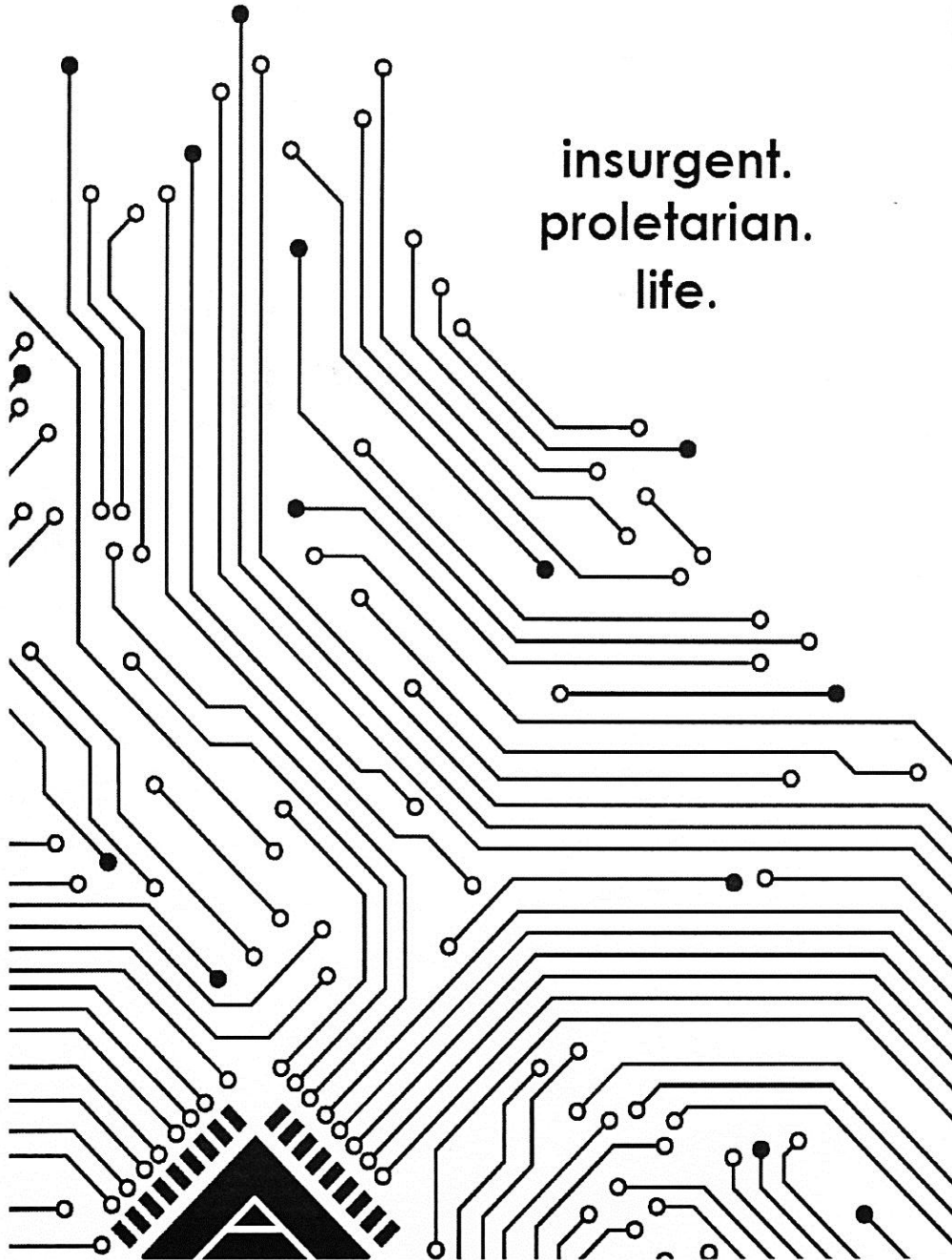


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LIVEWIRE

against automation
against UBI
against capital

IGD
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NOTES

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THIS IS A REALITY. THIS IS NOT JUST SOME SHIT THAT PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT... AND IF YOU BELIEVE THE REGIME IS NOT INSIDIOUS ENOUGH, NOT PATHETIC ENOUGH, TO EVENTUALLY REPLACE TRUCK DRIVERS, ALMOST COMPLETELY, YOU'RE A FUCKING IDIOT. YOU'RE STUPID IF YOU THINK THESE PEOPLE AREN'T THAT FUCKED UP. THEY ARE.

– *TRUCKER BROWN, POPULAR TRUCKER YOUTUBER*



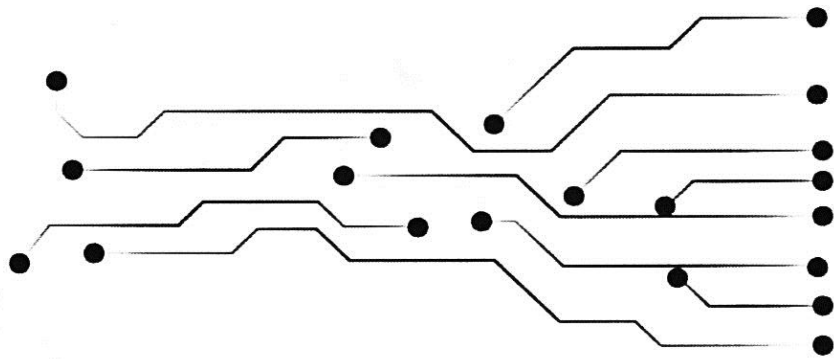
WE AUTOMATE WHAT WE CAN AUTOMATE.
WE'RE GOING TO KEEP DOING THAT.
THAT'S HOW WE GET MORE PRODUCTIVE.

– *STEVE COUSINS, CEO SAVIOKE*



“RATHER THAN BEING SOMETHING THAT IS A MASSIVE UPHEAVAL OF CAPITALISM, ITS ACTUALLY A WAY TO ADAPT AND EXTEND THE SYSTEM...”

– *MARTIN FORD, 'FUTURIST'*



The scars of neoliberalism dot our landscape. But while outsourcing has pushed production overseas, at the same time in the last 19 years, the majority of jobs lost in manufacturing, 85%, has been to machines that can now do the work of humans, also known as *automation*.¹ Over the next 10 to 15 years, massive amounts of the American workforce are also expected to be displaced from their jobs by machines.² As one expert on automation recently stated, cities like Las Vegas in ten years could become the next Detroit³, as robots replace service workers. Meanwhile, other places will soon start to feel the hit with the coming of self-driving vehicles in the trucking industry, as massive corporations now pump billions into the creation of autonomous cars and trucks that will allow companies to compete with Amazon⁴. *The future is here, but only to leave us behind.*

In the face of this, economists and those in the tech industry expect two things. The first is simply that there will be widespread job displacement and loss;⁵ in short, things will get worse for the working class. But moreover, they argue that with so many workers making so little, there will be no one to buy their products. Such a situation, besides triggering a massive recession, may also lead to something the elites are even more afraid of: *rebellion, revolt, and revolution.*

Second, we can take the initiative, much as the campaigns against Amazon from Atlanta to Queens have already done.³⁰ Maybe there's a new self-checkout coming into your store, maybe a robot is now sweeping the floors, maybe a group of workers is about to be laid off – these are all opportunities to bring people together and create campaigns, take autonomous action, and start to build resolve around anti-capitalist sentiments.



Ricardo Aca

Our Jeff Bezos' piñata helped us get some closure on this brief, but very dark chapter on the almost #HQ2Scam deal.

NYers said #NoAmazonNYC and that's exactly what happened.

Let's also be on the lookout for mass contradictions and gaps within the current system as production shifts. What happens to the vacant malls and stores that will be made empty as Amazon continues to kill off the offline retail sector? Can you say #MallSquat? What will be the response when instead of a small group of workers being laid off, its hundreds and thousands of people in one set place? What happens when whole parking lots of full of angry Amazon workers start to get rowdy?

With the threat of automation looming as global warming becomes even more of a danger, the need to create movements, infrastructure, and weapons to fight with is needed now more than ever. If history shows us one thing, its that major changes in production often lead to mass upheavals and revolt. *Let's get ready.*



them provide a better life for their children. What it will achieve is solidifying the role of the State as a person's boss; in control of what meager amount they are allotted and able to cut off payment at any time someone gets out of line. It will be a meager lifeline that will barely keep anyone afloat yet constantly gasping for air.

There Will Always Be Resistance

Already resistance is brewing against automation. From attacks on self-driving cars, strikes by Las Vegas workers, slow downs and blockades from truck drivers, campaigns by Amazon workers and communities against the corporate giant, and pushes by labor unions against self-checkout machines.

But despite these important struggles, we are still going to see a massive wave of automation hit us. One of the first things proletarians and autonomous anti-capitalists can do is attack the narrative presented by the mainstream and pro-business news media. Automation and robots aren't cool, sexy, or exciting, they are instruments in a class war. Technology and innovation isn't neutral; these things aren't being used to make our lives better, they are being designed to make things more *productive*, and thus, more profitable. In short, we need to replace a vision of development, technology, and robotics that sees "progress" as a progressive arch towards human happiness and well being, with an anti-capitalist understanding that held in the hands of the class enemy, all of these tools only will continue to alienate us from each other, increase the regime of industrial capitalism, and further destroy the living earth.

"the jobs that once promised us "freedom" and luxury to create our own schedules and then chained us to an app, also set the stage for the next period of production that didn't need us at all."

In this context, more and more trolls, pundits, and corporate heads, from Richard Spencer to Mark Zuckerberg have begun to call for Universal Basic Income, or a set amount of guaranteed money that every "citizen" receives to keep them alive during a period of increasing job displacement due to automation.

While many progressives and some on the Left are lining up to herald this new push as a step towards "socialism," what is being promoted is anything but. The elites are hoping to buy social peace at the price of \$1,000 per month, (at least in Presidential hopeful Andrew Yang's plan;⁶ others would probably offer less), while also hoping to slash a variety of social welfare programs in exchange, a move that would be devastating for the poor.

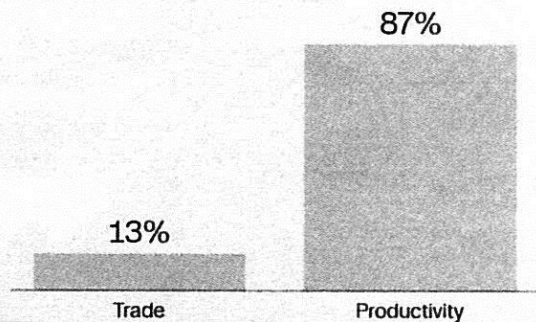
The solution to both the push of capital to automate itself and the false solution of UBI is not to be found within capitalism, meaning: the State, wage labor, and private ownership of the means of existence. Instead, it is to be found in quite the opposite direction, in both the destruction and destitution of these things and what amounts to a reappropriation of the entire world. In short, *the creation of commons*, the end of the reign of profit, and the creation of relationships, networks, and infrastructure where things are produced and shared around the basis of human need.

The Push to Automate and the Logic of Capital

Automation is already a part of our lives. ATMs have replaced bank tellers, self-checkout machines have replaced cashiers, and computerized call-in centers have replaced telemarketers. However, currently when we hear about automation it seems far removed from where we currently are, as we passively watch human interest stories on the news or social media about robots stocking shelves at Wal-Mart or falling to their watery graves as security guards.⁷ But what amounts to nightly news fluff today, over the next several years is poised to level entire industries.

Jobs lost to trade vs. automation

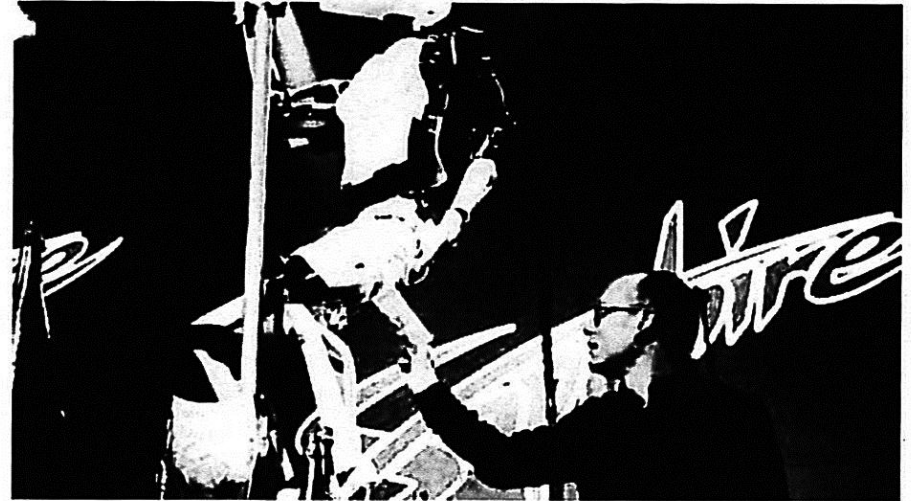
Share of manufacturing job losses 2000 to 2010



Massively more jobs were lost to automation than free trade from 2000 to 2010.

At its heart, the push to automate production is driven by the same logic that has fueled the growth of mass income inequality following the Great Recession which has come

as urban cores have only become gentrified, pushing people farther to the margins or out of the cities altogether.



At the end of the day, UBI will do nothing to actually redistribute wealth to the people that have literally made the modern world possible through their labor, instead it will (in theory) do what it is intended to do: *save capitalism*, or at least, *keep it on life support*. Thus, our point in opposing UBI is not to make a moralistic stance against taking money from the State (which it has taken from us), but instead to create an anti-capitalist analysis as to why different sections of the elites want to push such a thing through and what they are trying to achieve out of doing so.

"our point in opposing UBI is not to make a moralistic stance against taking money from the State, but instead to create an anti-capitalist analysis as to why elites want to push such a thing through."

At the end of the day, UBI won't be a solution to any of our problems. It won't be able to get people out of poverty, help them secure better housing or education and it won't allow



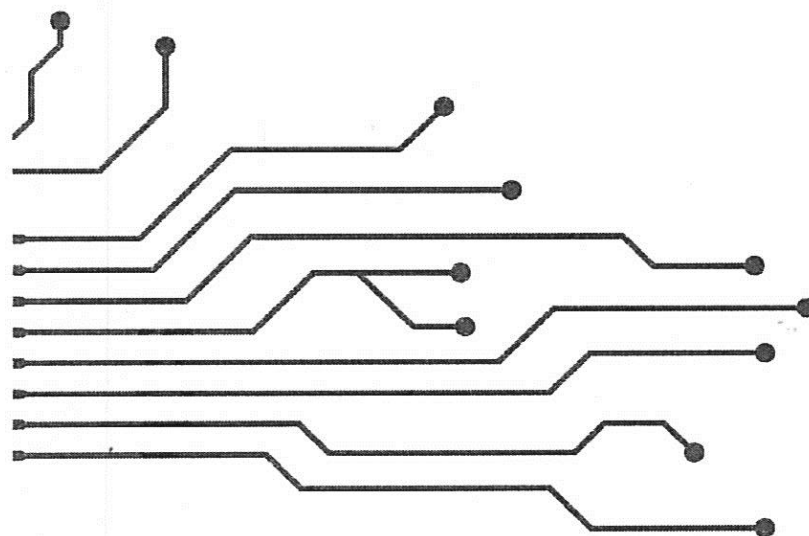
Much of the Alt-Right has turned towards supporting Andrew Yang, primarily because of his platform on UBI.

The point here is just that in an economy where many of us are paying half of our income on rent and then factoring in the cost of healthcare, childcare, food, and transportation, to say nothing of debt, educational costs, clothing, and beyond – \$1,000 a month isn't that much money. And it especially isn't enough money for someone to elevate themselves out of poverty. In fact, many in favor of UBI see it as designed this way, to keep people poor enough to where they "want more," and won't get comfortable. The irony is that this is currently the reality in which people already live in under capitalism.

But while liberals push for blue collar workers to be "educated" about the benefits of learning to code, if history shows us anything, it's that when crisis hits and things collapse, in general people often don't bounce back, they instead become poorer, go farther into debt, and often pass this generational poverty onto their children. Areas of the heartland and the Rustbelt gutted by neoliberalism and outsourcing haven't bounced back. If anything, they've only gotten worse and more riddled with drugs and declining standards of living. Communities of color destroyed by everything from a CIA backed crack-epidemic and de-industrialization have also not bounced back,

to define our current era and given rise to both far-Right and social democratic populisms.⁸ Automation follows the same line of thinking as the current austerity model which pushes workers to work more for less, the shifting of tax burdens on the working class, suppressing wages while the cost of living rises, and in turn, profits increase. Automation simply takes this logic one step farther: *completely removing workers from the equation.*

For capitalists, this is a smart move both in terms of increasing profits, but moreover, in assuring that their new robotic workers do not strike, call out sick, or complain. Automation then, is not simply the "logical" or innovative development by capital to make things "more efficient" or our lives better; or even to respond to a basic need, it's not like they're making medicine or housing cheaper or more accessible. Instead automation is a calculated attempt by specialists to literally cut human beings out of the labor market in order to increase profits.





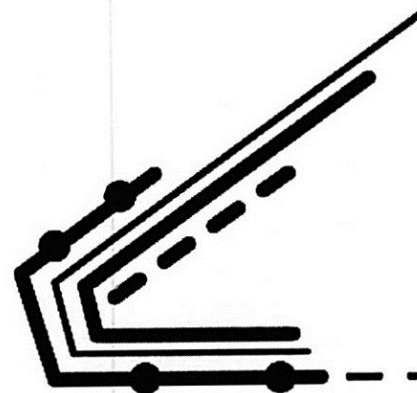
Map of the US showing states where truck driving is the most common profession.

How this will play out and the rate in which jobs will be displaced by automation still remains to be seen,⁹ however much of the research points to a very grim reality of upwards of 40-50% of jobs being displaced or affected by automation in the next 10 years or so.¹⁰ Moreover, other studies predict that in the next 10 years, half of the workforce will be working in some sort of "freelance," or gig economy job.¹¹ Ironically, it is many of these 'professions,' such as driving for Uber and Lyft, which are currently on the chopping block for being replaced with self-driving cars. Thus, the jobs that once promised us "freedom" and luxury to create our own schedules and then chained us to an app, also set the stage for the next period of production that *didn't need us at all*.

Speaking in a video for *VICE*,²⁹ futurist and author on automation Martin Ford states:

While many people view (UBI) it as a form of socialism...it's actually a more capitalist market oriented approach to providing people with a safety net. The idea is that you give them an income and then they can go out and participate in the market. So rather than being something that is a massive upheaval of capitalism, it's actually a way to adapt and extend the system in a world, where perhaps there aren't enough jobs to go around.

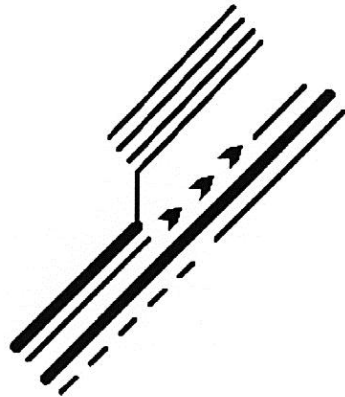
But for many people, especially families who are hit the hardest by everything from climate change to gentrification to automation, \$1,000 will probably not be enough. Already, federal programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), offer a form of UBI to people that have been injured on the job or who cannot physically work. Currently, the amount given to someone on SSI is around \$800 per month for an individual and just a little over \$1,000 per couple. While Andrew Yang's proposal of \$1,000 a month would be of course more than that, it wouldn't be by much.



across the world and the US, the idea is even starting to be experimented with.²⁶

The concept of UBI is simple but its implications are sweeping. It calls for (generally) the abolishing of most if not all forms of welfare and a social safety net (food stamps, cash assistance, Section 8) and even according to some, things like medicaid and medicare. In its place, will be simply a base payment to every citizen, regardless of their income. For white nationalists like Charles R Murry²⁷ and various libertarians,²⁸ UBI represents a path towards destroying the last vestiges of the the New Deal and the Welfare State they have been attempting to widdle away at for years. Members of the Alt-Right, such as Richard Spencer, see it as a motivating factor for convincing people to not allow immigrants into the country. Move over "Blood and soil," the new rallying cry is "They'll take our UBI!"

Tech capitalists and neoliberals like Andrew Yang see UBI however as a placebo to not only hold off possible social unrest, but also give people a buffer in which they will be able to find ways to integrate themselves back into the market and become "innovative" and "reinvent" themselves again. The \$1,000 a month is thus seen as an investment in human capital in the hopes that it will somehow make people find a way to be 'productive,' or at the very least, hopefully not riot and burn the country down.



Perhaps one of the most targeted industries currently is trucking, with a multitude of corporations currently attempting to get self-driving trucks on the road as soon as possible in order to compete with Amazon. In some ways, the push towards automation in trucking, which in 29 states is the most common job,¹² has already been foreshadowed with already increasing forms of tracking and surveillance of workers, through so-called Electronic Log Devices (ELDs), which have been resisted by truckers for years.¹³

"The push to automate production is driven by the same logic that has fueled the growth of mass income inequality which has come to define our current era...Automation follows the same line of thinking as the current austerity model which pushes workers to work more for less...it simply takes this logic one step farther: completely removing workers from the equation."

ELDs in themselves are a response to a rise in accidents and deaths (and for capitalists more importantly, a loss of property) caused by sleep deprived truckers dozing at the wheel. Truckers, who are paid by the mile and push themselves to the breaking point to make money in an industry that has seen wages fall since the 1970s, are now seeing this very reality being used as a reason to automate their jobs out of existence.¹⁴ Ironically, the trucking industry is in the midst of a *labor shortage*, however the corporations which own the industry would rather replace truckers with computers than reduce hours and increase pay. *This isn't 'progress,' it's class war.*

One of the things that capitalists love to say is that automation will create "different jobs," which somehow, are mysteriously not going to then be automated themselves. However in regards to the trucking industry, what jobs tech capitalists are saying *will* be created are simply those that will take goods from distribution hubs to people's homes. As with Amazon currently, these jobs already pay a horrible wage, have no benefits, and will be structured like a "gig economy" job: done through an app, as an independent contractor, with wages determined at the whim of the corporation.

Thus, truck drivers will go from making in some cases over 100,000 a year, to then barely making minimum wage, all while having to compete with massive amounts of other workers in the same situation. Already, at a time when global warming has become even more of an international emergency, massive corporations are pumping *billions* into making self-driving trucks a reality.¹⁵ This includes industry giants like GM, Tesla and Amazon, as well as Google's own Waymo, and new comers, Uber, all of which are pushing to have self-driving trucks flood the market, and in some states are already on the road.¹⁶

But trucking and other forms of driving based industries from bus drivers, to paratransit, to the distribution of food goods, is only one example of how automation will impact the American economy. In major US cities, where concentrations of tech capital have already re-made the landscape, driven up housing prices, displaced millions, and fundamentally changed the face of the modern metropolis, automation is being presented as a solution to another fundamental problem created by capital: *a lack of workers who can afford to live in the city.*

their cars outside of Amazon facilities, toiling as seasonal workers in the jobs that have yet to be automated. And in the end, the divides between both rich and poor and along racial and gender lines will only have been more solidified.

The trajectory of modern capitalism is one in which so-called rural America is not only left behind by neoliberalism, but suddenly catching up are the urban cores, devastated by automation. *From sea to shining sea.*

White Nationalists and Tech Capitalists Agree on This: Universal Basic Income



Mati Greenspan

What comes next is not capitalism nor socialism, neither are very efficient.

Advances in technology will allow society to distribute value more freely and fairly to all participants in the network.

From Alt-Right grifters, capitalist ideologues, and tech giant CEOs there is agreement on one thing: Universal Basic Income, or UBI. Pushed into the spotlight lately by the campaign of Democrat Andrew Yang, a buzz had been developing around the concept of UBI for sometime now, and in some select cities

Then there's also the reality that like everything in racialized capitalism, some will be hit harder than others. Jess Chen, another academic at the University of Redlands²⁴ and another expert on automation writes that currently Latino workers have a 25% higher chance than whites of having their jobs automated. African-Americans, a 13% higher chances than whites, while women will also be more likely impacted than men.²⁵ Meaning, that when it hits, it will hit communities already impacted by the last several hundred years of colonization, slavery, genocide, recession, and crisis harder than others, and previously "recession proof" jobs that held up so many working families will be suddenly obliterated. The collective impact, will be astronomical.

These realities also obliterate both the far-Right populism promoted by Bannon and Trump of increasing production in the US as well as pro-tech neoliberalism – as both fail to take into account the realities of automation. What good are manufacturing hubs kept in the US when robots have all the jobs? What good are "smart cities" when no one can afford to live in them?

"when it hits, it will hit communities already impacted by the last several hundred years of colonization and crisis harder than others, and previously "recession proof" jobs that held up so many working families will be suddenly obliterated. The collective impact, will be astronomical."

If we want an image of the future, we need only look towards trends that already are gaining steam: rapidly gentrifying urban centers, where the homeless and working poor are driven out into the suburbs and further hinterlands. People scrambling to piece together enough money through jobs found on Craigslist, through apps, or on the black market. Masses of people living in

Where as paying service industry employees enough to live in the places where they labor would cut into profits or be passed onto upper-middle class tech workers, automation solves this problem and keeps prices down. Zoom Pizza for instance in San Francisco, features robots that for now, alongside some humans, make pizzas. Some chains are also pushing self-driving delivery vehicles¹⁷ while others are starting to use more and more automation as well, from coffee shops,¹⁸ to burger joints, bars,¹⁹ and even strip clubs.²⁰

Thus for capitalists, replacing robots and AI with people, solves the labor shortage created by mass gentrification and the housing crisis. At the same time, the pundit class and mass media treat these "new innovations" with a sense of wonder and only asks how "consumers" will respond to these new technological creations. Such packaging helps to maintain a view of automation in a "neutral" light, where such development is just the latest sign of "progress."

But many experts and academics foresee a dystopian future. In a recent three part special from *Al Jazeera*, Johannes Moenius from the University of Redlands and considered one of the current experts on the impacts of automation, stated that cities like Las Vegas,²¹ now considered "boom towns," in several years might become the "new Detroit," as automation replaces upwards of 65% of jobs over the next 10 years.²²

And the push towards automation won't just heavily impact blue collar staples like bus drivers and security guards, but also the remaining manufacturing centers that remain in the United States. Remember the Carrier plant in Minneapolis that Trump campaigned around and pushed to remain open? It did, but not after upgrading its facility in order to automate many of the jobs out of the plant.²³

