

# OFF-*Line*

A Cocoloco/  
Planet  
Onamor  
Publication

Autumn  
2000

Issue # 14



## An Issue of Place Contents

A Yonkers Tale (UptownShem).....	10
<u>Life on the Loquator: My Yonkers</u> (Vincent).....	14
Digging in the Dirt: Ritual of Exploration (Claire).....	19
<u>Activist Reports: Cracking the Wall — Iraq Sanctions</u> (Vincent).....	23
"Not One More Bomb!" — The Struggle for Vieques (Vincent).....	28
<u>Centerfold: Bay of Fundy</u> (Claire&Vincent).....	32

### PLUS:

The Writer's Block: How to Win a Game of Pool (3-V),  
Message from Your Body (8-C) • Cartoons (7, 18, 27, 48) •  
Foolplay: Film Funnies (30-V) • A Study of Movement  
Tactics (Part I) (34-V) • Garden of Vegan (43-CV) •  
Readers Forum/Reviews (46-V)



Claire Cocco and Vincent Romano,  
New Brunswick, Canada, July 2000

**OFF-Line is...**

- Humor, Art, Poetry, Prose, You!
- defying authoritarianism and resisting convention
- truth, justice, and the un-American way
- sincere, diverse, thoughtful, and controversial
- avoiding alienating, bland, superficial, privileged on-line technology to fashion community and counterculture
- an intimate postmodern salon of intellectual discussion
- time well spent!

Subscriptions: \$10 per year, \$1 by mail, free to low-income.  
Comments, submissions, angry threats: Claire E. Cocco and  
Vincent J. Romano, 35 Barker Ave. #4G, White Plains, NY 10601.

"We the people are not free. Our democracy is but a name. We vote? What does that mean? It means that we choose between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. We elect expensive masters to do our work for us, and then blame them because they work for themselves and their class." —Helen Keller



## How To Win a Game of Pool Vincent

Recently, I was grouchy. (What else is new?) My favorite radio station was offering a pair of tickets to the Rhyme and Reason Tour with Rage Against the Machine and the Beastie Boys this summer, and was going to give them away to the 89th caller. I definitely wanted to go, and that would save me over \$100, so I punched the numbers into the telephone and set my autoredial to work.

Needless to say, I didn't win. I tried to time it, and I even got through twice. The second time, I held my breath, only to crash at the words, "You're caller 86 — [click]." Close, so close again...but I never win.

Whether it's radio contests, a raffle where you match the number on your ticket stub, or even the small bets I've placed in the past, I never seem to be the lucky guy. Heck, the elevator in my apartment building is practically never waiting for me when I need it. I learned early in life, if I can't even win a stuffed animal by moving the metal claws in a toy dispenser, there's no way I'm ever going gambling. I've heard the stories about folks losing their life savings from not knowing when to quit. It's no secret that the few who walk out of a casino with a thrill and modest winnings are totally acceptable to the owners, who stay in very profitable business because they're taking a heck of a lot more out of everyone else's pockets.

Likewise, I'll never play the lottery. "You've gotta be in it to win it" is a line for suckers. The odds are fantastic, and the idea of jostling with hordes scrambling to buy tickets for the next \$15 million jackpot doesn't seem all that appealing. A few dollars here, a few there — what a drain. If you'd just save that money every time you got the itch to play, after a few years you could take a very nice vacation somewhere. But I don't save because I don't play. I feel like there's a neon sign blinking on my forehead: "Born Loser!"

Then another thing occurred to me. It lifted me out of my doldrums, at least for a bit. How could I think I'm a loser, I realized, when I've won the most important contest there is? Maybe the only thing that rivals it is being the random, down-home lady who pokes her surprised head out of her doorway in Peoria, Illinois, when Ed McMahon's sweepstakes mob descends upon her front lawn. And having to take a check from Ed McMahon [shudder] might not be worth it after all.

I'm talking about winning the lottery of life. The day I popped out of my mother's womb as a white middle class American male, most everything important was already taken care of for me. In a sense, simply by virtue of my birth in this extraordinarily rare identity, I could coast through life on the strength of my race, gender and class attributes (as I often do, unconsciously). As much as we'd like to believe that all things are equal, we know that life isn't fair. For me, that translates into a formidable array of benefits — some in the open and some hidden, which go unexamined for many people. How could I think that I've never won anything?

The legacy of slavery and colonialism has established a towering edifice of white supremacy — this despite the fact that the world is only 30% white. Sure, meritocracy allows some exemplars of each race to move up through sports, entertainment, or business, but obviously they are still the exceptions to the rule. When will the nation be "ready" to elect a U.S. president who is not a (rich) white (male)? How many Fortune 500 CEOs are non-white? (I think there's maybe three, the last I heard.)

But beyond the obvious privileges bestowed by hierarchies, there are many more subtle forms of white privilege. My mother never had to warn me about how to behave around the police — offering compliance with every order and not making any threatening moves, should I ever be pulled over for "suspicious" activity in a racial profiling detainment. I can shop in department stores alone without worrying about being followed and harassed by security. I can move to any neighborhood that I can afford without needing to worry about facing exclusion.

It's just as true that male privilege exists in many ways. Although there's 51 women to every 49 men, we all know that it's a man's world. Much of the country sneered at the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution 25 years ago, and many persists in rejecting the legitimate complaints of feminists today. Despite advances in women's rights, women's pay still averages about 70% of men's. Funding for college athletics and attention paid to national sports continues to favor men over women. The women I've known in my life, from my mom to my sister to my girlfriends, have ingrained in me the fact that I can walk outside at night with much less fear of being jumped or raped than they.

The privileges that accrue just from being American are the ones I find to be the most shocking. For instance, if I don't want to, I don't have to learn about the language or customs of the people of color who constitute the majority of the world's population. Conversely, people of color need to learn the rules, or they will suffer penalties for not playing the game. On a larger level, the U.S. possesses or controls 50% of the world's wealth. It's divided among Americans unequally, to be sure, but the poor in this country have a higher standard of living than most places. Unbelievably, 1.3 billion of the world's people live on less than \$1 a day, 50% suffer from



malnutrition, and 80% live in substandard housing. There's more: my privilege prepared me for college, and that education has opened doors for me. You can bet that none of those portals will open to a sweatshop. I am one of the elite, because only 1% of the entire world is college educated (60 million). In addition, I joined an exclusive club this past summer when I took my first vacation outside the country (Claire and I drove to New Brunswick, Canada). Just 10% of the world's people (600 million) travel internationally each year.

Now, if I was one kind of person, I'd say something I've often heard said, in one way or another: "Thank God I live in America.

This is the greatest country in the world." I could be judgmental of people who "don't work hard enough," and cluck to youngsters about steeling themselves since "it's a dog-eat-dog world out there." Maybe I'd even fight for "white rights" and feel it was my patriotic duty to sign up for one of the armed rancher posses currently bashing Mexican immigrants in the American Southwest .

**The solution  
was redefining  
a game of pool  
as a  
cooperative  
effort, so that  
now opponents  
become partners  
instead**

But my eyes see the world a little differently. My life experiences have taught me that the game is stacked. The rules that apply to most, when it comes down to it, seem to exempt certain others — and the umpires collaborate with the perennial champions! George Orwell aptly noted in Animal Farm, "All pigs are equal, but some pigs are more equal than others." So while a few get a free pass, the rest duke it out between themselves for the scraps — as Roger Waters sang in *The Wall*, "When I'm a good dog they sometimes throw me a bone." The preferred reaction to this state of affairs is a brief sigh, followed by setting one's jaw and changing the subject with bright eyes to the content of the evening's television programming.

No, I don't want to play that game. Contemplating the world as a pie, with half already sliced and handed to a few obese people, leaves a crowd of thinner folks to compete for the rest — and what happens is, you have those with more relative privilege set up to grab their little bit, and most reduced to snatching the wayward crumbs and licking the dish. Plainly, that just sucks! I want to change the rules: no headstarts for perfectly able people (can you say "trust fund?"), no threat of losing it all for those who appear displeasing or unuseful to the brokers and the arbiters of the game.

Claire and I are both very competitive people, especially when it comes to games. Boy, am I a big complainer when we play each other in tennis or backgammon or whatever and I don't win. Recently, I've been at my crankiest when we've gone to shoot pool. I can't get a clear shot, you're knocking my balls away from the pocket, every time I get one in I scratch...wah wah wah! It was getting ridiculous, and I knew I needed to improve my behavior.

So I developed a new game, with the expressed intent of structuring our play in a way that would prevent us from fighting. The solution was redefining a game of pool as a cooperative effort, so that now opponents become partners instead. After breaking the triangle and the first pocketed ball, when we divide between solids and stripes, instead of racing each other to finish off our side and sink the eight ball, we collaborate instead. Each ball is assigned a point value: sinking your own color earns two points, while putting away one of your partner's (with their permission) gets one. The eight ball is two points as well. Both players work together to achieve the highest combined and cumulative score in a set time limit (say, one hour).

So, for example, if you don't have a good, clear shot at one of your own balls, instead of scratching and grouching about it, go after one of your partner's and move the game along. To maintain some factor of danger, if anyone scratches with the eight ball, precious time and all points are lost and the game begins anew. No need to yell at your partner for clumsiness, though, because as a team you're in it together — best rack 'em up again and restart. With this system, we got 60 points on our first try by basically completing two games in an hour (OK, we're not that good, but our new best is 99). Now playing pool is fun again instead of mental torture. Working together leads to success by definition, and we're aiming at doing even better for next time!

Thus, if you change the rules of the game, even though you may be using the same equipment, the results can be entirely different. It's the same way for the game of life (no, not the Milton Bradley version). The world has finite resources, so if you aren't one of the "lucky" few beginning with inherited wealth, it can be rather arduous. The rules of the money game allow wealth to generate more wealth through interest from investments. The way it's set up, there's a few winners and many, many losers. If life was a game of pool played to 500, the wealthy would start at 490!

"Back of every great fortune lies a great crime," Thorsten Veblen once said. (I also have no idea who Thorsten Veblen is, but it's a cool quote.) And to get to the top in the first place, most employ the handicap of privilege, and then have to claw and race their way past all challengers. Meanwhile, all human feeling is lost in the equation; it is very hard to maintain friendships



between unequals, when you have to view the other players in the game as rivals who potentially might cut into your own action.

In the capitalist system, executives and managers make decisions about how the wealth produced by a company is distributed. They live off everyone else's labor, and skim as little from the(ir) profits as it will take to pacify their workers. Threats and propaganda keep the rabble in line, and workers know that if they say or do the wrong thing, they could land in quite a bit of hot water. Should people realize the true value of their labor and its collective power, and band together to demand more, the owners hire lawyers, or make trade agreements, or simply call the cops on them.

Just like in pool, we can transform this win-lose situation into a win-win proposition. Competition can be changed to cooperation with just a reorientation of values, away from selfishness and towards community. Realigning this world to run according to anarchist principles — one with no bosses, no masters of any kind — is not only not impossible, it is clearly achievable. The difference between a game of pool and the game of life is only one of scale. Heck, even that guru of pop culture, Yoda, knows anything is possible: "Size matters not. Look at me... You must unlearn what you have learned."

We can begin to do this by utilizing our imaginations and "thinking outside the box" (so in vogue with corporate types these days), severing our connections to the present system as much as possible, and slowly building the alternative we wish to see until it is strong enough to take hold and spread. Just as people naturally take care of each other within the kinship ties of their families, we also can envision a society in which people rely on each other. By putting this into practice in our own lives, we can broaden the boundaries of what it means to be family. Because if one person scratches on the eight ball, we all go down together.

(The figures I cited come from UN international development reports. My education on privilege came from reading Peggy McIntosh in college.)

### TOM TOMORROW - THIS MODERN WORLD (The GOP Convention)



# Message from Your Body

## Claire

Is there ginkgo in your cereal? St. John's Wort in your tea? Herbal remedies, essential oils, hydrotherapy, massage therapy — these are all health buzzwords that have burst through the margins of alternative lifestyles to the mainstream. Combine this new availability of natural medicines with widespread dissatisfaction over the health care that HMOs (fail to) provide, as well as more radical ideas about Western medicine and the pharmaceutical industry as bad, bad, bad, and we have a growing popular critique of establishment medicine.

I care about my body, which is why I buy organic food and dabble in herbs and oils. I share the suspicion about Western medicine. Unfortunately, I also seem to have absorbed the cultural message that I as an individual don't understand what is going on with my body and that only a paid expert can diagnose and treat it for me.

Take these factors and add the fact that I, like many women, find it easier to take care of others than myself, ignoring my own instincts, and the sum was my recent close shave with a serious disease.

I should know better. Intellectually I do, but sometimes theory evaporates in the face of real events, such as the small, itchy red spot I noticed on my leg one day this past summer. I thought it was a mosquito or spider bite, and I kept my eye on it.

But I was soon distracted by a more pressing issue with my body — a sudden fever, chills and fatigue. On top of that, I had the worst neck ache I've ever had. No position was comfortable for sleeping; one night I even slept with my head at the foot of the bed. After three days, the fever went away. But the red spot didn't; it got bigger and itchier.

A few days after that I woke up nauseous, threw up, and had all sorts of gross intestinal stuff happen. I attributed this to a large amount of raw rhubarb that I consumed the day before. The next day I was fine. I was going grocery shopping at a health food store and took the opportunity to ask the natural remedy person to look at my leg and recommend something. Poison ivy was my latest theory. She gave me a salve that eased the itching, but didn't stop the spot from growing.

Now, I live in Westchester County, which has one of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the U.S. I thought I was pretty aware of this illness. Somewhere inside myself, I knew I should get the spot checked out by a doctor. But I blocked it from my mind. I never even opened up one of my natural health books, which I grab every time someone else has something



unusual going on physically. Pathetically, I really needed someone to *order* me to see a dreaded professional doctor.

That someone was my father, when Vincent and I went on vacation this summer near Bath, Maine. By then I felt fine, but the spot had enlarged to take over most of my lower calf, spreading in a circular design with a red ring on the outside. It had even spawned a little friend on my knee cap, another itchy spot.

At the small Bath hospital, the friendly doctor suddenly looked very serious when he saw my leg. He asked me if I had been outdoors in a place where I might have been bitten by a tick. I'd already contemplated this and knew I hadn't been active outside in weeks because of bad weather at home. We were looking forward to being outdoorsy on this vacation — except, of course, there was the time Vincent and I went to the Underground Press Conference in Ohio, where I sat in a grassy field in a skirt, thinking, "This is the Midwest; it's safe to do this."

Turns out that the tick bite isn't visible until about four days after the initial chomp. You see, the tick hangs on for that long, really getting its fill of human blood; meanwhile, it secretes its own anesthetic so that you don't feel the bite. The timeline fit perfectly with my trip to Ohio — four days after we got back I noticed the bite and got the fever. All the funky symptoms that I had, which I considered separate from each other and attributed to different causes, are classic Lyme disease symptoms. My body was waving multiple red flags in my face, yelling for help. I saw the message but refused to accept it.

Luckily, I was still within the three week safety range by the time I saw the doctor, who started me on antibiotics immediately. If I had waited even one more week, the effects of the Lyme might have been much harder to reverse. That would mean joint pain, fatigue, possible compromise of the nervous system (including facial paralysis), and ultimately brain damage.

You can see that I was grateful to take the antibiotics, but I also took echinacea and garlic capsules to boost my immune system's ability to fight the bacteria that the little bastard had deposited in my blood stream. Now I feel fine, although slightly weaker than before — although that might simply be due to lack of exercise.

What sucks even more is that Lyme can be recurring. But I have learned my lesson — I need to trust my body and my instincts. While Western medicine does have many negative aspects, including its tendency to offer costly cures at the expense of preventive care, it can be useful when prevention fails. I'll be watching and believing in my body in the future.

## **A Yonkers Tale** **Uptown Shem**

At the end of May, I found myself living in Yonkers. I call myself Uptown because I was born and raised in Upper Manhattan (Washington Heights), but Yonkers really can't be considered uptown cuz it's a totally separate city altogether. Yonkers, N.Y. is the first stop in Westchester County, directly north of the Bronx. But it's true what Yonkers-born rappers The Lox say on their 1997 debut album — "You can get to any borough from here in 30 minutes, but it might as well be 3,000 miles away."

Sure, there are similarities between "Y.O." (as it's affectionately called in the streets) and the Bronx. The close proximity of the two makes it hard to be all that different. When it comes down to it, though, the mentality in Yonkers is a world unto its own.

Y.O. is what you'll hear nowadays when a young, urban kid refers to Yonkers. It wouldn't surprise me if some kid didn't even know Yonkers, only Y.O. It's safe to say that either The Lox or DMX (another immensely successful rapper originally hailing from Yonkers) coined the term "Y.O." Since it's mostly inner city youth who use the slang, you most likely won't hear Yonkers mayor John Spencer talk about "Y.O.'s economy" on local TV. But one thing's for sure — whether you're white, black, Asian or Indian — if you're in the know, you'll be reppin' for Y.O.

The city, established in 1637, is very old, with much of its architecture dating back to the early 20th century. For instance, the Cozy Nook Luncheonette on McLean and Tibbets Rd. is a soda fountain shop with an old school decor. I get my morning coffee there all the time. The proprietor, who always has a butt hanging off his lips, is an old timer whose greased-back hair looks like it hasn't been washed since "Starsky and Hutch" first aired.

Compared to New York City, Yonkers is just a dot, but at 18 square miles it is the fourth largest city in the state. A large influx of immigrants has swelled its population to 200,000 and growing. This migration north of the five boroughs was an inevitable occurrence, perhaps, since New York City has become so overcrowded and pressurized. Who wants to live sardine style? The suburbs are already alive with established communities of immigrants. Already, Yonkers (and Westchester County as a whole) is as ethnically diverse as (almost) any Manhattan neighborhood, including Irish, Italians, Jews, Arabs, Blacks and Latinos.

Like any city, Yonkers is divided into "urban" and "suburban" areas. There are tree-lined streets of mansions where the crime rate is almost non-existent, as well as low-income streets full of bodegas, drug dealers and



tenements. Overall, the city is poorer than most in Westchester, as the median annual household income is \$46,000 — about \$16,000 less than the county average. Nearly a quarter of the city is under \$20,000 a year.

Things in Yonkers are cheaper only in comparison to the rest of Westchester County. For example, perhaps an Italian chose Yonkers over Little Italy in New York City to open his new restaurant. He and his family probably found it more livable in Yonkers, with its "suburban-in-the-city" feel. It is a smaller city, and therefore more personal, so a home in Yonkers is probably a little more peaceful than a home in New York City. Many new (and not-so-new) arrivals on Yonkers soil feel right at home here.

**You get the sense that in Yonkahs, you'll definitely hear some "fuhgged-aboudits." Besides Boston and Brooklyn, Yonkers accents are about as distinctive and funny as they come**

I moved into an apartment complex on a nice, peaceful stretch of McLean Avenue, one of the main arteries in Yonkers. It stretches from the Bronx border, near Kimball Avenue in the east, to South Broadway near the Hudson River in the west. From what I've seen, McLean is a melting pot of sorts. On one side there is a large Irish community, complete with many bars, groceries and whatnot. The Irish were the first immigrants to lay claim to Yonkers, to which McLean and the surrounding street names testify. In fact, a couple of girls from Ireland checked on the internet for "big Irish 'hoods" and decided on Yonkers. On the other side of McLean is a mixed Spanish-Black community, and in between is old Yonkers, with many elderly and long-time residents who speak with a distinct "Yonkahs" accent. You get the sense that in Yonkahs, you'll definitely hear some "fuhggedaboudits." Besides Boston and Brooklyn, Yonkers accents are about as distinctive and funny as they come.

Without a doubt, Mexicans are the top dogs in Yonkers. While there are pockets of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (who still dominate in New York City), Yonkers can almost be called a "pequeño Mexico" (lil' Mexico). Even the ever-popular livery cab companies are Mexican-owned, with names like "Mexicana" and "Azteca." Many other Central American peoples also have chipped stone here, most notably Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, and Hondurans. You'll find a Mexican taco place beside a Salvadoran "pupusa" joint next to an Italian ristorante. That's the beauty of Yonkers and its culture, which is constantly growing and evolving.

Yonkers shares southern Westchester County with the cities of Mount Vernon and New Rochelle. Like the rivalries between the boroughs of New York City, people in Mount Vernon talk shit about Yonkers, Yonkers folk talk shit about New Rochelle, and so on. It's been going on for quite a while, but being a newcomer to Yonkers it's amusing to observe all the shit-talking and such. I've heard young, urban folk dis each other's city only to claim turf. This rather thuggish-looking kid I used to work with in Yonkers (who turned out to be pretty much a teddy bear) felt the need to rag on Yonkers and rep his Mount Vernon streets whenever possible.

One thing about the Yonkers streets is that they aren't lacking for dealers. A few weeks back, I went with a friend to buy some weed. She took me to Coyle Place, a short walk from my quiet block, which I previously had thought was just a regular residential street. I had seen some kids hangin' out there, but what's so abnormal about that? Young blacks chillin' on a stoop doesn't automatically equal drug dealers. But many narrow-minded bigots would say otherwise. Racism is alive and well, just better disguised these days.

Anyway, as soon as we turned the corner, BAM — a raid! The whole block was full of undercover cops who had a bunch of kids (all black, no less) on the wall, assuming the position. We had just come from work and still had our uniforms on, so we slid by without a hassle. Generally, I don't like to stick around when there's cops doing a bust mere feet from where I'm standing. Even if I don't have any drugs on me, cops make me uncomfortable. What? You think the police don't plant evidence on people anymore? Ya darn tootin' they do. They also routinely trump up charges just to get an arrest, embarrass potential arrestees in front of family, use excessive force, etc. I can't say for sure, but the cops might have come to a negative conclusion had they seen us pass. I'm white — or what one would consider white, that is. My friend is black. The mentality of some of these crooked cops is, "Hmmm — white guy, black girl = up to no good."

However, the neighborhood around Coyle Place is mixed, so that theory is bull! Even so, cops will stop mixed couples based on shit like that. Personally (and luckily), I have yet to have dealings with the Yonkers police, but I hear there is no shortage of racism. Because there are what you might call "racially divided" neighborhoods, certain racial tensions can flare at any given time. It is police (even minority officers, ironically) who instigate shit in black and Latino neighborhoods a lot of the time.

This was my first exposure to "urban goings-on" in Yonkers. It ended well for me when my friend took me to Lawrence Street to finally score some "trees." Unfortunately, the weed was shit, as has been pretty much all of the weed that I've scored in Yonkers. You see, even though Yonkers is right near the Bronx (where weed, like everything else, is plentiful), the weed here operates on a Westchester County price basis (i.e. suburb



prices). A nickel bag from the Bronx goes for \$10 here. Unless you have a really good connection, you'll be stuck smoking hack weed.

What's funny to me about the whole weed expedition is that there was a drug bust on Coyle Street based on racial profiling, while ten minutes away on Lawrence we met a Honduran fella openly rollin' a blunt. Lawrence has a reputation for being a big drug block. There was certainly no shortage of young, pants-saggin' and rottweiler-walkin' kids sellin' budda! It felt just like the South Bronx to me. Not for one second, however, did I feel scared or intimidated, even though I wasn't from there, as anyone could plainly tell. I never attracted a bad look or comment ("Hey, white boy" being the most common). It was here where I first caught wind of what the real deal is with the Y.O. thing!

There are quite a few similarities between Yonkers and the Bronx. Both cities have a Van Cortland Ave., Riverdale Ave., Sedgewick Ave., and most importantly, a Broadway. What a lot of people may not realize is that the Broadway that runs through both Manhattan and the Bronx is the very same Broadway that stretches across Yonkers. The edge of Broadway in Manhattan at West 220th St. becomes Broadway in the Bronx at West 225th by crossing over the Broadway Bridge. This short bridge is properly known as Spyten Duyvil, a Dutch name that can be traced back to the days of Adrian Van der Donck, the "young gentleman" after whom Yonkers was named.

From here the rest of Broadway runs through a beautiful and historic part of the Bronx until it becomes the city of Yonkers after West 263rd St. South Broadway and Caryl Ave. is the entrance to Yonkers. Van Cortlandt park also ends here, but the transition from the Bronx to Yonkers is hard to discern. In Yonkers, Broadway is much the same, except it is not as broad as it is in New York City. It still serves as the main thoroughfare of the city, with the hustle and bustle of cars, stores upon stores, high class blending with low income. It may be the world's longest avenue, as far as I know, since it continues out of Yonkers along the Hudson all the way through Tarrytown. There's no denying that Broadway is the most vibrant street on earth. There's nothing, and I mean nothing, that doesn't happen on Broadway.

You'd really have to come down yerself and spend a little time here to really get the feel. Yonkers is definitely the essence of urban Westchester grit. So, whether you hop on a Bee-Line bus or catch a ride, come swing by and see what all the talk about Y.O. be!

*Uptown Shem, 24, is very happy to have recently left his McLean Avenue apartment and his job as a server at the Applebee's chain for better things. He remains in Yonkers and still goes by Uptown, of course.*

## My Yonkers Vincent

I spent the first 18 years of my life in Yonkers, New York. Although I grew up there, I hardly *lived* in the city — a pattern established immediately when I popped out of my mother's womb in St. Lawrence, the Catholic hospital in the small town of Bronxville, two miles to the north. My family's residence was in Yonkers because my grandfather, an Italian stonemason, built the two-family house for my mother and her sister here, but Mom didn't think much of the city's public schools and other facilities. I suppose my grandparents lost their fondness for Yonkers as well, because they built a new house for their retirement years and moved away not too long after in rural Patterson, in the next county north.

Bronxville, on the other hand, is the prototypical yuppie bedroom community. Most of my religious and educational upbringing, social interactions, and employment took place here. So we drove back and forth every day, beginning with nursery school at age two, and my world was limited mostly to my bedroom and backyard. Outside of the narrow strip of the city where we traveled, most of the time I truly was "Lost in Yonkers."

Despite my family's dislike of this large, ethnically diverse urban area — at 18 square miles and 200,000 people, it is the fourth largest city in New York — a few images of my life in Yonkers have stuck with me through the years. I was a rather sheltered youth, growing up a sensitive kid who always had my head in a book. Reading a lot made me pretty book-smart, but left a lot to be desired in the general aptitude department. One priceless episode from my youth that my mom likes to relate was my foible on Valentine's Day. A few days beforehand, I had the opportunity to get to a florist when my mom wasn't around. I bought a few roses and, needing to keep them hidden from her until the occasion, stashed them behind the clothes in my closet (because you can't give flowers except on the official day, of course). Naturally, the lame, wilted blossoms that I excavated from this tomb on Feb. 14th only got me points for being pathetic.

Yonkers Terrace was a strange block to inhabit. At the bottom of the hill, the Cablevision company had a lot for its service vans. Across from the lower middle class houses on our side of the street were several seven floor apartment buildings and housing projects. Also, one of the two entrances to the Yonkers Avenue McDonald's was on our street. Like any fast food joint, it attracted hordes of teenagers, who would roll up in their Isuzu Maximas (outfitted with extra woofers and tweeters, plus a glowing neon license plate attachment, of course), park outside my window, drink beer



and blast really bad Hot 97 dance and rap music late at night. Even though the McD's was two lots down from my house, the litter somehow managed to skip our neighbor's house and blow into our driveway. I'd spend many a sunny summer afternoon picking Big Mac wrappers, cigarette butts, and ant-infested soda cups off the ground of our concrete front yard.

I never really liked my neighborhood, which without fail was assaulted with a barrage of fireworks for weeks before the 4th of July, plus covered with shaving cream and broken eggs every Halloween. If you liked, you could walk out of your house on Nov. 1, shave your beard and have breakfast just by dipping into the public trough.

Italians shared the block with blacks and Hispanics, so I was exposed to diversity despite going to St. Joseph's, an all-white Catholic school in Bronxville. I did make one neighborhood friend, however. Mom often sent me on errands down the street to Kee's Deli, a Korean-owned grocery. While waiting for our

cold cuts to be sliced, I'd talk sometimes to the owner's son, Rob Hong, a kid my age. He became my sometime playmate, and we'd pass some summer days crawling amongst a fort we'd make out of the milk crates in the store's back room, or sledding on toboggans down the hill in winter.

**A Hispanic man  
in the  
stairwell  
called out to  
me, "Yo, man,  
you were right  
not to give him  
the money!"**

Once during the school year, I offered to take him with me to St. Joe's pre-teen "Hang-out," which converted the gymnasium into a youth center with pizza, video games and basketball on Friday nights. I should have realized that Rob's imperfect English would make him an easy mark for my even more sheltered classmates. They mocked his accent and pelted him mercilessly with dodge balls, but otherwise ignored him. Our friendship was never the same after that night, and quickly dissolved.

I experienced the same xenophobia in other ways during my teenage years. We all loved going to the Westchester County Fair every summer, which situated itself for three weeks less than a mile from my home at Yonkers Raceway. I never tired of the over 100-foot Ferris wheel, rickety roller coasters and amusements, but once we reached adolescence (meaning Mommy and Daddy wouldn't drive us any more and we could go to the Fair ourselves), some of my friends began to shun it because it attracted so many "minorities." They would repeat urban myths about stabbings between rival gangs on the fairway to justify their decision. Likewise, after going to Sprain Ridge, the Yonkers public pool, on

weekends throughout much of my youth, my mom determined one year to quit wading through the crowds of black and Hispanic families there. We began to go to the pool at Lake Isle, a country club in nearby Eastchester also offering tennis and golf. Even though the cost strained my mom's finances to the limit, she made sacrifices to give us the best, and so now we waded through the solidly white middle class crowds to go swimming. I still go to the Fair and the public pools every summer, and have never witnessed or had any problem.

Racial problems in Yonkers ran deep, particularly within the city administration and school system. In the 1980s, the courts found that the mayor's policies encouraged segregation and fined the city every day until its ruling was implemented. The remarkable thing was that the fine would increase exponentially every day, so after the initial \$1,000, the amount levied doubled to \$2,000 the next day, \$4,000 the day after that, etc. I remember marveling at the bad name Yonkers was getting in the state and even around the country, hearing on the radio that the city was holding out for over a week, and caving in only when the fine ran into six figures. Unfortunately, since then not much has changed, and many people still complain about the gross inequities plaguing the Yonkers public schools.

One good thing about St. Joe's was early dismissal at 1:15 p.m. on winter Wednesdays. Kids who wanted to could ride a school bus to go ice skating at Murray's rink in Yonkers. For 90 minutes, my buds and I would indulge our passion for Gobstopper hockey, which involved kicking the colored Willy Wonka candy balls around on the ice. I never figured out how to brake while skating like real ice hockey players, so I developed my own procedure — slamming into walls at top speed. I would later refine this (dis)ability when I went with the St. Joe's youth group on my one and only ski trip, finding that the only sure way to stop when streaking down hills at breakneck speed was by deliberately steering into trees.

I may not have been very agile when cumbersome footwear was strapped to my body, but living in Yonkers made me a pretty spry pedestrian. The gritty urban setting honed my intuitive sense of speed relative to distance. From often walking on a timetable (in trying to catch a train or bus, or reach a destination by a certain time), I acquired the ability to cross streets with fast-moving traffic and miss the oncoming car's front bumper by two inches and half a second.

I gained one of my many high school nicknames from my walking habit. We lived in the southeast corner of the city. Just a half-mile downtown was the northern border of the Bronx, and Mount Vernon was a short jog across the Bronx River Parkway and the Metro-North Commuter Railroad, which I could see from my third floor bedroom window. As a kid, I knew the exact moment when the trains would pass and would look out while getting ready for school, so I was happy to be able to take the train to get to high school (the Jesuit-run Fordham Prep in the Bronx). My classmates,



coming from Bronxville and other towns to the north, would have to detrain and wait five minutes to get a connection at my stop, Mt. Vernon West. They would often spot me coming down the hill to the train station.

Although a small figure, I was unmistakable because every day I wore some gray-colored article of clothing (like my full-length trench coat during winter), and so came to be known as "The Gray Dot" (which was much kinder than most of the other names I was known by). Since there was no bridge across the parkway at the bottom of the hill, I'd have to go a block out of my way to cross over to the station, and sometimes I'd hear them chanting, "Gray Dot, Gray Dot!" as I walked. Occasionally I'd be late, and the kids on platform would give me an imminent warning, calling out "Train!" They'd laugh as I'd break into a full-on sprint, in my tie and jacket and slacks, but I usually made it. Mom would always want to know why I came home with the soles and heels of my loafers worn down, though...!

When I wanted to get around on weekends, since I didn't have a car, I'd ride a Bee-Line bus. One of the most memorable trips occurred once when I was going to the record store. I sat in the back behind a black man, who quickly turned around and tried to entice me with a shell game. Showing me a pebble and three bottlecaps, he encouraged me to plunk down \$20 to play. Yes, I had gained some street smarts since my flowers-in-the-closet days, so seeing my hesitancy, he turned to another black man across the way. "Want to try this?" he asked him. The guy replied, "Who, me?" — as if I didn't realize that he was his partner. The guy acted excited when he won a game, and despondent after losing; a \$20 bill changed hands each time. "See, you win some, you lose some," the gamesmaster proclaimed to me. "There's no tricks. Are you up for a game?"

I decided to be slick, and pulled a \$20 bill out of my wallet to show him, and then easily identified the correct shell. I demanded my winnings, and the guy acted affronted. "I showed you I had the money," I argued, and he hotly responded, "No, man, you gotta give me the money to hold onto!" I laughed, and rapidly extracted myself from the tense situation when we finally arrived at my stop. As I got off the bus, a Hispanic man in the stairwell called out: "Yo, man, you were right not to give him the money!"

This bus route was along Central Avenue, Yonkers' gigantic strip mall that stretches for several miles. After my parents divorced when I was six, my dad used to pick up my sister and me and take us back to his mother's house on Long Island. Throughout my childhood, I got used to the routine: he'd plunk us on the couch to watch cartoons, deliver some Burger King for lunch, and go downstairs to drink beers with his brother-in-law. He might take us to the corner store to play some video games, and if it was nice we'd walk to a nearby pond to feed the ducks or practice my pitching in the park. I'd have fun riding my bike around the block, but like all growing kids, I got tired of being confined to this small area.

Desperate to create a new Saturday ritual, I campaigned to get out of Valley Stream. For months my lobbying fell on deaf ears, because he objected to the increase in spending the change would necessitate. Finally, however, I convinced him to take us to Central Avenue. Thus, Saturdays during my teenage years became an American kid's consumer fantasy. We'd eat the gourmet hamburgers at Fuddrucker's or indulge at Pizza Uno, see the latest adventure flick at Movieland, stock up on my Spiderman comic and baseball card collections at The Dragon's Den, get pop music tapes at Tower records, and engage in macho one-upmanship at Brunswick bowling. And sometimes we'd even have some fun for free with more pitching practice at Andrus Field.

Perhaps my weirdest Central Avenue experience was after the late movie at Central Plaza one weekend night. My buddies and I walked into the parking lot, and a woman who looked to be in her 30s approached us. "Can you guys jump me?" she entreated. If you're a teenage guy, that's a pretty interesting thing to hear from a single woman in a parking lot late at night. Seeing our confusion and realizing her error, she quickly clarified: "I mean, do you guys have jumper cables? My car won't start." Whew — that's all! Yeah, we could handle that.

Another parking lot episode comes from the Hudson River Museum Planetarium. I was 17 and excited to be going to see my first laser show. As we arrived to get our tickets for Led Zeppelin, the Pink Floyd show was letting out. "Whooooa, maaan," a long-haired guy addressed me, obviously high on pot. "You've got to see the Floyd! It was excellent! 'Shine on, you crazy diiiiamond...'" he crooned as he stumbled away. That helped me get into the Floyd, although I never developed an appetite for marijuana. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to see the Floyd show there, as the Planetarium dropped them eight years ago due to lack of interest.

The laser shows stopped about the time I left Yonkers for White Plains, which I enjoy living in much more. I have no doubt that my experience of Yonkers is different from almost anyone else's, because of the unique conditions of my upbringing and my personality. But this is my Yonkers, and I'm happy with my memories.

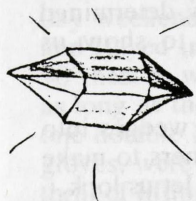
TOM  
TOMORROW

THIS  
MODERN  
WORLD

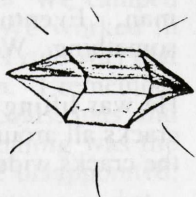
The  
Democratic  
Convention







## **Digging in the Dirt: Ritual of Exploration Claire**



The ritual would typically start at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday morning, before the sun or anyone on my suburban street had risen. My mom would be making coffee and packing food in a cooler, my dad glued to the Weather Channel, my brother still in bed, trying to grab the last minutes before we all packed in the car for three hours. I always stuffed a small bag with crummy clothes the night before.

For about four or five years of my childhood, my family took the opportunity that long weekends and holidays afforded to morph from a middle-class suburban nuclear family in Rochester into a pioneering, prospecting posse! We traveled at ungodly hours on our days-off to search for diamonds — not real diamonds, but clear, naturally faceted quartz crystals that are only found in a certain part of New York State. I didn't really tell too many of my friends about our habit at this time, knowing it was really unusual (I should spend Saturdays at the mall!) and afraid of being thought of as more of a freak than I already was.

We developed this rather secret life by accident. Every since the summer when we stopped by the town of Herkimer, NY on the spur of the moment, returning from a trip to Maine, we'd been hooked and become regulars. That day was unbearably hot, 98° and humid. We had heard from friends that you could pay a couple of bucks to prospect for "diamonds."

With other tourists, we scoured the dirt looking for the crystals. Every so often we found something glinting in the sun, in a rock or on the ground, and would call out and put it in our pockets. My dad keenly watched the men who used more than the store-issued hammers. They had pry bars and sledgehammers, and were gruff and unfriendly.

Dad started to pound with his hammer on rocks, trying to find what they had shown us in the store — a matrix, a crystal trapped in a rock. He found one and tried to get it out. "Don't do that," someone said — a youngish man with dark, curly hair. "You'll break the crystal. Besides, they're worth more in the rock."

He introduced himself as Joe. I think he liked our family because of my brother and I; Alex was six then and I was nine. Maybe we weren't as obnoxious as other kids that day. Joe went back to his toolbox and handed my brother a small, blunt chisel. "Here, use this," he said.

My dad went to work with that chisel on the wall, having no idea about how crystals grow. Sweat was pouring off him — he's a very determined man. Eventually Joe took pity and came over, offering to show us something. We all went to look where he was working.

He was lifting big blocks of rock from the floor by sticking wedges into cracks all around it, then hitting the wedges with heavy hammers to make the cracks widen. He pried off a rock big as a sofa pillow, and let us look.

Although it was a hot day, I sensed coolness when that rock was lifted, and the air there smelled fresh and clean. That rock below had never seen daylight, I realized. Underneath the ugly grey stone were a dozen clear, sparkling half-inch crystals. They revealed our own first finds for what they were — just chips and shards of real crystals. "It looks just like someone put them there," my mom said breathlessly. They were nestled in shallow holes with a black powder under them.

"The holes are called vugs," Joe said, "and the black stuff is carbon. This is the level that you find these kinds of small, perfect crystals, not high up on the wall over there."

We were awed. Our brochure had said these crystals were older than the dinosaurs. Joe was not a typical "regular." He took a liking to us, and probably enjoyed his transfixed audience. "Come with me," he said. "I'll show you something else."

We followed him to his truck, and with our backs to the mine, he pulled out a shoebox. Inside was a mass of cloth. He unrolled this to reveal a huge crystal, seven inches long, smoky grey in color and with many planes and facets. "It's broken," I said, looking at the straight grooves and ridges on its surface. "No, this is called a skeletal," Joe explained. "When the Herkimers get large, they show these splits. I've been told that no one has found such a large crystal with this clarity."

"Where did you find it?" my dad asked. "In a pocket," Joe said. "Did you see those 18-inch holes against the wall? Well, those are pockets. You find dozens, sometimes hundreds of crystals in those things, all at once. Some pockets go back four, six feet."

My dad about dropped to the ground. "Why isn't everyone going for those then?" he demanded. "Well, it's not easy," Joe said chuckling. "You need some serious tools, strength, and at least three days. I like working the ledge. It's less back-breaking and you get just as nice crystals, though smaller."

Well, that did it for my dad, and pretty much the rest of us too. On the drive back, he was already planning what tools to bring next time.



There were quite a few next times. Holidays from school that formed three day weekends in the spring and fall found us at Herkimer. We camped and stayed in motels, where I did my homework at night. We worked in 90° heat as well as below freezing temperatures. The mine's rule was that as long as there wasn't snow on the ground, they were open. I remember one notable November weekend when we, wearing winter coats, hats and gloves, were the only people in the mine. What kept us coming was the thrill of lifting each rock. Four out of five times we would be disappointed, but we knew that with perseverance, we would hit a vug or even a pocket.

When I say my family mined for crystals, people usually imagine us with lights on our heads going down shafts into the bowels of the earth with pickaxes. Herkimer wasn't like that. Situated among the rolling hills of the Mohawk valley farmland, it was more like a quarry carved out of the side of a small mountain. The entire area was about the size of a football field and looked like a stony pit.

Many people associate the word "prospectors" with "staking a claim," and we did indeed do that. We all got up at 5:30 in the morning in order to make it to the mine before the gate opened at 9:00. We knew from experience that the regulars would be waiting there, eyeing each other warily, ready to pounce on the best site.

On any given day, we would find a small group of people waiting outside the mine, people (like ourselves) for whom the lines between hobby and obsession were a little blurred. There were Budd and Mary Ann, owners of a large RV, a friendly retired couple who made a living out of their hobby. There were Louie and Jerry, brothers who smiled a lot under their mustaches but were not to be trusted. Hugh was a local farmer who was helpful. Privately we referred to these guys as Hughie, Louie and Jerry. Betty, a partially disabled woman from Maine, was well-liked, with her little dog Bear. A dark man with a wild black beard was named Wolfgang — and he really did look like a wolf to me. George was a quiet, older man who took a liking to my dad. Once, George drove my father home to Rochester after he, working there without us, accidentally chipped a rock in a way that sent it slicing off the tip of his nose. And there was Bo — a jerk, with long, dirty blond hair who stole one of my pockets once. We were well known to all of them, because we were the only entire family of serious miners that came with young children.

Once the gate opened, the Herkimer scenario ran like this: drive to the mine, get out of our cars and clamber over mounds of small grey rocks as fast as possible — but with dignity! — to stake your claim. Here and there, breaking up the floor, were different layers of stone. This is where my dad liked to put down his tools. I liked to work here too, as the cracks between layers were usually large, and as young as I was, I still could swing a sledgehammer and lift up large stones.

Setting up our spot was an important part of the routine, because it made the rest of the day easier. We unloaded the car, carrying buckets full of cleaning tools, like whisk brooms and trowels, chisels and iron wedges, crowbars, tarp and poles, and hammers of all sizes, especially the 20-pounder, over the rocky hills. I was more comfortable using the 12-pound sledgehammer, but was really proud the day that I could swing, slightly, The Big 20.

If it was extremely hot or threatened rain, we set up the tarp first. We all learned how to balance the four poles and tie down the covering onto surrounding stones. My dad, who seemed to have an innate practical sense of how things work, figured stuff out by trial and error and taught us in turn. He would clear stones from the spot, picking up the largest and throwing them aside, or sometimes breaking up the big ones into pieces with the sledgehammer. He had safety glasses but didn't often use them.

When we had cleared off a good eight-foot-wide spot, nearly the limit allowed by the management, we might discover that there was a pool of water at the bottom of the floor. We had watched others deal with this nuisance before, and I liked the job of taking care of it. I would get out a long, clear, thin plastic tube, put one end into the puddle and take the other end down the hill a bit towards the rock pile, where I then sucked on the tube like a straw in one long breath. My brother would warn me that the water was coming. Seeing the brown muck get closer and closer to my mouth, at the last second I'd drop the tube. (Sometimes, however, I would get a little gritty Herkimer dirt in my mouth.) The siphon would now work on its own to draw water from the pool.

There were many boring, frustrating hours during which my brother and I would wander around, making up stories about the characters in the mine. Or my mom and I would get punchy and laugh uncontrollably, making my dad crazy. But the few times during the trip when we lifted a large rock, held our breath, and saw the perfect crystals lying there, the waiting was worth it. The strange thing is, I don't think it was greed that drove our family to keep going back to Herkimer. When we got a pocket, most often it would sit in mud for weeks at home, and we'd look at it with much less intensity than when we originally found it in the rock. It was the exploration and anticipation that kept us going.

I realize now that this was an empowering time for me; my parents let me work hard, doing what I could until I needed their help and not doing it for me, nor saying, "That's not how girls act." I learned not to fear the elements, dirt, big tools, or pain. I saw that I could do physical work that older men did. I became more confident of my body and my strength.

My dad still goes to Herkimer, fifteen years since we first got hooked, although it's getting harder to find the quartz. I haven't gone in a long time. But I see it as part of my secret history that helped define who I am.



## CRACKING THE WALL

Vincent

*U.S. activists travel to Iraq to resist weapons of mass destruction –  
economic sanctions*

This past August 6, many people around the world mourned the first use of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima 55 years ago. Some groups acted to mark another tragic anniversary, however. While hundreds gathered in Seattle to collect school supplies and medicine, others in Washington, D.C. skewered loaves of bread on the fence of the White House. There, 103 people were arrested in a sit-in protest, and in London, 200 participated in a "die-in," laying down in the road in front of the Prime Minister's home. And under the blazing 132-degree sun in Baghdad, four people erected a tent outside the offices of the United Nations and announced a three-day water-only solidarity fast.

The common thread weaving together all of these actions is Voices in the Wilderness, an organization that is leading the worldwide resistance to the economic sanctions on Iraq. Based in Chicago, Voices sends delegations of Americans to Iraq to offer what little humanitarian assistance and great compassion they can. Upon returning home, the members publicize their firsthand knowledge of the reality of life in Iraq to disprove popular misconceptions.

Ten years have passed since the United States orchestrated the imposition of UN sanctions to punish Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait. Their toll on the Iraqi people resembles the effects of several nuclear weapons: five to six thousand children die from sanctions-related causes each month. That is about 200 deaths per day, or one every ten minutes – over one million people altogether, according to UNICEF and other UN sources.

This summer, six members of Voices elected to spend two months in Iraq to fully experience what it is like to live under sanctions. In doing this, they began to learn elementary Arabic, eat only the contents of the UN humanitarian food basket (small quantities of rice, lentils, flour, cooking oil, and weak tea), and relinquished conveniences like air conditioning – a virtual necessity in the stifling summer heat of a desert nation. "What we are doing is nothing compared to the suffering of Iraqis," says Kathy Kelly, a founder of Voices and head of the group in Iraq.

In their travels, the members of the group have met engineers now forced to work as cab drivers, factory workers who supplement their meager incomes by peddling their own drawings, families that sold their furniture to pay for

medical bills, and school dropouts become shoeshine boys. Far from harboring hostility toward Americans, the people of Iraq invariably have welcomed their guests with open arms. "I cringed when my host family splurged to purchase special vegetables and beans for a welcoming dinner in my honor," admits Lauren Cannon, of Dover, N.H.

Several working class families in the southern port city of Basra kindly offered to host the group during their stay in Iraq. The locals dubbed their neighborhood "Missile Street" in January, 1999, when a bomb from a U.S. plane enforcing the "no-fly zone" took the lives of six people and injured 64 others. The United States characterizes its longest sustained bombing of a country since the Vietnam War as responding to Iraqi provocations. Iraq denounces the bombing as aggression, which has killed more than 300 additional people in the past two years. Kenneth Hannaford-Ricardi, one of the Voices group, says, "On my first day in Basra, I met several examples of President Clinton's 'collateral damage' - boys and girls with mutilated legs, burned hands, and scarred faces."

A resident of Worcester, Mass., Hannaford-Ricardi reveals what prompted him to take his frequent protest of the military contractor Raytheon in his home state to Iraq. "I have now stood at both ends of the Tomahawk Missile's continuum - the quiet, well-manicured factory where men and women choose to make a weapon whose only purpose is the death of other human beings, and the sandy, garbage strewn street where children scarred by the attack continue to mourn those who died."



Young victim of U.S. bombing raid in Iraq



Hannaford-Ricardi had to leave Iraq after three weeks because the diet literally made him sick. In addition to the UN food aid and gallons of impure water, he ate very little in the way of supplements: some eggs, dates, and mushy tomatoes, growing out of soil affected by radioactive depleted uranium from U.S. bombs. "You get 2,000 calories a day, but no fruits or vegetables. It's feeding children a diet of starch," he explains.

Supporters of the sanctions are quick to point out that they do not ban food and medicine. However, the crisis in Iraq is rooted elsewhere. The UN food basket is enough to stave off starvation, but doesn't begin to address a person's total nutritional needs. Additionally, with the rationing of electricity curtailing the power for 12 hours a day, there is no refrigeration and nothing can be preserved.

The extent of the food shortage is perhaps best expressed in a haunting image Hannaford Ricardi observed. "I saw a boy, about six years old, looking into a sewage ditch," he said. "A lime floated by. He reached in, pulled it out, wiped it off, and brought it home to use in his family's dinner that night. At that point, I redefined what I thought I knew about poverty."

Before the Gulf War, Iraq was one of the most developed nations in the Middle East. What it lacked in political freedom, Iraq offered in growing literacy, well-educated doctors and a modern health care system. Its people's greatest nutritional problem was obesity. Now the child mortality rate has doubled, and many of those who survive leave school to find work in the streets. Denied basic materials like pencils and paper, and distracted by the gnawing of empty stomachs, it is difficult for students to accomplish much anyway. "It's disconcerting to realize that students in their early teens are still unable to read," says Kelly.

In addition, hospital equipment lies unused for want of spare parts, and health professionals, prevented from obtaining updated medical knowledge, struggle to fight exotic diseases. In Basra, doctors attribute a huge spike in leukemia, lymphoma, and other childhood cancers to the U.S. military's use of depleted uranium weapons during the Gulf War. Dysentery and other afflictions stem from contaminated water supplies. Like the pencils and ambulances humanitarians send to Iraq in violation of the sanctions, chlorine for water purification is barred by the UN Sanctions Committee because it might have a military "dual use."

The concentrated assault on Iraq's infrastructure has left a ten-year legacy of dysfunctional sewage, electrical, and communication systems. As Lisa Gizzi of St. Paul, Minn., describes it, "Garbage rots in heaps in the middle of the street. As far as the eye can see are signs of a nation that has been cruelly cut off from the rest of the world and left to fend for itself."

Hannaford-Ricardi relates the disturbing question sometimes posed to him. "Occasionally an Iraqi asks, 'How have we sinned? What are we guilty of

that your country would punish us for ten years?' The answer, of course, is that none of these people has sinned. The children who die needlessly each month from malnutrition and illnesses easily preventable before the imposition of sanctions.

"We have adopted in Iraq a completely immoral approach to achieving national goals," he concludes. "We are now no better than any evil, real or perceived, that we are trying to prevent."

The work of these activists has put the governments of the U.S. and United Kingdom, the principal supporters of sanctions, on the defensive. They argue that the sanctions must be maintained to punish Saddam Hussein for his transgressions – but Saddam Hussein is just one man, and the sanctions cause only the people of Iraq to suffer. Meanwhile, in the United Nations the U.S. and U.K. have blocked billions of dollars worth of contracts that would help repair Iraq's infrastructure. It almost seems as if it is not American politicians, aircraft, and naval vessels that are enforcing a ten-year blockade on this country.

Indeed, the U.S. and U.K. claim that they are powerless to lift the sanctions until Iraq cooperates with weapons inspections. Yet Scott Ritter, who had been one of the more aggressive UNSCOM weapons inspectors in Iraq, now asserts that Iraq is "qualitatively disarmed" – certainly enough to offer an immediate relief of economic sanctions, while still preserving an embargo on military items. He has joined his dissent with the sober judgments of other civilian experts, including Denis Halliday, who resigned his position as coordinator of the UN oil-for-food program (as did his successor, Hans von Sponeck), saying, "We are destroying an entire society. It is as simple and as terrifying as that."

Amazingly, the Iraqi people persevere through these gross hardships. "It's remarkable that Basrans maintain hope and preserve their intellectual heritage and abilities as they struggle against the chaos wrought by increasing deprivation," Lauren Cannon marvels. Tom Jackson adds, "In their spontaneous gestures of warmth and simplicity, one begins to see that they are offering to give back to us a part of our humanity that we may have lost."

The governments of Iraq and the United States continue to point fingers at each other about who is responsible for the immense suffering of the Iraqi people, but it is clear that we all are bound to raise our voices on behalf of the forgotten ones of Iraq – the ones that impel the Voices in the Wilderness to cry out. "We must tell the people in the United States it is as though our government saying to you, if you don't force your government to surrender to every demand we make of it, we will slaughter your children," Kelly says.

A young girl, Maghareb, is one victim of the Missile Street bombing. Observing her one morning examining the seven large, dark scars that cover parts of her thighs, shoulders, and chest, Cannon's mind turned to the



activists she knew were raising the issue of sanctions back home at the Republican and Democratic conventions. "Contemptuous toward the protestors, both presidential candidates will endorse policies that abuse Iraqi children and sacrifice them - daily. They won't dare question sanctions against Iraq lest they jeopardize support from defense companies, oil companies, and powerful, influential decision makers.

"Maghareb's body speaks volumes about warfare. Yet our efforts are fueled precisely by her affectionate smile and warm embrace. We are aligned with Maghareb."

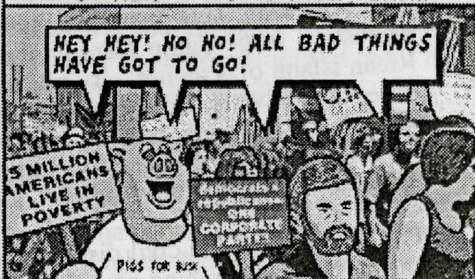
# Tom TOMORROW: THIS MODERN WORLD

AS SAM COMPLAINS ABOUT THE LACK OF NEWS, THERE ARE HUGE PEACEFUL MARCHES IN THE STREETS OF PHILADELPHIA, AS WELL AS THE VIOLENT CLASHES WHICH RECEIVE MORE COVERAGE...A MAINSTREAM CONSENSUS QUICKLY DEVELOPS THAT THESE ARE JUST SPOILED CHILDREN WITH NO CLEAR --WELL--PURPOSE... AS ONE LOCAL ANCHOR PUT IT--



--AS IF SHE WOULD HAVE EVER PAID ANY ATTENTION TO THEIR MESSAGE IF THEY HADN'T BEEN OUT IN THE STREETS RAISING HELL...

OF COURSE, IT'S HARD TO CONVEY A THOUGHTFUL, WELL-REASONED CRITIQUE OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM WHEN YOUR ONLY OPTION IS TO MARCH IN THE STREET AND CHANT INSIPID SLOGANS TO A FOUR/FOUR BEAT...



...WHICH IS PRETTY MUCH WHAT THEY'RE DOING **INSIDE** THE CONVENTION HALL AS WELL...THE DIFFERENCE BEING THAT THE INSIPID SLOGANS OF THE **DELEGATES** ARE MEANT TO DRAW ATTENTION AWAY FROM ISSUES RATHER THAN **TOWARD** THEM...



--AND WHERE, FOR THAT MATTER, ONLY OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED IDEAS ARE ALLOWED WITHIN...AND IF THOSE RASCALLY PROTESTERS OUTSIDE RAISE **THEIR** VOICES TOO LOUD, THE POLICE STAND BY, READY TO CALM THEM DOWN--WITH **TEAR GAS** AND **TRUNCHEONS**...



AND ME? I FEEL LIKE AN ATHEIST AT A REVIVAL MEETING, AS I WANDER THIS LOCUS OF LIP-SERVICE LIBERALISM--WHERE, BY POSTED DECREE, ONLY OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED SIGNS AND PLACARDS ARE ALLOWED ON THE CONVENTION FLOOR--



↑ GOP Convention, Philadelphia (continued)

Democratic Convention, Los Angeles (continued) →

## **"Not One More Bomb!"**

### **The Struggle for Vieques**

**Vincent**

A once beautiful island has been transformed into a desolate landscape resembling the surface of the moon. This is the face of imperialism: pockmarked with craters, poisoned with toxins, surrounded by intimidating barbed wire fences. Into this forbidden territory, island residents from every walk of life relentlessly enter, becoming nonviolent activists in a determined campaign to reclaim their homeland.

This past May, U.S. marshals and military police evicted over 200 peaceful protesters from Camp García, the U.S. Navy training base on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. By placing their bodies in the restricted area of the base, the activists had successfully halted military operations for over a year. Their very presence augmented the rally cry of the people, demanding that the U.S. military permanently cease its training activities on Vieques and quit the island: "Not one more bomb!"

The members of the civil disobedience camps lived in tents they constructed on the Navy's bombing range. Even the Catholic Church instituted its own camp last February, staffing this tiny liberated zone with priests, religious and laity. The year long "live-in," triggered by the death of David Sanes, a civilian guard for the base, by a stray missile in April, 1999, was the longest sustained civil disobedience in recent U.S. history.

During the federal raid on the peace encampments, the Navy had to set up a blockade around Vieques to deter many small craft from joining the protesters. In the two months that followed, over 500 others have been arrested trying to gain entry to the base – and they just keep coming. The nonviolent actions occur in waves, averaging two or three per week, and include representatives from a broad variety of civic and professional groups – everyone from doctors, union members, and fishermen, to veterans, students, and members of the Vieques Women's Alliance.

The liberation struggle clearly extends across the whole of Vieques civil society. Yet despite the unremitting pressure on the government, the U.S. navy resumed bombing "exercises" on June 25, firing another 130,000 pounds of dummy shells on the base. The next day, the Diocese of Caguas in Puerto Rico released the results of a poll of more than 2,000 Vieques residents. It indicated that over 88 percent insist upon the immediate departure of the Navy.



The situation in Vieques resembles the struggles of people around the world against U.S. bases in places such as Okinawa, Japan and the Philippines. The United States acquired Puerto Rico in 1898 through the Spanish-American war. This war of territorial expansion eventually resulted in the establishment of Guantanamo Bay against the will of the people of Cuba. It also has given the legacy of Camp García to Vieques.

The Navy seized three-quarters of the 21-mile-long island in 1940 through a legal claim of eminent domain (which allows the government to take private land for the "public good"). Its military areas surround the 9,400 people in Vieques' two main towns on both sides. Dismissing the residents' concerns, the Navy claims that Vieques, because of its unique geography, is the only place where it can conduct its war games (e.g., training for missions such as patrolling the so-called "no-fly zones" in Iraq). What seems most relevant about the geography, however, is that Vieques is one of many locations off the U.S. mainland where the military has chosen to expose people of color to its deadly operations – a textbook case of environmental racism.

While the Navy continues to deny any wrongdoing, the independent evaluations of concerned non-governmental organizations and environmental experts have uncovered the unexploded ordnance, radioactive depleted uranium shells and other contaminants that have wasted the land. The incidence of cancer in Vieques is 27 percent higher than the rest of Puerto Rico, and the rare diseases that afflict the people are too much to be coincidental. For all of their sacrifices, three out of every four residents live in poverty.

Last January, during the nonviolent occupation of the Navy base, President Clinton issued a directive in an attempt to defuse the situation. He decreed that a referendum in 2001 would determine the fate of the Navy on Vieques, offering a choice between either leaving after three more years or remaining in perpetuity.

Dangling the promise of development aid for acceptance of a continued Navy presence has not deterred Puerto Ricans from maintaining their steadfast resistance. 50,000 people clogged the main highway in San Juan, Puerto Rico in a silent protest march the next month. They accentuated the popular desire for the Navy to quit the island, clean up the land and have control over where they live returned to them.

The repression of the people's voice reveals that democracy in Puerto Rico and the United States has been replaced by something resembling a military dictatorship. Democracy deferred is freedom denied. The 11 members of the United Vieques Youth who were arrested entering the base to protest in August made their determination to be free clear in their statement: "We cannot continue letting the U.S. Navy trample our people and rob us of the right to a healthy and dignified life."

## **Film Funnies**

*[King Arthur, on horseback — actually, he is just prancing up and down behind his flunky, who is tapping two coconuts together to resemble a galloping horse — comes upon an old woman and a peasant working in the mud of the English countryside.]*

**Arthur:** How do you do, good lady? I am Arthur, King of the Britons. Whose castle is that?

**Old Woman:** King of the who?

**Arthur:** The Britons!

**Old Woman:** Who are the Britons?

**Arthur:** We all are! We are all Britons. And I am your king.

**Old Woman:** I didn't know we had a king! I thought we were an autonomous collective.

**Peasant:** You're foolin' yourself. We're living in a dictatorship — a self-perpetuating autocracy, in which the working classes...

**Old Woman:** Oh, there you go, bringing class into it again!

**Peasant:** But that's what it's all about! If only people would...

**Arthur:** Please, please! Good people, I am in haste. Who lives in that castle?

**Old Woman:** No one lives there.

**Arthur:** Then who is your lord?

**Old Woman:** We don't have a *lord*.

**Peasant:** I told you, we are an anarcho-syndicalist commune. We take it in turns to act as a sort of executive officer of the week, but all the decisions of that officer have to be ratified at a special bi-weekly meeting, by a simple majority in the case of purely internal affairs, but by a two-thirds majority in the case of...

**Arthur:** Be quiet! I order you to be quiet!

**Old Woman:** Order! Who does he think he is?

**Arthur:** I am your king!

**Old Woman:** Well, I didn't vote for you!

**Arthur:** You don't vote for kings!

**Old Woman:** Well, how do you become king then?

**Arthur:** The lady of the lake, her arm clad in the purest shimmering white, held aloft Excalibur from the bosom of the water, signifying by Divine Providence that I, Arthur, was to carry Excalibur. That is why I am your king!

**Peasant:** Listen — strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government! Supreme executive power derives from a mandate from the masses, not from some farcical aquatic ceremony!

**Arthur:** Be quiet!



**Peasant:** You cannot expect to wield supreme executive power just because some watery tart threw a sword at you!

**Arthur:** Shut up!

**Peasant:** I mean, if I went round saying I was an emperor just because some moistened bink had lobbed a scimitar at me, they'd put me away!

**Arthur:** Shut up, will you shut up! [*grabs him*]

**Peasant:** Ah! Now we see the violence inherent in the system! Help, help, I'm being repressed!

**Arthur:** Bloody peasant!

**Peasant:** Oh, what a giveaway. Did you hear that, eh? That's what I'm all about. Do you see him repressing me? You saw it, didn't you?

— John Cleese, *Monty Python and the Search for the Holy Grail* (1974)

\* \* \* \*

**Ace:** Your request is not unlike your lower intestine: stinky, and not without danger.

— Jim Carrey, *Ace Ventura II: When Nature Calls* (1996)

\* \* \* \*

**British soldier:** [*to the natives of the fictional Rafiristan, early 1900s*] We're going to teach you soldiering, the world's noblest profession. When we've done with you, you'll be able to stand up and slaughter your enemies like civilized men! You'll have to learn to man your arms without even stopping to think. Good soldiers don't think — they just obey. Do you suppose if a man thought twice he would give his life for queen and country? Not bloody likely! He wouldn't go near the battlefield! One look at your foolish faces tells me you're going to be crack troops.

— Sean Connery, *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975)

\* \* \* \*

**Son:** Why does the sign [*in a restaurant window in 1940s Italy*] say "No Jews and dogs?"

**Father:** Because shop owners do what they like. One wants no Jews or dogs; I know another that won't take cats or Spaniards.

**Son:** But we let everyone into our book shop.

**Father:** Not anymore. We'll put a sign up too. Are there any animals you don't like?

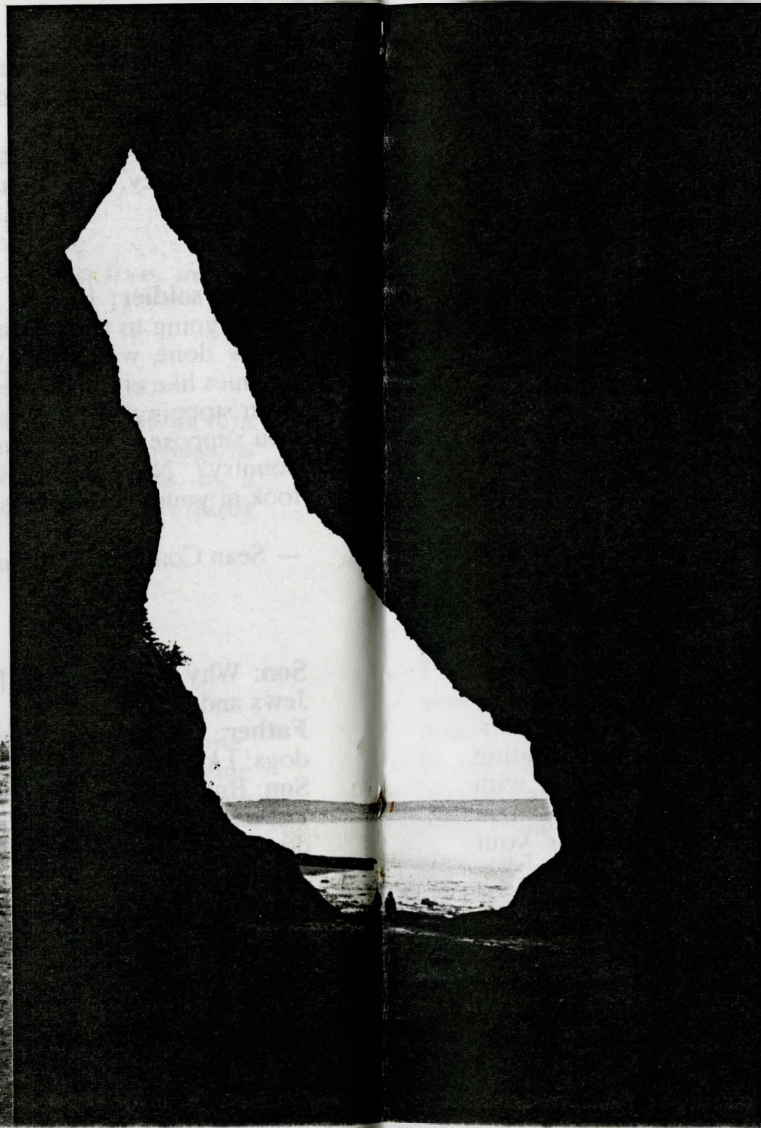
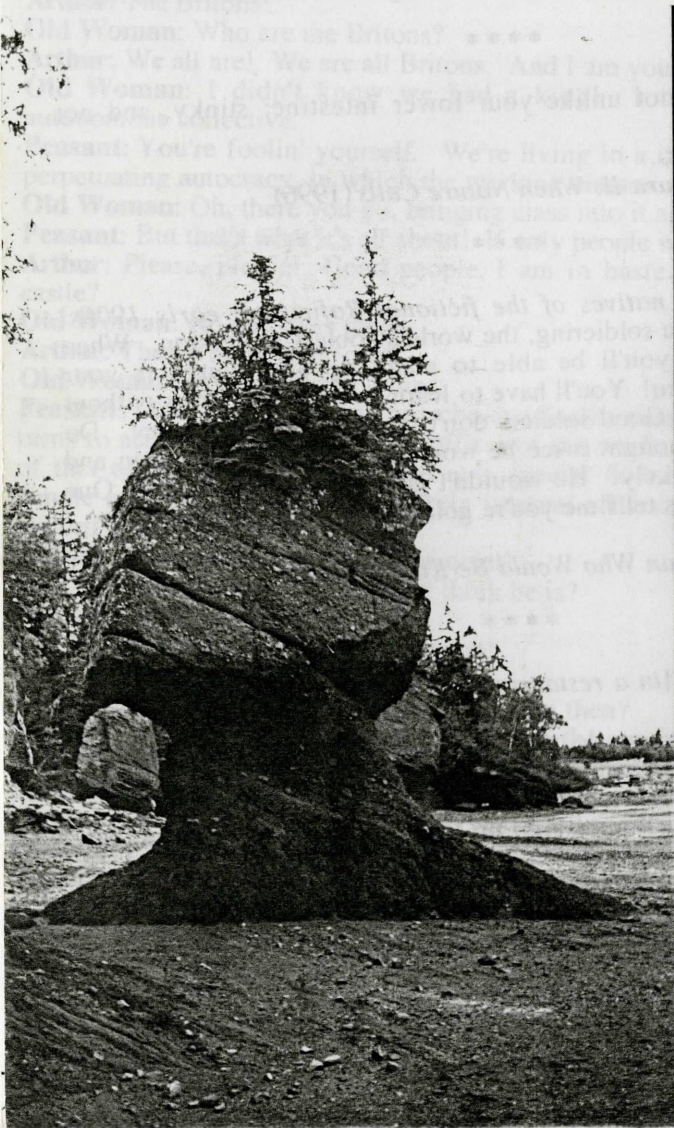
**Son:** Spiders.

**Father:** There! And I'm getting sick of the Visigoths. So that's it. Tomorrow, we'll have a sign: "No Spiders and Visigoths."

— Roberto Begnini, *Life is Beautiful* (1998)



What else does Canada offer besides geese, hockey and Neil Young? The Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick, with the highest tides in the world - over 40 feet! Vincent and I drove there this summer; it was his first time out of the country. Vegan food options in this seacoast province get a grade F; however, the Hopewell Rocks get outstanding! The reddish rock has eroded over time to form free-standing "flower pot" formations, or carved-out caves + arches. Three years ago, this 3km stretch of coast was part of the National Parks system in Canada. Now, tourists pay about \$5 each to a private British company to gape at + explore the awesome crevasses, and, when the tide is high, to kayak among them. Looking fragile, like they might tip over in a strong storm, they still make the humans swarming around them appear puny + powerless. - Claire





# A Study of Movement Tactics (Part I)

## Vincent

1. Working within the system (Case Study: The Iraq Sanctions)
2. Conscience vs. effectiveness (Case Studies: The WTO, IMF, SOA & Plowshares)

Readers of **OFF-Line** know that this zine is devoted to consciousness-raising, promoting a radical understanding of the world and action to uphold principles of peace, justice and compassion. As much as we hope to inspire people who have never acted upon these ideals to activism, we also aspire both to critique and improve upon ourselves and the current movements for social change.

Toward these ends, I have thought long and deeply about the tactics we employ to achieve our ideals. It is important to reconsider these periodically, because as surely as we hope to express our firm beliefs for how to build a better world, we also do not want to become stuck in a rut as activists, and perhaps even frustrated and burnt-out from repeated failures. Thus, **O-L** readers will also be aware that as I stake out my opinions on these topics here, they are not the definitive, authoritative answer by any means, but rather a call to reflection and open debate.

### 1. Working within the system

A friend of a friend has an activist project called "P-Mail" ("People Mail"). Each month, she sends out a packet including a two-page letter on a current issue, a call to action, a form letter addressed to a public official, and an address label. Mailing to about 100 people, she coordinates a small network of letter writers that, conceivably, combines with other groups concerned about these issues around the country to influence policy.

Recently, she highlighted the Iraq sanctions as the focus of the month. Instead of writing to Gore, I wrote *her* a letter. I was less than thrilled about the idea of writing yet another letter pleading for an end to the sanctions, and hoping to step up some discussion and debate on tactics. Not surprisingly, she did not reply, and just removed me from her mailing list. I have found this to be a typical response of people who disagree with me philosophically. I think it is appropriate here to reprint most of that letter and open up the question of tactics in this forum for your consideration:

"I am impressed by your commitment to this issue, since I know you have been working on it for at least a couple of years. Your monthly letters are

always well researched and it is clear you have a good grasp of the gravity of the situation.

"However, for this issue in particular, and most progressive causes/revolutionary social struggles in general, the idea of sending a letter to Al Gore asking him to please stake out a position publicly on the sanctions strikes me as a waste of time and misguided.

"However, I am taking the time to write this letter to you instead, because I feel it is more valuable to reach out to you, my allies in the struggle. I know you have at least 100 people on your mailing list, and so I speculate...while I cannot know with certainty the kinds of activism in which most P-Mail folks are engaged beyond filling out your letters, I hope they are not restricted to this activity. That would be a pointless exercise in helping well-intentioned people feel like they are doing their part, but in actuality are doing virtually nil.

"I observe that you have offered the contacts of peace groups working against the sanctions (at different levels of effectiveness — I have worked for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, so I have some 'inside knowledge'). It's good to push folks to do more, and I guess that's what I'm trying to do with this letter.

"About the letter to Gore, specifically: I agree with you that writing to Bush would be close to hopeless, yet I question why you consider Gore to be any different. Does 'Democrat' still suggest to you a greater potential for conscience and moral action than 'Republican,' despite all available evidence that there is no significant difference between the two parties?

"Al Gore is a product of the Democratic machine. He is coasting to November on his association with the present administration, and is hardly distancing himself from Clinton's positions on any issue (and if he is, such as with Elian Gonzalez, it is in a more obnoxious direction). I think I can say with assurance that Al Gore will not stake out a position on the sanctions, much less campaign to oppose them, while he is running for office. On the infinitesimal chance that he did, do you think that it would be substantially different from Clinton's or Bush's position in any way, besides saying some smokescreen bullshit about improving humanitarian relief while still blaming Saddam for Iraq's problems?

"Gore is establishment through and through — I won't bother to list the countless ways he has shredded his supposed ideals throughout his career. He will never say anything controversial (how about that bold proposal for drug tests for prisoners?), will never be a real leader, and will continue politics as usual for four or eight more years just as surely as Bush will.



You might as well jump on Pat Buchanan's bandwagon. He is saying lots of stuff against the sanctions, but of course is generally considered a crackpot.

"I also take issue with your hyping of the efforts to change the sanctions via Congressional legislation. With 70 or so representatives sort of on board, that leaves well over 400 to go. Needless to say, it will take years even to have a chance to sign up 300 more reps., and you will surely need at least a 2/3 majority to have any chance of passing a bill over a Presidential veto. Do you seriously think we can find that many people with hearts in Congress?

"I consider any efforts revolving around the political system a waste of time and energy. Just yesterday, Congress passed (by a 3-to-1 margin) yet another exorbitant 'emergency' military spending bill that will fund the 'drug war' (counter-population) programs in Colombia. This issue is not dissimilar from Iraq in moral or 'national security' terms, yet clearly it is the military madness that always has and likely always will reign in Congress. Besides, the presidential administration makes foreign policy. As with our recent wars, Congressional votes have merely been rubber stamps for vicious policies. This will not produce real change, which is of course what we both want. Right?

"Quick, easy actions (signing and mailing a letter) will never change this society at the level it needs to be. Admittedly, writing letters will contribute to an occasional victory (as you cite the years of pressure against Mitsubishi finally resulting in its scuttling of its salt works plan in Mexico). Yet, I will mention the obvious here: this success only halted (for the time being, anyway) one particular manifestation of environmental destruction that hadn't actually started yet, while thousands of other manifestations already in place continue unabated. It hasn't contributed to or created anything positive in the world — except, perhaps, to reinforce the notion that writing is going to be an effective tool.

"After all this, you may still think, well, writing a short letter still can't possibly hurt, even if it may not help. I suggest that it does hurt, though, returning to my earlier theme: if this is all that middle class people can muster themselves to do, we are going nowhere, on this issue and in this society.

"My suggestions: encourage people to take deeper steps that involve them on a more personal level. Do you pay your taxes? If so, why do you sustain the military system that upholds the sanctions you abhor? Civil disobedience is another option that will register outrage and apply pressure much more than polite letters ever will. Lessening our

dependence on automobiles (surely an option for people living in the suburbs of Boston) also makes a strong statement. If you could work on convincing the 100+ folks on your list to prepare themselves to take real risks to oppose the Iraq sanctions, I think we'll have a better shot in the long run of actually accomplishing something. If we don't risk, we're just making ourselves feel good for doing the right thing. If we're afraid of pushing ourselves in these ways, how can we honestly believe we are taking the high road and doing all we can while another 200 Iraqi kids die today? These challenges for us are easy in comparison to what Iraqis face daily.

"I write from an anarchist perspective, so you can understand why I consider letter writing to be very low on the nonviolence/activism ladder. I write with all due respect for your efforts to educate your friends and associates, which of course are essential for any struggle. Thank you for your time and your thoughtful reflection."

Is my opinion too cynical or realistic? You decide. But consider that people have written letters to the government on this issue for ten years. Whether you think this might help depends on whether you believe we can repair a problem like the million dead children caused by the economic sanctions on Iraq with reforms or an outright revolution.

Are bad policies mere accidents, aberrations corrected by clearer heads? Or are they willful, cunningly planned actions that fit into a long-established pattern of oppression? Is part of the problem that many people cannot see that over a million preventable deaths is a problem? Do we need a change in the law or a change in mindset?

How you answer these questions depends on how you address the perennial debate about whether there is a sickness in the human condition. I postulate that the social sicknesses of racism, sexism, militarism, and exploitative capitalism stem from the short-sighted selfishness that places oneself at the center of the universe, at the expense of the equally valid needs of others. The tactics we use should be appropriate to address this more fundamental problem. Clearly, a revolutionary position goes beyond tactics that fit comfortably within, or can easily be accommodated and ignored by, the established system. Thus, in addition to persuasion, we must employ the *satyagraha* (soul-force) of Gandhi, matching intractable oppression with correspondingly exacting personal and collective action.

(By the way, two months after my correspondence with P-Mail, both Bush and Gore pledged that, if elected, they would take a "more aggressive" stance towards Iraq, and expressed their desire to remove Saddam Hussein.)



## 2. Conscience vs. effectiveness

If working within the system is too mild, too laid back, and ineffective, then what is to be done? Mass action in the streets, of course. This tactic clearly is a lot more in-your-face than a telephone call, postcard or letter to our elected "representatives" in government. However, it should also be obvious to activists that there are different styles of mass action — and I don't mean legal and illegal.

By definition, legal demonstrations do not intimidate the system, and actually may help to support it. Tending to focus on persuasion and reformist in nature, they give credence to the government's claim that the state is free and open to dissenting views. In contrast, illegal actions certainly push the envelope further and seek change through coercion (of a nonviolent or violent nature). There is a place for both methods, because not everyone has the option of risking arrest or imprisonment (although, admittedly, massive illegal resistance would pose the greatest threat to the system). As we observed last November at the WTO protests in Seattle, the mass marches and the nonviolent blockades supported each other; without either, the impact of each would have been greatly diminished. Arguably, the window-smashing of the Black Bloc anarchists also enhanced the effectiveness of the marches and blockades by making them seem more moderate in comparison, although what that gained in media attention probably was counteracted by the negative pall it cast over the movement as a whole ("rioting and chaos in Seattle" caused by "violent anarchists" was the spin in most major media outlets).

The different styles I am referring to here are "faith/conscience-based" (FCB) activism and "effectiveness-based" (EB) activism. FCB activists, while not eschewing effectiveness entirely, place their primary focus on witnessing to injustices and impelling change through moral force. EB activists are often motivated by conscience as well, but tend to apply themselves to actions that they believe will have the best chances of achieving their goals, and the wisest among them also consider the means they use as intricately linked to the ends they aim to attain.

Currently, I am discussing these modes of activism with a friend behind bars. Daniel Sicken, who identifies mainly as a FCB resister, is in the midst of a 41-month sentence in federal prison for his Plowshares action of Hiroshima Day, 1998, in which he and a fellow nuclear resister damaged a Minuteman III missile silo in Missouri with sledgehammers. "Doing this action was the best thing that I could do with my life," Daniel told me. "Many people my age are trapped in their lives for many reasons — job, marriage, etc. Though in prison, I feel very free. I did all that I could to make it as effective as possible, but once I made the decision to do it, that was what really mattered — DO IT! Don't dwell on the consequences. I have no regrets." (Write Daniel at #28360-013, Federal Prison Camp, Unit 1, PO Box 2000, Lewisburg, PA 17837-2000.)

My thoughts on the topic lately have stemmed from my disillusionment with the FCB camp. Of course, due to my Catholic background and strong sense of right and wrong, I've stepped up to toe the protest line with these folks for some years now. Despite the righteousness of their position, however, it has become quite stale for me. I wouldn't say I am burnt out so much as I am tired of their formulaic way of doing actions. In my experiences, FCB activists spend little time deliberating how others will receive their witness: it's all about making their point. And despite the merits of the prophetic calling, that's pretty disturbing to me.

The basic point of FCB activists is simply that their position ought to be accepted because it is right, based on their conception of God. (According to this understanding, I will consider the many socialist groups to be FCB activists as well, due to their inflexible promotion of a mythical government with all-salvific power.) Yes, I personally consider God to be nonviolent and upholding all life. Yet another FCB activist, such as a right-wing fundamentalist, might have an entirely different view of God backing their positions. What you wind up with is one group of FCB activists arguing with the others about which side's views reflect the true God. Therefore, to the average person who subscribes to neither view, both views are equivalent in their authoritative merit, and thus equally meaningless.

When socialists continually thrust their newspapers into people's faces, or religious groups maintain mournful vigils outside places of death, we see most clearly that FCB activists, unfortunately, are generally irrelevant to the society at large. This is the application of theory in a way that cripples action before it even begins. Here theory becomes like dogma, dictating one way for all occasions. Whereas FCB activism generally is unresponsive to changing situations that call for many ways, relying instead upon the grace of God to add that extra something that will make it work, EB activism creates theory through experimental action. EB activists are not theoryless by any means, nor are they always effective. Rather, they enter into situations with a theory and make adjustments if it is found to be in error. The next time, they approach with a modified version of the same theory, or perhaps with new ideas altogether.

As a FCB activist, in my mind I often shifted the blame for lackluster actions with few results on to the ignorant, amoral, selfish masses, the biased corporate media, the evil officials, etc. While each of these may play a role in the failure of an action to inspire change, it seems to me that the fault belongs at least as much to the activists themselves. The lower-than-expected turnout at the FCB April 9 Jubilee 2000/Cancel the Debt rally in DC, and its lack of solidarity with the International Monetary Fund/World Bank demonstrations a week later (A16), is but one recent example of this. In contrast, the DC IMF/WB and Seattle WTO mobilizations were very convincing in demonstrating the possibility for change. Why so? The EB activists consciously worked toward consensus, took more risks, and achieved more because they actually sought more (i.e., they attempted to shut down the meetings and set themselves apart



from traditional legal demonstrations in many ways). When FCB activists join forces with other diverse groups to form coalitions, then they are thinking about effectiveness more than witness and have more of an impact.

The difference between FCB and EB activists definitely lies in their approach. The former have an ulterior motive in making their stand. They want to convince you of the rightness of their faith and to join their group, or at least adopt their value system as your own. While their values may indeed be excellent ones, because they are so distinct from the rest of the world, they automatically (sometimes unconsciously, and not entirely unreasonably) assume nothing can change in the world, and thus show up to cast down blood or yell holy hell in unwelcoming judgment. It is a weird tension between realism and idealism.

On the other hand, effectiveness folks have goals beyond announcing their presence. They think about what they need to do to make a positive splash in people's minds by tailoring their message to the context of the moment. They will be happy if people are persuaded to their thinking and/or join their groups, especially if they come to see that their own interest is at stake, rather than the faith/conscience of the religious activist.

As we've seen in Seattle and DC, EB activists are better thinkers strategically, better trained tactically, and more inclusive of diverse viewpoints. Effectiveness activists don't need to act in solidarity with other groups because they are open to everybody. Differences of opinion lead to more colorful actions and a more powerful focus through consensus, rather than splinter groups or paralysis. The anarchic spirit of EB actions stands in pointed contrast to hierarchically controlled events demanding lockstep adherence to a nebulous faith or conscience that so few people (unfortunately) seem to have.

EB activists might frown upon attending another routine action, but I don't think that they always wait for others to get the ball rolling. Sure, there are always some free riders on any action. But look at the thousands that poured into DC the week before A16 to do the puppet making, spokes council planning, food and medical prep, etc. These folks knew what they were doing, or learned it as they went, and they did it well. This is much more egalitarian and powerful than any one-directional, top-down, FCB action I've seen. As an FCB activist, I used to make plans with a small clique, cover most of the details myself (because few others were motivated enough to pitch in), and hope for the best. That's fringe activity, not building toward any kind of revolution.

It's true that some EB activists may not want to go to an action that isn't going to attract media coverage and lots of people. However, this may be more of a positive character trait than a negative one. Isn't it better to put in the extra work conceptualizing the action, building broad support, and couching it in terms that will be attractive to the media and the public?

What I see is FCB activists either rushing to do yet another one-off protest or doggedly persisting in the same style with the same action, and showing up with the same small, insular bunch that is easily dismissed. The media tried to dismiss the globalization activists, but they just couldn't do it convincingly. Their message was too strong, too broad-based, and too universal, and more new people continue to join the growing movement.

The Close the SOA (School of the Americas) movement is a good case study of an FCB organization slowly growing in its understanding of how to be effective — faster than other faith groups, at least. In its beginning, it was a small movement that was heavily religious at its core. Fr. Roy Bourgeois was a man on a mission, highlighting the murders of Oscar Romero, the Jesuits and the sisters in El Salvador at the hands of SOA graduates, and choosing tactics (fasts, blood pouring) that are typical of FCB groups. For years, this focus attracted largely activists from Catholic schools and religious organizations.

Since then, SOA Watch has swelled its ranks tenfold. It has balanced some of its Christian rhetoric by uplifting indigenous spirituality at its demonstrations, and has seriously courted students at secular universities, the labor movement, and non-FCB organizations. Of special note is that it wisely mobilized 200 supporters to join the A16 mobilization and make the links between the SOA and the IMF and World Bank; 30 continued their organizing behind bars in the week-long jail solidarity action.

On the other hand, like the Jubilee 2000 event, its April Lobby Days at the Capitol suffered from competing with A16. SOA Watch continues to plod away in the legislative arena, hoping to finally achieve victory through a narrow vote despite massive resistance from the Pentagon. In addition, the movement has become stuck at the new plateau it has reached, since for the last three years it has not changed its tactics at all. Playing a numbers game, the organizers counted solely on increasing participation in the annual Fort Benning demonstrations to gain momentum. The movement's growth curve has nearly reached its apex, as it has become clear to many participants that the demonstrations have evolved into a polite game of crossing the line at the base. As impressive as the masses that trespass in the solemn funeral procession are, they have not significantly increased the costs for the military to really consider closing the School. The SOA has but one weekend of the year to gear up for a major media spin effort and overtime pay for base officers. It is annoying, but not yet severely costly.

However, SOA Watch reportedly has begun to relinquish some control over the planning and decision making of the Ft. Benning actions. Heeding the advice of other leaders, the planning for this coming November's action includes much more flexibility. Nonviolence will still be the norm, but the anarchists and young people who participate will have more leeway to agitate through affinity groups. Closing down all four entrances to Fort Benning, instead of just the main gate, and refusing to obey soldiers' orders to stop processing will be among the new tactics



unveiled. This will certainly add a new effectiveness to the movement, and if there is ever an escalation to more than one annual demonstration at the base, the military will be rocked back on its heels again.

Returning now to the Plowshares movement, we can see the counterpoint these FCB activists present. Inspired by a biblical passage from the book of the prophet Isaiah, which reads: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again," the Plowshares mix their faith with a desire to be effective. Thus, instead of writing letters to legislators or demonstrating with signs, they take it upon themselves to begin the conversion of nuclear weapons to nonlethal instruments by rendering them harmless, actually or symbolically.

Since its founding in 1980, when brothers Dan and Phil Berrigan and six others hammered on the nose cones of missiles at a GE plant in Pennsylvania, there have been over 60 Plowshares actions involving several hundred FCB activists in the U.S., plus related Ploughshares actions in the United Kingdom. In garnering many long prison sentences for their sacrifices, the activists have gained some notoriety for their cause, but have failed to affect any lasting change (although the seeds they have sown may yet take root and sprout somewhere unexpectedly).

The key weakness of the Plowshares movement is that it has not built any mass support. Many are alienated by the religious terminology, the symbolism of splattered blood, and the tactic of property damage that Plowshares activists employ. Perhaps most importantly, however, most are not able or willing to hurl themselves against the gears of the system virtually alone and entertain the likelihood of an extended prison term.

Despite the Christian promise of resurrection for those who give up their lives in the service of God, the cross is not a motivating symbol for most FCB activists, let alone the rest of society. Promising suffering and death is a huge downer for folks who share their opposition to nuclear weapons, and is unlikely to motivate new people to get involved. One cannot be a leader without followers, and so it is especially important to offer people a reasonable chance of success if they are to engage in activism. Mass support offers a form of protection and augmented potency through solidarity that is more appealing than martyrdom in prison.

Thus, the greater power that Plowshares actions possess because of their illegality is diminished from lacking the crucial element of a broad societal foundation. At the very least, coordinating many Plowshares actions to occur simultaneously around the U.S. would immediately enhance the effectiveness of the present movement, but truly expanding it beyond its present limited capacity will require detaching it from its FCB origin. Only the combined strength and power of many people can eliminate the scourge of nuclear weapons and transform this world into one in which we want to live.

## **Garden of Vegan**

### **Claire and Vincent**

Well, folks, we have more entries than usual for this column. Most are our own creations, but we have some multicultural family recipes from Italy, India, Peru and Pakistan as well. Experiment and enjoy!

### **Tofu Omelets**

- |                                       |                            |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 lb. silken tofu                     | 12 button mushrooms, diced |
| 4 tablespoons Ener-G egg replacer     | 1/2 tomato, diced          |
| 1/4 cup rice milk                     | 1/2 green pepper, diced    |
| 1 Fantastic Tofu Scrambler mix packet | 2 scallions, chopped       |
| 1 teaspoon canola oil                 |                            |

Chop all vegetables. Place tofu, egg replacer and Fantastic tofu scrambler mix packet (containing spices, sea salt, soy sauce powder, dehydrated vegetables including potato, onion, garlic, celery, chives, etc.) into a blender and puree for one minute. Add rice milk and a bit of water to help liquefy the mixture and run the blender for a bit more. Heat the oil on low-medium heat in a skillet and pour the mixture to fill bottom of pan. Add a handful of the veggies to the center of the pancake and let it cook for a few minutes. When the edges harden, take two spatulas and flip half the omelet over, cooking for a couple more minutes until it is sufficiently firm. Repeat process. These measurements serve three for a delicious brunch with Vin's Famous Homefries (**O-L # 7**) and bagels.

### **Pasta alla Garbanza Bonanza**

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1 cup garbanzo beans (chick peas), cooked     | 3 cloves garlic, minced |
| 3 cups macaroni or small spiral pasta, cooked | 1/2 tbsp. oregano       |
| 1/2 cup vegetable stock or water              | fresh parsley           |
| 1 small yellow summer squash, diced           | salt                    |
| 1 small zucchini, diced                       | pepper                  |
| 1 fresh tomato, diced                         | olive oil               |
| 1 cup spinach                                 |                         |

Mince garlic and parsley. Slice the zucchini and squash. Chop tomato and fresh spinach. Boil water for pasta while you sauté garlic and squash in a large pan. When the squash looks semi-soft, add spinach; then add chick peas and tomato. Add stock or water to cover bottom of pan. Add parsley, oregano, salt and pepper, cover and simmer on low heat. When pasta is done, combine all in a bowl and eat with a spoon, with some nice Italian bread to soak up the juices!



## **Claire's Squashed Dal-ly**

1 cup brown lentils	1/2 cup vegetable stock
1 small yellow squash	1 teaspoon curry
1 cup basmati rice	1/2 teaspoon cumin
6 banana or fingerling potatoes, diced	cayenne pepper to taste
medium onion, chopped	1/2 teaspoon ginger
3 cloves garlic, minced	salt

Soak the lentils overnight. Drain and put into a saucepan with enough water to cover them by one inch. Boil for 20 minutes, until they are soft — but do not let them get dry. In a skillet, sauté the onion and garlic until translucent. Add all the spices except for the ginger. Then add the lentils and the water that remains in the saucepan. Add potatoes, squash, and vegetable stock. Stir, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes. Add ginger and cook five more minutes. Serve over rice with chapatis, burrito shells, or Neera's Indian Pancakes.

## **Neera's Indian Pancakes**

1 cup water	1 1/2 cups "Behan" (Indian chick pea flour)
1/2 onion, chopped	3 large kale leaves
2 tbsps. vegetable oil	1 teaspoon cumin

Mix water, flour, and cumin in a bowl to achieve a pancake batter-like consistency. Tear kale leaves into small pieces and add to mixture. Add onion, and more water if necessary. Heat vegetable oil in skillet. Spoon mixture into skillet and cook several minutes until each side is brown. Makes nine 4" pancakes. Eat with dal or your favorite Indian dish.

## **Grandma Casarella's Pasta Fagiole**

2 tbsp. olive oil	2 whole tomatoes (or 16 oz. can diced)
3 cloves garlic	16 oz. great northern (cannellini) beans
a few sprigs of parsley	16 oz. elbow macaroni
salt	pepper

Add just enough olive oil to cover the bottom of a frying pan. Brown garlic in oil. Add salt, pepper, and fresh parsley (dried is OK). Add tomatoes and cook for 20 minutes on medium heat. Stir in beans and cook an additional 20 minutes. Meanwhile, boil pasta in a separate pot. Strain the macaroni, but save some salt water on the side. Combine pasta e fagiole, and allow them to mix. Add a bit of water to help absorb the sauce if needed. This recipe is better the second time around, after it has had some time to gel in the fridge.

## Laura's Peruvian Quinoa

3 cups water  
2 tbsp. olive oil  
2 cloves garlic  
salt

1 1/2 cups quinoa  
1 tomato (or tomato sauce)  
1/2 medium onion

This comes courtesy of our friend Laura Valdeviazio, native of Lima. She instructs: "Quinoa [*Kêe-noo-uh*] is a cereal that was part of the Inca diet, and it is really nutritious. In Peru, my family has quinoa for breakfast, just like oatmeal. Here is a dinner recipe: Rinse the quinoa carefully (the grains are very light). Boil the water, add quinoa and let it boil for a couple of minutes. Then put the pot on low heat. When the quinoa is ready it will 'open.' Each grain looks like a little ring. Until this point, the process is pretty much like cooking rice. Don't let it dry too much.

"In a different pan, add and fry the oil, garlic, onion, tomato and salt. Feel free to change the quantities according to your taste. Sometimes we add chili to it. You can be very creative and add other kinds of things to it. Once the onions look golden brown and the whole mix is kind of juicy, add the quinoa and ¡buen provecho! (enjoy!)."

## Jessica's Chickpea Curry

1 onion  
1 6 oz. can tomato paste  
4 - 5 small potatoes, cut into 1" pieces  
salt  
turmeric

1 16 oz. can chickpeas  
vegetable oil  
cayenne pepper  
cumin

Chop onions and fry in oil. Throw in the chickpeas, reserving the water from the can. Add the tomato paste. Fry these together for a few minutes. Add water if it burns. Next add the spices to taste. Let sauté for about 5 minutes.

Then add the water from the can. When boiling, add the potatoes; cook for 10 - 15 minutes. Enjoy!





# **Readers' Forum/Reviews**

## **edited by Vincent**

### **INDEX**

- 1) **Distribution:** Words as Weapons
- 2) **O-L Reviews:** *Indy Unleashed*, *The Thought*, *Broken Pencil*, *Low Hug*, *Hodgepodge*
- 3) **Letters:** V. Jones, A. Bunnigrrrl, J. Flux, J. Macready, K. Haas, F. Maurovich, C. Wolwood, H. Davis, A. Rayson, G. Houser, A. Trudgeon, L. Nocella
- 4) **Zine Reviews:** *Avow*, *Clamor*, *You're Not Normal*, *Indian Attack*, *Miranda*, *I Defy*, *Disgusted Life*, *A Real Life*, *Cutlass*, *Hodgepodge*, *Turning the Tide*, *We Dare Be Free*, *How I Learned to Do IT Bloody Murder*, *The Thought*, *Wishbone*, *The Match*

~~~~~

### **1) Distribution**

**OFF-Line** is now available from Words as Weapons, a small but devoted distributor run by Andy, Adam and Ariana, three recent college graduates. They are committed to "resistance, anti-exploitation, and equality," as well as "fight[ing] the corporate automatons as they try to turn us into busy 'adults.'" If that appeals to you, by all means write for a free catalog: PO Box 24131, University City, MO 63130.

~~~~~

### **2) Reviews**

We got a nice sort-of review in the small review zine *Indy Unleashed* #9:

• **OFF-Line** #13 (Summer 2000): D.B. Pedlar introduced me to these guys and I'm glad he did. They had several issues on display [at the Underground Press Conference, Bowling Green, OH, June, 2000], but I was out of money and almost out of trades, so I'll order the rest later. — Owen Thomas

*The Thought* ("Since 1981") was kind enough to recommend us to its philosophically-inclined audience in its issue #119:

• **OFF-Line** #10: Interesting magazine put out by Claire Cocco and Vincent Romano. Articles included "Masturbatory Peacemaking" and "Understanding Militarism." The articles are all well written. Good review section as well. — Ronald C. Tobin

I was much less enthused about the mindless review offered in issue #13 of *Broken Pencil*, surveying "zine culture in Canada and the world":

• **OFF-Line #8:** This is an out-there zine that seems to be trying to combine a left-wing sentiment with a quasi-religious brand of Christianity. When the reader opens the cover, they are immediately confronted with the activists' report: "In Defense of the Seattle Rebels (Or Nurturing One's Inner Anarchist)." Just a little further along we get "What the Average Churchgoer Should Know (About Christianity)." Now maybe it's just me, but isn't there something wrong with this picture? I mean, which one of these articles doesn't belong (apologies for the cheap Sesame Street allusion)? Well, whatever, it's definitely not my cup of tea. — Dave Pahn

I can only sigh as I respond. This is very similar to the *Slug & Lettuce* review of *O-L* reprinted last issue. There as well, the reader saw the word "Christian" and ran far, far away, waving a crimson flag to warn other possible readers away from our zine. Dave's reaction to the mere mention of Christianity suggests the damage that the religion has done to many youth, and I can appreciate that. It's too bad that Dave doesn't appear to have read the article in question. By keeping his analysis strictly to the titles, he entirely misses the point that this and the other articles are highly critical of Christianity as it is practiced by most of its adherents!

It says right on the cover that #8 is the "Spirituality Issue," implying that the focus on Christianity is a one-time affair. Inside, I clearly distinguish between spirituality and religion (or "quasi-religion," whatever that is). Dave might not think we were so "out there" if he considered the anarchist critique of religion that I brought to the fore.

Apparently, once more it seems that I broke the rules of the zine world by combining the topics of anarchism and spirituality ("which one of these articles doesn't belong?"). Yes, Dave, it is just you; reading the articles in question might have helped you to discover the consistent thread tying them together. Actually, I didn't think of Sesame Street, but Ani DiFranco's rant on "IQ" leapt to mind: "They showed me the picture of three oranges and a pear / They asked me which one is different — it doesn't belong / They taught me that different is wrong." *O-L* continues to affirm its mission as a forum for diverse voices.

What is particularly lame is the fact that *Broken Pencil* is another review zine that can't seem to assign submitted zines to people qualified to give them fair appraisals. Dave Pahn's few reviews were among the shortest and most superficial in the issue, entirely inconsistent with *O-L*'s approach. (His other reviews were for poem and litzines, which he evidently enjoys more.) On the other hand, just a few pages before, *BP*'s Brian Burke favorably reviewed the newsletter of the Toronto Catholic Worker, which combines "anarchism" with "peace and radical social justice." Sound



familiar? Guess **O-L** won't be cracking into the Canadian frontier any time soon, but at least we have high-quality journals like *Alternative Press Review* and *A Reader's Guide to the Underground Press* to rely on here.

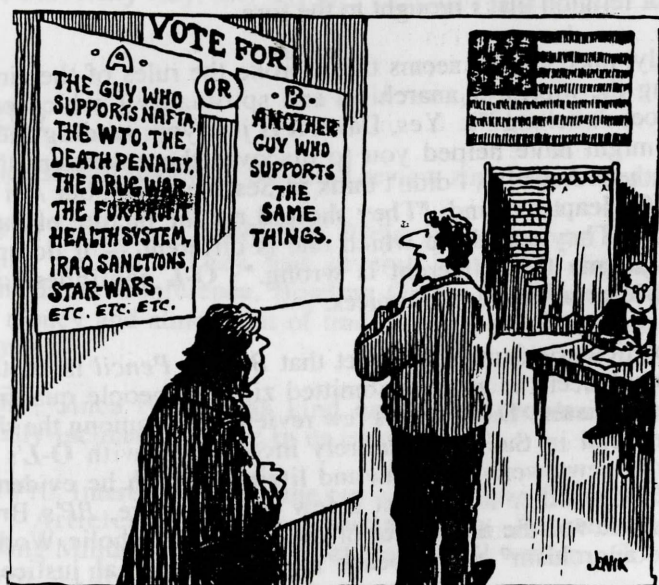
Thanks to *Low Hug* for a nice write-up in its issue #4:

• **OFF-Line #9**: Worth the price of admission alone for the academic analysis of working as a bartender in a New York strip club written by Deb Morra, in which she considers the customers, the strippers, the other bar employees and the power structures that exist between them. Other thought provoking articles include a "point/counterpoint" between Vincent and Claire about the use of the words "bitch" and "fuck," and a long but highly understandable argument concerning genetically engineered foods. And, **JUST IN: OFF-Line #11-12**, a special issue that adds collage and art to the usual essay fare. — A.J. Michel

Finally, we appreciate the good words offered in *Hodgepodge #6* (the new issue, now available for \$2; see contact address below):

• **OFF-Line #9**: While the writing in here is a bit too academic for my liking, it is all well thought out and put together providing a very educational read on a variety of important issues, from genetically engineered foods, to reclaiming language, to working at a strip club. This is the first issue I've read and we can only expect good things to come from Claire and Vincent's work. Good job. — Mike Schade

≈ ≈ ≈



### 3) Letters

**Readers' Forum** policy: any correspondence received pertaining to the zine potentially may be reprinted here, unless explicitly requested not to do so.

• Dear Vincent,

I am happy that **OFF-Line** has not only continued, but has produced five new issues since I last saw it. There is much food for thought in issue #10. It is better than most zines in this vein, which can be prone to bullshit and posing. Fortunately, **OFF-Line** has none of that.

— Violet Jones, Hayward, CA

• Hi Vincent and Claire,

I just received your zine **OFF-Line**, and I must say, I'm impressed! I haven't yet had a chance to read through the whole thing, but I like what I see so far, and I hope to do a review of it for my upcoming issue. I scored mostly c's on your political quiz, with some d's mixed in. What else? I can't wait to try the french fries recipe. I'm kind of lazy when it comes to cooking, but those sound really good! The article you reprinted on organic food is hilarious...moldy bread causing cancer...*ha ha ha ha*! I have been a vegetarian now for over six years and I get asked a lot if I "feel different." Why yes — as if I would *miss* the digestive nightmares of meat and milk and Taco Bell (still do cheese though — I'm not strong enough to give up pizza). Anyway, I'm going to show that article to Bunniman. He wrote a book on vegetarianism and will really dig it. I also like the cartoon by Tom Tomorrow you reprinted. I saw that one in our local weekly paper a while ago and it had me laughing for days. Clue train, ha. And cops, ugh, don't even get me started.

— Angela, aka Bunnigrri, San Juan Capistrano, CA

• Dear Vincent,

**OFF-Line** looks really neat, although I've only had time to read the first two pieces so far. Good stuff, especially about Diallo (issue #10, "Amadou Diallo: *In Memoriam*"). There was little reaction here, or rather little public show of a reaction. Sad. I look forward to reading the rest. You and my brother should get together to discuss working for nonprofits. Ugh!

— Janice Flux, San Francisco, CA



• Dear Claire,

The newest **OFF-Line** that you sent was trashed by a guard here who packed my friend's property when he was placed in the Segregation Unit. This is a common practice. It is sort of an unofficial penalty imposed on those who go to "the hole." My friend was released the next day but most of the property that was deemed "unnecessary" by prison staff had been thrown away. I guess the guard didn't "get" **OFF-Line**.:-)

— **John Macready**, Oakdale, LA

*Claire responds:* John is a prisoner and a student of nonviolence who welcomes correspondence. Write him at #20412-077, PO Box 5000, zip 71463.

• Dear Vincent,

Thanks for **O-L** #13. Most of the zines I've seen that mention political issues tend to just rant and rave in simplistic and/or unfocused fashion. Yours has lots of thoughtful writing and I really enjoyed it. I especially liked your analysis of the jail incident in "The Blue Rules in Pleasantville"; it made a lot of good points. I was also interested in your letter to the IRS. I've been carrying around an article from *Friends Journal* about the war tax resisters for years, thinking that some day I'll take some action on this, but if truth be told, I'm just too much of a chicken. What kind of response did/do you get from the IRS?

My partner Bruce, who is an organic gardener and nature educator, thought the Betsy Hart article was a hoot (*Media Rewind*: "Pesticides Are Good For You!"). He could hardly believe the woman was for real. "Isn't this some kind of spoof?" he kept asking. He sends congratulations on a good rebuttal.

I am interested in reading your back issues with articles referred to in your letters column — the one about the use of "fuck" and "bitch" ("Dialogue on Language," **O-L** #9) (I'm with you all the way!) and whatever it was that got you the "creepy Christian" comment ("Dialogue on Spirituality," **O-L** #8). There's so much slamming of Christianity in zines, and while I'm not one (being of the Friendly persuasion myself), I do have a tremendous amount of respect for what I think of as *real* Christians, the folks who are actually practicing what their God preached.

P.S. I couldn't agree with you more about *Retail Hell* — hilarious!

— **Kate Haas**, Portland, OR

*Vincent responds:* Your positive comments, for the second issue in a row, are much appreciated. You are the first person to compliment a short story of mine in I-can't-remember-when, so that especially tickles me. It's also amusing that your husband thought the anti-organic opinion piece was a spoof. Indeed, that's what I consider news/talk radio, local TV news and the local paper to be — mostly spoofs on genuine journalism — but the joke's on those who can't see they're being played for fools. The IRS has sent me between one and three form letters each of the past three years, informing me that I owe money (duh), noting the interest and penalties I've accrued and requesting payment, which I blithely ignore. I expect that eventually an agent will try to contact me in person or that the IRS will try to levy some asset of mine — if they can find any. I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. Although you think of yourself as poultry, at least you have seriously considered it. I don't mind sticking my neck out for my ideals, although someday I may be running around like a chicken without a head. But don't hesitate to call the contact phone number for the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee I placed in **O-L #10** if you're interested in learning more.

• Dear Vincent,

I got into your most recent zine (**O-L #13**), and I surprised myself by getting an 11 in the anarchist quiz. Where have I gone wrong?

— **Frank Maurovich**, Ossining, NY

*Vincent responds:* Fear not, intrepid soul. You had been immersed in the fog of smoke and mirrors, but now can see that the black-clad anarchist is actually the standard-bearer of light. Heck, you don't even have to don the morbid uniform. With a little more work at it, you too can proudly hoist the flag of freedom — truth, justice, and the un-American way!

• Dear Vincent and Claire,

Who the heck says you can't combine a left-wing sentiment with a quasi-religious brand of Christianity? I'd love a copy of **OFF-Line**.

— **Clayton Wolwood**, North Vancouver, British Columbia

*Vincent responds:* Clayton is obviously referring to the review of **O-L #8** in *Slug & Lettuce* (see reference in *Reviews*, above). Well, you have proved me wrong, since you are evidence that some people can see past the negative discoloration resulting from a reviewer's ignorant biases!



• Dear **OFF-Line**,

In **O-L** #10, both in her response to my letter and in her second essay ("Pornography and Misogyny: The Chicken and the Egg"), Deb Morra delivers conclusions not supported by evidence.

For example, I'd suggested that Morra's customers did not tip generously because they "probably assumed she was getting a big cut from the over-priced drinks." Morra retorted that I am "comically viewing male patrons as helpless victims of overbearing bartending." That does not follow. To the contrary, Morra's patrons' refusal to tip demonstrated they were NOT helpless.

Second example: I'd remarked that, if I danced, I might not "have received much in tips, because I'm not good at flirting." Morra responded, that affirms her "argument about the economic rewards of deference." No, it doesn't. Morra seems confused about deference. Most businesses and jobs require deference: doing work a customer or boss wants even though you might rather be doing something else. But you are not expected to work for fun — at least not for long. That's why they pay you.

Morra does mention some notable studies: for example, "wholesome family entertainment" portrays more violence toward and submissiveness by women than does porn. But then, without evidence, Morra claims that "misogyny...creates the context that allows pornography to exist and flourish."

Contradicting that is Morra's own admission that "pornography has many faces, and not all...is violent or renders women submissive." (Most porn I have read or seen featured women in the mood for sex who boldly went about getting what they wanted.)

Morra sees signs of misogyny everywhere: for example, a man referring to a mature human female as "girl" instead of "woman." However, in this youth-glorifying culture, that may signify not depreciation, but approval. Note that women, too, often refer to men as "boy friends," and each sex may call the other "baby." As for strip bars: showering a dancer with money seems more likely to signify admiration than hatred.

I largely agree with Morra about the media. (After reading Deb's summary of *The Little Mermaid*, I would not take a daughter to see it.) But I suspect that subjugation of females is much more ancient than Disney. All our ancestors, on back to ground apes, tree shrews, limbed fishes, or whatever, were those who propagated their genes. Various impregnation tactics sometimes succeeded. Not all were consensual.

A few million years ago, when brains and heads got bigger, birth more difficult, and newborns less developed and slower maturing, a new

consideration arose. Proto-humans became smart enough to learn that sex, though pleasurable, might result in something uncomfortable to gestate, painful to birth (sometimes deadly), and a nuisance to care for. Proto-humans then discovered contraception: non-genital sex, rhythm, herbs, barriers. Some females avoided pregnancy, while those who would not or could not, had more of the babies and propagated their traits. In particular, a female attracted to a domineering male, who would fuck her when and how he wanted, regardless of her preferences, was more apt to reproduce.

Bert (my companion) theorizes that many women who hate men do so not because they lack sex desires or are purely lesbian (many lesbians, as do many hetero men, like men fine — except they don't want sex with them), nor because they are bullied by men they can't refuse, but because they DO occasionally desire sex and, at those moments only, *are attracted to abusive men*. Consequently, because THEY have sex mostly with abusive men, those women assume that all or most men are abusive, or would be if they could.

I wonder if Morra's urges or habits might be in conflict with her attitudes. She complains, "I could rarely walk the few blocks...without being accosted by men...who called their approval or attempted to engage me." Hmmm. I've read that even Marilyn Monroe could walk down the street without attracting attention when she chose to — i.e., she could "turn it on" or "turn it off." But some women may lack Marilyn's awareness of what "turns on," or may be subconsciously unwilling to "turn off." Therefore, perhaps unknowingly, they dress or move in ways that signal sexual receptivity.

I've found that I attract many compliments and solicitations — or none — depending on what I wear. Men's assumptions are a minor nuisance during warm weather when I prefer to wear little or nothing — for comfort, not enticement. But being asked if I want sex, when I don't, is something I can easily deal with.

— **Holly Davis**, Philomath, OR

*Vincent responds:* Well, I'm glad you found some common ground with Deb, but I tend to disagree with your arguments. Claire and I stand behind Deb's articles. While you claim her direct experience isn't evidence enough to support her thoughts, your and Bert's ideas rest even more on assumptions and conjecture. Your "wonderings" about Deb are way off the mark. Three other points: I would never dare to call you or any other woman I've just met "girl" or "baby." That may be acceptable as an intimacy with a partner, but is demeaning, sexist, and reflects the attitudes and reality of male power dominance in this patriarchal society. Your upholding Marilyn Monroe's and your talent of blending to contrast with Deb's supposed subconscious unwillingness to turn off her attractiveness sounds like the usual blaming the victim at which this society is so good.



Your argument would be disallowed in a sexual harassment case in a court of law. And I could care less about the mating habits of tree shrews and limbed fishes. I believe we've moved just a bit beyond that stage, and we should be mature enough as a species to end the subjugation of half of humanity by now — and stop making evolutionary apologies for it. Thanks for being so participatory in this debate, but I'm not buying your half of it.

• Dear Vincent and Claire,

Greetings! Thanks for sending me your zine (**O-L** #13). It's very well done. I think you do a fine job. You treat the reader in a kindly, considerate fashion, something that I often stray from in my blistering condemnation of this evil system. It's very important to be consistently open, honest and civil, and I commend you both for doing it well. The truth is a joyous thing in and of itself. Anarchism is the smile of life. Cheers!

— **Anthony Rayson**, Monee, IL

*Vincent responds:* If you think our zine is well done, that's not so good because we don't eat steak — I prefer my veggies raw. OK, that was a really bad joke! However, thanks for the compliment. I share your zeal, and it has been known to carry me overboard on occasion, within these pages and in my life. But I think the Buddhist principle of right speech is very important to keep in mind always: to not only be unflinchingly honest in our words, but also to be helpful in things that we say, avoiding excess negativity, judgment, slander and gossip, and striving to keep an economy of words. This is the opposite of superficial patter and really holds the best possibility for creating a space where your voice can be heard and the seeds of goodness can be sown.

• Dear Vincent,

I must say I like to receive your publication. I guess I am of the old school. I haven't gotten used to speaking of "zines." I admire the time, thought and effort you give to the writing.

I really got a kick out of "Take This Anarchist Quiz." I had to laugh a bit about some of the choices. They were so predictable. I am not an anarchist, but I usually lined up in the "d" category. However, I do vote in most elections and I don't believe in dismantling police forces, in spite of the tragic excesses. Life is more complicated than the anarchists conceive because human nature is complicated.

The best chance for a successful anarchist community lies in the religious communities. The Bruderhof does pretty well and that isn't totally anarchistic. But this is a big discussion. And life can't be built around civil disobedience. Basically I believe in struggle for peace and justice. And this is something that never ends. We can find our peace in the midst of struggle for justice. I like the phrase coming out of the African liberation struggle, *a luta continua* (the struggle continues).

Anyway, I find your writing stimulating and usually agree with the articles and the comments. However, it is easier to be negative than positive. How do we build the beloved community? I don't think we achieve it, but we struggle for it. And this is what life is all about.

— George Houser, Pomona, NY

*Vincent responds:* We both appreciate your regard for **O-L**. Certainly, we continue to agree on most things political. However, you have raised a number of points for further discussion.

It is a shame that you didn't color outside the lines and suggest answers that you believe may have been less predictable. The point of the quiz was to illustrate how people (such as yourself) who do not self-identify as anarchists nevertheless have much in common with this political philosophy in your beliefs and daily lives. Who are "the anarchists" to whom you refer when you dismiss them as not fully appreciating the complexity of life and human nature? I embrace anarchism because the anarchist philosophers I have read (e.g. Proudhon, Chomsky, Guérin, etc.), as well as the authors of anarchist zines (*Imagine*, *The Match*, *Harbinger*, etc.), make far more sense than any other school of thought I've studied — especially concerning the struggles for peace and justice.

I think I have made good efforts, building on the work and ideas of others in addition to my own experiences, at beginning to describe how to make inroads into manifesting the beloved community in reality. These include my "Individual Choice and Responsibility" essays (**O-L** #1 & 9) to my three part series on Anarchism (**O-L** #2-4), as well as my criticisms of nonprofit organizations (**O-L** #10) and movement tactics.

The Bruderhof cannot be an example of a model religious community, as it is openly homophobic, and isn't close to anarchism as long as it is structured hierarchically. What is your justification for claiming that religion offers the best hope for an anarchist community? A faith tradition can serve as a building block toward fashioning egalitarian communities, but more often works in the opposite direction. A humanitarian/moral/ethical basis can and has equally advanced anarchist ideals, as I have pointed out in my writings cited above.



An anarchist analysis of the police finds the "tragic excesses" of police behavior to which you refer to be systemic in nature, flowing from the unjust division of wealth in society and inherent racism and authoritarianism. Perhaps we will focus in a future issue on constructing a fuller vision of how to achieve a world without police forces.

Paraphrasing the punk band Propagandhi, "You can vote however you like, but power still calls all the shots." Please illustrate how any vote you cast in your lifetime, in your mind, contributed to the goals that we share.

While I can see how your appraisal of the quiz answers suggested to you that I was promoting a life based around civil disobedience, that was not my intention. Regardless, I disagree in that some revolutionaries do have quite happy lives while engaging in profligate disobedience, but I prefer to think of it simply as expressing individual freedom and social rights at every turn without compromise. With such an orientation towards life, each action serves as an achievement of individual liberation, *as well as* contributing to that larger struggle that motivates all activists for peace and justice.

• Dear Vincent and Claire,

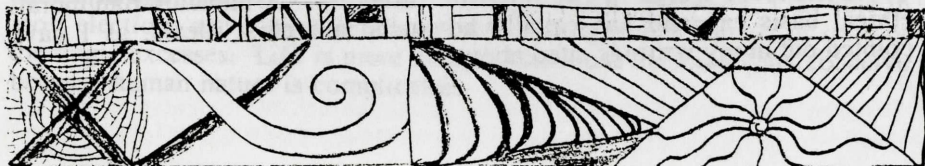
It was good seeing you both at the Underground Publishing Conference. I liked your war tax letter to the IRS. The pesticides article informed me of things I didn't know. (I always have a garden each year.) I see you've put quality time into **O-L** #13.

— Aaron Trudgeon, Detroit, MI

• Hi Vincent,

Thanks for **O-L** zine! What I've read so far is great. The writing is very compassionate and intelligent. This is exactly what a personal/political zine should be: aggressive, honest, and open to others' opinions. I liked your "Plea" on page 3 — very honest. I also liked the polite but firm way you challenged Aprille's review of **O-L** in *Slug & Lettuce*. If others could just question with class and intelligence it would bring out the best in everyone. Good job!

— Larry Nocella, Collegeville, PA



#### 4) Zine Reviews

• **Arow** is definitely one of the better punk zines I've read. Issue #9 showcases some fine creative work, including poems with titles like "American Household" and "Darkening" that starving artist publisher Keith Rosson puts out unrepentantly. I was immensely impressed by his attempt at a photo essay; the 13-page spread of "Ashes" is provocative of alienation and in drawing out the elements of our world that justify black and white photography. My two highlights were the wistful tale, "The Time the Eye-Stabbing, LSD-Gobbling Hick Wanted To Kill Our Hero," and the hilarious "Punk Heroes, Punk Villains" comic book character caricatures. Check out the powers of "The Veganator: Can transmit the pain of all suffering animals through skin contact," and the weaknesses of "Captain Apathy: When confronted with an undeniable truth, he runs to his record collection to look at how cool the colored vinyl is." Also an interview with Hot Water Music and some brief top of the head writings, including "In Defense of John Mellencamp" — yes! Recommended. \* 64 pp. (1/2 size). Send \$3 to 222 SW Pine St. #538, Portland, OR 97204.

• **Clamor** is just totally *packed* with text. Its three issues so far (Feb., April/May, June/July) have kept me absorbed on several long road trips. Jen Angel (*Fucktooth*) and Jason Kucsma (*Praxis*) have launched this very ambitious mega-zine, assembling diverse content from writers across the zine spectrum to produce "a loud and continuous uproar of many human voices." They're building a distribution of several thousand strong, and by mostly eschewing advertising, have established an alternative to *MRR* for the newsstand browser that has a far more viable and less sectarian future. Open to all independent writers and photographers submitting work under the general themes of politics, economics, culture, media, people, sexuality and relationships, food, and travel, I've already contributed through some proofreading and having an article printed, with monetary compensation (disclaimer duly noted). I will only pull out a couple of highlights. Two especially well-done features in the first issue included tales of a first pregnancy (from the punk mom's and the baby's perspectives) and an attempted thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, bringing out the romantic beauty of both experiences. In #2, Jen and Jason do a nice, lengthy piece on open relationships and alternatives to monogamy. I very much appreciated the article that deconstructed the rampant stereotyping of Italians in the HBO hit *The Sopranos*. The latest has good stuff on the A16 protests, Wal-Mart, anarchism, and "The True Cost of the Automobile." Highly recommended. 82 pp. Send \$4 (\$20 for 6 issues) to Become the Media, PO Box 1225, Bowling Green, OH 43402.



• ***You're Not Normal*** (#10) is a split zine with *So Fuckin' What*, which I've reviewed previously (**O-L** #7). Both are in the same vein: anarcho-political with hardcore/punk interviews, but *YNN* has a special focus on political prisoners. As a professional editor, I get irked easily at such minor poor style elements as ALL CAPS TEXT and headache-inducing SEVEN POINT TYPEFACE, and there is a definite need for proofreading. Presentation aside, the content is pretty decent. The interview with radical New Afrikan revolutionary activist behind bars Ali Khalid Abdullah is thought-provoking. The sweetest part was the very first paragraph, "No I Won't Fucking Shut Up": "I know how many of you out there hate politics and couldn't really be bothered with any of the issues this zine talks about. I just want to say its time for you to understand what your apathy and indifference is leading to. When I am assassinated by the government please don't cry or mourn for me in any way at all. Because that's what you wanted. A world free of boring politics." I like this guy! 32 pp. Send \$2 to Sean Lambert, 2835 Delaware Ave. Apt. #1, Kenmore, NY 14217.

• ***Indian Attack*** (#1) is the second zine by Ravi Grover I've reviewed (the now-defunct *Strife*, in **O-L** #10, which I preferred). There are a number of intelligent columns and a large feature on "Human Parasites and the Earth's plight" ("ENVIRONMENTALISM IS THE ONE ISSUE THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED"), which is a very thorough and well-sourced introduction to the subject. I will mention just one interesting statistic that I gleaned: "36 of the 40 world's most impoverished nations export their food to the U.S.!!" You mean there's a structure and a system to the unequal economic relations that are tilted in favor of our country? I wonder why that might be... Write for this and join the Ravilution! 16 pp. Send \$1 to PO Box 5646, Naperville, IL 60567-5646.

• ***Miranda*** is one of the better personal zines I've read by an adult (or non-youth, which I define as over 30). She has a recurring feature, "The Motel of Lost Companions," in which she wistfully recalls friends of old who have faded away. I like these stories because she has a real gift for enlivening a character — in just a few pages, she details the traits that make them stand out in her memory, and I can feel her smiles. In issue #4, she writes of joining the Peace Corps in 1990 to teach ESL, being evacuated from Morocco at the beginning of the Gulf War, and realizing that "no matter what our personal beliefs, [we were] parts and pawns of the government in whose name we were sent to kill and die." Issue #3 includes reflections on living a life without television, and #2 features a harrowing account of teaching in an inner city public school in Baltimore (aptly named "Chaos"). The most recent issue, #5 (December 1999), discusses her first trimester of pregnancy. Each issue also has book reviews and a recipe. Recommended. 24 pp. (1/2 size). Send \$1 to Kate Haas, 3510 SE Alder St., Portland, OR 97214.

• The *I Defy* #7 package definitely sets the record for the most total pages. It took me a long time to get through it all. Casey shares some stories from his internship at FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting), as well as a list of alternative media and an article decrying the corporate media monopoly. Other supplements include record and zine reviews, a guide to putting out records, and a vegan cookbook. More impactful were the writings in "Home" and the booklet with the Rorschach-like cover design (very nice), including several critiques of the military, writings on Mumia and corporate influence in universities.

Casey writes like Kerouac in parts, very stream of consciousness and long sentences. Sometimes it works; sometimes it can be a bit much. A typical sentence, from "Dine Alone": "I am the only table out in this field of smacking lips and crunching jaws and mouths moving in furious, disjointed unison propelled by speech, words slipping coyly out like mad monkeys dangling from sweaty tree limbs in humid nights, to sit a party of one."

I have mixed feelings about Casey's personal writings. On the one hand, I can definitely identify with many of the topics: college goons, the rat race, meeting the girlfriend's family, "Definitely Not Born on the 4th of July," general broodings while riding the train, etc. But often his writing left me feeling about as bitter and depressed as he was when he wrote. Maybe that's a tribute to his good communications skills, but it was hard for me to draw anything positive from his essays. One might say that's how the world is, there are no happy endings; however, I longed for some transforming experience. Maybe I'm being too hard on him, because I recall my junior year in college being filled with the same unrelenting feelings. Overall, though, I am supportive of what Casey's produced in *I Defy*. Personal writing is hard to do, and obviously he risks comments such as mine or worse (or outright avoidance) for being so open. Since he's two years older now, there may be more growth in his writing, and it's definitely worth checking into it. 96 pp. (full size), 92 pp. (1/2 size) plus more. Send \$3 to Casey Boland, 614 S 48th St. Apt. 2R, Philadelphia, PA 19143.

• *Disgusted Life* (#6) is a year old, but worth picking up. It's a political zine that has about as broad a focus as *O-L*. Some of the highlights for me included his centerfold on the effects of the sanctions on Iraq (thank you, Breen), a report on the Millions for Mumia march in Philly, a "Poor Folks Guide to Environmentalism" that suggests simple things you can do, like saving paper by writing or copying on the unused side. There are several informative columns with info on feminism (I was shocked to read that 51% of surveyed college men said they would rape a woman if they could get away with it), world hunger and more. Recommended. 48 pp. (1/2 size). Free, but "Donations greatly appreciated and badly needed!" Breen Casey, 3229 Dawson St., Pittsburgh, PA 15213.



• ***A Real Life*** (trial issue #1) is essentially a glorified zine, written by one woman, Barbara McNally (although she has a small pool of contributors and helpers, but no advertisers), published bimonthly from New York City. Its commonsense food and environmental teachings are targeted especially toward other moms with children, but are useful for all folks interested in, well, a real (better, higher-quality) life. Topics include whole foods (down with white flour!), fast food that's not junk (did you know that real maple syrup contains twice as much calcium as milk?), natural home cleaners (forget animal-based dishwashing soap, go for baking soda and water), eliminating plastic (use glass or wax paper to avoid the carcinogens in baggies), and the nature of reality (I'm not telling — you'll have to get this). Rarely has a zine I've never heard of impressed me right away. Highly recommended. 24 pp. Send \$5 to 245 Eighth Ave., PMB 400, New York, NY 10011.

• I read two issues of ***Cutlass*** and was impressed. Janice's personal stories, cartoons and poetry peek through the cut 'n paste black and white collage of her political/gurl-oriented zine. Issue #4 features "Don't Worry About the Cost," a reflective article on Gregory Levey, a student who died in self-immolation on the Amherst, Massachusetts common in 1991 to protest the Gulf War. This is a powerful story that makes you ponder to what lengths you would go to make peace in the world. At least Janice remembers his sacrifice. This issue also includes rants about book-dumping at the San Francisco library, the manipulative "Cops" TV show, and an overview of "Your Rights and the Police." Issue #5 contains one of the better WTO stories I've read, in the form of an interview with an activist who was on the front lines in Seattle. Another highlight is the tale of last year's demise of Frisco's legendary Epicenter Zone, a punk store run by yet another collective that succumbed to the wear of attrition, bills and a changing scene. Recommended. 24 pp. (#4), 40 pp. (#5) (1/2 legal). Send \$1 to Janice Flux, PO Box 16651, San Francisco, CA 94116-0651.

• ***Hodgepodge*** is an awesome zine, with a mix of hardcore and politics that's similar to *Inside Front*. Issue #5 is a couple of years old now, but still worth a read. There are great columns, including writing on the common man's response to the anti-hate march in New York City after Matthew Sheppard's murder ("Who do these fuckin' fags think they are, blocking traffic because they are gay?"), plus falling in love, standing up to a psychologically abusive father, etc. Featured here are a journey to Chiapas that came face to face with the military terror, which chased the Zapatistas and *Norte Americanos* alike into the jungle, plus an interview with Ramona Africa, in which Mike probes MOVE's position on the "wrongness" of homosexuality, and more. There's also band interviews, music reviews, and very good book and zine reviews. Recommended. 88 pp. Send \$1 to Mike Schade, 983 Little Neck Ave., N. Bellmore, NY 11710.

• ***Turning the Tide*** is a good newspaper focusing on police brutality and prisons. Volume 12 Number 4 (Winter 2000) has a nice exposé of the "small" lies that cops routinely tell in court to justify and cover up their own illegal actions (like unconstitutional searches and planting evidence). The justice system is weighted to thus convict people who would otherwise go free, because the police and the judge are already predisposed to believing their guilt! Then the prosecutors have the victim boxed in a corner, where he risks a stiff sentence if he maintains his innocence, so he's convinced to plea bargain down and accept something like probation — all without any real evidence to convict him! This issue also has some stuff on the WTO protests, Mumia, and the crisis situations in Africa. While this is a very nice resource for these issues, ads take up much space on the few pages and it's somewhat pricey for what you get. 16 pp. (tabloid). 4 issues per year for \$15 from People Against Racist Terror, PO Box 1055, Culver City, CA 90232.

• ***We Dare Be Free*** is an anarchist newspaper that's "providing a voice for the 'violent minority of black-clad hooligans, ignorant vandals, and rogue elements' since 1998" (quoted tongue-in-cheek from a mainstream media source, I presume). It includes pages of international news briefs on anarchists in action, with a particular focus on "New England Anarchist Agitation for International Social Revolution." Issue #6 (Spring 2000) features a broadside against the World Trade Organization. I'm basically in agreement with most of their politics (anti-capitalism, internationalism, anti-statism, class struggle and revolution), but they appear to be closed to dialogue on the merits of nonviolence. It gives me a good insight into how these folks think: highly intelligently, but with an overzealousness that often clouds moral reasoning — yes, a revolutionary vanguard. 20 pp. (tabloid). Send \$1 to PO Box 230685, Boston, MA 02123.

• ***How I Learned to Do IT Bloody Murder*** just blew me away when I read it in one sitting. Author Heather Lynn warns reviewers "not to say it's all about sexual abuse or rape or something equally lame and wrong or I will punch you." Undeniably, there is a devastating helping of that mixed in, but this compelling short story, framed by provocative drawings of society's view of "good" and "bad" female images, is more about one girl's encounter with the values of masculinity and authority we've come to know and love in this patriarchal world. Molly Eliza Tremble learns to be a champion faker to avoid the booby-traps set for free spirits, but inevitably she's found out and her rebellion lands her in a so-called hospital for juvenile suicidals. As Molly puts it, "i say the most disturbing things. my mother says that part of becoming an adult is learning when and when not to talk about certain things. maybe i'm gonna stay a child forever, telling truths whether people are ready or not." Here's to that. Highly recommended. 64 pp. (1/2 size). Send \$3 to PO Box 7023, Grayslake, IL 60030-7023.



• **The Thought** is the bimonthly libertarian/anarchist journal of The Philosophers Guild, which I gather is a collective of folks in the southwest that go back a ways, since the Sept./Oct. 2000 issue is #120. I've never been particularly keen on libertarianism; one reason why is exemplified when the editor discusses the candidates running for office this November. While rightly skimming over the election in one brief paragraph to move on to more important topics, he makes the error of dismissing Gore, Bush, Nader et al. in terms of adjectives describing their campaigns — a fatal flaw for anarchist analysis. The campaigns project themselves as competitions between rival personalities and platforms, which only serves to mask the electoral college and finance structure that predetermines the range of "debate" and squelches true democracy. Inside, there is a decent article on the puzzling lack of protest north of the border against the World Petroleum Congress in Canada and another on White Supremacy, but also long, sleepy tracts on the Libertarian Party platform and "Authoritarian Grammar." I'm glad to see Black Bloc anarchism criticized, but nothing else in the way of activism is offered. This is a mixed bag, which is only natural when a zine has many contributors. For intellectuals only. 26 pp. Send \$2 to Ronald C. Tobin, PO Box 10760, Glendale, AZ 85318-0760.

• **Wishbone** is a somewhat bunny-obsessed personal zine (the author's *nom de plume* is Bunnigrrrl), but has a variety of interesting entries. It really is a grab-bag trying to find well-written *and* informative *and* entertaining zines through the mail. Issue #9 manages to be all of these things. You at least know that you're doing something right if your work gets trashed by religious fundamentalists (the amusing letter is reprinted). The features include "Roots and Wings," a critical tour of an Orange County, CA SUV-driving yuppie housing development, and "Marrying Your Dad," on the very sad and perpetual attraction of the author's friend to abusive males. "In Defense of Wealth," a ridiculous manifesto taken from a local elite rag, reads like it was written by one of the specious College Republicans I debated once upon a time. Shaun Richman, currently managing the Socialist Party presidential campaign, writes a capable response demolishing the mythical stories and platitudes upheld by the brainwashed capitalist — although the habit of such defenders of the faith, of course, is to completely ignore the well-thought out responses and plunge on to ever higher plateaus of rhetoric. There's some humor stuff, such as her soulmate's ("Bunniman") description of "real pedestrians: people who almost magically move from one place to another without a car," which cracked me up, plus newspaper clippings, including one revealing something I'd only suspected previously: it's true that the lower the education level of a woman, the higher her shoe heels tend to aspire. Treat yourself and get this one. 36 pp. (1/2 size). Send \$2 to PMB 200, 32158 Camino Capistrano A, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675.

• I am so glad that I took issues #94 and 95 of *The Match* with me this past summer, on my first week-long vacation in over ten years. By no means is this zine, now in its 30th year, the usual fluff for the beach, and that's exactly what I like about it. *The Match* is deadly serious, and having the time off from work gave me the space I needed to really think about its anti-establishment critiques. Publisher Fred Woodworth packs this journal with so much news and views, you owe it to yourself to get a copy if you are at all interested in the practical, philosophy of anarchism. Its self-assuredness is at the same time its greatest strength and weakness. It is by far the most solid revolt against authoritarianism in defense of individual liberty that one will find, but its inflexible tone, especially in Woodworth's replies in the extensive and diverse letters column (longer than even *O-L*'s), suggests the closed-mindedness that sometimes comes from a lifetime of experience. The sarcasm and invective can be a bit much after a while (a sample: speaking of the Black Panther Party and other "vanguardist bludgeoning, Cuba-loving, discipline-demanding, leader-strutting SHIT," he cries, "It's depressing and sickening to see the hideous worshipfulness with which some of these disgusting criminals are today regarded by ignorant or malicious *de facto* provocateurs"). Even when Fred is right (and admittedly, he often is), his grating tone smacks of the superior martyr posing to have all the answers already. It's possible that others may have worthwhile perspectives, even if they are outside your worldview.

Still, the main themes of *The Match* will unshackle your mind from the illusions of the world and most justice movements as well. The editorial in issue #94, for instance, rightly insists, "The only thing the State or Government is afraid of is this: Your withdrawal of consent. Illegitimacy. Anything else you do only adds to its total of amassed power." A discussion of the inherent problems that come from filling out the census form amplifies that assertion in issue #95. #94's "Living in Littleton: Columbine, Christians and Cops," by a parent of one of the shooting victims, discusses the culture of violence and many of the points I made in my own essay on the topic (*O-L* #5). Interestingly, his experience with the authorities there converted him into an anarchist, and he follows this treatise with a study of the Denver police over a three month period in #95. This complements the regular "Who the Police Beat" column, a sickening, thoroughly researched presentation of the national epidemic of police brutality, corruption, wrongful shootings, etc. You'd think it was some kind of twisted parody, unthinkable in the most free country in the world, but it's all pulled from newspapers clippings, which makes you wonder what isn't reported. If you still make excuses for the men in blue after reading this, you simply have blinders on. #95 also offers criticism of the pseudo-anarchists who play intellectual gymnastics by declaring violence against property not violence, but self-defense, plus true tales of "Freedom Eclipsed" and a "Crap-Detection Department." Fred practices what he preaches, eschewing computers in favor of his own solar-powered press. Highly recommended. 64 pp. (1/2 legal). A subscription is free, but you really should send \$3 to PO Box 3012, Tucson, AZ 85702.



One day a farmer went out sowing.

Part of what he sowed landed on a footpath, where birds came and ate it up (one who hears the message without understanding it).

Part of it fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprouted at once since the soil had no depth, but when the sun rose and scorched it, it began to wither for lack of roots (one who hears the message and at first receives it with joy, but has no roots, so lasts only for a time).

Part of the seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked it (one who hears the message, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of money choke it off, producing no yield).

Finally, part of it landed on good soil and yielded grain thirty- or sixty- or a hundredfold (one who sees with eyes and hears with ears and understands with the heart).

—MATTHEW 13:4-23



V. ROMANO 2000

WHERE HAVE THESE SEEDS  
FALLEN FOR YOU?