

Woody Guthrie

A Dust Bowl Representative in the Communist Party Press

Woody Guthrie is widely recognized as a folk singer and songwriter of “This Land Is Your Land” as well as countless other songs, ranging from political material to labor anthems. Less recognized are his contributions to the Communist press, especially his writings for the San Francisco-based People’s World newspaper, for which he composed a regular column and cartoons for eighteen months. This study examines the content of these writings mainly during 1939, when his commentary focused on the conditions and experiences of California’s Dust Bowl migrants. It discusses his role as an advocate for migrants, his unique methods of spelling and composition, and feedback by People’s World readers to his writings, which were composed during a period of tumult in the state.

Arriving in California in 1937, Woody Guthrie was a self-described “dust bowl refugee” but had yet to produce the songs and writings associated with the southwestern diaspora. But shortly after settling in the Los Angeles area and during a subsequent journey to New York City, he produced material during his late twenties that would historically associate him with the dust bowl migration and establish him as an American icon. “This Land Is Your Land,” which he composed in 1940, is recognized as both an alternative national anthem and a reaction to private property rights, and his dust bowl ballads joined John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* and Dorothea Lange’s photography as cultural representations of the Depression-era dust bowl migration and settlement. Later, he became ill with and died from Huntington’s chorea, allowing greater understanding of the genetic disorder. But shortly after his arrival in California, he established himself in a role less

recognized during his life and during later decades: a contributor to *People’s World*, the former San Francisco-based Communist Party newspaper, in which he wrote a regular column and drew cartoons from May 1939 to November 1940.¹

Guthrie’s largest collection of unexamined material during this period, these writings and cartoons offer potential insights about him. During his tenure with the *People’s World*, he was first formally recorded, wrote many well-known songs (including many dust bowl ballads and “This Land Is Your Land”), and contributed notes to the songbook *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People*.² Meanwhile, the Depression was concluding along with the dust bowl migration that inspired much of his early work. During this period, he composed 253 commentary articles and ninety-eight cartoons for the newspaper, both labeled “Woody Sez.” Most frequently the small cartoons, which took up only six square inches—2 inches wide by 3 inches deep—appeared on the bottom right corner of page one with a jump referencing the reader to “More Woody Sez” on page four, where his column was in the bottom right corner of the page.³ While biographies have noted his contributions to the *World* and folklore scholars have critically examined his songwriting, others have examined his artwork and his role in the Communist community, but none have critically examined his newspaper writings.⁴

This study addresses this shortcoming with a textual analysis of Guthrie’s *People’s World* writings and cartoons during this period,



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specifically focusing on May to December 1939, during which 174 of his 253 articles in the *People's World* appeared. Concentrating on this period, when he was most focused on the dust bowl migration and its consequences, leads to a more profound understanding of his role as a representative of the dust bowl migration culture, which he achieved through the telling of first-hand accounts as well as anecdotal folklore. Beyond achieving a greater understanding of his newspaper contributions, this study also provides insights into his accounts of social problems of the late 1930s and policies that he considered remedies to socio-economic ills faced by the migrants.⁵

This examination is primarily concerned with Guthrie's 1939 material and largely excludes his contribution from 1940 because this was a transition period for him. After losing his radio program at KFVD in Los Angeles and failing to be adequately compensated through leftist fundraisers, he left southern California.⁶ After that, his contributions became less frequent until there was a three-month hiatus in his *People's World* appearances from January 6 through March 4, 1940. When he reappeared in the paper in March, his column had a New York date-line, appeared less frequently than during 1939, and, most importantly for this study, no longer addressed the dust bowl migration and its participants.

In the spring of 1937, Woodrow (Woody) Wilson Guthrie decided to leave his adopted hometown of Pampa, Texas, because, except for an occasional sign-painting job, little work existed for him. California, however, offered promise. Like legions of other dust bowl migrants, he was encouraged by his family's earlier migration; his aunt Laura and cousin Jack Guthrie had previously settled in the state during the mid-1930s.⁷ After arriving in Los Angeles, he found work as a musician and a broadcaster at KFVD, which was owned by former Progressive J. Frank Burke, and he sang hillbilly songs while incorporating a "Cornpone Philosophy" dialogue.⁸

Besides Burke, KFVD employed another leader of the Los Angeles left, Ed Robbin, a Communist Party member who broadcast a nightly news commentary advocating workers' rights and union formation in the open shops of various Los Angeles industries. Guthrie soon became friends with him, and he introduced the songwriter to the local communist community at rallies and book readings. Robbin and others in the Communist Party, such as actor Will Geer, helped him form a political perspective regarding the poverty that he had witnessed during his migration. They also instructed him about individuals central to the ideology, such as labor-organizer-turned-convict Tom Mooney, and Marxist ideals central to the communist cause.⁹ Beyond his work as an activist and a broadcaster, Robbin was the Los Angeles bureau chief for the Communist Party's San Francisco-based *People's World*, the West Coast equivalent of New York's *Daily Worker*, with coverage of labor issues and international affairs along with radical editorials. Several months after their initial meeting, Guthrie proposed to Robbin writing a column for the *People's World*. Because Guthrie had used Robbin's typewriter, Robbin was familiar with his writing, but he was unconvinced that the songwriter could meet the

deadlines required for a newspaper column. Furthermore, the newspaper's overseers were former New York Wobblies, who Robbin feared would find no value in Guthrie's folksy writings and the cartoons that he submitted following Robbin's request. Fortunately for Guthrie, the *People's World* editor, Al Richmond, was seeking to expand readership and agreed to publish the column, which was entitled "Woody Sez."¹⁰

Richmond had entered the newspaper field in 1934 as an editor for the *Daily Worker* in New York City and eventually served as the Washington correspondent for the 30,000-circulation newspaper and the managing editor for the *Sunday Worker*. He then was asked to direct the creation of a new San Francisco publication that would replace the moribund, semiweekly *Western Worker*. Under him, the paper underwent a metamorphosis that included a new masthead, which came from a cash-prize contest, and different content, which offered less ideological material, including pages devoted to sports and entertainment. On Saturdays, a magazine appeared that published recipes, comics, a teen page, and a women's column written by socialist leader Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. The six-page newspaper also had a column by communist Mike Quin, whose work was accompanied on the editorial page with cartoons and letters to the editor from the publication's California readership. Due to Richmond's age—he was twenty-three when he assumed leadership of the paper—the California Communist Party

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leaders expressed concern about his role and installed more mature Wobblies, Harrison George and Vern Smith, as the executive editor and labor editor respectively. But neither was greatly involved in the direction of the newspaper and allowed Richmond great latitude in advancing the publication. The first issue appeared on January 1, 1938.¹¹

The *People's World* emerged during a period of transition and tumult for the American Communist Party. The party had experienced unprecedented growth in the previous decade, partly through its inclusion of labor unions and leftists to reflect the "New Americanism" that the party hoped to promote, especially during the Popular Front period (1935-1939). But in late 1939 and early 1940, the CPUSA was weakened by two controversies. The Communist policy toward European fascism, whether represented by Germany's Adolf Hitler or by Spain's Francisco Franco, had been one of confrontation. But the August 1939 signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which formally rejected warfare between Germany and the USSR, required Communists to adjust their anti-fascism to passivism and criticize Hitler's opponents, such as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. This about-face caused many to leave the Party. Beyond inconsistent policy, the CPUSA's general secretary, Earl Browder, was sent to prison in January 1940 after publicly admitting to traveling on a false passport in September 1939. Although he was released after the USSR and the United States became allies in World War II following Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, which invalidated the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on June 22, 1941, the inconsistent policies and the subsequent vacuum of leadership left the party

lacking its earlier strength. It was in this environment that Guthrie contributed to the *People's World*.¹²

People's World had been in circulation for less than a year when Robbin introduced Richmond to Guthrie's material in late 1938. Richmond was initially suspicious of the authenticity of what he wrote:

Being suspicious of folksiness and words misspelled for comic effect, I wondered at first: is this columnist phony or genuine? I soon met him when he came to perform in San Francisco, a man in his late twenties, slender and wiry, a wild mop of hair and a beard. He might have been called a hippie in later years, except that his Oklahoma speech was authentic and so was his familiarity with the folkways of the open road as it was traveled by uprooted farmers and migratory workers. He was genuine.¹³

Guthrie was accepted at the *People's World* without "serious examination" of his political views or an ideological screening test, according to Richmond. This was likely a decision that was lamented by Communist leaders, who disapproved of contributions that were not serious political discussion.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he joined the overhauled publication in May 1939 as an unpaid contributor.

The first "Woody Sez" column appeared on the editorial page of *People's World* on May 12, 1939. Beneath a large cartoon of an enormous businessman, standing between a factory and workers holding AFL and CIO placards, appeared the headline, "Woody Sez: A New Columnist Introduces Himself." The article began with an introduction to the twenty-six-year-old Guthrie, which was likely written by an editor sympathetic to the migrants' socio-economic position:

Woody calls himself a hill-billy singer. He is one of the 200,000 people who came from the dustbowl looking for work and a little food—the people who have picked the fruit and the crops of California—lived in shanty camps, been beaten and driven about by the bank-lowners.

But Woody came with a guitar on his back and with an eye and an ear sensitive to the suffering of his own people. . . .

And Woody has gathered a great deal of homely wisdom from his people. Each day he will speak to you on this page in his own way about how he looks at things.

The paper's introduction revealed a distinction between two allied communities: the *People's World* editors and communist advisors as well as Guthrie and the dust bowl refugees. While the newspaper was largely sympathetic to the migrant's plight and reported the conditions in the labor camps, the language used to describe his writing—"homely" and "speak . . . his own way"—distinguished him from traditional columnists and the communist readership. He represented the culture of the 1930s Popular Front, during which the Communist Party sought a broader coalition and attempted to embrace American culture broadly. "Communism is twentieth-century Americanism" was the Popular Front slogan,

and he, along with other folk artists, embodied this concept.¹⁵

The embrace of Guthrie's authenticity was not limited to *People's World* editors during this period; his status was celebrated in nearly every form of media exposure he gained following his arrival in Los Angeles. Introducing him on his Library of Congress recordings in March 1940, musicologist Alan Lomax declared Guthrie "to have seen more in those thirty years than most men see before they're seventy."¹⁶ In his *Hard-Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People*, which was co-authored with Lomax and Pete Seeger, Guthrie was introduced by Steinbeck, who also was an advocate for dust bowl migrants: "He sings the songs of a people and I suspect that he is, in a way, the people."¹⁷

Due to the national publicity about the migrants at this time, in part through Lange's photography and Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the newspaper welcomed an authentic dust bowl migrant, and Guthrie's initial column introduced a working class character similar to the fictional Joads or Lange's subjects. Guthrie's "Awtwoyografie" related his dust bowl experiences as a common migrant laborer, beginning with the origins of his name:

Well, I was born in Okemah, Okfuskee County, Oklahoma, in 1912, the year that Woodrow Wilson was nominated for President. My dad was quite a figger in Okfuskee county politics at that time an' so he named me after the President, Woodrow Wilson Guthrie—which is too much of a name for a country boy. So I sawed off all the fancy work an' jest left "Woody"—I cood remember that.

After an oil boom during the early 1900s, Okemah suffered an economic collapse, after which Guthrie "left town with the first migration, headed for the plains of West Texas, around Amarillo, Pampa and Borger." But the droughts and subsequent dust storms of the 1930s left him and others itinerant:

When the drouths drove all the folks out of Oklahoma, an' Arkansas, into the cow country, wheat fields, an' oil towns of West Texas, I was in the runoff. We had a hard old go of it. I've picked it by asking questions that the bad weather drove 1 [family], an' the banker drove 9 out of every ten families that deeserted there farms by the oodles an' gobs in eastern Okla., Ark., Missouri, Kansas, Alabama, Georgia, Texas, an' Tennessee. (Naturally my statistics is jest a guess, but a mighty good guess, I think).

Like others, his attempts to find stable work proved futile and resulted in frustration: "I got what you wood call disgursted, busted, an' rooled me up a bundel of duds, an' caught a long, tall, frate-train thet had a California sign on the side of it."¹⁸

Guthrie's introductory column provided characteristics present during the eighteen months that his column appeared in the *People's World*. Perhaps most importantly was his method of composition, which relied upon misspellings and folksy statements that were unique to his newspaper writings during this period. Composed using phonetic spellings mimicking a Western dialect, "Woody Sez" exhibited several consistently used methods of incorrect spelling. These include the incorporation of double letters ("cood," "wood," "figger," "desserted," "rooled"), the addition of letters ("dident"), the transposition of letters ("bundel"), the sub-

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traction of letters (“wich”, “windo”), and the substitution of vowels (“stetistics”). He also used terms unique to rural Western culture (“boom-chasers,” “drillers,” “roustabouts,” “tooldressers,” and “teamskinners”). Later, his writings incorporated analogical and observational statements that added to the oral texture of the composition, including “the oily tongue catches the sucker,” “hottern a pistol at both ends,” “hottern a sheep at a county fair,” “yessiree, funny as a dickens,” and “we was in deeper than a rotary oil well.”

In comparing Guthrie’s *People’s World* spellings and phrasings with those appearing in his other writings during 1940 and 1942, it appears likely that they were a result of a unique self-representation created for the paper’s readers. During 1940, Guthrie maintained a personal correspondence with Lomax that demonstrated his ability to spell correctly despite the general rambling nature of his correspondence.¹⁹ Thus, his spelling methods in the *People’s World* were absent in letters, and simple words warranting unique spelling in the newspaper are now correctly composed by professional folklorists.

Similarly, *Bound for Glory*, his autobiography, showed Guthrie’s ability to manipulate spelling to reflect the circumstance. It had the same traits found in his *People’s World* columns: deliberate misspellings and phrases of regional vernacular. But the texts differed in one important way: While his newspaper columns misspelled words regardless of circumstance, *Bound for Glory* shifted from proper spellings to improper oral representations most often when directly quoting individuals. For example, in his autobiography many of the spellings and strategies in the *World* columns were revisited: “yore” and “yer” (your), “jest” (just), “shore” (sure), “fer” (for), “purty” (pretty), “git” (get), “wuz” (was), “ta” (to), “gramma” (grandma), “bumbs” (bombs), and “mebbe” (maybe).²⁰ This further suggests that Guthrie, despite the ability to correctly spell and compose in a correct or formal manner, chose to use phonetic composition in his *People’s World* articles.

With his phonetic spelling and composition, he implicitly portrayed himself as not formally educated, a depiction not entirely accurate (he withdrew from high school during his senior year and did not return). But in his 1939 newspaper writings, he also explicitly celebrated his purported ignorance and lack of education when addressing figures in business and journalism. In a June 3 column criticizing the local gas company, he wrote, “Uneducated, unenlightened, and uninformed as I am, provides me with a magnificent opportunity, and a elegant excuse to tell you right here and now that I oftimes have nightmares in which there go crawling and creeping a species of creature similar to those symbolized by the practices you use.” Similarly, he contrasted the level of education among migrants with newspaper reporters in a column condemning the *Los Angeles Times*’ depiction of migrants. “Course we ain’t as educated as you are—‘cause you’re a mighty smart feller. But we’d like fer our children to grow up an’ be big, smart, educated fellers like you.”²¹ His perception of formal education was not inconsistent with the views of many migrants, both in terms of enrollment

and attitudes. Among high-school aged Farm Security Administration (FSA) camp residents, only 41 percent attended school in 1940.²² Meanwhile, the migrant culture often shunned formal education. As historian James Gregory noted in 1989, “[M]any of the migrants shared a vaguely populist outlook which directed expectations towards manual occupations and away from extended schooling.”²³

While framing himself as uneducated, Guthrie’s personal anecdotes and community folklore provided his audience with an informal dust bowl narrative. In his early Texas and Los Angeles radio broadcasts, he was renowned for telling tall tales of the dust storms, which he referred to as “cyclone tales.” Following the massive Black Sunday dust storm of 1935, Pampa residents sought shelter wherever it could be found—some hid in cars and others in their homes, as he reportedly did. More than four years later, he introduced dust bowl folklore and audience reaction in a May 1939 column:

I guess you’ve heard about as many wild and windy Cyclone Tales as I have. An’ I guess you’ve seen as many Cyclones in operation as I have. But the thousands of letters on thet very subject thet come into me at KFVD, has proved to me that ever body likes to stop an’ hear a good, tall, handsome, wild, an’ windy, Cyclone Tale oncet in a while.²⁴

He then told the story of Jim Lukas, who “was a boilin’ an’ a scrapin’ a hog one mornin’ down in the cow lot when a Cyclone struck.” His reaction was swift; he slaughtered his four hogs and “sliced ‘em up into bacon, pork chops, backbone, hogs-head, an’ chitlin’s.” As with similar anecdotes in his column, this story demonstrated identification with the migrants and readership.

Having established himself as a legitimate narrator with knowledge of the dust bowl experience, Guthrie became an advocate for similarly dispossessed migrants. This was chiefly accomplished by documenting the socio-economic circumstances experienced by migrants, who endured what he deemed a lower “standerd of living.”²⁵ Like thousands of dust bowl migrants, he followed Route 66 from Texas to California by either hitchhiking or riding freight trains. His few possessions, which included a guitar and paintbrushes, were sold for food, and he slept in jails and asked to work for meals at churches.²⁶ He revisited his experience in a June 1939 column:

While I wuz on the bum in Calif, I slept in everything but a bed.

I et ever thing except a square meal.

An found ever thing except a home.

I rode on everything that had wheels, from a one cylinder kiddy car to a mountain massey railroad locomotive.²⁷

While he eventually reached his family in Riverside, California, Guthrie recalled in a May 1939 column that the trip was a

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disorienting experience: "I was a headin' out to see some relatives, but I didn't know for shore wich r. r. bridge they was a livin' under, so you see I was travelin' practically without a magneto. I mean a compast. I didn't know where the heck I was a goin'."²⁸

Throughout his 1939 columns, Guthrie's conception of the dust bowl migration contained imagery of destitute, penniless travelers intent on reaching California, where a better life waited. But, unfortunately for his migrants, the promise was not met after reaching California. Perhaps the most telling example of the dust bowl migration concerned "a couple of old Texas boys" who "just blowed into California":

They come out on what I call a Bootleg Bus. They didnt have enuff money to come out legal. But you caint tell the difference now that they're here.

A bootleg bus is wher you just happn to be a standin a long side of th road, an a car just happens to come down the road, an it just happens to stop—and you just happen to get in—or just happen to cetch a ride, an then after a while the feller gets to a needin some expense money, an you just happen to sweeten th pot a few dollers—and he just happens to bring you to Calif.

An you just happen to get here broke, an get up every mornin for 847464546474645 mornins, a lookin fer a job of work.²⁹

Collectively, he portrayed the migrants as hard working and individualistic. While not highly skilled laborers, they fulfilled a necessary and noble role in society. Similar to the self-motivating messages in the "Pea-Patch Press" that appeared the migrant camps, he established the migrants as industrious. "We can gather in the crops. An' we can drive Tracters, an' Draglines, an' Shovels, an' Cranes, an' Cement Mixers, an' Picks, an' Hammers, an' lots of things like that."³⁰

Guthrie saw this as a contrast to the way that migrants appeared in California's popular press, which often portrayed them as a burden on public resources. He used his column to counter this negative perception, often by criticizing metropolitan dailies in the state. His favorite targets were the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and an article in the latter's Sunday magazine on May 14, 1939, provided fodder for his column. Written by Kenneth Crist, who was a regular contributor, "Career Men—in Relief" examined the type of migrant who loitered in Farm Security Administration camps while collecting government assistance. While he attempted to distinguish between migrants who were "genuine job hunters" and "deliberate loafers," his generalized language often failed to clearly make this distinction:

Some 10 camps have been built to accommodate these people. The places have running water, hot and cold showers, and parade under a fair stab of sanitation. They stand now as mute evidence that your paternal Uncle Sam will not forsake his children even if they forsake all—and if they have anything to forsake.

They can leave the Mississippi Delta, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas; they can escape the rigors of the dust bowl or the disappoint-

ments of share-cropping and come out to California's sunshine if they want to; they need not be able to support themselves on the theory and fact that American freedom is not predicated upon a dollar sign. Still, less than 4 per cent of those migrants hale from the industrial States!³¹

The article then provided interviews and observations supporting the central thesis before concluding, "It's just another gold rush to the West—but not for gold in the hills. It's the rush of career men in relief."

Guthrie's *People's World* rebuttal appeared on May 23, 1939, eleven days after Crist's piece. "The *Times* carried quite a story,"

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he began. "The tale, written by Kenneth Somebody, an' paid for by Mr. Somebody Else, was wrote up for the one purpose of givin' the Refugees another black eye." The concept of individuals completing a cross-country migration and living in FSA camps simply to collect government assistance was outrageous to Guthrie, who addressed Crist personally:

No, Kenneth . . . it ain't the Easy Relief Money Us Folks Is After—it's jest a chanct to work an' earn our livin' . . . sorta like you earn yore livin'. You've got your Gift of Writin'—an' that's the way you work an' earn yore meal ticket here in this old world. An' each one of us has got our litle Job that we hope to do in order to pay for our keep.

Guthrie's discussion of a *Times* article was repeated in an August 11 column that addressed a July 9 story reporting

Steinbeck was sequestered in his Los Angeles-area ranch, partly because of being threatened by dust bowl migrants. Despite the only source of information being "some Los Gatos folk and others," and Steinbeck denying the threat in the article, reporter Tom Cameron said there were two "versions" about why he rarely left his ranch (the other threat, which was confirmed by Steinbeck, was from wealthy Oklahomans who did not like their portrayal in *The Grapes of Wrath*). In response, Guthrie again spoke on behalf of the migrants and, in this case, to Steinbeck directly: "John, if you git holt of this article—rest assured that us dustbowlers aint even 'about' to come a huntin' you. (If you see anybody a comin, it'll just be some more Hearst reporters)." Despite mistaking the ownership of the *Times*—Hearst owned a competing Los Angeles newspaper while the *Times* was a Chandler family publication—his criticism allowed a counter argument from a non-conventional source.

When Guthrie was not defending the "dustbowlers" generally, he related conditions experienced in specific places in California in "Woody Sez." Dust bowl refugees settled almost equally between metropolitan (51.6 percent) and non-metropolitan (48.4 percent) areas with the greatest migrant influx in urban and rural settings being Los Angeles and the San Joaquin Valley. The consequences of this became evident in labor statistics: in 1940, Los Angeles had a 14 percent unemployment rate (118,000 people). Meanwhile, incomes varied greatly between the rural and urban areas. Families in the San Joaquin Valley, who had arrived from the Southwest during the previous four years, had an average yearly income of \$650 in 1939, which was a little more than half of the \$1,145 annual income of those employed in Los Angeles.³² This dichotomy was evident in Guthrie's column, where the migrant's environment

consisted of two extremes: Los Angeles' Skid Row and a rural work camp.

The migrants who settled in a rural work camp rarely remained in a single community. Instead, they followed a harvest circuit that might extend 700 to 1,000 miles.³³ After finding work, the migrants found varying degrees of shelter, from one-room shacks to small plots of land where tents could be pitched, and disease, especially among children, flourished. During 1939, Guthrie occasionally reported for the *People's World* from the migrant camps, and his articles reflected his experiences and the living conditions of the migrants. His first work camp article described the Redding, California, work site, where idle laborers found a delayed dam-building project:

You was lucky to get one meal a day. Most of the boys was flat busted. Hit town with \$5 or \$10 which dont last long in a dam boom. . . .

Whole families was out in the woods—down on the river, up on some little hills—under the rail road trustles—a livin in houses of mickey mouse description—made out of junk tin, flattened out buckets, pasteboard boxes, shippin crates, apple boxes, old boilers, etc. (an them that was not so lucky lived just rudely, crudely, almost nudely).³⁴

But his discussion of the work camp conditions was not without encouraging observations. At the Shafter, California, camp, Guthrie found striking workers, who were “really a holding out for \$1.25 a 100 [pounds] for cotton picking.” The strikers were supported by “their own speakers, singers, dancers, and all sorts of entertainers,” including folk singers, who impressed him. In Arvin, California, he noted Fred Ross, a camp manager who ran a “real progressive camp government.” The migrant newspaper at Arvin, *The Toe Sack Tattler*, also impressed him with its “news reports of workers interest like strike conditions, wages, hours, unions, and how they're develop- ing around over the country.”³⁵

The most common alternative to the rural labor camps was Los Angeles, where southwestern migrants encountered a vast, diverse, and often intimidating urban environment. Due to its inexpensive rent, many migrants settled in the central and eastern sections of the city, which included the Los Angeles Skid Row. Much like a rural working camp, Guthrie wrote of the suffering and displaced Okie attempting to navigate a new environment:

Skid Row is generally where you land when you first hit Los Angeles on a freight train a blowin out of the Dustbowl.

Two reasons why you hit Skid Row is somethin to eat, an some- wheres to sleep.

You can do both cheaper on Skid Row then you can in the more civilised sections of town. Besides the Police bother you too much in the classier sections. . . .

Skid Row is Skid Row because all of the r.r. hobos is skidded off

down there—so's they wont go to sleep on the laws out on millionair avenew.³⁶

Like others, Guthrie found less-than-ideal housing on Skid Row, where he shared a room with twenty men for 20 cents per night. But his Skid Row, with its music, fights, criminals, and lack of police oversight, was celebrated because of the genuine people not found in the “high hat” areas:

Anyhow I went down on L. A. “Skid Row” east of 5th & Main . . . down where the men are men and the wimmen are glad of it. Down where the refugees are homeless and the finance men are glad of it.

I love the slums . . . and when I hit a new town I all ways go to the slums . . . not the high hat end of town, you can see that anywhere, but the slums where the people are real, and the hunger realer.³⁷

In both rural and urban migrant environments, Guthrie discovered familiar themes: poor living conditions and lack of employment in a community that contained promising culture in music or printed communication. To him, it was an upside-down setting, where the noble, industrious migrant laborers suffered injustice at the whims of the well-heeled few. Often this was represented through his perception of the lack of common goods available to the lower classes and migrants. Likely influenced by the conditions of migrant camps and the destitute areas of Los Angeles where he often performed, he often found the ownership of

goods—whether land, shelter, cars, shoes, or food—to be impractical for the poor but abundantly available for those belonging to a more affluent caste. “You aint got it an neither have I,” he noted in a column that defines his concept of a standard of living: “The standard of a living is a home, an a car, an a lectric ice box, an clothes, an radeo, an groceries, an wages you can live on, an some spair time to loaf, an some spair money to spend.”³⁸ But this standard of living failed to exist for dust bowl migrants in California. In an October 1939 column, he described the shortage of goods available to dust bowl migrants: “You seee, we been a hittin’ it hard ever since we can remember, an’ they aint been many groceries and clothes, and shoes, and cars, and houses—fact is, they been awful scarce—but we got by somehow.”³⁹

His expression of the need for particular goods was not limited to his writing; from May 24 to June 7 in the *People's World*, Guthrie introduced various individual goods with a watercolor painting of each above a short passage. The paintings included a car, a house, a shoe, a liquor bottle, a kitchen, and a bean and was often complemented with a column devoted to the necessity for the good (with the exception of the liquor bottle, which is not among the migrants' expenditures, according to him).⁴⁰ Among these basic goods, several received particular consideration in his column, specifically housing and the automobile.

Affordable housing was made more widely available during Roosevelt's New Deal. Prior to the program's implementation in 1933, only about one-in-four Americans owned private residences, which were often paid for in full or with large down payments.

The New Deal created two new agencies that altered the pattern of home ownership: the 1933 Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which insured long-term mortgages, and the 1934 Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), which protected homeowners against foreclosure and refinanced unsound mortgages. Additionally, the creation of Fannie Mae provided lenders with a means to resell mortgages. The FHA, the HOLC, and Fannie Mae eliminated much of the uncertainty for lenders and have been credited with the post-World War II suburban expansion.⁴¹

Despite these measures, Guthrie remained antagonistic toward 1939 housing circumstances. Home ownership remained impractical for the poor, and most were required to rent properties. Beneath a watercolor cartoon of a house, he wrote:

Big corporations use houses now days to rob workin' folks with. They line 'em up around over town—an' charge you 2 times too much rent. They let you buy 'em—an' you never git 'em paid out. They even take the one you built yore self.

You can git robbed with a gun . . . 'er with a house. Knowin' that you'll work yore fingers to the bone fer youre wife an' kids—the Landlords take advantage of your highest love, an' youre hardest luck—an' git you in a House, like a Rat in a Trap—and Tease you like a Cat—'till the day you die.⁴²

Meanwhile, Guthrie considered foreclosure a practice of the drunk and unscrupulous. In August, his page-one cartoon featured a man holding a bottle with the caption, "I aint drunk enough to foreclose on a family."⁴³ Foreclosure was a reoccurring theme in his columns and cartoons. On December 4, he drew two people with houses in the background. The caption read, "But they's nothin left to foreclose on," likely indicating his belief in the widespread foreclosure of property. Beyond foreclosure, his characterization of the housing market was of competing extremes: on one end, avarice-driven real estate investors, and on the other, itinerants sleeping outside:

A real estate feller told me the other day that it was the cock eyed est racket in th country. Well it shure sucks in a lot of country, all right. It shure sucks a lot of suckers.

If a good honest Fedral housing deal goes through, it will hurt th racket of these land shirks, an one reason they don't want no fedral houses is cause they wood be honest.

The only folks that cood hold up a housin deal wood be th ones that belief in a sleepin outside, as long as it aint them.⁴⁴

Housing was not the sole commercial good unavailable to migrants and the poor; Guthrie also considered automobiles prohibitively expensive. To counter this, he proposed legislation that prohibited new and used cars to remain on a sales lot; instead these should be distributed to the destitute:

You see whole pastures of used cars a lining our boulevards—an you see whole armies folks that's a walkin.

Now I am of the notion that you ott to have a law fixed so's ever petastain wood be requierd by law to go to the abused car lot an drive off a car.

Then you wood need a law makin it unlawful for any abused car dealer to have over 3 [Ford Model] T-models on hand at any one time.

This wood get all the good used cars out in circulation—an wood also get all of the T's off of the rode.⁴⁵

Guthrie felt the shortage of automobiles was amendable through redistribution and government oversight to counter the reckless avarice of the "finance friskers."⁴⁶

Like real estate financiers, his automobile loan "shirk" was an avaricious sot who repossessed cars without remorse.⁴⁷ Other goods and services also were unavailable to his migrants and the poor because of high prices. These included health care ("Aint seen a doctor yet, cause we aint got what the dr. likes to see . . . the money") and food ("Feller next door owns a grocer store—you know, stuff you eat—an he tells me he's a havin to paint his prices on th ceilin—so dern high").⁴⁸

Guthrie's narrative of the migrant experience not only recognized shortcomings in goods and general well being. It also reflected his knowledge of California public policy proposals that he deemed beneficial to the migrants. While he was unique among traditional editorial writers in language use and cultural representation, his advocacy of public policies put him in a more conventional role as a newspaper contributor.

A depressed economy and a vast influx of migrants into California prompted the introduction of statewide economic policies intended to redistribute wealth during the 1930s, including the End Poverty in California (EPIC) and the California Pension Plan Association movements, both of which complemented the federal New Deal program for financial assistance. During Guthrie's tenure at the *People's World*, EPIC had long been defeated at the California polls but central ideas in the plan continued to be advocated by migrant leaders, specifically the idea of production for use instead of profit. Meanwhile, the California Pension Plan Association's movement reached its apex during 1939 before also being defeated in the statewide November general election.

The association's 1939 initiative, better known as Ham and Eggs, was conceived to aid the elderly. Based on earlier plans by famed geriatric advocate Dr. Francis Townsend, Ham and Eggs was devised by pension "zealots," who met in the Clifton Cafeteria in downtown Los Angeles during the fall of 1937.⁴⁹ The result was a pension plan that promised \$30 every Monday—later changed to Thursday—for every needy Californian over the age of fifty. The initiative had support in local radio through the broadcasts of Robert Noble, a former seminarian who called for \$25 weekly allowances for all unemployed Californians over fifty, and following his introduction, the California Pension Plan Association presented the state's secretary of state with a petition signed by 789,000 vot-

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ers, which was one-fourth of all of those registered to vote.

As a statewide phenomenon, the association soon had a new name that was initially introduced by the plan's opponents; "ham and eggs" was a derisive phrase employed much like "pie in the sky" as an unrealistic expectation. Nevertheless, the imagery of elderly Californians eating ham and eggs breakfasts after receiving their assistance checks proved popular, and rallies soon featured individuals carrying banners, "HAM AND EGGS FOR CALIFORNIA," and speakers proclaiming "Ham and Eggs, everybody."⁵⁰ Also appearing in the FSA camp newspapers and echoed by residents in interviews, the "Ham and Eggs everybody" statement was embraced in the rural migrant camps as well. The initiative was defeated by a two-to-one ratio in the 1939 general elections after the state's Republican, Democratic, and Communist parties, as well as financial experts, all denounced the plan, but widespread support continued in the rural work camps.⁵¹

In his column, Guthrie often celebrated the Ham and Eggs initiative as alternately a reaction to the power granted to financial institutions and a remedy for hunger among the poor: "Ham and Eggs is a plan to take the makin of money out of the hands of the bankers. . . . [A]ll they need to do now is to take it out of their pockets."⁵² These sentiments were echoed in his cartoons, which often included the "Ham and Eggs everybody" catchphrase that existed in the rural work camps as well as "30 dollars wood help," a reference to the weekly government assistance. Beyond simply supporting the initiative, his cartoons often requested action from the audience. An August 1939 front-page cartoon depicted an unshaven man speaking, "VOTE YES YES YES YES YES YES yes HAM & EGGS!"⁵³ The Ham and Eggs name, with its reference to food unavailable to the poor, was reconsidered by Guthrie in his cartoons with new food combinations proposed by other, less-generous members of society. During a three-day period in June 1939, the "Ham and Eggs everybody" catchphrase becomes "Bread an' water everbody," when proposed by a "salary loan shirk," and "Bread 'n' beans everbody," when proposed by a banker.⁵⁴

In 1932, Upton Sinclair had conceived of the End Poverty in California (EPIC) movement, which hoped to establish new administrative bodies. The California Authority for Land would establish agricultural colonies on idle land, where the unemployed would produce food for consumption, and the California Authority for Production would establish jobs for the unemployed in the industrial sector in idle factories. A barter system would be implemented between the factories and agricultural communities, which would be partially funded by state bonds issued by the California Authority for Money. Meanwhile, a redistributive taxation program would eliminate the sales tax while instituting graduated income and inheritance taxes and increasing taxes on public utility corporations. The goal of the plan was as simple as its name: end

poverty through state-sanctioned employment, fiscal policy, and government assistance.

Guthrie strongly supported this plan and used his column and cartoons to express his encouragement for what he considered a panacea to homelessness and widespread unemployment. One front-page cartoon depicted an idyllic hillside neighborhood, with the caption, "COOD YA PERDUCE HOUSES FER USE!"⁵⁵ Another portrayed two men talking in front of a car lot with the caption, "DID YOUSE SAY PERDUCTION FER USE?"⁵⁶ Beyond simple front-page endorsements, he theorized the ownership of goods produced by laborers would result in a more peaceful United States: "If th country belonged to ever body in it they coodent no fights break out."⁵⁷

"When Al Richmond accepted Guthrie as a People's World contributor, his expectation was a genuine reflection of a migrant everyman, relatable to a wide audience rather than just the party overseers. Beyond his folksy composition, he accomplished this with techniques that included a casual introduction to his column, often directed from the first-person voice ('Howdy everbody'), and personal entries that had narratives about family life and parenthood."

When Richmond accepted Guthrie as a *People's World* contributor, his expectation was a genuine reflection of a migrant everyman, relatable to a wide audience rather than just the party overseers. Beyond his folksy composition, he accomplished this with techniques that included a casual introduction to his column, often directed from the first-person voice ("Howdy everbody"), and personal entries that had narratives about family life and parenthood.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, his narratives were never so overtly ideological as to upset his Los Angeles editors or the party's leaders. During 1939, judging from recollections by Richmond and Robbin and letters to the editor, Guthrie's columns were rarely the source of controversy. But following a brief hiatus during January and February 1940, he criticized modern art, and readers responded with combative editorial page letters.

Guthrie only criticized modern art twice, but the drawings involved symbols of labor politics and characteristics of modern artwork. His April 18 cartoon modified the symbol of the National Recovery Administration—the blue eagle—to become a crow. Beneath the cartoon, he lambasted the idea of modern art and artists: "I always did think that all of us was good for something—and now I see what it is. We're painters." The cartoon and column generated numerous letters, most of which criticized his perspective. One letter demonstrated the writer's conception of progression in artistic work, whether it was songwriting or the painting of modern art: "Cultural phalanxes of any period move abreast, though often ignorant of their common cultural front—their integration is the crying need of our time." Following this criticism, more readers joined the chorus, one saying Guthrie's "intolerance of a progressive movement would fit in better with *The Los Angeles Times*." Another reader, however, compliments him for having "the 'guts' to say anything about it for fear of not being 'refined.'" Guthrie's reaction to this discussion was another critical illustration of modern art. This time the drawing depicted a laborer working on a machine with a caption that read: "MODERN ART MEDIUM: Human

sweat. TITLE: 'I just got to heaven an' I caint set down.' ARTIST: All of Us." As the letters largely subsided, one writer noted, "Heck, some of Woody's drawings look pretty modern to me."⁵⁹

Beyond his criticism of modern art, Guthrie used both his newspaper column and radio program to advance California's Ham and Eggs proposal. To gain public support for it, he ran a straw vote from the KFVD studio to measure public attitude and used his newspaper column to publicize the ballot. Instructions were provided in his column: "You take a penny pistol postal card, put yes or no on it, and mail it to WOODY, KFVD, L. A. and let's make this a real advance test of the Ham and Eggs question . . . and see if the real election goes like my Straw Vote."⁶⁰ Unfortunately for him, his reportedly unanimous straw vote supporting the initiative was not mimicked at the actual polls, and Ham and Eggs was defeated. But his vocal support for the policy reflected his commitment to the dust bowl migrants, who largely supported the initiative despite its rejection by established political parties and the California popular press.⁶¹

In January 1940, Guthrie hitchhiked from Los Angeles to New York City, eventually arriving in February. Following a month-long hiatus from the *People's World*, he resumed contributing to the newspaper with seventy-nine columns appearing through November. They marked a departure in content from his 1939 material. Instead of focusing on the dust bowl migration and its resulting socio-economic circumstances, his writing targeted Wall Street institutions and prominent international leaders. Also appearing in the *Daily Worker*, these columns contained his idiomatic phrasings and phonetic spellings but lacked the patterns of dust bowl representation shown in this study.⁶²

Guthrie's 1939 newspaper writings provide insights about his methods of self-representation. Content-wise, he established himself as a legitimate broker of the migrant culture through his use of anecdotes, which included Lukas' reaction to the dust bowl storms, the "Texas boys" on the "bootleg bus," and his discussion of conditions at work camps in Shafter and Redding, California, among many others.⁶³ He complemented these simple stories with examples of advocacy for the migrants, whether through his promotion of Ham and Eggs and plans earlier introduced by Sinclair or by attacking the press when he thought it portrayed the migrants negatively. Furthermore, he positioned himself as an advocate for the migrants by confronting those opposing his beliefs. Broadly referred to as "finance friskers" or "money folks," these were owners of businesses, whether they were property owners who refused to provide affordable rent, financiers who foreclosed on family homes, or owners of car dealerships who refused to allow the destitute to own a vehicle. To him, the rich were directly responsible for the financial insecurity of the poor. "Billionaires cause hoboes," he wrote in July 1939, "and hoboes make billionaires."⁶⁴ He elaborated on this contradiction in his December 2, 1939, column: "One bunch of folks is down an' out an' hungry an' cold an' miserble—an' ain't got nothin'. An' another bunch has got a hole lot of stuff they caint use and don't need, an'

still won't reduce their pile to help a feller humen out—."⁶⁵ Thus, he established himself as an advocate for the dispossessed migrants and, more generally, the poor.

Besides his use of anecdotes and advocacy on behalf of the migrants, Guthrie's unique method of composition, accomplished through misspellings and idiomatic phrasings, helped the audience identify him as a true migrant laborer instead of an educated Communist Party insider, who was often found at party newspapers. Generally, he modified proper spelling with one of several consistently used methods that resulted in a spelling more closely aligned with oral pronunciation; thus, "guitar" was spelled "git-tar" and "could" became "cood."⁶⁶ But he composed these spellings uniquely for his newspaper writings. When compared with personal correspondence during the period, many of the repeatedly misspelled words are correctly spelled in his letters.

Until this study, an analysis of Guthrie's writing had not been achieved, but it is evident that he manipulated his language depending on his audience. Like his KFVD broadcasts during this period, in which he performed as the uneducated rube, the audience discovered an "authentic" narrator, which was defined by both content and methods of communication. Contrasting this portrayal is his less apparent character, which was well read and advocated policy decisions. His discussion of newspapers of the period—specifically, the *Los Angeles Times* and camp newspapers—demonstrated a close reading of current events while his discussion of Steinbeck and *The Grapes of Wrath* revealed a grasp of literature (Guthrie's song, "Tom Joad," told the story in verse).⁶⁷ As a result, his *People's World* contributions demonstrate the difficulty of understanding the true Guthrie—while one article may have celebrated his ignorance, another could advocate a proposed state policy.

While it is unlikely that Guthrie will be considered in the same class as Max Eastman, John Reed, or Michael Gold in the history of the Communist press, his *People's World* articles demonstrated a valuable contribution to the leftist press. His dust bowl narratives offered first-hand accounts of conditions endured by migrants while his advocacy of public policies demonstrated a political awareness grounded in leftist ideals. Thus, his newspaper contributions deserve recognition in journalism history.

NOTES

¹ The *People's World* has undergone several changes since Guthrie contributed to it. Currently, it is published as the *People's Weekly World* in Chicago. Most general biographical information in this article was found in two Guthrie biographies: Ed Cray, *Ramblin' Man: The Life and Times of Woody Guthrie* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004); and Joe Klein, *Woody Guthrie: A Life* (New York: Delta Publishing, 1980). Lange's dust bowl photography was found, among other places, in Paul Taylor and Dorothea Lange, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (Paris: Editions Jean-Michel Place, 2000).

² Alan Lomax, ed., *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People* (New York: Oak Publications, 1967). Guthrie contributed an autobiography to this songbook as well as notes and opinions about each song. It remained unpublished for twenty-seven years.

³ Unlike the page-one jumps, Guthrie's columns were not of a consistent

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length. The longest one occupied the entire width of the broadside as well as the lower quarter of the newspaper's height. Other pieces would not exceed 200 words with the briefest being only seventy words.

⁴ For a discussion of Guthrie's folk music and political importance, see John Greenway, *Folksongs of Protest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953). In 1996, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum's American Music Masters series focused on him and included a conference that led to a publication with perspectives from several disciplines. See Robert Santelli and Emily Davidson, eds., *Hard Travelin': The Life and Legacy of Woody Guthrie* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1999).

⁵ For this study, two years of *People's World* (1939-40) were examined on microfilm at the Library of Congress' Newspaper & Current Periodical Reading Room in Washington with each Guthrie commentary read and analyzed by the author for content and language use. Most often the writings appeared on page four of *People's World* until the editorial page moved to page five in 1940. His cartoon work for the paper most often appeared on page one but during 1940 occasionally was on page four.

⁶ Cray, *Ramblin' Man*, 160.

⁷ Guy Logsdon, "Jack Guthrie: A Star That Almost Was," *Journal of Country Music* 15 (1993).

⁸ "Cornpone Philosophy" from Klein, *Woody Guthrie*, 98. Guthrie's radio program was popular if judged by fan mail, which often exceeded 1,000 pieces per month.

⁹ Ed Robbin's book about his relationship with Guthrie is valuable for insight about Guthrie's commitment to communism during this period. See Ed Robbin, *Woody Guthrie and Me: An Intimate Remembrance* (Berkeley, Calif.: Lancaster-Miller, 1979).

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 35-40; and Al Richmond, *A Long View from the Left* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 279-80.

¹¹ Richmond, *A Long View from the Left*, 250-89.

¹² Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Press, 1982), 33-57.

¹³ Richmond, *A Long View from the Left*, 280.

¹⁴ Robbin noted, "The general attitude of the top leadership of the Party was that the paper ought to be much more dignified, serious, and pretty rigidly political." See Robbin, *Woody Guthrie and Me*, 36.

¹⁵ The embrace of Popular Front strategies was not universal among CPUSA leaders. "Older, more orthodox Communist leaders" were "horrified" at this inclusive approach." See Robbie Lieberman, *My Song Is My Weapon: People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 33.

¹⁶ Recordings, Woody Guthrie, Rounder CD 1041/2/3, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷ Alan Lomax, *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People* (New York: Oak Publications, 1967), 13.

¹⁸ "Woody Sez: A New Columnist Introduces Himself," *People's World*, May 12, 1939.

¹⁹ See Woody Guthrie to Alan Lomax, Sept. 25, 1940, Woody Guthrie manuscript collection, box 3, oversized; Wood Guthrie to Alan Lomax, Sept. 19, 1940, Woody Guthrie manuscript collection, box 1, folder A. Both are in the Archive of American Folk Song, Library of Congress. These letters contain a 308-word sentence and an 181-word sentence respectively.

²⁰ Woody Guthrie, *Bound for Glory* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943), 21-22.

²¹ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, May 23, 1939.

²² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Farm Security Administration, *Population in Farm Security Administration Camps*, no. 1, cited in James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1989), 135.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, May 22, 1939.

²⁵ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Dec. 2, 1939.

²⁶ For a more complete account of Guthrie's migration, see Cray, *Ramblin' Man*, or Klein, *Woody Guthrie*.

²⁷ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 17, 1939.

²⁸ "Woody Sez: A New Columnist Introduces Himself."

²⁹ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Sept. 5, 1939.

³⁰ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, May 23, 1939.

³¹ Kenneth Crist, "Career Men—in Relief," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, May 14, 1939, 4-5, 81.

³² Gregory, *American Exodus*, 63.

³³ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁴ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 27, 1939.

³⁵ See "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Oct. 23, 1939; "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Oct. 24, 1939; and "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Oct. 25, 1939.

³⁶ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Aug. 10, 1939.

³⁷ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, July 7, 1939.

³⁸ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, May 18, 1939.

³⁹ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, 27 October 1939.

⁴⁰ Guthrie wrote, "Don't worry about us Refagees a pendin' our Relief Gold fer likker. Or shows. The Salary Lone Man is on our neck before we can git down to the Salloon." See "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 2, 1939.

⁴¹ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 370.

⁴² "Woody Sez," *People's World*, May 31, 1939.

⁴³ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Aug. 1, 1939.

⁴⁴ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Dec. 4, 1939.

⁴⁵ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, May 16, 1939.

⁴⁶ Guthrie repeatedly referred to financiers as "finance friskers." See "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 6, 1939.

⁴⁷ In a cartoon, Guthrie drew two individuals with the caption, "Lets get drunk and repossess a car." See "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Dec. 4, 1939.

⁴⁸ See "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 23, 1939; and "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Oct. 2, 1939.

⁴⁹ "Zealots," from Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 202.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁵¹ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 153.

⁵² "Woody Sez," *People's World*, July 14, 1939.

⁵³ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Aug. 12, 1939.

⁵⁴ See "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 23, 1939; "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 24, 1939; and "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 26, 1939.

⁵⁵ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 15, 1939.

⁵⁶ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, June 10, 1939.

⁵⁷ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Sept. 26, 1939.

⁵⁸ For example, Guthrie wrote a series of columns from the perspective of his third child, Bill, who was born in October 1939. Written in late October and through November, they addressed family life and American society from a newborn child's perspective. His columns also addressed the experiences of his extended family, who were usually fellow migrants in California.

⁵⁹ Each of the quotations was from letters to the editor during late April and early May 1940. See "Cultural Phalanxes," *People's World*, April 26, 1940; "Intolerance," *People's World*, April 29, 1940; "The Guts," *People's World*, May 10, 1940; and "Heck," *People's World*, May 17, 1940.

⁶⁰ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, July 6, 1940.

⁶¹ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 153.

⁶² Like his *People's World* contributions, Guthrie's *Daily Worker* articles were often brief during late 1940 with many being less than 100 words. These usually appeared on page seven of the *Worker* beneath a headline that summarized the article. For example, see "Woody's Friend Cisco Just Had Narrow Escape," *Daily Worker*, Oct. 14, 1940; and "Rights of the People Changing says Woody," *Daily Worker*, Oct. 17, 1940.

⁶³ "Bootleg Bus" *People's World*, June 27, 1939. His discussions at Shafter were published on Oct. 23, 24, and 25, 1939, and his reporting from Redding was published on June 27, 1939. All appeared under the headline, "Woody Sez," in the *People's World*.

⁶⁴ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, July 7, 1939.

⁶⁵ "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Dec. 2, 1939.

⁶⁶ See the spellings in "Woody Sez," *People's World*, May 12, 1939; and "Woody Sez," *People's World*, Aug. 15, 1939, respectively.

⁶⁷ Judy Bell and Nora Guthrie, eds., *Woody Guthrie Songbook* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1994).

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