who've been kicked out of employment by automation, or offshoring, or whatever, but still are stuck in the spirit of speculation, well, they're gonna keep struggling.

My one great lesson that I've learned in thinking about these things is, it's simple. I apologize for my simplicity, right. But it's just: people struggle where they are. Period. People run up against misery, and they decide they don't want to take it, they don't want to take being bullied by their boss, they don't want to being unable to afford to survive, they don't want to take being killed by the cops, and they struggle where they are. If you get a lot of people in production, you're going to see production struggles. If you get a lot of

people in circulation, you're going to see circulation struggles, it's pretty straightforward, actually.

TFSR: Kind of drawing off the way that the...maybe the history is told to us in the way that it plays out in our imaginations -- and perhaps this has to do with the fact that the strike kind of came about also the times that these like, you know, different kinds of liberationist ideologies of like anarchism and communism are coming out -- but the strike plays a kind of out-scaled role in our imaginations of what, like, revolutionary struggle means. And the the sense I got reading your book is like this, because you go "riot strike riot prime", the strike almost seems like an aberration in terms of its concentration of kind of, like, movement power. And that, at least today, I see that the romanticization of the strike seems to kind of out exceed its effectiveness, like people still think that's where we need to be doing our work, but it doesn't really quite make sense.

So I was wondering if you have thoughts about why the strike, you know, commands so much power over revolutionary imaginations? And then there's also kind of poetry to the riot, of course. I wonder if you want to talk about that, and, like the imaginative power of these forms of struggle?

JC: Yeah. Well, that's, again, this is a great and complex, rich question. I hope you're right that the strike was like an aberration. By which I mean, not that I bear the strike any ill will, but I hope that human history endures long enough, that we look back on the 150 year period where the strike oriented a lot of struggles in a lot of the world, as an aberration. I'm worried that human history is not going to last that long, and that we won't have a chance to look back on that as an aberration.

I think you raised an important point, which is that it is a fairly clearly bracketed period and so why did it take on the intense charisma that it did? I think there's good reasons for it, to be honest.

Certainly, when the strike was on the rise, there was a belief -- and a not unreasonable one -- that was moved toward an industrial society, a manufacturing society was just going to continue, that it was going to cover more and more of the globe, that it was going to organize more and more people's lives, organize more and more of social production. That was the belief in the labor movement, when it came into being. We have our first strikes in the late 18th century, we have the first Workers Party officially in the 1870's in Germany. And at that point, it's on, right? The labor movement is sort of where the action is, in the West at least. The sense was to just continue to expand. People thought that for a good reason. It didn't really turn out to be the case, it lasted for a while and not forever.

But during the period of the labor movement's expansion and consolidation it won a lot of really tremendous victories. The strike, especially when there is high labor demand, is an incredibly powerful weapon. You know sometimes people read the book as an advocacy book, saying "Oh, you should riot not strike," which it absolutely is not, it never once suggests that. The strike, in certain but not at all uncommon situations, is incredibly powerful. It won a lot of victories. It seemed like it was a route not just to better compensation and conditions for workers, but maybe to overcome capitalism. For those reasons, it acquired a lot of charisma, so much so that I'm sure as you've noticed, people love to call things strikes now but just aren't strikes. They don't involve withdrawing labor, don't involve interfering with capitals production, but people will call them strikes because that term has a lot of charisma. Two things: one, it deserves that charisma for the victories that it won.

TFSR: Mhm.

JC: Two: I think people who are going to struggle get to call what they're doing whatever they want. If someone wakes up in the morning, and is ready to go out and really try and fight against power as it exists, I salute them and they should get to call with their doing whatever the fuck they want.

TFSR: *laughs* Right?

JC: That said, I do think or hope that we'll live long enough to see the charisma of the strike wane a little. It hasn't been nearly so powerful, it hasn't won nearly the gains it used to win since the 70's, or 80's. Meanwhile, other forms of struggle are coming to the fore. I think there was probably even a time a few years ago, just six years ago, eight years ago, when people were still saying, "well, the riot's illegitimate, it's not a real form of struggle, the strike is the only real form of struggle." At this point I think it's only like, hard-line work-erists, as we say, who hold to that position after the George Floyd uprising last summer. I think people are more ready to recognize that these other forms of social contest can really become a challenge to the present social order.

TFSR: Right. Yeah, that's an interesting point, just to see how that tide has shifted from just last year, where I think you hear less people kind of talking about how "what we need to do is like organize workplaces."

JC: Yeah, I mean, I think if I can just intercede for a second, I think you use the word "organize." That's really a crucial pivot here. So one of the reasons that the strike feels so politically powerful to people, is because of a fairly narrow definition of what counts as organization. They always say "you have to be organized." Often that just means organized like a union, organized like a political party. The strike satisfies that, and a riot or uprising, insurrection does not. It will never work, it's not organized. Now, that's rubbish. There's lots of other kinds of organization that go into an uprising, a riot, you know. Robin D. G. Kelley the great historian has written eloquently about the kinds of organizing that small social groups in Los Angeles did in advance of the Watts riots in 1965 that made it possible. Now, these small social groups often get called "street gangs", but they're community groups that get together and figure out how to proceed from day to day. They did a lot of organizing, but it's not the kind that gets recognized by like, "we need to organize." That's

exactly the hinge I think, is understanding what counts as organization, as we think about political possibilities.

TFSR: Yeah, that's a really good point. And we could probably draw a comparison to, like, the George Floyd uprisings, the massiveness of them came in the heat of the pandemic, when there have been mutual aid groups working in all these cities to try and take care of people while they're losing work and losing access to the things they need to live. So in some way, that kind of organization which doesn't get recognized in the same way, like, a party or union does, was there at the same time that people started reacting to, you know, the continuous murder of Black people by the police. That may have helped provide a kind of leverage for the size of the movement. So that's an interesting parallel that you draw from Kelley.

In terms of this, the way that you describe the predicament of the strike today, is really helpful for me to think about, like why it seems less successful. You call it the "affirmation trap." This seems to me actually to be super helpful, just in thinking about capitalism and what it produces in terms of how we can even imagine our lives and struggle. You say that all that workers can really struggle for is to reaffirm their position within the capitalist within capitalist exploitation, and that's a game of diminishing returns. I wonder if you could kind of talk about this affirmation trap and explain, like, that larger arc of capitalist accumulation or financialization that leads to this narrowing of the purview of the strike.

JC: Yeah, absolutely. As a preface, I should note that the concept of the affirmation trap that I developed, one of the sources in thinking through which logic was the phrase and the idea of "cruel optimism," which is drawn from Lauren Berlant. Lauren is a friend of mine, and she passed a couple of days ago, so I just wanted to mention that and remember her briefly while we're together and I'm thinking through this problem, because a lot of my thinking is

possible because of the brilliant people that I've known in my life and Lauren is absolutely one of them.

TFSR: Yeah, that is a great loss.

JC: Lauren describes cruel optimism as this way of being stuck in having to feel optimistic about the very thing that keeps on reproducing your conditions that don't change. The optimism of believing you can get change from an edifice that in fact prevents change. I think in reading her book that maybe one of the main references would be something like voting. We're told over and over again that voting is the only way you can change the world, and yet over and over again it turns out to be the case that we vote for people who keep the world the same. But for me the referent was really usefully labor. Which is to say, we're compelled to be optimistic about labor, or at least to go to work every day, because otherwise we would starve. Yet it's work that preserves us in a situation of subordination, of being at risk of starving, and so on. When I started thinking about the affirmation trap, it's as much as you described, it's that thing of having to affirm -- by showing up in the morning -- the very thing that keeps you subordinated, and doesn't affirm but negates you as a human.

That's true for each individual, I think with work, but it's also true for the workers movement in general. That happened in very concrete historical ways. The workers movement had a lot of substantial gains, often through the strike over the century, let's say between 1875 and 1975. But in the late 60's, early 70's, industrial capitalism, global capitalism really enters into crisis. Profit margins essentially vanish. They're still huge profits, but they're matched by losses in other places, there's no systemic growth. Overall, capitalist profitability really plummets around 1972-1973. Many of the major industrial firms in the US -- car companies most famously but there are other examples as well -- face a sort of existential threat. They're barely making any profit, or they're generating a loss, and the government is propping them up because they can't afford to

have these major industries vanish.

Consequently, the unions find themselves in a very tenuous position, because if they bargain really aggressively and strongly General Motors is just going to go out of business. If the union wants its jobs to keep existing -- that it provides for union members -- it has to make sure General Motors continues to exist. So it has to bargain for contracts, not that push General Motors around and win concessions, but that keep General Motors functional and profitable. This is a huge transformation in the structure of organized labor -- especially the United States, Western Europe, but other places in the world as well -- in which unions, in effect, cease being the antagonists of industrial firms and start being in effect collaborators. Both of them enter into the task of keeping each other operative and functional. That sense that there's a sort of historical struggle to overcome capitalism, that horizon starts to close, long before the collapse of the Soviet Union. We often date the end of the Communist dream to 89' or something. But that horizon where the labor movement was pointed toward overcoming capitalism, rather than preserving it really starts to fade in the 70's.

TFSR: Yeah, It made me think about the problems that you come into when you're like organizing workers from the perspective of like, keeping them in work. So if you have, like, a miners strike or something, or you know, miners are trying to unionize to get better benefits, but the mining itself is under question now because of like climate catastrophe, impending climate catastrophe. Like people aren't going to necessarily get behind a miner wanting to keep mining, right? Because it's doing damage to the earth. And so that's like one of those contradictions. And one of the things that keeps coming to my head -- it came into my head when I was reading the book, and I didn't really have the language for it but I keep thinking about it while we're talking -- we were talking about the the realm of reproduction in a way it's like, it's just life, right? Like the ability to live and to exist. And this is what we're struggling over and both riot and strike

bring us there, they're sort of an expression of the way that we are made dependent upon the market and state to survive, right? Like, one is through work, and one is through having to rely on the goods that are produced through work to live, like, consuming them.

And so we have all this language to talk about the things that we have to do to live but it's just about...it's this question of living right? That we don't ever get to. I mean, one thing is , I think about whatever work struggle we have to have within the horizon of getting rid of work, like, abolishing work as a relationship. But I don't know if you have thoughts about that, like how...maybe this is like a later question to like, what's this realm of living in relationship to struggle?

JC: Well, yeah, I think as it was formulated probably a number of times, but best known to me is in a bunch of writing from the 60's in France by the Situationist International, with the goal to get beyond survival. We needed to overcome survival as what our political horizon was. In some sense both the struggle that depends on negotiating for your wage, and the struggle that depends on the value of market goods -- the price at market goods -- are both about survival, but neither of them is about overcoming the horizon of survival itself toward what you're calling a living. Just reproducing ourselves without reference to some capitalists choosing to pay us a pittance every hour, or some store that's going to sell us low quality pasta.

The goal is to get to a place where we can reproduce ourselves -- sorry, I keep falling into this technical language, I'm trained [*laughs*] -- where we can reproduce ourselves without reference to the wage or the market and that's the goal. I think you raised an important moment, which is the conflict now between ecological struggles and labor as a contradiction, we saw that really dramatically at Standing Rock, for example. Where the pipeline company never says, "Oh, you have to take down this blockade because we need profits," they say "jobs", right? They say, "if you shut down this pipeline with your

blockade, you know, water protectors, you're going to be putting a lot of good Americans out of work." It becomes a conflict between, on the one hand, people who want access to the wage, and on the one hand, people who want to avoid total despoliation of the climate and the lands on which they dwell and so on. I don't think there's a way to overcome that contradiction. People try to sort of imagine, "well, we'll have green jobs." That's the magic squaring of the circle, is that somehow, "we'll have an increase in jobs, but it will be good for the climate not bad for the climate." I think that's a bit of magical thinking, to be honest.

I think that really asks us to get back to your question about getting past survival to living, to really think seriously about the zero jobs demand. A lot of, for example, socialists, full employment as a demand. Obviously, full employment, I think, is obviously, A: not possible and B: a guaranteed route to faster and faster climate collapse.

TFSR: Right.

JC: And moreover, work fucking sucks. I have a good job, I'm lucky, I've had a lot of jobs in my life, some better some worse, right now I have a good job. I'm very lucky. I don't like that job. I don't like any jobs, work sucks. Having a boss sucks, having to show up sucks. Showing up doesn't suck, *having* to show up sucks. I don't think there's a route to planetary survival, that doesn't pass through the No Employment position, rather than the Full Employment position.

TFSR: Right. And I mean, just kind of building off that, it makes me wonder, so all of these questions and struggles often don't get at the meat of the things, like, you know: we need to have the basic things to survive, which is: food and shelter and care of different kinds. The struggles don't tend to be actually over those things. It's hard to get out of the mindset that thinks about like, some entity, like the state, providing us that right? Which they

certainly aren't going to do and they never have.

So I was just wondering if you if you had thoughts on that, because part of the dream of the labor movement in the 19th century, that we still have inherited today is that full automation, the centralized state that controls everything and we can sort of live our lives freely within that, but that obviously never happened. It doesn't look like it's likely, and all that the state does is reproduce these forms of exclusion and surplus. Do you think that even shifting our gaze to those basic necessities as as the ground from which we can think of life could be approached as a kind of aspect of the movement without replicating those structures?

JC: I think it could be. I think that there are some real challenges and real warnings we need to heed. Certainly we've seen recognitions of this need, but they've often happened in fairly small scale ways. I'm old enough to live through hardly the first but a sort of substantial "back to the land" movements, and the forming of what get called communes - which is usually like, you know, 12 people, one of whom has a trust fund, moving to upstate New York and living together in a farmhouse. I say that slightly mockingly, I don't think that's a bad idea, but there's a couple issues with it. One: it often doesn't legitimately detach from the market and the wage. There's someone who's still got a job, or still has inherited a lot of capital, is sitting in a bank somewhere and is living off of that, or whatever. So that's not a true form of detachment. The other is, of course, it's quite small scale.

But the real blockage to that is: imagine, you know, that started to happen with thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of groups started to try and detach from the wage, detach from the market, and get into subsistence gardening and, you know, reproduction of their own communities. Without anyone working for a capitalist without anyone shopping in the marketplace. What would happen then? The state would come for you, the state would come for you immediately. The state would come for you first by

probably jacking up taxes really intensely on that activity so you simply couldn't afford it. Historically, as taxes were invented to drive people into the money economy, and force people to live that way. So that would probably be the state's first strategy to force people back into the money economy, to force people back into the labor market, insofar as they're needed in the labor market. Which is to say, long story short: if people want to pursue this question of communal reproduction -- I'm just going to call it a commune, but I don't mean again, the household, I mean, like large scale things -- if people want to pursue the commune, they're not going to do it just by like "withdrawing and it's going to be cool." It's going to be part of a sustained struggle with the state on behalf of capital. There's no route there that's peaceful, that's groovy, that is just like, "we're just withdrawing, we're gone." Like, that's not gonna happen.

TFSR: Yeah, that's, that's important. Yeah, thanks. That kind of helps to think about, like...we still have to struggle against the state that's gonna interject itself in any kind of relationship we try to establish outside of its purview. So now we've sort of moved to the current situation, but one thought, and one question I had thinking about the current moment, and the phase of capitalism, that makes strike difficult, is how capital flight has worked, right? We have technological advances that made internationalizing supply chains easier, but then increased the on demand nature of modern production, and that creates more opportunities for choke points in the circulation. Two recent examples of this have been the colonial pipeline that shut off its distribution because it couldn't invoice the customers and bill them for the gas, but that ended up leading to gas shortages around the southeast. The Ever Given cargo ship blocking the Suez Canal created a sort of crisis, and that was accidental, apparently. These might not have been politically motivated in terms of limiting circulation, but they do point to issues of places where we might think about struggle. I was wondering if you had ideas about these kinds of circulation struggles from another perspective?

JC: Yeah, you know what? I just want to hover over those two moments, that colonial pipeline and the Ever Given blocking Suez Canal, just because they were such extraordinary moments and glad you pointed them out. It's true: both events are political, but that's different from saying both events were conceived of and executed with specific political goals. These are extraordinary moments showing us vulnerabilities -- choke points is a very popular term, which I've sort of come to feel ambivalent about, but that's fine. But I think they do point to possibilities for struggle, but not just the fact like "oh circulation, capital is more and more dependent on it" which is true, right? Capital as industrial capitalism has become less profitable. Large firms have tried to really make their distribution of goods, their circulation of goods far more cost efficient. We've seen this massive build out of global shipping, especially since about 1985. Really dramatically trying to improve turnover time and cost per unit of shipping and cut down on those costs as a form of venture capital struggle, and those produce vulnerabilities. There's no doubt about it.

I don't want to exaggerate those because capital is pretty resilient, to use the technical term, capital is pretty effective at having multiple routes to move things around, to be able to reroute, to evade a blockade or something like that. I don't want to exaggerate how vulnerable capital is. But it's definitely a site of struggle, a site of contest. It's important to note that when there was the struggle to try and bring down that Egyptian government in 2010-2011 -- it actually starts with strikes in Mahalla in the textile region, then there's massive riots and occupations around the capitol in Tahrir Square most famously -- but the hinge event is the Suez workers threatened to go on strike. So that's at once a strike and a circulation struggle, where they're going to block circulation through the canal, and that's the event that actually brings down the government, that precedes by two days, the collapse of the government.

So this is sort of an interesting combination of phenomena. What's most important to me here is who this indicates as the subject who

is involved in struggle. If we say working class, I actually think that term misses some things: it assumes people who are working for a wage, who go to work in the morning. Obviously, that's inaccurate, because all of us do all kinds of work. There's reproductive labor in the home, we're doing eldercare, we're doing childcare, all kinds of things, right? But usually, "working class" sort of refers to wage workers. The thing about a circulation struggle, the thing about blocking a pipeline is: you don't have to be a worker. To shut down a factory with a strike, you have to be a worker and refuse and withdraw your work. It really limits who can take part of that option to workers in that site to the working class.

Whereas shutting down a pipeline, anyone in the entire proletariat -- which is not just the working class, but everyone who, you know, doesn't own the means of production, isn't a capitalist -- can take part in that, anyone can show up in the pipeline. As we saw Standing Rock where like, any number of my students -- I'm a teacher -- were like, "I'm failing for a couple weeks, I'm going out to Standing Rock" and I was like, "Godspeed." You can just show up and be part of it and take part and that's I think what distinguishes circulations struggles, is they're open as tactics of struggle to anyone, you don't have to be a worker to take apart.

TFSR: That's interesting because one of the brushes they use to tar the riot is the discourse around the outside agitator. So the strike has a kind of belonging to it, like the workers belong there, and because of that "belonging" they have some sort of voice that demands to be heard. Whereas the riot can always be painted that way, like that it's outside, that is not coming from here, that it's someone's neighborhood, but not theirs that is being demolished, or even if it is, there's the people who are doing it wrong. But what you're saying with circulations it's actually this more open form precisely because you don't have to belong to be to participate in it. It creates a different kind of space for struggle.

JC: That's really well said. I mean, I think you just did a better

version of it than I did. But you're right for a variety of reasons, the strike can make these sort of moral claims, you know: I go to my workplace, I use the tools every day to make whatever I make at my workplace, and I have some sort of moral right of disposition over those tools, I can decide they're not going to be used today, that the strike is on. Whereas that moral right doesn't seem to transfer to the scene of the riot, the scene of the blockade, the scene of the occupation. At the same time, that space of let's say, the blockade, truly belongs to everyone. To go back to Standing Rock as an example, which I find very useful -- it was led by Indigenous people, water protectors, and rightly so, given their historical habitation on the land -- but it was also open to anyone. That land, if we want to believe any of the promises that were made, even by governments, that land belongs to everyone. It's everyone's right to protect it, possibly everyone's obligation. So, in that sense, circulation struggle, I think, has a broader sort of ethical compass to invite people in.

TFSR: Yeah. That puts it in a really interesting and important way. Because it maybe creates more possibilities of solidarity, too, to think that that your voice belongs there. But since you've brought up Standing Rock, I kind of want to think a little bit about how you describe, like, the modern, or current form of riot, "riot prime" in the book. You trace this back to a slightly different history than the earlier riots, to anticolonial uprisings and slave rebellions, or that's like an additional part of it, a thread that comes into play in today's riot. Yu say that today's riot is always racialized, a question of surplus population. So I wanted to hear you talk a little bit more about the effect of racialization in understanding the riot, the way it's talked about, and then maybe if you want to bring that into play with the uprising after George Floyd's murder, or the experience of Ferguson that you had, because that seems like a good examples for the racialization of riot.

JC: Yeah. So this gives me a chance to track back to our very opening discussion about sort of the technical and theoretical categories.

I'm going to try and lean on them again, but toward this very concrete experience of racial violence, community defense, and things like that. So there's various ways of being excluded from the "formal economy" as we say, the "wage economy." One of the ways is sort of classic land dispossession, so we can think about Indigenous people in North America being dispossessed of their land. Not always just to be bargained for labor force as workers, but sometimes it's just like, "Get the fuck off the land, we'll kill you if we have to, to get you to leave, you're not wanted, we're not even going to include you in the labor force." So that's one way of being made rendered surplus to the economy.

Another way of being rendered surplus to the economy is you work in a car factory that goes fully robotic to compete with lower overhead firms in Japan or South Korea, and you're kicked out of your job as you're replaced by automation, by improved processes. That's another way you can be sort of excluded from the wage and rendered surplus.

So these are different kinds of surplus, but they're both super racialized, right? For example, I talked about Indigenous populations, that's racialized obviously enough. In the United States, to choose a single example, if you're going to get excluded from a workplace by industrialization, Black workers get fired first. This is a long standing tradition, even has to do with union policies of like, you know, "last hired, first fired." Unions were very slow to allow Black people into unions, and into productive labor, they tend to get hired later and then I'm fired earlier. People who've been rendered surplus in that way are also racialized.

But this is not just true of the United States, if you go to look to both France and the United Kingdom, which is, you know - this book also came in the wake of really massive rioting in France in 2005-2006, and then, quite famously, the the Tottenham riots in England in 2010, and these are profoundly racialized as well. You get large immigrant populations, often from the Mashreq, the Maghreb in

England, often from the West Indies, as well. The unemployment rates in those populations are inevitably twice as high as they are among white Europeans. So those are people who, by virtue of being unemployed, are not in production, but they are in circulation and that's where the riot is.

These riots of surplus populations are inevitably racialized in the West because of the ways that dispossession and exclusion are racialized, and dispossession and exclusion produced the population of riot. They're always going to function that way. Here's the kicker: once you exclude people from labor, you exclude them from labor discipline. As you probably have experienced in your life, if you have a job that's a kind of discipline, you have to be a certain kind of citizen, you have to show up in a timely fashion, you have to comport yourself in certain ways. The job forces you to be a certain kind of citizen. But if you don't have that wage discipline, what happens? Well, what happens is you get policed much more dramatically to make sure that discipline is imposed, because there's no wage discipline, there's police discipline, the state discipline. So these populations are far more subject to state discipline and to state violence. And that's what we see over and over again, that kicks off the riot. Almost inevitably. We look at the George Floyd uprising, and it's a struggle with the state right? With the cops, against the police, because the police are the instrument of this discipline, the state of the instrument of the discipline and has to be, because there's no wage discipline when you have very high unemployment, exclusion, dispossession...you know, where jobs were, the police are. And this is always the case.

TFSR: And also just listening to you describe that history, it makes me think about why the riot currently takes on such a bigger role than even seems more hopeful in a way, as a point of struggle. Is that the previous iterations didn't, sort of, attack the whole, all the interconnecting parts of capitalism in the state, which relied on dispossession of Indigenous populations and enforced labor by enslaved populations that became racialized. And if that part

of it isn't addressed, we're just doing a labor struggle, it's never gonna fully lead to a kind of liberation, because we're still living off of that, those profits. Once the racialization of the struggle becomes apparent, it seems like then it's actually being truthful, in a way, about where the enemy lies, or I guess, to put it in a kind of simplified language.

JC: I think that's right. I mean, I do want to avoid a kind of antisolidaristic account where like, strikes are for white people, and riots are for, are for BIPOC or however you want to phrase it. I don't think that's quite right. Moreover, I think that opens up the riot -- the uprising insurrection -- to all those outside agitator claims. Like, here's the right, the correct kind of person to be part of this struggle, and here's the incorrect person who shouldn't be party to it and who's just clearly an agitator. I'm more interested in a possible sort of solidaristic politics. My experience of the George Floyd uprising was that it was led by Black proletarians but it wasn't racially exclusive in any sense and I think that efforts to paint it as such are counter revolutionary-

TFSR: Right.

JC: -and that it was an important moment of a partial -- always partial -- solidarity, which I think opens possibilities for the future.

TFSR: The narrative that I think was pretty generalized in my area-- when there was Black youth-led uprisings in the street, in the wake of George Floyd -- the discourse of outside agitators (white anarchists) came in and then the Black elder leadership also took on that role. But the fact of the matter in the streets was that it was a multiracial coalition led by Black youth who are innovating the point of struggle and talking about it differently than the people that have been kind of shepherded through the movements over the last few decades.

But coming off that idea of solidarity -- and this is perhaps what

you saw, maybe in Ferguson, too -- you talk about it in a really important way. Because there's the racialized surplus population that you just described previously, but I think the population that's rendered surplus today, as production gets further and further withdrawn- so, you're a teacher, I'm a teacher too, teaching the students in university who were expecting jobs after a BA, leave with no jobs and horrible amounts of debt. And so in a way there's no pathway for integration, even for white people who were promised a place in this system, that just doesn't really exist anymore. So I was just wondering about how you might think about that, how that plays out on the ground, or how we can articulate that more explicitly to form bonds of solidarity.

JC: It's certainly an interesting moment. You know, we finally -- after almost 50 years now of national decline -- have reached a moment where the possibility of national decline can be admitted. And the reason it can be admitted is because the consequences of it have finally arrived on the doorsteps of the white middle class, if we have to use the term "middle class", I think we all know that's a deeply ineffective term. But we're getting to the moment where we're seeing declining life chances for white populations who never in the history of the nation have had anything but improving life chances, increasing life expectancy, increasing income expectations. Now we're seeing that moment where all life chances are starting to decline and diminish for that population of reasonably well off, not utterly impoverished white people. We can now talk about decline.

So the question is: is that population newly confronting political economic exigency able to enter into solidarity with the truly immiserated proletariat, especially the Black proletariat, Brown proletariat, and so on? Is that possible? There's moments in which I do not have much optimism. You look at the data from the January 6th insurrectionists, right, and it's all not impoverished, but you know, middle class white people with a particular feature being they live in counties that either are or are adjacent to sites in which there's diminishing white populations.

TFSR: Right?

JC: That's a really interesting study by Robert Pape at University of Chicago, who does really useful demographic studies of things like this. So in that sense, if we want to talk about like a downwardly mobile, white middle class as a sort of significant demographic slice, the moment of January 6th is a moment of extreme reaction against -- extreme hostility toward -- proletarians of color. At other times, we've seen lately more optimistic moments. I describe the Occupy movement -- and again, maybe optimistically, I don't know, I think I should be allowed the occasional moment of optimism -- I described the Occupy movement as an effort, a failed effort, but an effort to find a solidarity or a collaboration between the downwardly mobile, white middle class, who just encountered the collapse of 2008, suddenly experienced vast amounts of indebtedness, as you say, really limited potential for future employment or advanced or anything like that. Trying to find a way forward with already immiserated populations, especially Black populations, others as well, it didn't quite come off, but it was try. One hope for the future is if that can come off better next time. And if that short of alliance, I don't know if that's the right word, but if that sort of solidarity, starts to manifest I think it's on.

TFSR: **Yeah, you put it really clearly. Like, what we're up against really is like the recruitment of those newly surplus white populations from fascists and the like -- and clearly that's happening across the globe -- but the anti fascist movements seem to be pulling out more people, at least right now. Like the George Floyd uprising was way bigger than the Open Up movements during COVID, and then the January 6th, whatever that was.**

JC: Yeah that's important to remember, it's important to remember the scale of the George Floyd uprising, you put together all of these, alt-right, far right nativist -- wherever you want to call them -- movements, and you know, the George Floyd uprising dwarfs them. That's really important to remember.

TFSR: Well, thinking again, about, like, sort of the global context, when you talk about the racialization of the riot -- and in the book, you are focusing, as you said, like, sort of on Europe and the US -- but in the current state of the riot, you describe how what was like a peripheral colonial conflict kind of comes to the colonial center, to the metropole, but I'm wondering how you see the kind of decolonial struggles continuing right now. How that might be tied in with climate stuff and Indigenous uprisings around the world?

JC: Well, I do want to be slow to comment on this, only because I'm not sure I'm an expert on anything, but I did a lot of studying and trying to learn things for the purposes of the book, and limited my field so that I could get some sort of handle on what was happening in the capitalist core. I don't consider myself much of an expert on the rest of the world, so I don't want to sort of wax knowledgeable about things in which I'm still learning. There are people who are doing really interesting thinking about this, my friend Charmaine Chua works on logistics, but she's doing really interesting work in relation to logistics, decolonial struggle, surplus populations, and try and learn from her and other people who are doing similar work.

I do think when I talk about colonial strategies coming back to the core, I'm not the first to mention that, Aimé Césaire -- who wrote *Discourse on Colonialism* -- talks about that exact phenomenon, of fascism as techniques of colonial management being sort of adapted for Europe. Various other people have tried to sort of study this since then. I think that's right. I think it goes back to Frantz Fanon is really important in thinking about this. I think it goes back to what I was saying before about the difference between wage discipline and police discipline or state discipline, right? So colonial management has -- not in every case, but consistently -- been a form of police management. Fanon described the colonized world as the world of the police station and the barracks. The population gets managed that way because you colonize people as an imperial power, you

don't magically give them all nice paying jobs, and they want to be good citizens, it doesn't happen that way. In fact, you're just kicking them off their land and managing them via sheer violence. And those methods in which you have to manage a population with the police and the army, rather than with the paycheck, are increasingly the case in the core.

So that's sort of what I mean about colonial methods coming to the core is that increasingly it's good state violence as a mode of management and I think that, you know, remains true all over the globe. It's just that we, you know, we notice it in these so-called high wage countries more dramatically as a change over the last few decades. Whereas in lots of places in the world, it's not a change at all. I was just reading, you know, George Manuel, who's an important Indigenous theorist and historian who wrote a great book called "The Fourth World". So he's, he's from Turtle Island -- what gets called Canada -- but he makes a trip in 1971 to investigate Indigenous life in New Zealand among the Māori, and then Indigenous people in Australia. And he takes a very clear note of the brutality and state violence meted out to Indigenous people in Australia endlessly. So this is a global phenomenon, but I don't want to say much more than that, because I don't want to claim any expertise where I don't have any.

TFSR: I appreciate that. But the way that you put it in the book that really stood out to me was helpful, was that you talked about the difference in the early time of the riot, was the state was far and the economy was near. Now we're in a situation where the state is near and the economy far, even though the riot is still in circulation. But what we are facing, we can't attack the producers of those things, of the market and goods, we're faced up against the police, which brings us basically back to that description that Fanon has of what what the colonial experience is, and that, in a way seems to me to be a just a kind of, I don't know, in all my reading, it's like, this is where the state goes, right? It goes to, instead of further subtilization of discipline of the population, it

goes to just literal brute force to keep people in order. And that has to do also with the diminishing returns of capitalism as a global structure of the economy. I guess it's good to not draw too many neat comparisons or analogies among things, because it is different in different places, and the climate catastrophes that we're facing will make that difference much clearer.

JC: That was, I think, a clear description. It's a real challenge, right? I don't want to be fatalistic, but this switch where once the state was far -- you know, police are a relatively recent invention, right -- once the state was far, the economy was near, you could go right after the merchant. You could go down to the baker, you could go to the grain merchant and just fuck with them. Now that's much harder to do. If you do do that, like, great, so you go down to the local department store -- if you live in a place where there's a department store, a big grocery store -- and you loot it, that's great, I salute that. But even that, that's only temporary. You get some supplies that'll last you for a couple of weeks, that's not a revolution.

This is an actual problem, right, which is to say: I think you have to fight the state, I think you have to fight the cops, I think there's no way out that doesn't pass through that. And I don't want to delude myself that we can somehow route around that moment. But you can't get locked into a ritualistic struggle with the state. I think we saw that, like in Greece, for example, which, after the 2008 collapse, Greece popped off first. For the classic reason: the cops shot a kid who was on his vespa and riots popped off, and they just kept going. It turned into...there was a certain calcification where it just became sort of a march on the parliament and attempt to storm the parliament. Massive defence forces around the parliament building in Syntagma Square squaring off, this happened sort of repeatedly. And it's important not to get trapped in that moment, you have to figure out a way to get past the militaristic confrontation with the state, but you can't route around it. So you have to figure out a way to get through it.

TFSR: It seems, in a way, that they were, in Greece, were able to, or in Athens, able to create at least a temporary zone of somewhat autonomy in Exarcheia, or something like that. This is actually, like leaving that specific example behind, just about where you're headed in your analysis, because the dead end of facing off with the state is that we aren't demanding concessions, right? Because they're not going to redistribute -- you say in the book "redistribution is off the table" -- and in fact, we're the crisis for state and capital, but the population is actually their problem, and we're not asking for anything.

What you say in the book is, "the next step is riot needs to absolutize itself toward the commune." You talked a little bit about the commune, but I was wondering if you had some more thoughts about are your current thoughts -- given the changes in what's happened -- on how the riot can produce the commune. Which you say, I think this is really important, is a tactic and a form of life's, not like the end goal of what we're trying to achieve.

JC: Yeah, that gives me a chance to try and set forth a little bit of what I'm trying to figure out for book I'm working on right now, which I hope to finish over the next nine months or so, which is specifically about this problem, or several of the problems you've mentioned about the limit which is the end of capitalist growth, it's diminishing returns, but also the limit of climate collapse and those as two limits that we confront as we try and figure out what revolutionary struggle might look like. I am trying to think more carefully about the commune. Not so much as what the riot becomes -- I think I put it that way in the book and I'm not sure I love that formulation -- but I think about what arises, in some sense, alongside the riot.

I'm going to go back one more time to Standing Rock as a really useful example. Standing Rock is not a riot, really, although there might have been a couple little riots in there. But it is what I call a "circulation struggle," that larger category in which the riot is the

exemplary form. So it's a circulation struggle, it's trying to stop capital from circulating, it's trying to stop that oil from moving through the pipeline. There's a series of camps at Standing Rock -- I think in the end, probably around 10 distinct camps, each has its own name, they're almost all founded by Indigenous women, they have various sort of makeup -- but those camps are what I would call "communes", not in the sense that they're sort of an achieved form, like, "here's our own self government now, now this is how we live", but in the sense that they took up the question of reproducing the community, "social reproduction" to use the technical category.

Because if you're going to have that blockade for months and months and months, you have to have food, you have to have shelter, you have to have care, you have to have medicine. And the camp arises alongside of that as a commune, and what's vital here is that they're the same thing. There's no blockade without the commune. And there's no commune without the blockade. It's not like they're two different solutions that you throw at a problem. It's that they're indistinguishable: the care work of the commune, and the antagonism, the direct antagonism of the blockade, are not two separate phenomena, and you sort of choose your adventure. It's the same people doing both things. It's a single activity that has as one side of it the commune and the other side of it blockade.

I think that is my real source of optimism. Is that we see those circulation struggles, which are inevitable -- again, I'm not saying they're good, I'm not saying they're bad, I'm saying they're inevitable -- the structure that capital takes is going to be in circulation now, and it has to be blockaded. And seeing that that inevitable blockade -- there's going to be more and more of those -- arises in the form that's also the commune, this, I think, points toward a way forward. Because we have to eventually get to that moment that the commune promises without necessarily delivering, of breaking free from the things on offer from capital, the wage and the market. That breaking free has to happen and the commune is the promise of that happening, and the effort to figure out how it can happen.

TFSR: Yeah, I love how you say that. That makes me think of what I mentioned in the very beginning about, maybe some of the strength of the George Floyd uprisings came from the fact that people were doing the care work of mutual aid at the same time that they were getting in the streets, fighting the police. Thinking back to the way that people talked about the Paris Commune or even May '68 in Paris, like, those are moments of lived experience that can then be drawn upon, of another form of life -- even if it didn't last. But if you experienced being in the streets with people that forms a kind of community. But I really like that you put the care work and the struggle together. That's something that I've been trying to wrap my head around too because it dissolves those divisions of labor that were sort of imposed upon us by the state, the market and the divisions of the spheres of life too, to say that there's work and home or something.

JC: Yeah. So the thing I would add is that that mutual aid that was practiced during George Floyd uprising, for example -- so there's a bit of a challenge here and the term "mutual aid" is a very common one. Anarchists -- I don't identify as an anarchist but like most of my friends are anarchists, and they probably all think I'm an anarchist too, so, and I would take it as a term of honor. Certainly in anarchist communities, the idea of mutual aid is an essential one and it has been for a very long time. But it's super important to me to think about all the activities that already happened in communities that don't identify as anarchists, that don't identify as activist, but that are mutual aid, right? There was all kinds of mutual aid in Minneapolis. St. Paul already, in advance of people who understood that as a practice and had a theorization of it and had a commitment to it, roll up, and I'm glad they rolled up because I want as many people rolling up as possible there. It's important to recognize that mutual aid as a practical matter already exists in those communities and has to, it has to for amiserated communities, communities of color, to survive. In the current situation, there has to be a lot of mutual aid being practiced all the time.

TFSR: Yeah, I appreciate that. That's so important. It goes back to what you're saying. You could call it a strike if you want, whatever the terminology. I think the same thing about anarchists, I identify as anarchist strategically, but it doesn't matter to me. But the thing that even, like Kropotkin, talking about mutual aid is that it's a kind of spontaneous organization that happens. It doesn't need to be imposed by outside. It's what people do all the time. And that I guess, like "care" might even be a better word for it, going back to what you were talking about in the commune at Standing Rock.

JC: I think that one of the things that's hopeful for me, I don't know how it is where you live, but in the Bay Area, which is my home, there have been moments when there's been a really aggressively contentious discourse that sets sort of care and militancy in opposition, often in gendered ways, but not always. In which like, we have a joke like "look at that manarchist" that joke about manarchism, militancy. But if you think about that example I tried to suggest of the blockade and the commune being a unity -- not just two things next to each other, but a unity -- you can see it sort of dissolves that opposition, the idea that like, "Well, some people are committed to care as a practice and has these virtues, and some people are committed to militancy and has these virtues." I think that like, you know, you look at scenes like Standing Rock -- and it's not the only example, it's just an easily available one from the last decade -- you see that that opposition is overcoming practice all the time.

TFSR: Right. I guess what I think that your book really helps do is to break through the sort of the false inheritances that we have from a kind of romanticize narratives of struggle and revolution that create those kinds of divisions that that don't exist or didn't exist. And in that light, I guess, just to ask you a final sort of broad question: do you have any other insights that you might offer to the current modes of struggle or anything that you've seen lately as a kind of innovation that excites you?

JC: Well, I mean, I think there's a highly specific and a highly general answer. The highly specific one is, you know, the great US innovation of the last year was burning police stations. It's widely known as a global phenomenon, as I never hesitate to point out, on the first night of the Egyptian uprising -- you know, that I referred to earlier -- a decade ago, 99, police stations got burned. So that phenomenon is known globally. But it's essentially unknown in the United States where the sanctity of the police and the sense of the risks of militancy, outweighing the virtues of militancy, are so powerful that that sort of breaking of that barrier, so that that was suddenly on the table. I think that's probably good news. And you know, two, three, a thousand Minneapolis', that's a specific one.

The general one is a way of dodging your question, right? Which is to say: I think what's most important, to sort of wrap around to the beginning, is to understand why certain modes of struggle emerge. Not to say "we should do this", or "that's good, and that's bad." But to understand why people...like, prescriptive accounts, like "this is the right thing to do" I actually don't think are very helpful. In part because I deeply believe in the proletarian struggle. I deeply believe in people fighting for their lives and fighting for freedom and fighting for emancipation, not as an enactment of theory, but as where theory comes from. You don't say like, "oh, here's the right way to do it, I have a theory" and then you deliver that to people. Anyone who does that can fuck off. The point is you're attentive to what actually happens and actual concrete circumstances, and you try to understand why it's happening. That's where I would want to end up, is on the team of trying to understand sort of the shape of history as it emerges, to understand what might be possible rather than sort of delivering some prescription about the best thing to do.

TFSR: Yeah, well, I mean, I'm really grateful for the work you've done to, sort of, to illuminate those things and I'm excited, I mean, I don't know if you want share a little bit about what you're working on now, because I'm excited to hear where you're moving next.

JC: Oh, I probably gave as good as summary as I can give. It starts with the fact that we still have the same two problems that, you know, Aimé Césaire says in the *Discourse on Colonialism* I mentioned earlier. He says that “question civilization, by which I mean, European civilization has bequeathed us two problems that we have not been able to overcome, which is the problem of colonization and the problem of the proletariat.” That is still true. We still have the same two problems, the struggle with those two problems now happens within two incredibly powerful limits: one is the end of capitalist growth, there’s no more growing your way out of problems. There’s no more increasing employment, there’s no more capital accumulation to redistribute, to sort of buy the social peace. So that’s one real limit. And then climate collapse is the other limit.

So two problems, two limits. Those are the conditions in which we are compelled to sort of struggle for freedom, struggle to leave the realm of necessity and enter into the realm of freedom. And I think that looking at the kinds of struggles we see emerging, the things that I’m calling “pipeline blockades” the things that I’m calling “communes”, and things like the George Floyd uprising, trying to think about these as ways that people are trying to figure out a path forward, against those two problems and within those two limits.

TFSR: I’m really excited to read that when it is published. And I’m, yeah, thank you for engaging these questions and bringing it to bear on what’s happening now.

JC: I really appreciate your thoughtfulness and your giving me a chance to ramble on a little bit.

TFSR: *laughs* It’s wonderful. Thank you.



The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world. Since 2010, we've been broadcasting from occupied Tsalagi land in Southern Appalachia (Asheville, NC).

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