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New Perspectives on Politics, Culture, Media, and Life

clamor

May/June 2003
Issue 20

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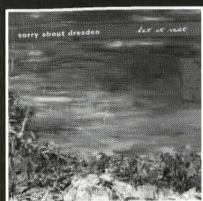
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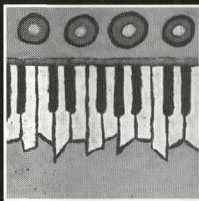
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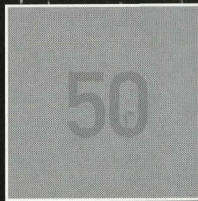
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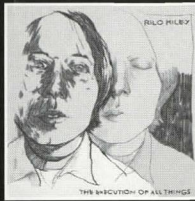
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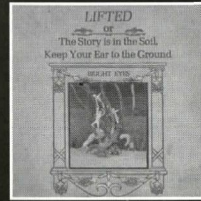
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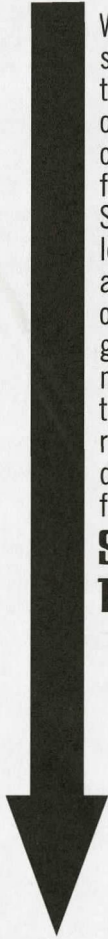


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from your editors

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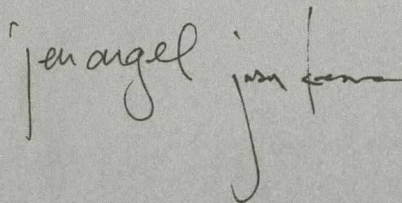
Please rest assured that we have not gone forward with our FOOD issue during a time of war in an effort to carry on and to show "them" (terrorists? Iraqis? Saddam Hussein?) that they can't keep us Americans down. The opinion that Americans should try to lead normal lives while a whole bunch of people on the other side of the world are dying (including American soldiers sent by our government), is just ludicrous.

We have gone forward with our regular issue first because we think it is important to examine what we eat. Also, because we believe that there are far better places to get up-to-the-minute war coverage than in a bi-monthly magazine published in the United States. For example, this issue was put together while consuming mass quantities of news from indymedia.org, daily supplements of Amy Goodman's radio program *Democracy Now!*, hours and hours of BBC World News Service, and snacking on countless forwards of articles critical of the war that have ended up in our email inbox. A steady diet of alternative and world news will do your body and mind good when trying to make some sense of this insanity. We're not guaranteeing that you'll go any less crazy trying to figure out why innocent people are dying during an illegal, unjustified war, but at least you'll know you're among the world majority who knows this war is about something more than "liberation" or "national security."

Speaking of misdirected energies and resources, we'd like to suggest that you visit our web site at www.clamormagazine.org/warbuys.html to find out what President Bush's \$75 billion war package can buy. Yep, that's \$75,000,000,000.00. Habitat for Humanity could use that money to build 1,875,000 homes in the United States — yeah, almost 2 million homes. They could build 20 times as many homes in India with that money. How about paying a year's worth of grocery bills for 14.5 million American families? Visit the site to find out some other ways to spend the money we are using to kill a lot of people, and perhaps suggest your own equivalents.

But what about the food? As you'll note on the table of contents, there are very few articles here that aren't related to food in some sense. We were inundated with articles for this epicurean issue. It seemed like everyone had something to say about the stuff we put in our pie-holes. What we end up with is an issue — not unlike other issues of *Clamor* — that takes a theme, tosses out the cliché articles that usually appear on the subject, and pieces together a mosaic of art and words that represent the diverse ways food plays out in our daily lives. We hope you enjoy every morsel or at least savor the dishes that appeal to you most. Dig in.

Thanks for reading!



PS: Please see page 7 for information about how you can participate in our upcoming issues! *Clamor* would be blank pages without you!

CLAMOR's mission is to provide a media outlet that reflects the reality of alternative politics and culture in a format that is accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds. CLAMOR exists to fill the voids left by mainstream media. We recognize and celebrate the fact that each of us can and should participate in media, politics, and culture. We publish writing and art that exemplify the value we place on autonomy, creativity, exploration, and cooperation. CLAMOR is an advocate of progressive social change through active creation of political and cultural alternatives.



CLAMOR: A Loud and Continued Uproar of Many Human Voices • Number 20 • May/June 2003

ECONOMICS

- 9 **Who's Paying for Your Fix?**
Fair trade coffee
Kate Duncan
- 12 **Future Food or Evil Spore?**
Quorn foods
Gavin Grant
- 14 **Hip To Eat Beef**
Beef industry targets young women
Matt Dineen
- 16 **... But I thought we had a deal!?**
Vietnam catfishing and the WTO
Michael Karadjis

CULTURE

- 20 **Coming Down on the Farm**
Monsanto still targeting farmers
Sarah Bantz
- 24 **Young Impressions**
Black women and body image
Katrice Mines
- 26 **Knowledge of Life**
Attempting Ayurvedic living
Charlotte Druckman
- 28 **In Search of Food, Home, and Community**
Foraging for a sense of place
Jason Gillis Lemieux
- 30 **Mmm ... Arepas**
Sarah Town

REVIEWS

- 22 Sounds
- 29 Friends Forever
- 40 Print
- 47 Text Tools
- 49 Mixed Sounds
- 59 Women on Video
- 63 Lumumba and Disinfo

POLITICS

- 34 **Eye on the Street**
World unites for peace
Joshua Breitbart, Michael Burke and NYC IMC
- 37 **The Politics of Food**
Rainbow Cooperative Grocery and Palestine/Israeli conflict
Neela Banerjee
- 38 **The Tyranny of Consensus**
Examining consensus decision-making
M. Treloar
- 41 **Oppressive Vegans**
Joe Diffie

MEDIA

- 44 **Politics Never Sounded So Good: Sarah Jones**
Interview by Tizzy Asher
- 48 **More than a Target Market**
Active youth
Carly Stasko

SEX & GENDER

- 50 **Re-Sexing the Cherry**
Kimberly Nichols

PEOPLE

- 56 **No More Junk, Eat Healthy!**
Halal Restaurant owner Shameem Chowdhury
Courtney Martin
- 58 **In Food We Trust**
Philly's Food Trust
Greg Fuchs
- 60 **Hello, My Name is I Hate You ...**
Harry Seitz
- 62 **Finding Happiness in Food**
Robert Biswas-Diener
- 66 **Minimum Security on Food**
Stephanie McMillan

letters

Please address letters to letters@clamormagazine.org or write us at PO Box 1225 Bowling Green, OH 43402
Letters may be edited for length.
Not all letters received will be printed.

Constructive Criticism of the Sports Issue

First, I should say that every time I get an issue of *Clamor*, I look for people of color in the bios and photos and art. If you haven't tried flipping through the issue with this viewpoint, you should. I'm sure you guys are thinking about race and representation all the time, but it really makes me uncomfortable to look down the list of 30 contributors and see only 2-3 obvious people of color. I know there are many pseudonyms, and I'm aware you do what you can to be inclusive. But also, something about the language and feel of the magazine seems anglo to me. (sorry for being so blunt!)

I think part of it is your editing style. I know we're bound to disagree on this, but to me, text-filled spreads with 3,000 body-text sized words with non-descriptive headlines, are just not accessible. Maybe literary (white) punk kids who spend their time in revolution books and library dumpsters can get into such wordy recreation. Please don't misunderstand me; I'm not trying to say that people of color are lazy readers. It's just that if I'm going to spend my time on something, it's gotta be educational and to the point. You don't have to be just soundbites like *Maxim*, but even *Utne* has scaled back on article length (more on *Utne* later). My point is that if *Clamor* attempts to be more accessible to everybody, including people of color, it might be disadvantageous to have such long, dense articles. "Minor League University" is just plain dry and academic. What is it about, anyway? The author doesn't really get to the point until the second page. "Play Is Not a Game" is oddly academic and analytical, but it's supposed to be about fun and spontaneity. Huh? This reminds me of *Utne*'s tendency towards eastern-influenced, typically-white self-analytical-indulgent reflections.

Again, this isn't meant to be a personal attack. There are a lot of great — but anglo-y — publications. Don't get me started on my love/hate relationships with *Adbusters* or *Utne Reader*. They're smart and well-designed (well, *Adbusters*, anyway) and crucial, but the last thing I need is a lefty white woman telling me about how her perception of time has been changed by her trip to Costa Rica. Similarly, I think the phenomenon of Suigetsukan (the community who founded it, who attends, why, what they learn and how) is a lot more interesting than what the white sensei/founder thinks about reconciling authoritarianist traditions with anarchist beliefs. (Who cares what an anarchist sensei thinks, anyway? That's like being the boss of an anarchist corporation). By the way, the headline, coupled with the large photo, smacks of appropriation.

On another note, it's not that I want to be a traditionalist, but if the lead described the point of the article, I'd be more inclined on finishing the full article. Mostly, I skip around and because I can't tell where the author is going. And I really do think the subtitles add a lot. I can't always tell whether it's an op-ed or reporting piece or memoir, etc...

I wanted to mention the illustrations in this issue. Someone may well be complaining about the ones I submitted to you, but there are two in particular that I want to bring up.

The first is JT Yost's illustration for *Minor League University*. Even though *Clamor* is all about autonomy, do you really want to be a publisher behind that kind of illustration? Why is the basketball player black? I'm assuming he's black since he has an afro. Without the afro he could as well have crawled out from *Where the Wild Things Are*? And what is going on with his face? I don't think the artist intended racist undertones, but how can it be regarded otherwise? The face seems really obviously distorted — it's not malicious, but definitely animal-like (like an ape).

The second is Eric Rose's illustration for "Betties on Boards." The dominant image is the hot chick with the tank top and tight abs. But the article keeps talking about real girls who skate who say, "this doesn't represent me." Rose is a talented, skilled illustrator, but that almost makes it worse because that means he has experience and didn't just read the article wrong. He just wasn't thinking and didn't really take the time to figure it out, especially knowing that he's a male illustrating a female's article on female perspectives.

Anyway, I know I submitted sub-par artwork so I shouldn't be critical. And I know I just dumped a huge amount of criticism on your laps, but I really mean it with the best intentions. I'm truly impressed with the level of quality of your printing and design. I'd just like to see *Clamor*'s usability as an educational, communicative media optimized.

Best,
C. Wong
Oakland, CA

First, we don't consider any of your work sub-par. We really appreciate being able to include your illustrations and we really appreciate you taking the time to air your criticisms. Of course some of them are difficult to hear without getting demoralized, and our first response was to wonder whether Clamor should even be on the newsstands; whether it's doing more harm than good, you know?

Clamor is anglo in a lot of ways and definitely comes out of an anglo community of post-punk, middle America zinesters. We're organizers in that community and it's necessary work and we think Clamor has been an effective tool for that limited use. But Clamor definitely needs to be and do more for more people; we're trying to move the magazine in that direction, and bring its whole community along with it.

Your comments come at a time when we're trying to transition from being a tool of one community to being a magazine that connects the culture of all of our movements. We think our biggest obstacle is time. There are only three of us working on Clamor full-time and we all have other jobs and responsibilities. Of course our primary focus is making sure we come out on time and making sure we have enough money to pay the printer. After that, our focus for the magazine is to increase the number of people of color contributing to and presented in the magazine.

Beyond writers and illustrators, we are eager to find guest editors and an art director who can move the

magazine in this direction, and free up some of our time to do the same. But that's hard when we can only pay very little.

Regarding article lengths, we are definitely moving towards shorter articles, but it's a slow process. Because we're open submission, making changes in our article style requires instilling a cultural shift in our community of contributors. (And then of course what you see on the newsstands is 3 months behind the articles that are currently in progress). We could come down harder with the edits on the openings and things like that, but we've always tried to walk softly on our contributors' work. It's a constant balancing act.

One of the (very few) criticisms we have/had of Blu and RedEye magazines is that their articles often seemed to come up short of the solid piece and I was left wanting more. Trying to find a balance of accessible pieces without sacrificing substance is something we'll be working on as long as we're doing the magazine. It's a marketing and editorial issue that is at the fore of most of the decisions we make. As evidence of this evolution, we'd point to how much Clamor has changed in the first three years. It's come a long way from starting out as a zine-like magazine with obscenely long articles to where we're at now, and we're glad to be progressing.

With regards to JT Yost's illustration, we see what you mean and it's troubling. We saw the illustration in the context of JT's other work, which you can check out at <http://jtyost.com/>. He draws everyone, including himself, like animals. But clearly there are times when that's not appropriate and this is a good example of that.

With regard to Eric's work, he did his illustrations based on photos of women skaters that we asked him to draw from, so we don't necessarily feel like he dropped the ball. If we had more time to work with, we would have jobbed this out to a woman to illustrate, but it wasn't until we received low-resolution photos at the last minute that we realized we needed someone to turn out a couple illustrations in a couple days. By coincidence, he wrote us out of the blue at the same time and said he could turn them out pretty quickly.

We appreciate the comments and the intentions. That usability is definitely our goal. Getting and responding to constructive criticism like this is an important part of the process of achieving that goal, even when it's a little painful. We certainly hope that you still intend to contribute illustrations despite your criticisms, and we hope you keep the comments — good and bad — flowing.

Corrections

Apparently, we don't know who our contributors are. The illustration on page 33 of the Mar/Apr 2003 SPORTS issue was attributed to Peet Lewis, when the real artist was Peet Baldwin. Even when we do remember our great contributors, sometimes their bios get lost in the mix. Rosa Clemente (Walk Like a Warrior (Mar/Apr 2003)) is a Black Puerto Rican organizer, scholar-activist and journalist living in Brooklyn, NY. In August 2001 Rosa was a youth representative at the United Nations Conference against Xenophobia, Racism and Related Intolerance, in Durban, South Africa. She has a host of other amazing credentials that we don't have enough room to print, but you can reach her at blkpuertorican@msn.com and 917.660.2187

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without you, clamor would only be a murmur.

Clamor is built from everyday folks like you. Please take some time to contact us if you have any ideas that you would like to see in Clamor.

Clamor accepts submissions of printed work and artwork on an ongoing basis. On our website, www.clamormagazine.org, under the heading "participate," there are deadlines and topic suggestions which may help you determine when, and what, to contribute. However, many works are accepted regardless of whether they fit with the cover story, or theme, of an issue.

Got an idea? Let us have it! Tell us about what is important to you, what is going on in your community, or someone (or something) you find inspiring. If a magazine was made just for you, what would you want it to include?

Drafts should be submitted to info@clamormagazine.org (preferred) or to Clamor, PO Box 1225, Bowling Green, OH 43402. Written works should be less than 2,500 words.

**Participate in our upcoming issues on
travel (Sep/Oct),
faith (Nov/Dec),
and art (Jan/Feb 2004).**

contributors

Unless noted, all contributors can be reached care of
Clamor, PO Box 1225, Bowling Green, OH 43402.

Tizzy Asher (p. 44) has written about music, film and women's issues for publications such as *The Stranger*, *Magnet*, *Seattle Weekly*, *Resonance*, and *Matte* and is currently the co-editor for the web zine *To Whom It May Concern* (www.towhomitmayconcern.org). She is firmly against the words moisten, grotto, and pudding and would eventually like to author legislation that declares the use of said words unconstitutional.

Neela Banerjee (p. 37) is a San Francisco-based journalist. Currently the editor-in-chief of *AsianWeek* newspaper, the nation's only pan-Asian Pacific American English-language news weekly, she has also worked for the *Dayton Daily News* in Dayton, Ohio. Reach her at neelanjana99@hotmail.com.

Sarah Bantz (p. 20) farms, writes, teaches economics, and practices radical politics in Central Missouri. You can reach her at sbant2@coin.org.

Robert Biswas-Diener (p. 62) is a frequent contributor to *Clamor*. You can reach him at jayajedi@aol.com.

Mike Burke and **Joshua Breitbart** (p. 34) are members of the New York City Independent Media Center (www.nycimc.org). Mike is also a producer at *Democracy Now!* and Josh is a consulting editor here at *Clamor*. They are neighbors in Brooklyn, and both love the spinach nachos from the burrito place around the corner.

Eli Chapman (p. 15) is working on a video project about the local food scene in and around New York. He's also looking for tech savvy partners to help him build a software system that makes it economically feasible to survive as a guerrilla video organization. Contact Eli at opensourcefood@yahoo.com.

A retired neuro-surgeon, **Dave Crosland** (p. 50) now spends his time dancing in a leopard-print thong to "The Party Boy Theme." He can also be seen turning tricks for the humor publication, *tastes like chicken* (tlchicken.com), and painting barns and amish wagons with his "partner" Debbie at hiredmeat.com.

After flunking out of Ninja school and selling her failing emu farm, **Melly Curphy** (p. 16) was searching for her purpose in life. That's when the freelance art thing really started up. Now she spends her time drawing comics about poop, sculpting busts of Jan Michael Vincent and studying lycanthropy. To see what this hot chick does with her "spare time" go to www.missmonster.com or you can email her at missmonster@bigplanet.com.

Matt Dineen (p. 14) is an activist, writer, and very recent graduate of Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. His senior project in sociology was about Participatory Economics (parecon) in Winnipeg's Old Market Autonomous Zone. If you happen to be on Cape Cod this summer, or if your favorite food is homemade eggplant parmesan, you should get in touch with him: PO Box 661/Eastham, MA 02642 or mattidineen@ziplip.com.

Charlotte Druckman (p. 26) works in the Architecture & Design department of *Town & Country* magazine and freelances for *DailyCandy*. She is a doctoral candidate in the History of Art, although, at the moment, she has abandoned academia. Her favorite food: it's a tie between spinach and (when she's not testing out weird diets) rice pudding. E-mail her at cqd5970@nyu.edu.

Kate Duncan (p. 9) is a collage and fiber artist, Swiss and Dutch specialist at Idyll Untours, and Managing Director of Idyll Development Foundation. She has fun even on overnight bus rides when the driver calls passengers clowns

and won't stop to let someone throw up. She wishes Spider Jerusalem were real. Kate says her favorite foods are butter and salt! Reach her at katherine@pobox.com

Sharon Easley (p. 20) strives to bring quality illustrations to publication. After studying abroad in Taiwan for three years she returned to the US to finish her BA at CCAC. To see more of her work please visit www.sharoneasley.com or www.crackpotillustration.com.

Greg Fuchs (p. 58) is a photographer and writer living in New York city. He is the author of *Come Like It Went* (BD Books, Washington, DC, 1999). He is also the columnist-at-large for *Boog City*.

Joshua Gorchov (p. 60) draws and paints every day. www.gorchov.com.

Gavin J. Grant (p. 12) freelances from Northampton, MA. He also runs Small Beer Press (www.lcrw.net). His favorite foods are dark chocolate and bread (though not necessarily together!).

Officially unemployed in the most unemployed state in the Union, **Shawn Granton** (p. 30) has plenty of time on his hands to ignore reality. Now there is no excuse for him not to draw more comics and the like, but I'm sure he'll think of something. Corner him in a coffeshop and ask him for a copy of his latest comic, *Complexification Strategy*, or send him \$1 to P.O. Box 14185, Portland OR, 97293-0185. He can also be electronically reached at modernindustry@hotmail.com.

After a four year sentencing at Kendall College of Art & Design, **Helen Griffin** (p. 24) is now a freelance illustrator and designer. She is currently residing in Michigan, where she's constantly dodging bill collectors and pimping her illustrations on the internet while hustling her graphic design portfolio on the street corners. Along with contributing for *Clamor*, Helen's illustrations has been published in other publications such as *Savoy Magazine* and *LIA Magazine*. To view more of her work or to contact the artist directly, please go to: www.helengriffin.com.

Michael Karadjis (p. 16) is a researcher and freelance journalist based in Hanoi, Vietnam mkaradjis@hn.vnn.vn

Catherine Komp (p. 46) is a community radio activist and freelance journalist. Contact her in care of *Clamor*.

Joshua Krause (p. 14) is an illustrator and graphic designer living in San Diego. Reach him care of *Clamor*.

Jason G. Lemieux (p. 28) is an artist and activist living between New England and the SF Bay Area. He is a designer and organizer for the Eggplant Active Media Workers Collective and can be reached at jason@eggplantmedia.com. His favorite food is hen of the woods, of course!

Courtney E. Martin (p. 58) was born and raised in the geographically expansive and politically narrow town of Colorado Springs, CO. A political science/sociology double-major at Barnard College, she also explored the spoken word poetry scene in New York as a participant (Nuyorican Poets Café National Team Member 2000) and in Cape Town, South Africa as a researcher and teacher. Currently, as a graduate student at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study (writing and social change), she is writing her first play, working on political theater with immigrant teenagers in Brooklyn, and pursuing her free-lance journalism career. She is an assignment writer for *ColorLines* magazine. Her favorite foods are catfish and collard greens, and she would love to hear your feedback at cem1231@hotmail.com.

Katrice Mines (p. 24) has been a newspaper reporter for four years and is currently completing a master's degree in American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University. She plans to pursue a career in magazine publishing. Her primary interest is in using literature to empower young women of color and to give voice to silenced groups. As it is her desire to always remember the community that helped her succeed, she allots of time to volunteering in community-based groups and tutoring students in literature and writing from elementary school to college. Her favorite food is broccoli. Reach her care of *Clamor*.

Kevin Mink (p. 39) fronts Belspring, Virginia's only cross-dressing country combo, *Bitch Cassidy & the Sundress Kid*. His writing has appeared in Alexander Cockburn's *Counter-Punch*. Contact him at minkman2@hotmail.com.

Kimberly Nichols (p. 50) is a writer/artist living in the California Desert. By day she works is the communications manager for a major HIV/AIDS non-profit organization and by night she is a co-editor of www.3ammagazine.com and www.newtopiamagazine.net. Her book of short stories *Mad Anatomy* will be published by Del Sol Press in Spring 2003. Her favorite food? Spicy pad thai. She can be reached at kcooperblue@earthlink.net.

Erik Rose (p. 26) is originally from the town of Etch-a-Sketches but now lives in Columbus, OH. He is a staff writer and illustrator for the comedy/arts newspaper *Tastes Like Chicken*. His mom and dad always thought he would grow up to be weird — they just didn't think he'd be that weird. See more of his work and contact him through www.tlchicken.com.

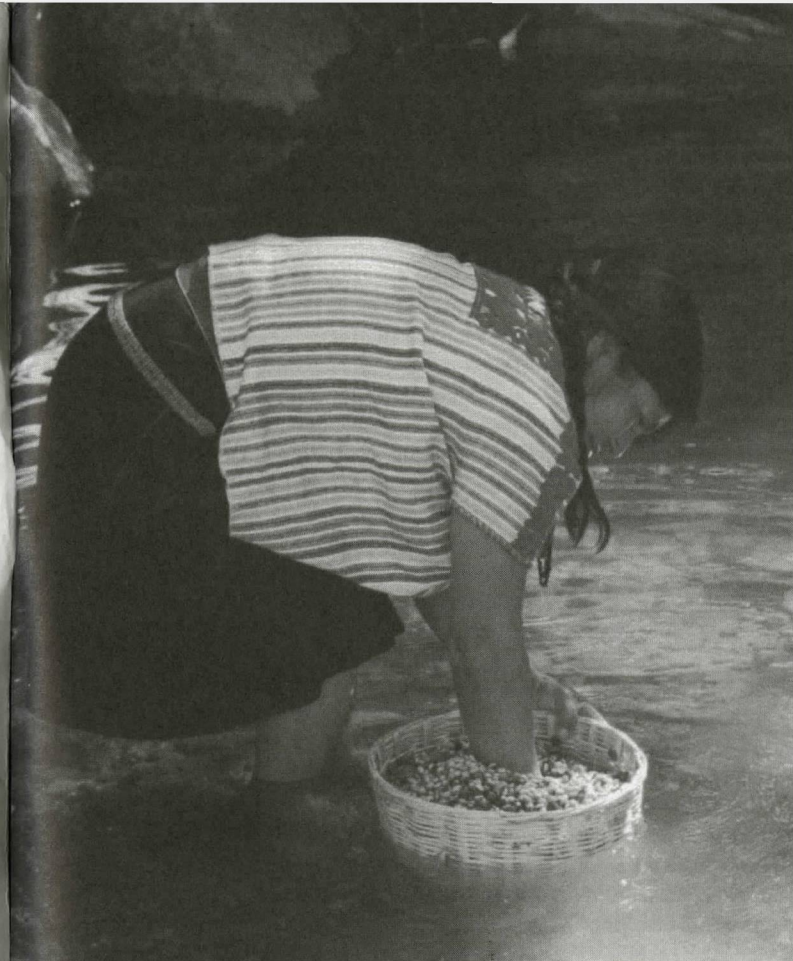
Harry Seitz (p. 60) currently resides in the NYC metro area. He is a bit of a late bloomer, and is currently in between jobs and apartments. If you know of any high paying jobs or cheap dwellings, please feel free to contact him at happer55@yahoo.com.

Carly Stasko (p. 48) is an artist, activist, and imitator. She leads workshops about media literacy, culture jamming, and globalization in classrooms and community centers around Toronto and abroad. You can find her cut n' paste madvertisements in her zine "uncool" and in *THIS* magazine. contact her at carly@intrinsik.net & www.intrinsik.net. Her favorite food is vegetarian roti.

Andrew Stern (p. 62) is a documentary photographer who has been traveling the world for the past few years working on a wide variety of projects. From Inuit land struggles in northern Greenland to the economic collapse and popular uprising in Argentina, his work focuses on telling stories that aren't normally told. His photography has been shown in galleries throughout the world and can be found on various Indymedia web sites as well as in the many different publications he works with. He can be contacted at: expectresistance@yahoo.com.

Sarah Town (p. 30) was raised on meatloaf and mac and cheese (not the kind from a box) and only ate her first arepa in the late 1990s. Since learning how to make them from scratch, she's been slowly expanding her repertoire of multiple serving and non-stir fry cuisine. Make dinner for your peeps and work for peace. Reach her care of *Clamor*.

M. Treloar (p. 38) is a member of *Black Cross Health Collective* (www.blackcrosscollective.org), which uses consensus, and *Bring the Ruckus* (www.illegalvoices.org/ruckus) which doesn't. Treloar can be reached at notamedic@netscape.net.



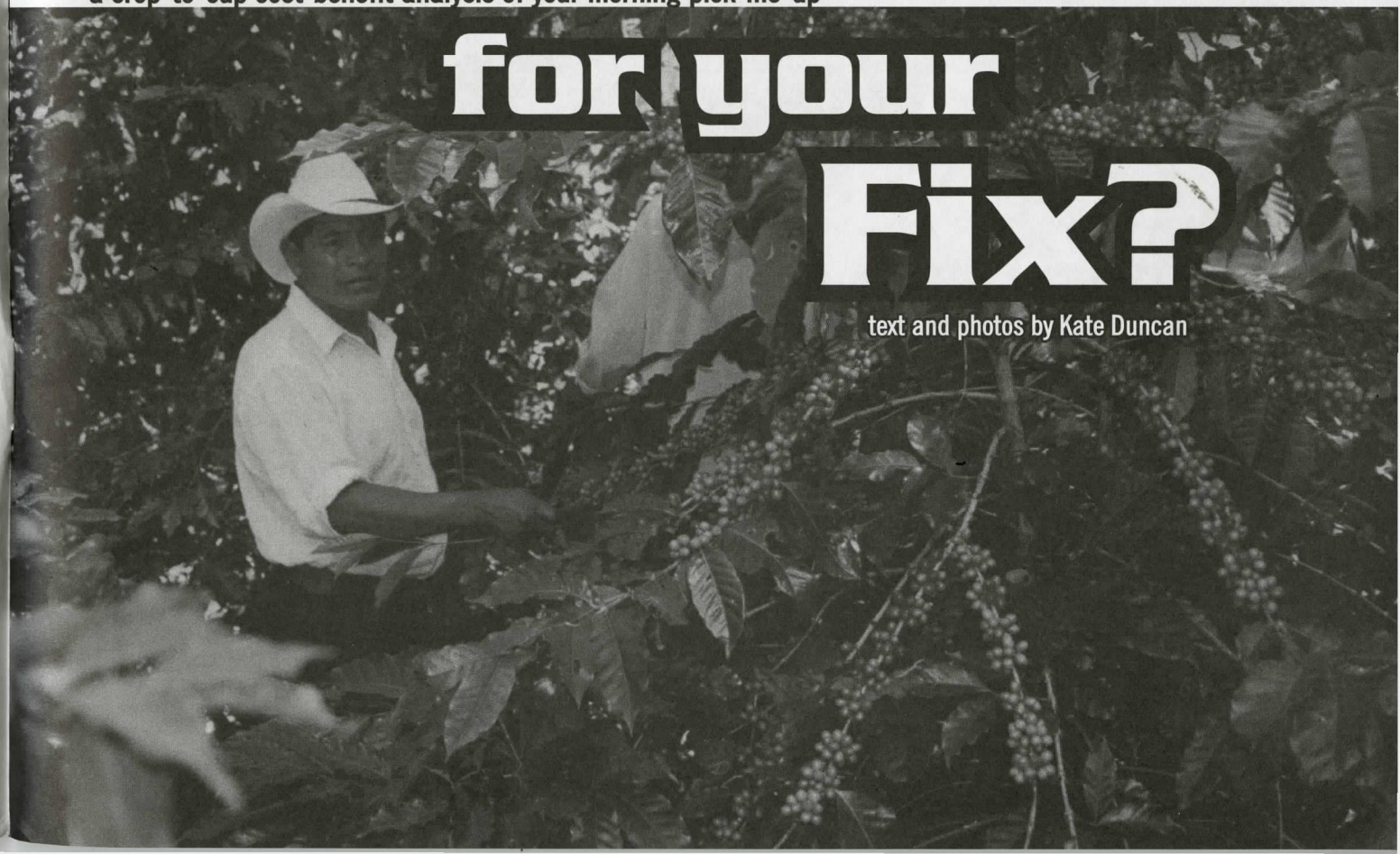
Who's Paying

a crop-to-cup cost-benefit analysis of your morning pick-me-up

for your

Fix?

text and photos by Kate Duncan



Unless your morning latte was a fair trade blend, it probably cost more than what the farmer who picked the beans earns in a day. Conventional coffee prices are at their lowest in a century, even below the cost of production. Farmers have been leaving the fruit to rot on the tree, pulling the kids out of school, abandoning the family land and pouring into the cities to find non-existent work. That's why, as the most heavily traded commodity after oil, and the most common beverage after water, coffee is a major focus of the fair trade movement.

If your morning latte was a fair trade brew, it means the person who farmed the beans is earning enough to support his family. This is all well and good, but the way fair trade is usually explained — with prices, numbers and statistics — ignores its lasting benefits. The true point of fair trade is the cultural, communal, and environmental stability it bolsters.

A farmer who sells through fair trade is a member of a cooperative that is a vehicle for community empowerment. And not just a neighborhood watch: The people typically organized via fair trade are those whom the free market has filtered to the lowest economic stratum. Rather than maneuvering them into a position where they're forced to take what they can get, fair trade recognizes farmers as equal partners, a platform from which they

can command more control over their business and lives.

"Fair trade is a different kind of business relationship between the producer and buyer, which has been an inspiration to help these communities pull together instead of caving to the pressure of all the things trying to blow them apart," says Monika Firl. Monika heads up producer relations for Cooperative Coffees, and as such, led half a dozen coffee roasters and me (as a grateful representative of Idyll Development Foundation, one of Cooperative Coffee's funders) on a buying trip to farmers' co-ops in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Mexico in February, where we were able to see the effect for ourselves.

Through Cooperative Coffees, 15 North American roasters combine their resources to purchase beans from small farmers who combine their harvests to sell in bulk. Much of the business is taken care of personally at annual meetings between the co-ops. In this way, Cooperative Coffees and other fair trade organizations build long-term relationships with farmers that both parties can depend on. Support for organic certification, sustainable farming practices, access to affordable credit, and consumer education to create more demand for fairly traded coffee are also priorities of the fair trade movement.

Mut Vitz, centered just east of San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico, is an

astonishing model of a farmers' co-op. Its list of 560 members can be cross-referenced with that of the Zapatista movement for cultural survival and self-determination of indigenous peoples in Chiapas. Most Mut Vitz farmers are living on their father's father's land, which they intend to keep. This, not the price of coffee, is the root cause for their organization. But coffee helps keep them going.

Democratically run by volunteers, Mut Vitz unites the livelihood of 22 indigenous villages, with a reach beyond the coffee fields. Fair trade income leveraged by the co-op helps pay for a community health clinic and autonomous, bilingual (Spanish/Tzotzil) schools. Mut Vitz's model motivated women in the communities to form weaving, gardening, and bread-baking co-ops, which have built shared ovens and community gardens. These supply the villages with fresh bread and organic vegetables, and earn the co-op a little extra income.

In contrast to the growth of Mut Vitz's fair trade sales (from 20 tons to 200 tons in three years), Maya Vinic in Chenalho, Chiapas is just getting started. Like Mut Vitz, Maya Vinic has strong roots in a movement for indigenous rights, but their group, Las Abejas, are conscientious objectors to the armed civil war. In 1997, 45 members of Las Abejas, mostly women and children, were

title page: top left - a woman washes parchment (unprocessed green coffee) near Yaxgemel, top right - coffee beans, bottom - a farmer on the Maya Vinic Farm in Yaxgemel
this page: below - coffee pulp to be composted at FEDEPMA mill

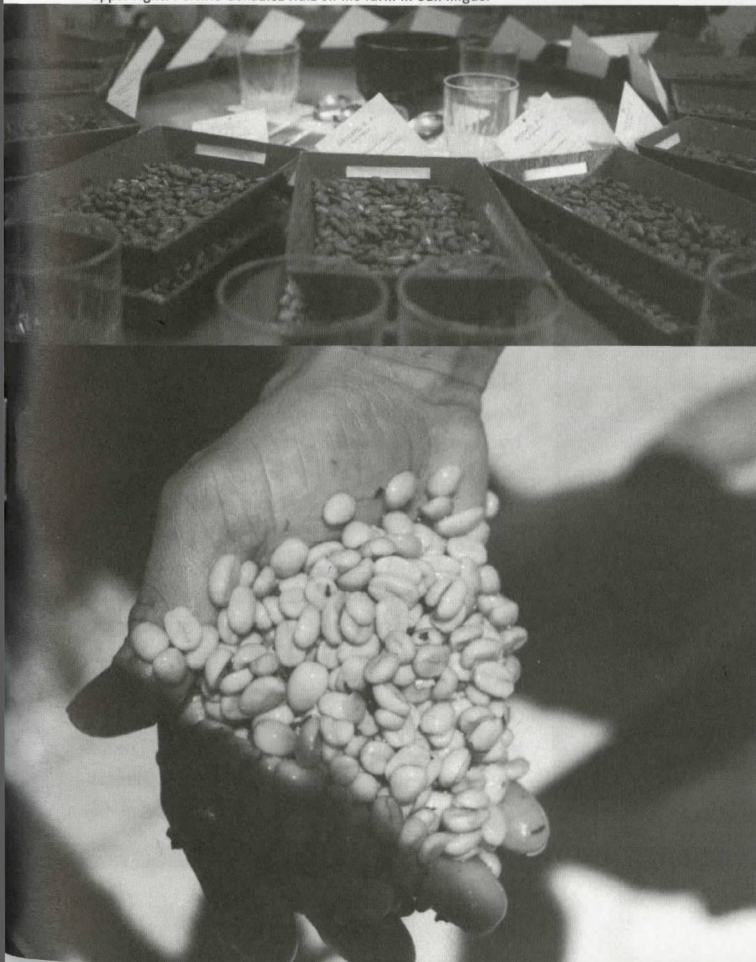


murdered in a prolonged attack by paramilitaries while praying for peace in Acteal, a Chenalhó refugee community. "The timing of the massacre was obviously planned to coincide with the coffee harvest," says Monika, "and many people benefited, both economically and politically, at the cost of the Abejas members who were too terrified to harvest their coffee that year." The fear was augmented by the fact that the murderers were neighbors of Las Abejas families. In the wake of the massacre, then, "Las Abejas decided to turn inwards and create a new organization comprised of their own members in an attempt to channel their products toward better markets."

In 2003, Acteal is breathtakingly unified through the lens of the Maya Vinic Cooperative. Six-hundred thirty-two farmers have an interest in the co-op. During introductions between Maya Vinic and Cooperative Coffees, each question posed by a roaster was directly answered by a different farmer depending on his knowledge, without being prompted by a leader. A perfect day of growers and roasters tromping together through fields exploding with bright coffee cherries (it helps that they've been organic for ten years) led to the signing of a contract for Maya Vinic's first 10 tons of fair trade coffee. A throng of people in the village of Yaxgemel, one of Maya Vinic's 33 communities, turned out to attentively witness every translated word and watch every stroke of the pen. We all quivered with excitement.

This solidarity and stability to plan for the future is the end to which fair trade is a means. Price does play a crucial part in fair trade, but it is only one method. "We're trying to pay decent wages that don't cause compromises to have to creep into the system," says Bill Harris, President of Cooperative Coffees. "We're trying to do something that gives people options of maintaining their cultural identity if they want to. The main thing we do is allow people to do what they've always done and to make a living doing it." ★

below: top - cupping at the Orocafe in Guatemala City, below - export quality beans
upper right: Porfirio Gonzalez Ruiz on his farm in San Miguel



Bringin' Fair Trade Home

Q: Fair trade's not more expensive than conventional coffee and the quality is better in most cases, so why should I have to campaign for its use? Why isn't fair trade the industry standard?

A: It's a demand problem, not a supply problem. Bill Harris, president of Cooperative Coffees, says, "The current supply of fairly traded green beans is estimated to be at least five times larger than the current demand. Conventional coffee roasters and importers will not buy this excess supply unless conscious consumers get involved and help make fair trade standards the standard for the coffee industry. Most coffee companies will only commit to fair trade when their customers demand it."

Q: Isn't it already catching on? I mean, even Starbucks is serving it.

A: Bill again: "Over 100 coffee roasters have signed on as fair traders and over 8,000 stores supposedly stock fair trade coffee, but it often seems that it is easier to find a brochure about fair trade than it is to find a cup of fair trade coffee. Starbucks's involvement, however limited, has been a positive for the fair trade movement in terms of consumer awareness. Those of us that are fundamentally committed to this movement just wish that they would use their incredible resources to actually market the product, rather than simply marketing the message. This movement isn't about positioning your PR campaign, it's about farmers and families and their ability to put food on the table. It needs more coffee companies to boldly step forward and declare that they care about the people that grow coffee and want to pay a price that helps them earn a living wage."

Q: So what do I do?

A: Demand fair trade coffee, especially from people who dole out lots of it! Spread the word! Grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, universities, churches, and AA meetings are excellent spots. Fortify your knowledge at Fairtrade.net. Transfairusa.org can send you helpful fact sheets and visual aids. And here are two sources for oh-so-delicious fair trade coffee: Cooperative Coffees (www.cooperativecoffees.com) and Equal Exchange (www.equalexchange.org). You can also copy this little card and take it to your favorite coffee shop:

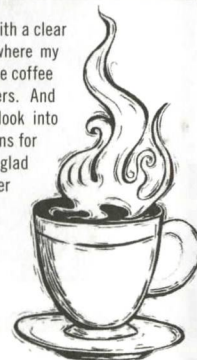
I like to support local businesses, AND I like to drink my coffee with a clear conscience. In a recent article in Clamor Magazine, I read where my favorite coffee shop can help me do both by purchasing fair trade coffee — coffee that is purchased for a fair price directly from farmers. And it's not difficult for stores to do this. Please take a minute, and look into these resources for information and wholesale purchasing options for fair trade coffee. Thanks for your attention to this issue! I'll be glad to continue supporting you in your efforts to introduce fair trader coffee to your clientele!

Information:

Fair Trade Labeling Organization: www.fairtrade.org
Transfair USA: www.transfairusa.org

Wholesalers:

Equal Exchange: www.equalexchange.com
Cooperative Coffees: www.cooperativecoffees.com



Future Food or Evil Spore?

Gavin Grant tries Quorn, a new player in the vegetarian foods game

What do think of when you see the word Quorn? Mmm! Tasty veggie treat? or, Hey, doesn't that stuff make people sick? Or, maybe, Loved their new album. (Quorn, not Korn!)

A little background on Quorn and me. I'm not generally a fan of \$17 billion drug corporations such as Astra Zeneca, parent company of Marlow Foods, who make and sell Quorn. And although I'm vegetarian, I am not a fan of generic meat-flavored meat-substitutes. I'd rather eat humus than fake chicken and those "meat-style" veggie burgers... no thanks.

But, but, but. Whenever I see a new veggie food, I'll try it. You never know, it could be a whole new style of food, a whole new way of eating. So, when I saw Quorn for the first time in the frozen section of my local Safeway, I gave it a shot. The result: an instant fan.

Quorn? What is that stuff?

Quorn foods are fermented (think cheese, yogurt, beer) from a mycoprotein, a vegetable protein discovered in a search begun by (and I'm not making this up) film mogul Lord J. Arthur Rank. Worried by widespread predictions of a future protein famine, in 1967 Rank put his money behind a hunt for protein alternatives. The mycoprotein that is the basis for Quorn was discovered soon after in a soil sample from Marlow, Buckinghamshire (hence the company name). Mycoprotein is sort of in the mushroom family, but is actually in the fungi family that includes mushrooms, morels, and truffles. (Myco is Greek for fungi.)

The first mycoprotein food hit the shelves of English supermarket Sainsbury's in 1985. Over the last 18 years, Quorn has become the best-selling meat-free brand in Europe and in 2002 it was — at last! — launched in the USA.

Backtrack Two

I moved to the USA in 1991 and, not to be too blunt about it, was horrified by the state of vegetarian food. Over the years I think I figured it out: vegetarian food companies are

sending products they couldn't sell in Europe to the USA — in the same way that companies sell powdered baby milk to developing countries but not in the USA. Vegetarians in the USA didn't know what they were missing. When I said I missed British food, they laughed — wasn't it all bangers and mash? Well, yes and no, and besides, those Quorn sausages are excellent! I'd reminisce about pakora and chip suppers, fantastic Indian food in London, and, just to listen to them squeal, vegetarian haggis. Sure, the vegetarian food in the USA was slowly improving, but in the last 10 years I've eaten a whole lot of grilled cheese. Come on. If they can do great veggie food in a pub on the Isle of Skye, why not in the USA?

There's no doubt that part of my reaction was culture shock, but mostly it was survival. A man needs to eat, and the food was not up to scratch. So one of the foods I missed from the UK was the very versatile Quorn. (Later I'd find that quite a lot of money and research had been spent to make it so, who knew?) For those that like this sort of thing, there are meat-substitute products (fake chicken, ground beef, etc.). There are also microwaveable meals and "tenders," little cubes which you cook like tofu, adding them to stir-fries or sauces. How much did I miss Quorn? Put it this way, I even tried to put UK ads for Quorn in my zine, but my sad photocopying skills couldn't handle it!

Why is Quorn only recently available in the USA?

Most of the lag between the 1991 European launch and the 2002 USA launch was caused by the stringent FDA approval process, which took almost 10 years. Marlow submitted over 100 clinical studies and 17 years of data from the UK before gaining approval. However, almost as soon as Quorn began to be distributed in the USA, out of the blue came an anti-Quorn campaign originating from the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CPSI).

I called Chris Samuel, VP of Marketing at Quorn, and asked if introducing Quorn here had been more difficult than expected. "There are two sides to this," Samuel said.



1 box Quorn patties

1 can green chile sauce

1 can Mexican green tomatoes

Put the Quorn patties in a oven-safe dish, pour over chile sauce and tomatoes, and bake in oven for 35-40 minutes. (This is a^{*}good time to make brownies.) Accompany with refried beans, guacamole, and hot sauce of your choice.

"The natural food industry in the USA is very well developed — from local shops to places like Whole Foods and Wild Oats — and the consumers in the natural food market are well educated." I was feeling pretty good about myself right then, but I asked him if people are so well educated and so ready to try new products — and if Quorn is really receiving all these fanatically enthusiastic emails of support that I'd seen on their website — where did the anti-Quorn backlash coming from?

"The other side," continued Samuel, "is the CSPI — famously dubbed by the media as 'the food police.' It's been a crusade by one person, Michael Jacobson, within the CSPI. The media like him because wherever he is, there's controversy. He's gone to extraordinary lengths — taken out ads in the UK newspapers and setting up a website asking for complaints against Quorn."

This last part really puzzles me. The intolerance rate for Quorn is documented from years of consumer reactions (that's you and me, folks) and it's only one person in 146,000.

Does that make Quorn dangerous? Can this seriously be a question in the country that produced Olestra¹? Compared to Quorn the average person is 4,000 times more likely to have food sensitivity to fish or shellfish; 300 times more likely to have a milk intolerance²; and 400 times more likely to experience an intolerance to that most popular of veggie staples, soy.

Jacobson seems to have been really ticked off that the original Quorn packaging described the mycoprotein as "mushroom in origin." Linking the mycoprotein to something understandable like mushrooms and morels was too much for Jacobson. He ranted against the "vat-grown fungus" wherever anyone would listen — it made me wonder if he'd ever been to a cheese or yogurt factory. Or a factory farm. Of course, the CPSI is famous for being against almost all kinds of foods. (Movie-theater popcorn and pizza

come to mind.) But comparing Quorn to those foods is like comparing a Toyota Prius to an SUV.

So, Who's Afraid of Quorn?

I've seen the CPSI's pre-packaged anti-Quorn stories in everything from national dailies to weekly magazines to the local freebie monthly health newspaper. That last one was the real surprise and made me look further into the story.

If you're intolerant to Quorn, you have my sympathy. Almost everyone I know is intolerant or allergic to something (cow's milk, aspirin, dust, etc.) and it's definitely no fun to find out, but one person in 146,000 is a tiny percentage of the population, so all the



protest can't come from those people alone. Unless Michael Jacobson is intolerant....

Perhaps, and this is just a theory, Quorn received a beating because other vegetarian food companies were unhappy with the thought of competing against Quorn. Maybe they were afraid of losing market share and being pushed out of grocery freezers. Or maybe they expected a backlash against their products because, unlike many vegetarian foods, the happy ending here is that Quorn tastes good. Recently while stocking up on Quorn at Bread & Circus in nearby Hadley, I saw a woman filling her cart with boxes of soy 'not-chicken nuggets.' She said her kids loved them so I suggested that we each buy

the other's favorite item. Damn, those things were like cardboard! Without hot sauce, that would have been \$4 down the drain. I hope her kids usually eat better than that. This, however, has been my typical experience with frozen vegetarian food and I wonder if falling sales of other brands might not have sparked some of the specious protests about Quorn.

Why is Quorn Vegetarian, but not Vegan?

I've always been disappointed that there are egg whites in Quorn, so while I had the ear of Chris Samuel of Quorn, I asked him why the eggs are used. He explained that "eggs are used as binder to form the mycoprotein into the microstrands that give Quorn its chewy texture." I protested that there are loads of products that use tofu, potato starch, or other non-animal derived substances as egg substitutes, so couldn't something like that be used? Samuel said no. "Despite looking at many other materials, nothing works as well as egg." However, there is one silver lining to this: "Quorn is a huge user of free-range eggs which has changed the industry in the UK. Now in the UK 70 percent of products that use eggs use free-range eggs."

There are eight Quorn products available in the USA right now, but there are almost 100 in the UK. More products will be launched here soon and I'm hoping against hope that at top of the list will be those breakfast sausages. ★

Notes:

(1) On Olestra: From the May 2000 Center for Science in the Public Interest Nutrition Action Newsletter: "More than 18,000 reports have now been submitted to the FDA by the CSPI and Proctor and Gamble. That is more than for all other food additives in history combined." Original emphasis retained.

(2) Compare that to cow's milk: the FDA website says "about 80% of African-Americans have lactose intolerance, as do many people of Mediterranean or Hispanic origin.... Unlike allergies, intolerances generally intensify with age."

HIP TO EAT BEEF?

At the end of January, *Time* magazine published an article asking "Where's the Beef (In the Teenage Diet)?"¹ It cynically addresses the growing popularity of vegetarianism among American youth, particularly girls, and how the beef industry is freaking out about this growing trend. Due to this "looming vegetarian crisis," as *Time* put it, they must "come up with innovative ways to win back young salad-eaters." The article briefly describes a new web site launched by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) called Cool To Be Real (www.cool-2B-real.com) that is targeted at young girls to try to convince them that eating beef, and lots of it, is now hip. What!?

Let's rewind. There is so much to say about the business practices of the American beef industry and its wretched, deceptive marketing campaigns. "Forget about the very real threat of Mad Cow disease honey. Beef is what's for dinner!" Too much to say in fact. Books like *Mad Cow USA* and *Fast Food Nation* have already covered a great deal of this disturbing information. The question here is: What the fuck is the beef industry doing targeting little girls? Furthermore, what are the implications and social effects of such marketing?

In 2000, an advisory group made up of beef producers released the Beef Industry's Youth Strategic Plan in hopes of employing new methods of "reaching youth."² But not just youth in general — they were specifically interested in "reaching" young girls with this plan. In fact, they admit that their "primary target audience" is "girls ages 8-12." An NCBA memo reveals, "Nutritional messages have been reshaped to appeal to the body motivations of preteen girls, and new heat-and-eat beef messages were incorporated to offer actual meal ideas that girls can make themselves."³ The plan was to further manipulate the media-induced insecurities of thousands of girls with developing bodies so they would eat more beef and "influence what their moms serve for dinner." Now all they needed was a spokesperson.

On June 6, 2001, the NCBA announced in a press release their new public relations campaign spreading a "positive beef message" to American youth. You can just visualize them salivating over their new contract with 16-year-old Olympic figure skating star Sasha Cohen who, they rejoice, "tells girls to stay fit and eat smart with foods like beef."⁴ Cohen was a strategic choice as spokesperson for the beef industry's youth propaganda campaign as she was regularly appearing in a number of

children/teen publications, such as *Seventeen*, *TeenPeople*, *Teen Beat*, and *Elle Girl*, which have a collective readership of millions of American youth. This relationship began a few months earlier during the February 2001 Cattle Industry Convention in San Antonio, Texas, when the NCBA announced the formation of its partnership with the United States Figure Skating Association (USFSA) and the young skater.⁵ Beef and ice-skating were now united.

In a media kit called Building a Champion, sent to nearly 100 publications targeted at children, the NCBA used Cohen to promote the consumption of beef. The idea was that girls would now associate eating beef with being successful and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The press release provides a quote ostensibly from Cohen praising the new campaign: "I want to thank the beef producers for letting me be a part of this important campaign to help girls eat better...I love beef and have learned a great deal about how important its nutrients are." It goes on to exclaim that Cohen's "entire family enjoys beef."⁶

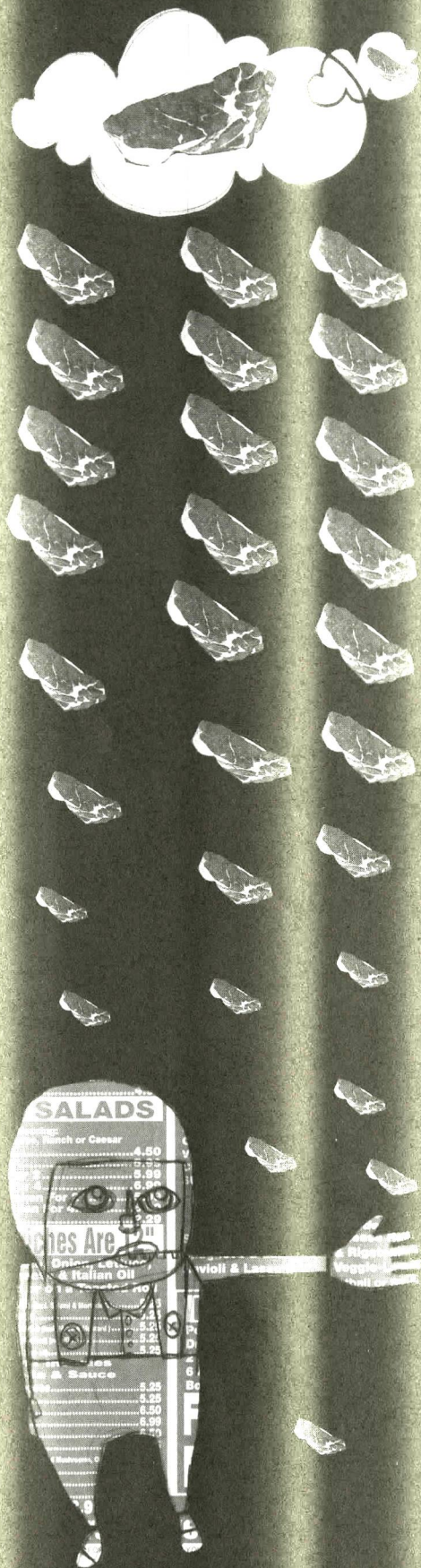
The NCBA further incorporated the Olympic silver medallist into their crusade to sell their beef to young girls by adding a feature on the industry's youth web site Burger Town (www.burgertown.com) called Sasha's Corner. Here, carnivorous children surfing the Net can learn about "tips on eating smart and staying fit, and fun food ideas using beef." There is also "a motivational diary from Sasha and even a special chat session with her."⁷

But Burger Town, developed by the Youth Education and Information Subcommittee, was not successful enough in the beef industry's mission of selling the wonders of beef eating to young girls. The NCBA needed something more creative and specialized. But it would take more time to develop such an idea.

After taking the silver medal again in the 2002 Winter Olympics, Sasha Cohen, now 17, remained the teen spokesperson for the NCBA's youth outreach campaign as her name recognition increased internationally. In July of 2002, according to a beef industry press release, Cohen was named the "hottest woman in sports" by a FoxSports.com online poll, receiving 75 percent of over 100,000 total votes.⁸

The men behind the NCBA's Youth Education Information Subcommittee were simply ecstatic about all of this news. A new, full page, color advertisement featuring the figure skater was placed in a dozen children's magazines making "more than 13 million

the beef industry tries to win back
the "salad-eaters" by targeting
young women



by Matt Dineen
illustration by Joshua Krause

positive impressions on the targeted age group" (and gender). The ad teaches its targeted consumers that, "beef is one of Sasha's favorite things." The press release emphasizes how "successful" this campaign strategy has been. As Gary Sharp, a South Dakota beef and dairy producer and chairman of the Youth Education and Information Subcommittee, explains, "Our relationship with Sasha has been very valuable to our industry, and we're pleased to have had such an outstanding young person associated with beef." He continues, "Girls in the pre-teen age group have definitely related well to Sasha and her messages about eating smart and staying fit."⁹ Despite this success, they still needed something more to hook little girls in. Enter: Cool To Be Real.

In early December 2002, the NCBA, in conjunction with the Cattleman's Beef Board and state beef councils, began a new campaign specifically targeting preadolescent girls. The Cool To Be Real web site was started on December 2. A week later, dozens of children's publications were contacted about providing "positive messages about beef" in an attempt to dispel their "nutritional misperceptions." This "media tour" that kicked off the Cool To Be Real campaign was done by Mary Young, R.D., the NCBA's executive director for nutrition and Sylvia Rimm, Ph.D., child psychologist, and author of *See Jane Win*.¹⁰

According to a beef industry press release entitled "New 'Cool To Be Real' Beef Youth Campaign Kicks Off," the media tour addressed topics from how the nutritional value of beef factors into the physical and intellectual development of girls, to "the obstacles that girls confront during pre-adolescent years, such as peer pressure." Dr. Young also discussed "issues of vegetarianism and obesity among children today," while Dr. Rimm talked about weight, body image, and the self-esteem of young girls. The announcement of the campaign gushed over how it "will focus on the enjoyment of eating beef."¹¹

The Cool To Be Real web site is an integral part of this campaign to influence the diets of girls, now that this target group increasingly uses the Internet to learn about the world. The NCBA explains that Cool To Be Real "features important beef information in a format that appeals to tween girls," and that it "allows beef producers to talk directly to them."¹²

The web site is fucking outrageous. It portrays "real girls" that are supposed to look "just like you" surrounded by beef filled tacos and stacked hamburgers. "Real" girls, of course, are those that eat beef — that is why it is so "cool to be real." Along with games, chat rooms, a "self esteem test," and e-cards to send to "real" friends, the site provides tips on "smart snackin'" with quick and easy recipes for snacks like nacho beef dip, beef on bamboo, beef tacos, beef chili, meatball and vegetable platters, and roast beef and vegetable wraps. It posts nutrition tips from, hee hee, "real girls." Stephanie, age 12, says, "I make sure to eat healthy, making sure I eat the right amount of food from the food

pyramid." While Erika, age 11, proudly cheers, "I eat vegetables and meat." And a poll question asks "real" girls, "What type of beef do you most like to eat with your friends?" Hmmm... "Steak, Tacos, Burgers or Subs?"¹³ To date, thousands have participated in this poll but we know that not all of them are "tween" girls... or do we?

Although the *Time* article about this Cool To Be Real campaign is very critical of the vegetarian lifestyle, it is also skeptical of the beef industry's attempt to sway young girls towards beef eating with a web site that the author describes as "a cross between a Barbie fan page and a Taco Bell ad." *Time* writes, "It's hard to wonder if they're going to be successful with this pitch. As any teenager could tell you, obvious pandering is not the way to go when you're trying to reach this audience... Young consumers are too savvy for old-school ads, and too steeped in irony for sincere come-ons."¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Cool To Be Real campaign forges ahead in the beef industry's quest to turn potential vegetarians into lifelong beefeaters while they are still in their formative years.

What else is there to say about this bizarre phenomenon? At one level, it is pretty hysterical how out of touch with reality the beef industry is, and some of this stuff is down right funny. But it is deadly serious too. It reveals something deeper about our culture and the pervasive force of what ecofeminist and animal rights activist Carol Adams calls "the sexual politics of meat." The campaign is yet another example of the interconnected oppression of both animals and women in this society.

Will the beef industry stop at nothing to maintain their profits? Will the children's entertainment industry continue their role in this insidious attempt to manufacture the consent of impressionable American children? Let's just hope that the kids will be too savvy for this pro-beef propaganda and show the NCBA that they are too cool to be fooled.

(Endnotes)

- ¹ *Time* Online: "Where's the Beef (In the Teenage Diet)?" Jan. 30, 2003; <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,412343,00.html?cnn=yes>
- ² Beef.org: "Youth Media Hear Positive Beef Message Through Landmark New Checkoff-Funded Program: Figure Skating Star Sasha Cohen Tell Girls to Eat Beef and Stay Fit," June 6, 2001; http://www.beef.org/dsp/dsp_content.cfm?locationId=216&contentId=1406&contentType=2
- ³ Beef.org: June 6, 2001
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- ⁶ Beef.org: June 6, 2001
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Open Source Foods

by Eliah Chapman

Thanks to the USDA, I don't eat organic anymore. As of October 21, 2002 the definition of the word organic, and its usage by farmers and food producers, is now owned and regulated by the USDA. Several farmers I regularly buy produce from at local farmer's markets here in New York City now cannot use the word organic without risking substantial fines. And so they use the word organic in a historical context, as in "my farm was certified organic from 1979 until the USDA took over the definition of the word organic in 2002." Or they use new words, such as "unconventionally grown" or "sustainable."

What this means is: beware of organic goods. Know where your dollar is going by looking behind the label. The market for organic products is massive, reaching \$7.8 billion in 2000 according to the USDA. We need only stroll through our local natural food market to see that agribusiness has taken notice. For example:

- Odwalla and Fresh Samantha fruit juices are owned by Coca-Cola's Minute Maid Company (bought for \$181 million, 10/2001).
- Boca Burgers are owned by Phillip Morris's Kraft Foods (undisclosed sum, 1/2000).
- Kellogg Company owns Kashi cereal and GoLEAN bars and shakes (approx. \$60 million, 6/01).
- 40 percent of Stonyfield Farms was bought by Groupe DANONE (i.e., Dannon yogurt and Evian water) in 2001.
- Betty Crocker's daddy, General Mills, has owned Small Planet Foods (Cascadian Farm and Muir Glen) since 1999.
- And lastly, it may feel like the only Heinz product in the natural food market is their organic ketchup, but in 1999, for \$100 million, Heinz bought almost 20 percent of Hain, the publicly traded company behind such brands as Celestial Seasonings, Westsoy, Garden of Eatin', Imagine Foods (i.e., Rice Dream), and Bearitos.

Suddenly it's not so easy to go food shopping and feel good about whom you are giving your money to. That's why I go to farmers' markets. There is something enormously satisfying about handing my money directly to the farmer.

Many farmers affected by the USDA's new standards are open sources of information anxious to talk to consumers about the food they grow. Our interactions with these farmers creates a new local standard, an Open Source standard, that helps consumers become competent enough to break free from the existing pattern of dependence maintained by corporate instruments like the USDA's Organic Seal.

And while I won't argue that it is good to eat organic, vegan, or raw foods, it is even better to understand and actively participate in the production of the food we consume. When we look beyond the label, behind the big corporations telling us what's good for us, we start investing in our communities. And we begin to appreciate the importance of feeding the farmer, not only by handing our money directly to him or her, but by not consuming products created by companies whose focus is on profitability rather than sustainability. We begin to vote with our dollars. ☆

The United States Department of Commerce (DoC) ruled in January that Vietnam is dumping catfish on the U.S. market, following its recent extraordinary decision that Vietnam is “not a market economy” for the purposes of trade with the U.S. The ruling is surprising to anyone familiar with Vietnam over the last decade, as the country opened its state-owned economy to private and foreign capital, de-collectivized agriculture, and allowed prices in most domestic trade to be market-determined. The prevalence of ugly corporate billboards, featuring everything from Toyota to Citibank to Unilever (but not yet MacDonalds), polluting Hanoi’s otherwise charming skyline, look suspiciously like a market economy, as do the hundreds of thousands of tiny household trading businesses set up by the poor on any available piece of footpath. And two years ago, Vietnam signed a Bilateral Trade Agreement with the U.S., accepting many conditions based on rigorous World Trade Organization (WTO) criterion.

What then is the Department of Commerce up to?

The ruling is in response to an “anti-dumping” suit launched by Catfish Farmers of America (CFA), who allege that imports of Vietnamese catfish were being subsidized and sold in the U.S. below the cost of production. Earlier, CFA had launched an unsuccessful “sanitary” case against Vietnamese catfish. Even the U.S. embassy in Hanoi has substantiated the fact that growing conditions for catfish are hygienic (catfish farmers use traditional methods). The DoC then banned Vietnamese farmers using the term “catfish” for exports to the U.S., forcing them to re-label the fish as Tra and Basa (two of the 21 species of catfish belonging to the Pangasiidae family and found throughout Southeast Asia).

Anyone familiar with how wealthy countries manipulate “free trade” will recognize this stunt. Companies in these countries can pay lawyers to launch spurious cases that cause huge losses to farmers in poor countries, who cannot afford the same luxuries.

Trade liberalization gurus assert that countries should export whatever can sell more cheaply, anywhere in the world. This is designed to facilitate the dominance of rich country-based transnational industries,

agribusiness, and trading cartels whose products are cheap due to massive technological superiority — or real dumping. However, when a poor country manages to take advantage of one of the cracks in this system, that’s when you need lawyers.

Vietnam simply cannot afford to subsidize exports, and Vietnamese farmers are too poor to sell below cost price to break into a market, earning an average of 30 to 50 U.S. dollars per month. The sale price is low due to such low costs, as well as the ideal breeding conditions for catfish in parts of the Mekong Delta.

The DoC knows all of this, despite the ruling that Vietnam is dumping catfish on the U.S. market. The aim, however, is not to stop dumping, it — is to help U.S. agribusiness. According to WTO guidelines, if a country is labeled a “non-market economy,” then the sale price of an export from that country can be assumed to be lower due alleged “distortions” in the overall economic structure, even without proving actual subsidies. The DoC’s decision could lead to punitive tariffs of 64 percent against Vietnam’s frozen fish imports.

Action Aid, the Vietnam Farmers Federation, and other groups led a research and protest campaign, handing out leaflets appropriately titled “Stop the U.S. Trade War on Vietnam” at a meeting of some 200 people in Hanoi. Participants were told that catfish farming was the traditional means of livelihood for a large number of farmers in the Mekong Delta, and those new to the industry “do not have land to farm and they do not have other skills to take up a new profession.”

Reports estimate that the livelihoods of 400,000 farmers would be affected by the success of U.S. dumping charges, and thousands of others who work in related fields would be out of work as well. Farmers who have taken out large loans to invest in catfish farming will be hurt financially and most will go bankrupt. Some families are already heavily in debt as a result of the decline in export volumes following the U.S. directive to change the name of the catfish and because of declining fish prices.

While catfish is a traditional occupation, it should be noted that after beginning export to the U.S., the quantity rose exponentially from 2000 tons in 1998 to 60,000 tons in 2001. If the U.S. action succeeds,

this raises questions about the wisdom of such rapid export orientation, especially if it involves selling up rice-land. Rice is the staple food of Vietnamese, accounting for the bulk of calories in their diet. The poor spend 51 percent of their income on rice. Cash crop monocrop schemes, if they go bust or come up against other obstacles, leave no money in the hands of poor farmers with which to buy rice.

An interesting side factor here is that Cargill, a U.S. animal feed mega-corporation, has been a major sponsor of this expansion, organizing the credit for the fish cages in the Mekong. This is not surprising, as intensive aquaculture relies on huge inputs of animal feed. Yet it is other U.S. companies launching the dumping suits. For Cargill it’s a no-risk strategy. If the U.S. farmers win, Cargill will sell more to them instead of the Vietnamese, but ruined Vietnamese farmers will still owe debts to the company.

The same is now occurring with shrimp. In October, the Shrimp Importation Financing Fairness Act was introduced in the U.S. Congress, accusing Vietnam, Thailand, China, Indonesia, India, Mexico, and Ecuador of dumping shrimp, and demanding these countries reduce their shrimp exports to the U.S. to three million pounds per month.

In addition, fierce competition, reduced purchasing power due to the international recession, and increased supply from European countries have reduced world shrimp prices by between 20 and 30 percent in 2002. While Vietnam’s shrimp exports rose by 10.7 percent during the first half of 2002, the value of these exports rose only 4.4 percent.

Vietnam is currently undertaking a massive expansion of shrimp production for export. The prudence of this strategy is open to question, given the catastrophic environmental and disease problems familiar to other countries that have gone heavily into shrimp farming.

The Environmental Justice Foundation recently released a damning report on global shrimp farming for first world export markets, claiming that “within a few years, this ruthless and intensive exploitation of

natural resources inevitably leads to a build-up of toxins and eventually environmental collapse, leaving behind a barren landscape and dispossessed communities.” Thousands of indebted landless farmers are unable to grow food in these saline wastelands. The result is unsustainable production that attempted to help farmers “escape poverty” by investing in “higher value crops.”

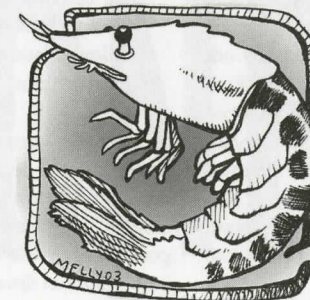
While Vietnam has so far been relatively cautious, such “shrimp graveyards” are widely evidenced in neighboring Thailand. “It has been estimated that over 20 percent of shrimp farms in former mangroves in the Gulf of Thailand are abandoned after two to four years.

And shrimp farming there is becoming ‘nomadic,’ with farms moving further and further south as land is abandoned,” according to Tu Giang in last November’s *Vietnam Economic Times*.

Yet poor countries often have little choice about entering high risk areas and pushing them to unsustainable levels — they need the export dollars to pay for increasingly expensive imports of industrial products from rich countries. Such imports are turning into a flood as tariffs, quotas, and other trade barriers, erected by developing countries to protect nascent industries, are being torn down as demanded by IMF and World Bank lenders, and WTO entry conditions.

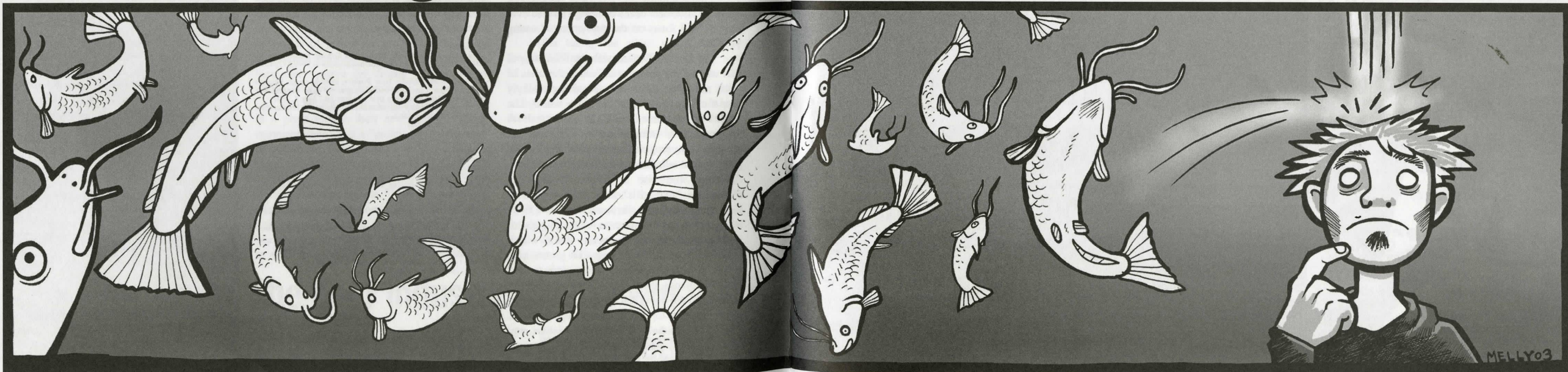
Ironically, they are also being flooded by certain agricultural imports, like grain and other surpluses, from rich countries’ agribusinesses. According to Professor Vo Tong Xuan from An Giang University in the Mekong, when U.S. maize and soybean arrive in Vietnam under the Bilateral Trade Agreement, local farmers will be wiped out, as subsidized U.S. prices are around half of the current price in Vietnam.

Large U.S. catfish farmers claim to be protecting their own livelihood from cheap imports, though Vietnamese catfish accounts for only two percent of the U.S. market. The U.S. provides hundreds of billions of dollars in export subsidies to big farmers, but Vietnam cannot afford to sue U.S. maize and soybean giants for dumping.



“... but I thought we had a deal?!?”

by Michael Karadjis
illustrations by Melly Curphy



U.S. Agribusiness Gets a Boost from WTO Loopholes. Vietnam Doesn't.

To pay for these imports, even more export crops are needed. Whatever the West currently does not produce — coffee yesterday, shrimp today — is exported until competition among poor countries to pump out as much as possible sends the multinational corporation-controlled “world price” tumbling down. Vietnam’s Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development said that coffee-centered trade liberalization in the Central Highlands has caused a “great shock” to the region, particularly to the poor and ethnic minorities, following the massive crash in coffee prices in the late 1990s. This crash was due both to the coffee glut on the world market resulting from so many developing countries competing for these export dollars, and to the stranglehold on international marketing of coffee held by a few transnational corporations.

Vietnam has been cautious about trade liberalization, but has not been able to avoid it. The trade agreement with the U.S., the Asia Free Trade Area (AFTA) requirements, and World Bank conditions attached to a current Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy all mean further trade liberalization. The government has wisely delayed for six months massive tariff cuts, which are due this month, on 96 percent of imports from Asian countries under AFTA. But Vietnam cannot escape trade liberalization for long, and is now talking of early entry into the WTO.

The U.S. should have little problem with this orientation. So is the “non-market” label purely an excuse for U.S. protectionism? Mainly, but there are other reasons for such labeling. The text of the DoC’s decision spells out that, to have the (likely deceitful) promise of unobstructed trade with the U.S., countries like Vietnam are expected to eradicate any vestiges of socialism remaining in their systems of governance. According to the DoC:

The Department recognizes that the Government of Vietnam has taken substantial steps to open its market to the international community and to allow limited forces of supply and demand affect the development of its economy. The government has promulgated many positive legal reforms that have led to the marked and sustained growth of the private sector.

However, the level of government intervention in the economy is still such that prices and costs are not a meaningful measure of value. The Vietnamese currency, the *dong*, is not fully convertible, with significant restrictions on its use, transfer, and exchange rate. Foreign direct investment is encouraged, but the government still seeks to direct and control it through regulation. Although prices have been liberalized for the most part, the Government Pricing Committee continues to maintain discretionary control over prices in (certain) sectors. Privatization of state owned enterprises and the state-dominated banking sector has been slow, thereby insulating the state sector from competition. Finally, private land ownership is not allowed and the government is not initiating a land privatization program.

So there you have it. Vietnam has used a number of mechanisms to maintain a degree of socialist orientation within its mixed market economy. A strong state sector remains dominant in the “commanding heights” of the economy, heavy industry, and global trade in strategic goods. Foreign investment is directed into areas useful to the economy, into industrial development, and into joint ventures with the state sector. Price subsidies are maintained on some basic goods to keep them affordable. And control is maintained over the currency, which helped save Vietnam from the 1997 Asian collapse.

Agricultural land is officially state owned, with farmers leasing renewable and inheritable titles for 20 years, helping prevent the large-scale land concentration and landlessness afflicting most of the developing world (where full ownership means full right to lose land). Also a renewed push is being made to encourage farmers to set up voluntary cooperatives.

Just in case Vietnam thought it had a right to freely choose such an economic direction, the U.S. government has just given a friendly reminder of who makes the rules in a “globalized” world. The DoC is expected to make a final ruling on the dumping charges this summer. ★

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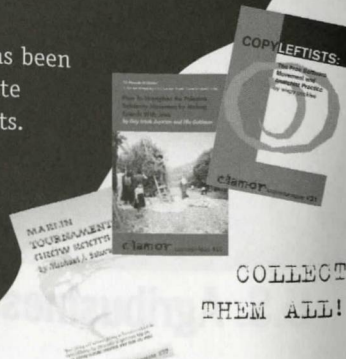
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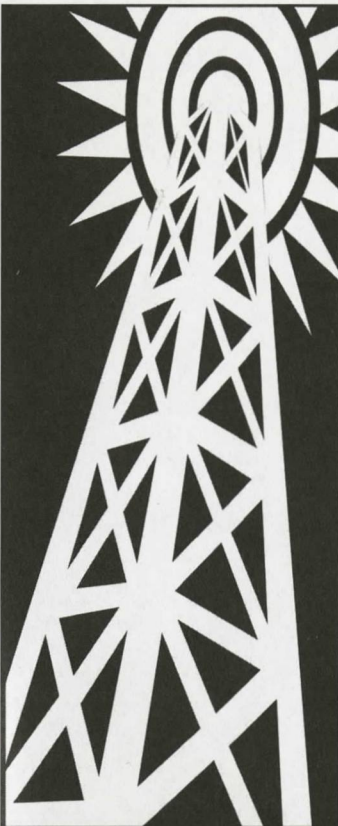
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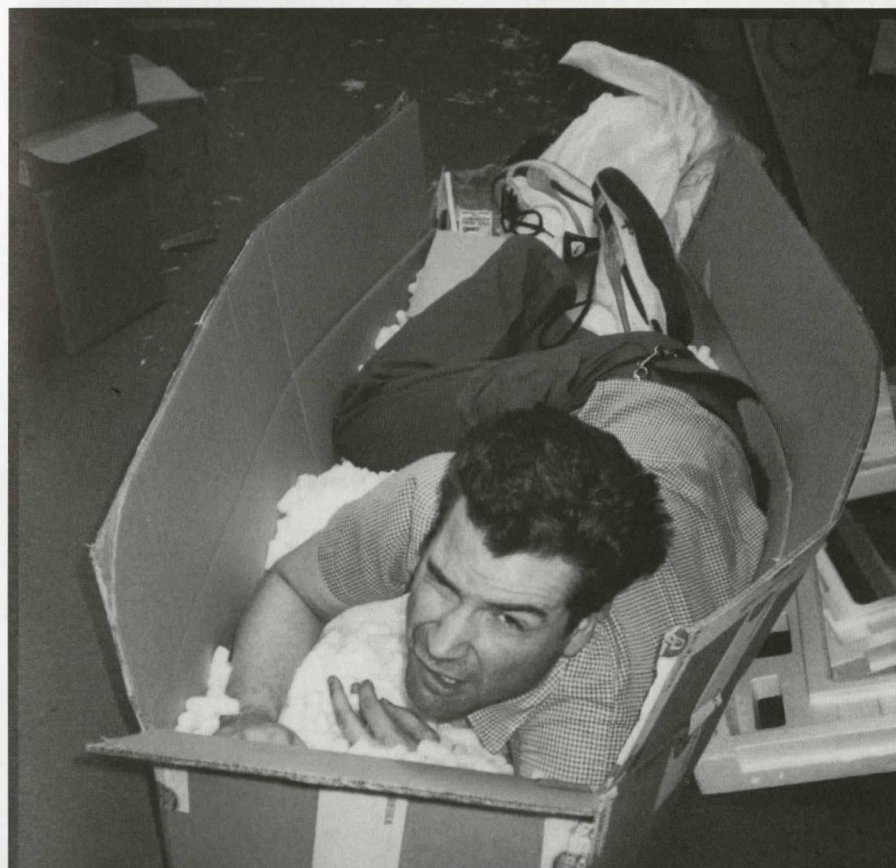


PHOTO: ALEC BOURGEOIS AFTER A LATE NIGHT AT THE OFFICE BY AMY PICKERING 2003

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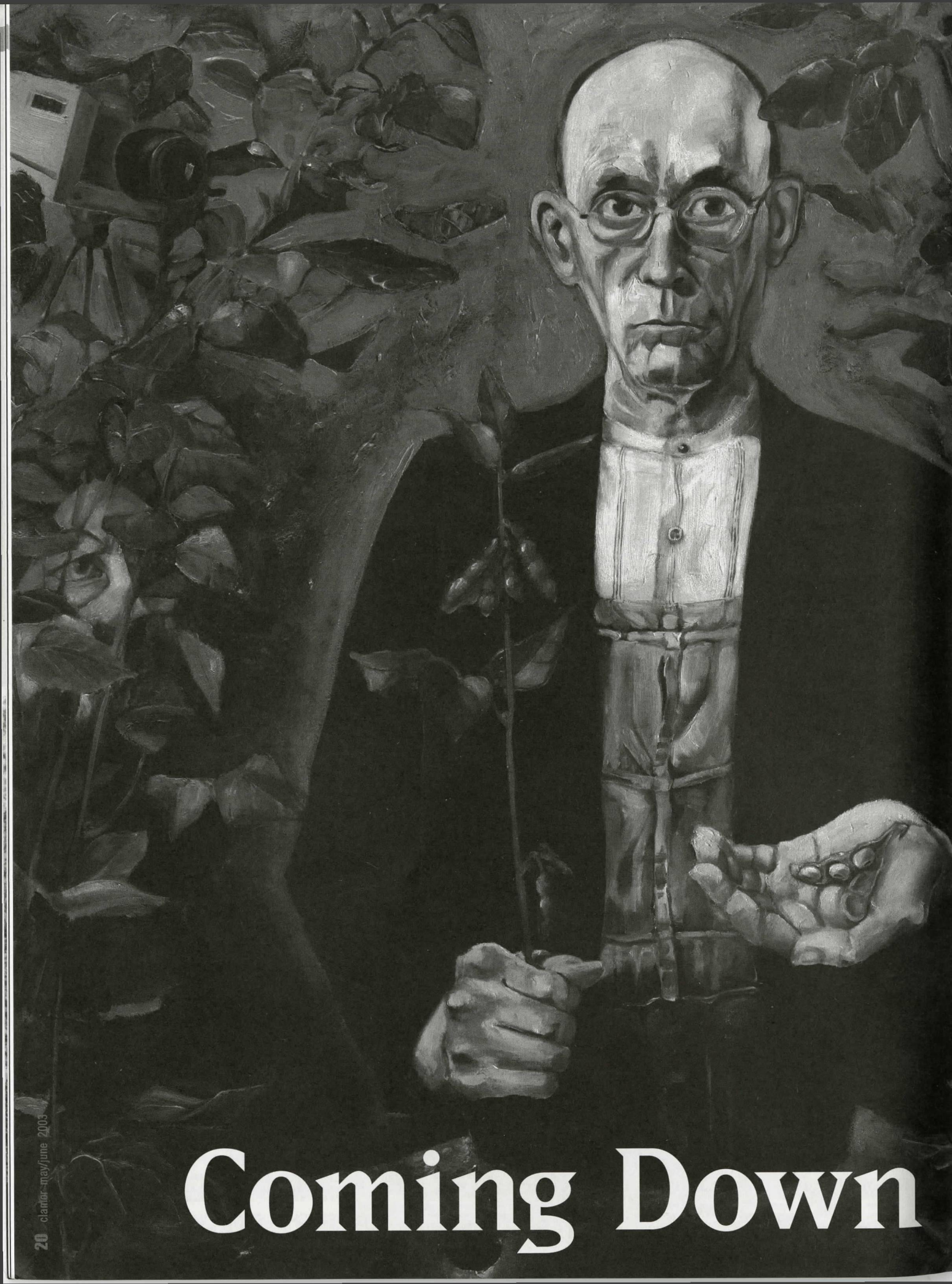
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Coming Down

This January, Ken Ralph, a soybean farmer in west Tennessee, lost a four-year legal battle to corporate giant Monsanto. According to federal court Judge Rodney Sippel, Ralph is guilty of stealing Monsanto's intellectual property for practicing the age-old tradition of saving seed.

Ralph is one of a growing number of family farmers found guilty in court of violating Monsanto's patent on the Roundup Ready or *Bt* trait, an engineered gene sequence that, when inserted into seed, brings resistance to herbicide or certain insect pests. The new genes make the plant tolerant to spraying by the broad-spectrum herbicide glyphosate, which Monsanto markets as Roundup. Ralph joins Homan McFarling of Mississippi, who was fined \$780,000 and has appealed to the US Supreme Court; Eugene Stratemeyer, a Southern Illinois farmer who lost to Monsanto last December; and Dallas Thompson, a Louisiana cotton farmer slammed with a \$2 million fine for replanting patented cotton seed. In Pennsylvania, Indiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Dakota, Louisiana, Saskatchewan, and throughout North America, Monsanto has prosecuted farmers for patent infringement and violation of intellectual property rights, resulting in over 100 out-of-court settlements and about 60 filed lawsuits. Only a handful have made it to court, and the few verdicts reached favor Monsanto.

Before Monsanto's patents, farmers regularly saved seed, particularly soybeans, with which to sow their fields the next year, a practice that cut costs and allowed individual farmers to continuously develop new strains particular to their region. Today, that action is illegal for the many patented varieties on the market.

In these suits, Monsanto requests hundreds of thousands, and occasionally millions, of dollars for compensation, damages, and to pay legal fees — amounts that one farmer's lawyer considers "ruinous." Why should Monsanto go to all the trouble to file lawsuits for damages greater than the net worth of the defendant? The farmer defendants describe Monsanto's rushed efforts to bring cases to court as hostile and aggressive. While a clear outcome of Monsanto's rapid and numerous prosecutions remains to be seen, what is understood is that the company means business.

Despite repeated claims by the life sciences industry that genetic technologies will feed the hungry, cure the ill, save nature, and ease the labor of farmers, the altered seed simply does not perform as planned. Monsanto's avid pursuit of these farmers begs the question: are genetically engineered seeds introduced for their improved agronomic traits or because the technology allows a monopoly and further profit for the company?

For two centuries, the US government and farmers agreed that seed saving and open sharing benefits agriculture and the economy as a whole. A US Patent Office report from 1885 stated "free and universal intercourse and exchange" of seeds "constitute the surest foundation for the happiness of nations." But since 1980, the patent office has liberally granted intellectual property protection to living matter. This

flip-flop occurred because, given genetic engineering, Monsanto and others realized that if plants could be recognized as machines and genes as the interlocking pieces of a machine, then modified genetic sequences would count legally the same as a mechanical invention and could be patented.

The seed is the last bit of capital farmers are able to supply themselves and it is the profit retained by farmers by supplying their own seed that the life sciences companies hope to claim as their own through genetic engineering, patents, and intellectual property.

A recent lawsuit charges Monsanto with colluding with seed companies, creating a cartel that both eliminates the market competition of smaller seed dealers and eliminates public and conventional seeds from the market. The anti-trust powerhouse Cohen, Milstein, Hausfield, and Toll has turned its legal machinery against Monsanto, filing a class action suit alleging the company, in collusion with other life science firms, has formed a global cartel to restrain trade and fix seed prices.

The suit charges that the technology fee, or seed premium, which increases the price of engineered seeds often three to four times that of conventional seed, constitutes price fixing and is symptomatic of monopolistic behavior. This fee is collected at the point of sale from the farmer and shared between Monsanto and the seed company. Monsanto shares a greater percentage of each tech fee with larger seed companies like Pioneer and Novartis while smaller seed companies receive a smaller percent. In turn these seed dealers give up the right to charge their own premium. Under the tech fee system, prices are set through discussion with competing businesses rather than through an open, competitive market, and non-colluding companies are shut out altogether.

Besides the class action suit, in the 1990s Monsanto went on a shopping spree, raking in several smaller seed companies that might otherwise compete with them. Beginning in 1996, Monsanto purchased six larger seed or biotechnology companies and formed long-term, technology-sharing partnerships with at least three others.

Finally, farmers challenge that Monsanto and its conspirators have engineered Monsanto's Roundup resistant and *Bt* technologies in the best conventional seed varieties, leaving farmers a choice between monopoly-priced genetically engineered seeds and low-performing conventional seeds. When viewed together, Monsanto's actions demonstrate the company's drive for control of seeds and, consequently, food and fiber.

When farmers buy patented seed, they pay the technology fee and sign a technology use agreement. This contract specifies a number of terms for the sale, including the ban on seed saving. It also requires any legal disputes taken to court be tried in the Eastern Missouri District

As the would-be empire struggles, small farmers are still finding themselves in Monsanto's crosshairs on the Farm

words Sarah Bantz
illustration Sharon Easley

of federal court, Monsanto's backyard. St. Louis is a company town by anyone's standards. Everyone has a friend or relative who works for Monsanto and the company's mark is everywhere — from high schools to universities, from the zoo to area environmental not-for-profit groups.

When Homan McFarling, a Mississippi soybean farmer, learned this court had found him liable of replanting Roundup-ready soybeans, he appealed the decision. One of three judges hearing the appeal disagreed with the earlier decision on the grounds that Monsanto's ability to decide where the case would be heard was unconstitutional. In the judge's view, the Technology Use Agreement is a "contract of adhesion," a particular type of contract offered by the party with stronger bargaining power on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, where the other party, in this case McFarling, has no recourse for negotiation. The judge argued that the Technology Use Agreement's stipulation that farmers must travel outside their home district for trial is unenforceable and violates McFarling's right to due process under the law as guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment.

Monsanto seemingly targets the more well-to-do farmers, those who can afford a new pickup and to send their children to college. Perhaps that is coincidence, perhaps Monsanto knows it might receive its compensation before the farmer falls into bankruptcy or maybe, as some assert, Monsanto is waging their battle over the seed on a social, as well as legal, front. "[Monsanto] just came into this area and they said they were just looking for somebody to make an example of," says Mitchell Scruggs, whose family raises cotton, wheat, and soybeans on thousands of acres in Louisiana. "They made it plain in front of the judge that they wanted to make an example out of me and my family." If those of stature in tiny rural hamlets can be convinced, coerced, or shamed into new, less favorable economic terms, then so can the rest of the farmers.

These cases begin with a letter from the company or its law firm, threatening expensive legal action. Later come inspectors, described as "Pinkerton cops," who trespass in fields, harass, and intimidate. Scruggs states Monsanto set up shop across the road from his farm, videotaping the house continuously and following the family wherever they went. "We had no privacy whatsoever," says Scruggs. "Just because they are a billion dollar company, they took away my freedom and my privacy and they can do whatever they want."

What's more, to aid in their ability to find seed-stealing farmers, Monsanto encourages farmers to snitch on their neighbors, advertising a toll-free number where farmers can report suspected violations. Even before the advent of the lawsuits, many didn't consider Monsanto a farmer-friendly company. Today, the company's strong-arm tactics have stretched and torn the social fabric of rural communities, a social fabric that has held together when the risky agricultural economy has not.

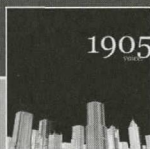
It is not only the traditional right to save seed but also the constitutional right to due process and privacy that farmers lose. Upon close inspection, Monsanto's pursuit of US farmers mirrors larger injustices, where corporate rights to profit take precedent over basic human rights.



Monsanto's aggressive tactics may be due in part to fears of its own demise. Two years ago, Monsanto was purchased by another life science giant, Pharmacia, as part of the merger and acquisition frenzy in the biotechnology business world. Pharmacia stripped Monsanto of its profitable divisions, leaving the company with only its hardly profitable agricultural inputs. Monsanto has sunk millions into developing new products that have yet to make it to market. The company is defending extensive litigation over not only engineered crops but also over its messy history producing industrial and military chemicals. Monsanto's massive publicity efforts, made famous by its commitment to a \$50 million "educational" campaign, have thus far failed to convince the consuming public that growing and eating genetically engineered food is safe. Rather, farmer, consumer, and environmental opposition continues to grow. Finally, Monsanto's patent on its biggest moneymaker, Roundup, has recently expired. For all of these reasons, Monsanto has fallen from grace. The company registered a \$1.7 billion net loss in 2002, its money-making ability plummeting like the price of its stocks.

It is from this precarious vantage point that the company realizes its future livelihood rests on maintaining monopoly control of genetic technologies. So far, Monsanto's legal pursuit of farmers has yet to yield a definitive ruling. The few suits that have been decided are now under appeal. Most cases have not yet been heard and farmers are fighting back. While the future of these family farmers depends on the outcome of these cases, Monsanto's survival is also on the line. ★

REVIEWS SOUNDS



1905

Voice
Exotic Fever Records, 2002
www.exoticfever.com

From the pounding, heavy, guitar-laden tunes to the serene piano instrumentals, 1905 dives into the psyche of the post-September 11 populace and ruminates on this for the entirety of their 14-track album, *Voice*. Riding on a wave of emotion, which renders melodic ballads as well as full blown rock grandeur, 1905 represent the varied opinions of peace versus violence through their unique musical style as on "Go" when they juxtapose soft, quiet vocals with strong, forceful metalesque rants while simultaneously placing them against a backdrop of a squealing guitar, sounding like its own type of warfare. For as angry as the at times hard rock guitar and drum can seem, the stimulating lyrics are tranquil and empowering as with "Dance on the ashes of what was/ Try/ Fall head first into what could be," on "Can't Change Everything" as well as with "Open your eyes/ You're not blind/ Don't set your sights/ Where they want you to," on "You're Wrong." Even though sung on a varying scale ranging from raging screams



to peaceful whispers, this album beautifully utilizes that from which it derives its title as a metaphor for society's volatile state of mind in a raw, smartly executed way.
-Tiffany Curtis

Botch

An Anthology of Dead Ends
Hydra Head Records, 2002
www.hydrahead.com

After nearly a decade, Botch has decided to call it quits and leave us with *An Anthology of Dead Ends* to remember them by. What a way to go out! Botch combines the technicality of metal and the raw ferocity of punk with complex time structures, similar stylistically to Deadguy, Coalesce and Converge.

The songs are named after countries with the letter "n" changed to "m", ending up with song titles like "Japam," "Micaragua," and "Vietmam."

The overall tone of the record can be summed up in one word: brutal. The devastating combination of metal, noise, indie rock guitar, rhythmic density, and scathing vocals is about as subtle as hitting your face with a sledgehammer.



The highlight of the album is "Afghanistan" where ferocity takes a backseat to melody with actual sung vocals and eventually fades out the drums, bass, and guitar and replaces them with keyboard and violin.

With *An Anthology of Dead Ends* Botch delivers a eulogy for itself. It goes to show that they are going out at the top of their game. Botch is dead, long live Botch!
-Jason Ziemniak

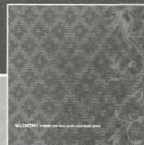
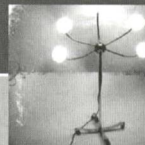
Busdriver & Radioinactive w/ Daedelus
the weather
Mush Records, 2002
www.dirtyloop.com

Anybody who has much experience with Mush Records probably knows that they should expect something out of the ordinary. This record doesn't fail in that respect, with both emcees bringing a Kerouac-style flow, with the only real requirement being that the lines rhyme. "That's a nice watch bro. Bought it at Costco. God I like pasta; God is a monster." and the like runs throughout the record. As you can imagine, this does get tedious fairly quickly, or so you would think. But thanks to the great instrumental work of Dae-

delus, the two emcees distinct voices become as musical instruments; their unintelligible dialogue serving as a kind of accompaniment to the assortment of samples and scrounged instruments that are used. A comparable work is that of Odd Nosdam with instrumentals on my favorite Mush album, *cLOUDEAD*. Taken as a whole, the ranting of the emcees against, well, everything and the genius beats make this a four star record.
-Jacob Dreyer

chin up chin up
s/t
Record Label
87 Butler St. 4F, Brooklyn, NY 11231

A slightly new band out of Chicago, Chin Up Chin Up released a self-titled six-song CDEP after writing and perfecting their sound — and all of their hard work certainly doesn't go unnoticed. These six songs off of their first ever release are incredible to listen to, they're as good as they can get with their sturdy guitar lines and innovative melodies. Lots of stuff I hear these days strives for that somewhat typical formatted indie-rock sound, but these guys are way above that — their songs stand



out from one another without being ruined by that dizzying "catchy" poppy vibe. I especially dig the various non-traditional instrumentation these guys have incorporated into their sound. It's not as if they're out to prove anything or make a big name for themselves, rather to provide a nice sound and open our ears a little more. The vocals are soothing and passionate at the same time. Even better—this is chin up chin up's very first release and an EP at that; I cannot wait to see what this band comes out with next.

-Rachael Joan

Christiansen

Forensics Brothers and Sisters!
Revelation Records, 2002
www.revelationrecords.com

Louisville, KY's Christiansen offer up six excellent post-hardcore tracks that show off their intensity as well as their sense of melody. Their sound is a combination of emo and punk with dashes of hardcore, a conglomeration of styles similar to that of Fugazi, Refused or early At The Drive In. While the lyrics are too obscure to command attention, the overall sound is engaging, with several songs subtly incorporating elements of jazz and electronics.

Christiansen have produced a sound as focused as it is experimental, being able to mix their youthful intensity with accomplished musicianship. While they may be compared to the above bands, they do not directly mimic them, instead they use those sounds as jumping off points.

Christiansen have radically progressed from their earlier recordings, producing a sound that may perhaps be the future sound of indie rock, the sound hinted on Refused's *The Shape of Punk To Come*. Expect to hear big things from this band.

-Jason Ziemniak

The Immortal Lee County Killers II

Love Is A Charm Of Powerful Trouble
Estrus, 2003
www.estrus.com

Listening to the Lee County Killers is a bit like being attacked by a crocodile without teeth. When I think of intense blues rock, names like The Dwarves or Pussy Galore come to mind. Instead, the Lee County Killers play 12-bar blues driven by heavily compressed guitars and vintage tube amps. Other duos like the White Stripes and Bob Log III produce much more overt reinterpretations of America's oldest genre. While the Lee County Killers may not be the most powerful blues rock band, nor the most inventive, they are able to transcend their lack of fire with a flair for faux-soul and danceability. While few of the forty minutes on this disc are innervated by the band's distant Delta-predecessors, a healthy respect for the big figures of blues keeps the record moving. As with the John Spencer Blues Explosion, you might expect weak material enlivened by flaming performance; instead, you actually get good songs (e.g. "What Are They Doing In Heaven Today?") subsequently butchered by tuneless lead vocals and wayward whistling. Despite such distracting performances, *Love Is A Charm Of Powerful Trouble* does harbor a few gems, such as the nasty buzz and crackle of "Rollin' and Tumblin'," or the buttery assault of "Goin' Down South." In a live setting, one imagines these songs coming to life. Unfortunately, on record, the songs come across as a little too reflective. This music should kick your ass not shake your hand. Speaking of the

inestimable Howlin' Wolf, they call one of his remarks "Honest but untrue" in their liner notes. Neither blues nor rock, the Lee County Killers embody similar paradoxes: a band who is sincere without being authentic, honest without telling the truth. *Love Is A Charm Of Powerful Trouble's* faults are also its strengths.

-Ryan McKay

The Mighty Rime

s/t
Caulfield Records, 2002
www.caulfieldrecords.com

After a long hiatus, Christie Front Drive bassist Kerry McDonald returns to recording with his latest project, The Mighty Rime. Christie Front Drive, regarded by many as one of the legends of the now ubiquitous "emo" sound, disbanded in 1996. Though McDonald spent the next few years playing in several different bands, The Mighty Rime marks his first recorded work since the band called it quits. A lot happened to McDonald in the intervening time though, and for The Mighty Rime, he's left behind the old emo sound in favor of a more organic lo-fi approach. Equal parts acoustic intimacy and explosive indie-rock, this is an album that really shines on repeated listens, thanks in large part to McDonald's fine songwriting skills. The Mighty Rime's sound is somewhat similar to older Modest Mouse and Built To Spill, with moments of Neutral Milk Hotel-style beauty. The album has a wonderful, lovely atmosphere, and the songs seem to flow seamlessly from beginning to end. Certainly an inspired and rock-solid piece of work, and definitely one worth checking out.

-Ryan Cornwell

Race for Titles

s/t
The Redemption Recording Co. 2002
www.redemption.net

When Lush released *Lovelife* in 1996, they were on their last legs as a band, coming off a few records that received some nice reviews but didn't sell a lick outside of hardcore Anglo-ophile record collectors. They were a dreamy, slightly over-synthesized guitar band that didn't inspire much rump-thumping, but then they released "Ladykiller," a driving, hook-laden rock song, and that all changed.

Race for Titles is where Lush was right before 1996. They've merged the dreamy landscapes with a few drops from the post-punk power pop well. A few more hooks and college radio will be calling.

Lyrical, the band stays on the straight and narrow with songs about a relationship fading to black. The record progresses through the decline of affection to the end, the last song, "Goodbye (Good Night)," Nothing particularly original here, but nothing overtly clichéd, either. The middle songs, particularly "Jackson," accurately portray the descent into madness that nice people enter into during the painful end of a good, healthy love affair.

-Matthew L.M. Fletcher

Soul Supreme

The Saturday Nite Agenda
Inebriated Rhythm Records
www.inebriatedrhythm.com

Inebriated Rhythm is a collective of producers, and this record is the interpretation of Soul Supreme of classics like KRS-One's "The Message" and "Come Get It" by Big Daddy Kane. It has a '70s blaxploitation flick feel, which turns

out to go very well with the songs and the old school flavor of the piece. Soul Supreme isn't taking liberties with these classics, though; he is just adding his beats to the lyrics, as an exhibition to any interested parties. As a listener with nothing to do with the stated goal of the record, this record is Ok as a mixtape, but it gets old pretty fast. This record isn't saying anything new, and it does seem hard to improve on the original. However, there is nothing wrong with just chilling back on a Saturday, and if that's your goal, then this is a pretty good choice. It's a jam record, and the beats are easy to like. They all really sound the same, though. The artists featured (those that aren't legends in their own right) talk the usual driveline of guns and crack in one line and "expand your mental" in the next, and quite frankly Cannibal Ox is better at that than any of these emcees could pretend to be. I guess there are probably those who would like to hear rehashed old school songs more than the new G Unit or the new Sole, but I can't think of any I know.

-J Dreyer

Sprawl

Sarah Veladora
IMOJ, 2002
www.thesprawl.com

In an alternate universe, where ClearChannel and the rest of corporate radio have not ruined the FM landscape, the Sprawl would be huge. They play hook-laden, minor-chord pop ditties that clearly show off and blend together the band's top-notch influences.

When the Toronto, Canada-based band was formed in 1996, the goal was to make some good rock and roll before a backdrop of the post-punk revolution. What they have come up with is music that is catchy without being condescending, ethereal without being esoteric.

On the new album, *Sarah Veladora*, it feels like each Sprawl song has run through a paint box of rock and roll, getting splashed with a little glam-rock here, a little '60s British Invasion there. It's as if Mick Jagger and David Bowie are in bed together all over again. The album also incorporates strains of '80s new wave and early '90s indie-rock.

Each song on *Sarah Veladora* is a gem. "Faded" takes Ralph Kircher's smooth vocals and puts them behind a wall of echo and gloss. The guitars build into a crisp, catchy chorus. Not of the lyrics on any of these songs are too deep. Rather, they are just vague enough to apply to any listener.

"Star in the Basement" might be the song the Flaming Lips wrote while pow wowing with Marc Bolan. The lush, swirling guitar is magnificent.

This is the rock and roll of the future.

-Danielle Furfaro

Waxwing

Nobody Can Take What Everybody Owns
Second Nature Recordings
www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Did you ever wonder why you don't hear much about male "singer/songwriters" anymore? Maybe it's because they are all in bands now. Waxwing is a rock band with a driving sound, but the meanings of their songs are the most important thing for them.

Not only are the lyrics prominently featured on the insert, but you can understand nearly all of them as sung by guitarist Rocky Votolato. What is even more amazing, they don't suck

(seeing them printed on a CD sleeve is often a danger sign).

There are no solos and hardly any instrumental breaks. In a few spots, like the beginning of "The Worst Kind of Liars," you could be listening to a coffeehouse song if the electric guitar were replaced with an acoustic one. Acoustic territory is left behind, though, as the busy drumming and bass playing of Rudy Gajadhar and Andrew Hartley and the jangly guitars of Rocky and Cody Votolato come in.

The music has the energy of punk, but without the lousy production and the "I don't give a shit" attitude. A song with the title "The Gift of Light" has a thoughtful feel to it, with the refrain "It's dark tonight wherever you are/It's dark tonight where I am also/The gift of light is something that you'll never know."

There are just a few times when the music slows down, like on the start of the last cut "Schoolmaker," which features melodica and Roland piano. These moments don't last long, though, as Votolato always comes in with his strong vocals that are so appealing, you don't mind that he occasionally wanders off-key at dramatic points.

Waxwing is not a group that you want to listen to casually. It's not meant to be background music. Thoughtful lyrics and an alt/punk sound do not always go together, but they work very well here.

-Dave Howell

Western Keys

Damage
Self-Starter Foundation
www.selfstarterfoundation.com

I got this album back in mid-November and had some immediate strong impressions. But rather than shoot a review off from the hip, I decided to hone in my aim using the scopes of time and repetition. Hearing the first track, "Gettin' Sick," on the Self-Starter Foundation's web site had made me hungry to hear more of these Western Keys who hail from Austin, TX. Having this 7 song EP in and out of my 6-disc rotation has honestly worked up an appetite for a full length LP from these Texans.

After three months track one is still a winner. "Gettin' Sick" sets up both a pace and a tone working from an ambling stroll to a hurried and hurried brisk walk — part of its appeal being how it never quite breaks into a full run. Track two, "Please Rock," takes the energy pent up in "Gettin' Sick" and delivers it in a hip-bouncing head-bopping tune that is definitely my pick for the one to include on your next mix tape/CD. The rest of the album (particularly the oh-so-emo swaying and sighing of track #4, "Laughter," and the aching guitar licks that kick in about two-thirds of the way through track #5, "Driver Denies") has worked its way under my skin and into the gusher parts of my being (kind of like the boy track #4 reminded me of — you know the one I'm making the mix CD for).

Ben Dickey, Darwin Smith, and Erik Wofford did a fine job mixing/engineering this collection of songs into an album; most of the tracks slide in and out of each other with ease and intention. Ben Dickey's voice and vocal stylings do sound heavily influenced by Connor Oberst and Isaac Brock. But while the music does have a bit of that jangle, it doesn't have quite the same low-end gravity you may experience in the orbit of Modest Mouse. Nor does it have any of the vintage photo dim graininess you may experience through the lens of Bright Eyes.

-leah j

I am positive that Black girls and young women today are delving deeper into negative self-analysis than ever before.

I remember the first time I saw the kind of body I wanted to have. I was about six or seven years old. I was only in the first grade, barely able to tie my own shoes and dress myself, and I thought I knew what kind of figure I wanted. My idols were the women on Charlie's Angels and Daisy Mae Duke from the Dukes of Hazard.

The first half of my adolescence was spent in an all-Black neighborhood situated on the edge of a predominantly White township in Northeast Ohio. Until the fifth grade, I attended two consecutive schools where I was one of only two Black girls in my grade. We both mingled with all of the other girls in our classes, sometimes feeling the awkwardness of having different hair and heavier voices. During gym class, I especially paid attention to how different the other girls looked. I noticed their smaller frames and thinner, straighter legs when we stretched before calisthenics and cartwheeled around the gym.

Constantly comparing myself to these girls caused me to question my own adequacy and led me to make some changes. I believed I had the most power over my body through what I put in it. While lunchtime had always been my favorite part of the day, that quickly changed. More than half of the White girls around me carried packed lunches, complete with baby carrots, celery sticks, peelable cheese, or things I couldn't imagine willingly eating. They sometimes bought a granola bar or just ate their salads and drank all of their milk. This was a pattern I not only noticed, but committed to my psyche. Eating was apparently not a "popular" habit.

A 1990's survey done by *Essence Magazine* (with 2,000 respondents tallied) reported that Black women are equally concerned about body image as White women. I knew this. However, I read in another magazine feature that Black girls "are more tolerant of being heavier." According to a fact sheet produced by Body Wise, "cases of eating disorders among diverse racial ethnic groups, including African Americans, are often underreported because studies typically do not include ethnically diverse populations." Body Wise asserts that after White women, Black women and girls are the second group for which most studies on eating disorders are available. Much of the initial research into eating disorders in women of color leaned toward the perception that the greater the acculturation the greater the risk of developing disordered eating behaviors. However those beliefs are steadily being dismantled. The National Eating Disorder Screening Program estimates that 15 percent of ALL young women have substantially disordered eating behaviors — despite their ethnicity or socioeco-

nomic status.

Making My Way

Over the years I have read several case studies, eating disorder reports, and magazine articles that detail the differences between Black, White, and Hispanic adolescent and teenage girls' self-perceptions. Each piece concluded that Black girls generally have a more positive outlook about their bodies. While I don't doubt that Black women 30 years ago struggled with issues around images of beauty, I am positive that Black girls and young women today are delving deeper into negative self-analysis than ever before. With this I am reminded of my family's move from the "White school" district, to the side of town where the bulk of the Black kids I knew went to school. On my first day at my new school I was culture shocked. The girls who invited me into their group got pumped about lunchtime, and no one packed food from home. They even smuggled big chocolate chip cookies back to class. Even though I looked more like these classmates and friends, I didn't know what to do. I was smaller than a lot of them in height and build. This is what I had wanted, and somehow I was still unable to feel adequate amongst girls who talked, walked, dressed, and even wore the same hairstyles as me. The days of The Dukes of Hazard and Charlie's Angels were long gone, thank goodness. But by then we had music entertainers to mimic in style and image, and I was an avid fan of Teen magazine. In short, I was intent on keeping my size minimal to imitate the images that had become so compelling.

By the time my junior high and high school years started to come and go, Blacks made up about 35 percent of the student population. There were more girls who looked like me, and it was not uncommon to notice them going up and down in weight and doing whatever it took to be in style, whether this meant not eating, running track, stuffing bras, or just refusing to buy the next size up when their jeans got too tight. All of sudden my Black girlfriends were skipping their lunch periods or buying a la carte. Lunch consisted of some type of small snack, and chocolate milk, fruit, salad, or nothing at all. I didn't change very much at all during those years. My weight was consistently between 110

YOUNG IMPRESSIONS

and 115 pounds. Fifteen years later, I realize that being able to skip lunch and ignore the subsequent hunger is not normal. Now, at 28, I see and hear about teenage girls in my community experiencing the same concerns over body image, like not looking like their favorite entertainers and more importantly like the thinner girls around them. Just recently one of my friends told her 13-year-old niece that eating too much salad could make a person's stomach swell. She immediately spit the lettuce from her mouth back onto her plate in the middle of the conversation.

A 1997 Commonwealth Fund Survey on the health of adolescent girls found that White, Hispanic, and Asian-American girls were more likely than Black girls to believe they were overweight. This statement agitates me. It misrepresents many of the Black girls who do suffer from eating disorders. It leads people to believe that young Black girls do not share in the same body image problems as other women. I think it's safe to say that few young women today also realize that being fit and healthy during the teenage years is imperative to future well being. More importantly, however, is for young women to understand that concepts of beauty are socially constructed and the push for all women to look a certain way denies the simple fact that we all look different.

One of my mentors and all of my male friends tell me repeatedly that a full behind, hips, and thighs are good things. Even while I try to pass on that message, I'm not ashamed to say I am still trying to reprogram myself with this statement in mind. Talking about this subject with people who know me and who believe that I never really fit the profile of a young woman with an eating disorder is a constant eye-opener. The notion that I never had the willpower to completely turn my disgusted introspection into action is definitely a shortcoming that I am thankful for. However, I am not so different from the young women who struggle with appreciating the uniqueness of their physical selves.

Our Future

My 2003 New Year's resolution was to stop criticizing my body. My shape has hardly ever looked quite right to me. However, as I study the way society has come to understand

what is "good" and "bad" (favorable and unfavorable), I am even more driven to talk about the destructiveness of this rationale. I am tired of hearing about the sexiness of Jennifer Lopez's big booty, only to turn the channel to the voice of another criticizing Serena Williams's black, one-piece spandex short set as too revealing for her robust shape. I didn't read about anyone striking back against the worn ethnic notions responsible for much of that talk. Nevertheless, when Williams was questioned about the outfit, her reply, in a roundabout way, spoke to the issue at hand: "It really sticks to what type of shape you have. If you don't have a decent shape, this isn't the best outfit to have," she said. Her response gives me hope.

There has been a steady increase in Black women in the media. While this helps to represent the true diversity of our communities, there is also a down side. As young White women and girls aspire to be like thin and beautiful White celebrities, many of us Black women, when faced with thin and beautiful Black celebrities, will also struggle with the same physical preoccupations. Thus, we must begin to educate ourselves and our girls on how to take ownership of our minds and our bodies. I am determined to resist taking it out on my body and I won't be silent. Black girls have to hear that they are beautiful in all of their variations. It seems almost far-fetched that women could be taught on a large scale to really love themselves and understand that being unique is being beautiful. But it is possible. The way to make a lasting impact begins with teaching girls to see and respond differently, and by teaching a belief system that corrects our thinking about body image. We can take back the language that defines us, beginning with our friends, our sisters, our mothers, and our daughters — each one teaching one. Realizing one generation of women enlightened will be worth the journey. ★

words **Katrice Mines**
illustration **Helen Griffin**



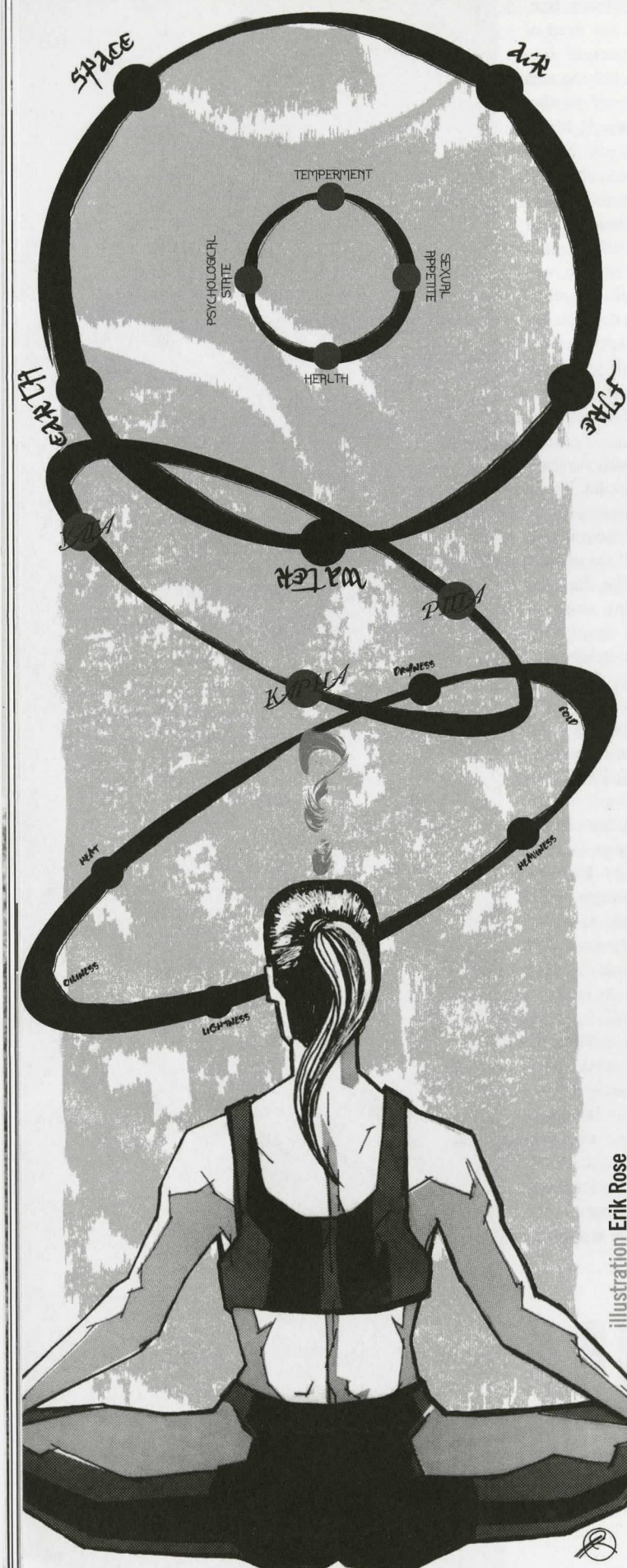


Illustration Erik Rose

I first saw Siddhartha Jacobs across a crowded room. Well, actually, it wasn't crowded at all. There were only eight of us in the small and characteristically musty classroom of a yoga center in Manhattan. We had gathered for a seminar about how to use the dietary and nutritional practices of the Ancient Ayurveda to treat disease and maintain physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

At this point, I knew absolutely nothing about Ayurveda — I couldn't even spell it. My yoga instructor, Susanna, who seemed level-headed and healthy enough, encouraged me to try it. She had gone to Siddhartha and he had changed her life. From the way she told the story, it all sounded so simple: He noted a deficiency that could be fixed by having a few extra spoonfuls of oil everyday. Using her birth chart, he had been able to figure her out completely — her trials, tribulations, and intestinal shortcomings. She claimed that after following Siddhartha's advice, she began to radiate a detectable glow and that life just seemed a whole lot brighter. It all sounded pretty cool to me — some system that used astrology, yoga, and food to make you the most optimal version of yourself. Who wouldn't hear the guy out?

All I knew was that lunch was included. I hoped that I could eat it.

What is Ayurveda? Siddhartha didn't go into this, but, I figured it out later. It's a natural healing system that originated in India eons ago. It categorizes people into constitutional types determined using the biological humors. Siddhartha's brand of Ayurveda is the ancient variety, and not as well-known as the modern version. I am not going to get into their differences here, I hardly understand them myself. What is important to note is that this ancient version treats each person as an individual case, instead of as a representative of a single type. In addition, where the Modern practitioners will take the manifestation of a disease symptom as an indication of a person's typology, Ancient followers allow for the possibility that while one's constitution may make him prone to particular diseases, he may also show symptoms of others that, at face value, would seem unrelated to his typology.

So there we were. Siddhartha, a tall, lanky, science-teacher-esque wisp of a guy, introduced us to a few key terms.

He began by explaining that there are five great elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) and these elements combine in different pairings to form three energies, Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. These energies, alone or mixed, indicate the seven major constitutional types that make up the Ayurvedic system. Each of these energies has three defining properties. There are six of these properties in total: Heat, cold, oiliness, dryness, lightness, and heaviness. Depending on your constitutional composition, you will have a preponderance or lack of these properties, which will make you more prone to the diseases associated with them. Each of the seven constitutional types tends to one of the major diseases, the seventh of which is the "mixed" darkhorse, meaning that you could tend to a pastiche of disease inclinations. It's important to note that these diseases affect all aspects of human existence — temperament, health, sexual appetite, psychological state, etc.

Our seminar was supposed to be an investigation of the dietary guidelines for each of these disease types. Each disease had a set of symptoms associated with it. But, going down the list of ailments for the diseases, I found that I could see myself fitting into at least three. To add to the confusion, seemingly opposing diseases presented similar symptoms, and sometimes, one disease could present opposing symptoms. Both the diseases of cold and heat can lead to poor circulation. And, you could suffer from the disease of coldness and have high or low blood pressure. You can see what sorts of problems and questions emerged. We spent an hour and a half of our three-hour

seminar discussing two out of seven categories. Naturally, each of the students was intent on figuring out which type we were. Wasn't that the point? That's why I was there. According to our fearless leader, we can only try to understand our typology, but without the special intuitive gift, which only a few possess, we cannot diagnose with certainty. Lucky for us, Siddhartha is blessed, and, if we wanted, we could set up a one-on-one session with him to investigate (for one hour, \$150) our physical and mental health, and find out how to achieve balance in these areas; or, (for two hours, \$300) the whole shebang, including our spiritual path, optimal career conditions, relationship behavior, and emotional stability.

I knew what I had to do. Before me was a sheet of paper that specified which food was recommended for each type (I use "recommended" on purpose — the Ancient Ayurvedic method doesn't promote following any regime to a point where it becomes restrictive). If I could just find out which type I was, I could eat my way to a balanced self. There was no reason to sit through another hour and a half (or questionable lunch) of everyone's incessant, persnickety questions. I scheduled a session with Siddhartha (the shorter one), gave him my birth info, and went off to do his required reading (Ayurveda Revolutionized by Edward Tarabilda).

On first sight, Siddhartha had surmised (or divined?) that I might be a "cold." Once I started doing my homework, I worried. People prone to the disease of coldness are supposed to avoid sweet-tasting things. That even rules out Nutra-Sweet. "Please," I prayed, "don't let me be a 'cold.'" I love sugar. It's my weakness. I have tried to cut it out of my life and the plan has only backfired (I found myself devouring a batch of brownies for dinner in a desperate act of compensation). In the days leading up to my session with Sid (let's just give him a nickname now that things are getting more intimate), I vowed that if he told me I shouldn't have sugar, I would dismiss the whole Ayurveda thing as rubbish.

The good news: I'm not a cold. The bad news: I'm actually a special kind of "mixed." Turns out, there's an eighth category known as the karmic mixed type. Constitutionally, we have the characteristics of a regular mixed type, but, we are ruled by past-life karma. This is a lot harder to diagnose, so I guess it's a good thing I went to a professional. My past-life karma was not so good. According to Sid, if a brick was to fall from a building, my head would be the one upon which it would most likely land. Was there anything I could do to fix this situation? That's what I wanted to know (as long as I didn't have to cut out the sugar). Sid told me, without much of a bedside manner, that I can't change the karma. My type is affected physically, which means that I'm okay mentally and emotionally, but yes, let the bricks fall where they may and they will probably fall on me. I can alleviate the effects of the karma so that instead of running into a bicyclist and breaking my leg, I can walk into a fire hydrant and badly bruise it instead. And the best way to alleviate the situation is to chant. He demonstrated. I wished he had told me to stop eating brownies.

And what about the power of food? For all intents and purposes, my body follows a Pitta course, which means it's ruled by the disease of heat but also tends towards lightness and oiliness. My birth chart led Sid to believe that for three quarters of the year (from summer through winter) I am mostly guided by lightness, while in spring, the oiliness surfaces and takes over. So, I have to follow a diet for lightness most of the time, but treat oiliness from March through June. It's a bit more complicated because, lots of the things that are good for alleviating lightness can exacerbate oiliness, and vice versa. Sid promoted protein, and although the Ayurveda preaches vegetarianism, he insisted that this should really be applied on a personal basis. For

me, seafood and white meat (lean — in order to stave off oiliness) chicken are my best bets. But I actually don't like chicken. What about fish? Yes, that's ok, but again, no fatty fishes (forget everything you've heard about omega-3, if you are at all oily, none of that for you). And tofu? Not so much, as per Sid. How about beans, aren't they a good source of protein? Only if one's system can take them. So that left vegetables (although, they're not protein, they're really carbs in disguise, according to Sid), seafood, and tempeh, on occasion. No dairy and low carbs. Sweet things actually nourish lightness but are a nemesis for oiliness, so they're ok in moderation, except in spring.

After realizing that I'd be eating nothing but calamari, steamed, I complained to Sid. His advice was variation — very important. I'm still confused. How do I have a varied diet when he has limited me to seafood? I looked at the booklet he gave me:

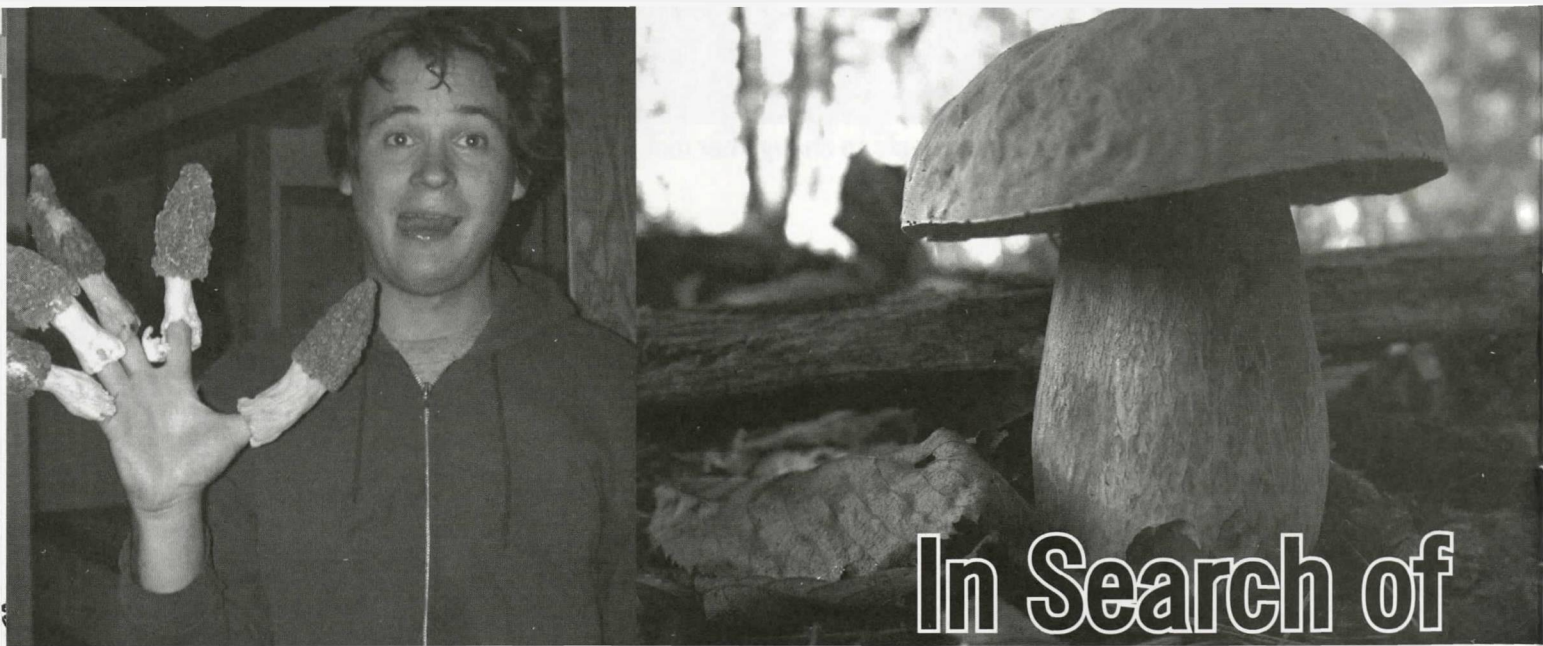
"Reduce excess oil in the Spring and eating lower fat diet especially in this season, reducing dairy and sour foods. This is basically a Pitta reducing diet, avoiding oil in excess. Too much oil stresses the gallbladder. Decrease use of the bitter taste, which increases a sense of lightness in the body and head. Smaller, nourishing meals taken more frequently is better than one or two gigantic meals. You must also reduce hot, spicy foods in your diet. Reduce the sweet taste in spring. Salty taste but can be used in moderation but should also be moderated in the Spring. For best digestion and energy eat your largest meal between the hours of 11:00 am-3:00 pm. Eat a smaller dinner and refrain from late-night eating."

Pretty vague, yet seemingly open-ended. Again, how was I left with a few measly shrimp?

What really bothered me was the nutritional value of this diet. For example, where was the calcium? Wouldn't you think that someone who was cosmically accident prone should worry about bone density? Without dairy and dark leafy greens, most of which would be considered bitter in taste, where was the calcium? Tofu is a pretty good source, but that had been nixed, as had salmon. Aside from the shellfish, there's no bone-building going on here. I even considered almonds, but then learned that these are considered "sweet," and would have to be ingested sparingly, especially in springtime. Plus, when you think about it, nuts have loads of oil.

I picked up Maya Tiwari's *Ayurveda, A Life of Balance: The Complete Guide to Ayurvedic Nutrition & Body Types with Recipes*, which is pretty helpful and actually provided me with many, albeit vegetarian options. Tons of veggies I thought were verboten turn out to be copasetic for lightness and oiliness. In addition, the book explains the dietary rules and the concepts behind them quite succinctly.

While I haven't completely followed the regimen mapped out by Sid, I have modified my diet. Giving up dairy hasn't been too tricky, and I think it has had a positive effect (Viaciv calcium supplements for women are great and tasty to boot). Although Sid promised more insight and wisdom if I came back for the second hour, I'm not convinced it's worth the investment. But I'm impressed with the general tenets of the Ancient Ayurveda, its lack of rigidity, and its holistic approach. And, as much as he may have scared the bejeezus out of me when he doomed me to a life of physical pain, constitutionally speaking, I think that Sid was spot on in his diagnosis. We'll just see what happens when spring arrives and it's time to cut out the chocolate. ★



In Search of Food, Home, and Community

words and photos Jason Gillis Lemieux

foraging for a sense of place

Mushroom love

I have a date with a mushroom that appears only once a year on the day following the autumn's first mild frost. The mushroom is called the Hen of the Woods. It is 2200 feet up the side of a wild mountain in central New Hampshire, growing next to the oldest butternut tree I know. I travel from wherever I am to keep my date. I have no choice, I am bound to it by a force that is stronger than most anything else in my life. To stay away would drive me to tears, I would pull out my hair and run through the streets screaming. I am always there and so is the Hen.

It is called the Hen of the Woods with good reason. It resembles a fluffed up wild hen with tiers of brown and grey flesh that look like feathers and often it grows to the same size as it's barnyard cousin. In Japanese it is called Maitake, which means "dancing mushroom". Folklore has it that it got this name because people tend to freak out, jump up and down, scream, fall over, and roll in the leaves with excitement upon finding it. Love indeed. I've done this dance myself, even before I knew the story. A Maitake is 20 pounds of the most delicious yummi-

ness you've ever known. To not roll around just doesn't make sense.

Foraging for food is about sharing the dances, the rolling in the leaves, jumping up and down, then cooking with friends and having a beautiful meal. It's about falling in love in a raspberry patch while you pick all day with an otherwise complete stranger — saving the biggest and sweetest berries to share — first throwing them across the patch, maybe feeding each other, being lost in the sweetness of it all until filling your bucket doesn't seem so important anymore. Most importantly for me, foraging brings people together to form strong relationships with each other, their community, and the earth.

Replanting

It is springtime here in San Francisco, far away from home. I stare looking into my refrigerator with a grim expression: I have one shelf of space. I have 3 bags full of fresh greens. Some are wild — from Golden Gate Park and the Presidio, some are from farms in Sonoma County and have found themselves in the dumpster behind the health food store. All were free and organic. Found food. More than I can handle. And I know where there is even more.

The miners lettuce, mustard greens, dock, nettles, and nasturtium flowers I picked in the closest thing this city offers to wildness — Golden Gate Park. When the full moon of February came last week I knew it was time to look for nasturtium blossoms and I knew just where to go. I arrived at my favorite patch of these spicy flowers in a valley of monterey cypress trees that offers shade, moisture, and quiet seclusion. The moon was correct, as always. The usual valley of green has exploded into bright oranges and reds. The first edible flowers of the year. Thus be-

gins one of hundreds of yearly rituals. I pick flowers for an hour, fill my bag, and continue on to look for Blewitt mushrooms in the arboretum. The start of nasturtium flowers in the valley means Blewitt mushrooms in the arboretum. Guaranteed.

I am comfortable here. My afternoon looking for food in the park brings me balance, peace, and an inner calmness that I find in the city no other way. I am happy here, but this is not my home.

Home

My home is in the woods of central New Hampshire along the Connecticut river valley. My roots are there. Thick roots, running deep through family, community and soil. I lived my first 18 years in the same house on the same slope of a mountain in the same little valley in New England. That is home. I maintain a deep and intimate relationship with that valley and especially with the mountain on which my parents still live. I know the plants, animals, and people of that area in intimate and predictable ways that brings me both comfort and security. I know of vast fields of wild greens and tubers, where to find every medicinal herb I ever need, when and where dozens of kinds of mushrooms will fruit, and who to go to in order to barter what I find for what they have. I am here in San Francisco because of my work and activism, but not a day goes by without thinking of that mountain.

My first three attempts at moving away from the Connecticut River Valley were not so successful. New places always brought a flood of loneliness and anxiety. *What is this tree? What are these flowers? Why am I here when the jewel weed is ready to harvest back home? There is no jewel weed here, it's far too dry. So what am I doing?*

What I was experiencing in my homesickness was the isolation that is caused by feeling that I didn't belong. I was out of touch with the systems that I was suddenly part of yet didn't have a defined role within. The social and environmental happenings around me were foreign and unfamiliar.

The launch of a gastronaut

The San Francisco Bay Area is extremely mycologically active and has a mushroom season that is opposite that of the Northeast. When it snows in Vermont, the mushrooms pop up in northern California. Good thing.

I arrived here with anxiety about living in a new and unfamiliar place and made a pact with myself to explore, explore, explore. I *knew* there were mushrooms here but had to find them. I took daily trips to new parts of the bay area, which is full of micro climates, an incredible diversity of ecosystems, and the dumpsters of some of the finest gourmet food manufacturers in the US (one of the best places to find mushrooms in the bay area is in dumpsters). I set out to develop a gastronomical map — a little map that lives inside me that tells me where and when I might find food.

In an urban setting the foraging is almost always better in dumpsters than in parks. The wild foods found in many bay area parks is of questionable purity due to the high lead content in the soil and consistent use of pesticides by the parks department. There are some bay area parks that seem clean enough to forage in, but it is hard for questionable wild greens to compete with domesticated organic ones from dumpsters.

Making your map

Becoming a gastronaut in a new place means a lot of walking around. A whole new series of ecosystems and neighborhoods must be explored. After some time a map evolves and with it comes knowledge, food, and security. You might learn some good dumpsters but you also might make a few friends, find some shelter, absorb local culture, feel at home where you are, and gain the security that comes with knowing your environment.

Fettuccini Morelfredo



This work is unimaginably easy. Our brains seem hard-wired to remember when and where to find food. I have hunted mushrooms in an enormous amount of territory yet instinctively remember the location and time of year (relative to indicators and other natural events) of each one I've found. The same is true of what nights are good to hit dumpsters I've encountered. My gastronomical

map of mushrooms spans the entire northeast, the Bay Area, and parts of Washington and Oregon. It includes about a hundred species of edible or useful mushrooms and thousands of different locations, times, and environmental indicators.

As I sit in my apartment in San Francisco I know that the predicted rain of next week will bring out the black trumpets in the Santa Cruz mountains. It just feels right. I haven't studied and researched to gain this information and retaining it doesn't involve writing anything down. The knowledge comes naturally as it probably did for our ancestors. I did of course have to learn what species are edible and useful, but that process was also very easy. You know a dandelion when you see one. It's a dandelion. Go ahead and eat it.

A call for submissions

The globalization of food, culture, and people has left us uprooted, eating unhealthily, and separated from each other. Foraging provides ways to relocate our culture, our food, and ourselves. I am seeking collaborators and contributors for an upcoming book entitled *The Wild Anarchist: A Field-to-Table Guide to Urban and Rural Foraging*. The book will be a collection of essays and artwork on food politics and issues, along with a how-to's and stories about dumpster diving, gleanings, common edible mushroom hunting and identification, plus wild plant harvesting, use, and preparation. Contributions of essays, artwork, photos, knowledge, and coordination are needed. Please get in touch: dumpsterdog@eggplantmedia.com. ★

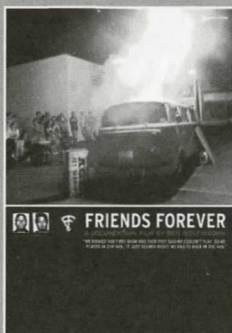
Friends Forever

Directed by Ben Wolfinsohn
plexifilm, 2003
friendsforeverthemovie.com

Friends Forever, a two-man Denver punk band, does not book shows at regular venues, but instead plays out of their orange VW van in warehouse districts or back alleys behind local music venues accompanied by unrelenting smoke effects, strobe lights, and sound distortion. Josh, the drummer, and Nate, the bassist and masked front man, ventured out on a West Coast tour in the summer of 2000 with \$350. Some nights the band tore through its set with a couple dozens fanatics cheering them. Other nights they wait and wait but only a couple people show or the police ask them to move on. Nate and Josh mutter existentially about the point of playing when only a few people show up. There are no backstage passes. There are no groupies. There are no hotel rooms to destroy. There is barely enough food or gas money. Often, there are few, if any, audience members. And there are always law enforcement officers or disturbed locals telling the band that they can't play there. There are no clichéd love stories or contrived conflicts between band mates. It's just two guys with their sound effects, explosive devices, and their lighting expert Jenn trying to put on a good show.

Friends Forever, the documentary by Ben Wolfinsohn, details both the mundane aspects of taking a band out on the road and the downright sexy aspects of being part of a rock band. The film documents the thousands of road miles between Olympia and Las Vegas and Los Angeles, recording their boredom, depression, disgust, and excitement. There is no script, nor much in the way of scene set-up. Everything is completely real, from the shows to the band members' philosophical soliloquies.

Best of all, this film proves that anyone with the desire to tell a good story can do so effectively. Anyone with a camcorder can put together a decent collection of footage. Most mid-sized cities and college towns have places such as 911 Media Center in Seattle where new filmmakers can cheaply rent film and video equipment buy editing room time.



Although somewhat reminiscent of Rob Reiner's mockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap*, *Friends Forever* more closely resembles Penelope Spheeris' out-of-print *Decline of Western Civilization*, the infamous documentary of the late-70s L.A. punk scene featuring X and Fear with drunk and stoned remnants of other bands that had been The Germs and would become The Go-Gos. The images in that film shocked many of its viewers, keyed into *All in the Family* and *The Godfather*. *Friends Forever* captures people in unimaginable circumstances — such as the Denver man the band meets up with in L.A. who drinks his own vomit, Nate's explanation of how he can drink 30 beers in only a few minutes (he vomits as he drinks), and how they — that blow away just about everything depicted in modern pop culture "events" like *ER* and *Chicago*.

Friends Forever is a film in which Nate and Josh make things happen. Nate forms a side project called Incrediballboy. Josh attempts to film a movie of his own while completely drunk. The pair travel to New York City to meet Lloyd Kauffman, head of Troma Film Studios, and present him with a head prosthesis they designed and a spray-painted sign that tells the world that "Troma Rules Balls." They meet their musical hero, Harvey Sid Fisher, composer of the song, "Aries." They wrestle the band Bio-Bitch. They lose three dollars in Vegas, a feat that leaves Nate superbly despondent. They model space-age costumes made out of garbage designed by their friend Dave in Portland, Oregon. They draw up schematics for attaching rockets to the van in order to fly the van from coast to coast. After filming ended, according to the liner notes, they destroyed the van in an attempt to make the dream come true.

Nate and Josh suffer for their art, as it should be. Nate lives with parents, doing odd jobs while the band is on hiatus. Josh wonders if they are getting through to anybody or if they are just making terrible noises. They are celibate on the road.

Through it all, the film makes one fact very clear — Nate and Josh are just a couple ordinary guys who like to sit in their van and make noise because somebody's got to do it. They don't do drugs because they don't make enough to afford them. They give away tapes and records at the end of their shows because all they want is to be able to afford a good burrito. They explain to the police in Denver that they figured they could play outside because they've seen blues musicians do the same. They pray to God, but not the regular God. The God of Rock and Roll. They don't compete for love and affection as a rule because their friendship is more important. In the end, Nate says, "If they're anything we're good at, we're good at making the worst music ever made."

Music aficionados familiar with Michael Bolton and the Spice Girls would tend to disagree.

—Matthew L.M. Fletcher

FRIENDS FOREVER REVIEW

What is it that makes arepas so unique? Why do I love them sooooo much? Arepas — best when they're fresh off the grill, warm and crispy and slightly charred on the outside, soft and chewy on the inside. The subtle corn flavor that goes just as well plain or with butter, cheese, eggs, or beans; spicy, salty, or buttery-sweet. Subtle, but it gets inside your head, hypnotizing your taste buds. Arepas that don't lose their identity, the subtle simplicity of the corn flavor and the shape — round, not too thin, not too thick — around Colombia they are prepared and served in many styles.

The “common variety” arepas — the ones you can find packaged in supermarkets — are four or five inches in diameter and less than a centimeter thick, a little thicker and chewier than Mexican corn tortillas. Then there are cute, thick, little arepas about two inches in diameter, like big stones or pirates' dubloons, thin shell around soft, solid, and fluffy insides. There are huge arepas, the size of a dinner plate, like the one I unwittingly ordered at a road-side stop on the way to the coast, covered with a thick layer of butter and fresh crumbled salty cheese — the one arepa in my life I have been unable to finish. On the Caribbean coast, they fry arepas in oil and serve them up like crispy bubbles that you puncture, releasing hot steam and revealing a flat, slightly greasy corn patty, and sometimes an egg. These are best left to cool, swabbed off if you're watching your grease intake, then sprinkled with hot sauce.

How did Colombia first get under my skin? Maybe Toto la Momposina, with her powerful drums and voice; or tales of carefree Caleños and their great salsa parties? Maybe the idea of one nation embracing the combination of Andean, Caribbean, Pacific, European, indigenous, and African cultures; of mountains, valleys, plains, beaches, rainforests and deserts? Maybe Colombia's map, looking a little like a starfish (Panamá also used to be part of Colombia).

Maybe it's the U.S. war on Colombia's countryside, agricultural and environmental integrity, its social and governmental structures, its economy, its people — oops, sorry, I mean on drugs — and Colombia's own civil conflict, already generations old when Gabriel García Márquez first published *Cien Años de Soledad* in 1967, both of which constantly remind me how much the world has to lose by following this path of destruction. I know for sure it wasn't guaro — aguardiente, the anise-flavored sugar-based liqueur that paisas drink like water — but that's another story. Okay, there was also a certain young lad.... But arepas are, like I said, essential. They have captured my imagination and my taste buds since the first time I tasted them, at a street festival in the Mission District of San Francisco.

So when Humberto told me his mom runs an arepa business out of their home in the hills of Medellín, I was pretty excited.

As a young woman, María de Jesús arrived in Medellín — capital of Antioquia

department and city of the eternal spring — in the 1970s. She traveled between Medellín and her native Chocó department frequently, giving birth to three of her four children there. The Chocó dominates Colombia's Pacific coast, stretching from the Panamanian border halfway to Ecuador. Known for its impenetrable jungles, rainy weather, gold mines, and predominantly African population and culture, Chocó seems to embody Colombia's intertwined histories of slavery and resistance, natural riches and resource exploitation, marginalization, violence, and displacement.

Around 1980 María de Jesús moved to her own place in a settlement of wood, cardboard, and plastic on the banks of the Medellín River, which cuts through the heart of the city from north to south. Several years later, the city introduced a “relocation program,” and residents traded riverside and cardboard for hillside and cement. María — now widowed — ended up in the northwest mountains on the outskirts of Medellín, in a new neighborhood called Vallejuelos. The whole neighborhood sits on a steep incline, so that motor vehicles only venture on the cross streets. Here, the city offered the family of five a 20 x 20 room built of cement, complete with a dirt floor. Today, they have added on a back room and Humberto is building the second floor piece by piece. There are rumors Vallejuelos residents may be uprooted again in the near future, to make room for wealthier developments.

mmm... arepas



words Sarah Town
illustration Shawn Granton

When Juan and I arrive with Humberto in Vallejuelos just after dark, the streets are alive with shouts, laughter, and vallenatos, kids on bicycles and teenagers in evening wear. María has a great vibe, a joyful, easy-going smile, and speaks in strong, rounded tones. She gives me and Juan a big smile and hearty greeting when we arrive and asks if we want to work or eat first. I'm all about learning the art of the arepa, so I say, "Work!" By the end of the evening, she's ready to make me her international agent, sending me off with two packages of fresh-made arepas and a whole borjón — an aphrodisiac citrus fruit native to Chocó that doesn't spoil when frozen.

María has the arepa production line at the front of the house — in the original 20 x 20 room — near the door and dinner table. The set-up consists of three basic steps, each of which requires some human labor: a grinder, a roller, and a grill. The pedal-operated electric grinder is my first station, where I scoop and pour dry corn kernels from a large plastic bowl into a vertical funnel. Another bowl sits under the grinder, catching the corn mush that clumps up on its way out of the grinder until it weighs too much and has to fall off. After I get my pouring rhythm down, I begin to use a wooden spoon to scrape off the excess mush.

Juan replaces me at the grinder and I move on to the rolling station, a flat waist-high wooden table equipped with a wooden roller, a sheet of wax paper, and a plastic plate of perfect arepa depth and diameter. This station is pure manual labor, and I think it embodies the heart of arepa art. Deceptively docile under the spell of María's hands, the corn mush rolls out a little slowly and clumsily for me at first. After a little coaching and practice, though, I am scooping out the dough, rolling out nearly perfectly smooth, round arepas in the plate's mold, then collecting the remaining dough and rolling it out again. The amused group of onlookers in Humberto's front room cheers me on.

The longish electric grill, with space for up to 16 four-inch arepas at a time, has been Humberto's station since the early days. He stands there today and monitors the arepas that come off the rolling table as they sing to perfection. From the grill they can be eaten fresh or packaged and reheated.

Before starting up her arepa business, María had done everything from working in wealthy homes to selling a variety of snacks and drinks on the street. In late 1999, she began exploring the arepa market, first offering leftover arepas made for home consumption to neighbors. To expand her clientele base, she often gave away samples, to certain stores, offices, and former employers. Last year, she was selected to be part of a small business entrepreneurs' program started by the city in

response to high unemployment rates, through which she has gotten access to classes covering budgeting, production, and marketing of products and services. Today María still operates her business on an order-ahead basis, keeping notes on scraps of paper with people's first names and how many bags they've ordered. This way she avoids the waste of overproduction.

After some fun with the arepa equipment, we sit down to plates piled with food: potatoes, patacones (squashed fried plantains), coconut rice, fresh tomato, cucumber, and lettuce, and savory chicken. On top of that, María balances a piping hot arepa. To drink we are first served fresh borjón juice, then chicha, homemade corn beer. María wants to find a market for borjón fruit, and as she bags one up for me she explains how simple it is to prepare: press the whole fruit, skin and all, through a strainer, then add water and sugar to taste.

When we are sluggishly full with awesome Chocóan food and hospitality, Humberto makes me sing my favorite Víctor Heredia song, "Razón de vivir," which I guess is a fair trade for this snapshot of María's art of survival. The room gets quiet and Nueva Canción floats out the door and down the street, as family and visitors passing by stop to listen. ★

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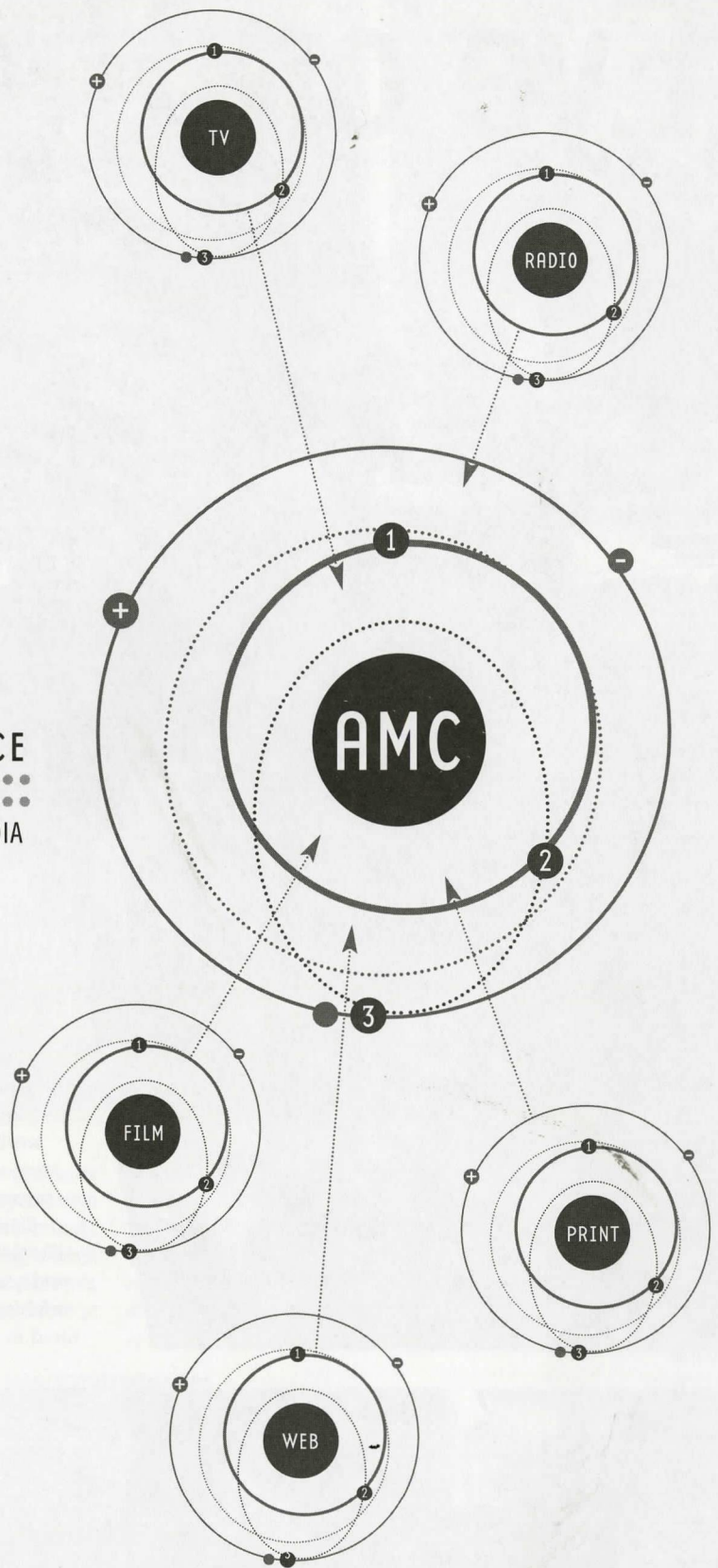


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Eye on the street

**On February 15, 2003
millions took to the
streets of cities around
the world to register their
opposition to the war.
Indymedia was there to tell
their stories...**

On February 15, 2003, the world saw an unprecedented day of protests against war. Up to 30 million took to the streets in some 600 cities and towns spread across all seven continents to say no to war in Iraq. There was only one place to turn for complete coverage of F15, the "World Says No To War" global day of action. Indymedia, with reports from all of the biggest demonstrations and many of the smallest, wove hundreds of separate actions into a single story. As popular uprisings from around the world begin to coordinate their actions, Indymedia is proving an essential tool for imagining this new community.

Three and a half years ago the scope of Indymedia extended barely beyond the city of Seattle where it was established to coordinate coverage of the N30 protests against the World Trade Organization in November, 1999. Those protests were not organized by a single group, or oriented towards a single location, or scheduled for a single hour. They were the result of networks of autonomous organizations working in coordination. And they were successful: the protests shut down the WTO ministerial meeting and brought the organization's destructive policies to public attention.

Corporate news agencies, designed to cover organized events like the WTO meeting itself and grown lazy on press releases and professional spokespeople, were ill-prepared for the events that unfolded in the streets. Indymedia, on the other hand, was structured in like the protests: Autonomous reporters united by shared



DUSTIN ROSS

FRED ASKEW

LOURDES DELGADO

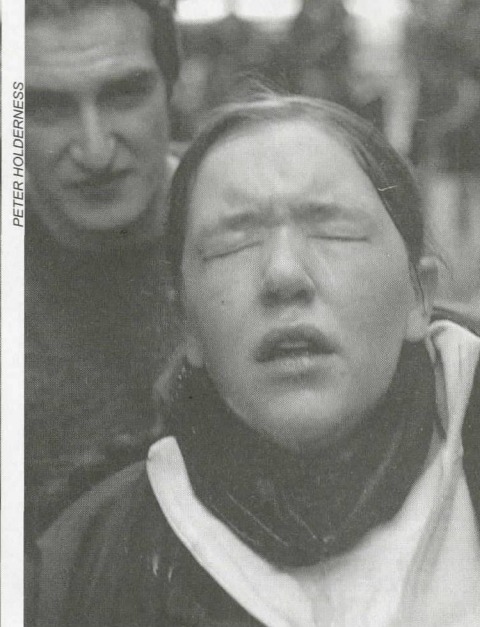




DUSTIN ROSS



DUSTIN ROSS



words mike burke and josh breitbart
photos indymedia



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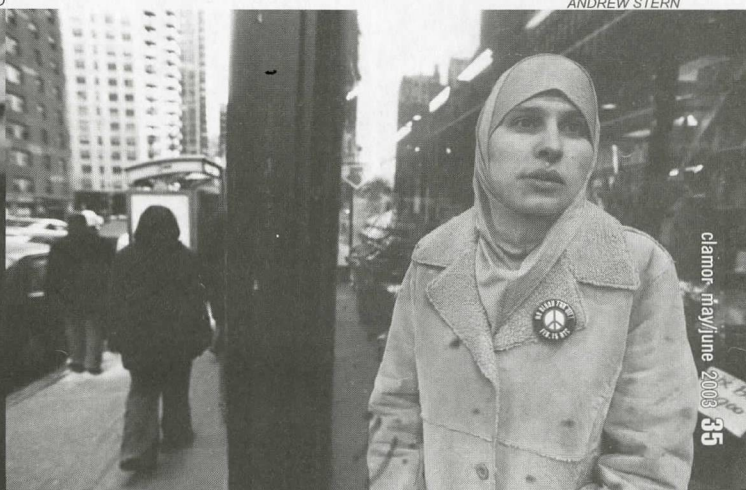
objectives and shared spaces — both the virtual space of the website and the physical space of the Independent Media Center — were able to document the protests from every angle. Thanks to a last-minute adjustment to the Indymedia website called “open publishing” which allowed any visitor to the site to post an article, every participant was a potential reporter. Indymedia was everywhere in Seattle. Now at times it seems like it is everywhere in the world.

There are now over 100 IMCs spread around the world, publishing in almost 20 languages. No longer ad hoc newsrooms set up for a weekend-long protest, IMCs are local media collectives that connect varied social movements simply by virtue of placing them on the same newspaper or web page. Indymedia now mirrors on a global scale what it accomplished on the streets of Seattle. Not that there are IMCs everywhere: they are rather scarce in East Asia, the Middle

MANDY CORRADO



ANDREW STERN



The world says no to war

On one weekend in February, as the United States moved men and machines into place for a war against the people of Iraq, millions of human beings gathered together in hundreds of different places across the Earth in the hopes that somehow they could affect this frightening course of events.

Rome: 2.5 million
 London: 1.5 million
 Barcelona: 1 million
 Madrid: 1 million
 Paris: 800,000
 New York City: 500,000
 Berlin: 500,000
 Seville: 250,000
 Melbourne: 200,000
 Athens: 200,000
 Oviedo: 200,000
 Montreal: 150,000
 Dublin: 100,000
 Brussels: 100,000
 Lisbon: 100,000
 Las Palmas: 100,000
 Cadiz: 100,000
 Amsterdam: 80,000
 Toronto: 80,000
 Stockholm: 80,000
 Los Angeles: 75-100,000
 Glasgow: 60,000+
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 Seattle: 55,000
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 Irune: 20,000
 Montpellier: 15-20,000
 Luxemburg: 15-20,000
 Buenos Aires: 15,000
 Rio de Janeiro: 15,000
 Helsinki: 15,000
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 Zagreb: 10,000
 San Diego: 10,000
 Philadelphia: 10,000
 Edmonton: 10,000
 Auckland: 8-10,000
 Tel Aviv: 1500
 Adelaide, Bellingham, Bregenz: 1500
 Bratislava, Cape Town: 5000
 Christchurch, Dunedin, Durban: 3000
 Iraklio: 4000
 Patras: 3500
 Prague: 1000
 Quito: 250
 Rethimno: 2000
 Rhodes: 2000
 Santiago: 3000
 Taipei, Tampere: 2000
 Tudela: 5000
 Turku: 5000
 Volos: 3000



RAVEN

East and Africa. But they cover and connect the world in a way that the foreign correspondents and satellite hook-ups of CNN or the BBC simply cannot.

F15 showed this to be the case. As in Seattle, the F15 protests were united only by a common goal and time, but now the participants were on the move across the entire globe, not just across an entire city. No single group could even claim to have organized a majority of the actions — there were no global spokespeople.

Unlike with the antiglobalization protests, the corporate news agencies could not obfuscate the message

of the antiwar protesters. But still they could not quite grasp what was happening: people in hundreds and hundreds of cities around the world marching in unison, under the command of no one. This is how Indymedia works, so it should not be surprising that Indymedia is the one information source that could gather and synthesize the thousands of reports from around the world.

Indymedia certainly has many flaws. Besides its geographical imbalance and its reliance on the internet (which keeps much of its information inaccessible to most of the world's population), it can sometimes have an overwhelming amount of information, and not all of it useful. People not familiar with the network and the website can easily get confused and tune out, and people familiar with the network can sometimes huddle together and speak only to those near them, closing out potential friends.

But, as these photos of F15 in New York City show, Indymedia gets closer and sees things more honestly than a profit-driven company ever could, no matter how many reporters it hired. Whether it was a quiet moment in the cold, a joyous moment in the crowd, or a violent moment of a police charge, Indymedia photographers were there that day. And not just in New York, but around the world. Maybe you were one of them, or maybe you will be. Visit www.indymedia.org.

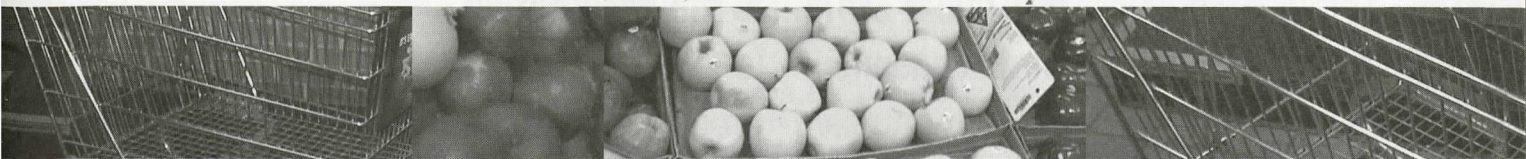


FRED ASKEW

RAVEN

The Politics of Food

Will the Israeli/Palestinian polarization
tear apart one of the country's oldest natural foods co-ops?



On a Thursday afternoon in February, Rainbow Cooperative Grocery in San Francisco is moderately busy. A woman in a multi-colored skirt leads her son down the aisle of bulk cereals, a dreadlocked couple browses in the natural supplements section and a short-haired woman in an Air Force uniform samples hand lotions. Tracy Chapman sings softly over the speakers and sunlight streams through the windows at the far end of the store.

There is no sign that just two months ago, Rainbow was at the center of a maelstrom of controversy — both internally and from the outside world — over a supposed boycott of Israeli products.

Now, as the 28-year-old, worker-owned co-op takes on one of the most polarizing political issues of modern times, there is concern that the issue might be too hot to handle — begging the question: do global politics, like this, really belong in a health food store?

People's Food System

Not that Rainbow Grocery is any stranger to politics, in fact — according to a comprehensive history of Rainbow compiled by co-op member Tim Huet, the store was very connected to the People's Common Operating Warehouse of San Francisco. This was a political project using food distribution as a form of community organizing and political education, which was striving to build a "People's Food System" or a network of community food stores throughout the city.

Rainbow became a non-profit in 1976, and almost immediately began making money, but also tried to adhere to the political principles of the People's Warehouse. According to Huet's history, culled mostly from interviews with Rainbow's founding members, the warehouse's activists thought Rainbow was not political enough. Soon after, Rainbow made a decision to split from the Food System and focus on issues of food and clean food access as their livelihood.

Rainbow continued to grow and its organizational structure was refined. It is now run by 14 departmental collectives, which come together into monthly membership meetings to make decisions. There is also a seven member board of directors that handles large expenditures, depart-

mental income statements and legal issues. Today, Rainbow has nearly 200 members.

Coca Cola Juice

Scott Bradley, Rainbow Co-op member of the public relations committee, says that Rainbow has outlasted most other collectively run grocery stores because individual politics was kept out of running the business. But he says, nowadays, it's all getting mixed up — especially when you look at the way the corporate world is edging in on the natural foods market.

"For instance, you have Odwalla being bought by Minute Maid, which is owned by Coca Cola," Bradley says, in Rainbow's noisy member lounge, which is adjacent to the co-op's kitchen. "That caused a big to-do here because we were like, 'Are we still going to keep carrying this?'"

Bradley says that it was a tough decision, but after meeting with the owner of Odwalla, who assured Rainbow that the purchase could be a good move as it would allow the juice company access to better labs and promised that nothing would change about the product, they decided to stick with them.

"The unfortunate thing is that smaller places that do organic juice can't produce the amount that goes through here on a regular basis and we can't always trust that they will be safe," Bradley says. "It feels like a cop-out in a lot of ways."

The Semantics of Boycotting

Being such a large and well-respected store, news of Rainbow's supposed boycott of Israeli products was pretty much front page news in the Bay Area. Word spread when customers came in asking for Hanukkah chocolate, or gelt, in December and were told that Rainbow was no longer carrying Israeli products. Emails were spread around the Jewish community and soon phone, fax, and email campaigns were being directed towards Rainbow. The Jewish Community Relations Council, a coalition representing 80 Jewish congregations and organizations in the Bay Area, called for an immediate reversal of the ban on Israeli goods and saw the ban as part of a larger "anti-Israel" agenda.

Bradley explains that there really was no store-wide boycott of Israeli products. Instead,

the bulk foods and packaged foods departments had decided among themselves to stop stocking these items. Before this recent controversy, for a co-op wide boycott to happen, a proposal must be written, posted, and all members must vote on it by petition. It must pass by a simple majority of 51 percent. In the past, Rainbow was involved in boycotting South African products and General Electric light bulbs.

"People knew this and felt like there wasn't going to be enough support for a store-wide boycott of Israeli products, so they did it in a little bit of a sneakier way," Bradley says.

At the height of the uproar, Bradley had received a couple thousand faxes and emails and was receiving 60 to 70 phone calls a day. The Board of Directors stepped in and issued a statement saying that there was no boycott and tried to explain the structure of the co-op, but people just weren't having it.

Eventually, the board told the two departments that their decision to ban these items was null since they hadn't followed protocol and since it was causing so much turmoil for everyone. Since then, the boycott procedure has been revamped to make it a two-thirds majority vote and to include a lot more education about the issue.

"We still got a lot of people upset, saying that we kowtowed," Bradley says. "I don't think we lost a lot of customers over it. I think the biggest problem was that it caused a lot of bickering internally. There was a pretty big schism for awhile."

Official Boycott

At Rainbow, the process to start an official boycott of Israeli products has just begun. It will take about six months for the entire process. Bradley says that he is slightly worried about what the issue may do to Rainbow, and whether people may leave the co-op over it.

"The argument comes up every so often about us being political or making some kind of statement and some people say, 'we're not political' and others say we are inherently so," Bradley says. "I think the real political statement that Rainbow makes is about the way we do business, about how we have made this structure viable and successful. That and good, clean food." ★

by Neela Banerjee

The Tyranny of Consensus

When election results were reported in Iraq in mid-October, 2002, it became clear that President Hussein could have taught President George W. Bush a few tricks about stuffing the ballot boxes. All 11,445,638 eligible voters stood by their Saddam. By definition, consensus had been reached.

No sane organization from anti-war or activist circles in the U.S. stood up at the time to defend those results as either democratic or honest.

Yet the process by which most meetings are conducted in those same circles is as undemocratic as the charade that was conducted in Iraq.

We are referring to "consensus process". It is the current practice of the anti-war and anti-globalization movements and other progressive and radical organizations on this continent.

Many *Clamor* readers will recognize this scene, whether they have experienced it in a black bloc of five crusty punks trying to figure out how to attack a line of police or at a gathering of hundreds of well-dressed and respectable Green Party members trying to craft a resolution to Congress. The group gathers, a proposal is put before the body, and someone interjects, "Wait, we have to use consensus process."

In its purest and most common form, it requires that *all* members of the meeting agree with the proposal. Those who do not agree are usually given a few options: They may block, or stop the proposal. Or they may step aside, which means that they will not stop the proposal. Or they may withdraw from the process altogether. Finally, they may attempt to come up with a new proposal that will win the approval of the entire meeting. (We are

M. Treloar examines the assumption that consensus is the best way for progressive groups to make decisions about the work they do.

using here the model outlined in Starhawk's *Resources for Activism* web site. All quotes will be from it, unless otherwise cited. Most models in use are a variation of this, rather than the tedious *Handbook on Formal Consensus* or similar books, which are rarely used. My admiration for Starhawk's work does not change this critique.)

Consensus process is undemocratic. It is unwieldy. It is usually time-consuming. It is easily subject to the whims of the facilitator. It is frequently just another tool of manipulation when white activists work with communities of color.

Consensus process seems designed to promote disruption of meetings by individuals. In the last few months, the author of this article has seen a meeting of thirty people organizing against state repression brought to a halt by one person, new to consensus process, who invoked a principled block. In yet another meeting, this one to decide the fate of Copwatch in Portland, four experienced pacifist organizers kept a meeting of community organizers and activists stalled for a full four hours, merely by blocking and refusing to recognize the clearly stated mandate — which had been apparent to everyone in the room in the first half-hour.

The first meeting had abysmal facilitation, with people tossing the task around the room like a hot potato; the second meeting had skillful facilitators, widely respected in the community, who hung in till the end. Yet

no matter how skilled the facilitator, the flaws embedded in consensus process allow an individual or minority to dominate the outcome of any meeting.

The Myths of Consensus

When large groups of otherwise rational people continue to engage in an activity without a gun held to their head, it is because they believe in the practice or because they believe in the myths surrounding the practice.

Consensus process on the North American continent is surrounded and supported by a number of myths.

Let's examine them.

The Myth of Seattle: This is What Democracy Doesn't Look Like

It is still the case, for better or worse, that many practices get over because "that's what they did in Seattle." The successful protests of the World Trade Organization's meetings in Seattle in December 1999, mark an important point in activist and anarchist organizing on this continent. It is also true that consensus decision-making was attempted in meetings of hundreds of people and affinity clusters leading up to the actions that shut down the WTO.

But forgotten in this myth are the numerous cases when facilitators and meetings threw out consensus process in order to accomplish what was necessary.

One meeting on the evening of Wednesday, December 2, 1999 at the convergence space in Seattle illustrates this. A battle was going on outside on the streets of Capitol Hill, where the police invaded with pepper



From Alison Bechdel's *Spawn of Dykes to Watch Out For* (Firebrand Books, 1992)

spray, tear gas, and batons. Inside the space hundreds of people representing the remnants of many of the affinity groups that had seized the downtown a day earlier, along with the Peoples' Assembly and Seattle youth, were attempting to figure out what to do next. The mayor of Seattle had declared a state of emergency and any marches downtown would risk mass arrest.

While the facilitators skillfully attempted to keep hundreds of people on topic, people choking from the tear gas outside came into the meeting with what proved to be false reports that the police were coming to attack the space. Calls of "We've got to take the whole meeting to the streets." arose.

In consensus process as it is supposed to be practiced, the affinity group representatives who wanted to take the whole meeting to the streets would have been considered to be blocking any proposals then on the floor and urging a counter-proposal.

In reality, what happened was that the facilitators — correctly — let security deal with the rumors and *ignored* the proposal to take the meeting outside.

A decision was reached to surround the jail the next day, which helped to break the mayor's ban and put thousands of people in the streets for the rest of the week. Other proposals, which had no support beyond one or two affinity groups, such as an insistent one that everyone should go out and clean up the anti-corporate graffiti put up on corporate Seattle during the seizure of the downtown, were similarly ignored. The facilitators simply refused to acknowledge that these proposals had been made.

This was *not* consensus process. If the "blocks" had been recognized, we would likely still be meeting, three years on.

The Myth of Anarchy

A number of anarchists and non-anarchists seem to believe consensus process comes from the theory and practice of anarchy. A recent AP story about anarchists cobbled consensus together with dumpster-diving, the black bloc, and Chomsky. Yet, no one ever cites any of the major theorists of anarchism as the source of consensus process.

They can't.

None of the records of the International Anarchist Congress of 1907, for example, show the use of consensus process. Instead, an account of the Congress, which featured speeches by Emma Goldman and Errico Malatesta, among others, states, "These motions having been read out in French, Dutch and German, a vote was held." Several measures failed. Several passed unanimously.

The Spanish National Confederation of Labor (CNT), which is frequently held forth as a model by modern social anarchists,

didn't hesitate to vote. In 1919, the year that it unanimously endorsed "libertarian communist principles," it rejected two structural motions. The first was defeated 325,955 to 169,125; the second fell 651,472 to 14,008.

Love and Rage, the last attempt to forge a national anarchist grouping in the U.S., did not function by consensus process.

It is only in the last 20 years that consensus process has appeared as a given among anarchist circles in North America. Food Not Bombs has been a source of spreading the new gospel. For them, "anarchism and consensus go together like hot vegan soup and a good day-old bagel."

But before those good folks, the first major use of consensus process in radical circles was in the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance of the 1970s. In those gatherings, consensus process was introduced from Quaker pacifist tradition, a notion that would horrify many non-religious and non-pacifist anarchists.

The Myth of Inclusivity

A major ideal of consensus process has always been: "...all (our emphasis) people to be able to express themselves in their own words and of their own will."

The tedious nature of consensus process and much of the foo foo associated with it has the effect of driving away the very "people" who most desire democracy and social change.

People who have homework, one or two jobs, children or elderly parents to deal with, lovers to kiss, meals to make and eat — or all of the above — are not eager for five hour meetings, especially when two hours would accomplish the same goals.

Anyone who has ever seen a group of young, usually white activists begin to practice consensus process with all of its frills in meetings where mainly working class or poor people are present has undoubtedly witnessed a lot of "What the fuck?" looks being exchanged. Dropping a whole new culture, with coded words such as "vibes-watcher" and secret signals, such as "twinkling" (wagging fingers to indicate assent), into discussions that affect people's lives, is one reason — though not the only one — that some well-meaning activists never get invited back to meet with "real" people.

Here are recent scenes from Portland: A white anti-globalization activist explaining to an African American community organizer at a meeting against police brutality that clapping was "violent" and voting was "competitive." A neo-liberal Democratic female mayor, noted defender of the same police

who routinely shoot Black and Latino men, threatening to remove those who clap at public City Council meetings and instead, asking that the audience "twinkle."

There is also a notion embedded in consensus process that *everyone will eventually agree if they talk about it long enough*. This premise comes as a complete and unpleasant surprise to many groups with roots sunk in the working class or communities of color. Allowing meetings where any one or two individuals, including the police who are sent to infiltrate, can outweigh the wishes of hundreds of community members seems suicidal to these groups. Organizations that have learned by painful experience that there are clear divisions in society have also learned that *no group in history has ever given up its wealth or power through consensus process*.

So Why Consensus?

It's easy to see why consensus process was invented as an alternative and why it has such appeal to young anti-globalization or peace or environmental activists. Most of those who invoke it have attended meetings where *Robert's Rules of Order* was used

People who have homework, one or two jobs, children or elderly parents to deal with, lovers to kiss, meals to make and eat — or all of the above — are not eager for five hour meetings, especially when two hours would accomplish the same goals.

— or misused — to bludgeon minority blocs or even majority groups that are challenging the status quo. Anyone who has seen an organization or meeting split because of a 50 percent-plus-one vote being enforced and leading to suppression of the minority would want a less divisive process. Anyone who has borne the brunt of tedious, long-winded harangues (usually from men) will want a more disciplined, yet inclusive process.

Democracy is not easy. Nor is it only enforceable by a written set of rules, despite our need for those. *Robert's Rules of Order*, as any who has taken time to study their history would know, arose as an attempt to prevent "the uselessness of attending meetings which began late and dragged on...overbearing chairmen and ruthless small cliques."

What Does Democracy Look Like?

But the alternative to *Robert's Rules of Order* being strictly enforced should not be a system where a clear minority must withdraw a sincerely held position in order not to obstruct

action. Often minorities are proven right by the course of history. Allowing their position — and vote — to stand while a majority vote determines the group's action is a workable alternative in many cases.

Some simple steps are in order for our movements. In the Bay Area and elsewhere, anarchists and other activists have undertaken to train decent facilitators for their meetings. Recognizing the importance of this skill, which can be learned by those willing to do so, is a first step for any serious movement. Many of the techniques advocated by consensus process are worth preserving, such as those which call first upon people who have not spoken to go ahead of those who would speak incessantly.

But if the facilitators are learning a basically flawed model, even a great facilitator won't be able to preserve democracy.

Many activist organizations have recently been driven to chuck out the model of pure consensus process that this article has criticized. They are moving to a much more realistic model where an *attempt* is made to reach consensus. Once that fails, as it frequently does, the group moves to a vote, setting a threshold of three-fourths or 80 percent in some groups.

This model recognizes that the goal of most activist groups is *action*. The minor-

ity is allowed to retain their position without apology and is also guaranteed a record of their position.

Some have suggested different rules for affinity groups and collectives, which typically are small in number and demand a high degree of unity, versus organizations or coalitions, which may be hundreds or tens of thousands in number and demand less unity. If a group of five people is risking arrest or injury or prison together, then consensus makes perfect sense, as does the ability of one person to block an action. When two or three or more lovers are trying to work out their relationship, few of us would suggest taking a vote.

But when five thousand people are busting to go out on strike, then allowing five dissenters or fifty to stop it makes no sense. As those of us who have gone through such struggles know, the possibility of victory recedes fast when there is only a simple majority. It is a legitimate and not simple question to ask what should be done when there is no super-majority available, when there are 55 percent in favor, 40 percent against and 5 percent completely undecided. Different organizations will choose different thresholds for decision-making. Starting off with an absurd standard of total agreement will guarantee only frustration or defeat.

None of the uprisings and organizing of the past that we honor would have occurred if they had used consensus process. Whether it was the Stonewall Rebellion, the Selma bus boycotts, the Flint sitdown, the Underground Railroad, the storming of the Bastille or the high school student walkouts and sleep-ins that are happening in Portland as this is being written, we can be certain of a few things. In order to accomplish those efforts, people argued, they probably prayed and cried and, with their back to the wall, decided to act. But they didn't wait for consensus.

It is time to face this reality if we wish to change society completely.

Notes:

This essay was written as the U.S. prepares to invade Iraq. Opposing the U.S. empire in words and deeds does not mean we have to be blind to oppression elsewhere.

The title honors Jo Freeman's useful work, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness."

This piece came out of discussions with Heather Ajani of Phoenix Copwatch and Bring the Ruckus. Joel Olson, also of those two groups, contributed major insights. Thanks to the Cobras and E.J., who corrected my grammar and watched over me in Seattle.

The anarchist history came from *No Gods, No Masters*, an essential work by Daniel Guérin.

REVIEWS PRINT

The Rulers of the New World

John Pilger
Verso, 2002
www.versobooks.com

I finished reading John Pilger's *The New Rulers of the World* on the same day that Congress gave George Bush the green light to invade Iraq. Never have I been so disappointed to see a book that I enjoyed be proven right.

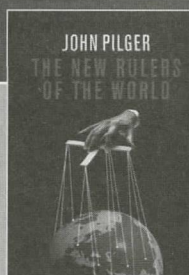
Pilger's book is essentially a 246 page indictment of the West and its imperialist misdeeds worldwide, and rather than just being a moderate helping of sour eggs, it serves to remind us of just why peace and security seem to be so elusive in our world. Now more than ever, we seem to be sliding into a kind of global snakepit which, led by the oilmen currently occupying the White House (against the will of the American people, some would say), appears to have no end in sight. Pilger is able to show in a pretty efficient manner the paths that have brought us here.

Pilger is an Australian journalist and filmmaker who makes his home in London, and is well-known for some of his documentaries that have aired there. This book takes its title from his most recent film on the subject of globalization. It's stated purpose is to demonstrate the "importance of breaking the silence that protects power and its manipulations, notably the current 'war' (on terrorism)," and if one can judge a book on it's ability to fulfill an articulated promise, then this is a great book.

I say that because in a time like this when we are in a state of permanent, infinite war like the one predicted in Orwell's 1984, dissenting voices are at a premium. Any piece of work that investigates the cause of anti-American animosity around the world, while also showing the role that western imperial "manipulations" have in destabilizing international relations, is valuable.

The New Rulers of the World is made up of four chapters each dealing with a different skeleton in the western closet. The first deals with Indonesia, Suharto's coup and East Timor; the second Iraq and the sanctions and bombing; the third with Afghanistan and the middle east more generally; and the fourth is about Pilger's native Australia and its apparently shameful treatment of its aboriginal people. Together these chapters paint a picture, both unflattering and indispensable, of our role in the modern world, a role that we continue to ignore — and worse, hide — at our own peril.

One of the most attractive things about *The New Rulers* is that it is packed with information. Some of the numbers and quotes that it provides can be hard to find elsewhere, despite their undeniable relevance to the current 'war' on terror (a war that, as Pilger points out, was declared on a noun, but seems determined to worm it's way



through the atlas as well). It was instructive, for me, to learn that during the war against Yugoslavia in 1999, when we were successfully bombing that country into submission, the US and UK were simultaneously, far from view of the front pages, dropping two-thirds as many bombs on Iraq's no-fly zones.

Some of these numbers can go a long way towards explaining the current war against Iraq. Certainly one has to cease scratching one's head to some extent when one reads that 40 cents out of every American tax dollar goes to the pentagon. In the second chapter, "Paying the Price," Pilger runs through the litany of misery in Iraq, specifically those resulting from our war and our sanctions. The fact that Pilger travelled there (for his documentary of the same name) and is able to provide a first hand account really brings the narrative alive.

However, the next chapter, entitled "The Great Game," is where the motivations for our insistence on perpetuating this bloodsport, and in particular the Bush administrations obstinacy in pushing for a new war there, start to take on a little clarity. And I must say "little," because I'm not sure that anything or anybody could ever fully explain the level of insanity that is currently taking place. Having said that, Pilger does a stellar job of showing the pattern of western manipulation in that part of the world, certainly giving the lie to the claims to noble intentions that one can hear at any hour of the day on CNN.

Finally, it is this pattern that provides the greatest insight into why we continue to travel down this hazardous road at breakneck speed. For all of the specific nefarious deeds and misdeeds that we can pin on our governments, this pattern of short-sighted, self-absorbed foreign policy is what has put us, indefinitely it seems, on this feedback loop of terror and counter-terror. The United States spearheads this crusade against terrorism, something that deserves extinction, while refusing to take part in any steps, however immodest, towards making this world even a slightly better place. The list of conventions and treaties that the US refuses to ratify is long, but the more notable among them are the ban on land-mines, the Kyoto accord, and the International Criminal Court. At the same time, the amount of money that is funnelled into the pentagon now sits at above \$400 billion. Figure in the amount of money made in the foreign arms trade, which jumped 64 percent after the Gulf War and by \$17 billion after the Yugoslavia adventure, and we continue to see how we live in an economy that is fuelled by war.

Understanding this pattern will go a long way towards trying to stop it. The ability to connect the dots, so to speak, and to forge a coherent critique of the roots of our militaristic escapades is crucial to any hope of a safer, freer and more just world.

- Paul Sebastianelli

Oppressive Vegans are killing the movement

Historically, militancy seems to be the only way to change the system. The radicals are always the ones that push moderates towards social change instead of stagnation. If a movement lacks radicals it will usually lose momentum and fizzle out. However, there is a general contradiction in "militant" movement culture. On one hand, there is talk of a "peoples' movement" that encompasses all races, religions, cultures, etc. creating an overarching global culture of peace, compassion, understanding, and openness. On the other hand, someone can't revolt against American apathy if they eat meat, smoke, wear make-up, or listen to Top 40. In other words, there are certain behaviors that are frowned upon by movement culture, even though many radical activists engage in them.

As a chain-smoking, alcoholic, Southern omnivore I have witnessed this subtle form of oppression at numerous activist events. One happened while attending the Kyoto Summit protests in the Netherlands through Greenpeace. I met people from all over the world who were willing to put aside minor differences in an effort to globally stop climate change. Despite language barriers I sat down in the hostel bar to share a roast chicken with some new African friends. While eating we received numerous lectures and dirty looks from American activists for blatantly sharing meat off the bone. Later, I was kicking a smoke at the bar with my new Dutch drinking buddy, and we were informed that Greenpeace High Command had decreed the bar non-smoking. Banished, we retreated to the local coffee shop where we knew our politically incorrect habits were welcomed. All my stoned Dutch comrade had to say in his broken English was, "Fuck deez Americans! Dey tink dey know everything"

I don't like seeing people made to feel like outsiders within movement culture, but that is what happens when political correctness is pushed to an extreme. Most working class Americans eat meat, but if they ever go into a convergence center or a non-violence training at a protest, they are forced to feel shame for their eating habits. It is not the most welcoming environment for someone who wants to make a difference but has never even thought about being a vegetarian before.

When initially dabbling into activist stuff I wouldn't tell anyone that I ate meat. That way no one would think I was a pseudo-activist, steadily ruining the movement one crawl-daddy at a time. However, hiding your habits and culture just because of the status

quo defeats the whole reason for being culturally active. It is like cutting your hair to get a non-profit job, or pretending you like some type of music to get a date. Now, I have outgrown that shameful silliness and proudly wave my wiener anywhere I go.

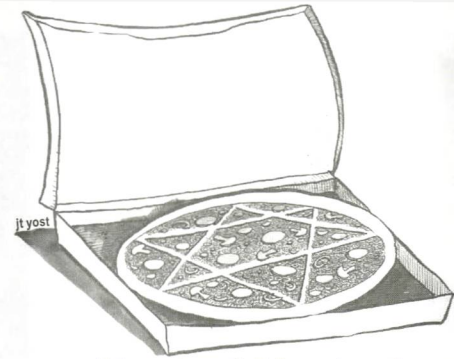
While vegetarians can be elitist, they are not the only guilty ones. It is straight edge kids being self-righteous. It is Marxists being dogmatic. It is me writing this article chastising vegetarians. It is the inner Amerikan looking down on those less righteous than it and telling them why it dominates over them or why it knows more about the world than them.

Some argue that boldly and confrontationally blaring your opinion every chance that you get is an effective form of activism, but I disagree. In fact, I disagree boldly and confrontationally. I think that is bourgeois status-quo activism. Activism that seeks to make the activist look perfect, forcing anyone who wants to change the world to copy their style...Activism that has been tried over and over with questionable results...Activism that needs to evolve.

A sample of effective modern actions that should be expanded upon and evolved are the ones that cause people to question their basic assumptions about America without face to face dialogue....Puke-ins at McDonalds.... Anti-capitalist writing on money.... Spontaneous teach-ins at Reclaim Columbus Day.... Mobs of Santas running amok in malls and drinking whiskey out of pine-sol bottles while flashing Santa genitals at peaceful consumers.... Billionaires for Bush or Gore.... Adbusters, if it was cheaper. Symbolic actions that leave the target with no one to argue with except their conscience can be incredibly effective. Activists need to move beyond rehearsed speeches that nobody wants to listen to. Let's infect the American mind, instead of running up against it.

I want to see more psychological activism. Think about different thought patterns and different routes of persuasion. Browbeating a point home does not work. Think of how you react when a fundamentalist starts bible-beating. Is your tirade about vegetarianism very different? Is my article any different? What is it going to realistically take to make our movement something that changes America? A mediocre parade of shortsighted people who let minor differences create major problems is not enough. ★

by Joe Diffie



Meatsa! Meatsa!

Mitzvah?

Readers of America's august journals of fact and opinion will be forgiven their ignorance of the obstacles besetting Israel's troops in the occupied territories. Yet those willing to dig deeper will discover certain sure signs of despair and defeat shadowing the Army of Light.

Information gathered from PizzalDF.org and its sister site, BurgerlDF.org, suggests, for instance, that Israel — despite approximately three billion dollars in aid per year from the United States — is currently unable to feed its soldiers in the field.

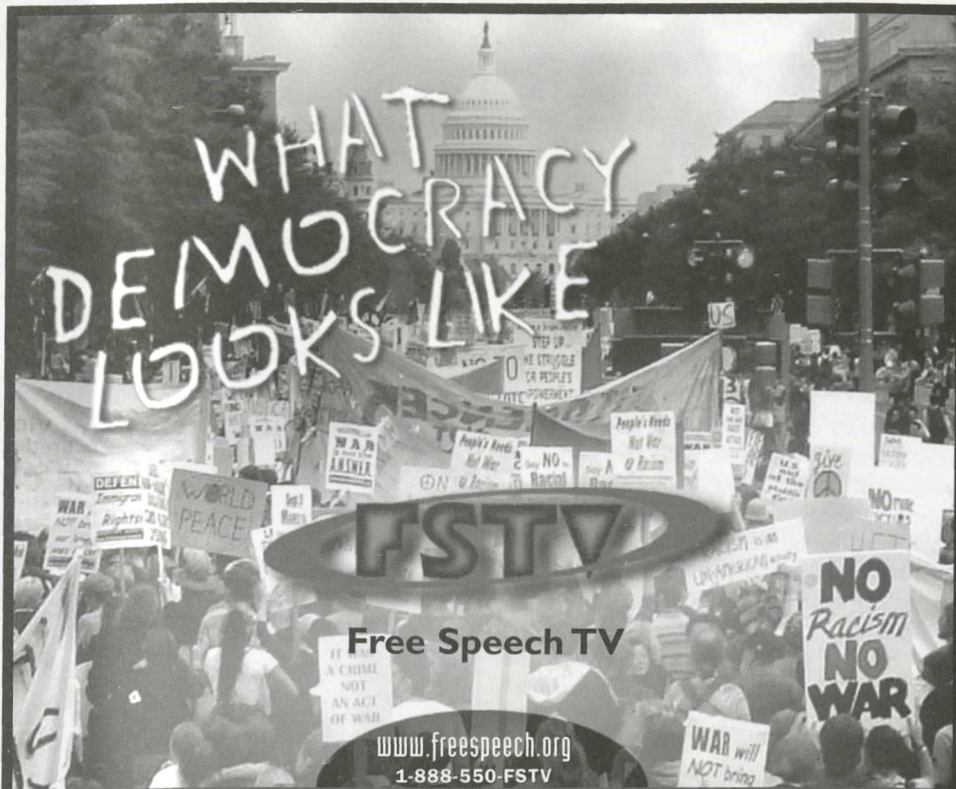
These ventures hope to capitalize on this unprecedented state of affairs by allowing worldwide opponents of a land-for-peace settlement to take their proxies to trough. Prices are reasonable: from \$16.95 for a patrol's pizza & soda, to a \$47.95 "Section Package" that provides burgers & soft drinks for ten — all with either Pepsi or Coca-Cola, according to the kosher supervision of the delivering pizzeria. Your contribution to the war effort is charged to a major credit card — Diner's Club, *oui*; Discover, *non* — and the snacks are dispatched to occupying forces on guard duty, at roadblocks, or on patrol.

There are, apparently, thousands of charitable citizens throughout Asia, Africa, and South America who number hunger among the challenges to an illegal occupation now in its thirty-fifth year. According to the company, orders have been received from Japan, Kenya and Brazil, to name but a few of the more exotic donor locales. (Company spokesperson Karen Bruce writes — with smiley-face emotion attached — that "we are still waiting for our first order from Iraq.") A full ninety percent of their pizzas, however, are ordered from the United States, and many customers include personal messages of encouragement illustrating a peculiarly American take on events in Palestine.

Rabbi Alon Tolwin, of Birmingham, Michigan, told the *Detroit Jewish News* that "this is one of the kindest and least expensive ways yet to help Israel." And that kindness runs through the messages quoted online. There's an admonition from Deuteronomy ("Thou shalt smite them, [and] utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them...."); expressions of admiration for "you guys ... doing the work of angels, protecting us all from baseless hatred"; an injunction to "preserve" something called "civilization"; even a curious blessing from self-described "Messianic Gentiles" in Chicago who "know you soldiers stand between chaos and sanity."

Whether these operations exist in the realm of the latter or the former depends on how one stomachs an item that appears near the bottom of the menu: "Your gifts of over \$250 are eligible for a US IRS tax deduction." Let's hope All God's Children in the Windy City opted to Super Size, as only the "Pizza & Soda for a Company" package — at \$269.75 — will stand them in good stead come the fifteenth of April.

-Kevin Mink



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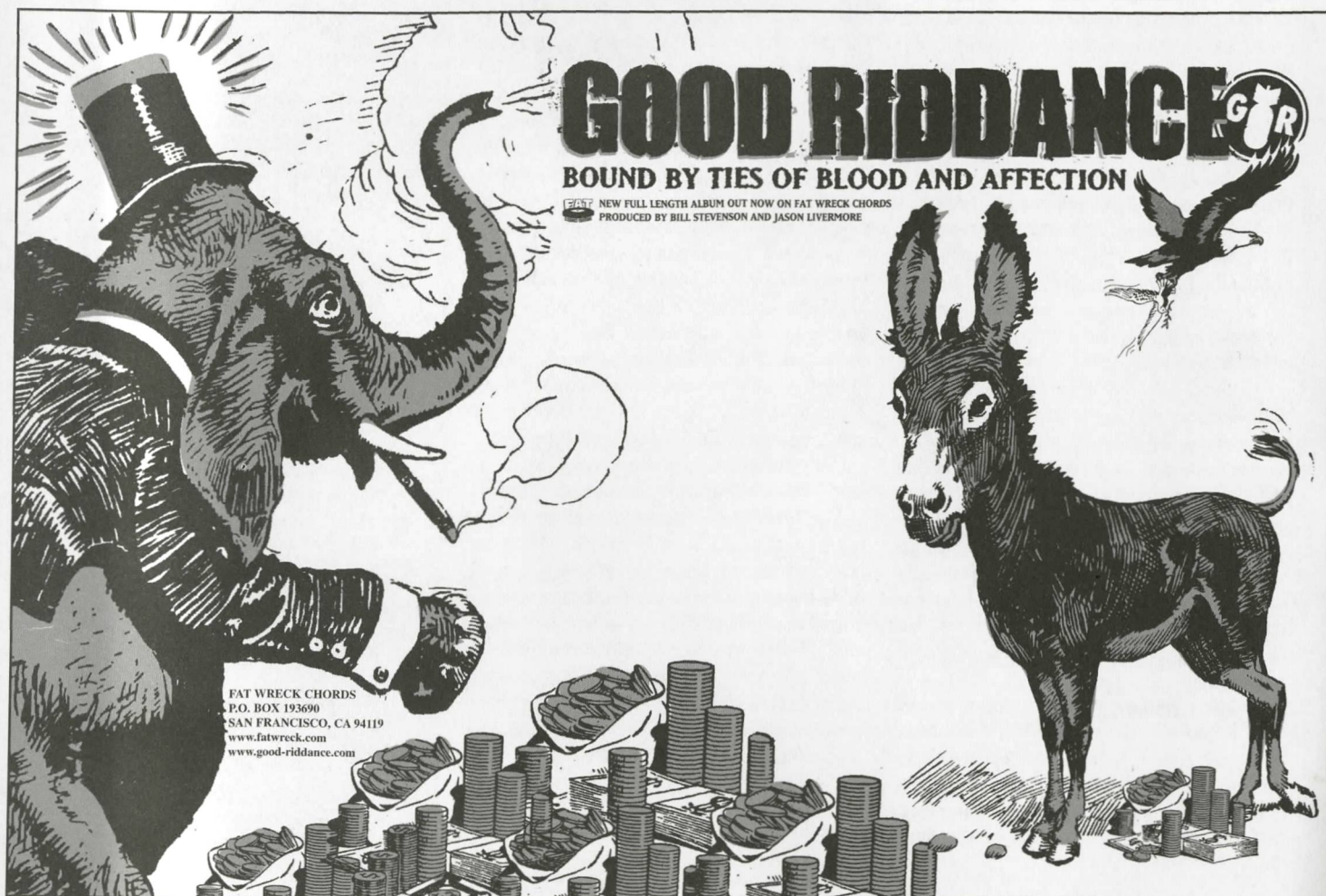
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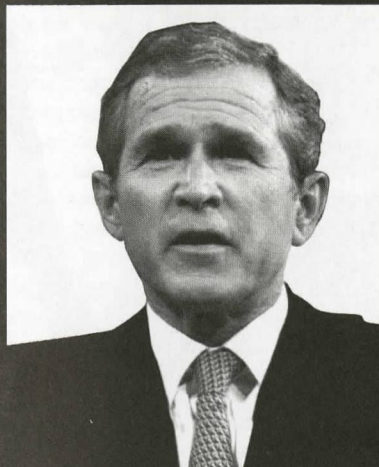
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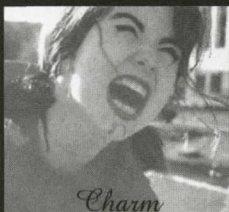
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The corporate media won't televise it, but thanks to Sarah Jones, the revolution will be rhymed, written, acted, spoken, performed, and broadcast on radio, the web, and in a venue near you

Politics Never Sounded So Good

interview by Tizzy Asher

Sarah Jones is not a porn star. But she does occasionally get mistaken for one. The tall, long-legged Jones smiles ironically and shakes her chunky braids as she tells the audience assembled at a Seattle community college why her web site bears the long and slightly bulky address, www.sarahjonesonline.com. "Sarahjones.com is naked women," she snorts. "Typical."

There could be no more antithetical image to Jones than the artificial fantasyland of Internet porn. Since breaking into public consciousness in 1998 with *Surface Transit*, a performance piece about racial tension, the New York City-based poet, playwright, and performer has established herself as a staunch advocate for social change and social justice. Much of Jones's work focuses on inequities in culture, be they based around race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. In other words, she's interested in disrupting the uniformity of popular culture and creating alternatives to what she often calls "The Rupert Murdochs and the Time Warners" — the ruling elite version of how things are.

Perhaps what's most impressive about Jones, however, is her willingness to live the lifestyle for which she advocates. She actively encourages dialogue around her work, and when the inevitable flood of backlash rolls in, she's been known to engage her opponents in discussion. Since Portland, Oregon radio station KBOO-FM received a \$7,000 fine for playing "Your Revolution," her feminist retort to hip-hop's depiction of women, Jones has been locked in a legal battle with the FCC over the definition of obscenity. (In an additional stroke of irony, Eminem received a comparable fine that was subsequently dropped.) She's even developed a famously antagonistic relationship with the commission's chairman, Michael Powell. ("So Michael, you're a big boy there in your federal high chair," she writes, on www.yourrevolutionisbanned.com.) In 2000, she wrote *Women Can't Wait*, a series of monologues addressing the UN's inaction after the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, and then performed it before the General Assembly.

Clamor caught up with Jones while she took a brief moment of rest in the New York City apartment she shares with her partner, poet Steve Colman. Apparently, resting still means speaking at full-throttle, the fierce rebellion in her words audible even through a hissing phone line.

Clamor: You're a poet, performance artist, playwright, and an actor. Which do you see as the most critical piece of your artistic identity?

Sarah Jones: I don't make a separation between the ways I express myself and my ideas. I think that they're all an extension of my personal experiences as a woman, as a black person, an American person, as a person of multicultural heritage, as a New Yorker. All of those things contribute to my views and the urgency with which I try to express things that I don't think are typically addressed in entertainment or culture in general. I wrote my first poem when I was six about Ronald Reagan and my dissatisfaction with the way that he was governing the country. I think that's a product of my environment, the way we're all products of our environment. But I don't hold any one genre or any one aspect of my identity as the dominant one.

Does your ability to integrate these different pieces of your identity help you cross genres with your art?

I like to give myself the freedom to let my ideas manifest themselves in whatever way they want to. The last time I tried to restrict some aspect of myself, it really didn't work out. I had this TV deal and I was, on the advice of some Hollywood types, trying to sublimate my political sensibility so that I could do comedy. But it didn't feel like me to be in the position where I was forced to give comedy priority over the things I really believe in. In fact, I find that comedy's not as funny when it's at the expense of other people in dehumanizing ways.

What do you think of people like Margaret Cho, who subvert stereotypes from inside?

I think Margaret Cho is doing a lot of important work. [She's] talking about social justice in a way that is also really entertaining. She's an artist who's figuring out what it means to be in the mainstream as an Asian woman. That means confronting a lot of sexism and a lot of racism. She figures out how to expose people's prejudices in a humorous way onstage. That's what a lot of artists are striving to do: give people an experience they'll remember, something that thrills them and excites them and moves them, but at the same time, gives them more than the same old dumb jokes or the same old repetitive images of people as caricatures based on their ethnicity.

Do you use humor in your own work to soften the message?

It's not so much softening the message as flavoring the truth so that it becomes more palatable to swallow. The truth is not our enemy. It's not something that we have to protect ourselves from. As the saying goes, "the truth will set you free." Conversely, not being able to face reality leaves us in a really vulnerable position as people and definitely as a nation. If we need proof of that, we can look at the fact that we're beating the war drum again, that we're busy creating distractions from the fact that our economy is in the toilet. When you can't face the truth, you end up in really dire circumstances.

I appreciate performers who manage that very difficult challenge and are successful at creating portraits of real people — communicating stories of real interest and drama beneath the comedy — that don't indict the audience, but just wake them up. Make them feel a little bit more alive in their experience and help them know that this is not about feeling guilty. I think of people like Richard Pryor, whose life work was creating portraits that made people laugh and break down in tears. At the end of the journey with him, you didn't feel like going home and ending it all, you felt like going out there and affecting real change.

Do you feel like you're swimming upstream against the dominant culture in the U.S.?

I don't feel like I'm swimming upstream; I feel like I have my work cut out for me. But I'm a hard worker. We're all harder workers than any of us give ourselves credit for.

There is a path to understanding other people and their behaviors.

There are realities about what it is to be born poor, what it is to be born poor and female, what it is to be born a person of color or a certain religion in the wrong area of the world. All of those things contribute to the circumstances in which we later find ourselves. Once you start to figure that out, it's not scary! It's not about going to the theater and saying, "Oh, I don't want to think about those people who are different from me or those people who think of themselves as oppressed."

I think about people like Bob Marley and how beloved he is all over the world by people who've never set foot in Jamaica. It's because he's talking about human experience that is at times about centuries of oppression, but he's talking about it through beautiful music that speaks to people, moves people, and calls people to action. It isn't until we look at the rise of corporate structures that [we see] it's not going to be financially advantageous for people to stand up for their rights. What would happen to the healthcare industry in this country if everybody realized that it's unfair? What would happen to our entertainment industry if people looked around and said, "I can write a poem or a song just as good as that crap heard on the radio! I'm going to go entertain myself"?

Who is responsible for enforcing these uniform versions of truth?

It's big money and unfortunately, it's married to our government. The ERA, civil rights, gay rights, all of these movements forced our government to be accountable. All of these movements forced our government to own up to the principles it claims to uphold. What happened is that the government understood that we — and when I say we, I mean everybody who's not a rich, white, straight, Christian male living in the West — deserve our human rights. It's something that the people who founded this country put in place and then weren't actually practicing. Women couldn't vote, couldn't own property, black people were chattel, Native Americans were slaughtered on their own land. Land of the free? You're kidding me.

As we begin to look at our present in the context of our history, there's no choice but to address these things. Unless you convince people that there's something else going on. If you convince people that it's just pathology and that women are just inherently stupid and that's why they need a husband to guide them. Never mind that people who aren't heterosexual are somehow deviant or terrible and should live in the closet because God says so. Or that Latino people and black people are criminal and they're just born that way and that's why they fill our jails up in such disproportionate numbers. If you can convince people of all these things, then, you don't have to acknowledge the history.

A friend once told me her mantra for social change was, "What if everything they told you was a lie?"

It's painful. Who wants to believe that they've been reared on propaganda, or that part of their thinking is rooted in sexism or racism? I have come around to thinking the way I do very slowly. It's a continuing process of trying to understand my own basic humanity and other people's basic humanity.

Look at the War on Terrorism. We have little kids growing up with this language and growing up with certain images of who's a terrorist, without learning about the U.S. and our foreign policy. I don't condone terrorism in any form — but what helped me as an American get some perspective on that suffering and that mourning was going down to South Africa to perform with my partner. We were able to talk to people who empathized with us and offered their condolences, but said, "Now you can understand how we in the rest of the world feel when a coup d'état is staged by our own government in the name of protecting U.S. interests or economic policy."

I think it's all about really getting at the truth and being able to accept our own responsibilities. But also, to get out from under this legacy of injustice that's part of our culture. Once we can begin to do that, we feel so free! You don't have to feel defensive.

KBOO Wins Fight Against FCC

After a long battle with Federal Communications Commission, Oregon radio station KBOO-FM is celebrating a victory. The FCC rescinded a \$7000 indecency fine, levied in May 2001 for airing Sarah Jones's song "Your Revolution" outside of the 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM "safe harbor" period. While the political and social message of "Your Revolution" is clear (the song attacks misogyny in rap and hip-hop using a variety of sexual phrases and innuendos), the FCC found that the sexual activity described in the song was "patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards." After KBOO was charged, the song was effectively purged from the airwaves, as stations across the country feared similar fines. But KBOO, a non-commercial community radio station whose mission is to "provide a forum for controversial issues" fought the charge, arguing that "Your Revolution" is not indecent, and that the FCC was violating free speech protections guaranteed under the First Amendment. Two years later, the commissioners have changed their minds about "Your Revolution." In a February 21, 2003 Memorandum Opinion and Order, the commission said that after further scrutiny of the song, they now find the material is not indecent because the descriptions are not "sufficiently graphic to warrant sanction." Helping them come to this decision were two issues: the most graphic phrase, "six-foot blow job machine," is not repeated in the song, and the fact that Jones has been asked to perform "Your Revolution" at high school assemblies. Jones also filed suit against the FCC for violating her First Amendment rights. But the FCC said that in light of the KBOO decision, they are dismissing Jones's case as moot. Some people close to the case speculate that Jones's suit, which potentially could have gone to the Supreme Court, is the reason for rescinding KBOO's fine. However, many still herald the news as an important triumph for free speech. KBOO's station manager, Dennise Kowalczyk, said that they spent more than \$20,000 fighting the charge, but that it was worth the expense. "Considering the political environment we're in right now, I think this is optimistic, it's hopeful, that yes, freedom of speech does matter, freedom of expression does matter, and that it's a right for everyone," said Kowalczyk. Deena Barnwell, the KBOO programmer that played "Your Revolution," said she feels relieved, like a weight has been lifted from her shoulders. "I have this belief in community," said Barnwell. "And the support has been incredible. It's empowering to know that people stood up and this is something that we didn't succumb to."

-Catherine Komp

If you talk to conservative commentators, they would claim their information is right. Who holds the power of truth?

In my work, I try to make it clear that I don't profess to have the solution to everything that's wrong. I'm just interested in making sure that certain facts aren't buried under Fox News. What I'm trying to do is create alternative spaces, alternative ways of thinking and approaching what we've been taught to accept as normal and standard.

Rupert Murdoch recently purchased the Star News cable network, and so with all of his holdings, his news and views now reach two-thirds of the people on this planet. When you think about that, when you look at the fact that people are buying up every media outlet they can and controlling how we view everything that happens ... when they're working that hard to make sure nobody else's facts reach light, it makes you suspicious.

My thing about an objective truth is that I'm more interested in making sure all of the facts come out. We are given the opportunity to weigh everything and not just spoon-fed someone else's political ideology ... We as artists, particularly as independent artists, are all searching for ways to feel not only like we belong, but like somebody is finally standing up and telling the truth. It's not painful, it's refreshing.

Do you think people live in fear of a big government hand doling out retribution?

I'm dealing with my FCC censorship case at this moment and it is frightening to think that our government has the power to take our tax dollars and use them to restrict what we say. But at the same time, all we can do is continue to find spaces for alternatives. [Pacifica Radio's] Amy Goodman calls [her radio news program] *Democracy Now* "the exception to the rulers." I think that's what we're trying to do. It's not about keeping step with the dictator. What you really want is your individual voice, your individual freedom and the option to be the exception or to look to exceptions to the power structure. Not only how you get your news, but also how you express yourself in life.

You have no trouble expressing your voice and expressing your truth. Was it ever difficult for you?

I think that the FCC case is probably the most profound example. It is significant that my ability to express myself freely and my access to the same outlets as everybody else are going to be limited by how other people think women's issues should be heard or not heard. And how other people think about black folks, how other people think about progressive politics ... All of those aspects of how I want to be in the world affect my ability to get on TV, get on the radio, or pursue my art.

It often means choices, it means compromise. Rupert Murdoch or AOL Time Warner or whoever, those folks own a lot of the means of production through which we need to get our art out there and survive. I really needed to pay my rent, and Camel cigarettes came along with a sponsorship offer. I went to Gil Scott-Heron for advice and he said,

"You have to make a decision. I'm not telling you what to do, but you need to get your work out there, you need to pay your rent, and unfortunately, right now, this is one of the only ways that you're going to be able to do that. No one else is coming to offer you anything. Make the decision that's right for you."

I ended up going on the tour, but I took one of my characters and gave her emphysema. By the time that marketing folks found out, I had already done most of my shows and they'd paid me. It was one way to balance out my commitment to what I believe in, do my art, and take some of the money from the folks that are doing damage and use it to get my message across.

Would you say that's resistance from within?

Right. Increasingly, we need folks like Dead Prez, the hip-hop group that talks about freedom in ways too frank for MTV. MTV is happy talking about degrading women and staying high all the time, but it doesn't want to hear about Dead Prez saying, "Let's get free." We need to figure out how to support artists like Public Enemy. MTV won't play Public Enemy's latest video because they make a Free Mumia reference. We've got MTV using its power as a symbol of what's alternative to adult culture and its street credibility to peddle all the music that the corporate big labels want it to play. And it's silencing real resistance. It's silencing the very things on which it built its reputation as cool, free-thinking, and music-minded.

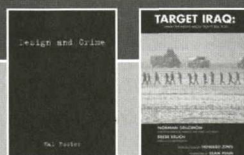
You've been featured in many of the big-name, Conde Nast-type publications. How have you managed to keep your image sexy without objectification?

The other struggle, particularly in this culture where there's so many stimuli out there, is being engaged. I love music, I love to go out and party, I love to shop as much as the next person. I like to participate in the conversation and exchange of ideas in mainstream culture. It's how we have fun, it's how we live, and it's how we communicate with each other. Women cannot live by *Ms.* alone! I read a lot of the stuff that's out there. I just want to make sure that there are many facets. Not just, "How to Give Him an Orgasm in Three Minutes."

Being sexy and feeling sexy and alive in all of those aspects of who you are, that's so important. If you don't have that, it can be even more difficult to get out there and fight these other folks who are so hell-bent on making sure that other voices don't get heard.

Do you think one of the problems with modern feminism is that it can't incorporate those two things?

One of the problems is that when you and I turn on our television, five out of ten of the channels are owned by the same person, the next three are owned by another conglomerate, and the remaining two are owned by somebody else. It's not like we're getting a balanced diet in the first place. ★



Design and Crime and Other Diatribes

Hal Foster
Verso, 2002

"In our consumerist world the designer again rules," notes Hal Foster in *Design and Crime*. From the Guggenheim museums of Frank Gehry to the Target teapots of Michael Graves and the design-your-own lifestyle of Martha Stewart, this is a hard fact to deny. But according to Foster, something has changed in cultural history since the last time design mattered. While the designers of 1900 were the bohemian avant-garde of their cultures, and saw the reconciliation of art and everyday life as part of a revolutionary project, the designers of 2000 — despite their claims of radicalism and postmodernism — are little more than conduits between global producers and global consumers. And so, these days, says Foster, design is crime.

Many progressives believe that the problem with postmodernism is that practically no one can understand it. If that were the problem, then the solution would be Hal Foster, probably the clearest and most accessible writer of contemporary cultural theory. Foster demonstrates, however, that the failed marriage of postmodernism and political radicalism is not merely an issue of prose style. Postmodernism, he suggests, was once a radical critique. After World War II, when urban communities decayed in the shadows of sterile skyscrapers designed by modern architects hostile to the opinions of ordinary people, postmodern architects insisted on the importance of place and the popular. In design, the explosion of subcultural styles after the 1960s meant that newly empowered postmodern consumers could pick and choose their lifestyles in ways that challenged the oppressive cultural authority of modern middlebrow life. But that was a long time ago. These days, the new corporate capitalism has — in what Thomas Frank has called "the conquest of cool" — discovered postmodernism and adopted its tenets as its own. Postmodern architecture has given way to predictability: subcultural revolt to niche marketing. "Contemporary design," says Foster, "is part of a greater reversion of capitalism on postmodernism."

Foster examines these developments in a series of loosely connected essays. He sees this process at work in the architecture of Frank Gehry, whose designs claim to be "in touch with the common culture," and are undeniably popular, but in what Foster calls a "faux populism" that assumes the public as a mass of consumers. It's a daunting task to distinguish between what makes Gehry popular and what makes him a tool of corporate conglomerates without coming off sounding like a snob. Foster succeeds. Parts of *Design and Crime*, however, are definitely written for the cultural insider. Anyone who writes "Yet, finally, who really cares about *The New Yorker*?" clearly doth protest too much. This tendency is most apparent in the book's second half, which reprints Foster's dense and theoretical essays for cultural studies journals. The way is hard going, but unless you are a humanities graduate student, the view from the top is unfortunately not as grand. Do you really care about the antinomies of art history? Do you even know what they are?

Enough carping. The world needs more Hal Fosters, because there is a lot of work still to do. For all his insights into contemporary culture, Foster offers little in the way of alternatives. In the epigraph that opens *Design and Crime*, Edward Said asks, "What is critical consciousness at bottom if not an unstoppable predilection for alternatives?" In response, Foster makes vague suggestions about reviving modernism, in particular the forgotten value of the idea that art can be something more than its cultural and economic contexts. In a world in which both your creativity and your rebellion are already bought and paid for, it's understandable why Foster ends on a despondent note: "It is difficult to imagine a politics today that does not negotiate the market somehow." But I am reminded of the calls of the first critics of modernism, people like the 1930s Southern Agrarian writer Andrew Nelson Lytle, who urged fellow Southerners to "throw out the radio and take down the fiddle from the wall." Difficult to imagine, yes. Impossible? Never.

-Christopher Capozzola

Target Iraq: What the News Media Didn't Tell You

Norman Solomon and Reese Erlich
Context Books, 2003

Two-thirds of Americans now believe that Saddam Hussein helped the terrorists in the September 11 attacks, according to a report by the Pew Research Center. Anyone familiar with the facts knows this assumption is ludicrous. Anyone who watches the least bit of television knows that Americans aren't going to get the facts — at least not from the mainstream news.

The American news media rarely mentions the historically bloody animosity between the secular Iraqi dictatorship and fundamentalist Islamic insurgents. Poised by the silver screen and other forms of media to see an Arab as an Arab and a terrorist as a terrorist as a terrorist, a large percentage of Americans seem ready to believe almost anything their government feeds them about Iraq's involvement with the 9/11 atrocities.

Yet the truth of the matter is that Saddam Hussein is no holy warrior. He is an egomaniacal dictator concerned with one thing above all others: protecting his own personal power. Despite being a real enemy of the US, it just doesn't jive that he would go out of his way to bring on the full wrath of the United States government. Prior to September 11, Saddam had problems, but compared to today, on September 10, 2001 Saddam Hussein was sitting pretty. Even more to the point, the simplest understanding of Middle Eastern politics suggests that he would never put weapons or training into the hands of al Qaeda or other fundamentalist organizations. These are groups that oppose his secular regime and have long called for his head on a platter.

Target Iraq presents the generally untold stories such as these, posing the simple questions that the mainstream news media has refused to ask, and in doing so, completely debunking the official justifications for the upcoming war on Iraq. The book raises the specter of oil, investigates the effects of depleted uranium and examines the impacts of a decade of economic sanctions.

Yet the book also starts out with the strange but refreshing assumption that many readers already know at least something about what the news media isn't telling them. Most of the facts and new information that come out in *Target Iraq* are presented in an attempt to explore the inner-workings and major biases of the American media system. It's clear from the get-go that *Target Iraq's* authors are just as interested in taking on CNN and the *New York Times* as they are George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld.

In a chapter called "The Media's War," for instance, Norman Solomon harshly criticizes news outlets like *USA Today*, *CBS Evening News* and the *Washington Post* for incorrectly claiming that Iraq kicked out UN weapon inspectors in 1998. The chapter presents readers with the real story: that UNSCOM head Richard Butler decided at US urging to remove the inspectors prior to the US bombing campaign dubbed "Operation Desert Fox." But the story is told overall to make a point about the propaganda strategy of repetition in order to turn lies into truth. "No product requires more adroit marketing than one that squanders vast quantities of resources while slaughtering large numbers of people," Solomon weightily explains.

Often times, what Solomon and his co-author Reese Erlich most try to combat is the media's silence about the real-life victims of US policies against Iraq. They refer to articles reporting that the US is deploying B-2 bombers "against Saddam," editorials that speak of "punishing Saddam" and of TV images that repeatedly glorify military technology as examples of how war is washed clean of its actual death and destruction.

In his introduction, Howard Zinn points out that most Americans did not know how many people were being killed during the war on Vietnam. He adds, "For those who knew the figures, the men, women, children behind the statistics remained unknown until a picture appeared of a Vietnamese girl running down a road, her skin shredding from napalm." Solomon and Erlich document how US military censorship and media complacency have teamed

up to prevent similar images from Iraq from coming to the forefront.

In response to the void left by this censorship, *Target Iraq's* authors weave the stories of real people into their work. They retell the stories of parents, graduate students, taxi drivers, waiters, government officials and aid workers, in the hopes of personalizing that which the mainstream media has depersonalized.

"I would like to take all of Washington's politicians to visit a seven-year-old girl, suffering from leukemia, who we visited at the hospital. Perhaps they could have spared a few moments to look at the uncontrolled bleeding from her lips, the anguish in the fearful eyes of her mother," Solomon writes in the Prologue. Erlich, who has also spent time reporting from inside Iraq, argues that it doesn't take talking with too many ordinary Iraqis to realize that, "Hatred of Saddam Hussein doesn't mean the people want Americans to occupy Iraq." Mainstream reporters could tell the stories of regular Iraqis. But there would be a price to pay.

In one chapter, Erlich expounds on "the acceptable parameters of reporting": quoting only official sources, not worrying too much about documentation when writing stories critical of US enemies, and being a team player in order to advance. Journalists who don't play by the rules do not get to climb the career ladder. While it's fine to debate the timing of a war, what the costs of occupation will be, and similar subjects, Erlich argues that most never even consider elementary questions such as whether or not the United States has the right to overthrow the government of another sovereign nation. Based on personal experiences he's had with fellow reporters working from dozens of countries for over 35 years, Erlich concludes that, "Most journalists who get plum foreign assignments already accept the assumptions of empire."

It's a variation of a concept even Dan Rather has wrestled with, although not often in forums that most CBS viewers typically access. Solomon quotes Rather as saying:

"There was a time in South Africa that people would put flaming tires around people's necks if they dissented. And in some ways the fear is that you will be 'necklaced' here, you will have a flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. Now it is that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions... What we are talking about here — whether one wants to recognize it or not, or call it by its proper name or not — is a form of self-censorship."

One of the great joys of reading this book is the sense of consequence that comes through in every paragraph; you know the critiques of the media you are reading absolutely mean something in the real world. With alternating columns by veteran columnist Solomon and veteran reporter Erlich, *Target Iraq* is an immensely readable work. Unlike many volumes now out on Iraq that were written by academics or activists, this book was brought to life by educated, activist writers — and their passion for writing and for their subject shows. You don't just learn about Iraq and the media when reading this book, you feel.

"Support [for the war] might collapse under the weight of more real information, especially if conveyed in both intellectual and emotional terms," Solomon writes. *Target Iraq* stands out from the over 100 other books published on the war in not only providing intellectual analysis and the emotional, uncensored voices of real people, but for also highlighting the news media's role in the Bush administration's march to war. By shining a spotlight on the media's strategies for erasing Iraqi lives and sanitizing the brutalities of war, Solomon and Erlich provide readers not only with the truth, but also with a tool.

-Arthur Stamoulis

**"Who puts the pathetic in apathetic?
WE DO!**

**Who puts the pathetic in apathetic?
WE DO!**

About the world, we don't care!

Sell us products for our hair! Yaaaaay!"

-Guerrilla cheerleaders University of Toronto

These and other cheers rang out across the streets of the University of Toronto campus several years ago when I was there with a troop of guerrilla cheerleaders. Part satire, part earnest hopes of "cheering" the people on, we set out to challenge the perceived apathy of our fellow students. In retrospect, I wonder if it was really effective, or if it was just a way of venting our own frustrations. A quick Internet scan of various student papers over the past few years shows me that we were not alone. In campuses across North America the same struggle between action and apathy seemed to be taking place.

Now a little over two years later, I'm still trying to encourage people to engage in activism but with a slightly different strategy. I

visit schools and lead workshops about media literacy and critical thinking. Over the years and since the attacks of September 11, more and more students are displaying a dissatisfaction with the state of affairs and have a desire to do something about it. Many students fear war and environmental devastation but feel powerless. During my workshops, I explore the ever growing range of tactics used by activists from community volunteerism to public demonstrations or street parties, from sit-ins to culture jamming, and from zine publishing to education. These creative approaches and diverse strategies often inspire students to imagine ways in which they can exercise their values into action.

Often, the media paints a picture of today's youth as self-centered-apathetic-consumer-obsessed-tycoon-wannabes. Considering all the money that is poured into market research, cool hunting, and tailored marketing strategies, is anyone surprised that today's youth seem to care more about MTV than they do about a possible World War? Young people have quite an influence on MTV (just as it does upon them)

and they know this. Cool hunters follow them around the school yard desperately seeking the holy grail of youth "cool" and market researchers painstakingly devise questions to probe the teenage mind for ways of tapping into their disposable income.

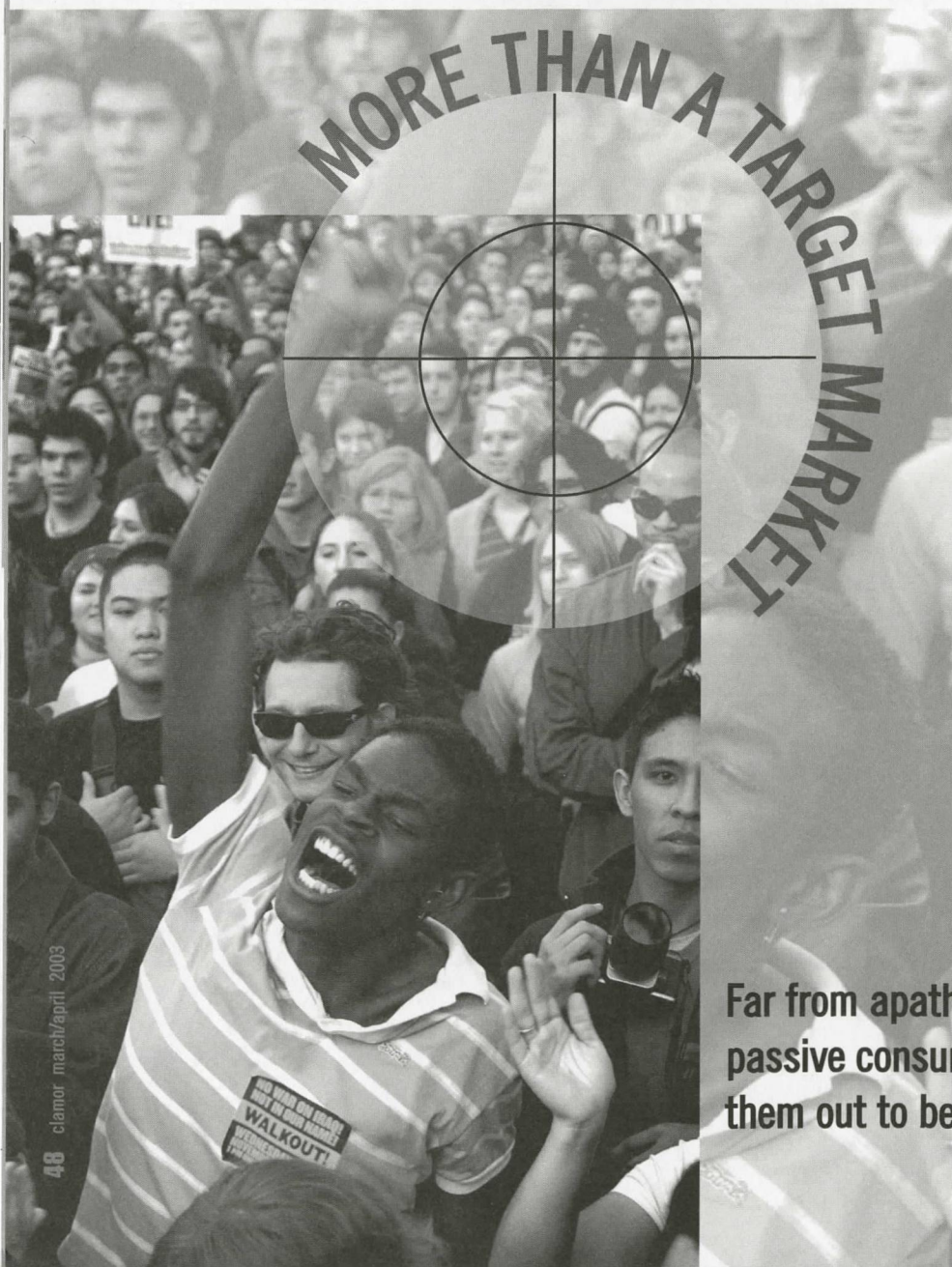
Young people know that they have power as a "market". They know that if they are talking about their buying habits, someone will listen. On the other hand, in the arena of domestic and international politics, young people do not seem to have much sway. Many of them are too young or disillusioned to vote and they don't have access to the world's decision makers. They can't afford to fund campaigns, hire lobbyists, or operate their own broadcast networks. If they have things to say or questions to ask about the state of the world — who's listening? Their teachers, families, and friends may care, but they are shadowed by the sheer size, resources, and slick packaging of commercial culture. The underlying message to today's youth is simple — You are a market, not a movement.

Commercial messages praise the individual and encourage a "Me Me Me" attitude. This mentality undervalues the role of community which can be a great support to activists. There is power in numbers, and it is easy to feel powerless and isolated alone in front of the TV or computer. There is also the issue of the media itself. In today's saturated media environment of sugared drinks, zit creams, and teenage-mid-riffs, current events are framed as fables of good and evil, where the villains hate our freedom and democracy. Today's media coverage of U.S. foreign policy is to Reality, what "Leave it To Beaver" was to the average American family — sanitized, constructed, and dangerous. When young people really understand what is happening they do care. Many of them gain access to grassroots perspectives of world events through alternative news groups like indymedia.org.

Thankfully more and more people are working together in their daily lives to debunk the apathy myth. By talking with friends, connecting with community, getting informed and engaging in action we can make a difference. At the end of my workshops there are usually a few students who hang around afterwards to tell me their own stories of resistance and their ideas, questions, or concerns. I can see that they aren't apathetic, just isolated or un-empowered. After hearing stories about what other students like them have done, they feel like they can make a difference too. Whether it is organizing their school uniforms to be made with fair labor, or increasing awareness about human rights and environmental issues, they know that together they can have an impact and that they are a movement and not just a market. ★

Far from apathetic, today's youth aren't the passive consumers corporate media makes them out to be.

words Carly Stasko
photo Fred Askew





DJs Ese and Hipsta

Embedded Studios Presents: *The Bedford Files*
www.embeddedmusic.net

When dealing with hip-hop reviews, one often get the feeling that the reviewer, afraid of being branded as wack or out of touch feels compelled to rave about some lame album. A perusal of any hip-hop journalism in publications such as the Voice to the Source to the Times will reveal some timid, deferential ass-kissing blather about nothing to do with hip hop at all. My qualifications for this review are simple, if not complete: I've been listening to hip hop since I was eight years old, it's the only music that I feel I know anything about, and, perhaps more importantly, I'm familiar with most of the artists played at Fat Beats and by King commercial itself — Funk Master Flex. I never made a beat, never got up on the subway, and I've only rhymed in my own home, drunk off my ass.

Speaking of Fat Beats, the first time I heard of DJs Ese and Hipsta, was at Fat Beats, where I bought one of their mix tapes. The mix tape promised "two 45 minutes sets" of spinning, and the content of the records they spun ranged from the Wu, to Talib Kwili, to underground all timers like El-P to less know underground artists like Huggy Bear and Pumpkinhead. The mix tapes, a satisfying smorgasbord of underground hip-hop, reflected a real appreciation for lot of different styles of hip-hop. Before going on, maybe we should lay on the table what underground hip-hop is. Fuck if I know, but I know that it often strives to be that part of hip-hop that is absent on commercial radio. That is, underground hip-hop is usually smarter, funnier, more political and experimental than commercial hip-hop. The other side of that coin, and I'm not sure exactly why this is, is that underground hip hop rarely makes anyone (excepts a few white dudes with Jansport bags (like me?)) want to dance, sing along, or even bob their head. Perhaps a lot of underground hip-hoppers think it's too easy, or boring, to get down to hip-hop. Ese and Hipsta, on their new CD, *The Bedford Files*, seem to try to bridge this gap; their beats are undoubtedly underground, their rappers rock some witty rhymes, and, at the same time, don't be surprised if the album makes you bob your head, which, I think we'd all agree, is a good fucking thing. Highlights include: BKLYN, where Tes rhymes over a real head bobber, "Tippin' Dominoes," when Vast Aire gets loose over a beat filed with jazz bass and some hot breaks. On "Cold City Winter" Mike Ladd rocks some deep shit over a beat that sounds like it was sampled from "Eyes Wide Shut." The track that stayed in my head the longest is probably "Building Blocks," featuring Zion I, a track whose beat features the repetition of a 70s sounding keyboard. Overall, some of the tracks seem to be influenced by DJ Premier, the god of all beat making whereas other tracks, which work equally well, are more dissonant and less overtly rhythmic.

If you're looking for real hip-hop — underground, commercial, or whatever — you could do a whole lot worse than rocking with *Bedford Files*.

-Sam Marks

The Quails

Atmosphere
Inconvenient Press & Recordings, 2001
www.thequails.com/

The Quails are Jen Smith, Seth Lorinczi, and Julianna Bright. This second album, *Atmosphere* reminds me of being at a county fair. Each twist and turn brings new surprises of sound -- if sounds could be represented in colors, this album would be splashes of red, blue, yellow, and maybe some fushia, 'cause I wouldn't want to limit this album to the primary colors. Or maybe the colors would be red and black as these kids have some great anti-capitalist lyrics.

In the broadest sense of the term, rock n' roll is what The Quails do, but add to that some performance art, riot grrrl-ish screams and fancy drumbeats. At points the lyrics remind me of the lady from God is My Co-pilot, but add in there some Rachel Carns (The Need) -esque tauntings and some Beth Ditto (The Gossip)-esque moanings. Whoa, did I just say all of that? I promise, I'm not trying to sound like a music snob, but this is the only way I could think of to convey the sounds.

But to make this seem more like a real record review, I'll let you know that the album's title track is by far my favorite, but I'm a lyric junkie, so I can't resist these lyrics, "Someone check the atmosphere, suddenly everything is fucked up here. What

to do when you have no voice? What to do when you haven't got a choice? What to do when you're sick of it? What to do when it's all a bunch of shit? What to do when you want to resist? Make a fist? Make a fist!" Oh yes, angst that we all love and a battletory at the end, "Make a fist!"

-alecia ruscini

Saturday Looks Good To Me

All Your Summer Songs
Polyvinyl Records, 2003
www.polyvinylrecords.com

There is something to be said for the importance of sound. Sounds warn us, hurt us, warm us, heal us. Somewhere, the sound of fluorescent lights buzzing is performing the soundtrack for a lonely employee working third shift, calling in sick as often as showing up. On the other side of town, an ambulance rushes down the street, sirens screaming a confused dichotomy of emergency and 'let me heal you.' Further still, the next town over, or maybe just in the basement right below where you stand, there is music. This music is strange and familiar, but somehow new. When you hear it, you dance. You might not even be the type of person who likes to dance, but something about these songs — the staccato, reverberant quarter notes, the thick wall of rhythmic ambience, the swelling of emotion, the jaunty guitar parts — makes your body shake free and begin to move.

Your dance becomes something special, and it exists, not only because of the song, but because of you. The song is inspiration. It is a rare occasion that I find a record that is all of these things and more. *All Your Summer Songs*, the forthcoming offering by Michigan's Saturday Looks Good to Me, is all of this and more.

Masterminded by Fred Thomas, *All Your Summer Songs* is a touching, heartfelt, excited exploration about finding meaning inside of this stifling post-modern existence that we live in. This record embraces innocence and celebrates the beauty of the personal while struggling to "...find a place to dream, in the shadows of a town made out of thieves," to borrow a lyric from the record's fourth song, "Ambulance."

It seems that, at times, the most important thing that this record wants us to think about, is how to be resistant through joy, and that everything really will be okay. We can see this in the album's second cut, "Meet Me By The Water": "We can dance together as the water rushes by to wash away the cities that somebody else designed. Dance with me beneath the circularity." It is perhaps in the lyric that we find the heart of this record. It is in that lyric that we see the juxtapositions of new and old, of beautiful and ugly, of weakness and empowerment, that make this record so important and magical. Not only do the lyrics deal with these juxtapositions, but the music also cuts in and out, being rooted in a very eclectic range of sixties music (Beach Boys, Phil Spector, Bob Dylan, and more), but occasionally warped with the feedback, fuzz and echo of an experimental nature.

From the album's most joyous moments — "Outside the birds sing, louder than the phone rings" — to its frustrated, political moments — "we have been overrun by the gentrification of once majestic city streets" — to its most profoundly heartbroken moments — "And we fell asleep when we turned 23/ when did we both realize/ that all our summer songs/ could only last so long?" — Fred Thomas pushes us through the gamut of listening experiences, challenging us at almost every step, and sometimes daring us to move on to the next track. The final track, "Last Hour," is perhaps the best song I have ever encountered by Thomas, mixing personal lyrics with music that sounds like what might have occurred had Phil Spector produced Bob Dylan.

It should also be noted that this record contains guest spots by many of indie rock's finest, including Ted Leo, Jessica Bailiff, most of Ida, Tara Jane O'neil, and more.

Stiffed

Sex Sells
Cool Hunter, 2002

This should have been the soundtrack playing in the film of my life as a 16-year-old Alabama girl driving around with the window's down in my grandmother's 1983 Buick Park Avenue with my best friend sitting shotgun while we drove by our high school crushes' houses making sure to go slow enough to

catch a glimpse of a family member in the living room, but fast enough to not get caught doing it.

But it wasn't — it was only released this year. Back then we were listening to a mix of poppy alternative girl stuff and the best of alternative rock. This album would have fit in nicely, but I have to ask myself if an audience is still there for this kind of music. Maybe I should ask my little sister.

Philadelphian Santi White's vocals are sharp, biting, pretty, cute in this 6-song ep. It's almost too cute; No doubt it's too poppy. I'd be ashamed to listen to it with the windows down or a cool kid in the living room.... But, one of my roommates said she likes it — and, she's a pretty good judge of aesthetics. Hey, maybe I'll bring it out for my spring cleaning rituals.

-alecia ruscini

Various Artists

Stand Up & Fucking Fight For It: Queers In Hardcore + Punk
Agitprop! Records
www.agitproprecords.com

By the mid-1990's, queer punk had exploded. The zine revolution was underway, and everyone agreed that queer zines were the coolest. Outpunk - the landmark record label - was in full swing. Tribe 8 got bumped up from the queer underground to the general underground, Pansy Division opened for Green Day in front of thousands of roaring frat jocks, and queer grrrls like Bratmobile found themselves honored in song by Joan Jett. Suddenly, queer musicians were a little more aggressive than the gay boy club music and lesbo folk songs they'd been associated with, and people were digging it. And then one day, queercore was pronounced dead. Or if it wasn't, it was only cuz the media was too politically correct to say so — but SPIN magazine wasn't trying to get through the queercore door anymore. Like most underground sounds hyped by the media, though, queercore was a revolution before it was a fad — and Agitprop Records' *Stand Up & Fucking Fight For It* compilation shows that not only did it never go away, it's evolved into some of the most creative punk and hardcore around.

Half of *Stand Up & Fucking Fight For It* qualifies it as the party album of the year. It's got the kind of biting bump that inspires even your Grandma to write MEAT on her chest and go rocketing off into the night, kissing girls on every street corner. You can clap along and hopscotch to Fagatrat's punk playground jump rope rhymes ("In high school I was a punching bag/when I got out I was a punching bag"); you can chant The V Area's "Body Hair" during a "Throwaway the Wax and Razors Game" at your slumber party. If Deathcheck's "In A Flirtatious Way" doesn't get you jumping on a pogo stick, nothing will. And as your "Just Got Gay Bashed" recovery kit, there's Best Revenge's springy little anthem "Bash Back," which makes you want to take boxing lessons (if you don't already) and mince on down the road for some good ol' fashioned breeder hunting (if you don't already).

For those who prefer their hardcore to sound like a massacre in a horror movie, *Stand Up* has got that too. For Ninja Death Squad's "Fueled by the Blood of Innocents," imagine if you will a vicious mass of psycho demons crashing a Motley Crue concert. It's just that good. And Myles of Destruction's "Mourning Sickness" is the day after, where the demons meet their hangover from the feast of teen metalhead kidneys. Other little gems come from Kids Like Us, who bring classic punk rock in the tradition of MDC with "Take Aim," and Lipkandy, whose "Long Way" picks up where the Primitives "Crash" left off. In short, *Stand Up & Fucking Fight For It* is not only a showcase of great queer bands, but also a testament to just how diverse punk and hardcore can be.

"Fuck Media Faggots" by Rotten Fruits closes the album, with lines like "I don't wanna watch Will & Grace, I wanna spit in their face." Beyond the fact that the music fucking rocks, that pretty much sums up why the *Stand Up* compilation is so important. Queer punk's spirit at its best is not about making a heterosexual mainstream more homo-friendly, or about licking the boots of those in power in the hopes that they'll like us; instead, it's a whole new vision of the world where our dependence on corporate approval is revealed as the nonsense that it is, and queer music thrives whether or not the big boys are taking note.

-Jojo

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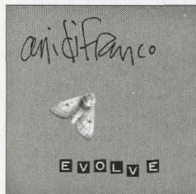
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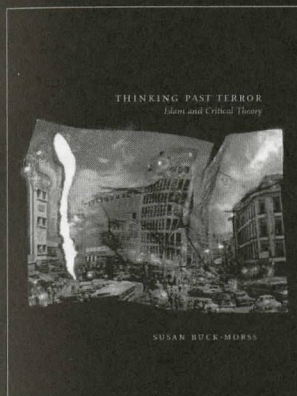
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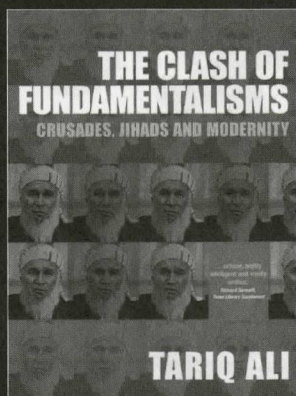
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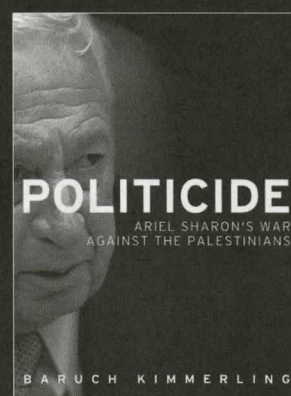
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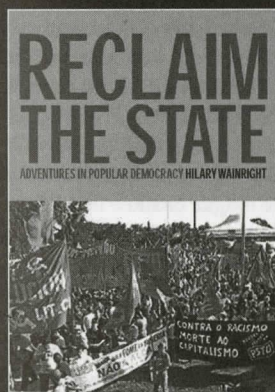
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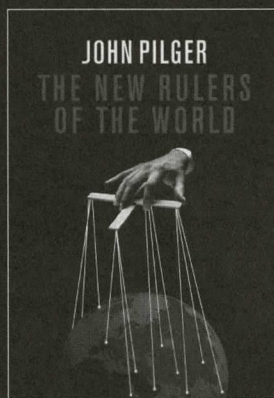
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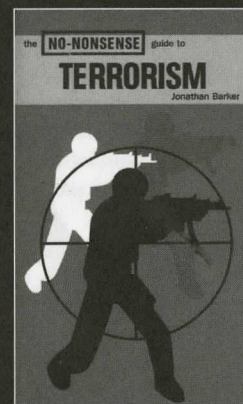
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Our relationship with food in America has been led astray. It is a nutritional reality to some and mere fuel to others. Ordinary food has been thrown to the wayside and taken for granted. Frankenfoods, dietary Nazis, and meals in a cellophane-wrapped bar have replaced the romance in food and point to our country's ever growing obsession with doing away with the authentic in order to find the faster, the easier, and the better.

Consider the cherry. Ever squeezed a plump black cherry between the fingers to marvel at the thin washes of pink, magenta, and blood red that emerge? It's marvelous. It's like a natural lip tint, a color for the skin of a loved one on the Valentine's Day bed to preclude a session of lovemaking, and a kiss that mingles with the tart taste, the moist flesh. The size and the shape of the cherry, just like the apple or the pear, varies so profoundly when the birth occurs organically. This is beauty. Yet, our careless rape of earth's natural food resources and our preference for the symmetrical and perfect may someday reduce the cherry into a fruit produced in a laboratory, a manipulative insemination into the eccentricity of nature.

Consider the word marzipan. Let it roll off the tongue as "Lolita" rolled off the tongue of her admirer in the opening lines of Nabokov's classic. Marrrrr-zi-pan. A completely sensual word that conjures the image of creamy nougat enveloped in a rich chocolate shell in the confectioner's tray. Yet these days chocolate is a sinner's prize as those who pretend to know better eat saccharine and olestra and other chemically-produced forms of fat that don't melt on the tongue or show up on the hips half as nicely as fresh cocoa blended nicely with creamy butter.

Consider yerba mate, the leaves of a tree found in Argentina and Brazil. When brewed, mate equals all of the warm and soothing benefits of coffee and tea without the caffeine, rolling through one's belly like soup for the soul. Or consider a bowl of tom gai kai, preservative free and fresh, spiked with lime, hot and sour as it tickles the throat. Or a tub of whipped honey, straight from nature, lingering on the undersides of a halved peach hot from the oven, covered in brown sugar crumbles. Think of a meal absent of anything sterilized, aerobicized, or homogenized. When is the last time you had one?

Mouthwatering, hot, lush, cold, simple, or complex, food is the core of our existence, the basic ingredient of our infrastructure, and the

Re-Sexing the Cherry

energy that sustains us. Yet, the sensual richness of food has become something for special occasions, holidays, a rare moment at home when one actually has the time or the reason to sit still and create.

The sensate in food, the underlying community consciousness of food growing and sharing, and the use of food to connect and fortify has been lost in a country where people are either starving, dieting, numbly fattening and feeding, or junk food junking. Food is embroiled in the political, the social, and the healthcare arenas. The enjoyment of food becomes pale in comparison to the realities of the starving in Africa who are manipulated by the iron fists of bionic grains or the obese who become enslaved to the money hungry fast food nation cash registers with their incessant bing bing bings. The very thing that is supposed to nourish and sustain us becomes just another mechanism in a machine where convenience and the palm pilot have taken place of the family meal, the coffee klatch, the get together. We live in a country where the lazy breakfast has been replaced by the Power Bar or the Egg McMuffin. We are rapidly losing touch with the basic human sensuality of the verb "to eat"; the magnificent vitamins that come from fortifying the body with nurturing attention.

What if we all decided to become conscious of every bite?

Aristotle considered the relations between men and women to be the greatest sensual experiences of our lives, in both the sexual and the platonic fashions. Who we know and how we know them and our relationship to things that touch us have profound effects on our mood, our interactions in this world, and our attitudes about co-existing. Yet how often do we stop to ponder what passes between our lips in a responsible and globally conscious fashion? Our interaction with food can mean as much as our interaction with other human beings. If we started to feed ourselves with thought we might make different choices about the things we consume and how they play into the world around us. We might sense that we aren't as elementally disjointed and individually disconnected as it seems.

In the Buddhist practice of Sesshin, which requires that Zen students sit together in meditation for long periods of time, the mealtime ritual is one of the most important elements to the experience. At mealtime, each student is given a set of bowls and utensils. Each serving of food, each placement of cup and napkin and spoon, is structured so carefully as to bring the mind fully present to the act of eating. One learns through this practice that one should only take as much as they need to feel full. One learns to be respectful of the others' time when eating. One learns that every bite counts, and that no grain of rice should be wasted because it took a long process to get from its seed to the bowl. We might all do well to create a meditative experience with our meals and learn to actually taste the social, political, and personal characteristics of the things that we eat. A small step towards the healing of our collective psyche, yes, but one that has the

potential to be profound. Because when what one takes in begins to have an effect on what one puts out, waves of influence are inevitably created. By paying attention to our basic human practice, we may come to rediscover basic human connections to each other.

Let's consider the concept of the aphrodisiac. Scientists may refute the claims that food has an effect on the libido, but I would argue that the sensuality lies in the textures, the temperatures, and the feelings of eating certain foods. It can be mind altering.

I sometimes have a fantasy that I take on the role of Joan of Arc, only I put on sexy metallic fishnets instead of armor and become the Joan of Tart. I take on a crusade to save the world and I visit the world's current most frightening leaders and force-feed them aphrodisiacs. I would feed red Korean Ginseng to Kim Jong-il until his eyes rolled back dramatically in orgasm. I would spice up George Bush's oyster platter with libido-enlivening Texas style Tabasco until he was panting for more. I would serve Osama some Zarda Pulao with extra saffron to spice the horny-making almonds, pistachios, and pine nuts, guaranteeing him hours of endurance and distraction from other matters. To Saddam, a stew of fennel and dill to remind him of Assyrians who once walked along the Tigris River painstakingly picking the herbs in what is now modern day Iraq.

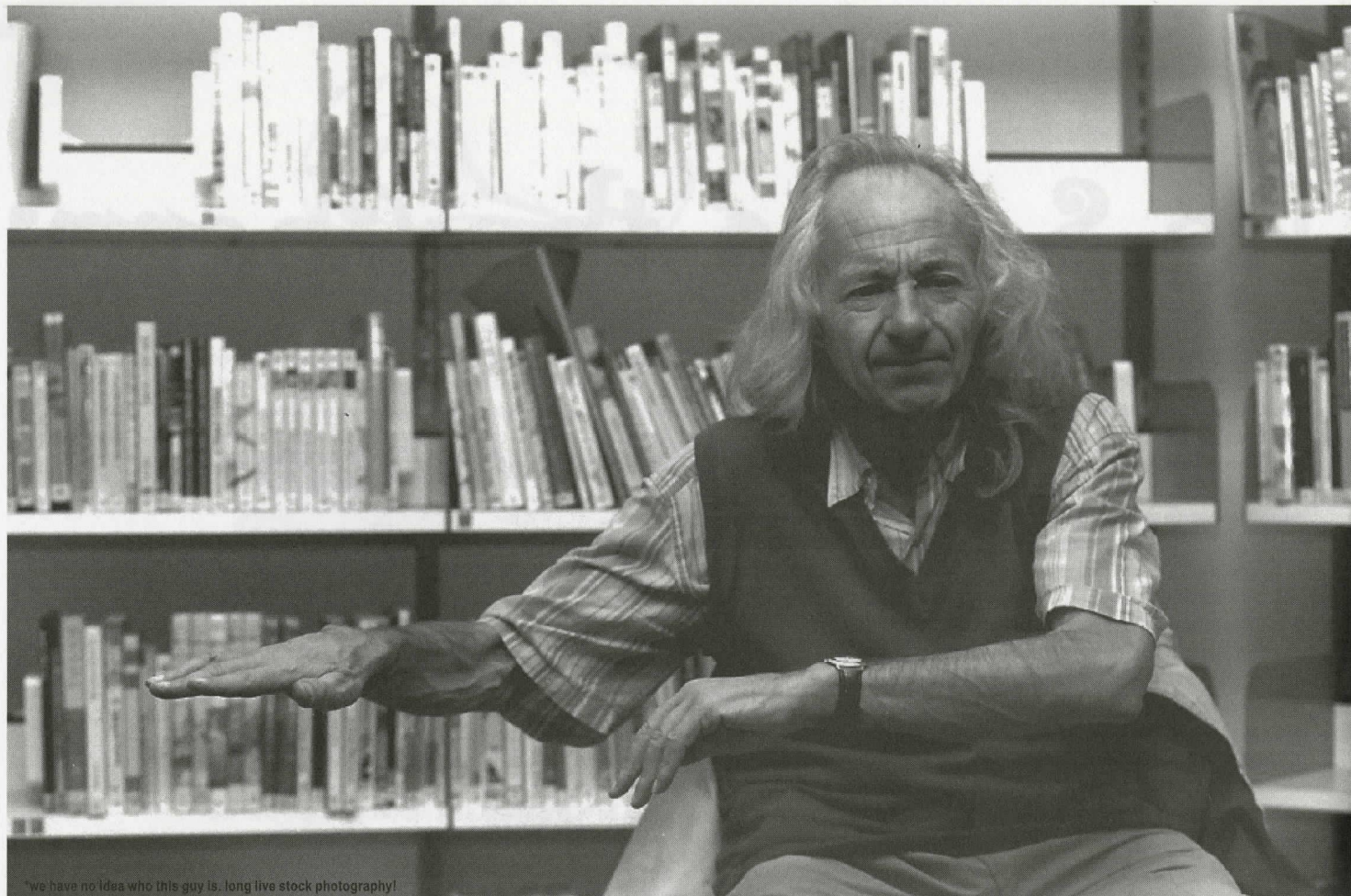
I would feed raspberries and cream, strawberries and sugar, dates, figs, avocado, fava beans, and other luscious reminders of sexual genitalia to all other people full of old school ideas. To all those people with a lack of personal integrity towards the environment or a macro mentality towards our collective unconscious or an ignorant, prejudicial, or arrogant viewpoint, I would create a global potluck to test the theorem that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach.

It's time to reignite our romance with food. To re-taste the textures of the mundane, the sublime, the simple, and the elemental sustenance that calms our most primal yearnings; to remember that in true farming fashion, we reap what we sow and we are what we eat. A revolution in eating well is surely a place where we all could find common ground. ★

Rekindling Our Long Lost Romance with Food

words Kimberly Nichols

illustration Dave Crosland



*we have no idea who this guy is. long live stock photography!

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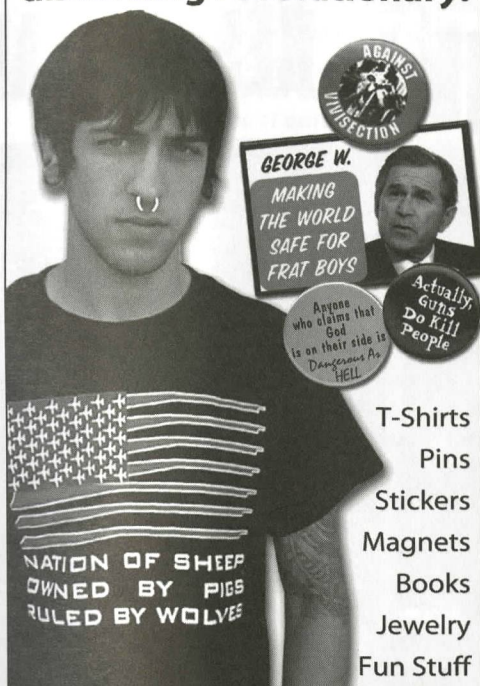
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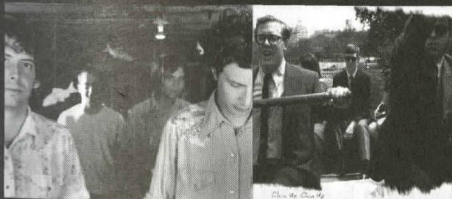
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'the band's strength is its sinewy intertwining melodic guitar lines and subtle (yet anthemic) vocal melodies... (Bosler) - VILLAGE VOICE

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No more junk, Eat Healthy!

Shameem Chowdhury's Halal Restaurant offers Brooklyn a delicious, healthy, and affordable alternative to the fast food fare.

words Courtney Martin
photos Joshua Breitbart

Shameem Chowdhury, owner of two restaurants on Fulton Street in Brooklyn, is a man with a vision. "I do this place a service. You see the KFC. You see the McDonalds. But people are tired of eating junk food; they are getting sick and getting troubles. I have a dream to give them healthy food." Chowdhury sees food as a way to connect with the Caribbean immigrants that live in the surrounding area. He dreams of food as the vehicle of health, of tolerance, of God.

He, first and foremost, wants to provide a healthy alternative. This dream is not small potatoes. Eric Schlosser writes about the fattening of America in general, but especially the American poor, in his 2001 best-seller *Fast Food Nation*: "The profits of the fast food chains have been made possible by losses imposed on the rest of society." That loss is health, especially for the Caribbean immigrants who call Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn home. In fact, a recent government study of food intake of almost 10,000 Americans nationwide found that the prevalence of obesity increased among women — especially — as their household income neared the poverty line.

Chowdhury says that most of his customers are neighboring "black people who just see no other way." He shines as he points out all of the healthy foods freshly prepared each morning and steaming away in the buffet; salmon, greens of all kinds, and grilled chicken are

People are tired of eating junk food ...

I have a dream to give them healthy food.

all piled high in the 20 foot metal table that lines the north wall of the restaurant. He is proud to serve these foods as an alternative to the high-fat and high-caloric content of so many neighboring in-and-out joints on Fulton. Within a four block radius of The Halal Restaurant a Bed-Stuy resident can satisfy their fast food cravings with crispy fried chicken, a slice of extra cheesy pizza, or a traditional Caribbean meal — meat pie and coco bread — for under four dollars each. Fattening food is both cheap and quick, and in the real world (get up early and drag yourself to work, work all day, drag yourself home) it is no wonder that many poor people find solace in the quick-and-easy despite the health detriments.

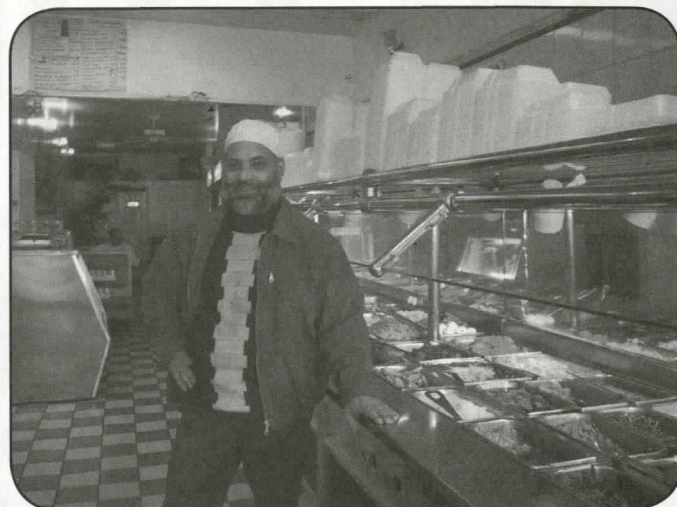
Greg Citser explores the intersection of obesity and poverty in his recent release *Fat Land*. A health journalist, Critser's work started to hit a little close to home so he decided to lose 40 pounds. To reach his goal, he consulted a medical professional, started taking the prescription weight-loss medication Meridia, and committed to daily jogs in a neighborhood park. In addition, he had the benefit of a wife who cooked him healthy food. "And money," he told Buzzle.com. "And time." He lost the weight, but "the more I contemplated my success, the more I came to see it not as a triumph of the will, but as a triumph of my economic and social class."

Citser's realization prompted him to start researching the intersection of poverty and obesity. His hunch was not unfounded. Poor Americans are more likely to suffer from every disease connected with obesity, including hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. According to United Nations non-profit, Focus, the number of people with obesity-related diabetes is expected to double to 300 million between 1998 and 2025, with three-quarters of that growth projected in poor people of developed countries. In Citser's book he examines the structural and sociological elements that link fat food and poor people, including the proliferation of low-cost, fattening fast food restaurants that profit off of hard-working people's exhaustion in poor neighborhoods. At the end of the day, it is much easier to pick up a bag full of Big Macs than to prepare a four-course meal. As Bedford Stuyvesant resident and mother of four, Lesline Johnson, explains, "Kids in this neighborhood, their parents are always out working. I remember when my kids were little, all they had in those kids had in those days were five cent bags of potato chips. That's all they had for snack, sometimes dinner. Some of their parents would bring home Kentucky Fried Chicken every single night. I remember asking this woman who did that about it and she said she was too tired to cook, and that even though it was a strain on her budget, she preferred doing it that way. If you ask me, KFC is too salty for human consumption." Johnson was a full-time nurse, single mother at the time, but as she explains, "The plus for me was that I worked at night so I got some sleep during the day, so when my kids got home I was raring to go. I used to see other people's kids hanging in the streets hungry. When they realized that I was home and I had food, that's where they flocked...I started feeding everybody."

It is no wonder then, that Chowdhury saw the need for a healthy food alternative in this low-economic environment. In fact, when walking down Fulton, one can't miss the bright yellow awning that graces the outside of The Halal Restaurant. In thick red block letters it screams, "No more junk! Eat healthy!" Adjacent to these exclamations, the awning proudly advertises: "New Millennium! Healthy food in Halal." —The African Observer."

According to Citser's diagnosis — that poor people are drawn to food that is cheap and quick — Chowdhury has the right idea. All of the 50+ dishes that The Halal Restaurant serves are set out buffet style from nine in the morning until 11 at night. In theory, he really is fulfilling his "dream to give them healthy food."

The reality, however, may be quite different. At the exact moment that Chowdhury is pointing out the luscious greens that grace the south



end of the buffet, two middle-aged black women — both carrying big Key Foods shopping bags and dingy leather purses — walk past the okra and the spinach and head straight towards the north side of the buffet where a bright yellow heap of macaroni and cheese sits adjacent to layer after layer of meaty lasagna. "Oh," Chowdhury stumbles, "I just have a little bit of the starches for the people. Sometimes they just want a little of the starches."

Even if Chowdhury isn't spreading the gospel of healthy food as effectively as he would like, he is confident that his message about Halal food is getting across. Halal is an Arabic word meaning lawful or permitted. The opposite of Halal is haram, which means unlawful or prohibited. According to The Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, Halal and haram are universal terms that apply to all facets of Muslim life, however they are mostly used in reference to food products and personal care items. Swine/pork and its by-products, animals improperly slaughtered or dead before slaughtering, animals killed in the name of anyone other than ALLAH (God), alcohol and intoxicants, carnivorous animals, birds of prey and land animals without external ears, and blood and blood by-products are all considered haram.

Chowdhury explains: "When you kill animals, bad things seep from their systems. Halal is killing the animal the slow way so that you recognize it. You kill animal in the name of God." Again he gestures to the walls of the restaurant to illustrate his commitment. Tattered bumper stickers hold up hand-written signs on florescent poster board (the kind that suburban children use for science fair projects) with what appears to be a completely random sampling of the foods available with prices per pound. One of the bumper stickers — green and torn on the corners — states, "Read the Qur'an, broaden your knowledge." Another, "ISLAM — The Law of God, Religion of Peace Not Violence." Chowdhury explains them: "90% of my customers are not Muslim, yes, but I still feel like I must educate people about my religion. My family who works here, we are all Muslim. I have friends who come, even all the way from downtown, to eat my food. I want them to know they are welcome."

Hospitality has become more these days than a gracious gesture or a warm meal. For Chowdhury, the careful preparation and quality ingredients that go into his foods are the building blocks of a movement towards healthier, more tolerant living. Chowdhury launches into a speech about the treatment that so many of his immigrant friends have been receiving. "Immigrants have all moved. They used to eat here, but the government is against those who are Muslim. We become disheartened about our dreams. We move to Canada." He is adamant, however, that he would never move. "I've lived in Brooklyn for over 19 years. This is my home now. I am not afraid." ★

IN FOOD WE TRUST

Philadelphia's The Food Trust Sows the Seeds of Fair Trade

words and photo Greg Fuchs



Monisha Jackson takes a moment for herself before the fruit sale begins on the bridge.

During the last 50 years agriculture has become agribusiness as a result of post-War revitalization initiatives, the growth of fast food, and the spreading of the myth that free markets are the evolutionary result of democracy. Sometimes this has occurred through noble goals: helping farmers survive or ending malnutrition. Other times it has been nothing more than a racket to enrich a few at the demise of healthy farms and food.

For more than 10 years, a Philadelphia-based group, the Food Trust, has participated in the international struggle to build strong communities by providing access to healthy food.

"We create access by building farmers [markets] and school markets as well as analyzing and developing food policy," says Frank Sherlock, the Food Trust School Market facilitator.

The Food Trust originally organized to conduct nutrition classes in the Reading Terminal Farmers Market and later began to host farmers markets throughout Philadelphia. These types of markets bring in local farmers, reestablish a relationship between producer and consumer, and ensure the arrival of fresh produce by shortening the distance food must travel.

"Since we are a non-profit we help farmers obtain access to retail space that otherwise would be cost-prohibitive," according to Brian Lang, the Food Trust Farmers Market Coordinator.

Local farms across the globe prove that one can make money by producing quality food that encourages the sustainability of the planet. In Great Britain, the number of farmers markets has doubled in the last two years according to the National Association of Farmers Markets. The United States Department of Agriculture states that the number of U.S. farmers markets has grown by almost 80 percent in the last eight years.

In addition to organizing farmers markets the Food Trust advocates policies that encourage local farming. Also, it developed a local school nutrition policy to redevelop lunch programs and to rid schools of sodas. In contrast to these long range programs, the Trust's School Market Program is a small but influential initiative achieved by teaching the value of nutrition through entrepreneurship.

"The School Market Program does an end run around the school lunch program. It brings nutritious food into schools and invests students in this mission. Instead of telling students the value of nutritious food we give them hands-on experience," proclaims Sherlock.

Since 1997 the program has been integrated into 17 Philadelphia public schools. It operates weekly fruit sales for and by students. They are taught to run a small business that sells a healthy product.

William Penn High School has one of these programs. At 8:00 a.m. six students, Sherlock and Lang, and Mary Jane MacLeod, Family and Consumer Science Teacher, arrive in a small school kitchen to prepare today's fruit. MacLeod emphasizes entrepreneurial and nutritional goals to her students.

"The program is direct, immediate, possibly lucrative. It helps to create positive attitudes toward food," says MacLeod.

Along with nutrition, she teaches the students how to balance the books, and to market and promote the fruit. Sherlock and Lang oversee the work of the students while guiding MacLeod.

A case of cantaloupes, grapes, oranges, pineapple, strawberries, and watermelon arrives from a local distributor that morning. The students lay out the fruit and several large containers on a table. Each person wears a hairnet and apron to chop the fruit.

Lang and Sherlock direct the students in filling and weighing the containers for the sale; 6 ounces for \$1.00 and a 12 ounces for \$2.00. Each contains a variety of the day's fruit. Three students, Kenneth Russell, Naji Gallmen, and Monisha Jackson, suggest that they should not make more than 10 large containers because few sold last week. Today they make 64 small and 7 large. Kenneth, Naji, and Monisha clean the chopping blocks, containers, knives, and surfaces.

I ask the students if they like to eat the fruit. They all respond with a resounding yes — contradicting claims that children prefer junk food.

A few more students arrive. They count the money for the register. Others load the cart. MacLeod sends Lang and Sherlock with Monisha and another student, Hyfief Morsley, to operate the fruit cart on the bridge, a walkway that connects a classroom building with the cafeteria. Meanwhile MacLeod coordinates the remaining students to work as two-person teams that sell fruit out of canvas tote bags throughout the campus.

The sale is scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m., the start of the first lunch period. Usually the sale lasts through the last, third, lunch period. The second lunch is traditionally the best time for sales, as sophomores and juniors walk across the bridge. Remarkably today they sell all fruit before the end of first lunch.

Back in the classroom the students clean up the carts, reconcile the bank, and discuss strategies for next week.

"We should double the amount of fruit for next week," suggests Sherlock.

In a society that equates one dollar with one vote the fact that these students, most of whom come to school with few dollars, are willing to spend one or two on fruit is a positive sign. Today the William Penn students earned 78 votes toward the long term redress of agricultural policy to move away from subsidized junk food. ★

Made in India

Directed by Patricia Plattner
Women Make Movies, 1998

Made in Thailand

Directed by Eve-Laure Moros and Linzy Emery
Women Make Movies, 1999
both available at www.wmm.com

The topic of women and labor outside the home has long been a controversial topic. Issues facing women the world over have made the transition from the submissive housewife to the independent working woman a battle against stereotypes, unequal treatment and clear exploitation. *Made in Thailand*, a film by Eve-Laure Moros and Linzy Emery and *Made in India* a film made by Patricia Plattner, explore some of those difficulties and the brave and creative solutions that are at work in Asia.

Made in Thailand (1999) is a video documentary that delves into the lives of several female factory workers in Bangkok. In Thailand, 90 percent of the labor force in toy and clothing factories is made up of women. On a daily basis, they deal with the difficult issues of low pay, lack of benefits and overwork. The film shows all of these angles, but adds an unexpected perspective by showing the organization of a union and dramatic protests.

Most Americans own a product that was produced in Thailand. This most likely is due to the fact that Thailand promotes its cheap labor to multinational companies in order to stimulate its own economy. Companies like Disney outsource their labor to factories in Thailand in order to avoid paying wages to Americans, who demand higher pay. This practice has encouraged the greed of factory owners in Thailand, who overwork the women who work in their factories and pay them as little as possible.

Thumthong "Mee" Pohirum, who is an employee at the Kader Toy Factory, said that on one occasion, she was working on an order of 100,000 dolls for Disney, each of which would cost one thousand baht (which is the unit of currency in Thailand). Each day, the women who work in the factory are paid 157 baht. "With our wages, we could never buy one," she said. This is an important commentary for Americans and other westerners who think nothing of spending \$15 on a stuffed toy for a baby. Who made that toy? Should we support the bottom line of companies who cut corners by having unfairly treated laborers manufacture their goods?

Sombat Ubonputh is scrambling to save enough money for retirement before they turn 45, she said, after which most women can not do heavy lifting. "After that, no one will hire us," she said. At 40, she has saved almost nothing.

At the time when the film was made, Somboon Srihondokkhae had been working at the Kader factory for 20 years. After 10 years she had developed bysnoxis, a severe respiratory condition caused by the lack of ventilation in the factory. Inhaling fibers every day had given her a chronic cough and congestion, as well as making it difficult for her to breathe. "No treatment can cure my condition," she said. "The owners deny our claims of illness," she said. "They pressure us to quit."

Unwilling to stop at a commentary on the unfair working conditions of Thai factory laborers, Moros and Emery show the strength of a growing union and the brave women who have joined it and participate in rallies outside their factories. The membership of many of the women was motivated by a horrible fire which took the lives of 188 workers who were not evacuated because the owners were afraid they would steal the toys they had been making. Almost 500 more workers were injured.

Pohirum said that she realized that a union may have saved her friends lives by demanding fair working conditions.

Ubonputh said that she believes that now that the union has grown strong, "Factory owners know that we know the law and we're on to them. We're fighting not just for us, but for our children."

The multi-faceted perspective that Moros and Emery give their audience shows keen understanding of the issues at hand for Thai workers. As many working people have, it appears that the workers in Thailand are battle for decent treatment and may foil their government's plan to profit from their fear and poverty. Westerners viewing this film may question their role in the mistreatment of these laborers and demand answers from the many companies who exploit them.

"Made in India" delves into a less-often discussed portion of the workforce, but one that is quite prevalent in India and is made up almost entirely of women there. The poor "unorganized" laborers there take on jobs like trash collection, embroidery, selling vegetables and gum collection. Prior to 1972 the people, mostly women, who did these jobs had to work alone to learn their businesses, fight for fair payment and find work. In 1972, Ela R. Bhatt started SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association), a union which brought together women from the many "unorganized" labor groups. The intention was to strengthen their voices, provide training, agitate against unfair practices and help to provide them with the funds needed to begin such businesses or help them along during difficult times.

By 1998, when the film was made, there were 211,124 members of SEWA. Today in all of India, there are 318, 527 members. They operate their own training center and bank, in addition to coming up with creative ways to "build up the solidarity of the workers," Bhatt said.

Geeta was a young child when her father died. Her mother began collecting trash as a means of making money to support her children. Eventually the children began collecting as well, picking up paper, plastic, rubber, stone, glass bottles and cardboard, all of which can take in a profit on the open market. At one point, the government of India, in an attempt to improve sanitation, planned on hiring a contractor to collect trash from people. SEWA intervened, saying that the independent trash collectors could be organized to do the job. Geeta now collect recyclables from 200 middle class homes twice a month. Whereas at one point, she could never be certain of making enough income, once she was given that job, she was assured of the income from the government.

Gum collectors in a rural area of India at one time had no control over how much they were being paid for what they collected and sold to various companies. SEWA stepped in, giving some of the women doing that job information about obtaining a license and handling their purchasers, in some cases demanding that the workers be allowed to sell on the open market should the companies be unable to pay them a fair price for their harvests.

Rami was an illiterate embroiderer when SEWA was introduced to her. "I cannot read or write. I sign with my thumb. Still I want a better life for me and my family. I'm not a housewife only." She explains that her husband did not like her involvement with the union at first, but eventually came to understand and appreciate their work when it had an economic impact on his family.

Bhatt's creation of SEWA was a truly creative move that has impacted the lives of poor Indian women tremendously. An important idea that is pointed out by "Made in India" is that women are in so many ways different from men and their labor needs will be different as more of them begin to become more independent and work for themselves. This is the same in any culture. The ability to be flexible and find ways to work with everyone regardless of what kind of work they do will become more important to employers and governments alike.

Plattner shows the talents of independent working women in India in a way that is anything but condescending. Their illiteracy in many cases is overshadowed by the ideas they have come up with to change their lives and the lives of others in their professions. It is truly an inspiring story of how one creative idea can change the lives of so many women.

-Kerri Danskin

Hello, my name is

I Hate You

and I'll be your server this evening.

I've worked in several restaurants throughout my life, and there are two things that have always remained consistent:

- 1) The customer is always an asshole.
- 2) If the customers knew how the food was handled, they would never eat in any restaurant ever again.

One thing that patrons have to understand about waiters is that we don't like you. We couldn't care less about you. I'll laugh at your stupid jokes and smile like a dipshit, but once you've left your tip it doesn't matter to me whether you live or die. And yes, it does bother me when your autistic brats run me around like a fool fetching little cups and highchairs for them. Some parents have no shame. I've seen children drinking from ketchup bottles, slobbering all over them while their parents, fully aware of this, do absolutely nothing. Apparently they go out to eat to show the entire world what lazy unhygienic slobbs they are.

The most amazing thing to me is that these people still have the gall to be absolute pricks to their servers. Somehow they haven't made the connection that we have unsupervised access to whatever hulking plate of garbage that they're about to consume. The food is filthy enough by accident, or by highly illegal cost-cutting restaurant policies. Tainting the food intentionally just makes me feel better. It might make it a little bit more dirty and unhealthy than it already was but it's really done for sentimental reasons. Watching some rude behemoth shovel fettuccini that's been laced with your spit and urine into his gaping hole can be very satisfying.

The last restaurant I worked in had a policy of doling out free cottage cheese as an appetizer. No matter how long the cottage cheese sat out in the dining room being sneezed on and fiddled with, if there were no visible cracker bits in it, back into the bucket it went. That should clue you in right there. People who care about their food do not store it in massive plastic buckets that they never clean forever. That bucket never left the cooler. In the four months I worked at this place, nobody touched it except to dump more cottage into it or to scoop out an appetizer.

The chains are no better. I worked at a prominent taco chain just as this particular location was opening. In the beginning, the managers pretended to care. After the first week, they realized that the situation was hopeless. It's frustrating working at any restaurant because you clean all this shit time and time again, several times a day, and it is never clean. It just keeps getting worse and worse. So eventually you do the only reasonable thing there is to do: you give up. Maybe if someone is watching me like a hawk and demanding that I clean this disaster, I'll pretend to work on it. Otherwise, the thing can do whatever the hell it wants to with itself. It obviously wants to turn itself into garbage, so who I am to argue with it?

The obvious advantage of working in a fast food place is that the cows are left to fend for themselves for the most part. They tote their little trays, they have unrestricted access to the bins that hold an infinite amount of highly questionable condiments and to the soda

machines. They make a mess of themselves, as almost all patrons do, but it isn't any worse than anyplace else. The obvious disadvantages are that you don't earn shit and that you still get a steady influx of psychotic primadonnas. Your way my ass, where the hell do you think you are, the Ritz-Carlton? Look around you for fuck's sake! Gorge on your 50-cent tacos like everybody else and shut up. If something tastes funny, dump more hot sauce on it. I make minimum wage. I am not here to make you happy. I am here to help you kill yourself by eating this poison.

One event that surprised me, maybe because I was still young, just beginning in the food services industry, was a burdened female voice placing the following drive through order:

Lady: I'll take 10 meximelts, four steak burritos, a fish fry ...

Me: Ma'am, we don't have those here. You're thinking of McDonalds, across the street.

Lady: Scratch that then, make it two bean burritos instead, and a fribble.

Me: Ma'am, you're thinking of Wendy's, right down the road.

Lady: Ok, make it a super-sized DIET Mountain Dew.

The line people building this twisted experiment in food gone horribly wrong busted out laughing. This lady just ordered 1000% of the FDA's daily recommended allowance of lard and she thinks that a diet Mountain Dew of all things is going to save her? And the order of a single beverage foreshadowed a dark side to this meal. It was indeed for just one person.

As the battered old van pulled up to the pickup window, I saw that this lady was indeed a beast, a real monster. The deuce was an ancient memory to her. The interior of the van was littered with fast food wrappers, an empty KFC bucket, and several massive empty paper cups. It looked like I was handing her a week's worth of groceries. That's another warning sign people, if you spend over \$20 on yourself at a fast food restaurant in 1992, you are doing something horribly wrong and unnatural to yourself. I used to wonder what would happen to a person if they ate nothing but fast food and now I know. First they explode, then they die.

Right before I quit, I was pissed off at one of the managers, so while he was watching me work the line, I reached barehanded into a huge vat of meat and crammed a fistful into my face, making sure to allow most of it to fall out of my mouth and back into the vat. The manager said nothing. He knew that we all ate out of the vats like that all the time; it was garbage, but hell, it was free. That was the day that any illusions of even pretending to handle the food properly evaporated permanently. Think about that the next time you bite into your chalupe.

This is really only the tip of the iceberg. I've walked in on dishwashers hiding in the cooler, eating ice cream out of a bucket with their filthy scumbag dishwasher's hands. I've seen pizza dropped face first on wet muddy tile floors only to be scooped up, paper towelled off, popped into the microwave for five seconds (to supposedly kill



any insects or germs), and loaded into a box, "good as new." I've heard managers instruct dishwashers to fluff up the salad with their ruined hands to make it more appealing to the customers. Personally, food that hasn't been mauled by a dishwasher's perpetually filthy and waterlogged hands appeals to me a hell of a lot more than a fluffy salad.

There is a new trend, it started in the major cities and now it's spreading. Restaurants are bringing the prep areas out from behind closed doors, so the patrons can watch as their food is prepared hygienically. They see some bit of meat dropped on the ground, and they see some poor bastard scoop it up and throw it out. Still, you have to be very skeptical. From the slaughter yard to the meat wagon to your plate, how many people have dealt with your food? How many times has it been dropped, pissed on, sneezed on, shat on (I am not exaggerating) before it got to your plate? How many insects have been mashed into it? How many rodents got sucked into the meat grinder with it? Traveling in some third world shithole my father saw a load of mashed coconuts slowly rotting on a dock. It was due to be exported to

the USA. Alongside the mashed coconuts were several water buffalos, and as buffalos or animals tend to, they felt free to take several liberties with the coconuts. They pissed on them, shat on them, ate them. All the while some poor Asian slave is shoveling the coconuts into the hold of some creaking wooden boat. He is completely indifferent. He makes almost enough to afford one value meal a year. Why the hell should he care? It's probably the only thing that keeps him going, the thought of all the American slobs gorging themselves on violated coconuts. He imagines that someday he'll kill them all, and then he won't have to shovel mashed coconuts into a boat ever again.

If you want a decent meal, this is my advice. Buy a gun and a knife. Start a garden. You'd be better off eating your average diseased neighborhood squirrel. You couldn't be doing any worse. ★

words Harry Seitz
illustration Joshua Gorchov



words Robert Biswas-Diener
photo Andrew Stern

Finding Happiness in Food

I have the enviable job of traveling the world and studying subjective well-being (happiness, in lay terms). Subjective well-being is an attractive topic because it offers a positive counterpoint to the many mental health problems that have been the historical target of psychological research. The easiest and most commonsense way to measure subjective well-being is simply to ask people about their happiness. I have people tell me about their life conditions, and I ask them about their satisfaction with various life domains such as income, intelligence, food, housing, and friendships.

As a researcher I am primarily interested in the ways culture and material simplicity affect happiness. Because "living a materially simple life" can mean so many things I have lived and worked with many fascinating groups representing various aspects of simplicity, including the Amish and Maasai tribal people in Eastern Africa. For me, it is necessary to look at the experience of homeless people, who live on the least romantic end of the simplicity spectrum.

I wanted to compare the homeless men and women of Fresno with homeless people I had worked with previously in Calcutta. Both groups were extremely poor and I was interested to see if there were differences in their respective levels of happiness.

During a three-month tenure in Fresno I spoke with more than 80 men and women whom I met at Poverello House, an agency providing free food and other social services to poor and homeless people. The homeless who spent their time with me came from every part of society. Some were schizophrenic, some were illegal immigrants, and some had college degrees. Nearly all of the people I interviewed had, or were recovering from, problems related to alcohol or other drugs. Most had frequent contact with the police and were incarcerated with alarming regularity. The vast majority were estranged from family, had few reliable friends, and felt ostracized by mainstream society.

It should be no surprise that the Fresno homeless reported very low levels of life satisfaction, and very frequent episodes of anger, depression, fear, and loneliness. Despite the fact that many of the homeless had enjoyable hobbies, or hope for future opportunities, they were not, by and large, flourishing emotionally. It makes sense: good physical health, meeting basic needs such as food, and having a sense of purpose are fundamental for psychological health. In the absence of these essentials the homeless people began to languish. The Fresno group scored similar to mental patients and newly jailed inmates on measures of satisfaction, and far below many groups that had been the focus of previous studies, including nurses, nuns, and college students.

One counterintuitive finding emerged from my research with the homeless in Fresno: they reported surprisingly high satisfaction with their food. Shouldn't food, a basic need itself, weigh heavily on the homeless? What could it be about the quantity or quality of the food that the homeless liked so much? At the time, I simply attributed it to the fact that the sample in my study was receiving relatively high quality food at Poverello House. That is, until I looked at the data from Calcutta.

While living in Calcutta for five months I worked with 83 people living in poverty. They included slum dwellers (poor people who live in crowded, and often illegal, settlements), pavement dwellers (poor people living on sidewalks), and sex workers (prostitutes). Each of these unfortunate people lived in dismal conditions. The pavement dwellers, for instance, often had to forage in nearby parks for scraps of cardboard and twigs to burn in order to cook the day's meal. The meal itself was often simple rice, bought with money earned by begging, mixed with

scraps of vegetables retrieved from the garbage. Many of Calcutta's poorest citizens have no access to baths or toilets, and get running water only from the municipal pumps on busy street corners. Life at the bottom of Indian society is hard, and the satisfaction scores of the people I interviewed were much lower than those of other Indians, such as middle class college students.

Despite their extreme material deprivation the poverty-stricken people I worked with in Calcutta showed the same high levels of satisfaction with their food, despite the fact that they were slightly unhappy overall. Considering the deplorable state of their meals, I re-checked the Calcutta data for accuracy. Sure enough, they showed the exact same pattern as their counterparts in the United States. Both the Fresno and the Calcutta

homeless complained about their material standard of living: they were dissatisfied with their income and housing, but – for some reason – very satisfied with their food.

What could explain this strange finding? One possibility is that the homeless, regardless of country of origin, seem universally concerned with the social fabric of their lives. They place a high premium on dignity, acceptance, and psychological security. In fact, the homeless people I talked with seem only concerned about traditional basic needs such as shelter primarily because of their social consequences. A lack of housing, for instance, leads directly to a lack of privacy just as low income is associated with low social status. It is possible that meals, regardless of quality or quantity, offer the homeless many unforeseen social benefits. For people

on the sidewalks of Calcutta, meals can be an important bonding experience: siblings might forage for food, mother and daughter cook meals, and families gather together to eat them. In Fresno, where people frequently complain about violence on the street, shared meals at the local soup kitchen are a refreshing period of truce.

The results of my research with these homeless groups (and others who show the same patterns of satisfaction) are important reminders of the power of food. Through their experiences the homeless instruct us that we can look beyond the politics of hunger, or the simple taste of a good meal. Food is often a way to spend meaningful time with those around us and, as such, is instrumental to our psychological as well as our physical well-being. ★

The Assassination of Lumumba

Ludo de Witte

Translated by Ann Wright and Renée Fenby

Verso, 2002

www.versobooks.com

Patrice Lumumba, first democratically elected leader of the Congo, is a political figure whose reputation has grown to almost mythic proportions since his death. After reading de Witte's account of Lumumba's assassination, it is difficult to say whether his iconic stature has come about because of the way he lived, or the way he died. Both were tremendously dramatic, controversial, and provocative, both attracted international attention and outrage, and, until now, neither one has been fully explored or documented. *The Assassination of Lumumba* leaves much of Lumumba's life untouched and deals almost entirely with the events surrounding his death, but this is not to its detriment. The book is so detailed, so exhaustive and painstakingly thorough in its account of Lumumba's assassination, that a project any larger in scope would probably have been an overwhelming task for de Witte, and most certainly an overwhelming read.

de Witte's goal in writing this book is to implicate Western powers for the role they played in Lumumba's murder, most significantly the country of Belgium and the United Nations, but also the United States. He unequivocally achieves this goal. Every statement he makes concerning the actions of these bodies or their representatives is rigorously backed up with hard evidence. de Witte has combed through what must have been veritable mountains of letters, memos, telegrams, conversation transcripts, and declassified records and documents to produce an impenetrable argument. The amount of time covered by the book is quite short – from June of 1960, when the Congo claimed its independence from Belgium, until January 1961, when Lumumba was executed by a group of Congolese secessionists and Belgian officers and advisers. de Witte does go beyond the murder to the days, months and even a few years following, to document the cover-up created by Belgium and the U.N.; however, the majority of the book is concerned with time period mentioned above. Such a specific focus allows de Witte to go into great detail and to document virtually every conversation and correspondence related to Lumumba. This makes his case against Belgium and the U.N. completely airtight.

The book is not without flaws. For one thing, it falters as a readable story. There are many, many players in these events, both Congolese, Belgian and otherwise, and although there are two charts of "Who's Who" at the begin-

ning of the book, it is still difficult to keep track of who each person is and what role he plays. Further, the great amount of detail, although necessary to achieve the goal of indicting the guilty parties, make the book quite dry in some sections. Also, de Witte provides insufficient historical context for the events covered in the book. I knew a little about Lumumba and the Congo before reading the book, and a good thing I did, or I might have lost interest quickly – de Witte jumps right into the fray, without even a brief introduction to the history of the Congo and its colonization by Belgium. Such an introduction would have been immensely useful. Finally, de Witte offers very little insight into the person of Patrice Lumumba. Upon finishing this book, I still know next to nothing about who he was, how he felt, and what kind of life he led, both politically and personally.

On the other hand, upon finishing the book and reflecting upon the lack of personal information in it, I decided that this actually strengthens de Witte's case. For it would be very easy to say, and to illustrate, that Lumumba was a good person and the appropriate political leader of the Congo, and as such did not deserve to die. However, subjective evaluations like these, while they make for more gripping reading, are easily invalidated by equally subjective arguments from opposing camps. Thus, what de Witte exemplifies in this book is that it wouldn't matter if Lumumba was a nice person or not; if he was a fair, kind leader or a tyrant: he was a democratically elected Prime Minister and as such, entitled by international law to immunity from attack or persecution. The United Nations had an obligation to ensure this immunity, and it failed. Belgium, still quite involved in the affairs of its former colony, was equally culpable. This rather detached perspective puts to rest arguments that have been made as to Lumumba's personal faults or his political mistakes – many thought, and still believe, that he was unfit to lead the Congo. de Witte shows quite clearly that these opinions simply don't matter – the question at hand is Lumumba's death, which should have been prevented by the U.N. and Belgium, who at many points had the opportunity to intervene and stop it from happening. Instead, these entities, as well as the U.S., did the opposite: they paved the way for Lumumba's murder, with Belgium going so far into it as to have Belgian officers present at the actual execution.

I recommend *The Assassination of Lumumba*, but I qualify my recommendation with this caution: the book is not for everyone. It's a challenging read, a book to which a reader must be willing to devote some serious time and focus. I found it to be quite worth the effort, and I'm certain that anyone interested in the ongoing battle between Western, capitalist, profit-driven political powers on the one

hand and nationalist, popular leaders and movements on the other, will feel the same.

-Sara Tretter

Disinformation: The Interviews

Richard Metzger

The Disinformation Company, Ltd.

www.disinfo.com

"The idea is that you will be *different* after you've read this book. Changed permanently," says author Richard Metzger in his introduction, adding, "This book intends to fuck your head up, *real good*."

This may not be true for readers of *Clamor*, who probably have already been inoculated by ideas outside of the mainstream. But the interviews in this book, taken from episodes of a television series that ran for two seasons on Britain's Channel 4 network, should point you to different ways of thinking about your existence.

Metzger wants to take us outside the narrow range of what we are indoctrinated to accept. UFOs, other dimensions, and magick are all discussed by various individuals in an attempt to find new ways to view reality.

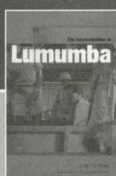
Metzger, who is also the creative director of the excellent Disinfo.com web site, quotes a wide variety of influences in his search for alternative ideas. The eleven interviewees also vary, from the mainstream futurist Douglas Rushkoff to the dedicated outsider Genesis P-Orridge, leader of the rock band Throbbing Gristle.

The outsiders look better in this book. Rushkoff's ideas, for example, seem conventional enough to be delivered in expensive seminars ("Corporations aren't really alive. They are a set of instructions for making money."). But you can pretty much count on people like Robert Anton Wilson (the "Illuminatus Trilogy" of speculative fiction) to offer intriguing comments about subjects such as conspiracy theories.

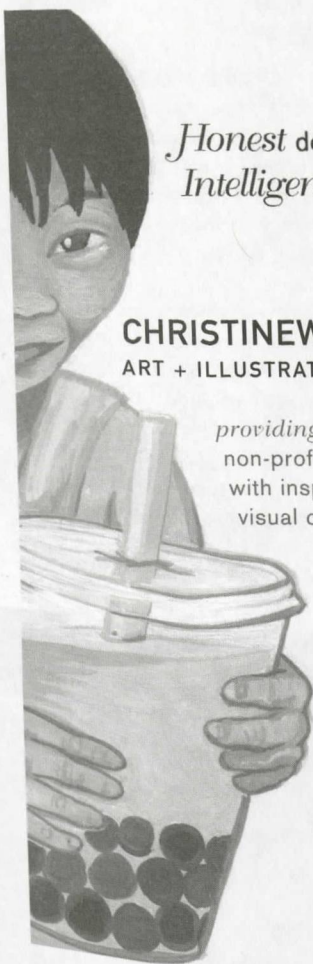
Other interviewees include Grant Morrison (who has done graphic novels of Batman and worked on X-Men comics), Duncan Laurie, who talks about subtle energy machines that can produce magickal effects, and Kembra Pfahler, whose performance art includes shock pieces like sewing up her vagina.

By the time this is published the U.S. will probably be at war with Iraq. No better example can be given of the bankruptcy of "conventional wisdom." And although some of the things presented in this book are strange, you can be sure that none of them are as stupid or noxious as this glorious conflict will be.

-Dave Howell



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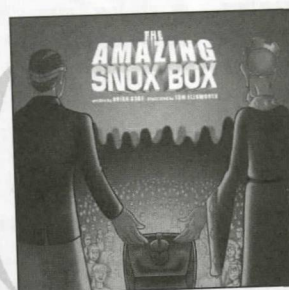
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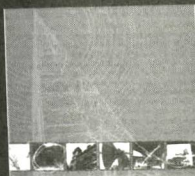


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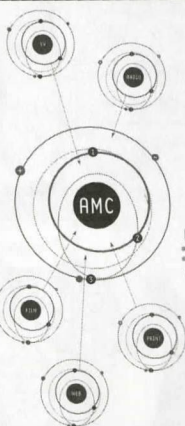
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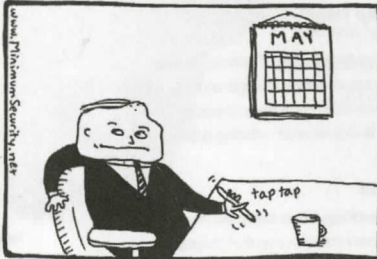
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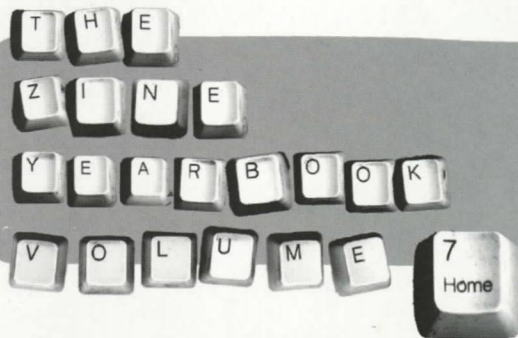
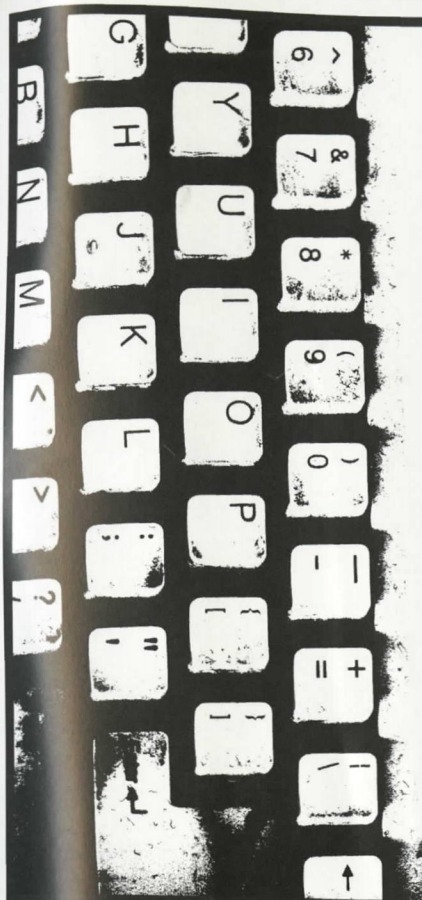


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