

WE ARE THE PEOPLE



Last week I re-watched [The Grapes of Wrath](#).

Directed by [John Ford](#) in 1940, this film is based on [John Steinbeck's](#) 1939 [novel](#). And yet 76 years after it was released it remains relevant to the people of today.

The film opens with Tom Joad, a man who has been recently released from [prison](#), returning to his parents' family farm in [Oklahoma](#). Along the way he meets an ex-preacher named Jim Casy who had baptised him many years before, but has now lost his faith.

In his 2014 essay, [In Nothing We Trust](#), Jim Greenfield reports that two-thirds of America's people now distrust everything from churches to public schools; and only 19 percent of them trust the government, down from 77 percent in 1964.

In the film Casy goes with Tom to the Joad property and finds that his family and farmers all over the area have been forced off their farms by the deed holders of their lands.

In Australia today this is the story of [farmers](#) caught in non-sustainable climate cycles of drought, floods and heat, as well as insatiable banking cycles of boom-bust lending and borrowing.

In the film Tom and Casy join the rest of the Joad family and set out for the promised land of California. Along the way, the elderly grandfather dies and is buried beside the road. When the family finally arrive at the first transient migrant campground, they find it already crowded with other starving, jobless and desperate travelers.

This is the story of today's [European migrant crisis](#).

After some trouble, the Joads make their way to another camp where they discover the food prices at the only store for miles around, which is owned by the company that runs the camp, means that no matter how hard or long they work, they end up more indebted than when they arrived.

In Canada today, Syrian refugees who survived dangerous sea journeys are now drowning in debt due to cruel [refugee loans](#) they've been forced to take out.

In the film Tom finally leaves to join the revolt for social change. But before leaving, he comforts his mother who grieves that she may never see him again. "Ma," he says, "Wherever there's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad. I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry and they know supper's ready. And when the people are eatin' the stuff they raise, and livin' in the houses they build, I'll be there, too."

This is the story of today's rangatira who fight to remove the inequities that [spineless governments](#), [gutless media](#), [brainless celebrities](#), and [soulless authorities](#) try to hide or excuse. It is a story that is echoed in the 2015 book, [The Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative of Revolt](#), by Chris Hedges.

As Ma Joad says at the end of the movie, "Rich fellas come up and they die, and their kids ain't no good and they die out, but we keep a-coming. They can't wipe us out, they can't lick us. We'll go on forever, Pa, cos we are the people."

