DECEMBER 20, 1999

Street Fight in Seattle · Marc Cooper

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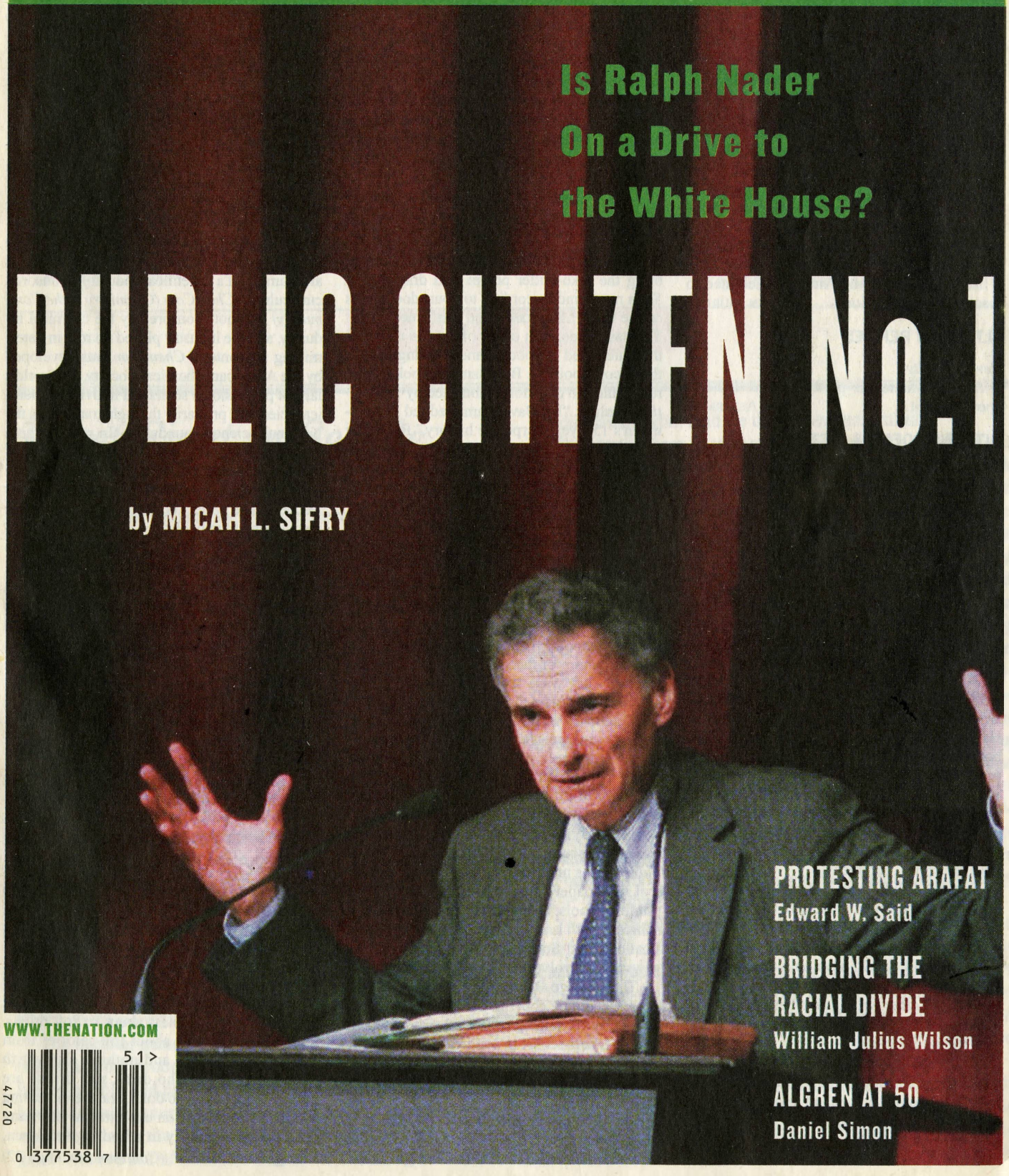
The Nation.



Is Ralph Nader On a Drive to the White House?

PUBLIC CITIZEN No. 1

by MICAH L. SIFRY

PROTESTING ARAFAT
Edward W. Said

BRIDGING THE RACIAL DIVIDE
William Julius Wilson

ALGREN AT 50
Daniel Simon

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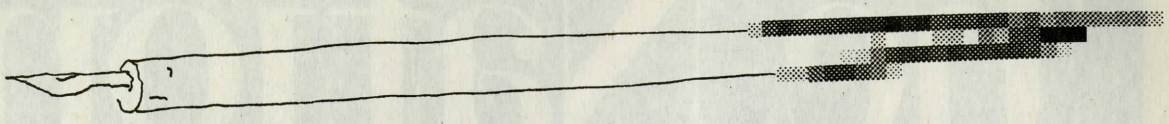
LETTERS



R.O. BLECHMAN

HOWLER & TIN MAN

Baltimore

■ I enjoyed Eric Alterman's "Full-Court Press" item on my fellow Baltimorean Bob Somerby and his mediawise Web site, *The Daily Howler* [Nov.22]. I'm troubled, though, that Alterman never discloses Somerby's personal relationship with Al Gore, whom Somerby and his Web site occasionally defend against unfair press coverage. Gore and Somerby were roommates at Harvard, and Somerby has always been up front about their friendship. Given the context—a column on media criticism—I found it hard to imagine why Alterman declined to mention the connection. EILEEN MURPHY

ALTERMAN REPLIES

New York City

■ The explanation is pretty simple. I didn't know about it. ERIC ALTERMAN

HITLER'S POEMS & PICTURES

Reinbek, Germany

■ "Bertelsmann's Revisionist" by Hersch Fischler and John Friedman [Nov. 8] is not fully correct. First, I never was instrumental in helping *Stern* obtain the poems and drawings that we erroneously thought were made by Adolf Hitler. These forgeries were presented to *Stern* as proved originals by two renowned German historians, Eberhard Jäckel and Axel Kuhn. They were given to me in copy with the comment that *Stern* had already decided to buy the material.

Not content with that, I additionally asked, without making any hint beforehand, Manfred Brauneck and Peter Rühmkopf, a professor at Hamburg University and a professional writer, both known as leftist-liberals and experts in literature, to guess who the author of the poems was. To my surprise, both experts confirmed our opinion independently but unanimously, so that we regarded these poems and drawings as originals. After all that, we decided to publish them with my critical comments.

Second, I didn't serve Bertelsmann AG as an editor of its official history but as an "editorial coordinator" of seven famous German authors who contributed to the book. It is inconceivable that I should have polluted the whole company and all the authors with revisionism as well. My other writings for Bertelsmann and Reinhard Mohn had nothing to do with Hitler or National Socialism.

Third, the authors described the two books I wrote about President Franklin Roosevelt and his conception of policy and warfare in a misleading way, but it is impossible to explain how in such limited space.

Fourth, there was no connection between my commitments to Bertelsmann and my Roosevelt books. I assume that most of the Bertelsmann top executives didn't even have any knowledge of them. In any case, we never exchanged a word about my books.

Fifth, I never served exclusively as a "house historian" of Bertelsmann AG. I worked very successfully as a business historian for many other German firms in the past twenty years.

DR. DIRK BAVENDAMM

FISCHLER AND FRIEDMAN REPLY

■ Dr. Bavendamm was a freelancer who helped bring the fake Hitler poems and drawings to *Stern* magazine, according to court documents on the fake Hitler diaries and confirmed by Dr. Thomas Walde, then editor of the *Stern* section that published the poems and drawings. As to the second point, a Bertelsmann spokesman, responding to questions submitted by *The Nation*, replied: "Dr. Bavendamm edited Bertelsmann's 150-year corporate history." Referring to that history, a Bertelsmann press release last year stated: "Bavendamm was also responsible for the investigation at the beginning of the 1980s." The remaining points are Dr. Bavendamm's interpretations and opinions.

HERSCH FISCHLER AND JOHN FRIEDMAN

TALES OUT OF SCHOOL...

Chicago

■ Susan Ohanian's excellent editorial "Standardized Schools" [Oct. 18] lays out the narrow and faulty aim of the standards movement advocates. They want "every kid in America [to] march in lockstep through the same curriculum," and they wield "high-stakes tests" to hold students and teachers accountable. Ohanian cites the example of teacher George Schmidt, who is being sued for $1 million by the Chicago Board of Education for exposing test questions to the public after students took the tests.

To clarify: Schmidt published five tests and one grading rubric from Chicago's pilot tests in *Substance*, a monthly investigative and analytical newspaper often critical of the Chicago public schools. Schmidt is the editor of *Substance*, which is in its twenty-fifth year of publication. That Schmidt exposed the tests in a newspaper involves the First Amendment.

The Chicago Board of Education sued *Substance*, claiming copyright violations, and got a temporary restraining order and writ of seizure from a federal court to suppress further publication and dissemination of the January issue, in which the tests were published. The government's right to copyright materials, a newspaper's right to free speech and the viability of Chicago's tests will be some of the issues debated in the federal case of *The Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees v. Substance, Inc. and George Schmidt* in a jury trial that will probably be held next spring. SHARON SCHMIDT

Associate editor, Substance

...& TALES INSIDE SCHOOL

Washington, D.C.

■ As a parent, I certainly agree with Steven Manning's argument in "The Corporate Curriculum" [Sept. 27] that sponsored educational materials need to be much more carefully monitored. But he got the facts wrong when he cited the high school chemistry text *ChemCom* as an example of a "chemical-industry-sponsored curriculum." *ChemCom (Chemistry in the Community)* was not sponsored by the chemical industry, and the industry played no role in determining its content. *ChemCom* was developed by the American Chemical Society, the world's largest professional society of individual chemical scientists, primarily through grants from the National Science Foundation. To receive these grants, ACS wrote a series of proposals to NSF that were peer-reviewed for quality, primarily by academic chemists and high school chemistry teachers. The project is maintained by royalties from sales of the books.

ChemCom is not a free learning kit or sponsored educational material. It is a textbook purchased by the schools, usually through formal adoption procedures, which means *ChemCom* has gone through repeated reviews by adoption review panels and has passed nationwide scrutiny from a wide range of knowledgeable scientists and educators. *ChemCom* was one of an extremely limited number of pre-college science texts featured in a recent OECD study of innovations in science, mathematics and technology education. It is considered a model of the science education reform movement and has been translated into Russian, Japanese and Spanish.

SYLVIA WARE

American Chemical Society

New York City

■ Corporate brainwashing isn't the only hazard of classroom commercialism. Poor nutrition, obesity and the undermining of federal school lunch programs also are direct consequences. Nearly all the foods advertised in schools are high-profit junk foods of low nutritional value. The companies know exactly what they're doing and are utterly shameless about it. Soft drinks, for example, contain about 150 calories from 1.3 ounces of sugar and nothing else worth mentioning. Kids who drink soft drinks are heavier than those who don't, and the increasing soft drink consumption explains the alarming rise in rates of obesity in school-age children,

(Continued on Page 22)

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EDITORIALS

Street Fight in Seattle

Seattle

After the Battle in Seattle one thing is certain: The next WTO confab will be held somewhere like Singapore or Jakarta. The corporate-dominated trade regimen enforced by the WTO is generating so much opposition that it can meet only under the sort of armed protection provided by a militarized state. Indeed, one silver lining of corporate-managed globalization is that it has harmonized US domestic protest against it to unprecedented levels of European-style militancy. Bill Clinton planned his appearance before the WTO as a showcase for successful free-trade policies, but he wound up having to give his speech under the umbrella of a declared state of emergency bolstered by barricades, curfews, riot police and National Guard troops.

The media focus on a few broken store windows should not distract from the profundity of what has happened here. A phantasmagorical mix of tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators—husky, red-jacketed steelworkers marching alongside costumed sea turtle impersonators, environmentalists with miners, human rights activists with small family farmers—stood against the WTO, succeeded in closing down its opening sessions and thrust the once-obscure issue of fair trade onto center stage. "A week ago no one even knew what the WTO was," said California State Senator Tom Hayden as he joined the demonstrators in the streets. "Now these protests have made WTO a household word. And not a very pretty word."

The broader message coming from the streets of Seattle is unmistakable: A corporate-dominated WTO that puts profits before people and property rights before human rights can no longer sustain its current course. As the peaceful demonstrators who shut down the WTO chanted at the startled trade delegates blocked out of their meeting halls: "We don't want you! We didn't elect you! And we don't want your rules!"

The scenes from Seattle are something not seen since the sixties, but in their totality unimaginable even then. At Tuesday's AFL-CIO rally, tens of thousands of workers demonstrated for labor rights and environmental protections, and—putting the lie to charges that to oppose the WTO is to retreat into protectionist nationalism—they heartily cheered speeches by union leaders from Malaysia, Barbados, Argentina and South Africa. Infuriated by the Clinton Administration's zeal to bring China into the WTO, even some of the most politically compliant leaders of Big Labor have found a new, more challenging voice. "We refuse to be marketized," AFSCME leader Gerald McEntee, an avid Clinton-Gore advocate, told the cheering rally. "We have to name the system" that tolerates sweatshops and child labor, he said, "and that system is corporate capitalism." Through the wisps of tear gas and among the forest of picket signs and banners held aloft, one could at last glimpse the rough outlines of the much-sought-after progressive coalition—an American version of a "red-green" alliance. Hardhats and longshoremen standing with granola crunchers and tree huggers, bus drivers and carpenters with snake dancers and organic food activists. Or as one hand-painted sign smartly put it: TEAMSTERS AND TURTLES—TOGETHER AT LAST.

The trick now is to come out of Seattle strengthening these new bonds—and keeping them tight through the nasty fights looming, especially during the coming Congressional battle over China's most-favored-nation status. It won't be made any easier by a Democratic Party split down the middle on China. Or by an AFL-CIO livid with the Administration over trade but tethered to Al Gore through its early endorsement of his candidacy.

Bill Clinton, with his weather-vane sensibilities, understands the explosive potential of the public opinion shift on global trade that's been jump-started in Seattle. The White House's reverse spin on trade would be startling if it weren't so transparently

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cosmetic. You half-expect Clinton himself to don a sea turtle get-up the next time he speaks on the WTO. At the November 30 Town Hall debate here on globalization, co-sponsored by The Nation Institute, Under Secretary of Commerce David Aaron went as far as to appropriate the slogans of the protesters, insisting that all world trade be "clean, green and fair." Nice words. But this Administration's verbiage on fair trade has never found concrete expression, either in the President's policies or in Al Gore's platform promises. As Ralph Nader quipped in that debate, referring to Clinton and Gore's newfound sympathy for the victims of globalization: "Where were they five years ago when they rammed all this down the throats of Congress in an autocratic, fast-track maneuver?"

Clinton's rhetorical shift on trade will likely have little success in deflating the growing protest against corporate-managed trade policies. He won't be around to reap the freakishly altered crop he's sown. But his successor surely will. Seattle is only the beginning. "We're not going to sit idly by and let them seize our world without a fight," International Longshoreman president Brian McNally told the electrified AFL-CIO rally. "Are you ready to fight?" he yelled to the roaring thousands. "Are you ready to fight?"

MARC COOPER

Ulster Says Maybe

Ireland's struggle to extricate itself from the British Empire contributed early and disproportionately to the political vocabulary of the twentieth century: colonial domination and guerrilla resistance, the aspirations of ethnic nationalism and the baleful legacy of partition. So it is fitting—and profoundly relevant beyond Ireland's coastal waters—that the century's last weeks brought a careful but innovative step toward multi-ethnic democracy in Northern Ireland. The new government at Belfast's Stormont Castle, ending twenty-seven years of direct rule from London and seated only thanks to former Senator George Mitchell's assiduous mediation, might seem an unworkable tangle. The new education minister, for instance, is Sinn Fein negotiator and former Irish Republican Army combatant Martin McGuinness; he is to be "advised and assisted" by two unionist assembly members, including Sammy Wilson of Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, which is sworn to wreck the whole Stormont enterprise. But the promise of the Good Friday accords is to turn such sectarian firebrands into conventional pols, dependent on one another to deliver schools and elderly services and street signs.

Far more worrisome is the very compromise that brought the Stormont government to office: Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble's pledge to resign and thus kill the power-sharing arrangement if the IRA doesn't begin handing in arms by February. The IRA had already pledged to cooperate with the internationally supervised disarmament commission. Trimble's threat, well beyond the requirements of the Good Friday process and intended to calm his party's rejectionist faction, sets the stage for a new crisis by giving unionist hard-liners another chance to pull the plug. IRA cooperation will continue only as long as

Gerry Adams and other Sinn Fein leaders can convince reluctant republicans that arms decommissioning is voluntary.

Most US reporting on the new government has misrepresented the unionists' decommissioning demand. Decommissioning has never been a guarantee of long-term peace, because everyone agrees that the IRA could rapidly replace its arsenal. The motives of the decommissioning demand are, depending upon the unionist faction speaking, to humiliate republicans, or to wreck the Good Friday Agreement by delaying its implementation so long that it falls of its own weight or, worse, to provoke a resumption of IRA violence.

Trimble is gambling on a momentum of peace more powerful than the symbolic rhetoric of decommissioning. The power and perks of executive office may prove to be a moderating force for parties that have spent three decades on a soapbox without budget, staff or legal authority. Northern business leaders hope desperately that several months of stable government will bring economically dependent Ulster a share of the Republic's roaring commerce, while labor unions see ground-up economic reconstruction as an opportunity to build social equity into the deal. The Good Friday Agreement doesn't mean that fundamental social issues have been addressed but that there will be a government for activists to pressure instead of an unaccountable national security apparatus and paramilitary leadership.

If the Stormont government survives, it will be in part because the Good Friday process now forces remarkable change not just upon the North but upon the whole island of Ireland. Cross-border institutions will establish all-island policies for health, the environment, human rights and the intertwined economies. The day the Stormont assembly named its ministers, the Republic abandoned its historic claim of sovereignty over the North and incorporated new constitutional language acknowledging Ulster's Protestant traditions as part of a broad Irish identity, ratifying the principle of democratic consent to any change in the North's political status.

How to build social equity and regulate commerce across national boundaries and how to accommodate contending cultures within those boundaries are among the central questions of the global era. Northern Ireland, so long an exhibit of the worst legacies of colonialism, may now be poised to offer some of the answers, but only if the Ulster Assembly is not turned into an ethnic squabbling-pot by rejectionist hard-liners.

Arafat in the Fire

On November 27 twenty Palestinian citizens of the West Bank and Gaza, nearly all of them extremely popular and prominent, issued a biting denunciation of Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority for its "corruption, humiliation and abuse" of the people, its sellout in the "peace process" and its supervision of the deterioration of the Palestinian commonweal to the extent that (with the exception of 200 or so VIPs around Arafat who are doing magnificently) almost 3 million people live in difficulty. The statement blames the 1993 Oslo Agreement for much of this, but it singles out Arafat as the party most responsible for the whole sorry mess. With characteristic subtlety the Authority responded by arresting eight of the twenty, placing two more under house arrest, calling in others for interrogation, brutally raiding their homes and offices, forbidding lawyers and family members to see them—all under orders of Ghazi Jabali, who came to Palestine in 1994, having sat out the *intifada*, and now heads Arafat's main police force.

Who are the protesters? Bassam al-Shakaa is not simply the former mayor of Nablus but an admired hero who lost both legs when an Israeli booby trap exploded in his car in 1980. A fearless champion of independence, he refused to allow Arafat to visit him in 1994, and when I spoke to him on November 29 he told me that despite house arrest he routinely goes out in his wheelchair to buy bread, daring Jabali to arrest him. Rawya al Shawa is a brilliant member of the Legislative Council from Gaza's leading family; her husband is Gaza's mayor. Jabali didn't even try to arrest her, obviously reluctant to take on someone so formidable, and settled for easier targets. Ahmad Kattamesh, who *was* arrested, had just been released after six years in administrative detention in an Israeli prison—the longest incarceration without trial of any Palestinian. Abdel Jawad Saleh, also arrested, is a former PLO minister, member of Arafat's Fatah (like several other signatories) and a council member. Adil Samara and Abdel Sattar Qassem are respected independent academics; Adnan Odeh is head of the Parliamentary Research Unit; Abdel Rahim Kittana is a well-known physician, as is Yasir Abu Saffiyeh, who is also on the board of a grassroots health workers' committee; Arafat now aims to strip the nine legislators of their parliamentary immunity. He may even succeed in getting some of the twenty to back down.

The *New York Times* and a few other mainstream papers picked up the story, but none of them interpreted it for what it is: a tip-of-the-iceberg sign of how unpopular Arafat, his US and Israeli partners and their peace have become—not just among the "Islamic enemies of peace" whom Bill Clinton sees around every corner, or the "Syrian agents" whom Arab clients of the United States love to blame for discordant noises, or "isolated" people like myself, but among ordinary Palestinians and their Arab counterparts. Thomas Friedman of the *Times* attributes the problem to Arab governments that haven't properly educated their populations in "the culture of peace," a fatuous phrase if ever there was one. That "culture" includes Israel's unwillingness to abide by two UN resolutions that stipulate land for peace; the continued expansion of settlements; Israeli control of borders, security, water and Jerusalem; designation of a meaningless Palestinian "state"; denial of return or compensation for the refugees from 1948; celebration of the millennial peace by the Western media; and transfer of more and more money from the World Bank directly into Arafat's greedy little hands.

As I write, hundreds more Palestinians are speaking out, signing petitions, calling for new elections and Arafat's ouster. The scandal is that the chairman, who operates without law or constitution, is being kept around simply to sign this fraudulent peace agreement, meanwhile employing 125,000 people in his security and bureaucratic apparatus, consuming 60 percent of the budget, while spending 2 percent on infrastructure. Especially hated lieu-

tenants of his—lauded in Israel and Washington as brave advocates of peace—have multimillion-dollar villas on the Gaza beachfront (in view of the Jabalya refugee camp, with its 90,000 people and open sewers). Their children and relatives run lucrative monopolies and have Israeli bank accounts in which to squirrel away their money. Unemployment fluctuates between 20 and 40 percent; demolitions and land expropriations continue unimpeded; and Israel's "peacemaking" Prime Minister Ehud Barak has increased military and settlement spending beyond even Netanyahu's.

The combined talents of Jonathan Swift and Evelyn Waugh couldn't have invented anything more absurd than the current peace juggernaut. It will certainly hurtle forward but just as certainly bring more instability and bloodshed. Yet neither the state of Israel nor Western left/liberals seem willing to face the obvious, as if the word "peace" had hypnotized them into stupefaction. Palestinians and Israelis are too politicized and savvy a pair of peoples to be fooled for long by their cowardly leaders. The latest protest should awaken people to what has been happening all along in pursuit of de facto apartheid. In the meantime, stay tuned for more until Arafat is finally removed, as he most certainly will be once he has fulfilled his purpose. Then the upheaval may be too great to stop.

For the present, politically active and independent Palestinians from the occupied territories, Israel and all the refugee populations are planning an international conference. One hopes such an initiative will at last allow Palestinians to represent themselves, putting forward an alternative peace process, democratic elections and an outline for effective representative institutions.

EDWARD W. SAID

CALVIN TRILLIN

One Problem of Bradley's Candidacy Solved

The last remaining superpower
Might get a leader who would tower
Above a smallish premier of Japan.
The Third World wouldn't be euphoric
At evidence (though metaphoric)
That global domination is our plan.

All foreign leaders love to stop
For that historic photo-op
That shows the world they've made a White House visit.
But what if Bradley is the guy
Who's posing with some tiny Thai?
That isn't very diplomatic, is it?

So, let's say Bradley wins the race.
We may not want to keep in place
The way that foreign leaders now are greeted.
The standing shot would cease to be.
The visitor will come to tea,
So both the President and he are seated.

Al Gore: Omega Man?

TO: Naomi W.
FROM: Chicky Kimmel
Semiotics and Semantics Division
Gore 2000

Naomi, you are absolutely right. The erroneous and simplistic news reports that you are trying to turn Al Gore from a Beta Male to an Alpha Male raise the question: Are there only two kinds of men in the world—the conquest-oriented, chest-thumping Alpha Man and the passive-aggressive Beta Man, who, one way or another, supports or undermines the Alpha?

As you requested, I've taken a deeper look at the other twenty-two letters of the Greek alphabet for image-repositioning ideas. We can rule out most of the letters right off the bat. Pi Man—Simple Simon might vote for him, but nobody else will. It sounds too much like a Seinfeldian baker. Upsilon and Epsilon just sound silly, as does Mu. Mu Man. Isn't that the nickname of the morning drive-time DJ in Milwaukee? At best, it's a vanity license plate for a dairy farmer. Omicron Man does indeed have "a nice technological feel" to it, but it comes from the Greek letter O, which looks like a big zero and, like Iota Man, sounds like the name of a very tiny Superhero. Al Gore, Eta Man. Leno and Letterman would have a field day with the cannibalism jokes, and I don't even want to speculate about what Howard Stern would do with it.

Sigmoid is too snakelike, and the phrase it gives its name to, sigmoid flexure, refers to "the contracted and crooked part of the colon immediately above the rectum," according to Merriam-Webster. Well, I don't have to tell you we already have far too many of those in Washington and more than a couple on the presidential primary trail.

Theta gives its name to the theta wave, which is a high-amplitude brain pattern, so it stands to reason that the Theta Man would be a real thinker, a brainiac. While this sounds good on paper, twitchy, high-strung eggheads rarely project a good leader image, spending as much time as they do pondering Fermat's Theorem, muttering to themselves and collecting their toenail clippings in large jars for future cloning experiments they plan to get to just as soon as they finish calculating Pi to the 20 billionth decimal and cleaning up the garage. Plus, nobody can understand a damn thing they say. We should stay as far away from this one as possible. Al already has too much of a rep as a geek.

Psi Man: This popular Greek letter has come to symbolize a range of paranormal phenomena, including mind-reading, psychokinesis, precognitive dreams and psychic healing. Tell me, has Al ever healed a sick person through sheer force of will? Bent a spoon with his mind or had a verifiable vision prefiguring a great world event? Imagine how handy this would be in negotiating peace treaties and trade deals, not to mention heading off wars,

preventing deaths in disasters and subverting the entire population to our will once our man takes power. Get back to me on this one. This image has real promise if Al has any talent in this area.

The country might not be ready for a Lambda Man at the helm, though one can't help wondering how different the world might be if all the Alpha Men would go chop wood and build things and let the Lambda Men run the world for a while. Statistically speaking, it's likely to lead to a world that is smarter, more artistic, sensitive, sexier and stylish with tastier cuisine and more provocative theater. A *Will & Grace* kind of world. I could live with it, but I don't think this is the right image for Al or for Tipper, do you?

If the paranoid cultists and survivalists are right, and the apocalypse is right around the corner, who do we want leading the nation through the pestilence, famine and plagues of locusts? An Omega Man. Erase the image of moviedom's Omega Man, Charlton Heston, from your mind for a moment, and focus instead on the message of the Omega Man, the solitary hero, Renaissance Man and tough survivor with a strong heart who rebuilds humanity. Of all the presidential candidates, not one has that Omega male image. George W. reminds me somewhat of a smug Omega Tau Mu Man I knew in college who, despite pulling down Cs and Ds and once passing out in his underwear in a chapel birdbath, nevertheless managed to get elected president of his fraternity and then took a cushy job in his father's business after graduation. But there the Omega resemblance ends. Al is closer to the ideal, but not close enough—yet. Of course, we at Gore 2000 see the smoldering, strong but sensitive hero beneath Al's wooden, internal combustion–pondering exterior, but it may be too much of a leap for the public to make without help, given the trouncing he's been taking in the press recently. Position him as the Omega Man without the proper setup, and it's Dukakis in a tank all over again.

Perhaps what we need, really need, is a Nu Man, as befits a new century and a new millennium. Give Susan Faludi a call. If you two Alpha Women can turn Al into a Nu Man, maybe he'll have an Iota's chance in 2000. We in the S&S Division are pulling for you, and for our man Al, and we remain,

At your service,
Chicky

SPARKLE HAYTER

Sparkle Hayter is an Omega Woman who writes satirical murder mysteries. Her most recent book is The Last Manly Man *(Morrow).*

GREIDER, IVINS, ON BOARD

We welcome William Greider to the magazine. Greider will be heading our National Affairs department and writing regularly on national affairs and the global economy. He has been the National Affairs editor at *Rolling Stone* since 1982 and is the author of several bestselling books on politics and the economy. Also, this month *Nation* contributing editor Molly Ivins will begin "Shrub Watch," a regular feature on George W. Bush, as part of our Election 2000 coverage.

In Fact...

THE CRUCIFIXION OF LARRY KLAYMAN

The Nation is part of a Jewish cabal that includes the *New York Times*, *Slate*, *Salon*, the *Washington Post*, *The New Yorker* and *National Law Journal*. That is apparently the view of Larry Klayman, the litigious right-wing lawyer who has filed forty-three lawsuits against various Clintonites. In an article posted on the Web recently, Klayman charged that there has been a pattern to the huge amount of bad press he has received—it was all written by Jews. One piece of evidence: Washington editor David Corn's profile of him ("See Larry. See Larry Sue," June 29, 1998). In that article, Corn reviewed Klayman's past as an attorney and noted that Klayman—who was a regular on the talking-head circuit during Monicagate—had been sanctioned by judges for misrepresenting facts and for poor legal performances and that many people who had worked with him considered him overly litigious and a pain in the ass. Other journalists—the *Post*'s David Segal, *Slate*'s Jacob Weisberg, the *Times*'s Frank Rich—have produced unflattering articles on Klayman, and he has sued several of them (though not Corn) and claimed to be the victim of the "liberal Jewish intelligentsia." The Knight-Ridder newspapers, *Newsweek*, *The Nation* and *The New Republic* all part of the same pro-Clinton LJI conspiracy? Paranoia, perhaps, but still scurrilous. Klayman, who calls himself "a Jew who believes in Christ," has adopted the scoundrel's refuge: Blame the Jews. No doubt, when the Clinton era fades and the TV bookers stop calling, he'll pin that on the Jews, too.

LETTERS FROM LORI

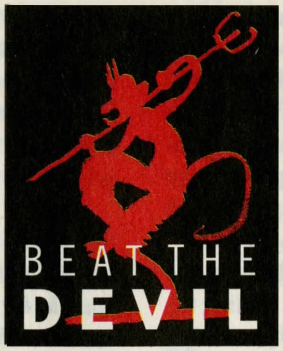
Daniel Radosh writes: According to my old friend Lori Berenson, life in a Peruvian prison is even worse than I had thought. Exactly four years ago, Lori was arrested in Lima, where she had been working for nonviolent political reform. She was charged, preposterously, with treason and convicted by a secret military tribunal with no semblance of due process. Maintaining her innocence, Lori was sentenced to life in prison. I've known Lori since junior high when we passed notes behind the teacher's back. Today we correspond only in Spanish so her guards can monitor what we say. She is not allowed to write much about her circumstances, which are appalling, or her health, which is deteriorating, but it wouldn't be her style to complain. In her most recent letter, however, Lori does write of a new affront to her dignity. Her prison wing has been given radio privileges, which, to her horror, means disco music: "I can put up with this regime of isolation and confinement," she says, "but nobody said when they sentenced me that I was going to have to listen to 'Won't you take me to Funky Town.'" After four years, Lori's sense of humor helps keep her strong. Reading between the lines, I know she's counting on our sense of outrage to set her free. For more information and to learn how you can help, visit www.freelori.org.

NEWS OF THE WEAK IN REVIEW

Danielle Crittenden in the *Wall Street Journal* praises the Harry Potter books because they show "a boy's way of thinking." This is remarkable, she writes, "when you consider that the novels are written by a single mother of a young daughter who was on the dole.... You might have expected something politically correct from her—the same tale, perhaps, but with a heroine at the center of it." You know those welfare mothers—radical feminists, all of 'em!

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Trade Wars, Trade Truths



Here's a might-have-been for you. All day long, Tuesday, November 30, the street warriors in downtown Seattle vindicated their pledge to shut down the first day of the WTO talks, in itself a rousing victory. Earth-First!ers chained together, Ruckus Society agitators, anarchists and other courageous troublemakers sustained baton charges, tear gas and rubber bullets, hopefully awaiting reinforcement from the big labor rally taking place around the Space Needle, some fifteen blocks from downtown. As the morning ticked away and the cops got rougher, the street warriors kept asking, "Where are the labor marchers?" expecting that at any moment thousands of machinists and Teamsters would reinforce them in the desperate fray.

But the legions of labor never showed. Suppose they had. Suppose there had been 30,000 to 40,000 protesters around the Convention Center, vowing to keep it shut all week. Would the cops have charged such a force? Downtown might have been held all night, and perhaps President Bill would have been forced to make his welcoming address from SeaTac airport or from the sanctuary of his ardent funder, Boeing. That would have been a humiliation for imperial power of historic proportions, like the famous scene the Wobblies organized to greet Woodrow Wilson after the Seattle general strike had been broken in 1919—workers and their families lining the streets block after block, standing in furious silence as his motorcade passed by. Wilson had his stroke not long after.

This might-have-been is not posed out of churlishness but to encourage a sense of realism about the struggle against the trading arrangements now operative in the WTO. Take organized labor, as embodied in the high command of the AFL-CIO. Back in February of this year the message came down from AFL HQ that rallying in Seattle was fine, but the plan wasn't to shut down the works; it was to maneuver from inside. No surprise. Institutional labor is not structured to be the advance guard of a social movement. At the end of the day it wants what it has always wanted: in James Hoffa's phrase, a place at the table.

And what does this particular seat at the table turn out to be? In Seattle the labor chieftains were willing to settle for a token footstool, in the shape of a working group that will, in the next round of WTO talks, be sensitive to labor and environmental concerns. On the current schedule, the present trade round will ponder the working group's role and make recommendations for the next round...suddenly it's 2015 before the group is up and running.

Gerry Shea, John Sweeney's assistant in charge of government affairs and the man running the show on this from 16th Street in Washington, is dedicated to staying tight with Clinton, Gore et al., and listens closely to his friend David Smith, head of the AFL's public policy department and a zealous neoliberal free-trader.

There are unions—the autoworkers, steelworkers, Teamsters, machinists, UNITE—that have rank-and-file members passionately concerned about "free trade" when, as in the case of the Teamsters, it means Mexican truck drivers coming over the border at $2 an hour. But how many of these unions are truly ready to act in world terms, just as capitalists do? The steel workers were the only labor group that, as part of the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, stood with the street warriors in downtown that Tuesday morning (and later fought with the cops and endured tear gas themselves). On that same day, November 30, the *Moscow Tribune* ran a story reporting that the Clinton Administration has effectively stopped all cold-rolled steel imports from Russia by imposing penalty duties of 178 percent. Going into winter those Russian working families at Severstal, Novolipetsk and Magnitogorsk are facing tougher times than ever. The *Moscow Tribune*'s reporter, John Helmer, wasn't in doubt why: "Gore must try to preserve steel company and steelworker support."

As the preceding item suggests, there's no such thing as "free trade." The present argument is not about trade, which (except for maybe a few bioregionalists in my own dear home of Ecotopia) all favor in some measure. The argument is about how trade is to be controlled, how wealth is to be made and distributed. The WTO is simply an expression of the present balance of economic power on the world held by the big corporations, which see the present WTO round as an opportunity to lock in their gains, to enlist its formal backing in their ceaseless quest for cheaper labor and places to dump their poisons. So ours is a worldwide guerrilla war, of publicity, harassment, obstructionism. It's nothing simple, like "Stop the War" in the 1960s. Capitalism could stop that war and move on. American capitalism can't stop trade (on its terms) and survive on any terms it cares for.

We truly don't want a place at the table to "reform" world trade rules, because if we get one, then sooner or later we'll be standing alongside Global Exchange's Medea Benjamin proclaiming that Nike, which pays its workers less than 20 cents an hour, has made "an astounding transformation." Capitalism plays only by the rules it wrote in the first place. The day the WTO stipulates the phase-in of a Third World minimum wage of $3 an hour is the day the corporations destroy it and move on. Justice in world trade is by definition a revolutionary and utopian aim.

Publicity, harassment, obstructionism... Take the opportunities as they come. Think always in terms of international solidarity. Find targets of opportunity. South Africa forces domestic licensing of AIDS drugs. Solidarity. The Europeans don't want bioengineered crops. Seize on that opportunity. Make demands in favor of real free trade. Get rid of copyright and patent restrictions and fees imposed on developing nations. Dean Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research reckons that Mexico paid the industrial nations $4.2 billion in direct royalties, fees and indirect costs last year. Let's have real free trade in professional services, with standardization in courses and tests so that kids from Mexico, India and elsewhere can come here and compete with our lawyers, accountants and doctors. Challenge the system at the level of its public pretensions. A guerrilla war, without illusions or respectable ambitions. ■

PAUL ROBESON JR.

The Paul Robeson Files

On the morning of March 27, 1961, Paul Robeson was found in the bathroom of his Moscow hotel suite after having slashed his wrists with a razor blade following a wild party that had raged there the preceding night. His blood loss was not yet severe, and he recovered rapidly. However, both the raucous party and his "suicide attempt" remain unexplained, and for the past twenty years the US government has withheld documents that I believe hold the answer to the question: *Was this a drug-induced suicide attempt?*

Heavily censored documents I have already received under the Freedom of Information Act confirm that my father was under intense surveillance by the FBI and the CIA in 1960 and 1961, because he was planning to visit China and Cuba, in violation of US passport restrictions. The FBI files also reveal a suspicious concern over my father's health, beginning in 1955.

A meeting I had in 1998 adds further grounds for suspicion. In June of that year I met Dr. Eric Olson in New York, and we were both struck by the similarities between the cases of our respective fathers. On November 28, 1953, Olson's father, Dr. Frank Olson, a scientist working with the CIA's top-secret MK-ULTRA "mind control" program, allegedly "jumped" through the glass of a thirteenth-floor hotel window and fell to his death. CIA documents have confirmed that a week earlier Olson had been surreptitiously drugged with LSD at a high-level CIA meeting. It is expected that a New York grand jury will soon reveal whether it believes Olson was murdered by the CIA because of his qualms about the work he was doing. MK-ULTRA poisoned foreign and domestic "enemies" with LSD to induce mental breakdown and/or suicide. Olson's drugging suggested a CIA motive similar to the possible one in my father's case—concern about the target's planned course of action.

In this context, the fact that Richard Helms was CIA chief of operations at the time of my father's 1961 "suicide attempt" has sinister implications. Helms was also responsible for the MK-ULTRA program. In 1967 a former CIA agent to whom I promised anonymity told me in a private conversation that my father was the subject of high-level concern and that Helms and Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles discussed him in a meeting in 1955.

The events leading to my father's "suicide attempt" began when, alarmed by intense surveillance in London, he departed abruptly for Moscow alone. His intention was to visit Havana at Fidel Castro's personal invitation and return home to join the civil rights movement. Since the date set by the CIA for the Bay of Pigs invasion fell only four weeks after his arrival in Moscow, the CIA had a strong motive for preventing his travel to Havana.

My father manifested no depressive symptoms at the time, and when my mother and I spoke to him in the hospital soon after his "suicide" attempt, he was lucid and able to recount his experience clearly. The party in his suite had been imposed on him under false pretenses, by people he knew but without the knowledge of his official hosts. By the time he realized this, his suite had been invaded by a variety of anti-Soviet people whose behavior had become so raucous that he locked himself in his bedroom. His description of that setting, I later came to learn, matched the conditions prescribed by the CIA for drugging an unsuspecting victim, and the physical-psychological symptoms he experienced matched those of an LSD trip.

My Russian being fluent, I confirmed my father's story by interviewing his official hosts, his doctors, the organizers of the party, several attendees and a top Soviet official. However, I could not determine whether my father's blood tests had shown any trace of drugs, whether an official investigation was in progress or why his hosts were unaware of the party. The Soviet official confirmed that known "anti-Soviet people" had attended the party.

By the time I returned to New York in early June, my father appeared to me to be fully recovered. However, when my parents returned to London several weeks later, my father became anxious, and he and my mother returned to Moscow. There his well-being was again restored, and in September they once more went back to London, where my father almost immediately suffered a relapse. My mother, acting on the ill-considered advice of a close family friend, allowed a hastily recommended English physician to sign my father into the Priory psychiatric hospital near London.

My father's records from the Priory, which I obtained only recently, raise the suspicion that he may have been subjected to the CIA's MK-ULTRA "mind depatterning" technique, which combined massive electroconvulsive therapy with drug therapy. On the day of his admission, my mother was pressured into consenting to ECT, and the treatment began just thirty-six hours later. In May 1963 I learned that my father had received fifty-four ECT treatments, and I arranged his transfer to a clinic in East Berlin.

Certain key CIA documents that have been withheld, in whole or in part, would probably shed additional light on these events. Among the questions to be answered are:

§ Why was Robeson's health such a concern to the government, and why is the FBI's information on it still being withheld?

§ Was the CIA implicated in my father's 1961 "suicide attempt"?

§ Did the CIA, in collusion with the British intelligence service, orchestrate his subjection to "mind depatterning"?

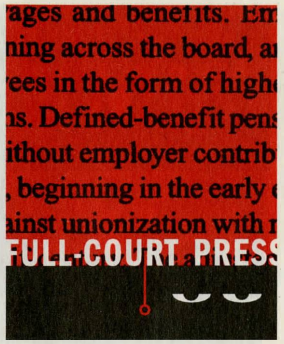
The idea that thirty-eight years after the original events occurred, the release of these documents could endanger national security should be rejected. On the contrary, the release of the information will improve national security by helping to protect the American people from criminal abuse by the intelligence agencies that are supposed to defend them. ■

Paul Robeson Jr. is an author and lecturer. Patricia J. Williams is on leave.

ERIC ALTERMAN

Blowjobs and Snow Jobs

If the sixties were the age of the war reporter and the seventies the age of the investigative reporter, then the late nineties may go down in history as the age of the blowjob reporter. Well, OK, that's an exaggeration. But when it comes to blowjob reporting, exaggeration is OK. So is almost everything else. To hell with evidence, objectivity and all that stuff they teach in journalism school. Ever since the word "Lewinsky" entered the lexicon, nothing makes an editor's pencil perk up quite so much as the word "oral" next to the word "sex."



The *Washington Post* has twice succumbed to fellatio fever in recent months. One of its best columnists noted that Gore adviser Naomi Wolf "brags in her book 'Promiscuities,' [that] she was rather adroit" in the oral arts as a teenager. This is slander—Wolf "brags" about no such thing. She does say that as a young teenager she listened to her girlfriends' older sisters brag about their abilities, but she makes no claims for her own prowess. When I contacted the columnist in question, he admitted that he had never seen the book and was quoting someone who made this claim on *Imus*, who in turn had not read the book but had seen it "in a wire story." When the subject is blowjobs (or Naomi Wolf), that's good enough.

An even more egregious example of journalistic promiscuity occurred in the *Post* this past summer when Laura Sessions Stepp wrote a lurid front-page story titled PARENTS ARE ALARMED BY AN UNSETTLING NEW FAD IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS: ORAL SEX. Apparently, in the "upper-income community of elegant brick homes, leafy sycamores and stone walls," some teenagers were said to be fooling around. I write "said to be" because while the story contained any number of hysterical pronouncements by people with no particular knowledge of the incidents described, it was light enough on evidence to float on air.

The *Post* report was inspired by a meeting at which a school principal informed shocked parents that their daughters were "at risk." (The sons, presumably, were at risk only of getting lots of high fives from their buddies.) According to the principal, as many as "a dozen girls and two or three boys had been engaging in oral sex through most of the school year. The teens, 13 and 14 years old, were getting together at parties in one another's homes."

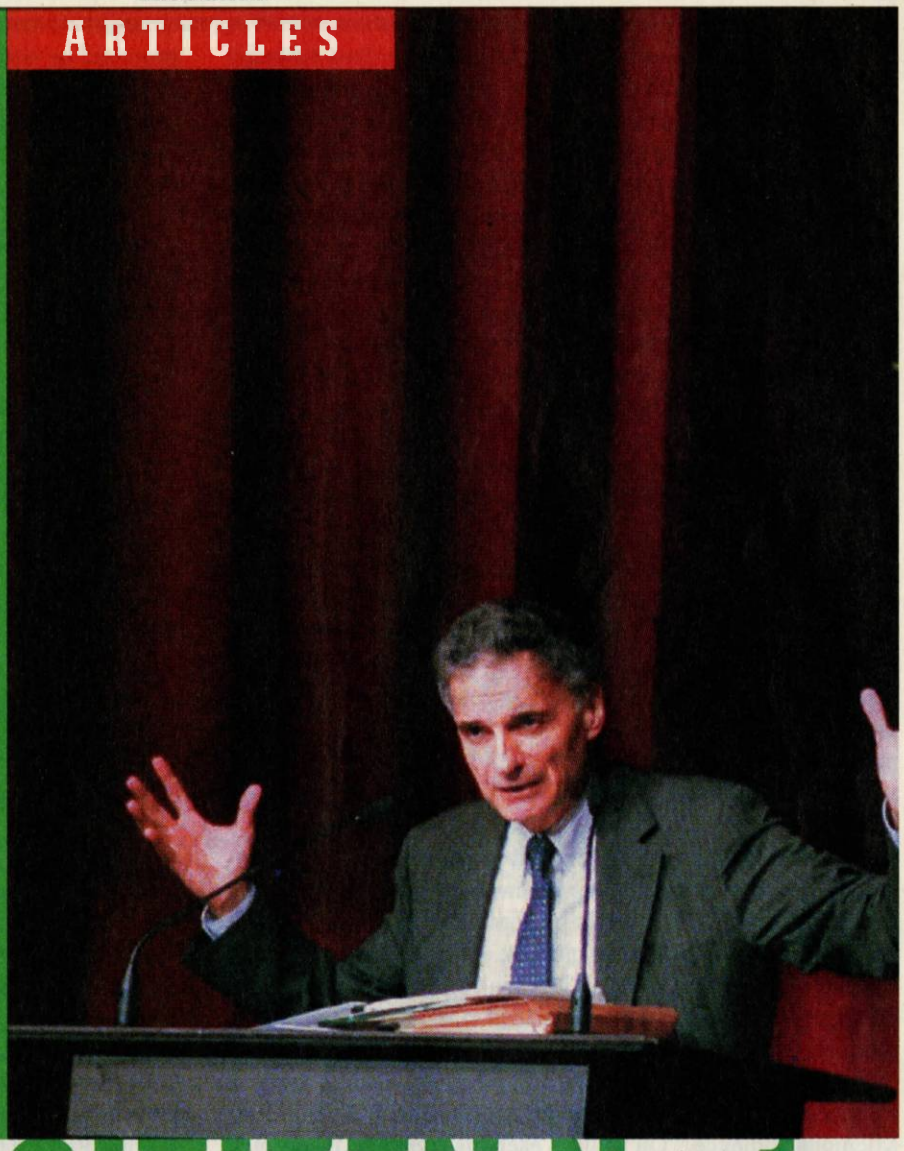
Two or three boys and a dozen girls? Does something sound fishy already? I mean, who are these guys? Well, it doesn't really matter. After all, nowhere in the story are these numbers corroborated. (Also, nowhere does the reporter mention that her son attended the school.) Stepp quotes a Mr. Michael Schaffer, a health education professional in Prince George's County, Virginia, who said, "It's now the expected minimum behavior." But unless this school has fewer than thirty kids, the vast majority appear to be defying that expectation with remarkable fortitude. Beth Knobbs, a director of pupil services in Talbot County, observes that "adolescents as young as 11 are not prepared for its emotional repercussions." Tough quote; too bad no one in this story, or anywhere else, for that matter, is arguing the contrary.

Deep into her story, Stepp shows that she knows next to nothing about just how many blowjobs are being given to whom when she admits that "there's no way to know the proportion of younger teens who are behaving similarly." The story quotes exactly one teenage girl who admits to having done the dirty deed. In this great newspaper, we are treated almost exclusively to second- and thirdhand accounts from sources like "a boy who just finished ninth grade at a private school in Baltimore," "the student grapevine" and "two boys who ran with the Williamsburg crowd in Arlington."

Don't get me wrong. Family newspapers should be covering the changing sexual mores of young people. But they should do a better job than, say, Matt Drudge does with President Clinton's imaginary love children. Much of the media's fellatio fixation derives—as do so many trends in media today—from the influence of the Internet. Online editors, who are able to track with alarming precision the number of readers each story attracts, have discovered that nothing pulls in readers like the prospect of a vicarious blowjob. *Salon*, whose editors claim to be addicted to daily hit counts, is a trailblazer in this category. Again, I'm not complaining about the subject matter. Hiring the eminently sensible "sexpert" Susie Bright as a columnist to write about her specialty is a fine idea (particularly when compared with her lunatic companions, Camille Paglia and David Horowitz). But one can see the Web magazine straining to bring home a blowjob no matter how far afield it must stray. Recently, for instance, a silly item about Alanis Morrisette's sex life discovered in a gossip column in an Ottawa newspaper led a writer to wonder whether any of the bestselling artist's "conquests include going down on a theater companion" as she sings about in "You Oughta Know." Another *Salon* story titled "Drop 'em, babe!" found a California freelance writer touting endless blowjobs as the ticket to a happy marriage. "Some friends think I fail to please my husband by not preparing his favorite foods, even using recipes from his mother. Each describes the appreciative, loving look on her man's face when he comes home to a table laid out with these special dinners.... How many men actually moan over a rib roast?" she wrote in not-so-*Good-Housekeeping*-like prose.

Well, obviously, journalism will never be the same since that fateful night in early 1998 when the august Ted Koppel bantered back and forth with his correspondent over the President's alleged assertion that "oral sex is not adultery." Koppel and the rest of the media had little choice but to obsess over sex during impeachment, but in the rush to sexploitation since, reporters have gotten careless. It's a bad sign when even respected journalistic institutions like the *Washington Post* are publishing shoddily sourced stories that exploit parents' fears and readers' prurient interest in sex stories about young people. Inevitably, these have the effect of leaving reporter and editor looking a great deal sillier than any two teenagers, alone in the dark, doing what teenagers have done since time immemorial. ■

ARTICLES



PUBLIC CITIZEN No. 1

Is Ralph Nader On a Drive to the White House?

by MICAH L. SIFRY

Not long ago, I was driving home from my office, fiddling with the radio dial, when I came across a familiar voice. It was Ralph Nader, consumer advocate extraordinaire, taped before a live audience at the Midwest Renewable Energy Association's fair last June in rural Amherst, Michigan. Nader, as those who have heard him know well, always demands a lot from his listeners as he describes how corporate power is destroying democracy. So it was more than a pleasant surprise to hear Ralph show a lighter touch. The audience laughed again and again at his jokes and asides.

Decrying the shrinking of the TV soundbite on the evening news from an average of eighteen seconds in the seventies to just six seconds today, he predicted the coming of the "soundbark." "When they say, 'Mr. Nader, what do you think of the latest Federal Reserve interest rate [hike]?' I'll go like this: 'Nyahh.'" Assailing corporations for turning Washington into an "accounts receivable," he called for the creation of a "taxpayer appreciation day," when big business would give thanks for all the subsidies and giveaways it has received from the public till. Citing the ancient Greek physicians' maxim that "a human body is more likely to tolerate colliding against a flat, yielding surface than a sharp, cutting edge," he chided General Motors for failing to design their cars conscientiously, pointing out that car makers took decades to install seatbelts even though they had been invented for pilots in World War I.

Throughout the speech, Nader reinforced a serious message: We need a renewal of civic culture to combat the dominant corporate culture. For a while now he's been effectively conveying the point by stealing a page from antipoverty advocates who put the emphasis on children. "More and more, corporations are raising our kids," he declares. Companies now start marketing directly at children as early as age 2. The average youngster, he points out, watches thirty hours of television a week, with three pernicious effects: They learn that violence is a preferred solution to life's problems, they are taught to value cheap sensuality in everything from sex to self-image to food, and they become addicted to entertainment that shortens their attention span. "What is wrong with a society that allows its most precious resource to be exploited?" he asks. "If there was a child molester in the neighborhood, would it be enough to tell parents to lock the doors?"

When we "grow up corporate," as he puts it, we never stop to think that any of this could be different—that we could control the resources of our commonwealth like the public airwaves and lands, that we could demand safer and less-polluting products, that we could have public financing of elections so money doesn't nullify our votes, that labor could win strengthened rights to organize, that consumers could band together to challenge monopolistic practices and industries, that poverty among children could be eliminated. But despite what we're up against, Nader is the ultimate anticynic. "If you were in a big lifeboat and the ship had just sunk and there's a big storm coming and you had to get to the island to save everybody in the lifeboat, and here you are rowing away and you look back and there's some guys who aren't rowing, they're listening to some music on their radio, what do you think you'd say?" he asked his Michigan audience. "Oh well, to each his own? You'd say, pick up those oars!" The crowd cheered.

Nader's message is more relevant than ever. The question is whether his emerging campaign will be, too.

For all his accolades—*Life* has called Nader one of the 100 most influential people of the twentieth century—few realize that he is more than a consumer advocate. His call for a revival of civic culture represents a full-blown philosophy of life. "This is truly one of life's greatest gratifications," he says, "to work a democracy into a strengthened posture for the greatest good for the greatest number of people." In this age of hypermaterialism and shallow politics, Nader's message is more relevant than ever.

The question is whether his emerging 2000 presidential campaign will be, too.

The official word from Nader, who was the Green Party's 1996 candidate and who got nearly 700,000 votes running a non-campaign that confused and angered many supporters, is that he has not made up his mind about running again and won't announce his intentions until January. Speaking at a meeting of the Association of State Green Parties last June in Connecticut, he promised he wouldn't limit his fundraising as severely this time. And he said he would make at least three major appearances in every state where he is on the ballot before next summer is through, with more selective targeting of key states in the fall—"if I run."

In an interview in mid-November Nader continued to maintain that no final decision had been made. But according to both a senior Green activist who met with him at length last June and a former Nader's Raider still close to him, Nader is privately saying he will run. "I'm not using the word 'if' because I've heard him be definitive," says the first source. "It's not if but when. The question becomes what kind of campaign because it takes two to tango. During our meeting, we addressed some of the issues from '96: Is he going to run an active campaign, and will he work closely with the Greens on a daily basis? He said yes and yes." Two concrete indications of Nader's intent: He allowed the California Green Party to place his name on its March 2000 primary ballot (a decision that had to be made by this November), and he convinced Native American activist Winona LaDuke to again be his vice presidential candidate after she had announced that she didn't want to run again.

Nader's goal: to get at least 5 percent of the vote. That's the threshold third parties have to cross in order to receive a proportional share of public funding for the next presidential campaign. The $12.6 million coming to the Reform Party's presidential candidate for the 2000 general election was triggered by Ross Perot's 8 percent showing in 1996. If Nader and the Greens succeed, it would guarantee the Green Party millions in public funds for 2004, which would give a huge boost to lower-level Green candidates as well. It would also raise the party to the same level as the Reform Party in the national eye. And it's not an unrealistic goal, as he got just under 1 percent of the vote in 1996, when only one out of seven voters knew he was running.

Not waiting for a formal announcement, a core group—including Carol Miller, co-chair of the New Mexico Green Party and recent Congressional candidate; Ronnie Dugger, founder of the Alliance for Democracy; Mike Feinstein, a Green member of the Santa Monica City Council; and Carl Mayer, a former independent selectman from Princeton, New Jersey, who ran for Congress last year first as a Democrat and then as a Green—is already hard at work on an unauthorized basis, having formed a National Committee to Draft Ralph Nader for President, opened a bank account and set up a Web site at www.Nader2k.org to sign up volunteers and raise money. "What I want is to build a Green Party," says Miller. "I don't think we can guarantee that he is going to win a four-way race," she adds with a laugh, "but if Bush implodes, anything is possible. I want someone who knows how to build a movement—people's movements, citizens' movements, bringing in young people. That's worth a lot to me, to have something after the election."

Does this make any sense? It's always made a certain sense. Nader is one of the few progressives with enough public standing to enter the celebrity sweepstakes of presidential politics. And Ralph is to backbone what most politicians are to waffles. His

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Micah L. Sifry, a former Nation *editor, is writing a book about the prospects for America's leading third parties. A version of this article also appears in* Salon *magazine (www.salon.com).*

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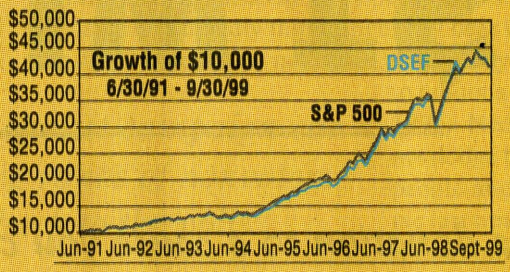

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message cuts across the simple labels of left and right, capable of reaching conservative home-schoolers anxious about rampant commercialism, small-business people angry about special privileges for big corporations, unionists upset about jobs disappearing overseas and anybody who knows someone whose life was saved by an airbag, as well as hard-core enviros, consumer activists and other progressives. He retains a strong following among seniors who have followed his whole career, and he still draws a respectable showing at his many campus speaking gigs. Two months ago I saw Nader speak to an active group of ex-Perotistas at the American Reform Party's national convention in Washington. At the end, they gave him a standing ovation, with several people chanting, "Run, Ralph, run!"

The time certainly seems ripe for an independent progressive-populist campaign. Three converging forces—the public's continuing dissatisfaction with the major parties, the growing power of disaffected citizens to band together quickly via the Internet and the twenty-four-hour-a-day need of our tabloidized media system for fresh stories to tell—have combined to boost third-party politics closer to the political mainstream. That, plus the unexpected election of Jesse Ventura as Minnesota governor last fall, has made the impossible seem possible. Polls show that anywhere between a third and a half of the public would like to see more choices on the ballot than just George W. Bush and Al Gore. And if all the reporting on Pat Buchanan's and Donald Trump's Reform Party moves is any indication, Nader is likely to draw a good deal of free media attention as well.

A strong progressive-populist campaign can reach into the growing ranks of nonvoters and bring them back to the polls.

In addition, Buchanan's decision to seek the Reform Party's nomination may shake up the presidential election in an unexpected way. "The Reform Party's nomination of Buchanan would open up more space for a polar opposite, like Ralph, to get engaged," says Steve Cobble, the former political director of the Rainbow Coalition. First, if Buchanan is indeed the Reform nominee, siphoning hard-right votes away from the Republican candidate, it takes some of the edge off the argument that Nader would merely "spoil" the Democrats' presidential hopes. Second, an aggressive Nader-Green campaign could offer a clearheaded alternative to Buchanan's xenophobic populism. For while the two men may agree about who the villains are in the trade wars, they disagree about many of the solutions. Not only could Nader inject critically needed arguments into the national debate; his candidacy would inevitably put pressure on Gore's and Bradley's instinctive centrism.

Finally, there is a pragmatic logic to a serious Nader candidacy that could even appeal to some Democrats—at least the Congressional branch of the party. A strong progressive-populist campaign can reach very effectively into the growing ranks of nonvoters, who are disproportionately lower on the socio-economic ladder, and bring them back to the polls. That is the lesson of victories like Paul Wellstone's in 1990 and 1996, Bernie Sanders's in 1990, and even last year's Washington State initiative to raise the minimum wage to the highest level in the country. In every case, voter turnout rose significantly.

Pollster John Zogby, who has built his reputation on figuring out who is likely to vote, says, "You will see an increase in those who call themselves liberal or progressive if there's a credible Green Party candidate [in the race]. For example, that was seen in New York with Ralph Nader in 1996." And once those voters are in the polling booth, they are likely to vote Democratic down-ballot. Indeed, Democratic Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico has credited his narrow 1994 re-election to the turnout boost from the Greens' gubernatorial candidate, Roberto Mondragon, who got 10 percent of the vote that year. For these reasons, Congressional Democrats hoping to retake the House might think twice about attacking a Nader bid.

And yet, the first thing many people, including sympathetic activists, undoubtedly think when they hear that Nader is running for President is: not again. Especially after his failure to mount a real campaign in 1996. Nader himself does not dodge the charge. "More people might have voted for me last time but didn't know if I was running," he told me. "We weren't on the ballot in many states," he adds (twenty-two plus Washington, DC, to be precise). "And there wasn't a campaign." The implication: This time will be different.

For starters, there won't be any shyness about filing as a candidate with the Federal Election Commission or raising money. While several decisions have yet to be made—about whether to cap the size of contributions à la Jerry Brown's $100 limit in '92, or whether to make the effort to obtain matching funds during the primary period—sources close to Nader say they hope to "break through seven figures" easily, which would allow them to hire full-time regional organizers and assist with ballot access. A larger budget to pay for campaign ads is under consideration, though Nader is very concerned not to let the fundraising tail wag the dog. "I want to see volunteer-hour-raisers, not just money-raisers," he told me. He will also resist releasing his tax returns—a voluntary step not required by law—arguing that the FEC's financial disclosure forms are more than sufficient and that income taxes ought to remain private.

Not all Greens are united around Nader's emerging campaign. One criticism comes from those who question whether he is really their best messenger. They remember his telling columnist William Safire that he didn't want to get into "gonadal politics," and they complain that his anticorporate focus gives short shrift to other parts of the Green platform that affirm feminism and gay rights. According to Steve Schmidt, chairman of the Greens' platform committee, when the issue of his statement to Safire came up last June at a national meeting of Green state parties, Nader professed his commitment to the continuing struggle against discrimination and for civil rights. But "whether that satisfies some of the people who feel the Green candidate should go more into that issue remains to be seen," Schmidt says. "Some people think we should be an amalgam of single issues writ large. But the Green Party national platform, which Ralph is on record as strongly supporting, is comprehensive. I think Ralph is right to focus on the core of the platform—reviving civic democracy, a broad-based political movement built from the grassroots

and citizen participation." Still, with Nader focusing mainly on topping 5 percent, it's likely he'll try to stick as much as possible to his civic versus corporate agenda in ways that some progressives will undoubtedly find alienating.

A second, more muted concern among some Greens is that Nader has waited too long to announce his candidacy, limiting the potential party-building effect of his running. "It's a huge missed opportunity," says one activist who worked very hard on the 1996 campaign but is sitting this one out. "The point is not Ralph or the presidential campaign; the point is to build the Green Party—to bring in new people. If you want to fundamentally change the landscape, you need people coming in earlier who will raise funds, hold meetings and learn skills so they will be in for the long haul. If he had announced two years before the election, we would have had a great opportunity to build a blossoming infrastructure. Instead, they're going to have to hire petitioners." On the other hand, people close to Nader point out that the Greens can still build their own locals with or without his official candidacy. In fact, while not a candidate, Nader has made several trips to help Green candidates get elected in locales ranging from New Jersey and Connecticut to California and New Mexico.

Yet the concern over what his late entry means for the Greens is just one symptom of a deeper complaint made by many veterans of progressive politics about working with Nader: He's a lone wolf, and he's never worked well in coalitions. "If you're on his side, you're in fine shape," says one top veteran of the antiglobalization movement. "If you decide to put less emphasis on the campaign, for whatever reason, but you still share his long-term goals, he can treat you like the enemy." This leader points to a serious break between Nader and the AFL-CIO over how hard to fight the GATT treaty and also questions whether Nader can bring together blue-collar whites with African-Americans. Still, pressed to say if Ralph should run or not, this person says yes. "We need a progressive running. If it's a choice between Ralph or nobody, a lot of us who have reservations on other fronts will say, Hooray! But if he doesn't run hard, that could become very dispiriting."

In the end, whether the emerging Nader campaign meets or exceeds expectations this time around depends entirely on Ralph. Even though grassroots volunteers can have a huge impact on the vitality of his campaign, only he can decide how hard to push which issues, how hard to fundraise, how integrated with party-building his effort will be. After all, campaigns—even unconventional, alternative campaigns—are still primarily driven from the center outward. And there is an inexorable logic pushing Nader further into the electoral arena. Thirty-five years after he essentially invented public-interest activism, his non-electoral endeavors are frequently blocked by corporate lobbying and trumped by big money's domination of politics. It makes sense for him, as he reaches the pinnacle of his career, to appeal directly to the same natural majority that he has indirectly championed for so long, and to use the leverage built into the federal election laws to launch one more institution of countervailing citizen power, the Green Party, into permanent orbit. The moment is his. And the chance won't come again. ■

THEIR PARENTS, SCARED AND OVERWHELMED, SURRENDER THEM TO AUTHORITIES WHO PROMISE TREATMENT. FROM THERE IT'S A SHORT PATH TO PRISON.

Sticks and Stones: The Jailing of Mentally Ill Kids

CARL GINSBURG AND HELEN DEMERANVILLE

A juvenile who is suffering from mental illness should be treated in a specialized institution under independent medical management.

—Rule 53, United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty

KAREN CALDICOTT

Nelson Smith,* a mentally ill 17-year-old, spent most of last year in Louisiana's youth prison system. At Jetson Correctional Center for Youth just outside Baton Rouge, a place that Nelson said "looks nice but has bad people inside," the boy was beaten and kicked by guards. "One guard unzipped his pants and threatened to piss on me," the boy said. "He hit me over and over again on the head with a table until it broke. He came at me again and hit me on the head. It was like I passed out. I can't remember. It was like I was underwater." Nelson has a sweet, shy smile and an unfocused, rambling way of telling his story that is consistent with his illness. He was diagnosed at six as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and has a long history of mental health problems, for which he has been hospitalized several times. In recent years, he has been diagnosed with "clinical levels of anxiety and depression."

Nelson's path to prison was a short one. It began with limits his insurance company placed on mental healthcare. Then, his mother, desperate to provide him with the help he needed, gave custody of the boy to the state, which promised treatment if she relinquished him. Instead, Nelson was sent to Christian Acres, a residential program four hours from home, where kids like Nelson are housed with teens just released from jail. Although the facility was supposed to provide treatment, he was taken off his medication. After fighting with another boy, he was transferred to Jetson, where the assault took place. "I felt hurt, helpless when he called me from Jetson," his mother said. "He told me, 'Mom, they tried to kill me,' and I couldn't get my hands on my child."

Nelson's mother contacted Cecile Guin, a Louisiana State University social worker who has monitored youth prisons for more than twenty years. By this time, Nelson had been moved to Tallulah Correctional Center for Youth, a prison already under federal investigation for neglect and abuse. Guin called the prison administration at Tallulah. They promised to review Nelson's case but never did.

Guin persevered and was able to confirm Nelson's story. Two Jetson guards were indicted. She learned that Nelson never underwent the required psychiatric evaluation at Jetson and received little or no medication while in jail, a serious omission for a child with Nelson's history. "This is a youth who is almost 17 years of age," Guin wrote in a confidential memo, "who never had any criminal conduct until he entered the court system for assistance. When [his mother] asked for help with her educationally deficient and emotionally disturbed son, he was set on a path to a correctional center. This case is the crux of many of the problems we are having in this state." Jetson Warden Elijah Lewis did not return phone calls. According to David Utter, director of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, "[Nelson's] case is tragically all too typical of the treatment of mentally disabled children in Louisiana's juvenile jails."

Nelson's experience reflects a larger process that many policymakers and mental health advocates are calling the criminalization of the mentally ill, which, like mental illness, often begins at an early age. Across the country each year one million kids come into contact with the juvenile justice system (and many more are sent to locked residential treatment centers). More than 90 percent are held for nonviolent offenses. The US Department of Justice (DOJ) estimates that 60 percent have a recognizable mental disorder and that as many as 200,000 are seriously mentally ill. They are kids with treatable illnesses like ADHD, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder and early-stage schizophrenia. All these conditions are exacerbated by time spent in county jails, detention centers, boot camps and youth prisons. Sentences can be open-ended and average years, not months. Of those who are incarcerated, two-thirds are minorities. "The extent of abuse and suffering of kids with mental disorders in our juvenile correctional facilities is almost hard to comprehend," said Michael Faenza, head of the National Mental Health Association (NMHA).

A 1998 DOJ investigation found "a pattern of egregious conditions violating the federal rights of youths in Georgia juvenile facilities," including "physical abuse by staff and the abusive use of mechanical and chemical restraints on mentally ill youths." Despite an agreement to improve conditions, the state continues to operate boot camps in which kids are subjected to military-style discipline, a "bad option" for "kids with mental health problems," in the words of Georgia Judge Sammy Jones. In Connecticut,

* A pseudonym, used at the family's request.

Carl Ginsburg and Helen Demeranville are freelance journalists living and working in New York City.

investigators at Long Lane, the state's institution for juvenile offenders, reported late last year that "children [were] handcuffed to beds...without clinical oversight for extended periods of time." The investigation was prompted after a 15-year-old girl hanged herself in her room. At a Pennsylvania residential treatment center last December, a mentally ill boy died in restraints, the second documented death by restraint reported at that facility in the past five years. There are documented reports of abuse of mentally ill kids in juvenile facilities in Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, New York, Arkansas, South Carolina, Florida, Virginia, the District of Columbia, California, Texas, Ohio, Maryland and Puerto Rico.

In an unprecedented action, DOJ filed suit on July 9, 1998, against all four of Louisiana's youth prisons, charging "sexual abuse and assault at each of the four facilities." Several trial dates have been scheduled and postponed as negotiations have dragged on, with attorneys for the jailed kids growing more and more frustrated by the slow pace. "Mental health conditions in the jails continue to be very poor, and kids are suffering every day because of the lack of care," said Utter. "Early this summer a boy tried to hang himself at Tallulah, and a guard just watched."

One question is how conditions got so bad in juvenile jails. Another is why nonviolent mentally ill kids are incarcerated at all.

The court has received expert reports that are nothing less than astonishing. Documents reveal that at Jetson, psychiatric evaluations of children lasted between four and eight minutes. At Swanson Correctional Center for Youth, the staff psychiatrist in charge of caring for hundreds of boys lived out of state, in Texas, and visited the prison for only twelve hours each month. According to court documents, he "failed to recognize, diagnose or treat a broad range of psychiatric conditions." Tallulah was even worse, where the DOJ reported that "juveniles with extensive psychiatric histories who self-mutilate and/or threaten suicide have never been referred to a psychiatrist."

Underlying the question of how conditions got so bad in juvenile jails is the question of how these nonviolent mentally ill kids, some never having committed a crime, were incarcerated in the first place. Among the most persuasive explanations are that the mental health field is dominated by managed-care companies with a bottom-line agenda; that child welfare authorities often recommend the transfer of custody to the state, which then opts for incarceration over treatment; and that public schools lack the resources to adequately serve children with mental disabilities. Amnesty International reported in 1998 that children in the United States were being "denied mental health care by their health maintenance organization, following which their behavior led to their involvement with the juvenile justice system."

Forty-four states pay private managed-care companies under Medicaid to care for poor or disabled mentally ill people. In a large number of those states, fees are capitated, meaning that the managed-care contractor receives a flat fee per patient, an incentive to limit or deny care. As more and more middle-class people enroll in HMOs, managed-care policies govern their access to mental healthcare, too. A 1996 federal parity law was intended to prohibit limitations on mental health coverage—some as low as $5,000 for an entire lifetime—but the law has been widely skirted by insurers, who instead now place limits on the number of treatment and hospitalization days a mentally ill person is allowed each year. The net impact is to have less mental health coverage, explained one actuary from PricewaterhouseCoopers.

According to Michael Faenza, "Managed care supports services that are short term and easy to deliver. These kids are expensive to serve. They have complex problems and need intensive services from multiple service systems. Some managed-care firms disenroll these kids, citing their behavior. Others just won't pay for the services that the kids need."

The words "behavior" and "manipulation" are often used by managed-care providers to argue that a child has a "conduct disorder" rather than a mental illness. According to Chris Siegfried, a Texas-based community health specialist, "Conduct disorder is a shorthand way of saying that a child is 'not treatable,' a way to deny traditional mental health services, and that includes medication." It is a phrase that can carry heavy consequences for kids, including discipline and punishment but not mental healthcare.

The case of Colorado teenager Randy Oaks has come to symbolize this kind of dishonest practice. On July 17, 1996, exhausted by the insomnia common to bipolar disorders, Randy lashed out at his mother, Rebecca. She took him to Dr. George Eliopulos, a psychiatrist who had been treating the boy. Dr. Eliopulos immediately recommended hospitalization, but the Jefferson Center for Mental Health, the managed-care company that by contract handles Medicaid kids for the Colorado county where Randy lived, assigned a nurse to review Randy's case, a nurse who had never seen the boy before. After half an hour with Randy she concluded that he was "manipulating," and hospitalization was denied. "The diagnosis was changed from mental illness to conduct disorder," Rebecca said. The nurse never conferred with Dr. Eliopulos or met with Randy's mother. Dr. Eliopulos, who stood by his diagnosis and treatment plan, said mental health managed-care decisions are made "around how the money flows." Dr. Eliopulos later severed his relationship with the Jefferson Center.

That day, Rebecca was summoned by Jefferson Center administrators to meet with child welfare authorities, who told her it would be necessary to surrender custody of her son to get him treatment. Having no other options, she complied.

The state then simply adopted the Jefferson Center evaluation and determined that Randy should go to a residential treatment center, not a hospital. It's almost impossible to get a kid hospitalized, according to Dr. Hildegaard Messenbaugh, a Denver-area adolescent psychiatrist. "I've had kids who were so crazy and so desperate they were cutting themselves and bleeding over the evaluator from the managed-care company. And the answer was, 'They're just manipulating.'"

Randy, who had no criminal record whatsoever, was taken away and sent to Cedar Springs, a locked facility in another city that houses many teen offenders. Cedar Springs is part of a chain that operates facilities in fifteen states and Puerto Rico.

When Rebecca went to visit, she was stunned by what she saw.

"There were kids there for sexual molestation and assaults. There were kids walking around in chains." Randy complained of feces on the bathroom walls and urine everywhere. "It wasn't even fit for dogs to live in," he said. Rebecca demanded an investigation. It was a yearlong battle, but finally Colorado authorities found that "hospitalization or other alternatives should have been offered to Rebecca and Randy at the time of the evaluation."

Randy Oaks and Nelson Smith have some things in common. Neither boy had committed any crime when he was sent away from his parents. And in both cases, parents, desperate to give their children access to much-needed mental healthcare, came under pressure to give custody of their children to the state. This is not uncommon. One study, funded in part by the National Institute of Mental Health, concluded: "The practice of transfer of custody as a requirement for receiving financial aid [for children with serious emotional disorders] occurs in a majority of states, though the actual extent of this practice is not known. The major factor influencing the use of transfer of custody appears to be the absence of an appropriate and adequate system of services for children and adolescents with serious emotional disorders."

According to Chris Siegfried and other mental health advocates, in a number of states parents are encouraged to have mentally ill kids arrested because there are no mental health services available. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that two out of every three mentally ill children under 18 never receive any mental healthcare.

Ashley Williams is a child who showed signs of mental illness before she was 9 years old. "Ashley had trouble sleeping," said Ruby Jarrett, her grandmother, who raised her in Baton Rouge. "She would cry and become hysterical." At school she was diagnosed with ADHD, placed in a class for kids with behavior disorders and disciplined harshly by teachers without special training, her grandmother said. Truancy became common for the girl, who later saw a psychiatrist and was diagnosed with manic depression. "Kids are underdiagnosed in schools because schools are not keeping up with the mentally ill," Siegfried said. "And school failure and mental illness lead to truancy."

At 13, after breaking into a neighbor's home, Ashley ended up at Jetson. She is one of the growing number of girls entering the juvenile justice system, what the DOJ calls "a significant trend." Half the girls in jail suffer from PTSD, according to a 1998 study of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

Ashley said that while in prison she was placed in isolation on more than one occasion, was forced to sleep on the bare floor, was denied medication and counseling, and was assaulted by guards. (According to DOJ investigators, one guard at Jetson "repeatedly whipped two females with a belt.") The guards, Ashley said, were "very harsh, like someone really taking anger out on me." Jarrett tried to contact Jetson's warden for an explanation of the girl's treatment, but the warden never responded.

"Kids with emotional disturbances and mental disorders are supposed to have individualized educational plans, which include any treatment that's needed. That is almost never done," said Shannon Robshaw, NMHA's Louisiana advocate. "Basically

what kids with mental illness get in the schools is expulsion. So the school system is failing them." Only 6 percent of the most severely mentally ill and emotionally disturbed kids in Louisiana receive treatment.

Federal studies have shown that more than a third of the juveniles held behind bars—at enormous cost to taxpayers—do not need locked placements and could be safely placed in community settings. In Colorado, Dr. Messenbaugh operates residential treatment programs that are distinctly unlocked. An impromptu visit to one showed kids struggling to make lives for themselves, respecting each other, sharing past disappointments and coping with mental illness. And her success rate is high, around 75 percent. In Milwaukee, the numbers are similar. Three out of four kids in home- or community-based mental health programs never break the law again. What's more, Milwaukee's program, at $9,000 per kid per year, is a significant savings over the $55,000 it costs to keep that same teenager in jail for a year. Shannon Robshaw knows this argument well. "[For] kids with real mental health problems, locking them up, incarcerating them in these juvenile prisons—not only is it bad for the kids and permanently damaging to these youths, it doesn't even save the state money. It's much cheaper to provide the community-based services, work with the family, provide community-based mental health treatment, family support services, work with the schools—the things we know actually work," she said.

Earlier this year, Senator Paul Wellstone announced the Mental Health Juvenile Justice Act, to remedy abusive conditions for the mentally ill in state juvenile jails. But the political trends seem to be in the opposite direction. In the past ten years, community-based juvenile mental health services have declined by 25 percent, while law-and-order politics have fueled the construction of hundreds of juvenile prisons. Today there are approximately 250 youth prisons and boot camps in the United States.

By the time they were released, Nelson Smith, Randy Oaks and Ashley Williams had spent many months in locked facilities. They returned home sicker and, in Randy's case, scared to leave the house. "He needed months of healing to go out to do the simplest task," his mother said. According to Dr. Messenbaugh, "It makes them infinitely more difficult to treat at that point because they're suspicious. They don't believe anyone really is ever going to listen or help."

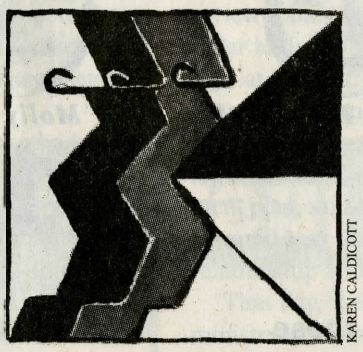
"Why would anybody do something like this to another human being," Randy asked, "trap him against his will and promise to give him help when they're not really giving help?" ■

A NATIONAL MULTIRACIAL COALITION IS THE BEST HOPE FOR PROGRESSIVE POLITICS.

Bridging the Racial Divide

WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON

Economic inequality is rising in America, and we need a progressive, multiracial political coalition to combat it. Political power is concentrated among the most advantaged segments of society. The monetary, trade and tax policies of recent years have arisen from and, in turn, deepened this power imbalance. And, while elite members of society have benefited, ordinary people have fallen further behind. A large, strong and organized political constituency is essential for the development and implementation of policies that will reverse the trends of rising inequality and ease the burdens of the disadvantaged.



KAREN CALDICOTT

But as long as middle- and lower-class groups are fragmented along racial lines, they will fail to see how their combined efforts could change the political imbalance and thus promote policies that reflect their interests. Put another way, a vision of American society that highlights racial differences rather than commonalities makes it difficult for us to see the need for mutual political support across racial lines.

When I speak of a multiracial coalition, I am not calling for the formation of a third political party, nor am I referring to a coalition that would be officially aligned with either of the major political parties. Indeed, my idea is that the coalition would be officially bipartisan. Its purpose would be to put pressure, including voting pressure, on both Democratic and Republican leaders to embrace policies that reflect the interests of ordinary families. It is true that Republicans are virtually united against many policies that would help working people, and measures to fight inequality would likely draw more support from Democrats than from Republicans. But if the coalition is perceived to be in a position both to reward and to punish political leaders, members of both parties are likely to take special notice of its activities.

The foundation of the coalition would be organizations committed to fighting social inequality, including grassroots community organizations, civil rights groups, women's rights groups, labor unions and religious organizations—broadly representative of the various racial and ethnic groups, and all organized in interconnected local, regional and national networks. Leaders of each of the national networks would constitute a coordinating or executive group empowered to represent the interests of the coalition and act on its behalf. Given the potential number and types of groups involved, this coalition could represent a very large constituency.

In light of the racial friction that has marred intergroup inter-

This article is adapted from The Bridge Over the Racial Divide *(California). William Julius Wilson, a MacArthur Prize Fellow, is the Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University Professor at Harvard University.*

action in urban America, the formation of a multiracial reform coalition presents a challenge. Beginning with the riots in Los Angeles in 1992 and culminating in the 1995 O.J. Simpson murder trial, media attention to racial matters has highlighted those factors that divide us. Although it is important to acknowledge the racial divisions in America so they can be meaningfully addressed, the incessant attention given to these gaps has obscured the fact that blacks, whites, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans share many concerns and have important values and aspirations in common.

Their perception of problems, for instance, is remarkably similar. In research by political scientists Jennifer Hochschild and Reuel Rogers, questions about whether various social problems were getting worse for the people with whom the respondents identify ("people like you or families like yours") elicited considerable agreement across racial and ethnic groups: 45–55 percent said school quality was becoming harder to maintain; 50–60 percent said it was getting harder to find good jobs; and 49–55 percent said it was getting harder to find decent housing. The same held true of views on major policy issues. Except for affirmative action and abortion, there are no notable differences across racial and ethnic groups on preferences for Congressional action—with overwhelming support for balancing the budget and changing the welfare system, less enthusiasm for cutting personal income taxes and reforming Medicare, and even less for business tax breaks. And, as Hochschild and Rogers point out, there is considerable convergence in views across racial and ethnic groups about how to solve particular problems, including education, crime, gang violence and drugs.

There is considerable convergence in views across racial and ethnic groups on how to address issues like crime and education.

Of course, this consensus does not always reflect progressive values and goals, especially when economic anxiety makes people more receptive to simplistic messages that deflect attention from the real and complex sources of their problems. In the early nineties, as the country was staggering from the effects of the 1990–92 recession, the poisonous rhetoric of highly visible spokespersons (such as Pat Buchanan, Louis Farrakhan, Al Sharpton, David Duke, Rush Limbaugh and California Governor Pete Wilson, as well as former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and several other House members who framed the 1994 Personal Responsibility Act) increased racial tensions and channeled frustrations in ways that divided groups in America. Instead of associating citizens' problems with economic and political changes, these divisive messages encouraged them to turn on one another—race against race and citizens against immigrants.

A multiracial coalition, by contrast, would craft progressive political messages that resonate with broad segments of the public. Such a coalition ought to emphasize the benefits it would bring to all groups who are struggling economically in America, not just poor minorities. It should convey the idea that changes in the global economy have exacerbated social inequality and heightened antagonisms between different racial and ethnic groups, and that although these groups are seen as social adversaries, they are potential allies in a reform coalition.

Social psychological research on interdependence reveals that when people believe they need each other they relinquish their initial prejudices and stereotypes and join programs that foster mutual interaction and cooperation. This does not mean group differences should not be acknowledged. As the Harvard sociologist Marshall Ganz has pointed out, "Acknowledging differences is essential to collaborating around common interest. It is important not to pretend that we are all the same." He notes that racial and ethnic groups have important differences, "but these become resources rather than liabilities if we come up with ways to [build] on our commonalities." Visionary group leaders, especially those who head strong community organizations, are essential for articulating and communicating such an inclusive vision, as well as for developing and sustaining the coalition.

Multiracial grassroots community organizations whose institutions, actions and belief systems exemplify the very conditions of perceived interdependence do in fact exist today. Some have coalesced around campaigns for living-wage ordinances in a number of cities, involving coalitions of local labor leaders, community-based organizations, religious leaders and student groups. The living-wage movement is an example of what can happen when local leaders forge coalitions to rally behind an issue that concerns all races, in this case economic justice.

Whether living-wage campaigns will expand to embrace other issues of economic and social justice remains to be seen. If they do, they might take note of the experiences of another multiracial group at the local level: Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), one of the strongest community organizations in the nation, based in San Antonio, Texas. The largest and longest-standing of dozens of local organizations affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), COPS has been responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements in poor inner-city neighborhoods of San Antonio through the upgrading or repair of streets, sidewalks, public lighting and sewer drainage, and the construction of parks and libraries. In addition, COPS has been responsible for the construction or rehabilitation of thousands of housing units. In Texas the IAF has created a statewide network that has effectively influenced political decisions in municipal governments, the state legislature and the governor's mansion.

COPS has generated and sustained interracial cooperation in three related ways. First, it has relied on its members' shared commitment to broad religious principles to generate trust and a sense of common identity. Indeed, the importance of the IAF's use of religious institutions in developing and sustaining interracial organizations should not be underestimated. Second, the issues it focuses on originate from local consensus and are framed in a race-neutral way, so they are not divisive. And third, Hispanic, African-American and white leaders are united in local IAF organizations but retain significant autonomy by also serving in other organizations or enterprises that address race- and neighborhood-specific issues that are not formally part of the Texas IAF agenda. The IAF does take

up many "issues of race," like poor schools, neighborhood neglect, healthcare shortages and lack of economic opportunity. But it frames these issues in nonracial terms, emphasizing the interest of the whole community in addressing them. It practices a local version of universalistic public policy, developing programs potentially open to all but with special benefit to low-income and minority communities.

The IAF in Texas has been successful in building an effective multiracial coalition by presenting issues in nonracial terms, but would such a strategy be viable in the long run for a national multiracial coalition? It's true that the success of the IAF's race-neutral strategy in Texas has depended on its members' involvement in churches—a condition that would not be as relevant at the national level. But for the most part, if the coalition is trying to build support for a mass-based economic agenda, a race-neutral strategy does make sense. Why? Because the goal is to attract wide segments of the population with messages that resonate across racial groups. "Both survey and case study evidence suggests that the more a multiracial coalition focuses on issues of racial and ethnic equality per se, the less stable it will be and the more likely it will be to fragment into competitive factions," write Hochschild and Rogers. "Conversely, the same evidence shows that the more a multiracial coalition focuses on issues that are not ostensibly about race, and that have the potential to involve a wide range of people of all identities, the greater its chance of persistence and success."

There is some debate over whether the race-neutral strategy is the best way to reach out to minority communities that are not already politically involved. Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, for instance, contend that the most effective way to achieve this is to organize them first around issues that are race-specific. Yet whether or not racial issues are the point of entry for people of color, a national multiracial coalition must nonetheless emphasize concerns that unite its diverse constituency.

This does not mean that such a coalition must steer clear of all issues of race; the challenge is framing them in such a way that does not divide the membership. To take one example, for African-Americans the issue of affirmative action as national policy is seen as crucial for addressing American racial injustice, so it would seem essential for a multiracial coalition to address it. Yet the case for affirmative action must be made in a way that minimizes its racially divisive tendencies. By shifting emphasis from numerical guidelines or quotas to opportunity—under a new, flexible system that might be called *affirmative opportunity*—applicants with disadvantages, including racial ones, could be evaluated according to their potential to succeed as well as those without disadvantages. Variations of this system have succeeded in maintaining racial diversity without igniting racial tension at the University of California, Irvine, and the University of Michigan Law School.

A sustained upward trend in the American economy has begun to improve conditions for many people in the late nineties. Ordinary Americans are still economically anxious and continue to be worried about their future, but public opinion polls reveal that they are more satisfied today than they were in 1994, when the Republicans took over Congress, or in 1995, when conservative political leaders perceived that their pronouncements about the adverse effects of affirmative action, welfare and immigration would resonate with the general population. Now is the time for proponents of multiracial coalitions to build on this shift in the public mood. Progressive leaders need to acknowledge racially distinct problems and the need for remedies like affirmative action, while emphasizing the importance of transracial solutions to shared problems. I call upon the American people—especially the leaders of the poor, the working classes, the displaced and the marginalized, the downsized and the de-skilled—to discuss, in vocabularies that reject the divisive particularisms of race, the true task before us. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

along with the even more alarming rise in diabetes—now seen at younger and younger ages.

Kids who eat junk foods don't eat school lunches, giving schools even further motivation to eliminate federally supported meal programs and turn them over to fast-food companies. Soft drink "pouring rights" contracts put schools in a blatant conflict of interest. They teach nutrition in the classroom and then sabotage it in practice. Food commercialism in schools should exceed everyone's "outrage threshold." Demand protection of federal school meals programs.

MARION NESTLE
Department of Nutrition and Food Studies
New York University

Berkeley, Calif.

■ I just looked in the annual report for my "socially responsible" mutual fund and noticed that at least two of the companies mentioned in the article on commercialism in the schools are included in my portfolio: Coca-Cola and Tootsie Roll. Maybe, in addition to such filters as the environment, human rights, tobacco and equal employment opportunity, there should be another for commercialism in the schools—at least one that requires companies to adhere to some type of guidelines. I'll be contacting my fund. Maybe you should contact yours. CHRIS GILBERT

MANNING REPLIES

Brooklyn, N.Y.

■ I spoke to a number of high school chemistry teachers who have used *ChemCom*. Many complained about what they saw as a pro–chemical industry bias in the text, especially in the accompanying lab questions. The American Chemical Society is an independent professional organization, and I did not mean to imply that it is directly controlled by the chemical industry. ACS's close ties to the industry are well-known, however, and most of its members—including authors of textbooks—work for chemical companies. STEVEN MANNING

YOUR HOLIDAY MISSION

Yamaguchi, Japan

■ As we enter the holiday travel season, I would like to pass on a little ritual of mine that I hope inspires other *Nation* subscribers to do the same. As I head to the airport I make sure I have several back issues of *The Nation*, some of which I leave displayed in the lounge area. Once in my seat on the airplane, I circulate about with several more issues in hand, which I add to all the numerous business and people mags in the magazine rack. It's my form of recycling and spreading the good word! ROB SINNOTT

CORRECTION

■ Because of an editorial error in Alexander Stille's "Emperor of the Air" [Nov. 29], the percentage of Italy's TV advertising revenue controlled by Silvio Berlusconi was incorrectly given as over 90 percent rather than 60 percent.

BOOKS & THE ARTS

Stop-Time in the Levant

AMMIEL ALCALAY

OUT OF PLACE: A Memoir.
By Edward W. Said.
Knopf. 295 pp. $26.95.

It is remarkable to what extent almost anything having to do with the Middle East in this country—be it political, cultural, historical or even personal—is permeated by the triumphalist vision of Zionism that followed the 1967 war. Even people not holding to prevailing assumptions feel compelled to position themselves in relation to them, if only to make themselves intelligible. As someone with long experience on these issues, I remain astonished by the still-reigning imbalances. What appears in the eyes of a Palestinian as simply a gesture of acknowledgment (e.g., the right of return) is already in the subconscious and even conscious social makeup of the Israeli Jew—and often those considered liberal—an admission of guilt and, in fact, a reversal of the entire value system and hierarchy of assumptions that he or she has been raised to believe or accept. This phenomenon extends itself to those identifying with Israel as well, if not more so. Thus, it appears preposterous and quixotic for a Palestinian born in Haifa, Jaffa or Jerusalem to wish to return to those places but entirely natural for a Jew born in Kiev or Brooklyn to "resettle" the homeland, possibly once ancestrally inhabited thousands of years ago, as if the interim—with all its mixture of peoples, histories, languages, buildings and ruins, its marks within and upon the terrain, and its myriad accomplishments and failures—were simply an inconvenience.

This amalgam of colliding realities manifests itself in a slightly more obfuscating but no less obtrusive manner in the United States, particularly in what passes for intellectual discourse, and even much scholarship, on the Middle East. Clearly, it is only in this biased American climate that racist propaganda campaigns guised in "objectivity," such as recent attacks on Edward Said's version of his own childhood, are given legitimacy at all. To get behind such static, to think about life as it was actually lived before these ideological categories determined who was who, where they might live, how they might think or, in fact, what they should even be allowed to consider thinking, is one of the implicit and explicit tasks Said has set for himself in writing *Out of Place: A Memoir*, almost as if he had anticipated the charges leveled against him.

If the grenade-launching, towel-headed terrorist remains the essence of the Arab in Palestinian form for too many Americans (whether they readily admit it or not), the suave, urbane and sophisticated face of Edward Said has become the essence of that figure for certain educated and even liberal Americans, cool and acceptable on the surface but potentially volatile nevertheless. Said's variegated intellectual trajectory is well-known and has taken him from fairly traditional literary criticism to seminal texts such as *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* (a work that should bear the same primary relationship to literary and cultural studies now that one of Said's intellectual models, Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis*, bore to previous generations). These two books have been enormously influential in redefining the nature, scope and relationship of diverse disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, not only in this country but throughout the world. In between these major works, Said has published voluminously in a variety of areas, from music criticism to media coverage of the Middle East. As we also know, from a certain point in his very public ca-

American culture is only now striving toward the kind of fluidity among diverse peoples that characterized the world of Said's childhood.

Ammiel Alcalay's books include After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture *(Minnesota). An essay collection,* Memories of Our Future, *is forthcoming from City Lights.*

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reer, Said has written, worked tirelessly and served as a spokesperson (both officially and unofficially) for Palestinians and the Palestinian national movement, explicating Palestinian identity, history, politics and rights for an American audience completely unused to hearing about such things. In his efforts on behalf of Palestine, one can see the issue serve as a kind of moral litmus test, a way for Said to check the integrity of his intellectual peers. Much as Zola galvanized public opinion in the Dreyfus affair, Said has lifted the Palestinian cause out of the apologetic and beleaguered discourse in which it had been embedded, to lend it universal dimensions.

With the publication of *Out of Place*, these intellectual journeys and endeavors can finally be considered against the backdrop of other physical movements and psychological trials, as Said reaches back to recall a life lived before coming to such public, political consciousness. We can now examine, at precisely the leisurely pace Said allows us to, all the historical, geographical, cultural, political, linguistic and personal forces that went into creating his persona, this figure we now know as Edward Said, for, as he writes in the book's opening sentence: "All families invent their parents and children, give each of them a story, character, fate, and even a language." The pace at which Said unravels his tale to invent himself and his family proves to be the guiding structural irony of the book. He writes in great detail about all the mundane occurrences that he can remember, as if he has all the time in the world. Yet the impetus to finally record these memories is the very dramatic knowledge and experience of his own mortality. As he writes: "*Out of Place* is a record of an essentially lost or forgotten world. Several years ago I received what seemed to be a fatal medical diagnosis, and it therefore struck me as important to leave behind a subjective account of the life I lived in the Arab world, where I was born and spent my formative years, and in the United States, where I went to school, college, and university."

The Arab part of this world is a place that existed before the consolidation of nationalism and nation-states, in regions once ruled by empires but not yet fully independent, where much older familial, communal and economic ties crisscrossed an area stretching from the Maghreb to the Mashreq, from the west of North Africa east to Baghdad and India, with leaps beyond into China or the Americas. This is also a world whose intricacies and memories have been faithfully depicted by many, many writers and intellectual figures not that familiar to American audiences: from the Lebanese Etel Adnan and the Iraqis Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and Nissim Rejwan, to Egyptians such as Ahdaf Soueif, Wagui Ghali, Jacqueline Shohet Kahanof, Jacques Hassoun and Edmond Jabès. In fact, *Beirut Fragments*, one of the most powerful and moving memoirs of this Levantine world, despite ending in the paroxysms of the Lebanese civil war, was written by Said's sister, Jean Said Makdisi.

For those familiar with such writing, and the work of dozens of others, Said's lucid memoir offers yet another facet of an incredibly variegated prism, for, as he writes: "It is geography—especially in the displaced form of departures, arrivals, farewells, exile, nostalgia, homesickness, belonging, and travel itself—that is at the core of my memories of those early years. Each of the places I lived in—Jerusalem, Cairo, Lebanon, the United States—has a complicated, dense web of valences that was very much a part of growing up, gaining an identity, forming my consciousness of myself and of others." Within this geography, Said's memoir faithfully echoes themes, images, feelings, details and nuances that represent a very deeply embedded and, ultimately, common set of references. Here, for example, is a passage from a memoir written by Jacqueline Shohet Kahanof, who grew up in Cairo, with one side of the family from Iraq and the other from Tunis: "To those of us who were born in the communities of the Levant, the names of places that were once familiar—Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Tunis, Algiers—are now the faraway places in that mythical geography of hearts and minds, where distances do not correspond to those on maps."

For those unfamiliar with this world, with what I have elsewhere defined as Levantine culture, much of what Said writes about growing up between Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon may seem utterly exotic and unlikely. This "unlikeliness" ranges from his father, an American citizen by circumstance, raising the American flag in front of the family business in Cairo, to young Edward's moving between British and American schools, seeing Jennifer Jones play Bernadette of Lourdes in the Greek-owned Diana cinema, or scouring the Egyptian press for items about Wilhelm Furtwängler once the boy's interest in music has been piqued by his mother. Such hybridity represents what is both most familiar and most "out of place" for

young Edward within the oddly autonomous but generally oblivious pockets of communal life operating at a privileged remove from the great majority of mostly very poor people around them. Written during periods of illness or treatment, Said's memoir depicts this world in exacting and painstaking detail, as if each incident, image or place recollected can offer some lifeline to a future rapidly receding from him. Much in the manner of the early sections of Elias Canetti's memoirs, *The Tongue Set Free*, Said allows the chronology of events to dictate his changing state of consciousness, without imposing an overarching structure or ending to them, despite his certain knowledge of the personal and political fates that doom this world to oblivion. In describing friends of the family, of mixed Lebanese, Egyptian, Armenian and Turkish origin, Said writes:

> But like us they were marked for extinction in the worldly Cairo environment that was already beginning to be undermined. We were all Shawam, amphibious Levantine creatures whose essential lostness was momentarily stayed by a kind of forgetfulness, a kind of daydream, that included elaborate catered dinner parties, outings to fashionable restaurants, the opera, ballet, and concerts. By the end of the forties we were no longer just Shawam but khawagat, the designated and respectful title for foreigners which, as used by Muslim Egyptians, has always carried a tinge of hostility. Despite the fact that I spoke—and I thought looked—like a native Egyptian, something seemed to give me away. I resented the implication that I was somehow a foreigner, even though deep down I knew that to them I was, despite being an Arab.

The accounts and impressions of everyday life, of various schools, teachers, headmasters, relatives, acquaintances and incidents, are punctuated by Said's ongoing quest to get at the truth of his relationship to his parents, who, as he writes, "were themselves self-creations." The portraits he paints of them are indeed memorable, particularly filtered through his own relationship to Palestine—from his first feelings of being acknowledged and recognized at the St. George's School in Jerusalem ("for the first and last time in my school life I was among boys who were like me"), to reuniting with displaced family members in exile and seeing "the sadness and destitution in the faces and lives of people I had formerly known as ordinary middle-class people." Throughout the book, the text is peppered with questions directed at his parents and himself, questions that the young Edward could never formulate but that, alas, can now only be answered rhetorically. These acutely painful passages are the turns of the screw that lock this memoir into place, as in this incident about his father:

> I was no more than four when he took me for a walk near the Fish Garden in Cairo (I do not think he ever entered the place, which seemed exclusively my mother's domain). I scampered along behind him, while he pressed on with his hands behind his back at a resolute pace. When I stumbled and fell forward, scratching my hands and knees badly, I instinctively called out to him, "Daddy... please," at which he stopped and turned around slowly toward me. He paused like that for a couple of seconds, then turned back, resuming his walk without a word. That was all. It was also how he died, turning his face to the wall, without a sound. Had he, I wonder, ever really wanted to say more than he actually did?

Yet, like Edward Said's own public intellectual trajectory, there is no sense of finality to this memoir. In fact, Said's relationship with his parents—and particularly his mother—continues. Despite her death, Said prolongs his treasured colloquy with her, through ruminations, conversations and even letters. It is this lack of finality, perhaps, that makes *Out of Place* such a unique document and highlights a crucial part of Said's invention of himself within an American context. Both because of and despite the sense of America conveyed through his father, Said has grown into ways of being an American that are extremely instructive at this juncture of our own cultural and political history. As he writes:

> The sheer gravity of my coming to the United States in 1951 amazes me even today. I have only the most shadowy notion of what my life might have been had I not come to America. I do know that I was beginning again in the United States, unlearning to some extent what I had learned before, relearning things from scratch, improvising, self-inventing, trying and failing, experimenting, canceling and restarting in surprising and frequently painful ways. To this day I still feel that I am away from home, ludicrous as that may sound, and though I believe I have no illusions

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about the "better" life I might have had, had I remained in the Arab world, or lived and studied in Europe, there is still some measure of regret.

What is perhaps most ironic about this is the fact that American culture is only now striving toward a formulation and practice of the kind of fluidity among diverse peoples that characterized the Levantine world of Said's childhood. His first winter away from home at boarding school yields the realization that "I had spent all my life in two rich, teeming, historically dense metropolises, Jerusalem and Cairo, and now I was totally bereft of anything except the pristine woods, apple orchards, and the Connecticut River valley and hills stripped of their history." In many ways, the memoir itself seems a long-delayed reaction against some of his earliest and most acute impressions of American behavior, as when he writes of "the extraordinary homogenizing power of American life," which "seemed to limit the complex intercourse of daily life to an unreflective minimum in which memory has no role."

Part of this need to reassert and validate personal experience also comes as an antidote to the very marked American tendency to relegate individuals to the role of surrogates, standing in as representatives of the race, the tribe or anything not completely domesticated or reducible to the already known. The most immediate form of this, of course, occurs through naming and the pronunciation of "non-American" names. The accessibility of being named Edward proved deceptive to Said, and the ways in which realities left behind were either mispronounced or left unpronounced is clearly another major theme of his memoir. As an extension of this practice of domesticating things whose names we cannot utter, Said's role and persona is often referred to, tongue in cheek, using classically anti-Semitic terminology—as someone so much like the "rootless, cosmopolitan Jewish intellectual." That is, someone almost like us but whom we can still hold at arm's length by not fully embracing his own context, by displacing him again, using terms familiar to us. Whatever parallels might exist, we must also remember that the experience of dispersion, exile and rootless cosmopolitan life has been the fate of almost all Arab writers and intellectuals this century. While enriching the possibilities of our own cultural horizons, in retrospect, Edward Said's *Out of Place* clearly joins itself to that embattled, often heroic and altogether much-neglected tradition. ■

Algren's Question

DANIEL SIMON

He would hang his coat neatly over the back of his chair in the leaden station-house twilight, say he was beat from lack of sleep and lay his head across his arms upon the query-room desk. —The Man With the Golden Arm

I am looking at a photograph of Nelson Algren on the evening he received the very first National Book Award. It adorns the most prominent wall in the Seven Stories Press offices, where, were we another kind of business, we would have our diplomas, our first dollar bill or our celebrity photo. Algren was the first author I published, beginning a year or two after he died, and the photo, a recent find in the archives of the National Book Foundation, shows me a happier vision of this person than the one I have grown accustomed to over the past fifteen years. Nelson stands beside Eleanor Roosevelt, who presented him with the award. It is March 1950. He is biting down on a cigar and grinning to himself like a hard-boiled Mona Lisa, unmistakably a man who has taken on the world and won, and, even more surprising, a man who had expected to win all along.

Taking on the world, for Algren, meant changing it through the proper use of his literary voice. His heroes were the Russian writers he admired, who could take for granted what on American soil can seem like a grandiose notion: that literary and social aims fit together. Algren was, like Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, a novelist with the heart of a radical reformer (precisely the kind of writer HUAC deemed "un-American"), and like his contemporary, the playwright Arthur Miller, he is representative of what many still consider to be the best American literary tradition of the post-war period. When his goal of revolutionary change through literary means seemed impossible, his life depressed him, even made him suicidal on at least one occasion; when the goal seemed within reach, as on this cool night in March 1950, he became elated and all was right with him.

Since Algren fought losing battles on a regular basis, winning, for Algren, held a special glory. But no surprise. And since he had chosen to write about a world of extreme dysfunction and despair, his strategy for making it habitable and enjoyable for his readers had to be complex and even a bit farfetched. In order to mine this world for gemstones of joy and hope, Algren had to be both in his particular historical moment and outside it, and given the sensitive and difficult subject matter he had chosen, he had to approach his readers gingerly, not pointing a finger but asking questions, hopefully questions that could be a bridge from his time into the future.

He had won the award for his astonishing novel *The Man With the Golden Arm*, completed and published the prior year, 1949. And the mysterious moment captured in the photo is best understood in terms of this specific work. Not because it is his only monumental achievement. It isn't. The earlier novel *Never Come Morning* (which actually sold more copies), his gracious story collection *The Neon Wilderness* (still the favorite among his works of many fellow writers), the book-length prose poem *Chicago: City on the Make*—each of these is of comparable stature and strength. But it is his *Golden Arm*, nonetheless, that is his greatest triumph, his greatest victory, his winningest hand—because its language is so densely laid down and so lyrical, its momentum so sustained, because the familiar Algren characters here are possessed of so much insight. To say it the way I imagine Algren might have: because it is the book he put the most into. Or as Nelson actually described his feelings about the novel, in a letter written a few years after he completed it [see page 32], "so I feel it was a lucky book, and a lucky time now past, and I was lucky to write it."

The story line of *The Man With the Golden Arm* is simple, but hidden. It is not the story of a man falling prey to drug addiction, since that happens offstage and prior to the novel's start. Nor is it an account of a marriage breaking up, since that also happens in the wings, before the novel's opening. Nor is it the account of a murder, unless in a most unusual sense, since the murder plays only a small part of the monumental drama that is played out

Daniel Simon is publisher of Seven Stories Press, which has just printed a fiftieth-anniversary edition of The Man With the Golden Arm, *complete with commentary, from which this essay is taken.*

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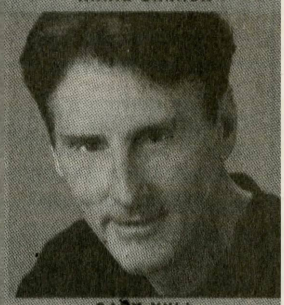
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*from Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther*

in these pages. *The Man With the Golden Arm* is, plainly and simply, an account of a junkie trying to go straight or, in more universal terms, a man pulling his life together—and failing miserably at it. Hooked on morphine at the end of the war, Frankie kills his dealer in a fit of pride and disgust. Saddled with a miserable marriage, he begins seeing a girl, an old acquaintance with a heart of gold, and can foresee a time when he has put his marital troubles behind him. Jailed on a minor theft, he heroically "buries his monkey," kicks his habit cold turkey, because jail is the one place he can get that job done. Frankie Majcinek is only trying to improve his life. But Algren's world is an essentially upside-down, tragic place. Good things happen too late to matter, or not at all. In the end, it's all the same difference. After paying so steep a price to get clean, Frankie goes back on morphine anyway. So what keeps us, Algren's readers, trudging along with hope in our hearts?

Algren embraced contradictions: He wrote unromantically, yet sentimentally; he wrote hopefully about characters with no way out; he wrote about a drab and almost colorless world in a splendidly rich, densely poetic and colorful prose style. He turned Aristotle on his head as well, writing about "low" comedic characters as if their stories were high tragedy—and to Algren they were, because what happened to them mattered so very much to him. That he came along when he did, at a time of suffocating conformity, only adds to the magic of what he accomplished. But where lies the pull of Algren's novels? And—a related question—could it be a matter of importance both in his historical period and in ours?

The Man With the Golden Arm is a book about identity, not action. The engine that powers the narrative forward is not the impact of the doer but the drama of the witness—of Sparrow, who sees the murder and helps drag the body out of plain view to buy Frankie time; of the many other neighborhood denizens, who rightly assume they know who done it, and approve; of Record Head Bednar, who interrogates the endless parade of the accused and condemned, only to feel that he alone, he who has done nothing wrong, is the real guilty party. Action here always has a dreamlike, otherworldly quality. People's jobs—Steerer, Record Head, Fixer, Meter Reader—are usually running gags of irrelevance, and even Frankie's—Dealer—becomes one by the end. Algren's characters here watch themselves with the distance and objectivity of nonpartisan witnesses. They reveal what they are made of not through their actions but by how they bear witness.

The lead actor in another Algren drama, the novel *Never Come Morning*, says at one point, in response to a sure death sentence, "Knew I'd never get t'be twenty-one anyhow." And what takes our breath away is precisely the spectacle of someone observing his own demise, coolly and with a hearty and humorous appreciation of the irony his life embodies. And so, the pounding the reader hears in his ears throughout *The Man With the Golden Arm* is only partly the expiring, exhausted breathing of Frankie Machine, victim, and partly the pulsing of the attentive hearts of Sparrow, Record Head, Molly-O, Frankie himself, Algren himself, alert, listening, watching—witnesses.

Whose identity is at stake here? (Sparrow's? Frankie's? Algren's? The reader's?) And how much responsibility rightfully belongs on the witnesses' shoulders, anyway? This more than any other may be Algren's question, the one he had to ask of himself, and of the rest of us. It would have concerned him, as a soldier who had only a few years earlier served in a world war that was already the second of this

century. And, as it would other writers of conscience, it would come to haunt him, as a writer who only a few years hence would have his passport application denied and the publication of a book of his hurriedly refused by his publisher because of his political affiliations (he was honorary co-chairman of the Chicago chapter of the Save Ethel and Julius Rosenberg Committee). He, and we, similarly, could speak of a century in which we have come to know so much and seem to be able to do comparatively little, a century in which genocide has been followed by the words "Never again," and then more genocide, and in which the fight against totalitarianism is routinely used to justify totalitarianism. And it is in this context that the question of the witness, Algren's question, keeps returning, demanding an answer. We all know we are bystanders of horror. Is there something about the nature of standing by and watching that Algren teaches? It is a question each of his readers will ask, and every reader will answer a little differently.

Since Algren's novel is a work of identity, not action, the reader experiences it on several planes, only one of which is narrative, and thus only one of which is hopeless. Whatever happens, there are residues of personality, of humor, of grace, that outlast and outshine the botched beginnings and miserable ends. It is almost as if Algren's novels were written in several literary genres simultaneously, as if at the end of *The Man With the Golden Arm*, the novel were superseded by a parallel work, a drama, and what resonates most strongly is an irreducible lyric quality, what Algren would have called poetry. And as if confirming this notion of multiple and parallel works within the novel, Algren in fact gives us three separate endings to the book, the first set in the hotel room where Frankie has holed up, fading in and out of consciousness and leaving the reader also without a sure grip on reality, followed by the police report, which is as it were absolutely narrative, followed by the poem with which Algren closes the book, letting go of the novelist persona, stripped naked. He calls the poem "Epitaph: The Man with the Golden Arm," and in its last stanza he poses this question: "Yet why does the light down the dealer's slot/Sift soft as light in a troubled dream?"

It was Algren's friend and agent Candida Donadio who first suggested to me that Algren was sentimental. I had to think about that. I'm still thinking about it. She was asking me to see sentimentality as a positive attribute, since Candida wasn't

criticizing Algren when she said it—just describing him. We usually think of sentimentality as the distortion of a true emotion. It can also be a bridge there.

In the early sixties, about twelve or thirteen years after he'd completed the writing of *The Man With the Golden Arm*, Nelson himself spoke on the subject to H.E.F. Donohue, for the book *Conversations with Nelson Algren*:

> [Sentimentality] is an indulgence in emotion. You want men and women to be good to each other and you're very stubborn in thinking that they want to be. Sentimentality is a kind of indulgence in this hope. I'm not against sentimentality. I think you need it. I mean, I don't think you get a true picture of people without it in writing.... It's a kind of poetry, it's an emotional poetry, and, to bring it back to the literary scene, I don't think anything is true that doesn't have it.

As the soul-grinding narrative of *The Man With the Golden Arm* is nearly completed toward the end of the novel, there is a scene in which Sparrow watches Frankie shoot up:

"It kills me in the heart, how you are now," Sparrow couldn't keep from saying. "It just ain't like bein' Frankie no more." "That's the hardest thing of all for me to be, Solly," Frankie told him with a strange gentleness. "I'm gettin' farther away from myself all the time. It's why I have to have a charge so bad, so I can come back 'n be myself a little while again. But it's a longer way to go every time...."

As the scene continues, Frankie pelts Sparrow with questions: "You know who I am? You know who you are? You know who anybody is any more?" Sparrow says he doesn't know. And then, abruptly, Frankie asks: "Then tell me just this—why do some cats swing like this?" Sparrow doesn't know that either. But for a moment, as happens at key points throughout the book, the different planes of the novel speak in harmony. The scene is heavy with plot, propelled by Bednar setting Sparrow up to deliver Frankie his morphine, which allows Bednar to put the heat on Sparrow to rat on Frankie about Louie's murder. The dramatic plane is present in Frankie's own awareness of his dead-end position. And the poetic plane comes through in Frankie's words. Action expresses alienation from being; being itself marks a diminishing trail; and in the end it is in their self-awareness—self-deprecating, often funny and bought at a steep price—that Algren's characters find their unearthly power. ■

Algren Speaks

This previously unpublished letter is taken from 1952 correspondence with Joe Haas, a serviceman in the Korean War. Used by permission of Seven Stories Press, courtesy of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Ohio State University Libraries.

Dear Joe,

I'd judge that I rewrote "Golden Arm" a dozen times in some places, and more in most others. I suppose there were, for some sections, forty rewritings that still aren't right. If Mr. Doubleday hadn't come and wrenched the thing away from me by brute strength I'd still be up there on Wabansia Avenue, rewriting away. Unless, by this time, they would have come and wrenched me away, shrieking Don't Let Them Take My Baby's Daddy Away.

No, it didn't pour[.] It comes in lumps, and each lump has to be smoothed and grained down and then, when it's just so shining and smooth you read it over aloud to [yourself] and love the sound of every perfect word, you find you can't use it, it doesn't tie in, it's fine in itself but it diverts the whole story. So you gulp and put it away assuring yourself you'll make a use of it another day and sometimes you do, if you remember what drawer you put it away in. Sometimes it's like a squirrel looking for the acorns he hid the fall before last—he knows it's somewhere in the neighborhood, and digs up the whole plot and when he finds it, it's gone to seed in those two years.

It's a hardy trade, Joe, with a boot as quick as a fiver.

But there were never days when I felt I wouldn't complete it. I knew that, unless the army got me again or a Buick bumped me, I'd get a story put together, because I had the parts to put together. My self-doubts weren't concerned with whether it would be completed, but only whether it would *say* anything, and say it well, as nobody else could ever have said it, when it was done. All those things came true, to a limited degree, so I feel it was a lucky book, and a lucky time now past, and I was lucky to write it.

No, I wasn't wild with delight in the writing—but certainly not unhappy. I had more kicks, aside from writing in that time, than ever before, and was moderately happy, and still am. I don't think you have to suffer as savagely as you suspect. Just so long as you don't get complacent, and self-satisfied, you're alright. Actually, I don't think I gave any particular thought, at the time, as to whether I was happy or not, and still don't. Don't have the time to find out. Or, rather, not particularly interested, one way or another. So I guess if I had been, or were now, I'd know it.

I never recall having an anger that brought words to flow like tears. First place, words never flowed for me, out of any emotion, and I never believe I ever got that mad. In a sense, I suspect, I'm mad all the time. But it isn't up where it interferes with my life. Nobody could get that mad about anything so long as he has a remnant of a sense of humor. Because I understood, a long time ago, so long ago I can't remember where or how I first found it out, that it's all a crazy sort of joke on us all; that there isn't any true meaning to anything that won't be untrue in half an hour, and if you can live through it you're doing fine. If you can live through it, and have a few of the good things on the way—music, a girl, a sense of work that you like, then you're as lucky as possible. I think that, once you get rid of the notion that the world is going to hell unless you keep it from going there personally, you're better off. It frees you to do and say what you think, to talk back and not fall for the hundred myths with which we're deluged every day, and not to expect too much. After all, it's only your life.

Nathaniel West was somebody who would have been one of the greatest and the best if he'd [had] just a few short years [more] to live. I have his "A Cool Millions."

The dramatization, for which you generously gave thought to backdrops, is off. We hadn't even reached the script stage when you started buying props. My collaborator couldn't do it. He's the third one who's had to give up....

Don't trouble yourself about my using my valuable time to answer your letters. If I feel like writing to somebody I do, if I don't I throw the letter away. I do most wasteful things with my priceless hours. Write when you like,

there you go, Algren

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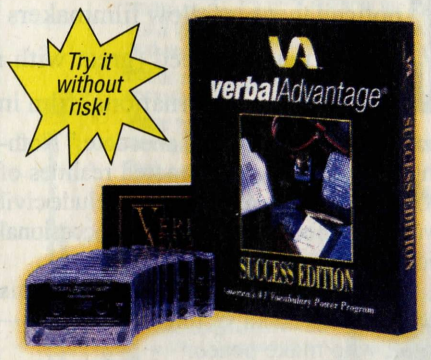

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FILMS

Back to Beginnings

STUART KLAWANS

GENESIS • SWEET AND LOWDOWN

Cheick Oumar Sissoko, who lives and works in Mali, has looked around and noticed that his fellow filmmakers in sub-Saharan Africa are few—"and due to our financial need (great with regard to our savings, though meager in relation to the international film industry), it seems to me that our films are not allowed the luxury of anecdote." Nothing less than "the deep-rooted realities of Africa" will do—realities that include civil war and genocide, as well as the occasional hope of reconciliation.

So he begins his new film with this dedication: "To all victims of fratricide—to all who make peace."

Set within a parched landscape dominated by a flat, steep-sided mountain, Sissoko's film is a tale of interrelated yet warring tribes: an encampment of nomadic herders, a troop of hunters and brigands, an agricultural community living within a town of rough stone walls. These people and their setting may seem primitive (to a contemporary African viewer, no less than to an American). And yet, as we quickly learn, the characters feel themselves to be anything but timeless. Certainties and restraints have crumbled; a younger generation, respecting no law, piles havoc upon mass murder, mass murder upon rape. The fiercest of the old leaders watches from a distance, waiting only for his chance at plunder and revenge. The wisest retreats to his tent, planning to mourn away what remains of his life.

Such is the Africa that Sissoko depicts in *Genesis*, his adaptation of the Jacob cycle in the first book of the Bible.

A work of deep conscience and imagination, of great visual beauty and human presences that are indelibly strong, *Genesis* proves to be a remarkably faithful adaptation, despite the relocation of the action to the southwest. Nor is it a violation of the text that Sissoko (aided by screenwriter Jean-Louis Sagot-Duvauroux) takes liberties with the chronology. Like the ancient rabbis, who deliberately ignored "before" and "after" in their readings of the Bible, the filmmakers reorder events to make Jacob the thoroughly abject figure you see at the start of *Genesis*.

He is a hunted man, relentlessly pursued by his brother Esau (played by music star Salif Keita). Standing on a hill overlooking Jacob's encampment, Esau narrows his eyes and howls an echoing denunciation of his brother for having long ago taken his birthright—stolen it, to Esau's way of thinking. Now Esau and his men circle like predators, waiting for the prey to weaken.

Yet when we see Jacob (Sotigui Kouyaté), we find he is already helpless and alone. His favored wife, Rachel, has died. Her son Joseph, who was to be Jacob's heir, is missing, supposedly torn to pieces by wild beasts. The real beasts, as Jacob knows only too well, are the sons of his other wife, the unloved Leah, who sits in bitterness outside his tent.

As if to complete the misery, a local prince rapes Jacob's daughter, Dina (Fatoumata Diawara). Although the young man quickly repents and asks to marry Dina—who seems willing to accept this restitution—Jacob is unable to enforce the peace he negotiates. Ignoring their father's wishes, Leah's sons go off and murder every man in the prince's town, down to the howling infants, so that only the chief is left—old Hamor (Balla Moussa Keita), Jacob's distant cousin. He lives to bear witness to Jacob's uselessness, while Dina, driven mad, hangs by Hamor's side, laughing and mocking.

All this, and more that's equally desperate, you may find in the Bible itself. What you won't find is the stampede through the corn, as Leah's sons drive their cattle through crops on the way toward the massacre. In the Bible, you won't find shadows stretching onward in late afternoon, as the killing draws to its close; you won't see how characters scoop handfuls of dust onto their faces, to demonstrate their grief. Some of Sissoko's inventions seem to spring directly from African storytelling: for example, an episode of burlesque playacting, which later calls to account one of Leah's miscreant sons. Other devices are purely cinematic, such as the color-coding of the

costumes. The mournful Jacob dresses in blue and keeps his head wrapped in a turban; Hamor is in white, topped by a tasseled hat that is surely meant to evoke a limp penis; Esau, who rages beneath a broad, arrowlike cap, wears the color of baked clay and dried blood.

And then there is the flight of brilliance with which Sissoko brings the film to its climax. With Esau closing in and redemption apparently out of his grasp, Jacob passes the night wrestling with God, or an angel, or (as the Bible says) "a man." Rather than show the face of any of the above, Sissoko has a swarm of small boys scurry out of the brush, to surround Jacob with an accusing chorus. The effect is stunning—not least because, in a single gesture, it moves *Genesis* from the primitivism of Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* to the high modernism of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*.

For those who have seen his 1995 feature *Guimba* (another film that uses a long-ago setting and bigger-than-life characters for sophisticated, contemporary purposes), *Genesis* will confirm that Cheick Oumar Sissoko is a very rare artist—and not only because he's from Mali. After being featured in New York City in the 7th African Diaspora Film Festival, the picture is now having a brief theatrical run at Anthology Film Archives. Hurry down.

If anecdote is a luxury, as Sissoko says, then Woody Allen flaunts his riches in *Sweet and Lowdown*. Here, as in *Broadway Danny Rose*, Allen calls a variety of witnesses onto the screen to tell stories of a legendary showbiz figure. Most of the stories go nowhere; several are contradictory. But then, we have to expect to meander when we're dealing with a great thirties jazzman such as Emmet Ray. As Allen himself puts it, Ray was not only a beautiful musician but also remarkably funny, "or, or, pathetic." This makes him hard to pin down, as does the fact that he didn't exist.

He's also a new character, which is something Allen has been needing for a while. In place of the too-well-known nebbish artist, we now have a sharp-dressing, gun-toting sneak thief and pimp. He's the cad that Woody Allen's other alter egos have aspired to be: Sean Penn, in a crisp white suit.

Penn has let his hair grow long and wavy for the role and has given himself a twirled mustache. He's taken on the period glamour of a Ronald Colman, but he carries himself like Oliver Hardy. You see something fastidious and fragile in his swagger—which is how self-doubt might

come to the surface in a man who has no inner life.

Amid the Depression-era roadhouses and dance halls (which are given a soft, pastel glow by cinematographer Zhao Fei), Emmet Ray is a self-proclaimed king, "the greatest guitar player in the world." Trailing behind this boast comes a supplemental murmur, "Except for this Gypsy in France." This is as close as Emmet Ray comes to self-knowledge, or wants to come: He recognizes in Django Reinhardt's playing a soulfulness that his own music lacks. For most of the movie, this Django-envy serves as a running gag, which Penn performs with absolute aplomb, as if trying to shake loose a piece of paper glued to his heel. Only at the end, when the anecdote meanders toward its brief purpose, does something resembling thought pass across Ray's forehead. The thought is of Hattie (Samantha Morton), the young woman who gave Ray everything he wanted, from mute adoration to ready sex and back again. Why did he dump her? He doesn't know, and I don't, either. I only know that such things do happen, and that Morton somehow stands up against Penn while giving a wholly wordless performance. She's a mimelike waif, whose resemblance to Giulietta Masina in *Nights of Cabiria* probably isn't a coincidence. Allen has made no secret of his admiration for Fellini. Perhaps *Sweet and Lowdown* might be described as his own version of *Nights of Cabiria*, focused not on the prostitute but on the first man who robs and abandons her.

Does that make *Sweet and Lowdown* a perverse project? The answer depends on what you see on the man's face. Penn, who has his own bad-boy image to maintain, is nothing less than astonishing as Emmet Ray. In an actorly tour de force, he matches the character's flamboyance to the point of actually fingering Ray's solos (played on the soundtrack by Howard Alden). But after all that ostentation, the high point of his performance is a single, quiet close-up, held while Ray plays an old tune and thinks of Hattie.

It's a privileged moment, for Allen no less than for the audience. If you permit yourself the luxury of anecdotes, then *Sweet and Lowdown* is a privilege to enjoy.

Book Note: These are bad days for artists who are troublemakers—I mean troublemakers in their art, rather than in roadhouses. To cite one example: the current campaign to remake Norman Rockwell into a man of sorrows, whose work, long insulted by elitists, can now be vindicated. To cite another: a recent article in the *New York Times* by novelist Scott Turow, who from his perch high on the bestseller lists looks down upon James Joyce. *Ulysses* can't possibly be as good as *Presumed Innocent*, Turow thinks. *Ulysses* is difficult; *Ulysses* is not popular.

So where does that leave Jean-Luc Godard? In the hands, I'm glad to say, of David Sterritt, whose book *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible* has just been published by Cambridge University Press. A volume in the Cambridge Film Classics paperback series, Sterritt's book provides just the guidance that a curious but less-than-full-time filmgoer will need in approaching this difficult, unpopular and absolutely essential body of work. With becoming modesty, Sterritt holds back from making his writing imitate Godard's formal innovations. Nor does he follow Godard (or Joyce) in scattering unexplained allusions throughout the text. He simply applies a clear-headed prose to a subject he's thoroughly mastered. The reader, encouraged, may venture forth with confidence, to let trouble spring (as it should) from every corner of the films. ■

Whatever It Is

I took some stones
from the overgrown fireplace
not too far from the maples
my father planted
that have outlived the house.
I have the tiny diamond
Aunt Barbara got from the man
she never spoke about
in my presence; today
only three people in the world
have any memory of her.
Here's a diary entry I made
as a teenager: "Cicero says
one of the 'six mistakes of man'
is to worry about things that
cannot be changed or corrected."

The stones are in the basement.
The diamond's in the vault.
Since I live in the country,
every spring I give a handful
of my hair clippings to the birds,
tie it in a bunch near a feeder
and let them pick at it to weave
into their nests, and perhaps into
their songs, these little
descendants of dinosaurs who
sing and sing and we smile at them
because we think their song says
"nothing to worry about,
nothing to worry about."

Ed Ochester

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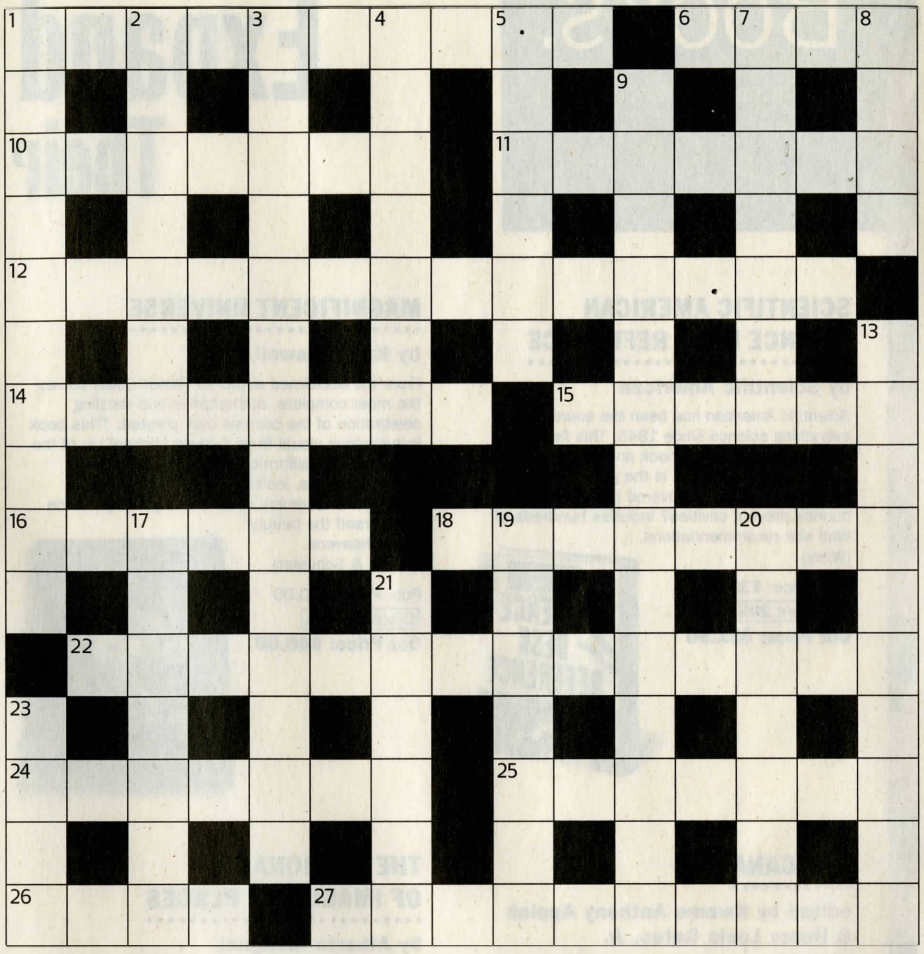
PUZZLE NO. 2734

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Often called wee in the AM—obviously for just a little time. (5,5)

6 With three or more masts, it has the sound of a real dog! (4)

10 Some of the sailors fired because it might be on top of them? (4-3)

11 Not knowing that the international organization has a big fight—but there's some point to it. (7)

12 Inventors of things to help what ails you might—which you can buy at the pharmacy. (6,8)

14 Sounds like a real comedown's what the court does at times. (8)

15 They say that's how we stand, if we're not looking forward to the fall. (6)

16 What something retroussé should do and eventually appear. (4,2)

18 Perhaps the knotty kind, but it should be easy to see through. (4-4)

22 "Get up!" and "Take your punishment!" might be posted on the bulletin board. (8,6)

24 A hundred parts of the wheel attached, which could provide some color. (7)

25 The place having more taste? (7)

26 and **27** The puma pounces, obviously—but they're not regularly called so. (7,7)

DOWN

1 Said to be somewhat like little toads, but they could be psycho to the workers. (10)

2 One who helps discover the way more to your choice? (7)

3 Does this have a rakish quality? (14)

4 Empire type of a place to sit or put your feet? (7)

5 At least parts of the fight should provide drinks for everyone. (6)

7 Not in favor of this, at winnings inside it. (7)

8 Part of the castle used to hold things. (4)

9 Keep step with one or you'll end up looking foolish on the floor. (7,7)

13 Apportions something, but they might be only a half-inch in the notice column. (10)

17 One must have been in court before to have one soak the den up. (7)

19 Get this straight! They're only small parts! (7)

20 This funny bloke is pointedly made to remember something important! (7)

21 She had a shrewish sister. (6)

23 Such craft isn't associated with trimness. (4)

EVEN HOMER NODS

In Puzzle No. 2729 in the November 15 issue, the answer to 4 down should have been NAHUATL, which renders ISTHMUS, the answer to 17 across, null.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2733

B	E	T	T	E	R	O	F	F	■	T	H	R	O	B
L	■	R	■	P	■	R	■	I	■	I	■	A	■	R
U	N	I	T	I	N	G	■	N	E	E	D	S	T	O
R	■	G	■	T	■	A	■	G	■	R	■	C	■	K
B	I	G	■	H	U	N	T	E	R	■	G	A	M	E
■	■	E	■	E	■	I	■	R	■	B	■	L	■	R
H	A	R	M	L	E	S	S	■	A	L	A	S	K	A
A	■	■	■	I	■	M	■	B	■	A	■	■	■	G
L	E	B	R	U	N	■	P	U	R	C	H	A	S	E
F	■	E	■	M	■	B	■	L	■	K	■	D	■	■
H	A	R	D	■	B	O	I	L	E	D	■	E	G	G
I	■	M	■	R	■	B	■	E	■	E	■	L	■	O
T	O	U	P	E	E	S	■	T	R	A	P	P	E	R
C	■	D	■	N	■	U	■	I	■	T	■	H	■	S
H	E	A	R	T	■	P	U	N	C	H	L	I	N	E

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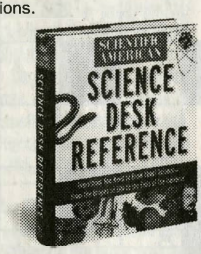

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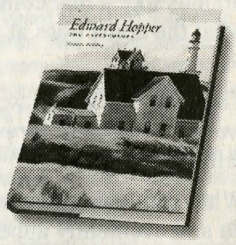

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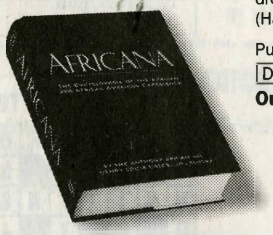

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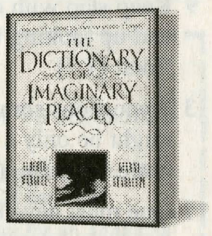

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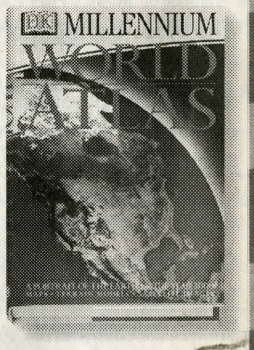

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