

# **DIRECT DEMOCRACY THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY**



**The Final Straw Radio - Nov 26, 2023**

The following is a presentation recorded on Saturday, August 12, 2023, at the 4th Another Carolina Anarchist Bookfair and so-called Asheville, North Carolina. More recordings can be found at **ACABookfair.noblogs.org**. A scholar-activist with over six years of experience in civil rights, Black Power, Pan-African, and social ecology movements will discuss the role of critical historiography and the study and documentation of directly democratic communities across human history in conversation with friend and collaborator Andrew Zonneveld. Modibo Kadalie's presentation will touch on ideas discussed in his two most recent books, *Pan-African Social Ecology and Intimate Direct Democracy*. Dr. Kadalie will also discuss his upcoming book tentatively titled *State Creep: A Critical Historiography*.

**On Our Own Authority Books:** [oooabooks.org](http://oooabooks.org)

**Andrew Zonneveld:** [andrewzonneveld.com](http://andrewzonneveld.com)

**Another Carolina Anarchist Bookfair:** [acabookfair.noblogs.org](http://acabookfair.noblogs.org)

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**Scott / Shuli Branson (host):** Welcome, everyone. Thank you for your participation in the book fair. I am really happy to see you all here and I'm really excited about this talk. We have Andrew Zonneveld, who is the editor of *On Our Own Authority!* Press and edited books with Modibo Kadalie, who's a returning speaker for our bookfair, and we're really honored to have you here. I'll let Andrew introduce Modibo further, but thank you so much for being part of this again.

**Dr Modibo Kadalie:** Thank you.

**Host:** Also, Andrew and Modibo have a bookstore in Stone Mountain, GA, Community Books, and they also organize the book fair in Atlanta, so inspirations for us. Thank you so much for being here.

**Andrew Zonneveld:** Thanks, Scott. Thanks, everybody, for being here. I'm gonna be really brief and introduce our honored speaker. I hope you don't mind, I like what I wrote on the back of this book. Very briefly, Modibo Kadalie is a social ecologist, academic, and lifelong radical organizer. In the 1970s, he was a member of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the African Liberation Support Committee and a delegate to the 6th Pan-African Congress in Tanzania. He's also the author of several books. I'm going to tell you a little bit about those. Modibo is going to tell you a lot more about them. Then we're going to hear from some of your new research that is going into the next book that's coming out.

The first book (we have one copy left of) was a big collection of Modibo's notebook writings from the 70s, dealing with a lot of the various movements he was involved in then, a lot of stuff on Pan-Africanism and the African Liberation Support Committee, just a treasure trove of primary source documents. This one, his students compiled, edited, and published back in 2000. That was before we knew each other. About a decade later, when we met, eventually we conspired to do various things. We started a publishing company in 2012, *On Our Own Authority!* Publishing. This is our little logo over there. We've published several books before we did anything of Modibo's. But one of the earliest books we published was by Kimathi Mohammed, who was a close comrade at Modibo's. He wrote a very influential pamphlet called *Organization and Spontaneity*. I regret that we are fresh out of these. But we have this one. You can also find them on our website. This was one of the earliest books that we printed together.

Some years passed doing a lot of other things, and from 2012 to 2019, when we put out this book, we have been doing a lot of community talks and gatherings just like this, mostly around the Atlanta area, but also elsewhere. Modibo was working on a manuscript at the time. But while he was working on that, I started digging through all of the recordings we had from all the conversations and lectures and realized that we had a book there. We could transcribe a book from that. So, while Modibo was working on this book, we went ahead and put out this book. This was the first book of his that we published recently. This is *Pan-African Social Ecology: Speeches, Conversations and Essays*. It focuses a lot on Modibo's lifetime of

activism, as well as insights into various movements that were going on at the time this was published. It's got a couple of interviews and a lot of other kinds of public talks and stuff transcribed in there, a lot of great photos. So that's a great book. People seem to like this book. That was really nice, and it felt good that people received it so well. I think, for a lot of folks, it was a reintroduction to your work.

Most recently, we published *Intimate Direct Democracy: Fort Mose, the Great Dismal Swamp, and the Human Quest for Freedom*. This is more of a monograph, a piece of writing on history, and really historiography, where Modibo is looking at two Maroon communities, Fort Mose and the Great Dismal Swamp, comparing those, and through that study, asking critical questions about the meaning of history, and how we understand where history is written from and what the study of history has to teach us in our activism. So if you're interested in any of those books, we can hook you up over here after the talk. Usually, when we have these conversations, Modibo is gonna probably talk a little bit about these works and his upcoming research. And then we just open the floor for questions and get some conversation going. Without further ado, please join me in welcoming our speaker, Dr. Modibo Kadalie.

**MK:** I'm glad to be here, and to the organizers, thank you. I was here before, but it wasn't this good. It seems like it's getting better and better every time. That shows good work. We've been inspired by the work of this community here. People coming from far and near just to be with us.

I will take you back through the journey that I had. This book right here is called *Internationalism, Pan-Africanism, and the Struggle of Social Classes*. What was happening during this time in the early 1970s is that there were a lot of Pan-Africanists, who thought that all Black people were the same people, and there were no classes. They were looking at the state as the way to liberate ourselves. So I tried to address a little bit of that, in their own words. This book is very thick. It has about three different sections, and it answer some critical questions. I was wondering, "Why did capitalism begin in Europe?" It didn't begin in Africa and didn't begin in China, though China was a highly developed feudal society. In order to answer the question, I had to re-ask the question. The question wasn't, "Why did capitalism begin in Europe?" I found out that it began on four continents simultaneously. But I have to go through that process. When you think about things, write them down, follow your stuff, and get yourself out of these conundrums. They can be disjointed sometimes.

Then I joined the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. If you look at the history books, they will say is one of the premier Black radical organizations of the Black Power Movement out of Detroit. The organization that I was a part of was highly hierarchical. They had leaders, and they had us. And they had the middle people—we did the grunt-work and everything. But the leaders were the ones that the newspapers were interviewing. They would have been the ones on television. Then it occurred to me that that was how the history is being written. And that's not where the history was taking place. So we published a critique of the

League of Revolutionary Black Workers, Kimathi and myself. Kimathi is a friend of mine who I didn't even know was a friend because he's from Savannah. I'm originally from Savannah, GA. And he was in Lansing and I was in... That's why I asked y'all sometimes, "Where the hell y'all from?" I might know you. I might know who your mommy is. But the point is, I found out this young man named Stanley McClinton. I didn't know Stanley, but then I was Edward C. Cooper at the time. He didn't know Edward C. Cooper. But Kimathi and Modibo met. This book right here is called Spontaneity and Organization.

This is what we figured out. The upheaval of the late 1960s, which you read about, you see on TV, see people burning, looting, and all that shit. Then all of a sudden, all these people started organizing. There was this organization and that organization and the other organization. Then all of a sudden, things stopped. Then we began to realize that it was the very organization that was throttling the social movement. So we wanted to figure, what is out the relationship between organization and spontaneity? So we had a conference, and Kimathi presented his critique of the League and showed how it was not going to work. He did a good job. We said that within 10 or 15 years, all these Vanguard parties, all these organizations of Marxist-Leninists, they will fall apart. And of course, y'all are witnesses—it's fallen apart.

Then there was a hiatus. I was trying to figure out what happened like a lot of people were trying to figure out what happened. I had written some essays, these essays in this book. But we came out with this book, and it really is Andrew's book. Andrew would follow me around with a mic just like this. And then he called me up and said, "Man, we got a book here." I said "What?" Our problem was trying to unite Pan-Africanism with social ecology. CLR James, who some call a Pan-Africanist, was talking against the state. But there was nothing in his writing about social ecology at all. But Bookchin, who was a former Trot, he was a social ecologist, but nothing in his [work] about Pan-Africanism at all. So Andrew came up with the idea of naming this Pan-African Social Ecology to hook the thing up, so people would understand it was the same movement. He titled the book and edited the essays and organized essays. It's a hell of a book. He just used me, but I'm thankful that he used me like this.

In this next one here, he kept insisting that I write something about the Dismal Swamp. I was working on it, but I was saying to myself, "That's not going to be nothing worth a shit. People don't want to hear nothing about the Great Dismal Swamp, a bunch of land in eastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia." But I did know about the Fort Mose. So I started digging. Then I realized—of course I was already committed to direct democracy—I knew that direct democracy was the only way we have out of this thing. I knew that. But I did not know that the Great Dismal Swamp... The book here catches on really good. People love this book. I'm trying to still figure it out. So I go back and read it. It's not bad. It flows well. When I read about stuff, I go back and say to myself, you don't know this guy. You don't even know none of his relatives, you don't know anything about him. Plus you heard bad things about him. And the book isn't shit. So read it and see

what you think. So I did that. I said I'm gonna read it. Damn, all these people, they had it right. This was an alright book. What do you think?

**AZ:** I love that book. I thought the whole process that we went through for that... because we took a long time on that project, because like I said before, that was something you were working on even before we published the...

**MK:** Yeah, I'd gone to the Swamp, gone down to Fort Mose. Went back to the Swamp, went down to Fort Mose.

**AZ:** We did a lot of fieldwork.

**MK:** Yeah, he got his kayak to go down there.

**AZ:** We did a follow-up as much geographically as we can.

**MK:** Oh, he's a map freak too. Loves maps.

**AZ:** We compiled some maps from other sources. Shout out to Margo for making one of those in there. It's a remarkable little book. It holds up. We were in it on the editorial process. We were going back and forth. "No, it's got to be like this." We butted heads a couple of times on a couple of pieces.

**MK:** I don't even remember the butted heads part.

**AZ:** It's resulted in clarity.

**MK:** Yeah, it was a collaborative effort. We were working together closely. We had disagreements of opinion here and there. Some of us conceded here, conceded there. Like on the Zapatistas.

**AZ:** I agree with everything you wrote about the Zapatistas in that book. You always say that there was a disagreement, but I thought it was a conversation. Yeah.

**MK:** The Zapatistas evolved to the place where they are now, but at first there were the regular Marxist Leninist nationalist organization. And that's what I was trying to put forth, that organizations could evolve. Give them a chance, just like people evolve.

Now, I'm gonna tell you about the work I am onto now. This one is called *Critical Historiography and State Creep*. This is the bomb, this one. I'm going to read you the introduction.

So I'm gonna read you the prospectus from the first section. It reads, "Tragically, the massive body of descriptive and analytical writing that exists today that masquerades as valid human social history is inadequate, ambiguous, inaccurate

rate, and contains an enormous amount of irrelevant information. This in almost all cases is a result of what is being looked at. [...]

“Uncritical social history is inadequate because it excludes certain crucial events, as well as certain forms of social relations. Most particularly, they exclude non-hierarchical social relations, as well as the dynamics and social processes that sustain enormously diverse stateless societies.”

What I’m saying basically there is they have it all wrong. They’re looking at the wrong thing. You know who Hammurabi is, who Genghis Khan is, and all these creeps. They’re basically people who social history threw up. They represent the pinnacle of these hierarchical societies. And these hierarchical societies represent a very small portion of human history. The real history lies in the stateless societies that they were trying to suck up. That’s what they were doing, they were sucking them up all over the place. Not only should these people not be glorified, they should be villainized because they were part of the states that were sucking up stuff all over. But the people were struggling against, back and forth and back and forth...

But anyway, this book has two sections. It has a section where there’s a series of essays, which go to the orientation of the book. Then the last section, I choose four highly venerated social formations that I’ve called Classical Empires, and I show you how they rose, how they fell, and how their influence is being exerted through the big religions of our time, even in our time. I spent a lot of time on Greco-Roman civilization because they were the ones that we get language and all the food and everything from, but I show how this was on a Phoenician platform. It gives people stuff to think about. But what it basically does is it employs you to study the unstudied, flat, stateless societies that were part of all our histories.

We need to pick through that and find out how direct democracy is more of a part of human history than hierarchy is. Because when I say, “The way we get past this capitalist society and nation states is we have to talk about direct democracy at the local level,” people say, “Where has that ever existed?” Evidently, it exists all around you. People associate with one another on a volunteer basis, people do it always. I’ll give you an example that I just now figured out. You have to figure this stuff out as you go. Do you remember the crack cocaine epidemic in the black community? Do you remember how the president’s wife was saying, “Just say no to drugs?” That was the bourgeoisie’s answer to it. But black people, young black people, through hip hop music, though all that stuff, organized themselves, and there’s no longer a crack epidemic in our community anymore. It’s gone. We don’t even see it. You wonder what happened. The example that I used to like to give is during the Detroit Rebellion.

**AZ:** This is in the first book, *Pan-African Social Ecology*, by the way.

**MK:** In the Detroit Rebellion, I was in Canada because I didn’t fight in the Vietnam War. I went to Canada. I realized I went to Canada in 1965. If I did the research, I was one of the first ones that went up there, but I didn’t know that. I was doing what I thought I needed to do. But anyway, I had a cousin named Sam who

lived right off 12th Street, which is now Rosa Parks Boulevard. 12th Street was the epicenter of the 1967 Rebellion as their history records it. So I went over. I tried to get in during the Rebellion itself, but the border was closed, so I couldn't get in. I could see Detroit from the Ambassador Bridge, up in smoke.

I finally got in after the thing was settled, and the police had basically repressed the social emotion. So I went to Sam's house, and I said, "Sam, what happened?" He said, "Man, the n\*ggers went crazy." I said, "Is that right? What happened?" He said, "You see that store up on the corner? They took all the food out of the store." I said, "What did they do with the food?" "Well, they gave it to the old ladies down the street." I said, "Well who else did they give it too?" "They gave it to the old ladies first..." I said, "Sam, did you get any?" He said, "Well, they didn't give me too much," and he opened his refrigerator. I said, "Sam, how long did it take them to do that?" He said, "They went into that store and within four hours, all the food was gone." I said, "How did they do that?" He said, "They had chained the line, passing things out, passing things out." "Well how did they give it to all these people?" He said they had go-carts, driving them down the street, giving it to people. I said, "Sam, these people did that themselves, didn't they?" "They didn't know what they were doing. They were just out there yelling and screaming."

But that was self-organization. Nobody writes about it. Nobody even sees it. They just see the police come in and all that. And you feel bad about it sometimes when you see things right in front of you. And you realize that I missed it. I missed it. But it's all around. It's not mystical. In my manuscript, I said (this is one of my best lines, I think), "After all, the unknown is the temporarily hidden." That's a good line, right? So I ask you to look at these and read the new book when, hopefully y'all invite us back next year, we'll have that manuscript in place. I'll be glad to share it with you. I wish I could give it to you, but it costs money. So I hope I've pointed us in a direction. We're almost halfway down.

**AZ:** I wanted to ask you a quick follow-up question. Just to clarify a couple of points on two terms, critical historiography and direct democracy. Specifically, looking at critical historiography, I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about Fort Mose since we have that book with us. And let people know, who are not familiar with the book, why studying Fort Mose in the way that you did is an exercise in critical historiography. Because there's one way that the history is written, and there's a whole other way that you're approaching that story, which leads to a different set of conclusions about how that site organized itself.

**MK:** Yeah. The non-critical historiography of the Fort Mose site is that the Spanish organized this community in front of St. Augustine for security purposes, and that these people had nothing to do with it, that the Spanish organized it themselves. The Spanish governors, Montiano and these other guys, decided that they needed to have this buffer zone there to protect themselves against the British incursion coming south. Even from the beginning, these people who formed Fort Mose left Charlestown.



**AZ:** We should clarify, just in case anyone's not familiar, that Fort Mose was a fort just two miles north of St. Augustine, in Spanish Florida.

**MK:** And you can see it. It's actually preserved by some local historians who are not trained in academia. They organized themselves to preserve that site. So that's an exercise in self-organization right there. The story is that when these people came, the Spanish gave them sanctuary when they became Catholics. What was happening was, so many people would coming, they had to do something with the people. So what they did was put one of the captains in charge of creating something away from the site, away from direct St. Augustine, and they were forced to change the policy. That's another important point. The state does not make policy on its own. It is forced to make that policy from below. It has to do it in order to maintain itself. Andrew, do you want to say something else about that?

**AZ:** Just to clarify what you were just saying, we have this migration of people fleeing slavery in the Carolina colonies, coming through the territory that would eventually become Georgia (which was a contested area), and settling in a town just two miles north of St. Augustine, which was the major Spanish colonial urban development. Just to get at what you were saying about the different ways that that story is told is that when you hear this story of Fort Mose from anybody else besides Modibo, what you're going to hear is that this was, like he said, the Spanish policy that was made to entice people to move south to escape slavery in order to economically screw with the British, which is definitely an effect of people fleeing slavery and moving south to Spanish Florida. But Modibo contends that this migration was already happening, and the specific reasons that are laid out in the book as to why people... because it's very important to know that the first underground railroad went south, not north.

**MK:** And then the other thing about the Seminoles. The Seminoles are actually not Native people in the truest sense. The state policy made them native so that they could move this integrated.... I think you make that point in your book. I'm very influenced by these two writers over here. I read their stuff. I hope y'all put some more shit out so I can read it.

**AZ:** One thing that you never hear in a lot of the books on Fort Mose is where this name Mose comes from. It's written Mose, and no accent on the E. Everybody's like "Okay, it's Spanish, so we will pronounce that Mose." Because I assume it's a Spanish name. But it's not a Spanish name. If you look at old maps, which we did in the book We found some good old maps around, and we even found one other historian who had commented on this. If you look at the old maps, the English maps, they call it Fort Moosa. Then there's another Spanish map that calls it Fort Musa, Musa being the Arabic for Moses. So these were people from West Africa, who were Muslims, who had been kidnapped, trafficked, enslaved, and escaped and named their city that they founded Fort Musa. Just that one fact alone tells you a

lot more about what this community was and the self-organization behind it. It dismantles this whole idea of it being a state project from Spain. In the history of Maroon communities that we read, sometimes Fort Mose is skipped over and not considered a Maroon community because of its relationship to the state. I think that's not fair. I think that it's certainly a different and more urban maroon community.

**MK:** What I'm asking for y'all is helping in writing this new critical history, this critical historiography, because we got a lot of work to do. Because it's all this stuff, it is turned upside down. Because there are people, even people who call themselves revolutionary nationalists, who draw on this tradition of hierarchy to justify what they do. But that's not human history at all. Human history is made up of people organizing themselves in a non-hierarchical fashion and resisting the state at every turn States win sometimes, and sometimes they lose. In the time that they lose, you can see that. They always say "Yes, and we were invaded by these barbarians from the mountains." If you read *The Levant*, they don't even know what the hell these people were. These people organized. There were all of these islands in the Mediterranean. They call them the sea people. They came over and knocked out all the states, flattened their asses right on out. But then they say, "Oh, this is a Dark Age. Dark Ages of Cretan descendants," of whatever, whichever. These were the times when the people were really organizing and working together. And all kinds of human ingenuity and human science emerged from that context. Even the women who were regarded as witches were actually doing all kinds of medicinal things in these contexts. So we need to write that. Be careful, because sometimes you think you're writing something, and it's so severe. I remember one time I was writing something, I was going back to read what I had there, and I saw hierarchy in my own stuff. When you do that, you got to start all over again, to get it out of there.

I usually begin these sessions by asking people questions about what they believe. How many of y'all believe Hammurabi was in great king? But I don't have to ask you, I know what y'all are.

**AZ:** Does anybody have any thoughts? I know we are a little informal today. Is there anything sparkling anybody's interest or have any questions for Modibo?

**Audience Member 1:** What does direct democracy mean to you?

**MK:** Direct democracy is when people sit down together, face-to-face, and govern themselves by collective decision-making of whatever they come up with. They're solving their own problems, it's equal, it's intimate. You have to know the people. You got to know who their mama is, what they did, what their motivation is, and then you can come up with a decision. What I'm proposing is that we go to the city councils—and I'm glad you're having this in this library. We need to reclaim these spaces. It's taxpayers' money. Library people, they love it. And they like to see people coming forward to have book fairs in their library because it's your library.

So direct democracy means an institutionalized mechanism by which everybody has an equal say and an equal influence in directing the motion of the society of which they are part. It's not representative democracy now. That's the first thing I do, I juxtapose it in this new book. I juxtapose it between direct democracy and representative democracy. There is no intervening representative, no corruption, no layer of people who know it all who will come down and just listen to you. You're the ones who tell them what to do.

**AZ:** There's an excellent book that we actually are privileged enough to be featured in that Cindy Milstein edited called *Deciding for Ourselves: The Promise of Direct Democracy*, and they probably have it at Firestorm. That's my favorite book ever. So go to Firestorm, and get a copy of it. Some great examples of modern-day real-life direct democracy in action. Hopefully, you love it.

**MK:** And practice and get it because sometimes you practice and you mess up, so you have to correct it when you mess up.

**AZ:** Do you want to talk a little bit about social intimacy and why you came up with this term, intimate direct democracy?

**MK:** Well, it's intimate because people have to know one another. The Seminoles were actually influenced by the Muskogee, and the anthropologists were saying the Muskogee were a matriarchal society because the matriarch chooses the miko. They call him a chief, but he ain't no chief. He's just a person who sits in the council and listens and is a proto-administrator. Because sometimes, in those gatherings, people don't even listen to the miko. But the point is, that these people who appoint the miko, or at least they consult in the appointment of the miko, are all the women in the society. And they know the kids, they know what they were when they were kids. They know he was a thief when he was a child, so he doesn't get to be the miko. So that's the way that those societies work.

I know y'all know about Cahokia. Me and my lover Janice went over to see Cahokia. How many of y'all have been to Cahokia? That was a great hierarchical society, like Okmulgee, a real hierarchical society. The anthropological data shows that people were fleeing those kinds of societies, as opposed to going there and joining them. These societies were unstable, people were being punished. People left there. You see traces of those societies up and down the rivers. That's why the Creek Indians were called Creek, but they are really Muskogee. You see in West Africa too. My Black Pan-African friends, "Oh, we had great kings and queens." You're being trapped. We're not for kings and queens, whatever color they are. We had the great societies in Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, and the archaeological records show that people running to the coast trying to get away from these people. Great Mensa Musa, the richest man in the world, who the hell wants to know about that? That's what I'm talking about, irrelevance. Mensa Musa, he had 100 elephants. What the fuck? ...

**AZ:** That's a huge part of the book *Intimate Direct Democracy*. What Modibo does in that book is shows that this eastward migration of people away from centers of hierarchical governance in the Americas, and the westward migration—both towards coasts—that was happening in West Africa at the same time. Due to the violence of colonialism and slavery, these democratic tendencies emerging from these two different places, these indigenous democratic tendencies, meet each other in the Maroon communities.

**MK:** Yes, and they work it out. It's just an amazing story. It's so beautiful when you know it.

**AZ:** And honestly, nobody else in the world but you would have...

**MK:** No, no, no, there are people who could see that shit. I wrote it down, and you edited it, and we got it here and we are talking about it.

**Saralee Stafford:** I don't often get to hear you Modibo talk about your thoughts...

**MK:** Saralee is the most influential contemporary writers of direct democratic contemporary history around.

**Saralee:** Maybe if I stop being a nurse, I could write better. I haven't really gotten to hear you talk a lot about the situations going on in Georgia right now. I am really interested in what you think about the future of what we have left and the struggle against Cop City, but I'm also wondering, given all of the history that you've helped unearth and really just pull together to help us actually think about even how to think about Fort Mose, not just pass it along and be like "Oh, there's some site." What's coming up, the threat of Okefenokee, what do you think it would really take for Okefenokee to not get mined, for the Sea Islands to be returned to the descendants of the enslaved and colonized, and for a Cop City to not get built? What do you really think it's going to take at this moment, and using all of that history that you've shared with us about that is so specific to Southeast Georgia, to Atlanta? Where do you see us going with these struggles? How can we win?

**MK:** Well, winning and losing is a long-term proposition. But first, we ought to congratulate the people who developed this campaign to save the Atlanta Forest. That will prove to be one of our most significant campaigns in this period. I don't have any doubt about it because there are so many layers coming together and congealing over the question. I think what is happening, just to give you an idea, they have overcome the civil rights petty bourgeoisie and their backwardness in the spirit. And you overcome that, then you've gone a long way because they're scared now. They are backing away. But you have to keep the pressure on, and I'm not a prophet or soothsayer or nothing. But I've never seen anything as promising as this. And everybody understands it. The thing that I love about it is the young people that are

doing it. It's not old crackpot preachers, which all the streets in the city of Atlanta are named after. That's a bad situation there between the crackpot preachers who have the streets named after them and the Stone Mountain named after the damn Confederates up on the wall. All of this stuff is gonna be wiped away after a while, but it's a long-term struggle. It's not the day or tomorrow, one fine day. It's going to take many different turns. It's going to take much frustration and much anguish and a whole lot of elation when you win a little bit. So the dynamic of back and forth, I think we are in a good position. I think people understand that.

Now, Okefenokee, it is remote. The people around there, the small-town city municipalities are bought off. But we've been down there. There was another mining group that was going 8-10 years ago. I got a crackpot preacher, who is a comrade of mine. Some crackpot preachers can scare people. So this was the Reverend Zach Lyde. We went down there, and we raised a little hell, and that postpone it a little bit. But they come back because there's money to be made from that kind of stuff, especially now. This is the dilemma and conundrum. On the one hand, we want to decrease fossil fuels and increase clean energy. That requires all kinds of elements, like cobalt and all these other things, which can be mined, and people can make money from. Two of them, unfortunately, can be mined at Okefenokee. But once we realize that the quality of life is going to be increased by having a clean planet. And to people who are from the outside, they tried to pull the thing about being from the outside. What do you want us to... We can't breathe your air? We can't drink your water? But the point is it's a long-term struggle. It goes from generation to generation. The new generation will bring us closer to a new understanding of it all. Because there are some blind alleys we can go up, causing great catastrophic damage. So we have to be careful. We have to write this stuff. But once we write the history down and show that people, everyday ordinary people, are the ones who make history, then they can see themselves. We don't want to tell the people to do this or that, or to grab the people by the hand and lead. We want to just put a mirror up to them. So they can see who they are and what they did, what they must do. Once they see that then they can understand. You need to just step aside and join in.

**AZ:** We have a piece of writing in the works dealing with Okefenokee that's trying to accomplish... The ecological destruction around Cop City is obviously horrible. The potential for what is going to happen in Okefenokee is unparalleled. This is one of the last intact freshwater ecosystems on the planet—not in North America, not in GA, on planet Earth—that's still functioning in a way relatively similar to the way it was before the Industrial Revolution, which is, I believe, the standard for how you determine an intact freshwater ecosystem. Drinking water comes from there, but several species make their home there including some endangered species. On the social aspect, it's really important to know that the Okefenokee was one of these places in this contested area that became Georgia. It was a place where people sought refuge. It was really the gateway to the Suwannee River for maroons and people fleeing slavery. Basically, there are two rivers. There's the St. Marys that goes out to the sea—which by the way, anything that happens at Okefenokee ends

up screwing up Cumberland Island, which is another protected area just downriver. Then the other river is the Suwannee River, which goes down through Florida.

Now, if you look at the great maps in a book I'm reading right now. We'll probably talk more about this in another event at some point, but you can look at maps of maroon communities in Florida, just going right down the Suwannee river. Then even further, once those folks began to be threatened, they moved farther south by sea. But that whole area has such a history of struggle, such a rich history of struggle, and a multiracial struggle. In these communities that lived there, there were African people fleeing slavery, there were indigenous people who were the first like the Timucua and Muskogee. And there's remarkable gender history there as well. The Timucua, the Spanish were like "We don't know what's going on with gender here." It's like they couldn't figure it out. It's really fascinating. You should look at it. There's a huge Two-Spirit history in the area. And that history of Okefenokee, a lot of stuff is written about it, but it hasn't really been presented as part of the effort to preserve that site, as far as I've seen it. And I think that part of the struggle is going to be presenting the people... The people down there right now, in Waycross and Folkston, it's Trumpville down there, no joke. It's gonna take people thinking and learning about how to engage with folks. While they might be objectionable folks in a lot of ways, they also don't want to lose the Okefenokee. They're very concerned about it. So maybe even with their kids, if they have access to stories from this place that show these multifaceted liberation movements that again and again and again kept happening in that area, I think that's a resource that can be brought to bear.

**MK:** It's very important that y'all do the writing from a critical ecological perspective and critical historiographic perspective. It's needed.

**Audience Member 2:** Thank you so much for the talk. I'm curious, you mentioned a couple of case studies in the book, like the idea of migration. But what other types of historiographic examples are you talking about? Specifically, you brought up this idea of showing a mirror to the masses. Are there other examples of that in the upcoming book?

**MK:** In the second section, I choose four empires, real empires. That's another weakness of the older literature. Anytime there's an amalgamation of several different nations, city-states, they call it, the guy who controls all three or four of them is called an emperor. But what I'm talking about is the ones that emerged out of Qin and Han China, where you got 4-5 million people coming together and being administered through state religions. That's one example. Another example is Achaemenid Empire, which was the ancient Persian Empire. Then I show how that sucked up a lot of other nations or other small tribal identity groups around to make up that administered... but they had to be administered through these great religions. I talk about the great religions, the Great Western religions, the monotheistic religions of ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, that's the same religious

tree. Then I talk about Hinduism and Vedic writing, and I show how they use that to mobilize people and break down these flat societies that they had to mobilize. Another thing they had to do—and you can see it resonated in the questions of my own time—all these religions had to use women’s bodies. And there is really no real question in my mind about it, because they were not industrialized, they used manual labor.

So you have to have a massive amount of manual laborers, and they use women’s bodies to create this. Not only did they use women’s bodies, they used the artisans. So if they wanted to decimate a flat society, they went and killed all the men and grabbed the women—because they were using them for laborers and bodies—and they would take the artisans and pay them off. And then they assimilated them into hierarchies. So I demonstrate that process and how it takes place in these various regions, including the Greco-Roman Empire. And the Greco-Roman Empire was the worst of them all. I liked what I did there. This stuff is still resonating. Once people see that it’s resonating from situations like that, because most people will look at history and they’ll say, “Well, I know Roman history, because I knew about Julius Caesar.” Julius Caesar is worth shit. The point is they had consolidated a massive empire. These people were buying and selling everything—women, children, everything. In the introduction to the second part, I say that what is being presented to us is a cavalcade of individual heroes. And I don’t spare nobody. I talk about Ragnar. I mentioned them all on the list. I say they’re all equally unimportant. I put Hitler and Ragnar and George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, all of them in there. I had some fun with it. If I were to present this at a school, and I tried to present this as a thesis, the people would say I went crazy. That’s why we publish our own stuff.

**AZ:** We have to wrap up.

**MK:** Sorry, y’all have been a good group. Thanks, everyone.

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