

New Perspectives on Politics, Culture and Media

clamor

December00/January01

Ushering in Holiday Cheer

Economic Inequality During Times of Prosperity

Police Battle Protesters 1968-2000

Human Rights in Mexico

Rich vs. Poor in an American College Town

Media Alliance takes on NAB

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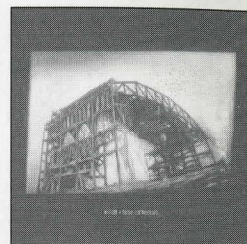
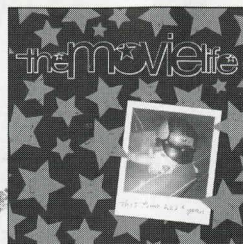
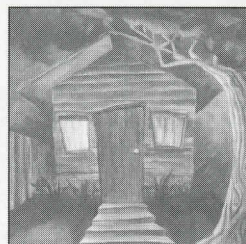
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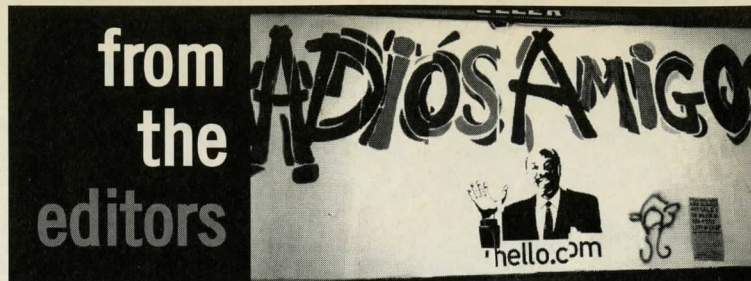
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Inequality takes many forms, and media coverage of these issues is pathetic. While there will be plenty of sensationalized "human interest" stories this holiday season about families who are temporarily down on their luck, there will no doubt be an absence of any mention of people who are poor the other 364 days a year. The family who is spending this Christmas at a YMCA because their house caught on fire will take the center stage while the millions of people whose day-to-day lives consist of soup kitchens and housing shelters will be largely ignored. We have come to expect such a lack of context from mainstream media. We don't expect the local news to delve into the infinite, yet identifiable, factors that work to create a society of built-in economic inequality.

That doesn't remove the power that local and national "news" programs have on creating the reality that people believe is the "current state of things." It's basically a scenario where people have no idea how divided the US is along economic lines, because they don't have the information to make an informed decision. We're told repeatedly that we are experiencing a time of prosperity, but how many of us feel this prosperity?

This holiday season is a good time for alternative media to reflect on inequality in America. Conscious attention needs to be paid to the harmful effects of rampant, concentrated economic growth at the sake of America's poor and working class population. Consciousness isn't enough though, and we should look to each other for suggestions on how to deal with institutionalized inequality that is built on and reinforces sexism, racism, classism and homophobia. We need to look to each other rather than to self-declared experts, "moral" leaders or politicians for answers, because no one is more capable of understanding our situations than we are. We need to look to each other for inspiration and education because we are the ones with the real know-how needed to implement programs that will sufficiently address problems in our communities and in the world. A simple glance at *Clamor's* readers and writers illustrates that we are not the population of complacent apolitical consumers that is played up in the media. Our readers are activists working on a number of levels; whether it is marching on the nation's capital or teaching kids or engaging in a challenging debate with co-workers, friends or family members. *Clamor* readers recognize that the problems facing our society are not easily solved by single-issue solutions, and they recognize that well-rounded, well-informed lives that mesh philosophy and daily action create the necessary climate for change.

In recognition of how important alternative media is to the creation of such a climate, we have put together another issue that touches on a number of tangible factors for why inequality persists in this world. Unlike conspiracy theorists or politicians who rely on bogey-men or scapegoats to explain social and political ills, we attempt to hold people, organizations and institutions responsible for their actions. We have attempted to highlight a few issues of inequality that deserve more attention. From the obviousness of class stratification in Scott Indrisek's piece on New Brunswick, NJ, to the more subtle issue of corporate and media consolidation advocated by the National Association of Broadcasters. This imbalance of power in media is discussed at length in the interview with Media Alliance's Andrea Buffa. This inequity in media extends to how mass media (and our own alternative media) chooses to report on certain topics. Consider the difference between the reporting on atrocities in Chiapas and in Guerrero, Mexico. Michelle Luellen and Heather Pruess' article discuss the current situation there, and as the title says, "Mexico is more than just Chiapas."

Of course, we all recognize that our lives do not exist entirely in an often draining world of politics and economics, and that is why *Clamor* also celebrates the lives and culture of everyday people. What we do in our spare time when we're not out smashing the state is, in the end, just as important and valuable. We hope you enjoy this issue!

Jason K. Jen Angel

Pictured above: "Adios Amigos—Hello Dot.Com" This graffiti welcomes the Dot Com revolution to San Francisco's Mission District—a traditionally lower class, minority neighborhood experiencing rapid gentrification. Photo taken near 14th and Valencia in September.

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A Loud And Continued Uproar Of Many Human Voices • Number Six • December00/January01



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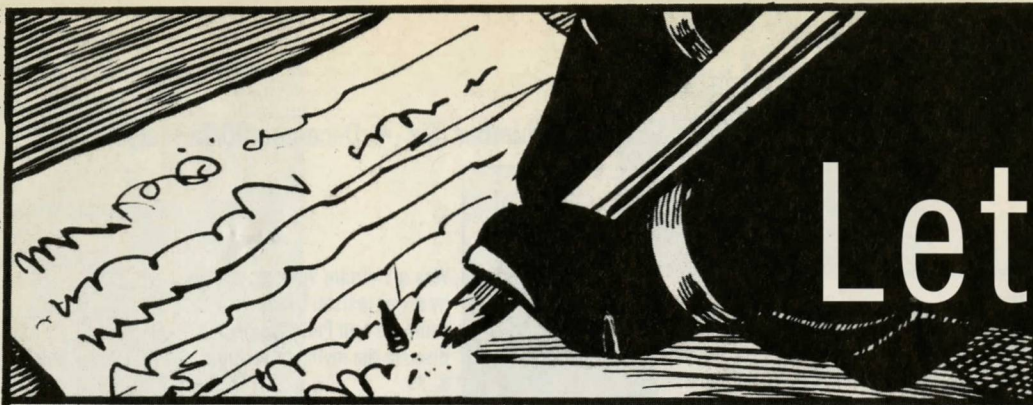
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Letters

please address any correspondence to letters@clamormagazine.org or via USPS at PO Box 1225 Bowling Green, OH 43402

Dear Clamor:

I received a copy of your magazine because I was interviewed for your August/September 2000 issue. I was impressed!

In addition, I'd like to comment on the article by Loolwa Khazzoom entitled "Oreo Cookie Feminists." Ms. Khazzoom tells a fascinating story of her going to conferences of the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS). By the end, she came to the conclusion that whatever issue a group addresses inevitably will rear its head within that group.

I'd take that even further in this particular case. It's indeed not surprising that at the NOMAS conferences—year after year—there were men violating boundaries with women. I believe that this is a case of a deep-seated problem, one of misunderstanding sexism. Yes, men make more money than women, men are more likely to be CEOs and in other positions of economic and political power, and men are physically stronger than women. This results in sexism: a system of advantage based upon sex.

But, for some reason, it's not politically correct to equally acknowledge any system of advantage based upon sex that is disadvantageous to men. It is there. For example: Men are 80 percent of the homeless, 80 percent of the drug addicts, the overwhelming vast majority of the prison population, and men have a life expectancy that is seven years less than for women. That last item—life expectancy—is one that is commonly cited as proof of an "ism"; for example, Native and African Americans have a shorter life expectancy than whites. It's not usually cited about men versus women. But it's there.

My point is that sexism, unlike racism, is not a clear one-way phenomenon. I believe it goes in both directions. Those who go to NOMAS conferences at least outwardly believe that it is a clear one-way phenomenon. Men who really buy into that begin to internalize the message that men are the cause of all the problems in the world, and that men are, therefore, basically second-class citizens. And if we men are to have any redeeming

qualities, the minimum requirement would be to acknowledge that we're solely responsible for the screwed up world in which we live, and we must constantly say that to women. While feminist gatherings may not say these words literally, this message is perceived by many; and literally articulated by some.

To me, then, it's no wonder that men who buy into that, have an understandable, but hidden revolt going on inside them which can manifest itself in highly ironic, inappropriate shadow behavior.

I'm a radical pacifist, a conscientious objector to the military, and an anti-corporatist peace and justice activist. I firmly believe in gender equality (and sexual orientation equality). But, I do not buy that sexism is all to the disadvantage of women. My bet would be that if Ms. Khazzoom would attend another sort of men's gathering, one which truly and unashamedly honors both men and women for being—deep inside—worthy human beings, then she would be much less likely to come across the boundary violation behavior that she did.

Michael Fogler,
Lexington, KY

Hey y'all,

The new issue is great. I've been impressed with Clamor from the outset, and things just keep getting better. Some of the pieces in this latest issue are just superb; Attica ("Life in Attica," Sep/Oct), the insightful and important article on Arab/Israeli relations ("A Big Piece is Missing in this Peace," Sep/Oct) and keeping up on important stuff like the sanctions on Iraq ("In Our Name," Sep/Oct).

My one real complaint is with Vique Martin's article ("Alive in Africa," Sep/Oct) especially as a cover piece.

Vique writes about her experiences in Africa with nary a nod towards the issues of being a wealthy white person traveling abroad, not to mention in a country that is so brutally familiar with colonization by first world nations.

She writes that, "All you need is a friend to travel with, a Rough Guide/Lonely Planet book

and the dough."

I would suggest that we also need to keep in mind a very healthy dose of the privileges that entail being a (relatively) wealthy white person traveling in these countries. We don't exist in a vacuum, outside of the complex web of imperialism, global capitalism, and racism that gives us the access to these places.

She mentions her first sight of coffee plantations, "providing the first thrill of the day." This is the only mention, in any context, of the nefarious practices of global capitalism which continue to ravage developing countries, as well as allowing us white adventure travel kids access to these countries. That plantation is most likely owned by a multinational corporation, which has its homebase in a first world nation, just as the author of this piece does. Not to compare Vique outright to a multinational, but in this context the two aren't completely disconnected, either.

I'm not trying to speak for the men that Vique shared beer and conversation with on her trip to Mt. Kilimanjaro; I'm not trying to imply that she herself was oppressing these men, or anyone else in Africa, with her nationality or money. I'm sure that those men were happy to hang out with her, and didn't seem to feel any resentment towards her at all. This stuff is complex, though, and what I mean to say is that I would like to have seen this article acknowledge the complexities of cultural exchanges such as those, as well as the context that it occurred in. That this exchange took place at all is amazing and wonderful, but I'm sure it helped that these men spoke "brilliant english," rather than Vique being able to converse with them in their home language.

I don't mean to tear anyone down or devalue anyone's experience; it's just that keeping a critical eye to this stuff is the kind of thing I've come to expect from a magazine with the radical perspective that Clamor is a shining example of.

John Gerken
Little Rock, AR

Dear Clamor,

Reading Vique Martin's "Alive In Africa" (Sep/Oct) was a disappointing experience for me. The article came across like the infamous slide show that bores the relatives (especially where she implores the reader to look at the picture of how happy she is). She references the Lonely Planet guidebook, but if I wanted the Lonely Planet version of Africa, I'd watch a Lonely Planet video. At least Lonely Planet attempts to infuse some sense of social consciousness into its travel guides. The closest Martin comes to questioning her status as a traveler, unfortunately, is when she cites her conscience as a reason for not giving the natives money for taking their pictures. Since very other aspect of her trip reflects a consumerist approach, where any experience—exotic animals, exotic beers, exotic accommodations—can be obtained through the exchange of currency, her discomfort seems odd.

Running this type of travel article in this magazine is trouble to me, since Clamor purports to be "a loud and countinuous uproar of many human voices." More and more, the voices I'm reading in Clamor are of the 20-something middle class set, evidenced in most of the other articles in this issues. (It's not like I'm not 25 and middle class myself, but I hope to defy that as much as possible.) This certainly undermines the diversity you aim to attract.

In Martin's piece in particular, I take offense at her closing sentences: "I went to the plains of the Serengeti and saw real lions. I did it. It was my pilgrimage. It was what I had to do for myself, to show myself that if I want something badly enough I can do it. No matter how many miles have to be traveled or oceans crossed—I can get there. I can." Certainly you can, but the natives you observed, like nine-tenths of the world's population—literally—are not as privileged. Not that they should be, either, because the politics of desire and the culture of travel promoted in the "developed" world are environmentally unsustainable.

I suppose Martin meant it to be an empowering statement, while perhaps implying a superior sneer at those whose lower class status only allow them to see lions in zoos or in National Geographic. Far be it from me to preach to Martin what fancies she should or should not indulge in, but a magazine like Clamor, which previously has run an excellent article critiquing automobile culture, for instance, certainly does not have to promote it.

Vincent Romano
White Plains, NY

Clamor,

perhaps polyamory proposes producing a practical plus pulsating perspective on people's possibilities promoting inclusivity and love and challenging possessiveness... presumably everyone prefers to perpetually feel beautiful, alive and loved...polyamory possibly permits propagating

new modes of friendship in which free individuals can genuinely experience love

we might recall that the nuclear family is a VERY recent device... absent for all but this brief moment in time... the connection between sex and conception was unknown for almost all of human existence... possibly polyamory promotes re-membering the communal life that, perhaps, we all desire...

m/sz
toledohio

Clamor readers,

I'm putting together a collection of essays for a Punk Reader. The purpose of the book is to spread the word about DIY politics, music, aesthetics/art, subjectivities, and art. But this isn't a zine reader: it's a book of essays, and it will explain and teach about punk to a wide audience.

Needed: writings about DIY, anarchism, veganism, animal rights, dumpster diving, squatting and/or punk houses, music, style (or anti-style), authentic punk vs. inauthentic punk, homocore, survival skills, EarthFirst!, ecology, food, FNB, drugs, spirituality, views of the Mainstream, ideology, philosophy, subjectivity, socialism/communism, what is a punk, on being a punk, corporate/commodified culture, stealing/scamming, sabotage, crime, cops, non-violence, the Spectacle, the State, the System, the diversity of punk, punks and Whiteness/race, punks and class, labeling/looking "punk" or not, technology, why/where/how/who/what/when of punk, punk by other names, resistance/revolution/revolt, commodification of punk music/style, strategies for punk, instructions on living the punk life, feminism, the history of punk, history of any of the above, the future of punk, et cetera.

Also needed: web URLs + book/essay titles for "further reading" section. Much desired: artwork (drawings, photos, cartoons, comix). Zines are enthusiastically welcomed, but please include a note pointing to the most relevant pages. Divergent views on punk are encouraged.

About me: I'm an anarcho-punk, born in 1969, grew up in Berkeley, traveled around, did my Ph.D. in anthropology on Seattle punx. I work at the University of Colorado. I am an activist, and I see punk as a powerful force for a better world. I'm also an academic and I will include several academic essays. I'm doing this my way with help and suggestions; if you don't like it you can DIY!

Please include your conditions/restrictions (if any) for publication, your contact info, and a little about yourself. All submissions subject to editing for space. I can't return your stuff, so send copies, not originals. Send me questions/concerns/comments if you like.

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This is a call for essays on Anarchist Perspectives on New Social Movements

The Institute for Anarchist Studies is offering a \$1000 award for an essay that advances anarchist perspectives on the new social movements represented by recent and on-going international anti-globalization protests. Essays should address this movement in a fashion that links theory to practice in order to contribute to the emergence of new anarchist praxis - theory informed by practice. Essays can address a variety of issues and perspectives but keep in mind that we are interested in contemporary viewpoints.

Submissions should be between 3000 and 10,000 words. Written work already funded by the IAS will not be considered. The winning essay will receive \$1000 and excerpts will be published in the IAS newsletter. Deadline for submissions is January 1, 2001. Please send nine copies of your essay along with a brief description of yourself and your activities to the address below. (Submissions must be in English.) Website: <http://flag.blackened.net/ias/>

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clamor contributors

Jered Bogli (p. 63) has published his zine, *(em) enobled mind*, since 1993. In addition to the zine and a full time job he teaches snowboarding part time in the winter, skates a bunch, does publishing-related workshops at the Independent Publishers Resource Center, eats lot of veggie sushi, and has recently been doing a lot of work on the house he just bought. He can be reached care of *clamor*.

Sean Carswell (p. 86) is the author of the novel *Drinks for the Little Guy* and publisher of the zine *Talk Story*. He spends way too much time reading left wing literature and watching movies he checks out from the library. You can reach him at gorskyco@aol.com or PO Box 320504 / Cocoa Beach, FL 32932.

Andy Cornell (p. 84) is a 23 year-old activist and writer. For a copy of the long-awaited fourth issue of his zine, *The Secret Files of Captain Sissy* send \$3 to 3907 Wedgwood Dr. / Portage, MI 49024. For correspondence or to hang out, email him at captainsissy@girlswirl.net

Chris Crass (p. 78) is a writer/organizer working to bridge race, class and gender analysis of power with anarchist theory and practice. He has been on organizer with Food Not Bombs for the past eight years and is currently working with the Challenging White Supremacy Workshop to bring anti-racist organizing into the movements against global capitalism and can be reached at chriscrass1886@hotmail.com.

Phil Dickinson (p. 42) is a 16 year-old boy masquerading as a 36 year-old man. He was recently awarded his Pd.D. in American Culture Studies from Bowling Green State University, where he currently teaches. He also plays drums in The Orgones, a garage punk band. He can be reached at 503 North Main #B, Bowling Green, OH 43402 or at pdickin@bgsu.edu

Daniel Fernandez (p. 19) lives in New York and is a graduate student in the philosophy department at the New School for Social Research. His research interests include political theory and discourse analysis. He is also part of the Executive Committee of Philippine Forum, which seeks to organize Filipino/as in the New York area for social and political change. Currently, he is working on a documentary about dissent in America. He can be reached care of *clamor*.

Travis Fristoe (p. 14) is usually either too critical or too positive. for more reactionary & jargon-laden "insights," write to box 13077 / gainesville, FL 32604.

John Gerken (p. 44) is hobo-erotic, smells like freight trains and bike chains. He is currently involved with putting together the *DIY Book* with Tree of Knowledge Distributions as well as various projects concerning handmade maps, which you should make and send to him. He can be reached care of Tree of Knowledge at PO Box 251766 / Little Rock, AR 72225

J. Gerlach (p. 31) takes breaks from frequent travels in his hometown of Minneapolis where he rides bicycles and works on various projects including the zine, *Breakfast Served All Day*. He can be reached at 1827 Fifth St. NE / Minneapolis, MN. 55418.

All of **Richard Gilman-Opalsky's** (p. 20) various moving parts operate under his close discretion. He likes to spend good times with snuggly Robyn and the cuddly cats. He likes to read, make music, and write essays like a mighty ideologue. He studies philosophy at the New School in NYC for the MA and Ph.D. He also seeks to use his hands, legs, and mouth to make noises that draw attention to social, political and economic inequities... He is a pretty skilled wordsmith, and considers his mouth a weapon... Direct all love letters and hate mail to thoughtandaction@yahoo.com

Shawn Granton (p. 32) has published the mini-comic *Ten Foot Rule* for over three years. The comic covers a whole range of styles and subject matters, mostly on the humorous side. He also publishes *Modern Industry*, an anthology that contains some of the best creators the small press has to offer. *Ten Foot Rule* is \$1ppd and *Modern Industry* is \$2ppd. Contact Shawn at 110 Pacific Ave, #296/ San Francisco, CA 94111 or at shawntfr@hotmail.com

Mandy Hackley (p. 43) is a graduate student at Kent State University. She has a pet frog (named Garp) and hopes one day to be Canadian. She can be reached care of *clamor*.

Bob Helms (p. 67) is presently releasing the 8th issue of his zine, *Guinea Pig Zero: A Journal For Human Research Subjects, and volunteers for drug experiments on a professional basis*. He is putting together a book on the anarchist movement in Philadelphia around the turn of the 20th Century. He can be reached at gpzero@netaxs.com.

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m/sz (p. 56) activist basketballer chef deejay dance enthusiast frequently found in "toledohio" - currently co-editing a children's DIY book with sarah s scott and helping to host toledo's no borders culinary carnival a gathering and street party exploring all aspects of FOOD—precisely production • privation • preparation • preservation • plus the proliferation of pleasure for the palate... june 1•2•3 2001 alienated access: mszuberla@yahoo.com or 535winthrop / toledohio 43620

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THE COP

AND THE CROWD

Police Strategies for Keeping the Rabble in Line

words by Kristian Williams

photos by Greg Fuchs

Police fear crowds. Crowds are dangerous, especially for authorities. Crowds are unpredictable. They allow for anonymity, or the feeling of anonymity, and thus breed courage. And, with any crowd worthy of the name, the police are certain to be outnumbered.

The need to control crowds is a permanent feature of political authority, but it presents a special set of problems in alleged democracies. The difficulty is especially acute when crowds gather for an explicitly political purpose. Open repression may have unfavorable political repercussions, and neutrality or acquiescence are not options for anyone who wants to remain in power. The question remains, always, *how* to control the crowd, not *whether* to do so.

This is not a matter that anyone who is politically active can afford to ignore. There has recently been a perceptible shift in the level of police response to large demonstrations, beginning with the WTO protests in Seattle. In the year since then, riot gear has become a fairly common sight. Police seem increasingly ready to use tear gas and less-lethal munitions. And, in connection with any significantly large event, pre-emptive arrests and no-protest zones have become almost standard. It is with this in mind that we must proceed, considering the various ways this problem has been addressed in the United States over the past 40 years, with reference to the broader social forces which have shaped the policing of protest during that time.

The History and Theory of Crowd Control since the 1960's

There are two modes of response available to police when confronting crowds. They carry the names "escalated force" and "negotiated management" (McPhail 50). "As its name indicates, the escalated force style of protest policing was characterized by the use of force as a standard way of dealing with demonstrations. Police confronted demonstrators with a dramatic show of force and followed with a progressively escalated use of force if demonstrators failed to abide by police instructions to limit or stop their activities." (McPhail 53). Such force could take different forms. Sometimes, arrests quickly followed any violation of the law, or even occurred where no law had been broken. These arrests were forceful and were often used to target and remove "troublemakers." Other times, police would use force in lieu of arrests, either to disperse the crowd or to issue summary punishment against those who disobeyed their orders (McPhail 53). First amendment rights were generally ignored (McPhail 51). "Well-known demonstrations in which police used the escalated force approach include those in the Birmingham civil rights campaign (May 1963), the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention, and the confrontation between student protesters and National Guard soldiers at Kent State University (May 1970)" (McPhail 50-51).

The differences between escalated force and negotiated management are clear. Under the negotiated management model, "Police do not try to prevent demonstrations, but attempt to limit the amount of disruption they cause. . . . Police attempt to steer demonstrations to times and places where disruption will be minimized. . . . Even civil disobedience, by definition illegal, is not usually problematic for police; they often cooperate with protesters when their civil disobedience is intentionally symbolic" (McPhail 52). Under negotiated management, arrests are used only as a last resort, and only used against individuals who have clearly violated the law (McPhail 53). Force, likewise, is kept to a minimum. Rather than trying to disperse the crowd, the police plan so as to contain it.

With this management model, police focus on preventing a disturbance, rather than responding to one. They do this by negotiating with protest organizers, by reaching agreements on elements such as the route of the march, by regulating demonstrations through a system of permits, and by encouraging organizers to provide their own marshals and exercise discipline over the group as a whole.

Negotiated management was designed to correct for the excesses and shortcomings of the escalated force model. Following the urban riots of the 1960's, several commissions were set up to study the disturbances, their causes, and the police response to them. Most prominent among these were the Kerner, Eisenhower, and Seranton Commissions. All three bodies found that police actions against crowds often exacerbated, and in some cases provoked, the civil disorder. Consequently, they advised a number of changes take place in police handling of demonstrations. The Kerner Commission, for instance, recommended a strategy emphasizing manpower over firepower, prevention over reaction, and increased management and regimentation of the police.

What strikes the contemporary reader about these reports is the apparent schizophrenia of them all. They decry social injustice with criticisms of racial discrimination, prison conditions, and the plight of the urban poor. They push for greater inclusivity at all levels for society. But they also denounce the activities by which attention was successfully brought to these problems and change affected. The Eisenhower report explicitly denounces civil disobedience and the Seranton report insists that those responsible for campus unrest be disciplined. These reports push for rigorous adherence to Constitutional guarantees of free speech and the like, while at the same time offering precise

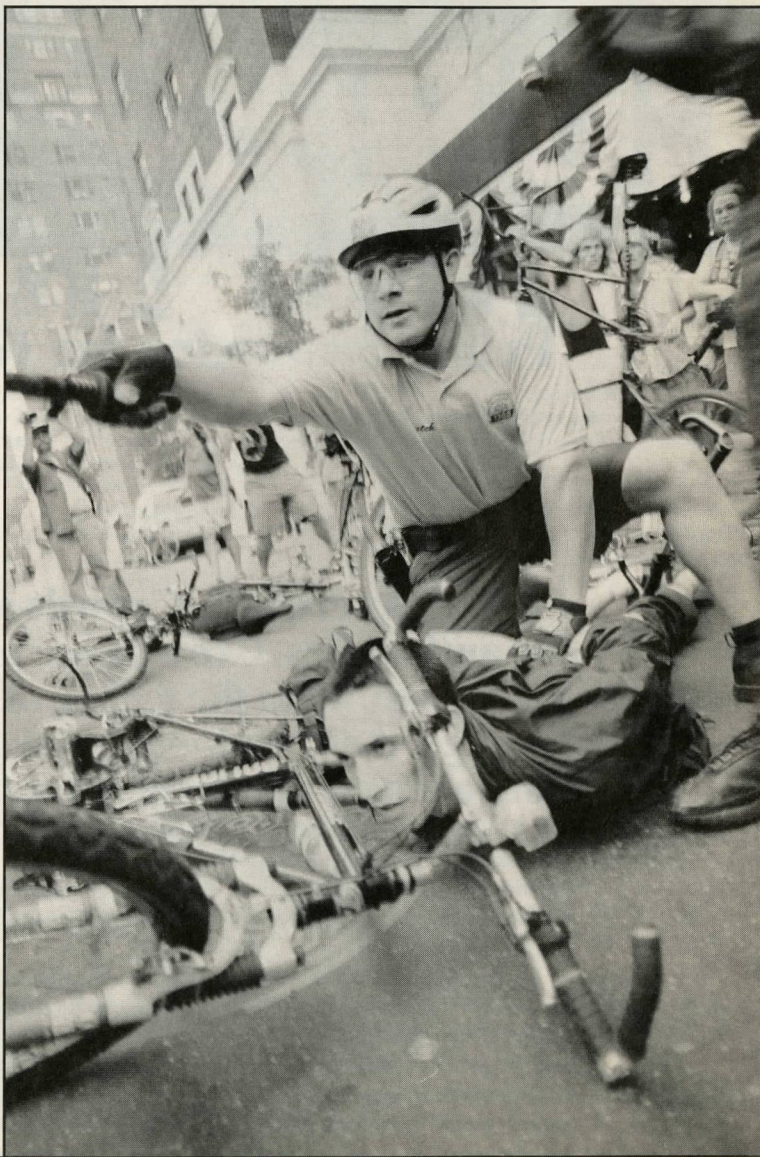
instruction on the means of limiting, containing, and controlling protests.

It is tempting to read such documents as well-intentioned but politically naive defenses of the rule of law. But, rather more appropriately, one might also understand them as handbooks for social managers and others responsible for controlling dissent. Taken as such, their advocacy of civil liberties and the principle of minimal force reflect the sophistication of the liberal approach to repression. Negotiated management was an innovation in the means of crowd control, but the basic aim remains unchanged. Both negotiated management and escalated force represent a defense of the status quo.

Seattle: A Tuning Point

Given this background, it is easy to see why the Seattle police were ill-prepared for what happened at the WTO protests in November of 1999. According to the Seattle Police Department's *After Action Report* police planners adopted a negotiated management strategy early on and failed to consider contingencies which would make other options necessary. Despite well-publicized plans to disrupt the WTO conference, the police decided to "Trust that Seattle's strong historical precedents of peaceful protest and our on-going negotiations with protests groups would govern the actions of demonstrators" (Kimerer 18).

In this, they were twice disappointed. Not only did radicals refuse to play the game by its usual rules, even respectable protest groups were unable to keep their members in line. Hence, when police changed the route of the permitted AFL march, hoping to keep union members away from the downtown disturbance, they were surprised when several



After dispersing a crowd in front of City Hall, police clamp down on RNC protesters in Philadelphia at 17th and Locust.

thousand of the marchers ignored the marshals, left the route, and joined the fray (Kimerer 40).

The SPD offered this analysis of their mistake: "While we needed to think about a new paradigm of disruptive protest, we relied on our knowledge of past demonstrations, concluding that the 'worst case' would not occur here" (Kimerer 3).

Such blindness is a typical fault of police agencies. Equally typical is the panic that follows a defeat—a panic felt not only in Seattle, but around the country, resulting in the sudden shift in police tactics at demonstrations nationwide. "Changes and learning processes of the police are initiated by an analyses of problematic public order interventions, that is, the police learn from their failures. . . . The importance of the body of past experience, however, seems such that it prevents the police from anticipating change. Tactical and strategic errors in confrontations with new movements and protest forms may trigger off a relapse into an antagonistic protest policing style" (della Porta and Reiter 30).

The response from the authorities has sadly lacked imagination. In general, the analyses of the police defeat in Seattle fall into roughly two categories—those that defend the negotiated management model, and those that urge a return to escalated force. The Seattle City Council's WTO Accountability Review Committee defends negotiated management; the R.M. McCarthy and Associates report (commissioned by Mayor Paul Schell) makes the case for escalated force. Neither document is surprising given the history of this debate, but it is worth considering their arguments as they represent the current positions on each side.

The McCarthy and Associates report was written primarily by three retired law enforcement officers from New York and Los Angeles. In it, they discuss the planning, preparations, and execution of the SPD's WTO operation, attributing its failure to the weaknesses of the negotiated management model. They argue that "Had a restrictive safety zone been established, protest areas designated outside of the zone, and additional personnel from other agencies been planned for and deployed in a pre-emptive manner on November 26, the results would likely have been different" (132). They specifically recommend the early deployment of National Guard troops on "training" status, citing the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention as historical evidence of the efficacy of such a move (38).

In sum, the McCarthy report suggests that the police state established in response to the demonstrations should have been set up in advance. In fact, it argues that the police response didn't go far enough. "The review team believes the decision to allow any previously scheduled marches or demonstrations to proceed after violence had erupted was unwise" (59). Furthermore, they urge the removal of language in police policy suggesting that crowds be moved or dispersed "peacefully," and suggest adding explicit instructions that police make as many arrests as possible (129-130).

Luckily, elected officials are likely to find such draconian policies difficult to stomach. The City Council's review committee referred to the McCarthy report as a "crude and unsatisfying" document (WTO 13), and reached almost entirely opposing conclusions. Rather than pressing for a more forceful response, the City Council's committee concluded that the SPD's operations were often senseless, and better left undone. "Members of the public, including demonstrators, were victims of ill-conceived and sometimes pointless police actions to 'clear the streets'" (WTO 3). Such an approach, they suggest, is always brutal and often self-defeating. For example, "The unintended consequence of police



Police arrest an A1 RNC protester engaged in a traffic blockade at 16th and Vine in Philadelphia.

actions on Capitol Hill was to bring sleepy residents out of their homes and mobilize them as 'resistors.'" (WTO 10). It may have been preferable to have let the crowds mill about in the streets, and disperse on their own. In advancing this analysis, the Accountability Review Committee echoes the Scranton Commission: "[T]o respond to peaceful protest with repression and brutal tactics is dangerously unwise. It makes extremists of moderates, deepens the divisions in the nation and increases the chances that future protests will be violent" (U.S. President's Commission 2).

While both sides acknowledge that better preparation was needed, the question of what, precisely, the police should have prepared for is hotly disputed. The City Council's committee, while recommending that more officers and better security barriers be used to deter lawbreaking, also condemned the abandonment of civil liberties and the principle of minimal force once the disturbance was underway. They urged, not for more force, but for increased accommodation as a remedy: "It is clear to the committee that demonstrators who sought arrest—in order to underline their statements of principle—should have been accommodated by police. Tear gas is a cruel implement to use against persons trying to make deeply felt statements against what they view as injustice" (WTO 15).

Essentially, the City Council's committee thinks the problem was not with the negotiated management strategy, but with its implementation. This may, however, rely on a misconception about the aims of the demonstrators. A great many of those who took part in the direct action did not have any intention of getting arrested. They were there not only to "underline their statements of principle" against the WTO, but to disrupt its proceedings and shut the fucking thing down!

McCarthy and Associates imply that where negotiated management failed on November 30, escalated force succeeded on December 1. If this is true, then the lesson of Seattle ought to be that the negotiated management model is one strategy of control, but that to exclusively rely on it is to court disorder. Escalated force must always be prepared for, as a backup. This is really a community policing model applied to demonstrations: if the Good Cop does his job well enough, the public need never see the Bad Cop. But the Bad Cop must still be there, off stage, in case the Good Cop fails.

What the McCarthy team recommends, and what we've seen to various degrees since Seattle, is to re-establish escalated force as the primary strategy of control. They recommend that the police strategy center on the use of force and that negotiation be used to gather intelligence and clearly outline the boundaries for protest organizers.

The idea here is if the Bad Cop is bad enough, he may only need to act in minor or symbolic ways to keep the crowd in line. Negotiation with the Good Cop starts to look more attractive, as does playing by the rules. This, in essence, is the strategy of political terrorism. The threat of violence is made clear at every turn, and a politically useful climate of fear is carefully developed to control the population.

The Good Cop/Bad Cop Routine

Massive displays of force are, by their nature, imprecise. During the WTO, "residents, drivers, and shoppers were all indiscriminately attacked. They were attacked in their homes, in their front yards, as they dined at restaurants and as they left grocery stores" (Richmond). The indiscriminate nature of the attack is characteristic of a terrorist act. Such operations are not designed to uphold the law, or to protect public safety, but to establish control—to maintain power. The state, having lost control in the streets, sought to regain it by means of terrorizing the general population—forcing them into silence.

A few months later, Los Angeles City Council member Jackie Goldberg was outraged to see a similar strategy pursued at the Democratic National Convention. "There is an atmosphere of intimidation that is unbelievable," she said. "What we are doing is creating a climate of fear" (Duant).

But the alternative to fear may be futility. State terror is one means of controlling a population, perhaps even the means most favored by police agencies. But there are other means better suited to a political system which espouses ideals of freedom and popular sovereignty. The Eisenhower Commission offers the Peace Moratorium March of November 15, 1969 as illustrating one alternative: "The bulk of the actual work of maintaining the peacefulness of the proceedings was performed by the demonstrators themselves. An estimated five thousand 'marshals,' recruited from among the demonstrators, flanked the crowds throughout. Their effectiveness was shown when they succeeded in stopping an attempt by the fringe radicals to leave the line of the march in an effort to reach the White House." (National Commission 75).

The nature of such a arrangement is not lost on those who study law enforcement. The academic literature describes marshals who "'police' other demonstrators" (McPhail 53), and who have a "collaborative relationship" with the police (Waddington 122, emphasis in the original).

If the escalated force model relies on the strategy of terrorism, negotiated management uses the techniques of community policing—the strategy of co-optation. Ironically, while conventional wisdom associates escalated force with the militarization of the police (and contrasts it with community policing), in point of fact, militarization is a key component of community policing and essential to negotiated management.

Community policing describes a model of law enforcement wherein the police apparatus (though not necessarily the officers themselves) becomes integrated into the community. Advocates of community policing talk about "community involvement" and "shared problem-solving," though in practice certain populations generally get counted among the problems to be solved rather the community to be involved.

For instance, under a community policing model, police priorities may be identified by the "community"—usually, by business and real estate interests. The police then involve the "community" in crafting a solution—such as by enlisting social service agencies to increase control over their clients. If the social service agencies refuse to be co-opted, they run the risk of being labeled "uncooperative," leading to problems with their neighbors, landlords, and funding sources. If they do cooperate, however, their entire infrastructure—ideally, the whole of society—becomes a tool for law enforcement.

Essentially, the same dynamic is employed in the negotiated management approach to policing protest. The police, again, often representing the needs of business or local government, enlist the protest organizations to control the demonstrators, essentially putting the organization at least partly in the service of the state, and intensifying the control function.

The relationship between this strategy and

The anarchist clown bloc ran around Philadelphia causing disturbances to distract the police from various lockdowns.



the process of militarization is both historical and conceptual. Historically, the shift in police strategy was largely prompted by the federal government. It was shaped by various commission reports, Supreme Court rulings, the development of the National Park Service permit system, and the availability of crowd control training at the U.S. Army Military Police School (McPhail 54). This training was specifically designed based on the recommendations in the Kerner and Eisenhower reports. The escalated force model was abandoned, and the negotiate management model developed (McPhail 62-3).

Militarization does not only refer to police tactics and weaponry, but also to their mode of organization. The Kerner report argued for it explicitly: "The control of civil disturbances ... requires large numbers of disciplined personnel, comparable to soldiers in a military unit, organized and trained to work as a team under a highly unified command and control system" (National Advisory Commission 174).

It is military discipline that makes negotiated management a possibility, by restraining the individual officers while maintaining the potential for a coordinated attack. "Not only must protesters be controlled, so too must the police operation, since the greatest threat is that some ill-considered action by an officer might spark an unwanted confrontation" (Waddington 122). This requires careful planning of the operation itself, and a high level of discipline among the officers, so that each one acts according to the overall plan (Waddington 122-3). Hence, militarization may increase brutality as a *modus operandi*, but may *decrease* individual acts of brutality, owing to increased discipline (della Porta and Reiter 11-12).

Previously, individual acts of brutality were tolerated or encouraged as a strategy of controlling the population through terror. For example, "Chicago police [had been led] to expect that violence against demonstrators, as against rioters, would be condoned by city officials" (Walker vii). But this approach can be limiting, as it makes negotiation and co-optation less likely. Militarization formalizes the strategy of violence at the institutional level, discouraging individual acts for the purpose of maintaining discipline and pursuing a similar strategy more selectively, with direction from above. The potential for violence is an inherent feature of police as an institution. The actual uses of this violence will depend largely on who has power over this institution, and who has power within it.

To summarize: there is neither antagonism nor competition between the Good Cop and the Bad Cop; they are, instead, each part of a single strategy. And this remains true, although each was developed independently or in response to the shortcomings of the other. Likewise, community policing and militarization are not in conflict; each represents one aspect of the broader process of modernizing the police force.

In the United States, the militarization of the police was issued in the development of the negotiated management model, but this was contingent upon the simultaneous strategy of institutionalizing protest. Demonstrations were granted some degree of legitimacy, and therefore came to be carefully managed rather than simply bullied about. The elements of control remained in place, though in a more subtle, and more insidious, form. But this arrangement proved fragile. When the institutional framework of protest was challenged, as with the WTO, the negotiated management model was also undermined.

Democratic National Convention—Then and Now

It may be useful in assessing the current state of police strategy to examine a recent police action, in comparison to a relevantly similar historical predecessor. History has been kind enough to provide us with two such subjects for comparison—the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago and the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles.

The behavior of Chicago police at the 1968 Democratic National Convention shocked the nation. Television cameras showed mobs of police ruthlessly and indiscriminately beating demonstrators, bystanders and members of the media. Senator Abraham Ribicoff spoke out on the floor of convention against the "Gestapo tactics in the streets of Chicago"

(Mailer 179). George McGovern described the scene as a "blood bath," also making comparisons to "Nazi Germany" (Mailer 177).

The melee scared the hell out of the Democratic politicians. "What staggered the delegates who witnessed the attack—more accurate to call it the massacre, since it was sudden, unprovoked, and total—on Michigan Avenue, was that it opened the specter of what it might mean for the police to take over society. They might comport themselves in such a case not as a force of law and order, not even as a force of repression upon civil disorder, but as a true criminal force; chaotic, improvisational, undisciplined, and finally—sufficiently aroused—uncontrollable" (Mailer 175). Such apprehension, surely, gave the civil authorities strong reasons to change the police approach to demonstrations, and to restructure police agencies as a whole.

Thirty-two years later, the DNC was again the target of sizable demonstrations. Considering the current international wave of protests, comparisons to 1968 were to be expected of course, though the differences may be more instructive than the similarities. Two incidents from the 2000 DNC suffice to make the case.

On August 14, after a concert in one of the designated protest areas, police cut power to the stage, declared the event an unlawful assembly and gave approximately 10,000 people 20 minutes to disperse through a single exit. A short time later, the cops attacked, charging with horses and firing rubber bullets. The *LA Times* reported that "In addition to rubber bullets, police also used pepper spray and projectile beanbags, striking many of the protesters and some bystanders as they fired indiscriminately for more than an hour" (Daunt and Rivera). Jesse Jackson characterized the police action as "unnecessary brutality" while Police Commander David Kalish called it "a measured, strategic response" (Breznican). They may both be right. The ACLU described the event precisely, referring to it as "an orchestrated police riot" (Lee 25).

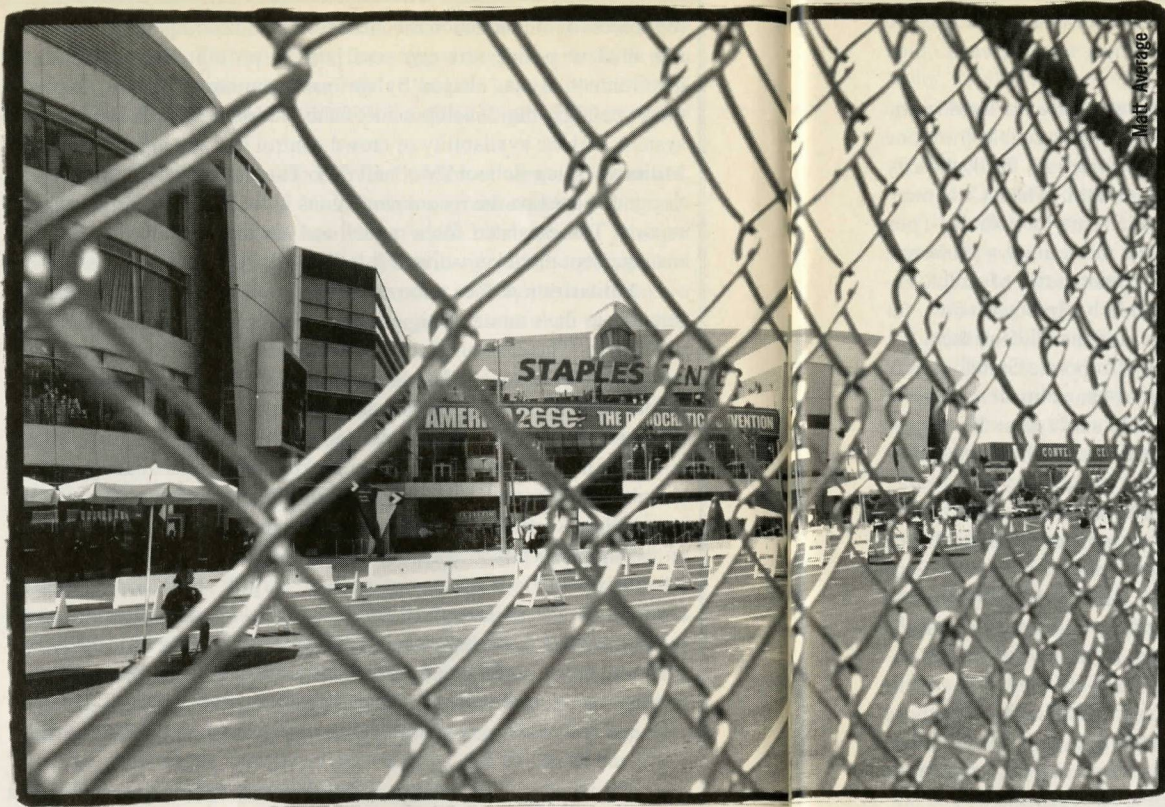
A few days later, the cops showed a different face when 37 people sat down in front of the notorious Ramparts Division police station and refused to leave. "The civil disobedience action. . . attempted to focus on the brutality, corruption, and violence of the LAPD. . . . However, some of the organizers had collaborated closely with the Ramparts police prior to the action to work out the details of the arrests, and had followed some suggestions of the police in order to avoid what they feared would be the cops going berserk if taken by surprise. After presenting the police chief with a list of demands, one of the arrestees shook hands amicably with him as the cameras flashed. Ironically, the result was a PR/media opportunity to showcase the civility and non-violent behavior of the cops" (Lee 25). This incident shows the effective neutralization of protest when it proceeds through collaborative channels. It also shows the disciplining effect of police violence in motivating protesters to negotiate ahead of time, and allowing the cops to set the rules. Terrorism and co-optation are thus subsumed under a single system.

If this case is any indication, it would seem that the biggest change since 1968 has been the mode of organization within police departments. Police officials have gained the ability to restrain officers when a Good Cop approach is in order. This has, until recently, encouraged a change in the nature of protest, de-emphasizing the radical or antagonistic aspects of the activity in favor of a routine and collaborative approach. The role of the police has not changed, but the range of their tactics has. What we saw in L.A. was something we should learn to expect: the strategic use of both the Good Cop and the Bad Cop to control and ultimately neutralize dissent. ★

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Matt Average

Anticipation & Preparations: A Weekend Journal from LA Protests at the DNC

by Kerry Levenberg

call ourselves the Green Hornets.

If we get arrested, one form of non-cooperation is not to give our names. That makes the process more difficult for the police and gives us additional leverage in our negotiations. On the other hand, we need a way for outside support to identify us so that our families and employers can be notified. So we adopt code names. My code name: Special K.

The general planning meetings have been both empowering and frustrating. They are run as spokes councils. While anyone can attend these meetings, only one representative from each affinity group may participate. The meetings are run by consensus, a particularly challenging method of decision making. After the spokes, we would break off into cluster groups, which would plan the details of specific actions.

Early tensions arose in response to the extent of the planning done before the first spokes meeting, though I thought it necessary. In order to grow the progressive movement and broaden our analysis of the issues,

These first days were hectic. Activists were constantly arriving at the convergence space, trying to plug into the week's actions. Every effort was given to prepare us for the coming week. I attended workshops where I learned skills I could use during civil disobedience, after arrest, during organizing meetings, when confronted by the media, and on and on.

We organized in affinity groups, small groups who know each other and ideally have the same goals and tactical limitations (willing to risk arrest? wish to participate in theater? in planning? in puppet making?). It's dangerous on the streets, and you are better off in a small group where you can take care of each other should some get arrested, or attacked by the police, or overcome with tear gas. My affinity group includes five friends from San Francisco Food Not Bombs and three of their friends. Seven have experience from either Seattle or Washington DC, or both. I have none. We

organizers worked with local community groups, strengthening overall solidarity and deepening our understanding of how national and international problems affect us locally. Groundwork for such cooperation had to be done well in advance.

Other tensions stemmed from the distrust between organizers of the Direct Action Network (one of the major organizers of the events down here, part of the D2KLA coalition) and the Black Block. The Black Block are mainly young, white activists with anarchist political leanings, though far from the only anarchists represented here. I am one myself. The Black Block became famous by breaking windows in Seattle—consistently portrayed in the media as "violent." I believe the distrust here to be media driven as some activists bought into the media spin on the Black Block before actually working with them. Personally, I have found the Black Block's aggressiveness alienating and to look particularly bad in the media, but generally they have been cooperative, even creative participants this week, and I have appreciated their presence. We need to make space for everyone with the same basic vision, even if their tactics are different.

Everything was prepared for Monday. We were hoping for a peaceful day. The police, though, had other plans.

Notes on police intimidation:

As I write, the police have surrounded the building. I've just learned that 150 police in riot gear plus three dozen motorcycle cops had been called in for one jaywalking activist. Jaywalking. The police described the event as "a routine traffic stop." I have already witnessed police targeting activists for jaywalking, closing in with mul-

multiple cars, sirens flashing. The riot police, though, was something new.

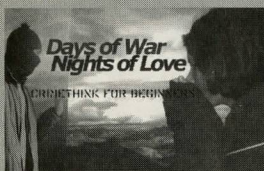
An injunction against the police was won by documenting early intimidation, including harassment and false arrests. The point, though, isn't to keep us in jail. It's to create a climate of fear.

The LAPD have dealt with the injunction by bringing in the California Highway Patrol and the helicopters. The helicopters make every march and occasionally the convergence center seem like we are under military siege. The CHiPs, driving by the convergence center every couple minutes, are out of their jurisdiction, being miles from a highway.

The police also have made creative use of bomb threats to enter and shut down various spaces, the most egregious being the Independent Media Center. Here, the police shut down the satellite feed of a live broadcast, yet were not concerned enough to evacuate the area.

It seems the law matters little to its enforcers, unless the public is watching closely.

(continued on next page)



Days of War Nights of Love : Crimethink for Beginners

Less a novel than an exploded manifesto, *Days of War, Nights of Love* might be just what we need. It certainly saved my night when I picked it up. I was expecting an evening of frenzied screamo music at the show (which I got plus some nice dialogue), but the merchandise table housed the real incendiary items.

Days of War is the type of book you'd thumb through in the store and actually decide to buy (or steal). Avoiding what lapsed grad student Phil refers to as "the thin gruel of narrative," the book instead gleefully mashes appropriated art pieces with personal testimony. Reconfigured Frank Miller comic panels shout "Face it, your politics are boring as fuck!" Whether you agree or not, there's a refreshing quality to a book that offers the same amount of information to both the serious reader and casual browser, because despite steady sales of *The Revolution of Everyday Life* and *Nation of Ulysses* CDs, most of us are still living lives that are frustratingly incomplete.

The past four centuries are all fodder for this new manifesto—everything—from the Unabomber to the Smiths, Henry Miller to the German J2M move-

ment, Kalahari bushmen to *Natural Born Killers*—finds its way onto the pages. Such voracious stealing from history and applying as needed becomes not just a practice, but a saving grace. By never labeling themselves punks or new Dadaists and instead stealing all manner of praxis and pranks, CrimethInc remains elusive, avoiding the pitfalls that toppled previous revolutionaries. Beloved nihilistic comic characters Milk & Cheese re-emerge as Soy Milk & Tofu to offer shoplifting as the true antidote to capitalism. The book is simultaneously tongue-in-cheek and as serious as getting up in the morning for work, yet avoids the inherent alienation of most historical and cultural texts (whose authors they dismiss as "careerist historicizers").

Topics range from anarchy to hierarchy, work to sex, alienation to liberation and technology, but every page burns with a passion for a freer life. Lies, exaggerations and blatant plagiarisms mix freely with passionate arguments. Nadia admits on p. 171 that this may all "sound like anarcho-mystical academic nonsense (which it is, of course — freedom cannot be understood except through mysticism!)," but the Crimethinc workers do weave a good spell. Who disputes obvious but unvoiced concerns like, "We pay rent before we live there a month. But we get paid 1-4 weeks after doing the work."? Other essays walk a precarious line between arrogant and inspiring: activists are taken to task for being dull and guilty; radicals and artists as excrement peddlers, forever squirming moments away from their next product. Too harsh? Or a necessary critique?

The book's vehement insistence that living is more important than art carries the argument beyond typical debate. If you make it to the end, the personal testimonials about not working and closing art pieces become an aria of voices urging you to close the book and *live*. Glorious, even for the most cynical reader. What more can we ask from books? Whether or not you buy it probably depends on what you think of that last Refused LP — revolutionary cannibals or well-dressed poseurs? Well-read former straight-edge kids or new messiahs? Don't think too hard about it — the book warns from page one, "This book will not save your life; *that*, my friend, is up to *you*."

— Travis Fristoe.

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www.crimethinc.com

Evasion : Travel Crime

Those needing a more literal corollary of the CrimethInc lifestyle should pick up *Evasion* zine, one man's travelogue of thievery and trespassing across these United States. What if straight-edge took a radically political turn—rejecting not just the leisure drugs of smoking, drinking & sex, but other core American

values like working and consumerism? An evolutionary possibility as explosive as the Planet of the Apes! *Evasion's* first-person testimonial illustrates just such an evolution as he shoplifts, hops trains and hitchhikes across America. The journey provides a literal and metaphorical seizure of our life and country. The very first page explains that his is "a path not to be mistaken for 'poverty is punk' posturing, it's about taking back your life." Sure, go to corporate health food stores and get the precious vegan snacks, but "left-hand" all but the cheapest bagel. His targets (Barnes & Noble, hotel pools, movie theaters, closed libraries) are all worthy and familiar ones. Imagine further a world where the proclamations from 80s hardcore were rallying cries instead of ironic witticisms at the local pub. The obvious reference would be *SCAM* zine, which the *Evasion* editor lovingly refers to twice, but *Evasion* is solely a solipsistic exercise. You won't find the interviews and community activism that make *SCAM* the mythic tome it is, but *Evasion* still beautifully delivers the exhilaration of a good scam.

— Travis Fristoe.

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Monday: Police Riot. Journal for August 14

At 9:00 am, it was already hot. Thousands of protesters had gathered to draw attention to Gore's ties with Occidental Petroleum. Occidental wants to drill on the ancestral land of the U'wa peoples in Columbia, which will render that land more or less uninhabitable. The connection of the U'wa to their land is so important to their way of life, that they have threatened to commit collective suicide should Occidental proceed with drilling.

Gore has family and financial ties to Occidental, though I believe the corporation's influence over Gore to be more mundane: Occidental is a major donor to Gore's reelection campaign and the Democratic party. Gore has a pulpit from which a few words on this issue could bring enormous pressure on the company, and the marchers were demanding that Gore use it to try to stop this tragedy.

The action began with a rally. The speakers were good, but one was missing. The Chief of the U'wa people was supposed to speak. He was denied a visa, another reminder of our government's views on free speech.

When the march began, the puppets led the way. Ten to fifteen feet high, sometimes as wide as a four lane road, these puppets offer visibility to the issues, attracting onlookers and the media. No wonder the authorities made such a concerted effort to confiscate them in Washington and Philadelphia. Lining the streets on both sides of the march were hundreds of police—full riot gear, gas guns, truncheons, rifles—but the mood was so good, the procession so peaceful, I couldn't fathom that something might go wrong.

It did.

The police forced protesters off the sidewalks, increasing tensions. Then I witnessed the following:

One officer reached out and from behind a protester and grabbed his sign. I saw nothing to precipitate this act. The bewildered protester, who didn't see what happened, held on. Then the cop pulled the sign from his hand with enough force to break the handle. The protester, stumbling backwards, might have touched the cop, and instantly there were police all over him, beating him with truncheons. Within seconds, he was on the ground, face down, one cop standing on his neck, another standing on his back, a circle of police around him, truncheons out. He was in obvious pain. He was not resisting.

The protesters scattered. I saw Reyna, one of my affinity group members, crawling out toward the circle on her hands and knees, alone, crying, begging them to stop hurting him. Three of us went to get

her. The rest of us regrouped. The police were telling everyone to back off, and Reyna, on her knees, pleading, was struck in the back of the head with a truncheon. Then my friends got her out.

We were split. The police had cut the march in two and then charged, intending to create a panic (which worked). The remaining members of my affinity group thought those who went to help Reyna were now behind police lines, possibly arrested. It was hard to see anything. Minutes later, as things began to calm, we found them. Reyna was badly

shaken, but not seriously injured. The Green Hornets would become more conscious of sticking together and keeping track of each other, having learned a hard lesson.

The march continued to the Staples Center, where the Democratic convention was taking place. Our "protest pit" was visible from one side of the Center, though physically isolated from it. Still, the city originally wanted the protest area to be out of sight. The ACLU managed to get that changed. Our rights are never ours by default. They aren't given to us by our government. They aren't always protected, particularly for the poor, the working class, communities of color, immigrants, women, queers, the disabled, the elderly. In other words, for most people. We have to demand our rights, and then defend them.

That evening was the "Human Need, Not Corporate Greed" march, focusing on corporate crime and corruption of our political system. It was large, more than 10,000 people. It would also end at the Staples Center, where after a few speakers, Rage Against the Machine was scheduled to play. The crowd swelled.

I left in the middle of their set, the luckiest of decisions.

Witnesses tell me that after Rage played, some of the Black Block defied the police by scaling one of the fences to place banners and flags in a place visible from the convention. Some were throwing trash at the police. The police responded with pepper spray. The crowd separated from those confronting the police. There was a lot of anger in that isolated group, an understandable response to being attacked with chemical weapons for climbing a fence. The police, rather than focus on those confronting them, took to the stage, and gave the entire crowd 15 minutes to clear. Most in the crowd had no idea why. Not everyone made it out.

Riot police moved in with tear gas, and mounted units charged, trampling activists. Eventually, they pushed the crowd out of the protest area—right into another permitted march that was just arriving at the convention center, causing much confusion. The police were firing rubber bullets and bean-bag guns. Most of the casualties were injured in the back, striking protesters complying with police orders to leave. The ACLU claims that the police targeted journalists and legal observers and have since filed suit.

I was back at the convergence center when I heard the news. I joined an effort to prepare the building for the coming casualties, turning the entire first floor into an emergency clinic. There was a lot of fear. Building security tightened in preparation for a possible police raid. All night, police helicopters buzzed the building, shining their spotlights, but the raid never came.

Tuesday: Get on the Bus Notes. on August 15

We woke up late and decided to split up, some of us wanting to catch up with the morning action on the undervaluing of women's work, the impact of welfare reform, and for living wages. I decided that I needed breakfast, not having eaten on Monday.

The Green Hornets regrouped for the Bus Riders Union march. The Bus Riders Union (BRU) is an organization based in working class communities and communities of color. These communities are not receiving their fair share of transportation funding, resulting in a crumbling bus system and insufficient services. In contrast, the subway line, which serves fewer people, is flush with cash. The BRU is demanding the MTA implement a federal consent decree by buying 1000 new buses at one billion dollars. Sound like a lot of money? It is, but billions are already being spent on public transportation. It's just that communities of color see little of it.

I was really impressed with this march. The MTA is a textbook example of how racism and classism are perpetuated through our institutions. Though a "local" issue, it clearly exemplifies a national issue. There are similar problems in San Francisco (BART's billions vs. Muni's millions, yet Muni serves so many more people, mostly working class and communities of color, while BART primarily serves privileged white suburbs). But I could just as easily look beyond transportation: Which communities get loans? Which communities get polluted? Which com-

Riot police moved in with tear gas, and mounted units charged, trampling activists. Eventually, they pushed the crowd out of the protest area—right into another permitted march that was just arriving at the convention center, causing much confusion. The police were firing rubber bullets and bean-bag guns.

munities have decent educational systems? And on and on.

The organizers reflected the communities most affected: people of color, youth, the working class, the disabled. Thousands turned out in a great show of solidarity. The predominant language was Spanish, in chants and among the speakers. Youth organizers had made dozens of drums out of plastic buckets and passed them out to the crowd. The speakers discussed racism and classism as institutional problems, making links to the criminal justice system and U.S. imperialism. They made clear that on the issue of transportation, the Democrats and the Republicans were exactly the same in their unwillingness to take action.

Tuesday night was the Queers and Allies march. Issues included affordable AIDS drugs, visibility, and hate. It was the first time the Green Hornets worked together on a project, playing a major role in security and monitoring for the march. Our responsibilities included keeping the march moving at a reasonable pace and in the right direction, acting as a barrier between the police and the protesters, scouting ahead, and passing information up and down the sides of the march. The responsibility was serious, as there were many participants in the march at great risk if they were to get arrested, particularly transgenders.

One of the Hornets, Chris Crass, played a key role in mediating between the Black Block and the march organizers. There was a lot of distrust. Some of the march organizers initially didn't want to let the Black Block participate, an authoritarian move that would likely have divided the march. The mediation worked, and we marched together.

The march began with a kiss-in and ended with a die-in: hundreds lying down in an intersection, their bodies outlined with chalk. There were some tense moments when the police surrounded us, cutting off all exits. It was an attempt at intimidation, with some success. It was also an attempt to draw a response, but the crowd would not be baited.

One of the great things to come out of the Queers and Allies march was the coalition of organizers. In L.A., queers, lesbians, trans-gender groups, Act-Up, etc., never worked all together on common projects. This was the biggest such march to happen in L.A., and the coalition intends to work together further. I felt enormous satisfaction playing a role in the solidarity needed to make it happen.

The Green Hornets were a bit too spread out along the march. Those at the end of the march felt unsafe around so many cops and so few marchers. After the action, we spent some time strategizing on how to remain a tight unit. We also debriefed and vented. One of the great things about working as group is you can share immediate feedback, ask questions, learn new information, or just let loose.

We were getting closer as a group.

Wednesday: Protesting the Police with a Police Escort. Journal for August 16

Wednesday morning we marched on Ramparts district station, where police are being investigated for murder, planting weapons, brutality, falsifying evidence, perjury, and using the INS as a weapon against witnesses to their corruption. Ramparts is a real problem. It is also a symbol of a national disgrace, where police corruption and brutality is overwhelmingly invisible; the victims overwhelmingly people of color.

I participated in organizing the Ramparts action in the cluster meetings. The Green Hornets volunteered to do security and monitoring. I helped word the demands that were to be given to the mayor and chief of police.

The demands:

- that all civil suits brought against Ramparts would be paid for out of the police budget rather than general city revenues.
- that the city create an independent civilian police review board
- an end to INS-police cooperation
- freedom for Alex Sanchez, an organizer who testified about Ramparts corruption, and was subsequently arrested and handed over to the INS.

When we arrived at MacArthur Park to start the action, the sun's heat was already oppressive. When the march began, the Green Hornets

clustered together on one side to better watch out for each other. Chanting loudly in English and Spanish, spirits were high for the long march. The neighborhood we marched through was mostly Salvadoran immigrants. Mostly families. If things got out of hand, many in the neighborhood were at risk—they could be deported if caught in a police sweep.

In front of Ramparts station, the police were out in force: on bikes, on motorcycles, in armor, many carrying tear gas canisters and rifles (maybe rubber bullets, maybe the new paint ball guns with pepper spray ammunition). We kept ourselves between the police and the protesters. The only people who didn't respect our requests to stay back were the media, who were almost charged by the cops for trying to break through their line, and a nutcase in loud green shorts—a lone counter-protester—who the police would detain. Though thirty-eight demonstrators were arrested for blocking the station entrance, the demonstration remained peaceful.

After the march, some of us went to eat at a worker-owned café. The food was good but it took them almost two hours to make my sandwich. I was exhausted and slept briefly at the table. The week's pace was catching up with me.

That night we relaxed, eating Thai food and staying up late playing a game of "I never ...," a kind of "Truth or Dare," without the dare.

I learned a lot about my affinity group.

Thursday: "Si Se Puede!" in the Sweatshop District. Journal for August 17

On Thursday, the Green Hornets volunteered at the convergence space, tearing down old literature from the walls, writing schedules on poster board and hanging them around the building.

We joined thousands in a march against sweatshops, for a living wage, and against the militarization of our borders. Hundreds of people carried large, white crosses on which were written the names of people who died trying to cross the border. We chanted and drummed through the garment district, the sweatshop capital of Los Angeles. Hundreds, maybe thousands, all people of color, leaned out the windows of the garment factories to cheer us on, to raise their fists, to chant with us: "Si se puede!" <Yes we can!> We marched down to the Staples Center for a final celebration. The convention was ending. Our work, though, was far from over.

After a performance by Michael Franti, the crowd, 5000 strong, marched to the Twin Towers city jail where many activists were being held. There had been 198 arrests during the week, and over 60 activists remained in jail. They were participating in jail solidarity: they had refused to give their names and were not cooperating with the guards. They were demanding that the DA negotiate with the group collectively; that everyone receive the same charges, including those already released, and that those charges be infractions.

This march was not permitted, but the police escorted it, knowing they couldn't stop it. The chanting crowd was energetic and angry. Outside the jail, speakers were often drowned out by the noise of the low flying helicopters. Again the police decided to cut off all our exits, trying to fan our anger. Again, they failed. We would not break our dedication to non-violence.

The police eventually agreed to let us through, but also threatened to arrest anyone who remained. March organizers then made what I felt was a serious mistake: they asked everyone to leave. Instead of encouraging demonstrators to make their own decisions, the organizers were repeating the same message as the police and the unscrupulous, blue-uniformed Department of Justice negotiators: there is risk of arrest, so go. We had come to do a vigil. Many had planned to stay until the activists in jail were released, their demands met. Instead, the confusion and bitterness so weakened solidarity that only six people stayed the night. The cops never followed through with their arrest threat.

Police harassed and brutalized dispersing protesters, most egregiously at the 7th Street subway stop. Here, for reasons unclear to anyone, the police decided to clear the station. They gave a two minute warn-

ing, and 20 seconds later charged the protesters with batons. Some protesters were beaten, some arrested.

The protests were not truly over, not until the last activists were out of jail, their trials, if any, completed.

Epilogue: The Last Days

— Jail Vigil —

The jail vigil began in earnest on Friday. Puppets and signs were made, and there was a visible presence outside the jail 24 hours a day, though in radically smaller numbers. By Sunday when I participated, there were maybe 40 activists remaining. About 20 were on hunger strike in solidarity with those on the inside.

Inside, activist women were forced to endure multiple strip and cavity searches and were paraded naked in front of the men. At one point, 40 jailed activists went on hunger strike protesting the lockdown of women prisoners (all women prisoners, not just the activists). Lockdown: no leaving the cell, no making phone calls, no contacting your lawyer or family.

By Tuesday, jailed activists had won most of their demands. Most were released that night.

— The Last Spokes —

Friday at noon was the last spokes council meeting. There were a lot of unhappy people there, mostly focused on the vigil. A good deal of time was taken to both praise and criticize the week's organizing.

Many criticisms revolved around authoritarian decisions made by the organizers, particularly by DAN (Direct Action Network). For anarchists like myself, if you make decisions which affect me, there had better be a good reason why I shouldn't have a voice in those decisions, or I will consider your authority illegitimate. Some of these decisions I thought were justified. For example, decisions on how to effectively work with community groups were made months in advance. I think that work was enormously important, though organizers not involved early were thereby excluded. On the other hand, there were some occasions where organizers acted paternally, the dispersing of Thursday night's vigil being one example.

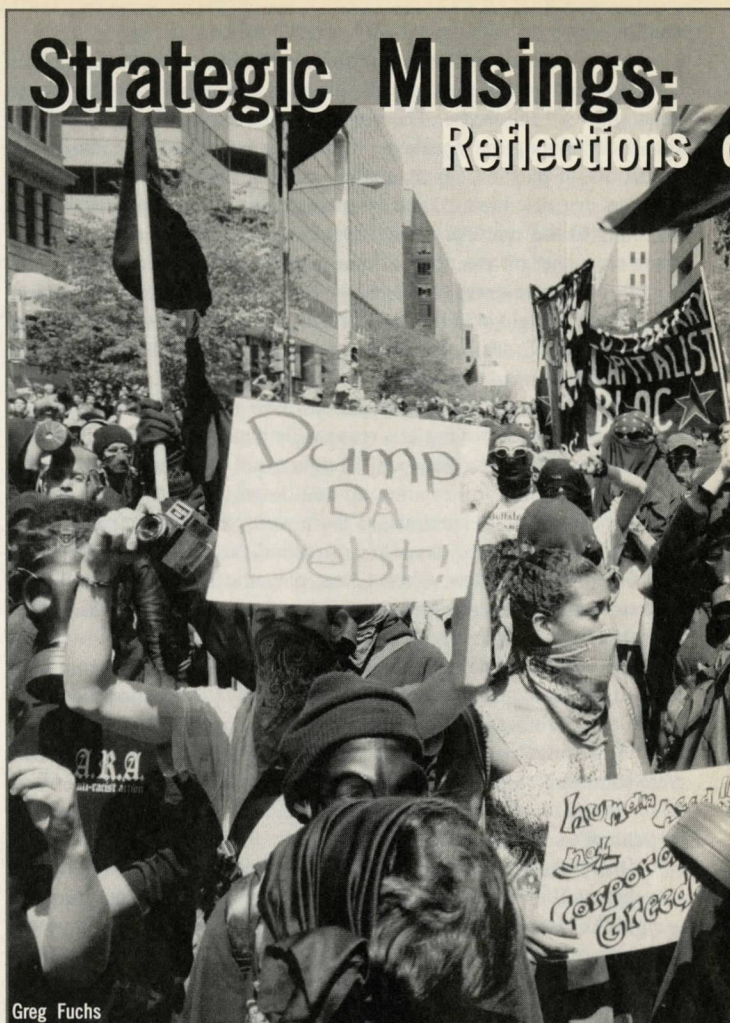
The work done at the convergence space by DAN and all the other organizers was explicitly anti-racist, feminist, queer liberationist. Adopting these views requires making them an explicit part of our organizations, over and above our personal behavior. The organizing was designed to raise such consciousness, and though there were criticisms, there was also an environment where such criticisms were welcomed.

Some thought Tuesday's march on women's rights and economic justice did not receive sufficient support either in numbers or resources (in particular, a sound truck promised but not delivered). Also, some of the older participants felt like their needs were not attended on some marches.

Some felt that we could have had a greater impact with more confrontational non-violent tactics. I disagree. In LA, the police are killers, and staring them in the eye is a form of civil disobedience. What's more, relative to the demonstrations in Seattle and Washington, there was greater participation by communities of color, the working class and immigrants. If I get arrested, being a white, middle class activist, I'm pretty sure I'll get out. I don't have any "strikes" in California's three strikes criminal system. I won't get deported. I don't have a family to support. For those taking greater risks, failure to respect their needs will effectively exclude them, when what we need to do is build alliances. Those that wanted to use more militant tactics could have organized parallel actions, attracting participants at spokes council meetings.

By the standard of movement building, I think we were enormously successful. There were coalitions built that will likely last and grow. Community organizers worked with activists groups, linking local issues with national and international concerns. Good connections were made with communities of color and working class communities, work that is only just beginning. It was reflected in the makeup of participants at all levels of organizing: from lead organizers of rallies, to speakers, to participating marchers. We should be proud of the work done here and build on it. ★

Strategic Musings: Reflections



on What Might Have Been in Philadelphia and Los Angeles

By Daniel Fernandez



“‘Grandeur’ and ‘decadence’ do not have intrinsic contents of their own, but are the empty signifiers of a fullness of society which can be actualized by the most different special forces...the different struggles and democratic initiatives are not united to each other by necessary links- so we have metonymical relations of contiguity.”

-Ernesto Laclau, *The Politics of Rhetoric*

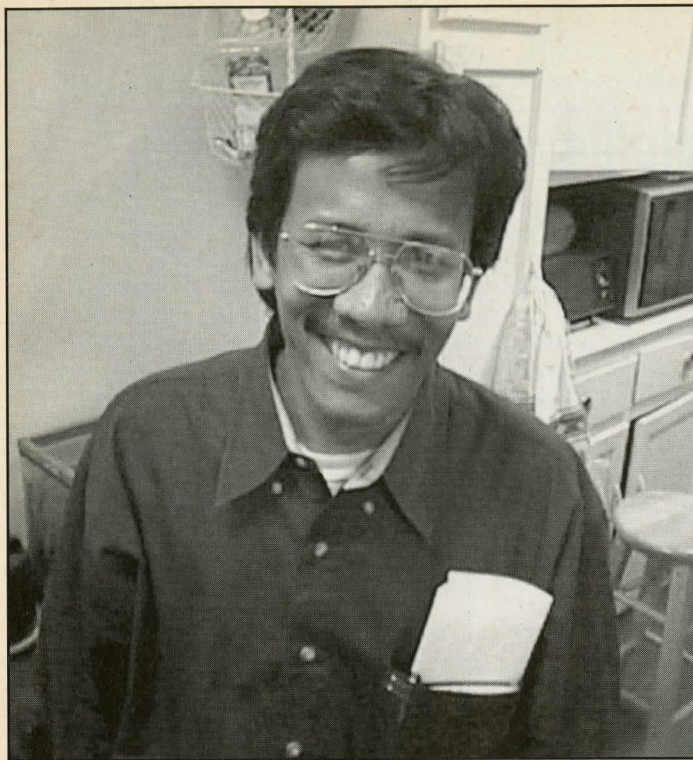
The initial shock sent over the airwaves of mainstream America in the wake of the protests in Seattle and Washington D.C. has seemingly been reduced to a mild pinch on the arm. It's not so much that the protests have gotten smaller or that the numbers of people disenfranchised by the WTO, the IMF/World Bank, the DNC or the RNC have shrunk at all. Indeed, one of the awe-inspiring aspects of the recent actions across the country has not only been their sheer size but the multiplicity of interests articulated from far and wide. The question lies in how we might maximize the sites in which these protests take place such that they are transformed into spaces of interruption. In other words, in the days that we converge upon such cities, how might we, each in our own way, interrupt the flows (literal and figurative) of a city's daily grind in order to redirect them towards the creation of new forms of life, cooperation, and production? In what ways can the particularities of our individual interests be voiced in such a way as to exceed ourselves and extend to the needs of others? What follows are simply musings that might contribute, in however meager a way, to that exploration.

Call it a missed opportunity. Call it missing the big picture. Depending on who's asked, the Camden Waterfront that was used for the opening ceremonies of the Republican National Convention would appear to contain within it a certain blind spot for Republican conventioners and protesters alike. Organizers for the opening fireworks extravaganza took great pains to secure the area near Rutgers-Camden

so that the delegates, who were either bused in by the dozen or driving their own limousines, would not in any way have to see the stark poverty that confronts those post-industrial cities on the east coast. Many of us know these veritable ghost towns of manufacturing days past, as they stretch a gamut from Buffalo to Binghamton to Camden and beyond. But on this particular evening, streets were meticulously clean, buildings assiduously boarded up, and blocks barricaded so the few residents remaining in the area could not see the carnival that was about to descend upon what was left of their community. Newspaper articles in preceding weeks had heralded everyone's favorite search and seizure Governor Christine Todd Whitman's efforts to revive the Camden waterfront for Sunday evening's festivities. Her initiative was, of course, to save the delegates from the slightest bit of contamination, especially those effected by the anti-welfare rights policies initiated in the Reagan-Bush years and completed in the Clinton era. Granted, this is hardly a surprise. Republicans (and Democrats), for all their grandstanding about representing everyday Americans, haven't the slightest idea of what everyday America increasingly looks like: not that much different than the world's poorest nations.

So it should hardly come as any surprise that George W., the son of an American president who marveled at the Jetsonian technology of your everyday grocery scanners upon visiting a supermarket, would have a party on the Camden waterfront for guests who were about as close to representing everyday America as Alice in Wonderland. The only rain on the Camden Waterfront that night was the persistent drizzle from dark clouds overhead. Similarly, the only rain for the delegates the rest of the week in Philadelphia were those “wily and zany (but nevertheless mildly entertaining) protesters who just won't get a job.” But what if the delegates really had to get stuck in the rain?

Protesters for the most part remained peaceful until Tuesday,



The Murderers Must Not Get What They Sought:

The Death of Jafar Siddiq Hamzah; The Death of a Revolutionist by Richard Gilman Opalsky

I write this article as memorial.

Of course, life always ends. Save for what I consider to be mythology, I cannot think of a single exception to this rule. Yet not all death should be considered tragic. Technically and philosophically, if there were some living thing that could not die, it would perplex our knowledge of life. How can we understand any sense in which something is living without an understanding of death? In fact, our understanding of life is defined, by contrast, with our understanding of death. Death is a part of life. But Jafar Siddiq Hamzah, a healthy 35-year-old man, was murdered at that young age because of his distinguished dedication to the security of human rights. Thus, there are certain deaths that can only be accepted as tragic. In what way might such a disgusting death enhance our understanding of life? Perhaps, if we consider the life that was taken. And although I write this article with profound sadness, I do intend to address these questions.

I write this article as hope.

Even when there seemed to be no practical solutions, Jafar was filled with hope. He educated our awareness with the hope that we would act. The more I reflected on Jafar's death, the clearer it became that I could not waste the privilege to write for clamor by neglecting to deal with this topic. Therefore, I write to educate our awareness with the hope that we will act. In Jafar's most tragic absence, I write for the sake of his hope.

Jafar Siddiq Hamzah was born on November 16, 1965, in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia. He was an accomplished human rights lawyer in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia before he moved

to New York to found the International Forum for Aceh (IFA), for which he was the chairman. He has published numerous articles and has given many presentations at conferences and lectures around the world. His work addressed problems of the military in Indonesia, the residency of multinational corporations in Aceh, Aceh's status as a province of Indonesia under Jakartan discretion, and the endless human rights violations that follow the exploitation and exportation of Aceh's natural resources.

Jafar had an obsession that afflicted his noble character. He could never rest while the mass of people in Aceh were suffering from poverty and all of its common effects. Jafar's tireless dedication to these issues was tempered by the most nuanced and intimate understanding of the role

of the global community. The root causes of many of Indonesia's problems are to be found in Indonesian and International business policies, in market-based land usage for development rather than subsistence, in growing government initiatives to capitalize at all costs, and in the self-interest that infects human nature subjected to such conditions. The

scrutiny of the international community could lead to the radical reformation of the policies that neglect the general welfare of the people. Human rights atrocities are far easier to enact when they can be enacted in privacy, without the reactions of mobilized peoples. Men usually beat their spouses in the privacy of their respective homes because they expect and fear the condemnation of the public in opposition. Yet the history of the problems in Indonesia reveal that they are very complex,

and that they are not reducible to any other institutionally oppressive situation. The political scene in Indonesia has been a brutal and bloody one for over the past 30 years. Aceh, a special territory of Indonesia, is located south of Malaysia in the Indian Ocean. Aceh

Jafar had an obsession that afflicted his noble character. He could never rest while the mass of people in Aceh were suffering from poverty and all of its common effects. Jafar's tireless dedication to these issues was tempered by the most nuanced and intimate understanding of the role of the global community.

is considered a special territory because the Acehnese, who were never colonized by the Dutch, nevertheless supported Indonesia's struggle for independence. By environment, Aceh is one of the richest provinces in Indonesia, providing to the central government substantial revenues from its oil, natural gas, and other environmental resources. Yet, while the

(Strategic Musings, continued from p. 19)

August 1, the day of solidarity for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Presumably most of those arrested that day had held out on earlier occasions, so as to be strong in number for other marches. But what if the numbers that gathered on the morning of July 31 for the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWURU) march or on Tuesday evening at City Hall had blocked the already blocked off streets of Camden? What if they had simply sat in thousands on the all-important Ben Franklin Bridge that leads from Central Philadelphia to Camden the night of the opening ceremonies? Instead of police surrounding thousands of protesters from all sides in Central Philadelphia, why not thousands of protesters surrounding delegates on all fronts, blocking the Ben Franklin Bridge on each end as soon as buses and limousines made their way onto it?

Sure, such an action might have resulted in hundreds of arrests, but if the mobilization were strong enough in number, the delay into the evening's scheduled festivities might have been prolonged enough to cancel the party altogether. Or it might have prompted the delegates to take widely circuitous alternative routes that would have forced the Republicans, who on the first night of their convention vowed to "leave no child behind", to see with their own eyes entire communities left behind in the age of this much too heralded "miracle economy".

Strategically, one must proceed such that her/his opponent *cannot* but respond and/or capitulate. A successful maneuver, in whatever arena, must proceed such that it produces an effect presenting an exigency that demands its addressee to respond, regardless of whether s/he wants to or not. Protesters can't be ignored when you can't get to your million-dollar party. Poverty can't be shied away from when you're lost in a lower income neighborhood and you have to ask for directions. At a time when

there seems to be few viable alternatives on the horizon for those who demand and imagine a more equitable democracy, our protests need to take on greater urgencies. We can no longer afford to miss any more opportunities, no one can afford to miss seeing the big picture.

But at a time when our protests have been portrayed in the mainstream media as little more than unintelligible acts of violence or misdirected energy, we must nevertheless ask the difficult question: what of this media representation is derived from media ignorance and what of it might be derived from our own strategic blind spots?

When the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci wrote his *Prison Notebooks* one of his concerns was the extent to which subversion (violent or otherwise) could affect a disruption of the daily grind of civil society such that the predominance of the State's functioning could be interrupted. Today we might ask how it is that our actions, however conceived, might disrupt the unquestionability of a freedom that is more often spoken of on the terms of the market (or the driving of your new Hyundai Elantra) rather than the freedom of creating and/or fostering practices that might be most conducive to one's self realization.

The possibility of engaging in such actions, however, was a most difficult task for those who descended upon Los Angeles for the Democratic National Convention. The Los Angeles Police Department's planning reflected not only shrewd tactical brilliance; it was also a showcase of its potential for raw, brutal force. It was an odd sight indeed when one gazed upon the ultra modern Staples Center and its fenced in perimeter. The latter was characterized by 15 foot fences mounted upon 4 foot cement barricades which wove their way around and about the Staples Center, constructing a rather unique space of incarceration. And yet, instead of heightening the possible sense that the Democrats might

have felt fenced in themselves, imprisoned within the cold and empty exclusions of the populist rhetoric that masks their corporate marriages, an unfortunate and strategically idiotic series of events followed on August 14. Instead of attempting to heighten for the whole world the sense in which Los Angeles had been transformed into a state of martial law, a series of ill-planned maneuvers (could you elaborate on these maneuvers either here or in the next paragraph) ensued and police opened fire on hundreds of protesters with rubber bullets and tear gas canisters.

And it was these events, provoked merely by dozens who distanced themselves from the thousands and who, despite their insistence to the contrary, shifted representations of the protests *precisely onto sensation and away from the issues*. It's one thing to advocate violence in political struggle and follow through in a manner that attempts to maximize one's subversive capacities against those of an enemy (however futile such an advocacy might be in advanced capitalist states whose hegemonic civil society has not been sufficiently contested). It's quite another thing to engage in violence so ridiculously futile that it seems contrived.

In short, our strategic planning might want to consider more than just a "to-do" list of tasks that could disrupt politics-as-usual in the United States (as we tried to examine in the case of Camden). We might also want to elaborate precisely what kind of disruptions we want to effect by excluding actions that merely reinforce already existing public suppositions regarding the protests rather than disrupt them. This does not *necessarily* imply a rejection of political violence *tout court*; rather, it suggests the need to *continually* re-evaluate what kinds of actions are most conducive to the disruptions we want to effect. Simply put, we would make such evaluation contingent upon the situation.

The melee that ensued outside the Staples Center when a group

engaged in a strategically ridiculous confrontation effectively evacuated whatever space of contestation had been claimed through music and creativity. Such art and creativity may have expanded the chain of struggle to the many of those present during the concerts that were not overtly involved in the protests (i.e. the residents of Los Angeles).

And this is now our struggle. Very few Americans have to be reminded of the socio-economic inequality that they experience on a daily basis: indeed, we *all* know it quite well. Knowledge of an inequality is not always sufficient grounds for everyone to act upon it, so it is crucial to establish wherein our struggles coincide with those of the residents of the cities we in part share during the duration of our protests.

As Ernesto Laclau's quote at the beginning of this text suggests, such links are not bound by the basis of any a prior necessity, but rather, because of strategic initiatives. *That we march together does not collapse the individual reasons for our striking separately*. And our marching together most certainly means expanding the spheres in which we march.

This is our challenge—especially at a time when outreach to the residents of the communities in which we protest is vital to furthering a social movement. And when media representations of our actions reduce our work to nothing but scattered fragments of meaning, how we construe our alliances and along what lines is of critical import. The task before all of us is to represent *what* we are struggling against as that which people *cannot but* act upon. ★

*For a more detailed analysis of this, turn to the sections on military and political science in Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*.

Indonesian government and its business affiliates fatten themselves on Aceh's resources, Aceh remains one of the poorest provinces, with a very high number of its villages living disastrously below the poverty level.

In addition to these economic disparities, there have been numerous government efforts advocating that Aceh becomes a regular territory of Indonesia by revoking its special status and treating it as a province that played no significant role in Indonesia's independence. These facts are all interconnected and at the root of Aceh's struggle for independence. These problems have given rise to the Free Aceh movement, which seeks to achieve political, economic and social autonomy for Aceh. But instead of working to resolve the socio-political and economic conflict through an open dialogue, the central government has, under General Suharto, mobilized the military to institutionalize state violence and counter-insurgency programs. These military forces were mostly directed against suspected members of the independence movement. However, the suspects are often chosen arbitrarily, without even the knowledge of their names. Therefore, the military operation has far exceeded counter-insurgency, creating an unrestricted atmosphere of rape, torture and random murder. The brutality against civilians has consisted of some of the most revolting acts imaginable. After the first major elections in Indonesia in June 1999, a new president, Wahid, was elected to supplant the previous dictator, General Suharto. Wahid is a radically different leader than Suharto, and his attitude toward the Indonesian military reflects that. But Wahid has not inherited a clean slate, and the mass psychological effects of living through decades of violence has taken a rather secure hold of the minds of so many Indonesians. Of course, it is critical to the new administration that the international community sees a new and less violent Indonesia. However, the steady flow of news coming out of Indonesia does not support these hopes, and the violence continues today. The government-appointed Commission on Human Rights has recommended that the military be disciplined and made accountable for its crimes, and the United States has recently threatened ridiculous and idiotic mandates such as "Put a stop to this violence, or else we will stop helping you to fund your military." These things, coupled with the new presidential leadership, may all prove to be red herrings, since large numbers of military personnel are still in Aceh; splinter groups and rebel groups are armed and active; and the wealthy elite, like the wealthy elite in any country, despise all dissidents who criticize the abuse and distribution of their resources. Needless to say, the killings have not stopped.

It is also a rather well-documented fact (for example, there was even extensive coverage in *Business Week* magazine) that Mobil Oil provided logistical support to the Indonesian military throughout their stay in Aceh. The military government used Mobil's machinery for the explicit purpose of digging mass graves for the dumping of civilian bodies. Many of those found dead are the corpses of children. Further, Mobil has significantly depleted the rich environmental resources there, exhibiting complete disregard for the village's interdependency with nature. And finally, some of the officers involved in these atrocities were trained in the United States. In addition to this, another U.S. multinational oil company, Freeport-McMoRan, occupies space in West Papua, and is reportedly taking a similar toll on the environmental sources of life for the indigenous peoples there.

Jafar returned to Indonesia at the start of the summer of 2000 to continue his work there. But his whereabouts became unknown by his family, friends and comrades at approximately 11:30 a.m., Saturday, August 5. Until this time, he had been calling his family every two hours to insure them of his safety. It was immediately feared that Jafar had been detained or killed by some unknown group who found his work as a

human rights peace activist to be objectionable. It is known in Indonesia, in the United States, and around the world that Jafar was a leading activist hardly safe in Medan. At the time of his disappearance he was travelling to meet with local politicians and a Japanese television crew. Unquestionably, he was intending to work with them on the issue of Aceh. The month of August was filled with letter writing, faxing, phone calling, and mostly, with anxious, nervous waiting. All the appropriate consulates were flooded with demands to find Jafar. Sydney Jones of Human Rights Watch rallied support to pressure the authorities to locate him, and yet we all must have sensed the point at which looking for a living man was unrealistic.

On September 3, some villagers reported a foul smell coming from a ravine just outside Medan, where five bodies were found. All of the bodies were wrapped from head to toe in barbed wire, their hands tied behind their backs, and were stabbed numerous times. One of those bodies was Jafar's. His face was smashed in. His family positively identified his body on September 5. It is suspected that he may have been killed by members of the Indonesian military acting outside of the line of command.

Jafar, while in New York, was also a student in the Political Science department at New School University where I am a student. In addition to being a student at the university, I also work in the Office of

Academic Affairs, a place where I would sometimes see Jafar 2-3 times a week. Jafar's face always wore the most beaming smile, one which greeted me with profound sincerity and which indicated his genuine pleasure to see me. Sometimes, he came in for some of the most banal things: He needed a form of some kind or another or had questions about general academic policies. Often he would come to visit a coworker of mine, and a very close friend of his, with whom he

But what was so beautiful about Jafar was that he recognized that the world is bigger than he was. And what is so tragic about his death is that he was killed for believing in that.

could speak in Indonesian. About a week after he began his studies he came to see me to start up a student group called the Student Coalition for Aceh. One time, Jafar and I went to get lunch together, and I attempted to discuss some more personal issues with him. Jafar would, very politely, cut me off so that he could return our attention to his cause. Another time, Jafar met with my band mates and I to record an interview. We set up a 4-track mock radio studio in my friend's kitchen, and Jafar jumped at the chance to take any opportunity to further the awareness of his cause. He was so proud when I finally presented him with a CD featuring a track entitled "Jafar Siddiq Hamzah." His smile, during that presentation, was somehow inspiring to me... if you could imagine a smile being that.

As a well-known human rights lawyer in Indonesia, Jafar's name was referenced weekly in local newspapers throughout North Sumatra. Yet, Jafar opted to drive a taxi while he was in New York City. He did this on the weekends and late at night in order to leave enough time for his political activities. He never told me this. I learned about this occupation of Jafar's later on, from a friend of his. Neither did Jafar ever tell me how widely known he was in his homeland. I suppose that the achievements of notoriety and career were not his real aims, and that this is why he never mentioned them. What Jafar really wanted was the security of peace, safety and freedom for his people. Jafar was the most active and relentless idealist I have ever met. He was a man who never stopped fighting for his ideal, and who never stopped trying to transfer his idealism to reality. If I had not known Jafar in a more personal way, the news about him would have made me think of some abstract freedom fighter, inaccessible to regular folks, and perhaps even superhuman. If I had not known him, learning about Jafar may have felt like the overwhelming love of humanity that I feel when learning about Emma Goldman from her autobiography. Yet, his consistent presence in my everyday environment never made him appear this way to me. Jafar

was the extraordinary demystified. He made me realize that people victimized for speaking out against systemic economic oppression and political tyranny are not abstract heroes that we should accept as fodder for the fires of our leftist agendas. These victims are people right here on earth. They are walking amongst us indistinct and undetected, with their own personal battles and over-priced apartments.

If Jafar had been more of a student and less of an activist he may still be alive today. If he was more selfish and if he was less focused on his cause perhaps he would still be alive. But what was so beautiful about Jafar was that he recognized that the world is bigger than he was. And what is so tragic about his death is that he was killed for believing in that. But I do not think this means Jafar should have been any quieter than he was. He was killed because he refused to accommodate the wishes of his murderers. What is so scary about this is the fact that most of our planet is still entirely unaware of Jafar's cause, and that he was not even as loud and visible as one would think might rouse his opponents to murder. Jafar's central political cause, the welfare of Aceh and its people, never really achieved the visibility or familiarity in global consciousness that he himself would have wanted. And still, by comparison to any given Olympic event, the publicity of Aceh is virtually unspectacular. Therefore, his opponents should have had some other recourse besides murder. The frightening truth is that Jafar was already too loud and too visible according to those opponents of peace and justice who claimed his life.

We must educate ourselves about the situation and conditions Jafar fought for, because it will take at least three times the readership of this magazine to restore the volume of his solitary voice. Jafar's voice needs to be restored, because the only thing that could make his murder complete would be if Jafar's death silenced his struggle. I think that this is the way he would see it himself. It was not his body that they wanted dead, but his work, and our continued reluctance to address Jafar's issues is the only guarantee that his murderers will get what they wanted. The only real justice that can be delivered to his killers would be to take the very thing they wanted to kill, and to keep it bright with vitality.

For such an endeavor, I know that it would've helped to know Jafar's smile. Of that, we have truly been deprived. As for me... I think I will use his smile still - for when I recall it I am warmed, and December is here. ★

For More Information ...

... on Jafar's disappearance and murder:

1. Newsday, August 9, 2000
2. LA Times, September 17, 2000
3. East Timor Action Network <www.etan.org/news/2000b/jafarmrn.htm>.

... on Mobil's involvement in Aceh:

1. Business Week, December 28, 1998

... on Freeport McMoran in West Papua:

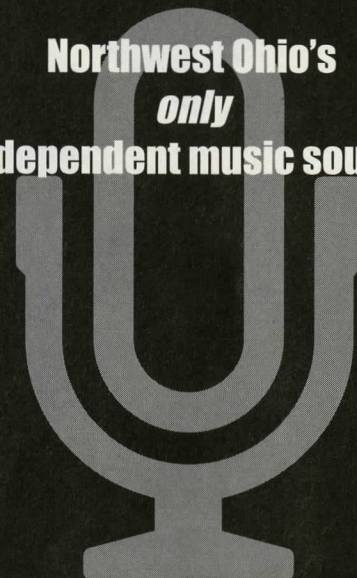
1. You can read about their occupation in Indonesia on their website at www.fcx.com, but the reports of their abuses had come to me direct from Jafar.

... on Aceh's Political History with Indonesia:

1. Tapol Report, "A Reign of Terror: Human Rights Violations in Aceh -1998-2000"
2. Amnesty International's report: "Human Rights Violations in Aceh."

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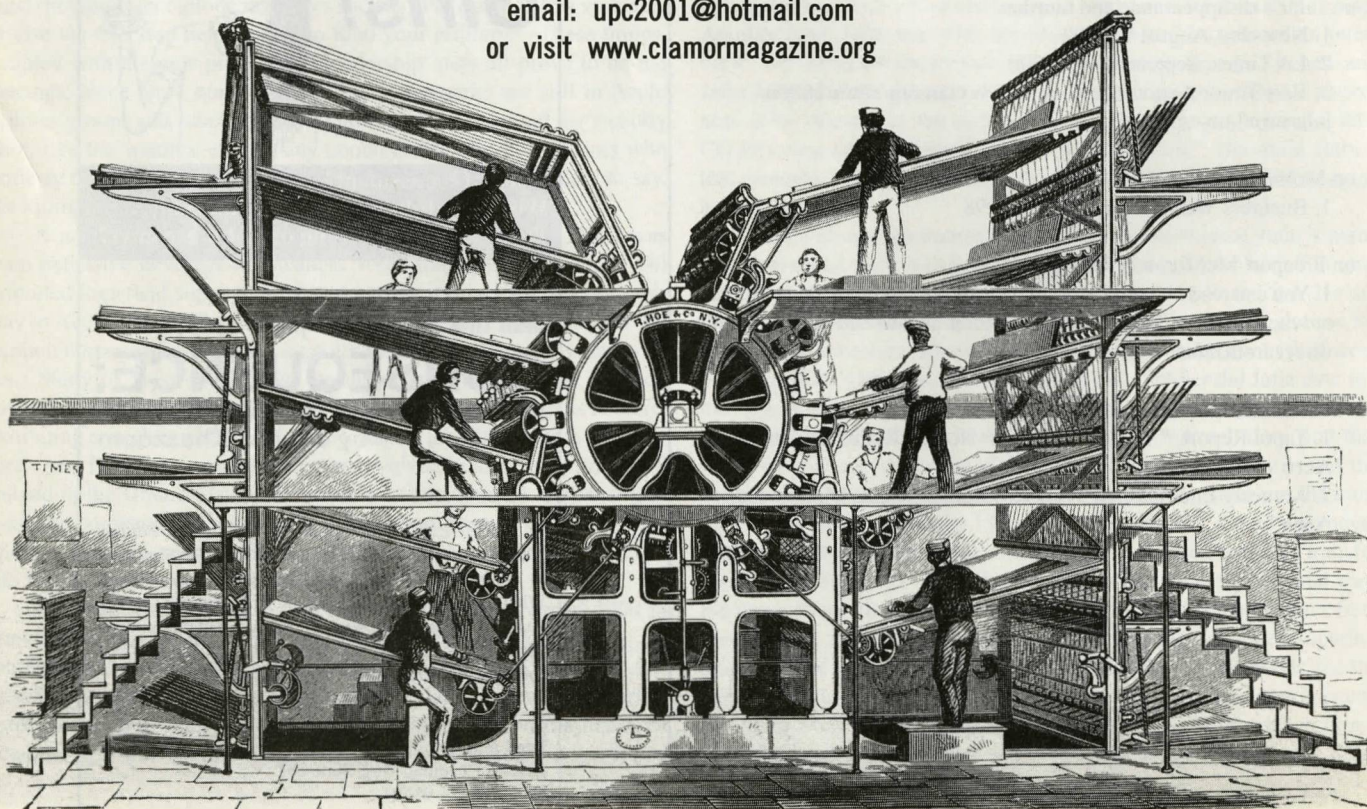
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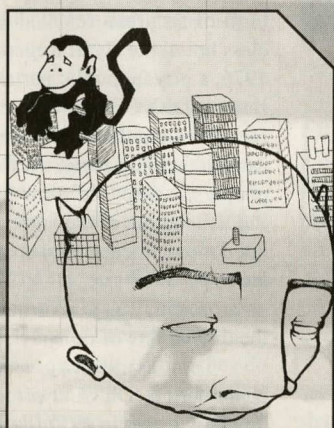
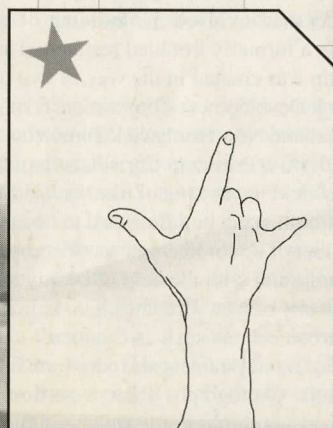
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We Have the Facts and We're Voting Undecided

Progress and Poverty in an American College Town

words and photos by Scott L. Indrisek

10/08/00: Enjoying the view from the lower portion of George Street. People sitting outside with books and cigarettes, the train trellis bridge in the distance, high-rises and miniature skyscrapers housing banks and business suits. Tired of interviews. Have generally run out of usable audio tape to make any more recordings. Tired of public relations, factual spin, graphs and charts, contradictions and half-truths. Two weeks since I began the massive task of tackling this city, trying to rip it open at the seams, not realizing that a city is a beast all its own, a creature with half a dozen heads and a million secrets. Trying to make some sense of these numbers, conversations, propaganda pamphlets, radical newsprint pamphlets. Where to begin.

First an abridged lesson in history and geography is in order, brief and to the point. New Brunswick is situated near the center of New Jersey, the maliciously and inaccurately described armpit of America, where it enjoys close proximity by train to both Manhattan and Philadelphia. For this reason, it's often been dubbed the Hub City; it has alternately been known as the HealthCare City for its high number of medical facilities, and for one brief point in misguided time, the next Seattle for its burgeoning bar and music scene. The city is also the home to Rutgers, the state University of New Jersey.

Witness the fate of urban centers across America. In the early '70s New Brunswick was down on its luck. The streets were dangerous, and the Johnson & Johnson corporation (whose main headquarters are located in town) was entertaining the notion of jumping ship. Witness the birth of an urban renewal project that involved the building of a high-class hotel, the Hyatt Regency, in a formerly troubled residential area. In 1976, a private/public partnership was created in the way of two organizations: DEVCO (New Brunswick Development Corporation, responsible for rebuilding the downtown area) and New Brunswick Tomorrow (dedicated to helping social needs). DEVCO President Chris Paladino: "Many people miss the 'old' New Brunswick. It was kind of like the Wild West." Indeed, the site of the current Summit Bank building used to house an X-rated movie theater, and the number of liquor licenses was disproportionate to its small size. DEVCO's mission, with the help of county and city government, was to refurbish the city of New Brunswick, to help it avoid the dismal fate of other Jersey urban centers such as Camden.

This has meant a great deal of money-raising and corporate financed construction. DEVCO promotional photographs show a portion of the downtown area in 1972 (dark streets, crumbling sidewalks, sad flickering neon stores) that was replaced by a modern epicenter (STARBUCKS, an upscale knick-knack shop, an expensive microbrew pub). On an aesthetic level, the improvement is remarkable, not to mention the fact that the

formerly dangerous neighborhood has become subdued, secure, ideal for late-night walks and sidewalk cafes.

Viewed superficially, it is convenient to appreciate the new New Brunswick without asking many questions. Unfortunately, the situation is far more complex. Despite being a modern, upscale commercial center, and the home to thousands of Rutgers University college students, New Brunswick is also the stomping ground of a 41,711 natural residents (most likely discounting the larger number of immigrants without legal papers). Sitting outside Starbucks on George Street, the scene is more surreal than comforting. Early morning businessmen stroll by, briefcases in hand, while the homeless smoke cigarettes and the mentally ill regular speaks Russian to an invisible companion.

Rutgers University has a stronghold on one end of town, the main campus being surrounded by clusters of off-campus student housing. The base of George Street (formerly the devastated, burned-out area in the '70s) marks the beginning of the non-university sector. George proceeds up several blocks, opens out into Monument Square and the theater district, descends into a stretch of slightly dilapidated residential housing, passes the Memorial Homes public housing project, and finally empties out into the green lawns and brick buildings of the Women's College of Rutgers University.

Paladino again: "Is New Brunswick better off than it was in 1980? A simple question to ask. Simple question." The crux of the matter is that the current state of the city is anything but simple, but rather a frustrating conglomeration of corporate interests, private interests, academic interests, and a question of general social welfare that begs a deeper investigation.

The People's Party is a local grass roots campaign preparing itself for the city council election in November. More of a coalition than a true political party, the group enlists a mixture of Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, and anarchists to push their 17-point platform that urges citizens' rights and participation in government. I spoke with campaign manager Xavier Hansen and associate Frank Bright at the party's office - the basement of a house in the non-commercialized region of the city, past the office buildings and the pubs. Describing the influx of corporate interests at the expense of residential territory, Hansen became emphatic: "When they do it in Yugoslavia it's called ethnic cleansing. When they do it in New Brunswick, it's called redevelopment...but what it is is the massive, continuous, methodically planned destruction of communities of people of color." He cited the example of the Hyatt Regency hotel, which sits on the former site of a neighborhood that was predominantly African-American.



When I brought up sentiments expressed by DEVCO president Paladino, Bright was not impressed. "What I'm saying is that these guys are bullshitting you." "This is happening in every urban center in America," Hansen added, "Wherever you go, there's always some dominant developers and corporate partners who decided in the early '70s to take back the cities..." He speaks confidently, passionately, when describing city government corruption in the late '80s that led to the prosecution of officials ranging from the law director to the chief of police. "It's the same people in power [now], it's just different names, different families."

The radical rhetoric is infectious, although I had only that morning sat in Paladino's office, listening to him dismiss many of the arguments that I would hear the People's Party make later in the day. Compare Hansen's opinion, for instance ("DEVCO is a front organization for the developer and banking industry") to the city mayor's own stance that appears in the corporation's info packet ("DEVCO shares New

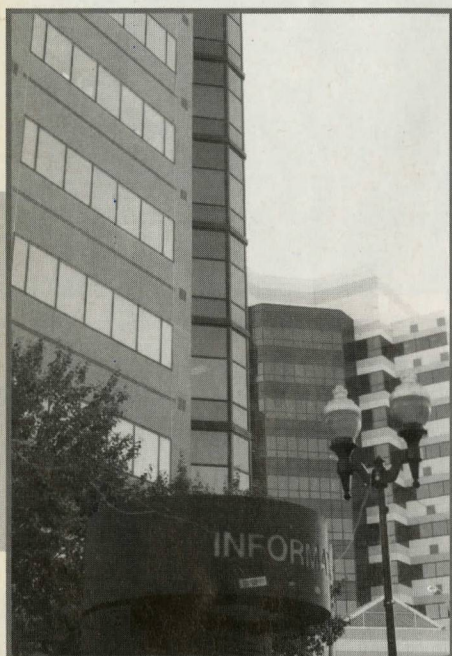
"Is New Brunswick better off than it was in 1980? A simple question to ask. Simple question." The crux of the matter is that the current state of the city is anything but simple, but rather a frustrating conglomeration of corporate interests, private interests, academic interests, and a question of general social welfare that begs a deeper investigation.

Brunswick's vision of a dynamic and prosperous city where development is paced to evolve with the needs and elevated standards of the people who live, work, and play here."'). The People's Party line is a mixture of heartfelt activism and paranoia. Sitting with Hansen and Bright, it's easy to imagine local government as a despotic, Fascist regime, operating solely under principles of corporate advancement and personal interests. Unfortunately, buying wholeheartedly into this outlook would be no better than simply accepting the current urban redevelopment as an aesthetic improvement to New Brunswick. When I asked Paladino if he believed the development had come at the expense of something else (the poor, the working class, etc.) his response was vague: "Not in any great part, but you have to make qualitative policies of what you're trying to accomplish. And I think as long as the way you implement those policies is fair, and evenhanded."

For an organization that has such a large hand in the affairs of the city, questions of fairness are crucial. Compare the racial make-up of the city (approximately 34 percent black, 51 percent white, 20 percent Hispanic—these figures might vary slightly depending on the source)

to the board of directors of DEVCO (one black man (a Baptist minister), no Hispanics, and 13 whites). Keep in mind, also,

are nearly impossible to decipher at times. For instance, how applicable does a term such as the desires of our residents become when our residents include affluent college students, workers of a variety of races, the homeless and urban businessmen? Local newspaper columnist David Harris sums up the economic situation in town succinctly: "Will they not be satisfied until we agree to work at shoe-shine stands in front of up-scale restaurants?" Socialist Professor Norman Markowitz compared involvement in local politics to "banging your head against the wall," likening Big Business to the Robber Barons of the late 1800s. The goal of current redevelopment seems to be bringing a new, more affluent population into the city limits. This cannot be faulted in and of itself—after all, one cannot expect the city government to be rallying for an increased low-income, unemployed, or homeless population—but the question is whether or not adequate services are being provided for the poor that already live here, and have lived here for many years. A multitude of upscale establishments have set down roots in New Brunswick within the past years: Northstar (a trendy tapas bar with myriad martinis and fruit sangria), Clyde's (think somber lighting, wood-paneling, Manhattan), La Fontana (bottles of wine, some of which top the charts at close to \$3,000). At the same time, the demolition of the projects, the Memorial Homes complex a mile or so from the central downtown area, is being planned. The cardinal sin is cheering the aesthetic and economic advancement of the city without examining the social status of the economically disenfranchised—the natural residents who (to most



Above: New Brunswick's business district

Center Left: Fountains in Monument Square

Center Right: Heading into one of New Brunswick's residential area.

Right: A liquor store in a Hispanic neighborhood



that new appointments to the board of directors are chosen by current members of the board who name their own replacements. DEVCO is able to sidestep this issue because it is, first and foremost, a CORPORATION,

and corporations are not obligated to hold open elections for board members.

What do the people themselves have to say? The People's Party held a survey of residents to inquire concerning the main problems with life in New Brunswick. They gave me a copy of three such surveys. A certain bias must be observed, considering the fact that 1,000 survey forms were completed in total and most comments raised troubling questions. A brief sampling involving city life, economics and the police: "They [police] would always slap my brother in the face with a walkie talkie...The police try to get my father to sell drugs...FUCK STARBUCKS...Some development in our community is not to help and expand our community, it is to move us out...Big business should not control small businesses, such as J&J buying up the town..." Witness a city that is confused about its own identity. A city that often seems unsure of its motives, its population, its future in any sense other than visually and corporately.

The politics and mission statements of the city of New Brunswick

college students, for example) do not exist.

"New Brunswick's always been kind of a laboratory of what are trends for urban redevelopment," DEVCO's Paladino explained. "What we're seeing is that there's a real coming home of people who want to live in cities again. I think over the next five years there will be a tremendous amount of construction and housing. That will only bolster our ability to attract quality retail. I certainly see in the next five years to have, you know, GAP, Banana Republic..." Viewed as a whole, the concept of having a GAP five blocks away from the site of a public-housing project becomes ludicrous. And the homecoming of people who are once again desiring urban life comes at the expense of the poor that have never had a choice.

The idea behind the proposed destruction of Memorial Homes, as explained to me by city planner Glenn Paterson, is that studies argue against the current setup: many poor residents living in dense high-rises, slightly removed from the rest of the urban population. The goal, then, is to redistribute the poor into mixed income neighborhoods, where they will live side by side with citizens in varied economic brackets. Employment amongst the poor might increase, for instance, when they have the opportunity to make job contacts in a neighborhood that is not entirely financially handicapped. And so the high-rises will disappear, and new homes will be created in various parts of the city. The problem is one of numbers. Take Memorial Homes (housing somewhere around 248 low-income families) and compare this to the planned construction of a lower number of mixed income housing units. This means that the conversion of project residents into the mixed income neighborhoods will not be 100 percent—in other words, some people will have to choose to leave town. Paterson explained that many residents, of their own accord, decide to return to the places they were born, or

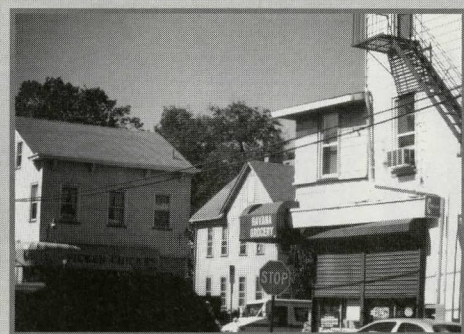
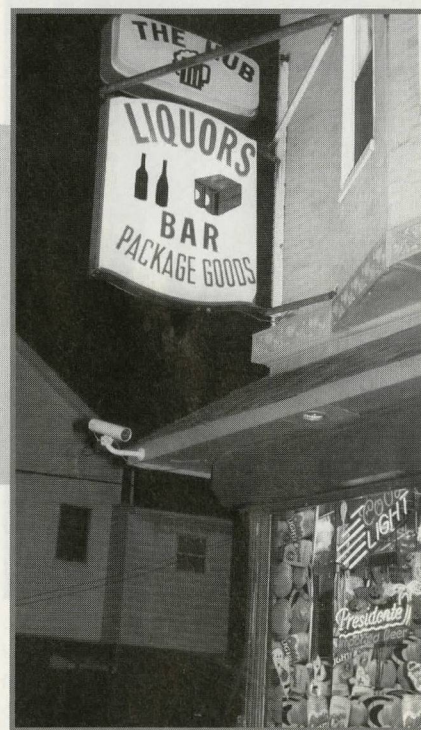
perhaps move residences to be close to a place of employment. Vouchers are given to substantially aid lower-income residents in finding affordable housing—the resident pays a portion of the rent, and the government picks up the rest of the tab.

When I discussed the Memorial Homes situation with Dr. Roy Epps, a member of the Civic League of New Brunswick (an organization primarily interested in civil rights), deeper concerns were raised. Epps was an early member of the DEVCO board of directors, and he undertook an academic study of urban redevelopment in American cities that included Hartford, Connecticut. He explained that the public/private arrangement in New Brunswick was modeled after a similar, earlier setup in Hartford, referred to as the Hartford Process. Years after Epp's study, Hartford's own public/private conglomerate ran aground - they evidently needed space for development, and were planning the removal of poor residents to an area 15 miles from the city proper. This is not to suggest that New Brunswick's own process will follow identical lines, but it does raise questions and concern about development in relation to the poor. The Civic League has filed a lawsuit against the city in relation to the Memorial Homes demolition.

A three-minute bicycle ride up the George Street corridor will take you past Starbucks, an upscale Ethiopian restaurant, the theater district...past Remson Avenue, slightly tarnished residential districts, over two blocks to the Catholic Charity's Men's Shelter for the home-

less] are ready to move on, but there's no affordable housing," Moore explained, citing also the fact that off-campus college students drive up the rent prices in town. Rutgers is definitely a large part of the problem equation in town, and what I discovered time and time again was general dissatisfaction with the university's commitment to the community-at-large. "We don't get anything from RU, as far as any kind of donation or assistance, not at all...J&J play their part...but not Rutgers," Moore said. Dr. Epps of the Civic League also complained of Rutgers' lack of involvement, most notably in regard to the struggling New Brunswick public school system. Professor Steven Lawson, chair of the history department at Rutgers College, shared his opinions on city life in relation to corporations and the university. "J&J was talking about pulling out of town, and some things were done...which also included putting up the hotel, the Hyatt Regency...they were very instrumental in convincing the city fathers and mothers to put up a hotel...of course it meant displacement of poor people." He mentioned the fact that the Rutgers administrators advise professors with children not to live in New Brunswick, generally because of the poor public school system. "Where in this university," he asked, "if any place, is there a mission to work with that area of the community that is ill-housed, ill-fed and ill-clothed?"

Poor Rutgers...no one I spoke to seemed



less. CC is across the street from Elijah's Promise, a soup kitchen that serves meals twice daily. I spoke with the shelter's program director, Wesley R. Moore, in relation to the severe split between rich and poor, the status of the homeless, and plans for the future.

It's hard not to notice the homeless in this city. At night, a woman sleeps the late hours away on a bench several blocks down from my house. During the day she often pushes a baby carriage loaded with blankets around the streets. Last week I saw two cops yelling at a man on the street corner asking for change. To be fair, he was stopping cars at a traffic light with his plastic cup, but their response was harsher than necessary, ("You're a grown man, you're panhandling!") bringing up familiar sentiments that when people are poor, it's something they deserve, or something that they've brought upon themselves in every instance).

Months ago the mayor's public relations director had informed me that the city has a very small homeless population—an opinion that Moore laughed at. He said the shelter was "full to capacity, with one on the couch." There are 38 permanent beds as well as two emergency beds. In the past, the emergency beds were generally utilized in the more brutal winter months, but Moore informed me that the situation has worsened within the past two years. "We've been carrying a waiting list right through the summer months...we get full to capacity with a waiting list..."

The shelter is designed to help all residents of Middlesex County, although the majority of them (200+ out of 391 men aided in the past year) are from New Brunswick. The goal is to promote self-sufficiency and employment; Catholic Charities requires that all residents deposit 60 percent of their earnings in a holding fund, to create savings that can be used to find living quarters. "There are times when they [the resi-

very fond of the university (nationally known, unfortunately, for having a president who made mention of certain genetic disadvantages blacks have in relation to intelligence), including DEVCO, who mentioned the school's reluctance to take part in any redevelopment affairs. Rutgers occupies a great deal of land in-town, and with a student population of 34,761 (1998 figures, although keep in mind these include nonresident commuters) they provide an enormous influx of residents. Oddly, many city organizations have seemed to take Rutgers as a kind of catch-all scapegoat and punching bag, and I'm unsure how much of this criticism is valid, or a simple game of hot potato involving responsibility. The college community can take the blame for raising rent prices, for instance, in order to explain the difficulties in finding affordable housing within New Brunswick. The status of college students in the city is also questionable; despite being a sizable chunk of the population, I was informed that the New Brunswick webpage formally referred to resident students as guests. And when DEVCO's Paladino discussed the displacement of residential areas downtown to make way for business development, he assured me that most of the displaced were college students, as if this were a lesser offense. The confluence of the academic world, the business world, and the public world, then, only complicates matters. Add to this the general student ignorance of the residential community in town, and you have a situation in which two

diverse populations live side by side, unaware of each other (not to mention difficulties encountered when factoring in the police force, which faces opposition from both ends of town...and with two officers currently up on charges of drug-trafficking and the operation of brothels, this forms another story entirely...). I recall a friend of mine who ventured downtown to the post office to drop off a letter, and was literally shocked to find that real people live in the city. The reaction isn't uncommon. There is a clear dividing line between academia and residential life. (Dr. Epps described it as the other side of the tracks, an accurate description since the city is literally cut in two by railroad lines that divide the collegiate from the private.)

Overall student involvement in the city of New Brunswick is also minimal, which is not to say that political activism does not run rampant. The steps of the cafeteria are often taken up by rallies, protests, and speeches. Mumia Abu Jamal is a favorite, as is the WTO. This kind of activism is not to be derided, but what is amazing is the general ignorance of real problems a mere 10 blocks away: not intangible poor people in a

foreign country, but actual poor residents living within a three mile radius of the protests themselves. Criticism of local

break by the city government in the 1970s, local residents are forced to move from their homes and relocate. "The problem we're stuck with is a philosophical debate between is capitalism good or evil?" Gillespie said. "When you strip away the rhetoric, you're looking at socialism versus capitalism. Philosophically, the problem with capitalism is that it's based on selfishness.

Philosophically, the plus about socialism is that its devoted to the problem of equal distribution of wealth...which sounds fair...the catch is that recent history has shown socialism doesn't work. Without the profit motive, things grind to a halt." As Prof. Gillespie suggests, I believe the primary conflict is not the city residents vs. the city government - it involves an entire system of beliefs that affects the whole of the country, and has affected the country since early in its inception.

Are there severe, deep-rooted problems? Most definitely. Does city government always work in the best interests of the people, the citizens within the town limits? This is a difficult question, especially in the modern urban center, where there is no single set of best interests shared by an entire population. An issue of power is definitely at stake. One would never imagine the residents of another university town, i.e. Princeton, New Jersey (think ivy, stone walls, affluent beyond normal bounds) being asked to relocate or leave town to make room for construction interests and corporate development. "It's a tale of two cities," Professor Lawson said, "like many of these cities in America are now...but you know, a hundred years ago in NYC it was also a tale of two cities, the



Above: Monument Square
Center: Starbucks
Right: George St. at night.



government claim that city officials try to discourage student involvement in local politics as much as possible - voting booths that used to

very rich, and the extremely poor...cities attract very rich people who want culture, who want entertainment, who want social life - and they attract very poor people who are going to provide the work, the labor, so that the rich people can have these things." Working within the boundaries of the American system, then, one reaches certain limitations. Radical groups spin conspiracy theories and the corporate leaders scoff at them. Who to believe? Where to begin?

be on campus have since been moved to a remote location, the whereabouts of which most people are unaware of.

"The facts are the same whether you talk to DEVCO or the People's Campaign," Professor Angus Gillespie tells me, "it's how you interpret the facts." Sage advice, and especially difficult when looking at the immensity of a city: factions each pursuing their own agenda, data spun this way and that, used to prove a million disparate points. "I've lived in New Brunswick for 13 years, I've worked on city government, and I don't have all the answers either," Gillespie added. There is the temptation, that romance of radicalism, that would make it easy to rail against authority in the city, to label the government as corporate whores, to point to the establishment of a Starbucks coffee shop as a sign of social Armageddon. I believe, in the end, the accurate judgement call falls somewhere between outrage and acceptance. There is no doubt that the city of New Brunswick, like so many other urban centers in America, has fallen prey to some degree to the theory of Social Darwinism. The history of this country has been built on the advancement of business, from the very day that the Constitutional Amendment that was designed to give blacks civil rights was instead primarily used to give CORPORATIONS rights as human beings. While Johnson & Johnson, for instance, is given an extensive tax

10/08/00: In my attic now, typing this, not entirely satisfied with all findings. So many snapshots that sum this all up - the man next door to the valet-parking Italian restaurant, the one-legged man who begs for change with crutches and a paper cup. the way people gather their words before they speak...afraid to say the wrong thing, wary of the tape recorder rolling on the desk, a waiting list for a bed at Catholic Charities, a waiting list for a table at Clyde's martini bar, a new population desiring to work and play in cities again, the theater district, the quiet campus quads, the Raritan River, Remson Avenue where there are problems with crack, driving to the liquor store to buy alcohol with fake IDs, drive-by shootings four blocks away, luxury hotels, the men who had sex with prostitutes beneath the back patio at the office where I worked this summer, four dollars for a cup of coffee, restaurants where they only speak Spanish, my ex-girlfriend's neighborhood with black graffiti "THE END IS NEAR" on a fence, fights spilling out of the college bar next to my house, the way DEVCO's president dismissed his opposition as The People's Worker's Revolutionary Communist Party, laughing, local officials sent to jail in the '80s, photographs of abandoned ghetto streets, multinational corporations, free dinners consisting of pork that comes in a can, a true working partnership between business and government...

Money Changes Everything

Money as Freedom
by J. Gerlach

If one was given a free piece of land, many square miles, and then handed millions of dollars to develop a modern urban center, the outcome would be obvious. The goal would be to beautify the area, bring in corporate interests, build luxury townhouses, attract a population that wants to spend money, orchestrate a theater district and a restaurant district that rivals Manhattan, albeit on a lesser scale. The problem is when this same goal is undertaken in a city that is not a blank slate, but rather a long-standing district of many faces, many economic brackets, many lifestyles. New Brunswick, I am sure, is not unique - its problems are the problems facing urban centers across America. If the upper classes fled the city years ago, leaving the poor to subsist on their own, what happens when those selfsame upper classes suddenly have the desire for the cosmopolitan urban life again? Difficulties arise when the terminology becomes vague: our best interests, our advancement, our successes. How to mark progress when there is no we, but rather an intangible collective, rich and poor, black, white, European, Hispanic, looking for work or trading stocks, all walking the same streets? ★

Money has always meant freedom to me. Right from the start, the income I earned mowing lawns and delivering newspapers was treated as savings, a defense against having to rely on anyone else. This freedom was purely hypothetical while I was still a teenager, living at home and depending on my parents, but it was somehow inherent in my early ways. So instead of spending money as quickly as I earned it, as most of my friends did, I socked it away ... literally, in a dresser drawer under the socks. I figured someday I would need that money for something much more important, like taking a trip to Africa or starting a bicycle repair shop. When that time came, I wanted to be able to do it - anything, without having to compromise my life or depend on anyone else. I didn't know exactly how much freedom might cost but I figured it had to be expensive.

My dad is a capitalist businessman. These are the first terms I would use to describe him. He has bought into the American capitalist system, worked hard to understand it and been successful within that system. While my sister, brother and I were young, my dad began putting some of the money he was making into the stock market in each of our names. He invested in our future so that each of us would escape having to take out loans for the privilege of a private university education. Due to my dad's foresight and some luck, we were able to avoid going into debt before we had our first full-time job. Staying out of debt is key in having freedom. For many of my peers, these student loans are where their personal debt began, a hole some of them are still digging out of 10 years later.

When I got out of college, I had no concrete ideas about what I wanted to do with my life. I did know that I wanted some freedom from the demands of the system. I yearned to know what it was like to spend more of my time doing what I wanted to do instead of what the system said I was supposed to do. Navigating through school without much difficulty, I had always felt that there had to be something more. I wanted to try and find it. My employment experience during college had consisted mostly of restaurant work where the varied schedule and quick cash had allowed me a relative amount of freedom. I figured out that I could make enough money waiting tables to live and still have lots of time to do what I wanted. So, once graduation day came and went, most of my peers went off in search of big money jobs in tall, glass buildings in Chicago, New York or Boston while I settled into a decent money job waiting tables full-

An Index of Interviewees:

CHRIS PALADINO : Middle-aged white male. President of New Brunswick Development Corporation. Lawyer.

STEVEN LAWSON: Middle-aged white male. Chair of History Department at Rutgers University, Rutgers College. Specialties include the issue of civil rights. Resident of Metuchen, a town in vicinity of New Brunswick.

WESLEY MOORE: Middle-aged African American male. Program director for the Catholic Charity's Men's Shelter.

DR. ROY EPPS: Leader of the Civic League of New Brunswick.

NORMAN MARKOWITZ: Middle-aged white male. History professor. Former resident of New Brunswick, now resides at the Jersey shore. Teaches from a Socialist perspective.

ANGUS GILLESPIE: White male. Former office holder in New Brunswick. Current member of the Board of Education. Teacher in the American Studies department of Rutgers.

GLENN PATTERSON: White male. Planner for the city of New Brunswick.

XAVIER HANSEN & FRANK BRIGHT: Xavier is of eastern European descent, I believe. I forgot to inquire about his accent. Frank is a white male in his late 20s. Frank also holds elected office for the local Republican party. They both are organizing for the People's Party campaign, elections to be held November 7.

time at a downtown restaurant. The work was tough, physically and mentally, but I found it came fairly naturally, especially compared to my short mind-and-body-numbing stints in office settings. I had no trouble keeping my expenses down and accepting the college-esque living set-up (futon on the floor, milk crate shelving, etc.) as completely adequate for my needs. I ate at work or cooked big pots of beans and rice for the week. I passed on cars and became dedicated to bicycling as my main mode of transportation. I found that my initial instincts were true; it was possible to live the way I wanted to, within the system, without buying into the belief that it would take large amounts of money to be happy. Over the next ten years I was able to take frequent breaks from employment; traveling extensively, playing in bands, reading, writing and visiting friends, all because I had the freedom of money in the bank.

Investment

I held a small bank account for years with just enough of a balance to cover the one or two checks a month I needed for rent and car insurance. For the rest of my savings, I reverted to my old ways and stuffed my tip money in my socks. Eventually my nervousness about losing a big wad of cash to thieves or fire led me to think of options outside of the sock drawer. The stock market had always seemed unimportant and boring to me but I remembered how my father had prepared for the future by investing so I went to him for advice. He recommended a few mutual funds that had a good history of returns and told me how easy it was to invest. I ended up doing some hasty research on his recommendations before spreading my small, saved-up sum between a couple of low risk funds. At the time, I never really thought about where that money was going or what it might be endorsing. I was happy to watch my money increase in value, making considerably more than a bank account would yield, without having to do anything. If I ever needed money, there would be more than enough. I would be able to put out my own publications and music projects without worrying about falling into debt. I wouldn't have to compromise my beliefs or take a job that I hated in order to live the way I wanted to. I would still be able to take the winters off and hit the road. It would be the closest I could come to freedom.

But, like most other 20-something, socially aware, non-mainstream kids from upper middle-class backgrounds, I felt sort of guilty about not being poor. Most everyone I hung out with in the punk, counterculture, whatever-you-want-to-call-it scene com-

plained about being broke all the time and blamed it on the man. My peers had nothing nice to say about anyone with money but these kids were doing the same thing with their income that my college graduate peers were doing—spending it on stuff. Maybe they made a great deal less than my old friends but they still had impressive record collections and hefty bar tabs. These kids were mostly white, middle-class, products who chose not to forfeit their young adult years to corporate America. They were able to live the way they wanted to within the relatively safe confines of a quirky midwestern city, but did they really expect to be rich too? And weren't we supposed to be living in opposition to the commercialism and hyper-consumerism of the mainstream? But there we were, spending whatever we made on our own versions of needs. There are so many ways our culture promotes the earn and spend lifestyle; focusing on acquiring things as a means to happiness, emphasizing standard schooling as a means to getting a good job. Success is measured almost solely in dollar figures. Without money, you are unimportant and powerless within the system. We need more of a dialogue on ways that money can be used for broader, positive means. I am a product of the American capitalist system and have reaped the benefits of that system for my whole life; how can I use these benefits to make things better?

As the years went by, I continued to question the system that I had been raised and conditioned in. It took me a long time to address the issues I always had inside me—questions about why our society was considered the best while I saw so much unhappiness, prejudice and

injustice around me; questions about the blatant contradictions between our rhetoric and actions. Almost everyone seemed to be looking out for his or herself and this is a product of our American capitalistic system, a system that emphasizes the bottom line, often while compromising other concerns. We sacrifice the environment, human rights and our health in order to make more money. More money means more happiness, more comfort, more convenience. More people are supposedly well off in America today than ever before, but more and more people seem unhappy, unhealthy and selfish. More, more, more. Our answers to social problems are more laws and increased taxes for more government spending. Time with family members decreases as we spend at least half of our waking hours at work and another few hours sitting in a car. We spend billions of dollars on a bigger army to defend the American Way by keeping foreign markets open. We approve more and more spending for prison construction and the war on drugs, attempting to clean up the effects of the problems instead of attacking the social and economic causes. Our national politicians are power-hungry movers and shakers that answer to, and are a product of, big money. If you end up having to deal with the American judicial system, your chances of getting off are greatly increased if you can pay big time lawyers.

When I discuss these things with my peers, they usually agree. Yes, they say, we could improve our society, but they qualify their complaints with the idea that it is still better than living in Ethiopia, Yugoslavia or even Canada. They say this is still the best system, the best country to live in. Democratic capitalism beat

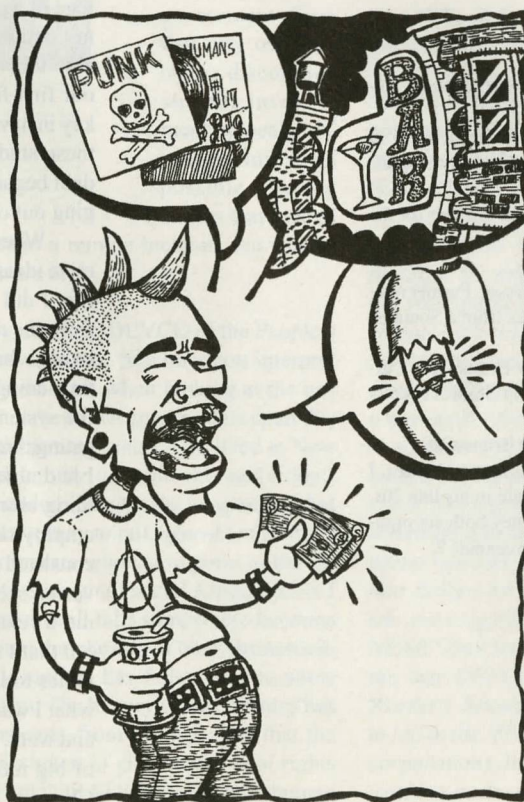


Fig 1~1: Anti~Capitalist

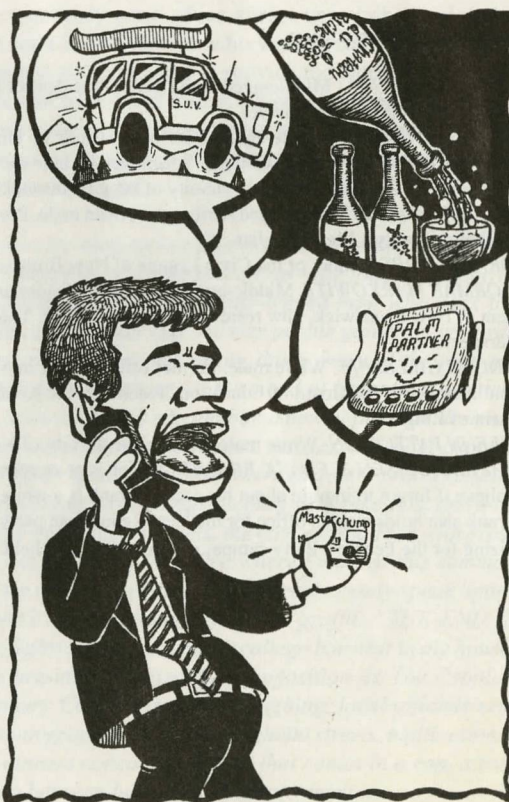


Fig 1~2: Capitalist

communism, but does that mean we shouldn't be addressing serious flaws and questioning accumulation? By reaping the rewards of the most advanced society ever, shouldn't we have the responsibility to improve the world instead of taking more and more from it?

As they got older, more and more of my peers bought into the system and acquired credit cards, made payments on new cars and home furnishings. They rationalized these practices – "I need a big car for the dogs and this isn't even the biggest one they had." or, "I hate that big, gross store but it is so convenient." We all make choices in life and I'm not here to judge how someone else spends their money since I can't expect respect for my own choices if I am telling others how to live, but I realize that just driving to the local co-ops and recycling my empty beer bottles isn't enough if I expect any change in the system. If I want to feel comfortable about participating in the system then I have to feel right about the ways in which I do it. Within capitalism, one of the obvious methods to effect change is in the way you spend your money.

I hate that money is so important. If it were up to me, I would be as self-sufficient as possible and use the barter system for the other things I need. I would live in a city comprised of loose communities and free of cars, where one's ambition did not come at the expense of someone else's well-being, but we live in a very different society. Our system has its roots in selfishness and it controls almost every facet of our lives. We support it with our dollars. However, I think it is possible to operate within that system while still incorporating your own belief system and effecting change in your own ways. This means shopping small stores if you are alarmed by the increasing corporate takeover and its resulting fewer choices. It means rejecting the barrage of advertising and the lure of consumer culture and deciding that we don't need these things. We need to pay attention to what is going on in our communities, talk with neighbors and attend meetings if we want to participate positively. If we all worked less and spent more time at home with our children or working on projects with friends, we could positively alter the concept of a good standard of living. We shouldn't be afraid to decide for ourselves what is important in our lives, even if it seems that the media and the powers that be are telling us something completely different. No one is perfect – we all succumb to the barrage of advertising and the convenience of modern society at times but there is no reason to buy into it hook, line and sinker.

Eventually, I realized the money I had been blindly investing, although a paltry sum by overall standards, was endorsing things I didn't believe in. Just like the products I bought and the stores I spent my money in, the dollar was my small vote. I needed to pay attention and recog-

I hate that money is so important. If it were up to me, I would be as self-sufficient as possible and use the barter system for the other things I need. I would live in a city comprised of loose communities and free of cars, where one's ambition did not come at the expense of someone else's well-being, but we live in a very different society.

nize that my complaints about the system couldn't be taken seriously while I was making money off of the worst parts of it. Ignoring this responsibility is easy. It is no accident that the money we put into banks, stocks and mutual funds is immediately infused into a complex financial system and becomes hard to trace. Cash is converted into figures and housed in databases and financial statements which are too complex for the average person to digest. Once it is taken out of its physical context, this money becomes easier to control and manipulate, filtered through multi-national conglomerates into all sorts of different sectors and companies. As long as companies return a portion of the profits in the form of cash dividends or higher stock prices, the average investor doesn't question the actual practices of these companies. We are so numbed by the huge dollar figures that we don't think about our small contribution having any real effect but, by investing your money in a company, you are endorsing whatever business practices that company uses in order to turn a profit – the bottom line. I was examining the prospectus of a mutual fund I had invested in and noticed that General Electric is one of their biggest holdings. GE is a company that makes a lot of its money from defense contracts. I hate that our military is so huge and disagree with almost every military action and didn't want to be endorsing this in any way.

Making Choices

I don't believe my vote in November is going to make any difference – it won't alter the system's course. I believe that how we spend our money, day after day, matters. If we all stopped going to McDonald's then eventually it would disappear – it's simple economics, supply and demand. Money is your vote. If I am going to invest my money in a system I'm skeptical of, then I should at least make sure my investment is helping to make changes. I should be supporting companies that are producing goods and services that I can get behind and operating in a way that isn't harmful. I should be paying attention to what the companies I am invested in are doing, using my shareholder votes to influence their decisions. These are personal judgment calls that I should be prepared to follow up on. I don't want to support war, discrimination or cruelty to animals so I shouldn't be investing in any mutual funds that are indirectly making money off of these practices.

"No one in American society today can escape our economic system. You have to eat;

you have to clothe yourself; you have to have shelter. These essentials are all provided by a system built on investment capital. Sure, you can grow your own food, weave your own cloth, and build your own lean-to, but the pollution in the air, the contamination of the water, and the noise of an industrial society keeps you connected to the system. Purity becomes a moot point. Responsible investing seeks to exert maximum economic pressure within the system to produce the greatest benefit for all society, not just one segment of it."

Money is a touchy subject. I understand the argument, used by myself at times, that it is all evil – that participating in the system and making a profit at all is wrong. But what are today's real alternatives? Most of the world today is striving towards some form of capitalism. Why not use the power we have as citizens in the greatest of capitalist countries to make a difference? When you put your paycheck in a big bank, you are allowing that bank to use your money to make more money in whatever way they choose. Many of these banks, like most capitalist investors, invest in any area that will provide the greatest return on the principal. They aren't usually asking about minority hiring policies or whether they use sweat shop labor. We can't complain about the erosion of control in our lives if we aren't willing to actively support alternatives. If we truly want a better world to live in then we have to effect change in our own ways, whatever our circumstances happen to be.

When I thought about how I was investing my money, I felt stupid for not actively being more involved. I did some research and came across a couple of books on socially responsible investing. This term simply means investing in companies that weigh factors like human rights, morality and the environment when making business decisions instead of sacrificing these interests for the greatest profit. I learned that there were dozens of socially responsible mutual funds that worked just like the ones I was already invested in, except that they were making attempts to screen out the especially evil parts of the system.

Socially Responsible Investing

Arising from environmental concerns, the unrest of the 60s and increasing human rights consciousness, socially responsible investing emerged as a viable concept. Churches, universities and community organizations decided they couldn't be fighting social wrongs within their institutions while they were investing their holdings in companies that practiced these inequities. Just because they weren't actively running a sweat shop in Indonesia or dropping bombs on innocent foreign civilians didn't mean they weren't indirectly contributing to some of these actions through their financial support of certain big corporations or the U.S. military. This brought up some uncomfortable truths. But, since many of these institutions were wealthy, they held power within the system. The best way to make positive changes in the world, the so-

cially conscious members of these churches and communities argued, was with their money. During the 60s, 70s and 80s, many church members and students put pressure on their boards to divest from companies that were polluting the atmosphere, making arms and promoting unhealthy lifestyles. The divestment from South Africa during the 80s led to the end of apartheid, proving that the money vote held enough sway to play a big part in bringing down the entrenched government and discriminatory system of a large, powerful country.

Using your money, on a smaller scale, works the same way. The easiest way to invest responsibly is through socially responsible mutual funds. These funds, like all mutual funds, hold a variety of investments — stocks, bonds, etc. — which offer a diverse, more spread out option than investing in individual stocks. Fund managers pool and control money. For socially responsible funds, these managers work to screen out certain practices, (pollution, racism, sexism) stay out of questionable

manufacturing areas, (armaments, tobacco, gambling) and/or to promote things like community development and the end of animal testing. The number of socially responsible funds has grown over the years in response to the varied demands of socially conscious investors. Today, enough funds exist to make it relatively simple for socially conscious investors to tailor their investments to avoid social evils that they are against. In order to find the best combination of social awareness, positive effectiveness and return on investment, you will have to do some of your own research. There are trade-offs and compromises involved in making these choices. No fund, probably no business for profit, is going to share all of your beliefs. If you are looking to make money on your investment then you may have to be satisfied with making choices based on the lesser of two evils, but by considering a company's business practices along with its ability to make a profit you are taking a step in the right direction. Enough investors boycotting a certain business practice could force the whole industry to change just to be able to compete. For more information on the different funds, try the library (I found a few books in the business section on this topic), the Internet (there are free terminals at most public libraries if you don't have your own access), searching under socially responsible investing or by talking to investment brokers (there are brokers in many cities that specialize in socially responsible investment). I found one site on the internet (Social Investment Forum) that listed social screens, minimum investments and past performance for more than

fifty funds. By reviewing this information, you can hone in on a fund that might be right for you. Some funds screen out for things like tobacco, alcohol and gambling; some profess to promote better minority hiring or labor relations. Most funds require an initial investment of \$1,000, but there are some as low as \$50 and most of them will let you get on a monthly plan to build up your minimum requirement over time. In general terms, at least these funds are run by people who are paying attention to more than just the bottom line.

For those capitalists who are skeptical about making money while being socially aware, one needs only to look at the financial facts. Over the past 5 or 10 years, dozens of socially responsible mutual funds have developed solid histories of above average returns. Most of these

Over the past five or 10 years, dozens of socially responsible mutual funds have developed solid histories of above average returns. Most of these funds have been able to make a profit on pace with their competitors while socially screening for things like defense contracts, cruelty to animals, and harmful environmental practices.

funds have been able to make a profit on pace with their competitors while socially screening for things like defense contracts, cruelty to animals, and harmful environmental practices. These funds have proven,

over the long term, that it is possible to participate positively while still earning a good return on your investment.

Capitalism on your own terms

"Responsible investing is, in some ways, creating a more ethical capitalism in the financial services industry, but it is still capitalism and one of the final objectives is to turn a profit."²

In deciding how to spend our money, we have to decide if avoiding the worst evils of capitalism is enough. I struggled with the idea of writing this article because I have been reading more and more about anarchism and thinking about all kinds of people, heroes of all ages, who are inventing their own systems. I realize that I am still involved in the system more than I want to be. Challenging the system directly and making real attempts to live positively with the people you come in contact with everyday are much more powerful and immediate ways to effect change. By introducing the practice of socially responsible investing I am only trying to offer an idea for improvement in another area of our lives. Granted, it's more a practical idea than a radical one. Socially responsible investing is not a way to overthrow the system but it is an easy way to make some difference.

There are more extreme investment options as well. You may want to look into local loan funds, which provide low interest loans to those who might not ever qualify under normal criteria, or in local non-profits which seek to serve your immediate community. Investing with your conscience could be as simple as providing some

capital so that a friend can realize his or her dream and start a record label to put out friends' bands. Maybe you want to start a small store to sell the products you and your friends make or fund a non-profit cafe that serves healthy food made out of food grown locally. In all businesses, there are constant choices; choices between cheaper and environmentally better products; choices between what's best for the owners and what's fairest to all; choices between community well-being or personal gain. If you don't want things in your world to be so much about money, then put your money, along with your time and talents, in projects that don't only think about profit.

Socially responsible investing means taking an active interest in how your money is affecting the world. It is still possible to make money while being a positive force, whether you choose to start your own business, fund a local grassroots group or invest in socially responsible mutual funds. How you choose to affect the world you live in is up to you. What you choose to do with your money is your own business. But with all the great machinery of the system working towards enticing us into buying its products and its ideas to achieve happiness, increasing its profits by promising us a lifestyle that is unattainable, shouldn't it be important for us to be skeptical and thoughtful about how we spend our money? We have to believe that our actions make a difference. If we don't want profits to be more important than damaging our environment or screwing over our fellow people, then it is up to all of us to use whatever voice we might have to change the system. By buying into the convenience and consumerism pushed on us by the capitalist system, we are allowing the system to control us. By not paying attention, someone else is making our decisions for us with their best interests in mind. I'd like to have the freedom to make my own decisions. ★

NOTES

¹. Investing With Your Conscience by John C. Harrington Wiley and Sons 1992 p. 62

². Same as above. p. 55

If any of these ideas interested you then please read William Upsi Wimsatt's book, "No More Prisons". It is an inspiring collection of essays. The book is available from Soft Skull Press, 98 Suffolk #3A NY. NY 10002 / www.softskull.com

THE CITY LIFE OF FAKE MEAT



by Beth Barnett

part one. lunch-meat.

Recently, I have been eating a lot of vegan fake processed meats. They consist mostly of soybeans and spices but look almost indistinguishable from real meat products. Deli slices, Tofu Pups, Boca Burgers, pepperoni slices, ham. You name it, I've worked it in somewhere. I like this fake-meat stuff because it is convenient and filling in the way the real thing would be, but it isn't meat at all, and that makes it good for me. It seems very silly that I'm eating hot dogs and deli sandwiches these days. Veganism seems so much about not eating like everyone else, it is odd to find it possible to function in an parallel universe of imitation meat, like nothing has changed. The processed meat product is a spooky thing- obscure in appearance, completely manufactured. Here I am eating food crafted in the image of food I have rejected for years.

However, no one is going to deny that processed foods are convenient and easy, regardless of their composition. That is why most people (with access to them) eat at least some pre-packaged, processed foods. That is why a lot of Americans seem to only eat these kinds of foods. I eat plenty of processed foods that don't pretend to be meat, like snack foods, cookies, and candies. But, I eat less of that stuff than the average person partly because it is unappealing, and partly because a lot of products contain animal ingredients of one form or another. When I stopped eating meat and other animal foods about seven years ago it had nothing to do with the taste and texture of meat and everything to do with what meat is. When I stopped eating those things I evolved this totally different view of food and discovered issues related to food I never before imagined. I learned much more about nutrition and about the processes that make meat out of animals. Now, as I chomp on a soy-burger or a tofu pup I can take what I know about meat and think about the vegetables.

Vegetarianism can be explained by a series of textbook justifications: compassion, non-violence, animal rights, environmentalism, personal taste, and human health. But these values are too broad to fit into a neat little vegetarian vs. not vegetarian dichotomy. These ethics, at the basis of most urban vegetarians' ideologies, are broad. More than superficial thought about the implications of our food decisions turns up a web of options and contradictions. Food, a basic necessity and universal need, embodies the problems inherent in our society and deep in our spiritual selves, even for vegetarians- the "enlightened" ones.

essential economics

Rev. Richard Mackin's Book of Letters: Consumer Defense Corporate Poetry #13

Contemporary American consumer culture privileges the passive consumer. The system works best when we are empty vessels with desires as malleable as the morphing glut of products that each of us positively "can't live without." But what happens when a conspicuous consumer decides to call major corporations on their shit by way of their customer service department? Such a tactic has produced 13 issues of Rich Mackin's zine *Book of Letters: Consumer Defense Corporate Poetry*. As a collection of letters and their responses (or lack thereof) to and from the major corporations that sponsor your soul, the most recent issue will leave you laughing, crying and saying "The Power of the Pen to the People!"

Taking corporations up on their offer to "Let us know what you think about our product," Rich spends the wee hours of the evening furiously drafting notes to customer service departments across the globe to give them a piece of his mind. For example, in one note to Bruegger's Bagel Company, Rich suggests that he was put off by a regional employee referring to him as "Sir" when he stops in occasionally to get a sandwich. Instead, he suggests that they implement a company-wide policy of calling people "My Man," because it sounds so much more natural and sets him at ease on his lunch break. Mackin's letters range from mildly agitating questions like where does Peter Pan Peanut Butter Toast Crackers get their "toast" flavor from to the more incisive limer-

Rev. Richard J. Mackin's
BOOK OF LETTERS
\$2.00 #13
CONSUMER DEFENSE CORPORATE POETRY



ick written to Proctor and Gamble about torturing bunnies.

As you can imagine, some of companies take time to respond to Mackin's queries—a lot don't. He prints the former and stamps a huge "NO REPLY" at the bottom of notes that the company has failed to respond to. The responses are most funny when a worker at ConglomoCorp. attempts to jam a response to Mackin's query into the standard form letter. "Thank you for the suggestion that we make another variety of Lever 2000," is the beginning of a response to a letter suggesting that the company cash in on the millennial craze and call themselves Lever 2K. Rather than address Mackin's frustration with Keebler and their packaging that shows a "suggested serving" of cookies being dunked and eaten by a bunch of elves (which Rich thinks is not an option for him), Keebler simply responds with a form letter

thanking him for his concern and apologizing for the fact that he is unsatisfied with Keebler EL Double Fudge Cookies.

Mackin's zine is one of many ways to wrestle control back from corporations. It may not be the most destabilizing or long-term way, but *Book Of Letters* is hilariously fun and will have you drafting a few letters of your own by the time you're done reading. If you can't overthrow them, why not just be a thorn in their side?

- jason kucsma

\$3 ppd in the US / c/o Rich Mackin / PO Box 890 / Allston, MA 02134
Digest, 38 pages, photocopied

part two. daydreaming.

Staring out the window at dinner, I got to daydreaming about my vegan Canadian bacon and pepperoni slices. I imagined myself starting a new job (not in a vegetarian restaurant or health food store) in which, for some reason, I didn't feel like telling everyone I was vegan. It's such a hassle sometimes, especially right at first. I tend to pack my lunch, and vegan pepperoni, nayonnaise, and some veggies works nicely in a sandwich. Of course, no one would notice anything different or special about my sandwiches. They wouldn't make comments about how they have a niece who is vegetarian, or ask if I eat fish and chicken. They would assume that I was "normal"—that I was a "meat-eater." They would have no evidence to the contrary, unless I volunteered it. But that scenario makes me think, "oh, how very embarrassing!"

Out of this daze, I mentioned the work scenario to a friend of mine, who eats real salami sandwiches, and she replied by saying, "oh, that's weird, I guess you might wonder what's the point [of not eating the real thing]." She didn't understand. Of course, it isn't about the appearance at all, or the taste or the texture. It's all about what the food is actually composed of, quite explicitly, in detail.

Really, I don't want people to assume I eat meat. I've definitely mellowed my attitude about meat in the past few years, and I think people have the right to eat animals, and in some cases it is better for survival and health to eat meat than to refuse. But I'm proud to be vegetarian, in my circumstances. It's not a secret. It's not something I think I should hide. Once I took crackers and veggie pepperoni slices with me to eat as a snack on a plane trip, but I couldn't bear to take them out because I figured the guy next to me would be confused as to why the stewardess brought me a vegan meal earlier. I didn't care what the pepperoni looked like, to eat it. I cared what it looked like to everyone else who wouldn't be able to tell the difference. I didn't want this stranger to think I ate pepperoni, even though he would have assumed it anyway, and even though he wouldn't see me again and didn't care. Call me a basket-case, but that's how I feel.

part three. ingredients.

Being vegan in America is all about reading ingredients labels. Except for the die-hard whole foods people, most vegans eat some processed or packaged foods. It's always an adventure and a triumph to find animal-free items. There are about a million sneaky, obscurely named ingredients used as additives and preservatives, dough conditioners, emulsifiers, flavor enhancers, whatever—that all come from animals in one way or another. Some of them, like urea (in shampoo), can be made synthetically now, which is nice. About half my time spent in the grocery store is taken up by speed-reading ingredients labels on packaged foods. And, I am not the strictest vegan out there. I eat honey, red-40 (crushed insects?), white sugar (sometimes processed through charred animal bones), and sometimes sodium steryl lactylate (may or may not be from milk). If I accidentally buy bread that has changed its ingredients to include "cultured whey" (the bastards!) I'll finish the loaf. I already bought it. It is not going to kill me.

Now that I am an amateur ingredients expert, obsessed with looking at labels, I tend to notice that hardly anyone else "normal" bothers to read ingredients at all. If it says it's food, if it looks like food, if there's no mold, they'll eat it. My mother used to read ingredients on cereal boxes to check for "sugar first," to prevent my sister and me from eating complete junk food for breakfast. She looks at the "nutritional information" section for fat content. But neither she, nor anyone else I know who isn't either vegetarian or a health-nut is as obsessed with contents.

To me, it seems weird not to know the ingredients of something before eating it. Food is a major part of life. It's up there with water, sleep, and sex. It seems odd and disturbing to not quite know what you're eating most of the time. Other animals run into trouble when they don't

pay attention to what they're eating. They run the risk of eating poisonous insects or plants. Humans frequently get food poisoning too, although it rarely kills us. The thing with humans is that we've gotten so good at manufacturing food that we have hundreds of processed products that look nothing like the whole foods that compose them. There are children who don't know that ham comes from a pig. There are adults who don't know that the casing of a sausage is made out of intestines. They don't have to know, so they don't.

part four. origin.

The main problem that I have with processed meat products, specifically, is that they completely remove the process of eating meat from the physical appearance of the animals, the tangible reality of their slaughter, and from the sacrifice involved. Bologna is a medley of meat ingredients, with a homogenous pink appearance, that the average person could not make from scratch. Turkey lunch meat doesn't look the same as a breast of turkey, and that doesn't look the same as a turkey you just killed and plucked yourself. There is this total disconnection between the animals serving as food, and the consumer. The consumer never has to think about what his or her food actually is, and she doesn't have any real

relationship with that food. Part of why I became vegetarian was because I came to believe that if a person is going to eat food that comes from an animal, he or she should feel able to slaughter that animal him or herself. I have a hard time imagining it, and I couldn't unless my life depended on it. So, I stopped eating it.

Processed fake-meats crafted into shapes like the thin, circular, processed real-meats taste and look about the same, but they share no complicity in the pain and sacrifice of animals. However, fake bologna is just as hard to make from scratch as real bologna. It is still manufactured food. There is still a disconnection between the food and the consumer. The nutritional information labels are not required to mention where the ingredients come from. If the ingredients are not certified organic (although they often are in vegetarian health-food products), there is no requirement for the label to mention what pesticides were used on them, or whether there was any genetic engineering. Manufactured foods with organic ingredients are more accountable, but descriptions on labels still don't match a true understanding of the process of planting, growing, harvesting, and then making the food before it reaches the consumer.

In some cases, produce aisles mention whether certain fruits and vegetables have been locally grown, or they have stickers that say "grown in California." But even with these fresh, whole foods, most have no explanation of how they came to be on display in front of us for \$1.59/lb. In the US at this point, only about 3% of the population is engaged in farming, and a good portion of them grow crops like alfalfa, corn, and soybeans for use in livestock feed. Most people don't have a vegetable garden.

New genetically modified vegetables are coming to stores as produce and as ingredients. Soy, a staple of my diet, is grown in large quantities with a pesticide engineered into it. My doctor and the radio both told me that possibly 70 percent of soybeans used in non-organic processed foods are GMOs. Corn is also in a lot of packaged foods and it is being grown and sold with pesticides or transgenic genes in the crops. I've heard of experiments that place animal and fish genes into plants. What does that mean for vegetarians? Is a salmon-tomato still vegetarian? I've never made a complete switch to organic produce and packaged foods, mainly because of the higher prices and smaller selection, but I'm thinking about it. Genetic engineering only complicates the search for origin and ingredients. So far, the FDA and USDA think labeling GMOs is unnecessary and would give a false impression that the stuff is less healthful. Great.

I, so far, am a metropolitan girl. I get my foods at the co-op and

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health-food store, but also at the grocery and big supermarkets. My apartment has no yard or land where I could grow my own soybeans, corn, green peppers, or spices.* Even if I had a patch of land, I don't have time to be a self-sufficient farmer. I cannot harvest wheat and mill flour. I don't even have time to research where all of the ingredients come from in foods I buy before they get to "the store." I often have to trust the food companies to work it all out for me. If I wanted to make all of my own food from scratch, from the soil-up, I would have a less varied diet, and it would be a full-time job. It is romantic to imagine this, but it is hard work, and there are some advantages to living in a complex economic society were people have learned to specialize. Although too many consumer goods can ruin us, in moderation they make a big difference. There are more diverse forms of entertainment, there are sub-cultures, and there are convenience foods (and those fake-chicken nuggets are so tasty with ketchup).

But there is a lack of awareness or concern over origin. It isn't just the food. Where do the other products I buy come from? (the store, of course). How do the companies actually make all of the plastic in everything? Where did the components come from? How were the materials mined from the land? Where are the forests that this paper came from? How was the ink made? And, by the way, when was my apartment built? What existed on this ground before it? And, what about before that? Where did the cross-beams come from, and the brick?

part five. urban nature.

There are quite a few things that I like about urban life, and many things that I have been conditioned to like or accept as normal. Cities offer social diversity and a better chance for meeting a few people like myself. You can't be too picky in a rural setting for friends. Cities also imply choices and options. I enjoy being away from cities, but so far I still want to live in one.

A major reason why I am vegetarian in the first place is because I live in cities. The wide accessibility of fresh produce, including fruits, the existence of health food stores and pre-packaged tofu make vegetarianism an easy option. I have choice, and I choose the more compassionate, more environmentally positive option. Most people don't recognize this choice, or don't feel a responsibility to make it.

City people generally live day by day with some time taken up walking on the ground, feeling the wind on their cheeks, watching trees sway, listening to birds chirp. Yet, it is completely possible and common to experience the bit of nature in the city without thinking about it in its own context. City people can never truly see the soil, the rocks, the plants, the elements composing the world that the city is built on, and that we are part of. Even sitting in a park, or walking barefoot on a manicured, mowed lawn can be done without actually thinking about the natural world. In the city everything has a visibly human-centered order. Nature is used by humans for their purposes, and it is sculpted and fragmented. It is an accent to offset miles of concrete, brick, and aluminum siding. To many people who experience life this way, everything may as well be man-made, synthetic, and manufactured by "somebody else." They would hardly notice. In the city, nature is "under control." The life support of the people in cities comes from food shipped in, from water stored and transported, or taken from underground. Most folks don't know where their food and water come from nor where their waste and sewage go. It's all taken care of (for a subsidized price).

Public parks and forests are places where some people go to see

nature for its own sake, since the ratio of nature to people, pavement, and buildings is much higher in such places. But, parks have trails, bathrooms, picnic tables, and even paved roads. They have mowed lawns for throwing frisbees. They have railings at cliff-sides. They are safe and comfortable for people. Trails and roads cater to human needs, although the strategic lack of trails in some areas also protect "wild" places from people. Very few city-oriented individuals ever deal with nature completely in its own world, unchanged for human benefit or safety. Very few of them ever experience life as an equal part of nature rather than a spectator and visitor. We feel the sense of being different and removed because our intrinsic relationship to land and the rest of the organisms on Earth is hidden under layers of technology and specialized tasks.

Quite a few "normal" American, urban men (and fewer women) take up hunting as a hobby to fulfill this need and break down the barriers of "civilization." But their game is artificially expanded by predator removal, and the animals are limited in range in small patches of remaining forest. Deer and bears aren't allowed to live in suburban neighborhoods. For many hunters, interaction with nature is also a mixture of appreciation and violence. They go to compete and conquer, even if they find enjoyment in hours of waiting and watching the woods around them. But, few of us escape that world-view. Large-scale monoculture farming is full of this same attitude of people versus the land, the native plants, the insects and animals, and the weather. Paradoxically, vegetarians who disdain hunting and slaughter and hike on trails at parks to connect with nature do not automatically escape this overarching competition and violence.

part six. history.

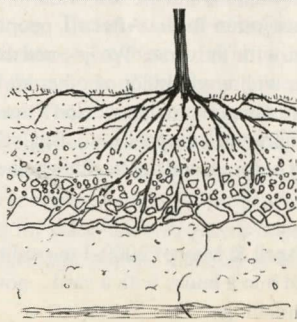
In April, I attended a presentation about building stone in Northwest Ohio. This fellow was discussing the origins of stones composing several churches, schools, railroad bridges, and houses in the Toledo area. In some cases there were still records from the 19th century describing the sources of the stone, in other cases, the characteristics of the limestone could be compared to stones from known quarries active at the time. A few of the buildings were built with limestone from a quarry within a few miles of them. Back then, these people probably built their own houses, they used a local quarry for their stone, and wood from nearby trees. Their relationship with homes and community buildings was personal. They took the materials from known places and built their "civilized" space themselves. It wasn't just made by "somebody else." In following generations staying on, they might not have built their buildings, but they knew their parents and grandparents had. This is the way a lot of people on Earth continue to live today, in countries and regions less urbanized and industrialized than ours, and in countries more connected to the past. But, it's a forgotten way of life to America's nomadic city people.

I was fascinated by the presentation. For the first time it struck me how absolutely unconnected I have been to the buildings I have lived in and worked in- and the land. I spend all this time in my life in structures that have no fundamental relationship with me, or even with the landscape around them. With time I become familiar with them and create a relationship, but when I leave, it vanishes.

These days, small farms are not very romantic. Young people are leaving rural areas for more choices of work in cities. It is often more profitable to sell a farm for use in housing developments than to farm it. It's partly the fault of agribusiness, but also due to changes in society.

The Jeffersonian romantic ideal of independent farmers is not completely practical, and maybe it never was. Anyway, I'm no farmer. I don't even know if I'd like farming. It isn't that everyone should try to build his or her home from scratch, there are millions of houses already standing. Not everyone could be a farmer, either- there isn't enough land. It's too late. But, as it is, to be urban

In the city everything has a visibly human-centered order. Nature is used by humans for their purposes, and it is sculpted and fragmented. It is an accent to offset miles of concrete, brick, and aluminum siding. To many people who experience life this way, everything may as well be man-made, synthetic, and manufactured by "somebody else." They would hardly notice. In the city, nature is "under control."



is easily to be without history or connection. I like cities well enough to stay, but there are reasons why rural people have resisted city ways, and I've got some things to learn from them.

The standard consumption lifestyle for a lot of Americans involves lumber from the lumberyard- unknown origin; groceries from the supermarket- manufactured, unrecognizable; apartment rentals- unknown age; plastic goods- synthetic, unreproducible. This breeds no connection to place, no security or comfort in that sort of feeling, no relationship with land or location that is whole and organic.

part seven. connections.

Why bother anyway, knowing history, origin, contents? Some folks seem quite content hanging on a civilized string over the earth, not quite touching it. A lot of people just seem puzzled by their constructed, artificial lives. They are fairly content, but melancholy, missing a sense of wholeness, meaning, and relationships between themselves and the world. I get a sense of whole when I take time to think about how rocks form, how the soil evolves out of them, how the plants take seed and grow, how the food is then digested, how proteins, compounds, and elements support life, how poop nourishes the soil and bodies return elements to it. That is a cycle much larger and longer in scope than I am, and I know I am a part of it, regardless of the fancy objects that get in the way. It is only when I think about the ecological relationship I have with my food, shelter, and surroundings that I feel a sense of peace with reality. So much created by humans seems pointless, temporary, and intangible, but even these things are part of the life cycle. These things are toys and distractions that we need to stay interested. There is far more to living than film theory, computer technology, sociology, and engineering. There is more than humans and their societies. Certainly earth's elements and aesthetic are in everything- in concrete and plastic and compact disks. But the world includes interest far beyond that.

I don't think humans have to un-civilize themselves to see themselves as part of a world. I like cities, books and films, and some manufactured goods. I am so accustomed to them that they are a frame of reference. But deep below this reality is the permanent and undeniable reality of the basic functions of life and of a unique Earth.

I will go on eating my veggie pepperoni. I know I complained and criticized it, but it really hits the spot sometimes, and the package says no GMOs! I'm not a fruitarian, not a macrobiotic, nor an organic whole foods purist. But I can't stop thinking about the ridiculousness of our manufactured lives while I sit on the stoop, pulling off another slice, stuffing crackers in my mouth, staring at the trees and the leaves falling. On an average day I am surrounded by a lot of concrete and asphalt but I know I'm bound to what is real, 10 feet under the surface where the roots cling to real rocks, where they break bedrock to form new soil, slowly, through my lifetime and that of those born on the day I die. It has taken a lot of thought and searching to truly realize that. I still manage to push that essential knowledge out of the front of my mind at times.

Civilization has really brainwashed me and most of my urban friends. I feel resentful and frustrated by the pervasive capitalist, urban culture, but I still choose to be in cities. I watch people criticize what it does to them and eat it up in the same moment. I feel conflict myself. The diversity of urban people, ideas, and activities is stimulating- the good and the bad. So much going on, revolving around humans, fools us into worrying only about those things contrived and orchestrated by humans. But I can find alternate ways of thinking about it. I've forced myself. I can take the science I have learned, hikes in the forest, human history, art and design, and see the relationships between humans and the rest of Earth. I find that I understand humans and the rest better for it. After all, people are interesting, but they're not the center of the universe. We live and die in an almost completely closed system, with a whole lot of other stuff going on. As "modern" urban people, we can pretend that we don't need to know about ecology and nature, origin and composition. But, it's there, affecting our behavior, our sense of purpose, and our health whether we acknowledge it or not. ★

*since writing the bulk of this essay in April & May of 2000, I moved to a smaller "micropolitan" city and moved into a house with a yard... now I have no excuse not to teach myself gardening.

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As most Americans are aware, the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War occurred not so long ago and yet its memory still haunts us. Did America lose? What about the Vietnam veterans? Why does that memory still linger with us? Why are there still those MIA flags 25 years later? George Bush Sr. made the remark during 1991 that the Vietnam War syndrome, as he put it, is finally over, though to many Americans the controversy and angst of the war America didn't win still lives on. It is undeniable that Vietnam has made a lasting impression on the American psyche and remains an influence on our culture so many years later. The urban legend of the Vietnam Vet being spat upon has remained a prominent image of the post-Vietnam culture. Is this the way it really happened? Jerry Lembcke is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Holy Cross College in Wooster, Massachusetts and his book, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*, has recently been published by New York University Press. In it, he discusses his experience of returning home from Vietnam as a veteran, and reminds us that history is often rewritten. Interview by Peter Werbe.

Clamor: Why does the memory of Vietnam linger in the public imagination in the form that it does?

Lembcke: The memory of Vietnam veterans being spit on?

Certainly that is one of the core images of the war and the spitting image is the sense that you get as soon as you look at your book. But I meant, why are we still concerned about Vietnam in the sense that we are?

Primarily, it's because we lost the war. It was a traumatic experience politically and emotionally because of that and that trauma makes it difficult to put the war behind us. It was a war that went on for 10 years and it was the first war that this country lost. So, it's been a hard pill to swallow. We keep looking for ways to replay the war in our own mind and culture, perhaps subconsciously hoping that we can make it come out differently.

On the cover of your book, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam*, the photograph on the cover shows what we would think of as an archetypal anti-war protestor from the late 1960s and

early 1970s. A bearded man, very long hair; he's got a flower in his buttonhole of an Army jacket, all sorts of anti-war pins, and he has something in his hands that he's about to throw. What is the image? Where did it come from?

It's from April 1971 and a couple of thousand Vietnam veterans went to Washington to return their medals to the government; medals they'd been awarded for their service in Vietnam and this fellow is on the Capitol steps, and what he has in his hand is a handful of those medals and he's about to throw them over a picket fence in defiance of the government's continuation of the war in Vietnam. It's largely an image that's been forgotten by Americans. The memory that so many veterans came home from the Vietnam to oppose the war is something that we've tried to write out of our history.

Has this ever occurred before? Was there a return of medals in the early 1930s in the Bonus March on Washington by World War I veterans, or is this unprecedented?

It's unprecedented as far as I know. The Bonus March on Washington was an attempt of course by WWI veterans to get the bonus they had been promised after the war, but it wasn't a protest of the war, and no, as far as I know, there's been no time in American history when, or any other country's history really, when soldiers have done something like this.

Give us the proportions of the demonstrations. Here were men, combat veterans, who had won medals and they were being thrown back in contempt, right? I mean, these weren't politely returned.

Absolutely. There was a lot of anger and there was a lot of frustration. The veterans were there in 1971 to demand that the war be ended. And again, this is one of the remarkable things about it, the war was still going on. These guys were there to protest the war that they had been sent to fight and they had returned from. Some of the men who were there had seen combat and some had not. There were a variety of medals that were being returned. Purple hearts for people who had been wounded, medals for valor, but also plain campaign ribbons, ribbons for good service, discharge papers, that sort of thing.

There was a lot of opposition to the war on all levels of society, but the veterans had a specific opposition that was, as you said, unprecedented for veterans of a war still being fought, opposing it and opposing it in such a dramatic way. Did you interview the men who participated in those actions? Did they talk about their motivation?

Well, to begin with, I'm a Vietnam veteran myself, and in the Spring of 1971, I was living in Greeley, Colorado and was a part of a group of veterans called Vietnam Veterans Against the War and we sent a contingent from Colorado to Washington. We drew straws for who got to go because we didn't have enough travel money for all of us and I was left behind as part of the local press delegation. So I have that bit of personal background on it myself and I've kept loosely in touch with Vietnam Veterans Against the War since that time, so I know a lot of these stories very well. In the course of doing the book, I kind of brushed up on some of that history, but a lot of it's been written. John Carey, the now senator from Massachusetts, was one of the people who was very much involved in that and he did some writing. There's a couple of books that he authored that have a lot of the personal testimonies and a lot of the words that veterans spoke at that time as they were returning their medals. And, so there's quite a bit of documentary history on that, as well as the newspaper accounts. You would be surprised if you went back and read, say the *New York Times* from that time. This was front-page news, which makes it all the more remarkable that now most people don't remember this happened. The image of this empowered, politicized Vietnam veteran has been displaced by that of Vietnam veterans as victims of the war, Vietnam veterans who are stricken by post-traumatic stress disorder and homeless vets; the bedraggled, besieged, sad-sack Vietnam vet character.

Three million guys went through the military at that time. In terms of your sense of things at the time, when you were a Vietnam veteran opposing the war, during the war, and as you look back as a historian, did you think you represented the majority sentiment of Vietnam vets? Or, did you get the sense you were these oddballs that were traitorous and out of the ordinary.

Oh no; our feeling at the time was that we represented a majority opinion. Not every vet was opposed to the war certainly, but my feeling when I came home from Vietnam was that most of the guys that I was with at the time I left Vietnam were opposed to the war. And survey data done at the time bears that out. There was Harris Poll data, and a certain amount of academic research that was done at the time which suggests that as high as 75 percent of Vietnam veterans were opposed to the war, at the time they returned from Vietnam. It's also interesting that polling data at that time shows that Vietnam vets felt like they were welcomed home just fine, and that defies the common wisdom now that Vietnam vets felt rejected and forgotten. They didn't feel that way at that time. So something happened in the culture between the end of the war and the present time where our own memory, our own sense of what went on then, has gotten reconfigured.

The subtitle of your book is Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam and each of those words is very important. The main title, The Spitting



Image, is the central image in that reconfiguration you speak of—the Vietnam veteran being spit on by some long-haired, anti-war hippie, with saliva drooling off his face, standing there helpless and hopeless, feeling his country has abandoned him after his sacrifice for the fight for freedom in Southeast Asia. You're saying, that's not what it looked like in 1971. What transpired in the intervening 30 years?

That's really what the book is about. Because when we go back to the late 60s, early 1970s, not only is there no evidence that those things happened to veterans, neither do we find any evidence that anybody said they were happening.

You're saying that no veteran was spit on?

I'm saying there's no evidence that it happened. There are the allegations now, 30 years later that it happened, but for example, there are no newspaper reports from that time that it was happening. I couldn't find something like a letter that a vet wrote home saying, "Dear mom, guess what—I was spat on this morning at the San Francisco airport." Nobody has given me anything like that. And again, there aren't any claims from that time that anybody was being spat on, which is, all the more remarkable. So, sometime between the late 60s/early 70s and now, these stories began to appear. Most of them begin to appear around 1980 in the context of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington being built. A certain amount of this stuff began appearing in film, although there are no direct images of vets being spat on, even in film.

Wasn't there one in Coming Home?

Coming Home, a 1978 film. There's no references to spitting in that film, but there's lots of images of betrayal in the film and expressions of being forgotten and rejected, particularly involving the returning Vietnam vet character played by Bruce Dern by his wife, Sally, who was played by Jane Fonda. The one most explicit reference to spitting in film occurs in the first *Rambo* film where, at the very end, he's being talked out of his rage by Cornel Troutman, and says "Those maggots at the airport spittin' and calling me baby killer." But that's probably the most explicit reference to it in Hollywood films.

How then did the spitting image become inserted into the culture if we



that some long-haired freak would go out to an airbase or airport and spit on some guy that had just come back from combat. I figured they would probably have been beaten to a pulp.

Back in the day when it was all going on, there were active duty GI's leading every mass anti-war demonstration followed by contingents of anti-war Vietnam veterans, followed by GI's that had been veterans of other wars and then the great masses of people that represented everybody.

After the panel discussion, a Marine combat-veteran came up to me, angry as could be, and said, "I was spit on." I thought, well, I guess it, could have happened once. Did he not get spit on?

Well, we could never be sure. I've had numerous conversations that begin like that and almost all of them break down. It turns out to be they don't know who spat on them. It turned out to be somebody in a bar, not necessarily an anti-war person, or it turns

have no evidence of it, nobody claimed it at the time, and there's no record of it? How did it become such a powerful and enduring image?

There were a lot of claims made during the period near the end of the war by people like Vice President Spiro Agnew that anti-war activists were acting in a hostile way to Vietnam veterans. There was a lot of that. They tried to turn Vietnam veterans against the anti-war movement.

It is important to view stories of spat-upon veterans in another historical context. After World War I, for example, Germany had lost the war and when their soldiers came home, there was a similar kind of campaign to portray veterans as having been spat upon. And, these stories are in the literature and in historical accounts of that post-war period of defeat, so it's possible that images of spat upon vets were picked up by somebody, were read in military histories or in novels.

But ultimately what I settle on in the book is that there's an imaginative element here; that in our society when we try to image experiences of rejection and hostility, the spitting image is thing that comes to mind. What do people do to people they don't like? They spit on them. And one of the things that's really interesting about this is that in many of the stories the spitters are women or young girls. When I was telling this to an anthropologist friend of mine, she stopped me in mid-sentence and said, "Gotta be a myth." I paused for a second and I knew what she was going to say, which was, "Girls don't spit."

So what you have here is stories, often times told by the veterans themselves, but not necessarily by them. Often they're told by people who identify with military culture, who identify emotionally with the fact that the U.S. lost the war, and they turn that into stories about rejection and betrayal on the home front, and women loom large in some of those stories. It becomes a story, a narrative, about the loss of masculinity, the loss of manhood in war. When men talk about this, it's an easy, quick step to talk about women as being the betrayers and the element in the culture that caused the loss of the war.

And, effeminized men.

They feminized the story, exactly. They gender the story.

I was on a panel a while ago about the anti-war movement during the Vietnam era and I mentioned the idea of GI's being spit upon when they arrived back in the United States. I said it seemed preposterous to me

out to be a spitting incident over something that had nothing to do with the politics of the war. You know, they got into an argument about the World Series or something and somebody spat on this guy. Or, sometimes the guy is spat on, but there's really no reason to think that the spitter would have thought that the guy was a Vietnam veteran. Was he in uniform? No. Well, did the person know you were a Vietnam vet? Well, no.

Oh, absolutely; there are more with every passing day. (laughs) Currently, on slate.com the on-line magazine, there are about 200 postings related to this. The manager of it, Jack Schaffer, wrote a piece using my book as his ammunition, attacking the use of this image in the press. The *New York Times* recently used this, the spat-upon Vietnam vet, as did *US News and World Report*, and he attacked both of those, using my book. Well, in response, he got over 200 postings, and many of them from vets who say they were spat on and worse. Some of the stuff is too gross to mention.

There's an element here of urban myth or urban legend and my book has certainly not put it to rest. If anything it's spawned even more stories; they just keep being generated.

Your book talks about myth and memory, so maybe these guys were spit on and never said anything at the time, or maybe they made it up. What's the difference?

Well, it's very important. These stories help construct an alibi for why we lost the war. And the alibi runs that we weren't beaten by the Vietnamese, we were beaten on the home front. We were betrayed, we were stabbed in the back and it's by that feminine element in our culture that allowed us to be vanquished.

That's totally Hitlerian.

Yes, it is. It mirrors the inter-war experience in Germany, and it leads to a reactionary backlash politics at home and keeps alive the idea that we could have won the war. And, that's a dangerous myth, because this being the 25th anniversary of the end of war in Vietnam, it's very important, that we not allow that war to be reopened. I think there are people who want do that who are not still not resigned to the fact that we lost the war They represent the idea that we need to go back, we need to redo

this, we need to get it right this time, if not in Vietnam, someplace else in the world. That's the importance of George Bush, Sr.'s reference to the Vietnam syndrome.

But, we have not overcome it, thankfully.

That's right, but the war against Iraq was in many ways generated by those kinds of feelings, that we have to show that we can do it, that we really are the men that we say we are, that we can go to war, we have whatever it takes "to do the job."

I think when we, as a nation, grieve the loss of 55 thousand Americans killed in Vietnam, we should put that into perspective and realize that the Indo-Chinese lost three million civilians. That's half a Holocaust for an attempt by the U.S. empire to force its foreign policy goals on the region. It was hopeless to even assume that we could do it, and the idea that we should have continued the war, to me, is just awful. Noam Chomsky said that when you ask most Americans how many how many Indo-Chinese civilians died, they just look at you blankly because they never considered the question. They will usually say, "I don't know, a couple hundred thousand." Chomsky makes the analogy to asking German citizens today how many Jews and other people died in the Nazi Holocaust and them saying, "I don't know. What, two, three hundred thousand?"

The spitting image is one of the main things that's displaced the real history of the war. Americans today know very little about the war itself. Largely, the history has become a story about what happened to our boys when they returned home and everybody thinks they know the truth about that.

How did the Nixon administration change the focus of the war from a conflict against so-called "communist aggression," to a war to get our POW's back?

From about the time the Nixon administration came into office, in early 1969, the war very much became that. We have to keep funding going for the war, we have to keep sending fresh troops to the war; why? Because the other side has some of our POW's. And, in negotiations with the North Vietnamese, that's the way it went. We won't stop the bombing, the U.S. said, we won't stop prosecuting the war until you release our POW's. The Vietnamese were saying quite the reverse of that. So, the POW's in Vietnam were used as pawns in the war, as were the soldiers themselves. One of the first arguments I had when I got home was with one of my uncles who said we have to keep the war going. Why? Because there are men there fighting the war. And, that's what was used in the Persian Gulf War as well. Bush sent the troops and then said we have to support the war, because the troops are there to fight the war. It's political blackmail.

When you returned from Vietnam as a veteran, how were you received? People always talk about Vietnam veterans being received so poorly.

We came home from Vietnam with war stories that people didn't want to hear. That was the problem. And, a lot of our war stories were really anti-war stories. They were stories about why this war should be stopped. They were sometimes stories that involved accounts of atrocities, mistreatment of the Vietnamese. They were stories that did not put us in a good light, and the American people for the most part, didn't want to hear those stories. Anti-war people did. And that's why we got the best reception, the best hearing, the most support from anti-war people. But that story has been turned on its head and washed out of our memory. We didn't come home looking for parades. You often times hear Vietnam vets say, "We never got our parade." Most guys came home from Vietnam opposed to the war; we didn't come home looking for a parade. This, again, is a rewriting of history and really does a disservice to what was the proudest moment for a lot of Vietnam vets, the fact that we came home and acted quite boldly and courageously to end that war. ★

Hegemonic Saliva

A Review by Phil Dickinson

The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam by Jerry Lembcke (New York University Press, 2000)

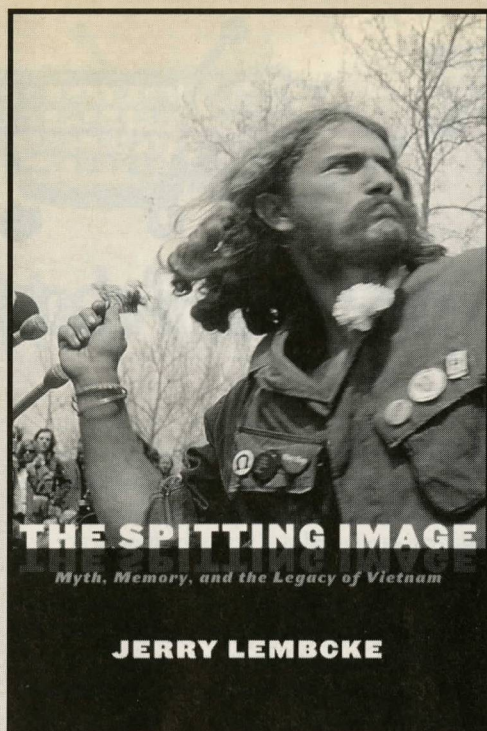
The familiar scenario has been invoked countless times in the arguments which swirl around the movements against the Vietnam War and the way in which they are remembered. A veteran disembarks from the plane that has brought him back from the jungles and rice fields of Viet Nam, retrieves his baggage, and prepares to reacquire himself with a society he has heard has turned alien in his absence. Out in the airport lobby, he is met by a group of antiwar protestors. Several, perhaps all of them, are women (it's hard to tell). They are longhaired and shabbily attired in all the androgynous freakery of a new and disturbingly unfamiliar America. Spying their prey, the mob surges forward and, amid shouts of "Baby Killer!," and "Murderer!," someone (usually one of the women) unleashes a glob of saliva which arcs its way towards the bewildered veteran and unceremoniously splashes onto his uniform, his face. Welcome home, soldier boy.

It's a visceral image which crystallizes for many the essentialized "facts" of America's "bad" war; a military hogtied into defeat by craven and liberal politicians back home, dutiful soldiers betrayed by a generation of cowardly rich kids more in tune with Mao and the MC5 than the Marine Corps hymn, a public unsympathetic to and suspicious of the returning veterans whose legacy includes mass rape and murdered babies at My Lai, and the veterans themselves, traumatized and misunderstood, broken by betrayal and neglect, left with only their flashbacks and bitter, explosive anger for company.

An entire history of the country's recent past and an implicit understanding of its future role in world affairs attaches itself to that memory of those thin trails of angry sputum. There is only one problem. There's "scant evidence" it ever happened that way.¹ This, at least, is the central contention of Holy Cross College sociology professor and Vietnam veteran Jerry Lembcke's ambitious book *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*. Lembcke is quick to point out that the veracity of this and other stories like it is not really the issue. Although "it is possible, even likely, that some Vietnam veteran, someplace, at some time, endured this humiliation," more important is the fact that "in the memory of a large number of people the anti-war movement came to be connected with the image of activists spitting on veterans."²

Confronted with memories such as these during the 1991 Gulf War, Lembcke set out to evaluate the historical evidence for and origin of the spitting stories as well as the ways in which the stories themselves were constructed and circulated, and the political and cultural uses they served. The resulting book traces the processes of public remembering and forgetting, of erasure and reinscription, across the discourses of journalism, psychiatry, and film. Lembcke convincingly uncovers the complex trail of historical denials and inversions the contested details of which are belied by the neat certainties of the story of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran and its close corollary, the story of the crazy victim-veteran unhinged by war and homefront betrayal so beloved by Hollywood.

¹ Lembcke, 72. Lembcke dismisses accounts such as those assembled by journalist Bob Greene for his 1985 book *Homecoming*—often cited by defenders of the spat-upon vet myth. Most of the stories Greene recorded are suspiciously uniform in their details, says Lembcke, and seem to have emerged in response to leading questions.



Lembcke calls such stories myths less because he finds them historically inaccurate than because of the way they function as powerful shapers of collective ideological “commonsense.” As he goes on to point out, the hegemonic interests of the political right are well served by this mythic erasure of a set of historical realities which undermine the nationalist and racist visions of American empire. The origins of the myth of the spat-upon veteran (and the crazy vet stories)

can be found, according to Lembcke, in such “grist” as the fragmented and misremembered (but well-documented) spitting incidents in which, counter to mythic commonsense, *pro-war* protestors spat upon their opponents,³ as well as in the various propaganda campaigns launched by the ultrarightist fantasists of the Nixon-Agnew administration in the spring and fall of 1969.

Elected on a peace platform, Nixon escalated and expanded the war. In May, 1969, the POW issue was launched to divert attention from the secret bombing of neutral Cambodia, but by the Moratorium Days protests in the fall of 1969, public displays of dissent were, in the words of *Life*, “without historical parallel.”⁴ Faced with a potent antiwar alliance of radicals and liberals, the Nixon administration sought to further reframe the debate about U.S. conduct in Southeast Asia by making the war an issue of support for U.S. soldiers themselves rather than U.S. policy. This was done by portraying antiwar protestors as both anti-American and anti-soldier (then-California Governor Ronald Reagan’s assertion that Moratorium organizers “lent comfort and aid” to the enemy and that “some Americans will die tonight because of the activity in our streets” being one particularly noxious example⁵). Yet the increasingly damaging participation in such protests by radical antiwar veteran groups such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War threatened to disrupt the comforting platitudes of this position and required that fine public distinctions now be made between “good” and “bad” veterans. As VVAW’s visibility began to rise throughout the early 1970s, the administration began to challenge the credibility of antiwar veterans through legalistic harassment and an all-out PR-offensive aimed at portraying them as “bad.”

Lembcke argues that the Nixon-Agnew campaign of public spin and covert dirty tricks was devastatingly successful. The administration not only prolonged the war another six years but perpetrated a wholesale revisioning of our collective memory of the entire war-era. The unprecedented radicalization and activism of in-service and returning military personnel (one 1977 study found that *half* of all Vietnam veterans supported an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist critique of the war’s motives)⁶, the overwhelmingly warm feelings of most veterans towards the antiwar movement, the concerted and successful efforts at outreach towards the former by the latter; all were written out of public memory in favor of

remembered antagonism and mutual hostility between the two groups. That such stories resemble both the post-World War I German “Doltschuss Legend,” the belief that German veterans were “stabbed in the back” on the home front, and the French myth of domestic betrayal following *their* defeat in Viet Nam in 1954 is not simply a coincidence; it suggests, according to Lembcke, that “these tales function specifically as alibis for why a war was lost.” Significantly, in all three cases, he writes,

the armies represented the expansionist interests of nations with ideologies of cultural, ethnic, or racial superiority. Unable to deal with their defeat by “inferior” peoples or societies, the losing colonizers look for reasons for their defeat at home. The myth of the betrayed, abused veteran is a classic form of scapegoating.⁷

In perhaps the most intriguing part of his book, Lembcke reads the discourse of disability surrounding the Vietnam veteran as itself a symptom of liberal middle-class anxiety over the threat to its cultural and economic power by the radical and nonwhite youth movements unleashed in the sixties. Seduced by the fantasies of the right, anxious middle-class liberals constructed an interpretive framework for their lingering unease about the war and its veterans which relied heavily on the language of journalism, psychiatry and, increasingly from the mid-’70s on, Hollywood film. The legitimization of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association is seen by Lembcke as a coup with wide ranging political consequences. What had been discovered, he writes, “was a mode of discourse that enabled authorities to turn the radical political behavior of veterans opposed to the war into a pathology, thereby discrediting them in the public mind.”⁸

If this is the most intriguing of Lembcke’s interpretation of events, it is also in some ways the least satisfying. For although the psychiatric rhetoric of trauma and disability may well have inoculated popular memory to the political dimension of the antiwar veterans’ activism, the traumatic insights themselves—for which PTSD is perhaps a polite middle-class label—still retain their sharp ability to offer a radicalizing critique of the workings of American imperial technowar. Many of the veterans of the war (a significant number from working-class backgrounds) became the poets and writers of the war against war and their literature of trauma is as powerful a dissenting tradition as any in American history. You have only to read the poetry of W. D. Ehrhart, Bruce Weigl, or Yusef Komunyakaa or the prose of Lynda Van Devanter, Wayne Karlin, or Robert Olen Butler to discover a cogent counterlanguage of trauma which leads not to amnesia and inertia but to outrage, painful political reevaluation, and radical engagement. Lembcke is a sociologist, not a literary critic, but his wide-ranging ambitions could surely have benefited from some recognition of the less-than-total monopoly of the anxious middle-class liberal on the political dimensions of war’s traumatic knowledge.

Lembcke also underplays the gendered dimensions of both middle-class anxiety and the spitting myth itself. This may seem an odd criticism in light of his chapter-long discussion of “Women, Wetness, and Warrior Dreams.” It is, however, the least successful chapter in the book, as well as being the shortest (discounting his brief conclusion). Lembcke presents a paraphrased hodgepodge of psychoanalytic ideas about the complex ties between masculinity and fascism which readers would be better served understanding from the original source.⁹ Lembcke also tends to add his observations on gender and the re-memoing of the war almost as an afterthought throughout the book; I’d suggest it is impossible to fully understand the complex gendered responses to and collective memories of the movements against the war without also acknowledging the central, anxiety-producing impact the emerging women’s liberation movement had on these responses. War is, after all, the single most destructive expression of collective masculine identity in the world today which, unsurprisingly, tends to victimize women in

² Lembcke, 71-72.

³ See *Life* magazine’s October 24, 1969 feature story for one noteworthy example.

⁴ Quoted in Lembcke, 45.

⁵ Quoted in Lembcke, 50.

⁶ John P. Wilson, “Identity, Ideology, and Crisis: the Vietnam Veteran in Transition,”

part I. Research Report. Cleveland: Cleveland State U., 1977. 54.

⁷ Lembcke, 89.

⁸ Lembcke, 110.

⁹ See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*. 2 vols. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987.

particularly systematic and brutal ways; a feminist counterrevolution paralleling a lost war, challenging as they both do a failed and corrosive vision of masculinity, must surely be recognized on a more fundamental explanatory level than Lembcke allows.

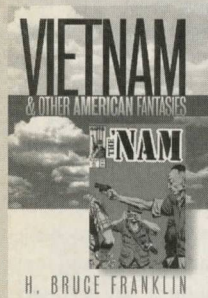
If Lembcke's book fails as a fully coherent account of the masculinist drives behind war and the rearticulation of its memory, it still succeeds as a valuable contribution to the rapidly growing corpus of radical scholarly studies of an era and its impact the country's dominant classes would prefer we forget altogether. It deserves a place alongside such essential reading as H. Bruce Franklin's *M.I.A., or, Mythmaking in America*, Christian Appy's *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam*, James William Gibson's *Warrior Dreams*, and Richard Moser's *The New Winter Soldiers*.¹⁰ It's a history we misunderstand at our peril.

¹⁰ H. Bruce Franklin, *M.I.A., or, Mythmaking in America: How and Why Belief in Live POWs Has Possessed a Nation*. New York: Lawrence Hill, 1992; Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam*. Chapel Hill: U of N. Carolina P, 1993; James William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams: Paramilitary Culture in Post-Vietnam America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994; Richard Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers's UP, 1996.

Vietnam and Other American Fantasies

By H. Bruce Franklin (Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2000)

Review by Mandy Hackley



H. Bruce Franklin's newest book, *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies*, is a truly multifarious book. It could easily be called the Vietnam War Myth Reader. Franklin ticks off the falsehoods of American involvement in Vietnam, one right after the other. One of the first myths he exposes is the idea that the mainstream American media caused America to "lose" the Vietnam War. Even though the government must think that this is the case, as the media was highly regulated during the U.S. invasion of Grenada and the Gulf War. He also discredits the idea that war protesters consisted only of the upper class college-educated crowd. A great

majority of the opposition to the war came from blue-collar workers. This makes sense since it is usually this class that is used as cannon fodder for Uncle Sam. Franklin does give credit to university teach-ins as a great anti-war tool but he does point out that the teach-ins may be getting more credit than they deserve.

Franklin is most prolific when he discusses how science fiction created propaganda for and against the war. As someone with very little background in science fiction, it was engrossing to read how Star Trek episodes dealt directly with the war. It may be easy to write off Star Trek as a mere television show, but Franklin cites two pieces of evidence to refute this: A model of the *Enterprise* is permanently exhibited at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum and trekkers had enough power to demand that the U.S. space shuttle *Constitution* be renamed the *Enterprise*. This may seem trite but it is chilling to know that a great deal of science fiction in the 60s centered around atomic weaponry. Certainly, the more militant science fiction works could have swayed public opinion in favor of more involvement in Vietnam. After all, a billion dollar nuclear arms shield has been named after *Star Wars*.

Franklin is at his best when writing about the POW/MIA myth. A simple Internet search will tell you that this myth is alive and well. Franklin asks the very simple question of why would Vietnam still be holding Americans as prisoners and what purpose does this myth serve? One purpose the myth serves is as America's excuse to continue economic and political warfare against Vietnam. It is disturbing to read that the former head of the Pentagon acknowledged that the government deliberately placed people on the POW/MIA list. In this way the Vietnamese could never explain the fake POWs and hence the myth could live forever.

Unfortunately Franklin's argument is often discredited by his failure to cite sources. Unfounded statements like, "One would never be able to guess from public discourse that for every American Veteran in combat, there must be twenty veterans in the anti-war movement" (48) do a disservice to the legitimacy of his claims.

Franklin has already touched on a great deal of the same material in other writings, but this book is not redundant and is still an interesting, if controversial, read.



The Ann Arbor

There are those precious few moments in life when it all comes together; when the usual limitations of what is possible do not exist, the laws of social physics are suspended, and certainly those pesky laws enforced by bored cops are simply ignored. Those moments when everything you believe in and everything you enjoy comes to life. Maybe you felt it during the WTO protests in Seattle, or when you first discovered zines, or maybe just riding your bike home after quitting your crappy job. Or maybe you were at the 3rd Annual Ann Arbor Hot Rod Shopping Cart Race.

Here's what happens: At the stroke of midnight on a weeknight in late summer, four lanes of main thoroughfare are taken over for a parade and race through downtown Ann Arbor, Michigan. What is usually a quiet street lined with over-priced crap-selling boutiques and even more expensive restaurants echoes with the rumbling of shopping carts reaching top speed, accompanied by the hoots and hollers of all involved, as well as various revelers and astounded passersby (not to mention people trying to drive up the street).

It's a spontaneous happening, through and through. Somewhere along the line, a few people figure on the date and make flyers that start showing up a month or two before the race. Stencils are spraypainted in strategic locations. Mostly it's just word of mouth. The

night of the race, everyone meets up at the designated location (the sleazy 24-hour diner, roosting place of every lost soul and weirdo in town), and when we just can't sit still any longer, we head to the





Hot Rod Shopping Cart Race

by John Gerken

starting line and race down the hill. It's a rowdy procession indeed; pirates and clowns, dragons, monsters, drag queens and road warriors, farmers and water balloons and bicycles, insects and space creatures.

Needless to say, it's a pretty amazing thing to see 60 or so people dress up, decorate shopping carts, and take to the streets for a parade and race practically through the middle of downtown.

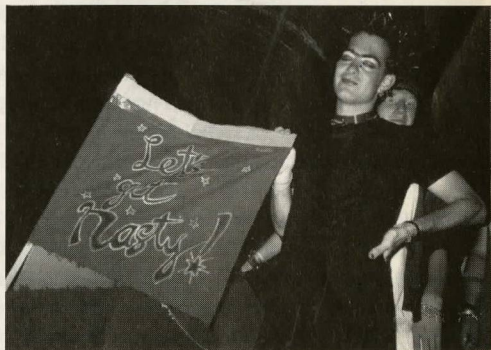
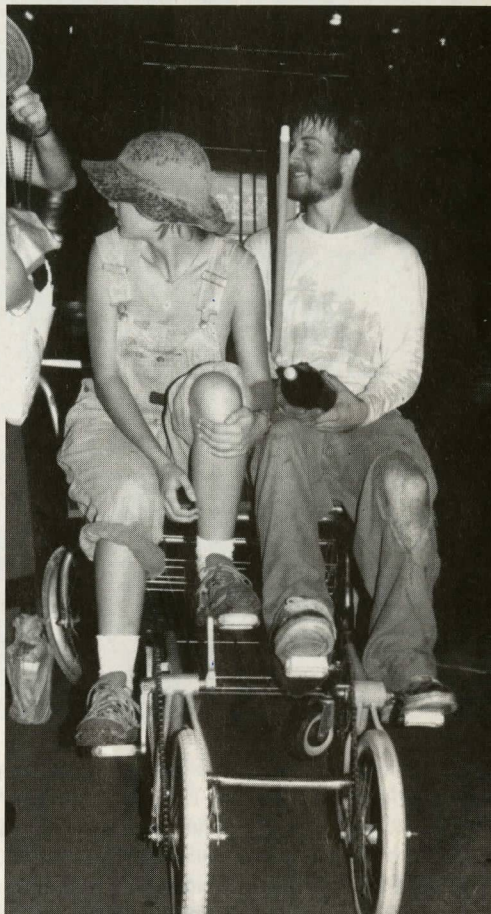
We got the idea from kids in Vancouver, BC, who generally hold their race in July, and in the middle of the day no less. Why not spread the gospel? The summer of their first, we had ours as well. It was about 30 people total, not many more than 10 carts. But it was the blueprint for what was to come; ridiculous costumes, torches, lots of screaming and yelling. A celebratory act of inspiration.

Every year has seen an increase of people. This past year, the Third Annual, at least 150 people turned out. There were probably 25 carts all decked out and ready to race, and this year saw the first welding, as well as bicycle hybrid carts. At some point, someone said (tongue in cheek, of course, or perhaps just a bit drunk), "This is the next Burning Man." I'll certainly never look at a shopping cart the same way again.

These people aren't necessarily artists or activists. But that's the point. It's mostly a bunch of scrappy kids out to have some fun. But there is an implicit politics to it, just as there is whenever you take a mundane, everyday object and get creative with it. When you take something that we all see every day and make it art, or something slyly subversive. This is how we celebrate the end of summer in Ann Arbor.

This is our carnival-esque critique of consumerism. Satirical indeed, to push around another human in what is usually the carriage of shrink-wrapped and packaged goods. To take this vehicle of purchase and remove it from its usual context (shipping garish store-bought crap from the overflowing supermarket aisles, to the checkout line, to the car) is subversive, to be sure. To take this instrument of capitalism, emancipate it entirely from its previous occupation and turn it into a parade float/soap-box derby racer carries a subtle message that is not to be misread. That is, we don't give a fuck about shopping with these things. We're here to dress up and race. We're here to reclaim public space and have a good time doing it. We're here to take private property and transform it into public art. We're here to give everyone a lively example of getting creative in a place that leaves no options for those under 18, with little money, and/or other similarly disenfranchised folks (that is, just about everywhere). While this isn't an explicitly political action, like a blockade, march, or demo with signs and chants, it seems to me that any time we have fun and do what we want in public it can be, at least implicitly, an expression of our sense of community and desire for change. It is an act of civil disobedience to take over the streets and have a party, to reclaim streets in this culture dominated by the cult of the automobile, especially in a place where almost everything is geared toward profit and adult spaces, where kids are given no outlet or option. In this age of sterilized corporate marketing, dumbed-down mass culture entertainment and MTV Spring Break, simply having fun in public is an act of resistance and rebellion. ★

(And sorry, but it's hard to find good action photos of the race itself. Who the hell can be bothered to point, focus, and shoot a camera when something this ridiculous is going on? We're too caught up in it all to think about anything but the moment.)





Folke Up In Tennessee

Getting Down on My Farm

The Dickel Brothers Sing About Chickens and Whiskey

Words and Photos by Sunfrog

Hailing from Oregon, sounding like the deep south, and owing a spiritual debt to DIY punk, The Dickel Brothers are not the first folk outfit to combine contemporary attitudes with primitive sounds. In the late 1980's, a handful of musicians from New York's lower East Side spawned the anti-folk movement and balladeers like Roger Manning toured incessantly, singing scorching lyrical poems of social dissent and romantic bitterness. At the same time, Michelle Shocked's highly-praised early records captured the spirit of anarchist cultural revolution with campfire melodies. More recently, people like Ani DiFranco and Casey Neill have re-invented the brash topical folk song with remarkable integrity and flair. And anarcho-octogenarian Utah Phillips has seen his career revitalized through collaborations with DiFranco and his unwavering commitment to playing gigs on the activist circuit for IWW, Earth First!, and other anti-authoritarian causes.

In an interview in late '99, The Dickels remarked that their gritty old-school sound—grounded in fiddle, mandolin, washboard, banjo, guitar and stand-up bass—was destined to survive Y2K, even if the power grid went down. Not too many techno, house, or rock ensembles would have much to do in an unplugged universe, but some musicians happily embrace forms that predate—and may outlast—the digital revolution. As we crawl into the new century to the numbing noise of the info-technocracy, traditional musical forms are experiencing (yet another) well-deserved revival. The Dickel Brothers' spirited and intoxicating interpretation of old-time string music is on the cutting edge of the latest wave, as former punks sip the moonshine of their forefathers, and we all get seriously folke up.

The story of how The Dickels ended up visiting my communal farm in the hills of Tennessee and playing a lively, two-set show in the middle of a field deserves some background. In May 2000, I attended

the Festival of Fantasy Fulfillment in the Sierra Mountains (the retelling of that gathering's highlights will have to wait for another story). There, I met Michael Dickel, who, when he wasn't eating or sleeping, was probably playing the fiddle. Much later, I learned that in the band Michael focuses on mandolin and washboard and has only recently taken up fiddlin'. My novice ears would not have known he was a beginner from the mystic sounds wafting across the dramatic heights that cloudy weekend. Before leaving the mountains, I invited Michael to visit me in Tennessee when his band rambled through. A couple of months and a handful of e-mails, letters, and phone calls later, I had confirmed that The Dickel Brothers would play the inaugural show at the Dismal Church of the Heathen Scum, the future music studio and workshop being created by my communitard George on land adjacent to our 120-acre Pumpkin Hollow Community.

Here in the rural counterculture of middle Tennessee, our frequent jam sessions are purely acoustic by necessity and choice. Why bring a mile long extension cord or a gas-powered generator to the hootenanny if it's not required? Why drain the stored solar energy at an off-the-grid commune when our voices, drums, and guitars are loud enough by themselves? While we all have access to electricity, whether solar or from the utilities, we often go without, lighting our evenings with candles and oil lamps or playing a pure form of old-fashioned music. In light of this existing tradition, I couldn't think of a more appropriate act than The Dickel Brothers to show up at our land in their beat up white Ford van to commence what will hopefully become a series of rural gigs for touring troubadours, and croon to a crowd of local hippies and hillbillies.

Indeed, a quick perusal of the songs the Dickel Brothers have chosen to revive demonstrates a profound affinity to a tumultuous, yet tender, down-home discourse of daily life that existed before television and



the tyranny of the trend. As the band began to play for us from a flatbed trailer that doubled as a stage, I thought, "All the songs are about chickens and whiskey." Well, the songs are also about barns and bibles, chitlins and children, rambling and redemption, infidelity and unemployment, wars and weddings and funerals. The songs are real. The songs are not about dot-coms and deadheads, bubblegum and BMWs, or Gore and Bush. The information age is known for its virtual reality, its cyberglossed illusions, fantasies, and escapes. Against the grain of this hollow hyperworld, putrid and impotent nostalgia abounds, from "family values" denial revivals to new-age neo-tribal delusions to such collective jokes as "reality television." The Dickels could easily fall into a similar trap of culture thievery. What business do these twenty-something west-coast post-punks have claiming the vernacular legacy of a Depression-era idiom of the dust bowl, the moonshine still, and the cotton field? However, this band avoids this snare with a frightening sincerity and a savvy focus on their craft. To close your eyes and listen to these dudes sing and play is to feel yourself transported to different time. Upon opening your eyes, you may believe, as I do, that time no longer matters once inside these songs.

A "genre" that actually spans hundreds of years, traditional folk music has a timeless quality that transcends the trite packaging of eras and categories that we are accustomed to now. The Dickels preoccupation with old-time is qualitatively different than say, the fetishization of the 70's or 80's currently in vogue. The Dickels may not be Woody Guthrie, the Monroe Brothers, the Carter Family, or the North Carolina Ramblers, but they're not A Flock of Seagulls or Foghat on the next reunion tour either. According to Michael, The Dickels are not "worried about being trapped in a genre" because so much old-time music exists for them to (re)discover.

In actuality, we live in such an ahistorical era that many young people's concept of folk music begins with Jewel; teenagers today don't know the protest songs of Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, and Phil Ochs from the 1960's, much less the rustic treasures from the 20's and 30's that the Dickel Brothers have unearthed for our listening pleasure. Pleasure, indeed. On a thankfully mild August afternoon, we gathered with corn-on-the-cob, potato chips, potato salad, chocolate cake, cheap union-made beer, and a mason jar of moonshine. We found ourselves with lawn chairs and ramshackle benches and a bonfire of brush in a freshly mowed field about a mile from nowhere. It felt like a family picnic; in fact, the band likes shows of this kind because "we get much younger and much older people when we play outside of bars."

The Dickels jammed, and we danced. We passed a hat to raise money for the band and for our commune. Pumpkin Hollow will use the cash, appropriately, to build a chicken coop. In the age of spectacle, performers and their audience are separated by the overstated impact of image and often by a huge stage, rent-a-cop bouncers, and roadies. At Pumpkin Hollow, when The Dickels second set ended and some of us stumbled back up the hollow in a moonshine haze, the party persisted as guests brought out their own instruments and the music continued around the fire. I went to see The Dickels again two days later in a bar in Murfreesboro and confirmed, as I'd heard was true, that The Dickels bring a certain raw immediacy to their shows no matter the venue. In a sense, I enjoyed the bar show more than the farm gig, simply because I wasn't responsible for producing it (and the house beer at Sebastian's didn't kick my ass nearly as hard as the moonshine I'd sipped on Sunday at Pumpkin). The Dickel Brothers are definitely worth checking out whether they wander into a local watering hole or end up singing around a campfire in your backyard. ★



Folks Up In Tennessee

Dancing in the Sonic Dreamland

Idapalooza Begins the Next Generation of Queer Music Festivals

Words and Photos by Sunfrog

Seasonal and communal carnivals wed ecstasy to event and have been a part of humanity's heritage for millennia. Whether religious or cultural, archaic or modern, the festival marks a time when people abandon workaday norms and adopt unique levels of creativity as expressed in music, food, dance, costume and ritual. In the loose and lively network of radical faerie communes located in the hills of Middle Tennessee, we take our celebrating seriously; parties bring our extended community of friends and neighbors together like nothing else, and often the extended community extends beyond borders, attracting an international assortment of eccentric artists and activists to our peculiar niche of alternative living. Our autumn soiree season commences at IDA's annual Artland gathering (and pretty much lasts until the Winter Solstice).

According to IDA's own MaxZine, Artland is "a time for artists and lovers of the arts to get together in the woods and feast on music, crafts, performance and culinary delights in an open community. It is a queer gathering: with the word queer broadly defined beyond sexuality and undefined so that all can feel welcome."

Previous Artlands of note focused on creating theater or a surreal circus while some had no theme beyond art through anarchy and spontaneity. This year's feast of fun, the most ambitious to-date, was the first Idapalooza Fruit Jam Music Festival. Bending definitions and exceeding the expectations of either a faerie gathering or a music festival, Idapalooza provided a multidimensional happening of chaotic harmony and collective hedonism.

Faerie gatherings in Tennessee give new meaning to such concepts as remote, rural, and out-of-the-way. Reaching Ida requires a good map and stoic patience—balanced by an appetite for adventure. Upon arrival, newcomers will immediately notice that they're "not in Kansas anymore." For most visitors, the initial change of scenery and pace is enchanting and invigorating, and they didn't even mind the primitive facilities that Duncan Teague of Atlanta's *Adodi Muse* called "the best outdoor toilets in the world."

Chicago's Scott Free shares Teague's appreciation of the rustic potties: "The vastly decorated shrine that is the outhouse is a Kodak moment in itself." Occasionally, a stranger might disembark in Ida's wooded hollow of weirdness and wonder, only to leave an hour later. Fortunately, most stay. Idapalooza provided memories and stories to last a lifetime—or at least until the next gathering.

An Ida festival is not for passive consumers. Artland is not McCulture and Ida is not a rural version of the urban queer scene. When a person arrives at Ida, there's no geek in an orange vest telling her where to park. There's no Coke machine. At Idapalooza, they didn't even have t-shirts for sale! There were no tickets to buy or gates to walk through (guests simply made a donation, based on a suggested fee, to an Ida resident and no one was turned away for lack of funds). Void of the crass commodification that turns many music festivals into orgies of commerce, Idapalooza's success depended on the sounds created by all its participants. From the informal improvisational jam sessions on a blanket under a tarp on a rainy afternoon to Saturday's stellar 10-hour concert (which was thankfully dry), Idapalooza organizers made good on their pledge to transform their 240 acres into a "sonic dreamland."

Both the weather and the sound system threatened to put a serious damper on the quirky delights of Saturday, September 23. The skies opened up in the late morning and rather than complain about the rain, several people ditched all clothes and danced naked in the lush Ida garden. Perhaps this was the anti-raindance we needed. The downpour turned into a drizzle, then stopped just in time for the show. It rained again later that evening as tired performers and fans slumbered in their tents. The rented sound equipment required patience from performers, fans, and the engineers who volunteered to operate it. Legitimate frustrations with technology aside, the music carried the day despite the brief assaults of droning, squealing feedback-from-hell.

MaxZine and Tom Foolery began the jam with songs (like Tom's "Big Girl") and jokes (like MaxZine's admonishment: "Do not take the



Facing page: Angela Motter (on left); Above (clockwise): Yolanda, Tom and Maxzine, Tom Foolery and Yolanda

brown aspirin”), as they repeatedly insisted, “This is not the show! This is a sound-check!” Scott Free followed with a short set of brisk, cynical love ballads. Then, when her outfit was finally ready, Yolanda took the stage in the best drag of the day. (During Yolanda’s set, Tom Foolery reappeared as psychedelic cowgirl on stilts to challenge Yolanda’s status as Queen for a day). Feeling like a mixture of disco glam and gospel jam, Yolanda re-invented herself with each song that was as loud as her leopard-print spandex. Much of her work shed redemptive light on archetypes of nastiness such as “bitch” and “control queen.”

Following Yolanda, Adodi Muse took the stage for a spellbinding set of performance poetry. Imagine Gil Scott Heron or the Last Poets stripped of their machismo and homophobia, and you can get a sense of the powerful commentary on black queer culture this trio from Atlanta dishes up. Like postmodern James Baldwins, these men seamlessly weave notions of religion, sexuality, and politics into an emotionally emphatic quilt of theater, poetry, and rap.

Next, Angela Motter’s bluesy, folksy, funky set reminded me of some of the 80’s most dynamic divas, people like Phranc and Annie Lennox. She shifted effortlessly from softer paeans of gender bent lust and freedom to angry songs with punk intensity to a joyful dance number that had the entire crowd moving and singing along. At the close of Angela’s set, the sun also set. Some folks scampered off to their tents for evening attire while others sampled the lavish vegetarian buffet. Before the next headliner, local lyricist Leopard made us all laugh with a gritty homage to his 12-cup espresso maker.

When Pistol Pete and Popgun Paul start to croon, the faeries swoon. This New Orleans duo helped visualize the Idapalooza concept during last fall’s Artland and appeared in top form when their set finally arrived. Regulars at most Tennessee faerie gatherings, the “Simon and Garfunkel of Homocore” played a spontaneous set of songs from their discs *Fine Red Wine* and *Son of a Gun*. Rather than refer to a planned list, Pete and Paul took cues from fans shouting requests. With angelic ballads like “What If God Was a Homo” and “Evolution

of Love” Pistol and Popgun gave the community a lush look at life through the lens of unlimited erotic ardor and impeccably crisp musicianship.

After a sound-check that seemed to last days, Bitch (of Bitch and Animal) finally began her set with percussionist Omecca. Amid a day of so many pinnacles and peaks, it may seem pointless to say Bitch’s performance was the best. However, I must say she stole the show with attitude and charm. Despite performing without half her band (Animal did not make the trip to Tennessee), jamming with a person she’d only rehearsed with a handful of times, dealing with the most frustrating sound-check in a day of difficult sound-checks, accepting gracefully the constant pestering of a devoted 7-year-old fan, and having her set cut short due to time constraints, Bitch blazed through her songs and manifestos with dynamic virtuosity.

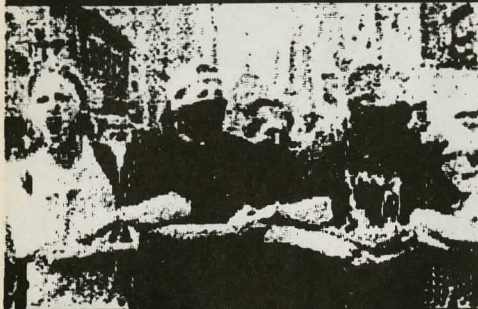
Maintaining an intense intimacy with the crowd, Bitch’s performance lured people off their blankets, lawn chairs, and hay bales to crowd the stage, to dance, to sing, to shout. From her parodic interpretations of gospel and country styles to her fierce electric fiddling to her moments of inspired improvisation, Bitch blew us away. My favorite moment had to be her “Pussy Manifesto” rant. Not since Bongwater’s Ann Magnuson penned “The Power of Pussy” have music fans experienced such a brilliant and beatific reclamation of the cunt. Of all the clever rhetorical hooks in Bitch’s piece of punk performance art, I most enjoyed her suggestion that we learn to compliment people with the expression “she’s got eggs” (as opposed to the familiar “that took balls”). After Bitch, a Nashville dance band closed the show; however, the show had already climaxed for me.

While the queer music festival scene primarily consists of women’s events, Idapalooza broke new ground by creating a mixed gender melodious mecca for freaks of all ages. Hopefully, next year’s festival will attract even more people to this impressively noncommercial, one-of-kind celebration. ★

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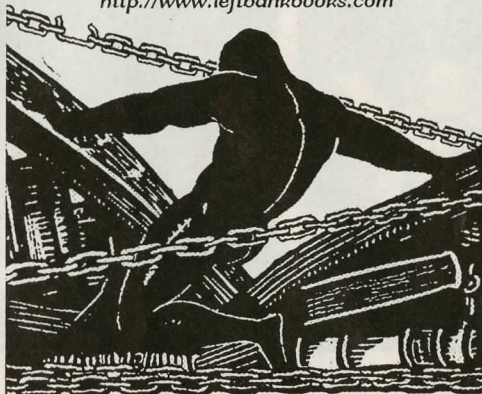
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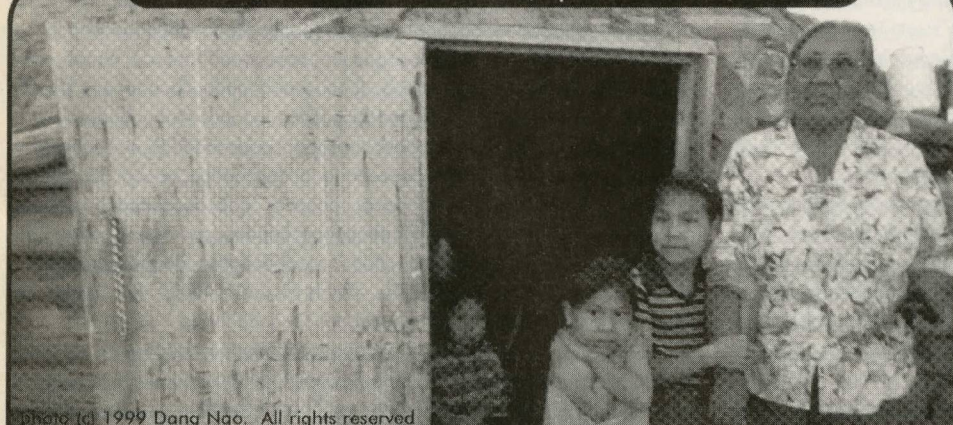


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Choice ★ Sara McCARRY

At the first streak in the plastic window you call her.

-How dark does it have to be?

-Shit, she says. Ten minutes later she is at your door.

You sit on the toilet and cry. From the edge of the bathtub she reaches over and touches your back.

-You're okay.

-Yeah.

She makes you coffee. You wipe your nose.

-It could be worse, you say later. Thank God I live in this country.

-Hell, she says, thank God you live in this state.

Everywhere you go you see women with infants. Large women with small infants, small women with large infants, infants with snot running from their noses. Clean infants, grubby infants, infants screaming, infants smiling and stretching chubby arms toward you from strollers. Your neighbors have a bumper sticker on their car that reads, Aren't You Glad Your Mother Was Pro-Life? They spend a lot of time in their yard, and wave at you as you bike past them on sunny afternoons. You wave back. They seem like nice people.

In your high school French class you learned that "I am full" is slang for "I am pregnant." Perhaps the receptionist will speak French. You will dial and say "Je suis plein" and the receptionist will understand immediately. Everything will be taken care of for you.

-Hello, you say, I need to make an appointment please, and then you say the word and there is a long silence.

-Have you had it confirmed?

-The line was pink.

-We cannot schedule a termination procedure without confirmation of conception, the receptionist says, and hangs up on you.

She holds your hand in the waiting room. The last time you had a confirmation, you were Catholic. Next to "Do you drink do you smoke have you ever used illegal drugs have you been sexually active in the last six months are you female" you check the Yes box.

When you are finished your cheeks are red. After 45 minutes someone calls your name and leads you to a little room with a picture of seagulls on the ceiling. After 15 minutes someone else comes in and takes your blood pressure and gives you a cup to pee in. After you have taken the cup to the bathroom and peed in the cup and placed it inside the indicated box being sure to carefully mark your name in the space provided you go back to the seagull room. You wait there for another 15 minutes and someone else comes in. You know it is the doctor because of the white coat.

-Well, the doctor says, what were you planning on doing about it?

You start to cry again.

-I'm in between appointments, the doctor says. I don't have a lot of time. Were you planning on continuing a relationship with the father?

In the car you tell her how you had to take your clothes off in front of the doctor because the doctor would not leave the room.

-Jesus, she says. Planning to continue a relationship with the father? You should have told the bitch you did it yourself with a turkey baster.

You start laughing at the idea of this and then you are laughing and crying at the same time and you keep making hideous choking noises.

-The Butterball baby! she shrieks and then you are both laughing so hard that she has to pull off the road.

A man in a pickup truck honks at her, for not using her turn signal or maybe just on general principle.

-Want a cigarette? she says. Here, you need one.

This time when you call you have the piece of paper the doctor has given you telling you what you already knew. You say -I would like to make an appointment for a termination procedure please. The word is not mentioned. You are put on hold. Yesterday after she drove you home she sat in your kitchen and told you it would have a heartbeat in a few weeks. You wondered if it might grow up to look like you. You put your hands on the part of your belly that sticks out and said -If it were a girl I would name it Lucy. She rolled her eyes at you.

-It's lower, dumbass. The part you've got your hands on is just fat. It's right here, she said, and flattened her palm across the top of your crotch.

-How far along are you? says the voice. You read the number from your sheet of paper.

-You'll have to wait. We don't schedule procedures this early.

-Okay, you say.

-It's for your safety. We're very busy. We perform many other health services. This is just a small part of what we do for the community.

-Okay.

-I might be able to find some time for you in a few weeks. Thursday. The 31st. I can fit you in at four.

-Okay.

-Do you have any questions?

-No, you say.

This is not true.

She had told you once what it felt like to walk through the picket

lines with a paper bag over her face so no one could take her picture. All she could think about, she said, all she could think about as she lay flat on her back with her body emptying, was what would happen to her if someone threw a bomb, if the doctor would leave her on the table. If she would die like that, half-naked with her legs spread, bleeding.

This is how it started: you were counting days. You wandered around the grocery store for 20 minutes because you didn't want to ask the 15-year-old boy stocking shelves where the pregnancy tests were. You had thought maybe next to the diapers. You found them finally on the feminine hygiene shelf between the condoms and the tampons. You picked the cheapest one and then wondered if maybe that was a bad idea. The bleached and lipsticked woman who rang you up did not tell you to have a nice day. You took the box home and peed on the spongy end of the stick and now here you are.

-I'm going to buy you a jar of pickles, she says.

You are crying again because your breasts hurt.

-I know you have an excuse, she says, -but you are turning into the moodiest bitch I have ever seen in my life.

-I'm sorry, you wail, crying harder.

-Oh Christ, she says, -I was joking. Come here.

She grabs at you and you cry some more until you realize your nose is running on her sweater.

-My nose is running on your sweater.

-It's an old sweater.

-Will you go with me?

-Shut up.

You are carrying a secret now, low in your belly. It has given you an awareness of the covert lives of other people. You eye women on the street, wondering what undercover truth they are bearing. The secrets of some women you can read easily: black eyes, too-thin bodies. But when you look in the mirror you see only a healthy, appealing sort of girl, who might be up for a bike ride or a game of Frisbee, and so it is faces like yours that you watch most closely. You think of criminals, their acts of desperation or hatred paraded across the television with their names and faces, permanently reducing them to the single most awful thing they have done in their lives. You are the worst kind of mother. On the evening news, you would be crucified. Your neighbors have acquired a new bumper sticker proclaiming In Case Of Rapture This Car Will Be Unmanned. You wish you had the option.

-I was fine afterward, she says. -Maybe it will be different for you, but I have never looked back. Never.

-Make them give you morphine, she says. She has driven you to the clinic and now she is holding your hand while you try not to cry. If you cry everyone sitting next to you will know what you are doing here and they will hate you.

-I'm right here, she says. -Breathe, she says.

You wonder if you will be sick. You are lucky. You do not live in Alabama, for one thing. You clutch her fingers and wait for the doctor to call your name. ★

Close Your Legs Forever

the space between
awake and asleep; the
fine line between
dreams and reality.

Jennifer Saboteur

There are graphic sexual images that used to reside, quite comfortably, buried deep within the recesses of my memory. Depending on how pleasant, memorable, or recently my encounters occurred, some were buried deeper than others. When they emerge, they are flashes of scenes long past, all blurred by the passing of time. Until recently, they rarely came forward unless prompted by a reminder. It was generally a good-natured question over drinks with a friend.

How many men have you slept with?

And conversation was pleasant. My memories for the most part were foggy and dimly lit. They were, at the very least, colorful stories to liven up a meal illustrating a time of abandonment and conspicuous sexual consumption. They were also encounters I happily left as stories infrequently told. I felt—and continue to feel more profoundly with each passing day—as though sex that I had in the past with people I have not seen or spoken to in a long time had, and continue to have, no place in my happily monogamous life now.

My sexual past has come forward and made its presence known out of the recesses of my mind, into the insides of my body. My rendezvous have, quite literally, infected me and are demanding some attention and recognition. They replay themselves over and over during my now frequent gynecological visits. They replay over weekly telephone conversations with the fully insensitive people who work on behalf of the complaint department of my HMO.

This is not the first time I have had to find a way to manage the occasionally ugly consequences of having sex, especially with people I was not in a monogamous relationship with. Anyone who has sex knows that it can be emotionally complicated and really dangerous for far too many reasons. This is, however, one of the only times in my life that the difficult consequences of sex were physical rather than emotional. One of the fundamental differences in how I handle emotional and physical difficulty is that when I run into emotional trauma, more often than not, I can work it out on my own or with the council of a person who I trust and respect. This element of choice can make all the difference in getting through a tough situation.

Importantly when dealing with issues or situations that are difficult emotionally but which lack a physical aftermath, you are also permitted a certain amount of privacy and a lot of choices about how you can handle the situation. When something happens to you physically as a consequence of consensual sex, as in contracting an STD or getting pregnant, immediately people who you probably have never met in your life, and who you instinctually may not trust, are brought into a very personal equation very quickly. To complicate an already complicated situation they are generally people who could give a rat's ass about how you feel about what is happening to you, and they charge an exorbitant amount of money for their services. In my experience, they also tend to be people who

don't think very hard about how insensitively they might be treating you, don't tend to fill you in on options which you have (because they are comfortable with making choices for you), and who, as doctors and health care providers, often seem to think that the only error they should be held accountable for is accidentally killing you. I have never met a doctor I liked. I have, however, met a few who I thought were good doctors.

After a routine gynecological visit several months ago where I got an abnormal Pap smear, I have had to "follow up" because my first gynecologist's assistant told me that I probably either had cervical cancer, or interior indications of "rough sex" (yes, these are two very different things and I don't know what she was thinking telling me this either). I have been consistently horrified with the treatment that I have received from nearly all of the four gynecologists I have seen, and appalled at my health insurance carrier for too many reasons to go into here, but most notably for the people they have not properly trained to put me on hold without accidentally hanging up on me, much less appropriately deal with very personal complaints about shoddy New York City gynecologists. My boyfriend heard somewhere that big HMO's actually hire prison inmates to work in the complaint department of their companies for obvious business reasons: the more inept they think the people working for them in the complaint department are, the more people will become frustrated with calling to complain and the less complaints they will get. Brilliant, right? While I laughed upon first hearing this, I think that while they may not all be in solitary confinement, they are certainly not properly trained at all. From the way that they speak to me I can't imagine that there are other co-worker/manager types around to ensure that they treat patients and customers in a sensitive manner. I'll give you a brief example of my indoctrination into the ways of HMO complaint departments. Keep in mind that I had already been hung up on several times when I finally got through. It would be valuable if you knew some of the history leading up to this phone call, but there is so much that I wouldn't know where to begin. Anyway, I need to save some of my horrifying anecdotes for later.

A very deep irritated sounding man's voice: Hello?

My voice, rather high pitched and young sounding: *Hi, I've been on hold for a while. Are you the person who takes complaints?*

Yeah.

Silence.

OK, well I have a complaint I would like to file against my doctor and a woman who works in his office.

OK

OK, well how do I do this?

You can do it with me.

OK, Uh, I'm not sure where to begin. Well I'm complaining about a gynecologist I saw, who I never actually saw. I want to make sure that I was not charged for a visit with him because he never actually examined me, his assistant did, and when she did, she seemed very nice but she dropped the tools she was using a few times during the examination and continued to use them, I think. She didn't seem very experienced and I always thought the doctor was supposed to do the examination, anyway. Then they called me back a few days later and told me that I had to come back into the office because I either had cervical cancer or was showing signs of it in my Pap smear. When I asked if I could make an appointment to come back in they said no. I asked why not, and the woman said that she did not make appointments in the evening and that I would have to call back another time. So I asked her when, and she said whenever, that I should just call back another time. And I asked why I couldn't make an appointment and she said that I just couldn't. So I called back the next day from work and I got another receptionist and I tried to make an appointment with

her and she told me that there were no appointments available, which really freaked me out because they had told me that I might have cervical cancer and I figured they should, you know, try and treat it. Hello? Hello?

Yeah, I'm here. Miss would you say that you received below average service from your doctor? Is that what you are trying to say?

Uh, yes. I would definitely say that I received below average service. I'm not actually done with my complaint, it all gets worse.

So, what you are saying miss is that you received poor service from your doctor?

I'm saying that I don't think anyone should use this doctor ever, and that you should perhaps consider removing him from your plan. If I tell you everything that happened I'm sure it will be clear why when I am finished with my complaint.

OK, well the thing is everything you tell me I'm going to have to type and I'm not the fastest typer in the world, and I don't have all day miss...

Well, what have you typed so far?

I typed 'Customer not happy with service.'

Flash images of my sexual past have become more vivid in some ways than what I did yesterday, or even last week. They are no longer dim memories, but humiliating secrets which have made it impossible for me to have sex with my boyfriend tonight, not only because I couldn't imagine anything I'd rather do less, but because the cramping and bleeding from the cervical biopsy I had yesterday make it impossible. Fear and regret has, almost overnight, overcome me completely and saturated every decision I make in or out of the bedroom. This includes the newfound danger I see in getting out of bed in the morning, as well as deciding whether or not it would be safe to leave my apartment at night.

My sexual history since last September has been waging an all out war against my body. Pictures of encounters that came to fruition during acts of free will feel they must go on to resolve themselves on a nightly basis, when I am sleeping and literally can't exercise free will to make them stop. They morph from erotic memories in dream form to the sensation of someone clipping off pieces of my cervix and prodding me with cold metal instruments. Sleep pounds me and offers perpetual reminders. It demands regret, guilt, and punishment most ruthlessly when

...Hello? Hello?

Yeah, I'm here. Miss would you say that you received below average service from your doctor? Is that what you are trying to say?

Uh, yes... I'm not actually done with my complaint, it all gets worse.

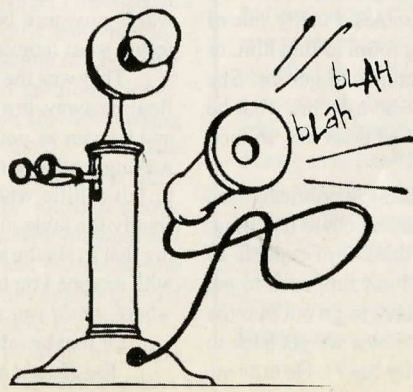
So, what you are saying, miss, is that you received poor service from your doctor?

I'm saying that I don't think anyone should use this doctor ever, and that you should perhaps consider removing him from your plan. If I tell you everything that happened I'm sure it will be clear why when I am finished with my complaint.

OK, well the thing is everything you tell me I'm going to have to type and I'm not the fastest typer in the world, and I don't have all day miss...

Well, what have you typed so far?

I typed "Customer not happy with service."



I am eager to escape all of that.

Sometimes my dreams are so vivid I can't remember if they actually happened. Because I often dream of things that actually happen throughout the day, all of this can make be very disorienting. Anyway, I don't want them as reality, they are uncomfortable enough as dreams, and so it is my instinct to pretend that none of it is real. I would rather dream my childhood dream of floating up weightless in a white night gown, and swimming with ease through the heavy air of my bedroom. If I don't specify which happened in sleep, and which happened when awake, I could perhaps convey to you what it is to live with a perpetual diminishing sense of reality.

I am in a hospital and the doctor is putting the mask over my face, which will put me to sleep. He tells me to breathe in. He is asking me how school is going. I am younger, eighteen or nineteen. I don't have clothes on, just a piece of paper in the shape of a gown covering me. My legs are spread. Everyone is looking between my legs and they are wearing masks over their mouths. I tell the doctor that I know what he is trying to do. He is trying to distract me by asking me inane questions. I tell him he doesn't have to do that. I'm not going to fall asleep. He laughs and although the mask covers his mouth, I can see his laughter in the crinkles of his eyes and in the tilting up of his chin.

When I wake up my insides don't hurt but my inner thighs hurt more than anything I have ever known from being spread for so long. It is a terrible pain and all I want to do is close them, forever. I heard that sometimes when women wake up they are crying but I'm not crying because I'm tough, and I got myself into this and I look at the doctor and ask,

"Are you finished?"

"Yes." He says.

"That was so fast."

"It wasn't actually that fast. You were asleep."

"Thank you," I say, and close my eyes, thinking about how strange sleep can be, how strange it is that you don't feel pain when you are sleeping, how it is like a form of death. They wheel me to a room where I lay in a bed next to other women. I am the youngest. Curtains are supposed to separate our beds but they are only sort of half closed so that I can't see their bodies, but I can see their heads. When the nurse comes to check on me I tell her that I think I am ready to go home, but she snaps:

Just relax.

And then she walks away with her shoes squeaking on the linoleum. I want to go home. I shut my eyes but I can't sleep. I open my eyes and see that the woman in the bed next to me is looking at me and smiling groggily. She has red frizzy hair and looks at me like she wants to protect me from something, like I am young and small. I realize that she has had it done also. That all of the women in the row have had it done, and that instead of being worried about ourselves we are all worried about the other women next to us in the row. Later when I dream it over again I remember most vividly the way that red headed woman looked at me, and how even though the thought of anyone having children scares me, I think she would have been a good mother.

When I am told that I am finally allowed to leave, the hospital pages my boyfriend over an intercom to come and get me, but he has fallen asleep so he cannot hear them and he never comes. Finally, one of the nurses has to leave her post to go to the waiting room to find him, or else I will have to stay there until someone else comes to get me. She decides for some reason that this is all my fault. She asks me what he looks like—skeptically, as though she thinks that he does not, in fact, exist.

They find him sprawled across two chairs, snoring, a political patch sewed carefully onto the back of his gas station jacket, chain dangling, skate sneakers. Looking at him, you would not think him capable of getting a woman pregnant. When we get outside I am supposed to get straight into a cab but none will stop for him so I have to go out into the street and flail my arms in the air to hail it myself. Once we get back to my place, I get into bed because I am bleeding pretty heavy. He tells me

that he has to leave because his band has a show somewhere on a college radio station in New Jersey. But, he says, he will come straight home afterwards and maybe he will bring me a treat.

When I wake up the bills begin arriving. It doesn't seem right that it could cost so much to have something done that hurts so eternally. A friend told me medical bills do not affect your credit. That sounded right to me. He was wrong. I pretend the bills don't matter and let them pile up unopened. I laugh like it is funny, even after I call my health insurance company and an annoyed sounding man on the other end of the line tells me they won't help-with a cent because they don't cover 'that sort of thing.'

Look, they keep sending the bills!

My boyfriend laughs also.

They think that if they send multiple copies, we will pay them!

I am startled awake by a wave of anxiety pulling at my breath leaving me choking. Instead of floating up in my sleep, like when I was a kid, I stand back and watch myself being pushed downward by my own weight.

I begin the tedious process of eliminating people and things from my list of waking hassles. I pay some bills. It takes years of hanging up and walking away to eliminate the boyfriend, and a little less time to get the bills paid off. Days, months, years later he does not mention the hospital bills or harassment when I am converted into a demonic muse for screamed anguished unabashedly self-righteous hardcore music records. It becomes my least favorite genre. This music is in the background when I am deep in sleep and he suddenly morphs into a midget rubbing his hands all over me, and he is too small to pick up and remove. The music becomes louder and he is the size of a child's penis trying to creep inside of me while I flail my arms and hands around trying to stop it, like I am one of those strangled puppets dancing.

Minutes later I am sound asleep, in another country. The sleep is more peaceful, certainly more childlike. Men do not speak English very well but they think I am beautiful. I think they are beautiful also, especially when we can barely speak the same language. I will never have to see them again. They don't know me. I don't know them. They will not mutter my name to other men who know me through New York's anxious social circles within the context of *stay away she is marked territory I have already lifted my leg and pissed on that one, don't betray me...*

If they can't speak English they can't ask me what it's like to be a woman playing music or a woman playing music with men or a woman writing or a woman who knows how to read and write. They don't ask me what I think of their songs, as a woman. They don't tell me,

No one would know who you were if it weren't for me, you wouldn't be anywhere.

Because, I'm not a woman here. I'm not even me, at least as you have always known me. You don't need a sexual identity when you are having anonymous sex with someone you will never see again. I am part of an act in a moment, which ends when I climax, and we fall asleep outside on the soft soil of the graveyard. Only the moment doesn't end here, or now. I am nowhere. None of this is real except the blackness behind my eyelids and the smell of sweat and dirty laundry, beer and cigarettes. It is a waking dream, the best kind. The sound of breathing and sometimes childlike laughter, enveloping you like a cocoon. We don't bother with words anymore because the more Czech beer you drink the more you forget what language you are trying to speak.

That was the good part of the dream. The one that is a little bit like floating away, in a white night gown while your eyes are closed, but older and heavier as you start to wake up. All dreams feel a need to convert to waking, and waking is never smooth or easy, at least for me, and you start to fall a little while you float, back toward the bed, or the ground, or finally the table in the gynecologists office with your legs spread, knowing that as she/he asks you questions about your sexual history they, along with anyone you try and talk to about this whole mess is thinking, somewhere, *I told you so.*

Or maybe, at best,

You should have known better. ★

GENDERETROPHY

Commentary By Jennifer R. Johnson

Recently there has been a surge in self-proclaimed 'experts' flooding the media with a new brand of insanity in the discussion of women and men in relationships and society. This has taken many forms, all of which are reminiscent of earlier times in history. When this phenomenon occurs in popular culture, we call it "retro." However, when this anachronistic reversion comes into play in the roles and images of gender in our culture, it is a reversal of what we call progress—and a phenomenon that I call "genderetrophy."

Examples of genderetrophy have been seen in everything from the blatant women-as-objects themes of *The Man Show*, complete with "juggies" bouncing the aisles in string bikinis and "girls on trampolines" clad in skirts, to the gay-bashing and sadomasochism of Dr. Laura Schlessinger (homosexuals are a "biological error"; pre-marital cohabitation? You're a whore) to the promotion of the coy woman, using her feminine wiles to "land" a man, as instructed in *The Rules* (and don't forget *The Rules II*) to the recent declaration by Arthur Gordon in *How to Get All the Girls You Want* that it is women's independence from men that is corrupting society. We've run the gamut. Welcome to America, circa 1950—except this is the year 2000. Here's news for those who believe that "old-fashioned" is the answer (and common sense for everyone else)—history doesn't provide precise answers, it provides education. Rather than revering and repeating history, we should learn from our past mistakes. If we do not, then our progress has been futile.

In several of the aforementioned forums, and in politics, we see platforms built around "family values." The "family" referred to therein consists of "married with children," and ignores all other groups. Has anyone stopped to look around in the last 50 years? Today just 20 percent of American families (yes, that's one in five) fit this model, and the divorce rate has tripled in the last fifty years. In fact, one half of all marriages now end in divorce. More and more people are opting to cohabit or remain single today and alternative lifestyles and families have gained acceptance, allowing many more people an opportunity to be true to themselves and still have a family. Yet the decline of the family is still the scapegoat of society's ills (do politicians realize that they are alienating more than half of their voting public?). Is denial really the answer here? If we actually believed that these portrayals of the family were accurate, we must also conclude that single parents, homosexual couples, foster parents and other non-mainstream families are not capable of being good role models to their children.

Arthur Gordon, author of *How to Get All the Girls You Want*, dares to suggest that this moral-familial decline would be halted if women were dependent on their husbands (here he argues that women were created for men in a pseudo-Biblical quotation designed to attract the church-going crowd). According to him this would eliminate divorce. And common sense, in my estimation. The resultant "family" is one of loveless, unhappy, forced, illusionary togetherness. Further, children of such families are taught that being unhappily married is better than being happily independent (or re-married or <insert any other non-married status here>). Of course, no mention is made of those who have no desire to marry or of those who desire to marry someone of his or her own gender. Is someone really arguing this as a valid solution? Someone is. That same someone has suggested that women are the "missing link" between ape and man, and are therefore less "evolved." With plain logic we can dismiss Gordon's argument as invalid. How can women be created before men and be taken from Adam's rib? Gordon's book reads like a Brian Vickers essay, all logical arguments with illogical and out of context bases. Sadly, Gordon isn't the only one promoting the dependent model. The writers of *The Rules* would no doubt like this idea—once a woman has "landed" Mr. Right, she gets to keep him.

Well, I'm all for bringing back the oppression of women. While we're at it, let's ban education for selected minority groups and popular-

ize racism. In fact, let's promote slavery, legalize rape, and launch a second Holocaust. I'm not trying to over-dramatize here—oppression is oppression—regardless of who is subverted. Sexists are no less offensive than racists (However, they do currently enjoy a higher mainstream acceptance rate).

Dr. Laura Schlessinger could stand to learn this fact. With Bible in hand, this reformed (from her sinful ways, which makes her an "expert") "Christian" quotes scripture to defend her bigotries (as she herself has done much of what she disparages), while encouraging callers to embellish details of their lives that border on pornography. It quickly becomes clear that she's simply living vicariously through the lives of her callers (and can reprimand herself as she punishes them). Apparently, this public confession forum is popular, as she debuted a TV talk show this fall in addition to her radio show (syndicated by Paramount). I'm just not sure who her listening public is (she's eliminated all homosexuals and all conscientious individuals, and the Christian right can hardly support her tactics).

Again, why are ancient cultural standards cited as the answer to society's "ills" of today? Isn't it obvious that society evolved *because* the norms of the past were no longer working? Why would anyone suggest that they would work now?

I look upon this phenomenon much as Gloria Steinem did upon her Second Edition of *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*. I'm happy to see that people still want to promote a sense of ethics and family, but the activist in me doesn't feel at all happy that people are still using cultural anachronisms to defend such arguments or that such topics are still relevant for discussion. "I don't know whether to celebrate or mourn."

If indeed a historical role model is sought, one should look to ideas which worked, not those which didn't. For example, Queen Elizabeth remained unmarried, some say to maintain her power and her hold on the throne. One can learn from this historical example without emulating her and without remaining single.

When will these insane tactics cease? When, and only when, the public stops buying into (and literally, stops buying) "new" (read as: recycled) ideas made popular by their shock value. Consumer purchasing only reinforces and rewards production of these media, creating a *Jerry Springer* effect. Is this the form which we want our "authorities" on relationships to take? And is this the forum that we want to learn from? We need to stop gawking, change the channel, and refuse to buy (or buy into) such propaganda. Only when we recognize and denounce this genderetrophy, will we find true progress. ★

Dr. Laura Schlessinger

Dr. Laura's TV talk show debuted during the middle of September, and was pulled off the air after just two weeks for a makeover. The low ratings the show received convinced the show's producer, Paramount, to allow Dr. Laura to ditch her nice and polite TV show attitude for the aggressive, condescending attitude she has on her radio show. She's experienced other setbacks recently, when a NYC radio station, WABC-AM, cut her syndicated show from three hours to two (NY Post, 10/23/00). A parody of Dr. Laura received a high-profile trouncing on the NBC show *West Wing* from president Martin Sheen. Sagging ratings and continued controversy have meant lost sponsorship, including Proctor & Gamble (E! Online News 10/23/00), and the show has been dropped by some networks (CBC.ca 10/5/00). For more information on the controversy surrounding Dr. Schlessinger, stopdrlaura.com has a comprehensive compilation of direct quotes from Dr. Laura, info on who her advertisers are, what stations air her show, etc.

The silence that shapes our wor(l)ds. The silence that contours the sounds of music. The silence that usually interrupts & surrounds our most incredible experiences (and interferes with their recurrence). The silence that leaves us alone with our pains—cutting us off from each other and our common struggles. Silence creates moments where we realize what we have yet to communicate... There is also a beautiful kind of silence that allows us to relax, to dream and to feel pleasure. This silence, which provides invaluable moments where one's mind can experience freedom, is often disrupted by the whirring of machines, the roar of autos, billboards, the buzz of computers and refrigerators, logos, sirens, small talk, etc. Many times silence delays discovering and delighting in deep-rooted desires. Silence inhibits turning these desires into pleasures.

Silence involves all... all sound... all possibilities... all we desire to communicate...

We exist in a **very loud** society—perhaps the most earsplitting ever—it is so loud we have almost become deaf to the many beautiful sounds which are crushed by the cacophony of corporate commerce... Away from this dissonance a tool dropped on the floor can be thunderous—a single automobile or plane can drastically interrupt the sounds of life... consider what we must filter out... (as the computer whirs)... An intersection closed by a protest or critical mass can restore a serenity which we often forget possible... let's unplug for a moment...

- I had a delightful friendship with a 70 year old Ethiopian woman ("Naya"). She spoke no English and I knew maybe fifty words of the Ethiopian national dialect ("ahmaric"). Our friendship was based on a few basic things: We both shared an intense love for her children and three grandchildren. We cooked and absorbed many incredible meals... We shared endless hours of beautiful silence while caring for her newborn grand-daughter (Dominique).

We communicated through smiles (and other facial expressions), laughter, eye contact, sharing food, hugging and kissing each other's cheeks (each time we met and parted)—as we embraced we uttered "dah nanich" which was an Ethiopian phrase expressing affection... as opposed to standard speech our communication sought to convey feeling through sound and silence rather than grammar... I never once felt the need to teach her English or to learn Ahmaric—our communications were efficient and pleasant...

Before Naya left for Ethiopia I spent the night on the couch in her family's living room. Early in the morning Naya came downstairs to leave- we hugged and kissed each other's cheeks—we made eye contact... we both knew that we would never see each other again. In a very significant way we were both dying in our shared reality... We cried and cried then hugged again...

I'm certain that words would have spoiled that moment. If we had a shared syntax we might have hidden our emotions behind grammatical structures and talked about trivial things like inflight movies, airline peanuts or postcards... Instead for a brief instant our minds were transparent and our communication could not have been contained within words...

Felix Mendelssohn: "people usually complain that music is so ambiguous, that it leaves them in such doubt as to what they are supposed to think, whereas words can be understood by everyone. But to me it seems exactly the opposite."

sound (e)merges with(in) silence...

- Silence**, often a forgotten aspect of **music** and **speech**, shapes and nourishes sound(s). Silence creates and releases tension... Music is born, develops and realizes itself with(in) silence: sounds arise and dissolve as they give a form to silence, and yet they do not abolish it. Silence is an oscillation between nothingness and being.

Silence is more a union than a breaking off.

Silence **nourishes** and **protects** music **with gentle and fluid boundaries which allow both uniqueness and universality...** Silence is the very substance of music... in it individual sounds are integral to the possibility of all sounds.

Dancing—getting further and further into the groove until we hear an undivided sound (the harmony of all life is intense (yet beautiful and peaceful)). A contagious ecstasy spreads as magnificent chills run down the spine and this bliss virus circulates throughout the entire organism. We no longer think about dancing—it just happens... the music is heard so deeply that it is not heard at all—we **realize that while the music lasts—WE ARE THE MUSIC**. Time dilates and frees itself from geometric subdivision. As we release time from its mathematical confines—we experience it as it is: infinite, fluid & indivisible. There is no past or future only a magnificent timeless present. A lifetime is experienced in every moment, the mind ascends as bodies flow freely...

The rigid egos which formerly separated us from harmony dissolve momentarily... Music is no longer external but rather an extension and intermingling of self & life... this beautiful listening event (which we have all certainly enjoyed) may simply be the experience of silence. The "pure sound" of silence is created by the inner singing of the mind with which we welcome and recreate sounds and melodies. Silence is the beautiful mindstate which makes us receptive to pleasure.

experience is interpretation...

Silence is the subjective aspect of listening—the personal signature given to the realities you encounter...

An enlightening mood transforms all sensations... Enchantment saturates every gesture as you stride with a feeling of elation and ecstasy which you previously only knew in dreams. Dancing—attracting all to

move and share this marvelous mirth... you listen in a different way to an imperishable moment of music—your surroundings take on an unusual beauty and light(ness)... The sounds of life mesh into the sweetest harmony... Totally alive - completely a unique individual—yet in total communion with all (just as a vortex is a unique but integral element of a river). Days pass and the mind swells to the point of bursting from an inner space overflowing with bliss—time expands (dilates) and your days are enclosed in an ever vaster fullness.

John Cage: The music I prefer, even to my own and everything, is what we hear if we are just quiet...

- **Silence** is the language within language- a mode of communication where translation is unnecessary... a primordial communication offering translucent immediacy... Silence is at times the most uncomfortable but honest aspect of **communication**. People often fill the air with all kinds of noise to avoid even a few moments of silence. Closeness and connectedness come when we can comfortably enjoy silence communally. Silence feels pleasurable and peaceful with those whom we love... Words fragment...

As the Linguist Benjamin Whorf notes: Language includes not only our way of constructing propositions but the way we dissect nature and break up the flux of life into objects and entities about which to construct propositions..." Silence, however, evokes an ecstatic sense of immediacy, an experience of radical beauty, breaking all the habits of mediation conventionally associated with perception. Silence negates the process of negation that abstraction is... Silence, as the art historian Poggioli claims, allows freedom from "the prison of things." **Silence amplifies the experience of extreme liberty and intensity of feeling: absolute freedom.** Our words lie so often they have almost lost their meaning—conversation (for the most part) has digressed to small talk which avoids the big issue(s) of existence and interrupts ineffable insights.

How does language fragment? A very important feature is the subject - verb - object structure of sentences, which is common to the grammar and syntax of modern languages... this structure implies that all action arises in a separate entity (the subject) and that (in cases described by a transitive verb) this action crosses over the space between them to another separate entity (the object). (If the verb is intransitive the subject is still considered to be a separate entity...). This pervasive structure contributes to patterns of thought which fragment life and view it as consisting of parts (external to each other) that are essentially fixed and static... these thought patterns contribute to countless social/environmental ills...

Speech is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness... (Harold Pinter)

I wonder what you look like when you're not wearing words (Ani DiFranco)

Shhh!

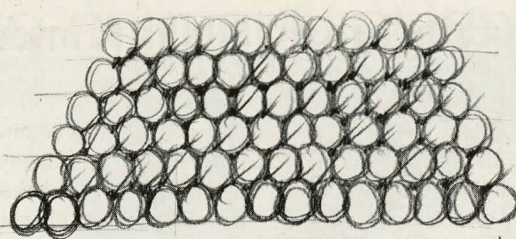
silence is the language of all; of all ages, places and times, it conveys, better than words, the incredible joys and possibilities of life... every-thing carries this silent message - you have been (un)aware of it...

Silence/Oppression/Liberation

the oppressor seeks not only to subdue the victim but also attempts to (e)limi(na)t(e) the vocabulary for articulating victimization while constricting the instinct for freedom (modified from Thomas Szasz)

Silent oppression is the most powerful... Oppression always involves

the creation of forbidden zones where thought may not venture and which are surrounded by silence or illusion. While complaints might be voiced—they are almost always in superficial terms without an expression of the nature of true discontent. Many oppressions have no name... Alone we can change very little - **liberation waits in silence for the moment**



elements of silence and the human character
(one relies upon the other)

of expression... bell hooks notes that for the oppressed true speaking "is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless... moving from silence to speech is a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible... (hooks - talking back).

What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? For it is not difference that immobilizes us but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken (Audre Lorde).

Deleuze: if the protests of children were heard in kindergarten, if their questions were attended to, it would be enough to explode the entire educational system...

A sub-verse silence is spreading...silence is not necessarily the absence of words or music or even of raw sounds... silence can be a vast utopian scheme- a plan rigorously executed... the dream of a new beginning... it has form(lessness) - it has no borders...

at the same time we are all realizing the (im)possible and it is the same time...

language represents an ever-changing reality with concrete metaphors which mask its (our) inability to fully grasp the dynamic nature of life... **Silence** creates multiplicity within language(s)... difference can be the condition of meaning...

souls forever passing into one another now words interrupting the marvelous silence of universal ecstasy

Despite our efforts to verbally communicate there remains (between us) an unstated truth...

Despite our efforts to communicate our wor(l)ds (remain) separate...

Mime

- Film is the art of creating illusion through reality, while mime is the art of creating reality through illusions. -Marcel Marceau

- A mime must first transform thinking, by very elaborated, constant practice. We learn to think words in this culture. A mime must think movement, vision, images and non-linearly; and this process must be given unlimited time to evolve. Only when this new way of thinking is absorbed can one begin with the analytical work. Later the improvisation comes to enlarge the scope of the work. One of the practices is to fast from words one day a week, to bring it to a habit, in order to penetrate the realm of silence. Later we shape this silence with movement, giving it multidimensional reality... (modified from: Samuel Avital)

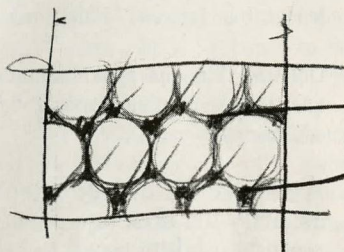
- perhaps... we have known all this before... it simply exists and remains essentially unchanged (and ever-changing)... directing attention to the progressive movement and growth of shape... to the beautiful, to movements and gestures, oscillations and still movements, to the

time, colors and tunes, to the essence anticipated within every action and creature... the secret hidden in the difference of similar and in the similarity of different things... there is a certain unity, an all-embracing concealed connecting rhythm... in this (no)thing(ness) lies the (non)sense of everything... (excerpted and embellished from the program notes to the Czech pantomime *A Strange Dream of a Clown*).

silence con(s)t(r)ains nothing

Mamako Yoneyamama describes haiku (an unrhymed poem composed of only three lines) as a brief statement which creates a feeling of "all of life's phenomena as inspirationally, as existentially and as economically as possible." "These few words," she asserts, "are dropped in the pond of silence. They ripple for a moment and then silence returns."

4'33" On August 29, 1952 pianist David Tudor premiered John Cage's piano sonata in three movements: 4'33". Tudor walked to the piano, opened and closed it three times (at the beginning and ending of each of the three movements) Tudor otherwise sat still for 4 minutes and 33 seconds... In the first movement the wind stirred the trees... in the second movement raindrops began patterning the roof and by the third movement people were whispering - others were leaving...



Imagined in 1948, Cage "composed" the silent sonata over the next four years (in 1948 he initially hoped to sell it (in manuscript form) to the Muzak company to address the desire which exists in all of us for new forms—transmute!).

In 1951 Cage entered an anechoic chamber - within this sound-proof room he was able to hear the sounds of his blood circulation and his nervous system. With this experience Cage proved to himself that silence could not be the absence of sound. According to Cage, the world teems with silent sounds (called silence because they do not contain musical intentions...). The experience of this silence allows for a change and amplification of the world which envelops us... as this process unfolds we are able to enjoy the harmonies which are uninterruptedly present but intermittently experienced...

Silence hinders the re-remembering/recurrence of beautiful moments...

The serene silence which follows an experience - creates a place for the experience, silence is like the echo after a sound... It amplifies the experience -creating a resonant space which extends, culminates, cultivates, and furthers this experience which dialogue tries to keep alive within us. Silent discourse extends the effort to retain and protract experience to a maximum frontier of time, space and awareness.

Imagine what the change could be—if what was thought so constantly—was said—not kept—locked up—in all of our heads...

•too many people thinking: no one thinks like this• "what if no one else agrees? it's too much of a risk..." (elements of a citizen fish song).

Silence Flow(er)ing:

loveevoloveevoloveevoloveevolove

boundaries between bodies became blurred—thinking and dreaming as one... con-fused as to where each ended and all began—passions flow(er)ed—the world contracted to us and expanded to infinity—for one perfect moment the (im)possible union of spheres was actual—love beyond desire—the feeling was as magnificent as anything ever felt—wor(l)ds flowed together... each attempted to explain to the other but there was no longer an

"each" or an "other". We mingled sounds of ecstasy or merged into silences of even deeper import. For some reason this delightful process was interrupted and "each" and "other" came again...

This has long been present—we all constantly think of it—everyone is aware of it—everyone thinks of it (constantly) most just accept it and are (n)ever amazed by it...

life is (e)merging

silence—life/death.... the next phase of evolution requires that we must either become wholly mental creatures or overcome 'clock' time and find the eternity in this instant... physical existence is a very temporary state... this thought was delightful and disturbing... it was the most serious and silly notion...

Then it occurred: "this is the experience of death... this experience is what all must experience when their physical life ends... are we about to die?" This question had been considered countless times... the answer was "yes and no and therefore yes..." "yes... death is inevitable and against the eternity of time it will occur in the next moment... no it did not happen that night and perhaps will not happen for another sixty years... or sixty seconds..."

silence = death •
death is silence(d)

Hiroshima: the strangest thing was the silence... You'd think that people would be panic-stricken, running yelling... They moved in slow motion, like figures in a silent movie... many simply dropped to the ground and died... Setsuko Thurlow

The silence surrounding death is powerful... many approach deaths with surprise and act as if it is an accident which happens only to the unfortunate...

every-thing is impermanent but life has continuity—time is elastic—time can dilate—we can immerse ourselves in this moment or evolve (beyond) our physical realities... every-thing is transient—we cannot really possess any-thing... Why do we all waste so much precious time talking/thinking about trivialities? Why don't we spend our time transforming this world, loving those around us and perpetually realizing the many pleasures we have discovered?

Sometime (perhaps) we will all communicate until our wor(l)ds become too sweet for utterance... we will live in moments that cannot die while enveloped in their own eternity... ahem...

As we communicate our greatest pains and frustrations—healing can begin—as we continue to rupture the silence about the horrible oppression and destruction happening on this planet we will further universal (r)evolution. As we learn to communicate and collectively understand it... we will learn to overcome the silences conventional communication creates and communicate in new forms... as we (dis)solve silences the "peak experiences" that many of us are consistently feeling will become more and more common... the ecstasy of communication is amazing and echoing...

haymarket martyr august spies last words: there will come a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today! *

a g a p e—m/sz—8-29 -00

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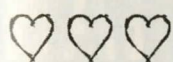
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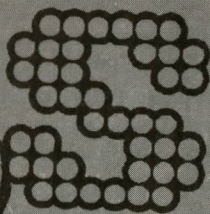
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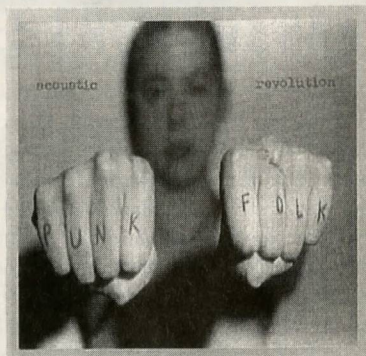
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MEXICO IS MORE THAN

"Mexico is more than just Chiapas," announced Mathew Carlin of the San Francisco, California based human rights organization, Global Exchange. Though the activist scene and even the mainstream U.S. media have given coverage to the plight of indigenous communities in the southeastern Mexican state of Chiapas, very little information is being disseminated about the dirty war occurring in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero. Given the potential power of the media as a site of global resistance and democracy, the silence of the media is deadly—silence greases the wheels of civil complicity and ensures governmental, corporate, and civil impunity. Without communication, repression is institutionally sanctioned, and then endured by the citizens of Guerrero—and the rest of the world—who are forced to endure daily, continuous abuse at the hands of municipal, state, and federal authorities and "security" forces. We write this article out of a sense of responsibility as citizens of the United States of America. As one of the largest consumptive bodies in the world and thus, one of the strongest and most influential forces in the historically constant and culturally embedded process of genocide, the United States maintains one of the bloodiest connections to Guerrero and the rest of the world.

Human rights work in Guerrero is dangerous, due to the threat and reality of military repression and violence. The climate of fear maintained in Guerrero necessitates international human rights solidarity and work. For these reasons, the Mexico Solidarity Network organized a human rights delegation to Guerrero. This past March, we, along with

thirteen others, arrived in Tlapa, Guerrero to meet with indigenous organizations and human rights workers. Delegation members comprised a spectrum of ages and backgrounds, though the majority of us were either university employees or students. While we were in Guerrero, Abel Barrera, Director of the Human Rights Center of the Mountain (Tlachinollan), hosted us. He and others working for the human rights center set up our entire visit, organizing encuentros with activists in Tlapa and with indigenous civic organizations in the municipalities of Temalacatzingo and Metlatonoc. We met with people from diverse sectors of local society: progressive clergy, teacher's union representatives, representatives from the local indigenous radio station, environmentalists, etc.

Here is a statistical picture of the land we entered:

Population: 2,700,000 distributed throughout 76 municipalities.

The majority of the population is poor farmers.

Guerrero is now considered the third poorest state in Mexico behind Chiapas and Oaxaca (some reports, however, place Guerrero first in terms of poverty).

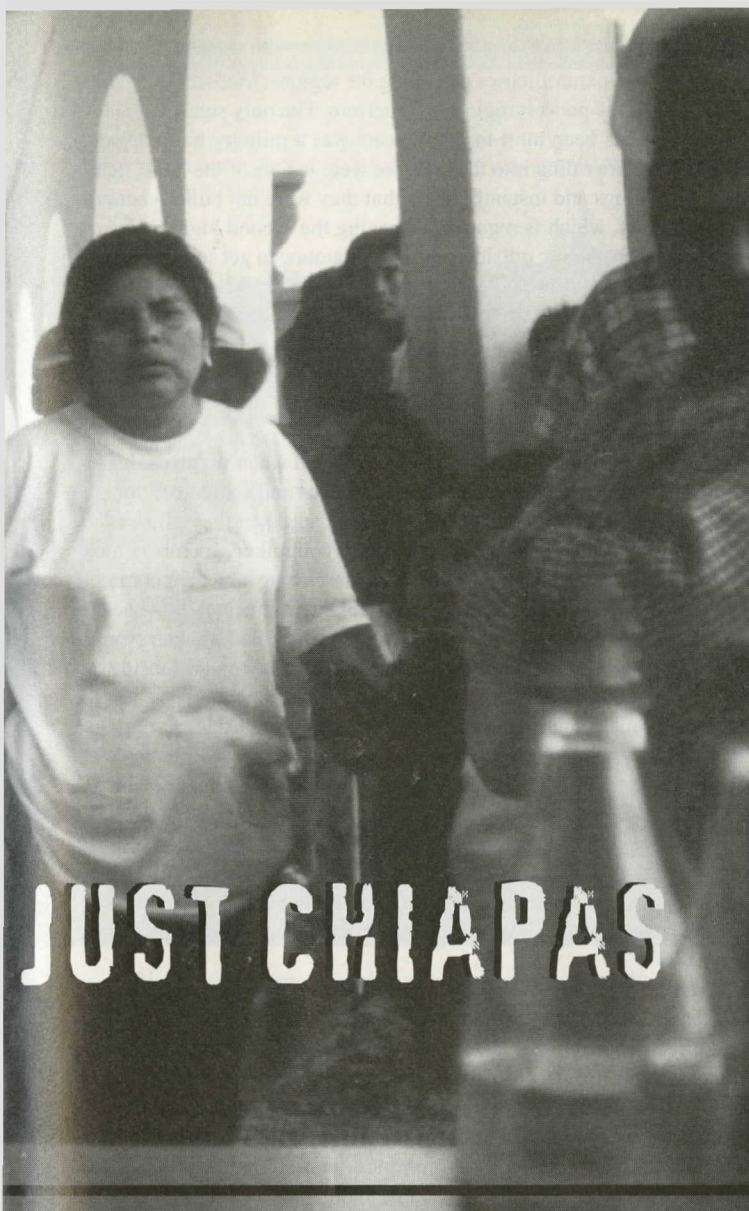
Thirteen percent of Guerrero's population is made up of the indigenous Nahuas, Mixtecos, Tlapanecos and Amazugos, who live primarily in the mountain region and "La Costa Chica" where the poorest municipalities of the state are located.

In relation to the rest of Mexico, Guerrero:

•is recognized as having the highest percentage of earth floors (57.5%)

[places]

by Michelle Luellen and Heather Pruess



- has the highest population of illiterate fathers (53.4%) and illiterate mothers (54.7%)
- records the highest percentage of severe infant malnutrition (32.4%)

Poverty in Guerrero is intense and carefully calculated, facilitated, legitimated and maintained by the Mexican government, international corporations and financial institutions and the Pentagon under the guise of structural adjustment (read: profit! profit! profit!). In "A Summary of the Militarization and Violation of Human Rights in Guerrero," Global Exchange notes that increased poverty is coupled with increased militarization. Poverty and militarization are endemic throughout the entire state, but are even worse in indigenous communities. In non-indigenous communities the level of malnutrition in children under the age of five is 38.5 percent, in communities with indigenous presence this rate rises to 43.2 percent and in indigenous communities the rate of malnutrition for children under the age of 5 rises to the incredible level of 58.3 percent. They noted that 73.6 percent of all children of indigenous communities in Guerrero are suffering from malnutrition.

The past 15 years have yielded an increasingly tight monetary and personnel relationship between US and Mexican security forces. Needless to say, in the midst of these transactions, human rights and social welfare have fallen by the wayside. In 1999, the US dished out at least \$21 million to Mexican security forces. This funding has enabled the modernization of the Mexican army, which has used the resources to create and train new military units and procure new vehicles and equipment. A substantial portion of US aid to the Mexican army is realized in the

form of training. Mexican army officers comprise the second largest national population of students at the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, Georgia. Their attendance—along with the bulk of aid received by Mexican security forces from the US—is deceptively premised on counter narcotics designs, but in indigenous communities increased militarization has resulted in maintaining—in a climate of fear—the hegemony of local power holders via torture, sexual assault, detainment and death.

The partnership between the US and Mexican governments, the prodigal protectorates of free trade, has left indigenous communities ignored at best and, at worst, targeted and isolated low-intensity war zones. Trapped in the clutches of deprivation, Guerrerese communities are essentially left at the mercy of local party machines, namely the PRI (Party of Institutional Revolution), which until the national presidential elections in July, maintained a tenuous and largely corrupt political hold throughout the country. The Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez Human Rights center notes that in Guerrero, since 1989, electoral gains by the major opposition party, the PRD (Party of Democratic Revolution), have resulted in an escalation of violence directed at civilians and opposition party members. The recent October 3, 1999 PRI loss in Acapulco might be construed as a declaration of war on the part of state police, military and political bodies—leaders in the campaigns of terror waged in Guerreran communities. The pretext for the near-total militarization of Guerrerese communities is again, the need to combat and eliminate armed groups and narco-traffickers. According to Digna Ochoa, lawyer for the Miguel Agustin Pro Human Rights Center, "Guerrero has been one of the states where human rights violations have been endemic... The situation in Guerrero has gone from bad to worse." Ochoa was detained and tortured in her home in October, 1999, for advocacy on the part of peasants and political prisoners, Rodolfo Montiel Flores and Teodoro Cabrera Garcia.

Impunity has maintained the intensification of violence and militarization. Ochoa notes that the Mexican Army has assumed the functions of police and public security forces—in violation of the Mexican Constitution, which states that the Army is responsible for national security, not community "security." Along with the military and State Police involvement, local caciques' head armed groups, patrolling and attacking communities, "that are not acting in accordance to their economic interests." Again, these groups operate with impunity.

TESTIMONIES FROM GUERRERO

One need not look far for specific cases. On April 20, 1999, two campesinos, Antonio Mendoza Olivero, 12, and Evaristo Albino Tellez, 27, left the community of Barrio Nuevo San Jose to pick maize. They never returned. When Evaristo's sister-in-law, Francisca Santos Pablo, and Olivero's grandmother, Victoriana Vazques Sanchez, went to the plot of land to look for them, they noticed a pool of blood. Military officers then surrounded them. Threatened with firearms and bound, the two women were gang raped. The communities we visited on the delegation, Temalacatzingo and Metlatonoc, comprised of Nahuatl and Mixteco residents, respectively, told similar stories.

Our first drive from Tlapa into the hills took us to Temalacatzingo, where we met with school and community representatives and community members. The region was completely deforested. The predominantly Nahuatl residents told us about the problems faced in the community, problems dues to lack of resources and political factionalization. They asked that we witness and bring their testimonies back to the States. A man spoke of the military presence in his community. He said, "The government wants us dead. Our language [Nahuatl] is a shame. We are of no use." Following him, in a meeting that lasted for four hours, people spoke in a similar vein about the deforestation of the mountains, death of the rivers and paucity of community resources. The Superintendent of School #10, located in Temalacatzingo, detailed an urgent need for teachers, but given the paltry pay, recruitment is nearly impossible. The school building, he said, was inadequate, lacking space and equipment. There are 487

students at the school, which houses only 187 desks. With only two classrooms, classes must take place in the sun. It lacks drainage. The authorities pay no heed—until election day. The people can not grow food—not in the dust that laces the entire mountain. The people subsist on tortillas, sometimes salsa and rarely meat or milk. The closest source of water is five miles away and drought has been a constant for the past four years. People die of curable diseases because medicine is not available. Without a means of survival—no water, no crops (much less narcotics)—men have left communities in startling numbers, following a well-worn path to other Mexican states and then on to the US. In the wake of their departure, women, “white widows”, and their children are left behind in an environment of machismo and military repression. Incidents of rape, torture and disappearance at the hands of military personnel, among others, inhibit movement and organization, though not completely.

Community life, as one man described it, is lived in a peace marked by silence and fear. The military, under the guise of the drug war and anti-guerrilla surveillance, harass people about their connection with the drug trade. The people said that even though they were pretending that they knew nothing about it, the military helps run the drug trade and profits immensely.

The intensity of military occupation is relateable to political affinity. Despite the fact that the PRI receives a majority of its votes in the countryside, the largest concentration of support for the opposition parties are in the indigenous communities, thus these communities experience heightened repression. Heightened repression, coupled with the fact that the political process yields little to nothing, according to Global Exchange, has spawned the growth of armed guerrilla groups in the last few years, “in reaction to the lack of commitment on the behalf of the state and federal governments to sustainable development in the region.” The major groups in Guerrero being the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) and ERPI. Many times the military accuses PRD supporters and human rights workers of having ties to the guerrilla groups, even if they have no connection at all. Men talked about being kidnaped and tortured. Women spoke of rapes and beatings and “disappeared” husbands. One man said that the organizations that people are involved in are legal under the constitution, but many have been detained because of organizing efforts. If they talk to the armed groups, they are not necessarily in cahoots with them, but the government uses this as an excuse to persecute them.

Elections in Temalcatzingo and other communities bring not the chance to exercise one’s democratic right (as ineffective as that may seem to many of us disaffected State-siders), but the possibility of receiving basic goods and foodstuffs. Days before the election, politicians from the PRI travel the countryside buying votes with *despensas*. These are baskets or bags full of food, detergent, sandals and other necessities which the PRI dominated government disperses throughout the community in order to insure PRI electoral victory. One of the men we talked to told us that often times the PRI pays community members the equivalent of one week’s salary to vote for the PRI. Further, community members related that election day is openly fraudulent. The PRI posts a member at voting booths to check voters and their ballots. A report on election monitoring published by Global Exchange and The Human Rights Center of the Mountain, detailed low voter turn out, PRI members observing and interfering with balloting, people trying to vote with credentials not belonging to them, people being told how to vote, voting booths being moved, etc. Desperation and isolation allow the PRI the ability to manipulate and depend on these communities for the majority of its votes.

Election time is generally the only time that indigenous people encounter outsiders in their communities. We encountered this reality on our second foray into the mountains, high into the mountains, where indigenous communities have been pushed for centuries. We arrived in Metlatonoc via a windy path many would be hardpressed to call a road to meet with an in-the-process-of-organizing Mixteco womens’ weaving collective. Some of the women had braved a 12-hour walk across the hills to meet with us, no mean feat considering the danger posed by

the military and paramilitaries patrolling the regions. Metlatonoc is considered one of the poorest regions of Guerrero. The only significant new housing that has been built in many years was a military barracks and base. As we were riding into the area, we were in awe of the large, new-looking buildings and instantly knew that they were not built to benefit the community, which is regarded as having the second highest rate of marginalization. Again, outsiders enter Metlatonoc to get something out of the people, like information or votes. The benefits for the people are short-lived. Why would their expectations differ as far as our visit was concerned? Consequently, it seemed that they did not fully understand why we were there. Our purpose was to show our solidarity with their community and hear their stories so that we could bring them back to the United States.

We did not expect the treatment we received when we arrived. The entire community arranged themselves around us and started petitioning us. People initially came to us one at a time, and then they all started talking at once. As the meeting commenced, community members took turns introducing themselves and speaking, describing how their communities have been torn apart economically and environmentally; we heard that land is being taken away, animals stolen and killed, human beings killed, disappeared, and tortured on a daily basis. The women subsist on money received from weaving traditional garments, but without access to major economic centers, they are forced to deal with dishonest middlemen who set low prices for the women’s crafts that the women cannot afford to refuse. But they do resist. During the meeting, an army vehicle approached the outdoor meeting area we were in; armed with AK-47s, the vehicle circled us. Two military personnel left the vehicle and walked slowly around us, guns in hand. The women paid them no heed by continuing to decry the loss of their way of life, un intimidated. They resist by organizing themselves, organizing the meeting, welcoming us, and bearing witness.

And then we left. We all boarded planes and returned, heavy with knowledge and experience and uncertain of what to do with it, to our lives of relative privilege. The information that we read about Guerrero before we left in no way prepared us for what we witnessed. In the “fourth world” of indigenous communities, genocide is not only an aspect of a tortured history, but a current event. In Guerrero, in the impoverished and marginalized, mountaintop communities of Temalcatzingo and Metlatonoc, oppression is driving people to organize and make demands. Through the collaboration with, and formation of, human rights groups and encampments on municipals center sidewalks and city hall steps, the people of Guerrero are demanding basic necessities like drinkable water, accessible water wells, fertilizer, the release of loved ones from INS detention centers, the bodies of the disappeared, meats and beans to supplement tortillas. A lot of us, living in a context of privilege, found it difficult to reconcile our lifestyles in the US. Even first generation Latino/a delegation members met with difficulty and guilt the awareness of the utter degradation lived by the people we met. But, in turn, we were all awed and inspired by their corresponding will, determination, and perseverance and struggle. We came away with an increased understanding of the continuing process of genocide, occurring in the mountains of Guerrero, Mexico, the US and the rest of the world. Genocide rather innocuously describes the world of hurt that is the lived experience of yesterday and today and also the future if it is not brought to the consciousness of white people, who by the ignorance inscribed in dominant belief systems, reproduce it daily in their consumptive patterns. The delegation taught us to reproduce the struggle we encountered in solidarity with oppressed people everywhere. The words of American Indian Movement activist and professor Ward Churchill are appropriate: “Movements don’t work without a sense of history... the history of genocide is not one to bequeath... It must be named, defined, conquered and ended... We all understand this.” ★

For more information contact: Global Exchange at www.globalexchange.org or (415) 558-9486.



newberg oregon

A Brief History of Skate Parks

jered bogli

By most accounts, skateboarding is somewhere in its 40s. There are countless stories about skateboarding. Any skater can go on for hours about backyard ramps and empty pools, getting chased by cops, rednecks, jocks, store owners and every other member of society. At least, that's the story I would tell. I began skating in the late 1980s and the situation was not good. Skateboarding was entirely underground; skaters were among the lowest on the food chain (right there with band geeks). I started skating at one of the low points in the development of the sport. If I had been born 10 years earlier, I would have had numerous parks to skate and many more people to skate with. What happened to the parks in the 1980s? That is a question I started asking myself about a year ago. I live in the state Thrasher magazine calls the "king of skate parks," Oregon. I began asking this question because Oregon is seeing an incredible number of skate parks being built. Free public skate parks ... this was unheard of 10 years ago! My goal is to explain where skate parks came from, why they disappeared, provide insight into the process of building a skate park and see what the "magic eight ball" says about the future of skateboard parks in the United States.

The Boom

The first skate park opened in 1976 in Daytona Florida—Skateboard City. A week later, Carlsbad Skate Park opened in California. These were the first two real skate parks the world had seen. Before these parks, people had been riding parks that occur somewhat naturally, as a byproduct of our progress as a society. Some examples of these natural parks are the legendary asphalt banks of the Kenter Canyon School (as seen in many Glen E. Friedman photos) and the Paul Revere School as well as countless other California schoolyards that served as unofficial skate parks. There were also the banked concrete walls of drainage ditches.

Official parks began appearing when city governments started harassing skateboarders and skate parks became the only sanctioned places to skate. In California, there were many skate parks. Florida had Kona (which survived the 80s and is still around today!). In New Jersey, there was Cherry Hill Skate park. Skate parks were everywhere.

Lynn Cooper, a skater and historian who grew up during the first skate park explosion of the 70s said Whittier/Skate City "had the best cloverpool I ever skated." Colton Skate Ranch had its great snake runs. Best known and one of the last of 70s parks to fall to the bulldozer was Del Mar. Most of the older skate footage of Tony Hawk is of Hawk ruling Del Mar. Lynn has footage in the skate history video he just released titled "Wheeling In The Years" of Mike McGill doing the first 540 McTwist in the US!!! You also had parks like Concrete Wave in Anaheim, Skatopia in Buena Park and, most memorable to Lynn, Sadlands, the public park in Anaheim named by the ever creative Neil Blender. If you've ever seen any old skate videos, you've seen Sadlands. Sadlands consisted of weird pylon things sticking up out of the ground with fairly tight transitions, Lynn described Sadlands as a moonscape.

The Bust

The skate park boom lasted from 1976-1981. Only five years from construction to demolition for most skate parks. What forced the parks out of business? Lynn made some interesting observations on the demise of the parks. He noted that in the 1970s, the skateboard industry was very small and there "wasn't a huge industry backed by millions of dollars." Lynn made a great point about "a cylindrical downturn in attendance at the skate parks." Lynn says, "As more parks were built, people went to the bigger and better parks. Eventually the parks couldn't sustain themselves as much." I found that to be very interesting; the market got saturated and started to feed on itself. High insurance prices and lawsuits are often cited as the main destroyers of the parks, but I think the trends Lynn observed are probably bigger factors. The saturation of the market may have caused the owners, unable to afford the insurance due to decreased attendance, to close their parks. The industry was unable to advocate and promote itself outside its own community which may have also contributed to the downfall of the first generation of parks.

After the parks closed in the early 80s, skateboarding went underground and any city street became the terrain of choice. There were endless places to skate—if it was paved it was fair game. Backyard ramps

The skate park boom lasted from 1976-1981. Only five years from construction to demolition for most skate parks. The market got saturated and started to feed on itself. The saturation of the market may have caused the owners, unable to afford the insurance due to decreased attendance, to close their parks.



began appearing all over but mostly skating was about handrails, stairs, ledges and gaps. Even while underground, skateboarding experienced some growth and recession. Then there was an event that changed everything—Green Day was on the radio and anything punk was instantly cool, anything underground was above ground and skateboarding was back on the upswing.

Resurgence

Today skate parks are being built at an unprecedented rate. The Skate Park Association of the USA estimates that over 300 skate parks are currently under construction and at least that many in the planning stages. Snowboarding's popularity and the notion of extreme sports (whatever that is) has given skateboarding more credibility as well. These factors, combined with a skateboard industry that is advocating for and promoting itself, have served to bring the sport back to prominence. Longtime skateboard shoemaker, Vans has started building skate parks in malls throughout California and the US. The Vans parks are interesting because they serve as an "anchor store", meaning the skate park is one of the main reasons people go to the mall. Parents can take their kids to the skate park, drop them off and go shop for two hours (a session at any of the Vans Parks is two hours long—very convenient). During a recent trip to San Francisco, I skated the Vans park in Milpitas California and was amazed by the way people viewed skateboarding. People skate in a fishbowl, and all around people are watching you skate. Parents and small children, all with their faces pressed up against the fence. You see the look of interest and excitement in kids' faces—kids who just learned how to walk entranced by skating.

Vans has done something very interesting in all their parks. They have incorporated elements from the first wave into their new parks which gives their parks a sense of history and heritage. At Milpitas,

there is a recreation of a bowl from Whittier. The Vans park in Orange has a recreation of the combi-pool from Upland Pipeline. Lynn verified the recreation is similar, but noted a difference — "At Upland you could actually skate the shallow entrance like a mini-halfpipe, if you wanted to."

The Vans parks, while great for the sport, are quite different than most of the parks being built right now. Most of the parks being built are free, public parks. In Oregon, we currently have 71 (by the time this is released the number will be more like 80) public skate parks and that number grows monthly, possibly weekly. Sam Beebe has been running skateoregon.com, a web site dedicated to skate parks in Oregon, since March 2000 and has seen a great number of parks built in that time. Skateoregon.com is a great resource for finding skate parks in Oregon that are already built as well as for finding out which communities are planning parks.

In Oregon, the smaller communities have bigger and better parks. Sam thought it had to do with more direct contact between the kids in the community. In a smaller community, everyone can be involved. You have more volunteers, more parental involvement, more community involvement and it is easier to deal with zoning and planning committees. In addition to these small communities having a great deal of pride, they want a park that they can showcase; they want something great. Geth from Grindline/Dreamland skate parks echoed Sam's sentiment. I talked with Geth briefly at the opening of the Newberg skate park. In addition to the Newberg park, Grindline/Dreamland Skate Parks has built the Lincoln City park, the Newport park and, most famously known, Burnside. They are currently completing another great park in Aumsville Oregon (east of Salem). I asked Geth why they located their parks in small rural towns. He said smaller towns allowed them the freedom to build great skate parks, whereas in a large municipality they would need permits, CAD renderings, budgets, timelines and be subject to all sorts of red tape.



newberg oregon

Today skate parks are being built at an unprecedented rate. The Skate Park Association of the USA estimates that over 300 skate parks are currently under construction and at least that many in the planning stages.

Geth said working with smaller towns was easier; if they had a question they could deal directly with the person who needed to answer the question. He also noted the smaller towns allowed them the freedom to develop their parks organically. Roll around the Newberg park and you'll understand. The park was built by skaters for skaters—every inch of concrete serves a purpose! I asked Sam if anything specific facilitated the building of so many skate parks and he answered in one word: "Burnside."

Burnside started as an unofficial park, unnoticed by the city until it was fairly well established (it helped that the mayor at the time was sympathetic to skaters because his son was a skater), at which time the city grudgingly accepted it. Burnside is celebrating its ten year birthday this halloween – a party not to be missed! To this day, any skater in the world knows of the legendary Burnside. Most importantly, Burnside showed that individuals could do something. The park in Kaizer, Oregon was built by a couple who didn't skate, and whose kids didn't skate. They just wanted to build a skate park; they just wanted to do something. There was a short lived D.I.Y. park under an overpass in San Diego which showed the city that skaters were serious about needing a skate park. Examples like these happen everywhere – a few kids take over a tennis court, bring in a few ramps and a rail and suddenly there are people using it every day. There are some great statistics pertaining to skatepark usage at www.skatepark.org. It is interesting because a skatepark that is built over an area the size of four tennis courts can hold and allow usage by many more people than tennis courts due to the nature of the sport.

The last factor in this new skate park boom is the Internet. The Internet has allowed skate park-related information to travel to places it would never have gone ten years ago. Online you can find contractors, ramp plans, outlines on how to address the city council ... the list goes on. A skateboard manufacturer, The Firm has published a thorough guide on how to get a skate park in your community, and local resources like Skateoregon.com and sleestak.net cover the Northwest in incredible depth.

Nationally, the Skate Park Association of the USA (SPAUSA-www.spausa.org) has a great web site which has all the resources you could ever need to get a park in your community. A few minutes online offers plenty of guidance in getting a skate park built in your community.

Lastly, some advice from Sam on how to get a park built: "Do lots of research and stay involved ... it is up to the kids to make sure the designer knows and the builder knows what (the kids) want." Most public parks take four or more years from the first meetings to the opening ceremonies, so staying involved is the key to getting the park built.

What will happen in another four or five years? Will skate parks die again, or are they here to stay? I'm not sure, and when I'm asked if skate parks are here to stay I consult my trusty "magic eight ball" which says "Probably yes." A great deal has changed since the first wave of parks. Insurance has changed, community awareness has changed and the industry itself has changed and has started to advocate for itself. Hopefully, the parks are here to stay. While growing up in suburban Connecticut, I never dreamed a place like Newberg would exist. Now parks like Newberg are becoming a normal part of a community. I guess there is an upside to going mainstream, to becoming legitimate – as long as skateboarding isn't in the Olympics, everything will be just fine! ★

Resources:

www.skateoregon.com / Sam Beebe interview from 9.28.00
www.sleestak.net
www.spausa.org
www.skatepark.org
www.grindline.com
 Lynn Cooper e-mail interview 10.2.00
 Concrete Wave, The History of Skateboarding
 by Michael Brooke; Warwick Publishing: 1999

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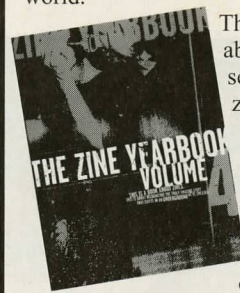
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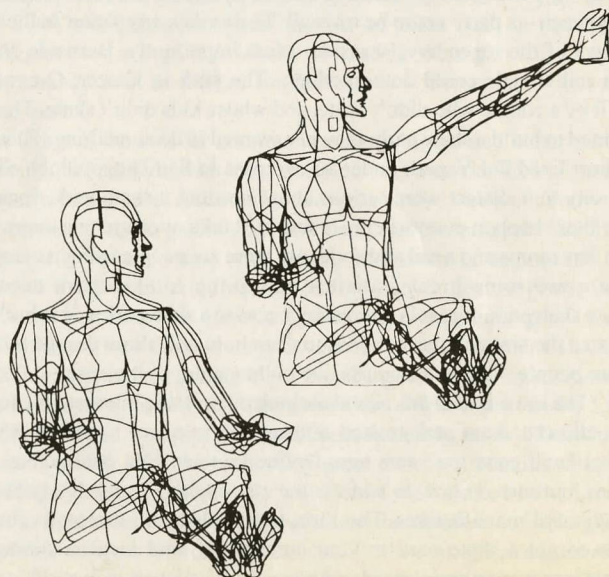
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Anarchists in Medicine and Pharmacy: Philadelphia, 1889-1930

by Robert Helms

Within the anarchist scene of Philadelphia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was a large group of professionals who practiced medicine or pharmacy as a livelihood while committing great energies to the movement. Looking just past the surface, we find a closely knit community of intellectuals who treated their comrades as patients, educated the public on health related matters, and who contributed substantially to the cause with money or the use of their facilities.

A look through the anarchist literature of the period will reveal the names of a remarkable number of doctors, who pioneered many of the debates on social changes that are, by and large, taken for granted today. Among them, the best known is undoubtedly Ben Reitman, because he catered to the mainstream press' image of an an-

archist by hanging out in saloons and hobo jungles, once carrying on a comic chase scene with detectives through department stores, and generally keeping himself in the realm of romantic legend. While Reitman did his share of fighting for positive social change during his career, he was the very least distinguished of the anarchist physicians of his time. (1) Certainly some of his leading contemporaries made this assessment. (2) He was actually more a political performance artist than a doctor.

Reitman's relative prominence is partly due to his connection to the very famous Emma Goldman, but even more due to the fact that almost nothing has been written in English about the doctors whose work, both in anarchism and in medicine, simply eclipsed the career of the "hobo king." Such is not the case in Yiddish, but not

[people]

so many people can read that language these days, or even locate the books by and about Jewish anarchist doctors. The major figures already known had careers in New York. They include Hillel Solotaroff, Jacob Abraham Maryson, and Michael A. Cohn, all of whom were extremely active in the movement in addition to being respected, practicing physicians. (3) While New York's anarchist doctors and their contribution to the movement is known and thoroughly documented, their colleagues in Philadelphia have been almost completely forgotten. (4)

A central event in the tale of these particular comrades was the shooting of Voltairine de Cleyre by an insane former student named Herman Helcher. Voltairine was already fairly well-known in the international movement for her many essays and poems that had been published in anarchist and atheist periodicals. Locally, she was one of the two best-known anarchist speakers, along with a self-educated English-born shoemaker named George Brown. She earned a very modest living by giving private lessons in English, French, and Piano. This poor, but respected woman was wounded by three revolver shots on December 19, 1902 at the corner of 4th & Green Streets, as she waited for a trolley car.

The early reports had it that Voltairine was doomed. She had been taken to Hahnemann Hospital, where the inside of the anarchist medical world begins to reveal itself. Daniel A.

Dr. Hillel Solotaroff in 1892



Modell, M.D., a general practitioner who was an anarchist as well as de Cleyre's "family doctor," lived in her neighborhood, which is where she was shot. (5) Modell's presence at the bedside is no surprise, but mentioned along with him was none other than Dr. William Williams Keen, who was at that time one of the leading Surgeons in the world.

Already revered for having removed a cancerous tumor from the Jaw of President Grover Cleveland nine years earlier, Keen in 1902 was co-chair of Surgery at Jefferson Medical College. He had already served as the President of the American Medical Association, and he would later preside for ten years at the American Philosophical Society, the most distinguished scientific think-tank in the country. He had been teaching surgery at Jefferson since 1889.

Keen was consulted for a possible operation, but he had no affiliation at all with Hahnemann Hospital. He recommended moving the patient to his own offices, but this was never done. Her condition started to improve, and finally the bullets remained inside her for the rest of her life. But, aside from the case of the bleeding lady anarchist, we need to ask ourselves just how the best medical talent on earth came to have anything to do with it. Voltairine was a poor person, who would do well to get help from even a mediocre physician at a time like that. Who had brought in the big gun, and how?

The precise answer is out of our reach, but we can narrow it down to two of Keen's former students, Leo Gartman and Bernhard Segal, who were both quite active in the local anarchist movement at the time. Dr. Gartman may have still been on the house staff at Jefferson Hospital, where he practiced urology before going into private practice nearby at 525 Pine Street.

Leo Noy Gartman (c.1865-1930) was born to a somewhat wealthy German-Jewish family in Ekaterinoslav in the Ukraine. Before arriving in the US in 1882, he was educated in Germany, which made him a higher-qualified

candidate for medical school than the average. Prior education was preferred at the time, but not required in most institutions. Before entering Jefferson, he had won a scholarship in mathematics at the University of Pennsylvania, but never used it. During the 1890's,



Dr. Max Staller

Leo was a stage actor in Russian-language productions of plays by Chekov and Gogol. (6) Dr. Gartman, according to his family folklore, had a "large female practice, including many fast women." (7) He was a disciple of Havelock Ellis, the great birth control advocate and sex psychologist, as well as the evolutionary theorist Ernst Haeckel, after whom he named a son. (8) He specialized in the treatment of venereal diseases. Leo lectured at meetings held by the Social Science Club from mid-1901.

Voltairine earned the lasting respect of both her anarchist friends and the general public by her flat refusal to testify against her assailant, who was a familiar face in the anarchist scene. Her friends took this a step further by organizing for his defense and for him to receive mental health care. Herman had been effected by typhoid fever around 1896. His sister told reporters that it had "left him a different boy," and that it had made him "morose and melancholy."

Another local physician, and probably an anarchist, evaluated Herman and seconded his family's recommendations. Dr. Simon M. Dubin (1866-1919) owned a house at 327 Pine Street, where he lived with his family and a few tenants. One of the earlier renters had been Herman Helcher for some years, and also Natasha Notkin, a prominent anarchist and close friend of Voltairine's, lived there in 1900. This may have been where Emma Goldman stayed during some of her speaking visits as well, since she was accustomed to overnight with Notkin. A few years after these events, Dubin was active in raising funds for the Russian revolutionary cause. (9)

Anarchists all over the country leapt into action on behalf of their wounded friend, including Emma Goldman, who called for material aid, and Dr. Hillel Solotaroff, who approached another physician on her behalf. That other doctor was Samuel Gordon which brings us back again to Pine Street.

Samuel H. Gordon (1871-1906) was not only a former anarchist, but also a former lover of Voltairine's. (10) Their stormy, intense relationship lasted a few years, but had been over for quite a while. Gordon was not popular

among the other anarchists, and he was regarded as shallower and less intelligent than his companion. The lovers' chief source of quarrel was her refusal to fall in line with Gordon's wish for her to be domestic and wife-like. While de Cleyre and Gordon were intimately involved, he enrolled in Medico-Chirurgical College in Philadelphia, and she began giving him money from her meager earnings to help him through school. By the time of his graduation in 1898, Gordon had become disinterested both in Voltairine and the anarchist movement. In her letters from the few years following, she describes him as conceited, inconsiderate, and getting rich and fat on his new profession. He set up his practice at 531 Pine, just four doors up from Leo Gartman.

Thus, the anarchists who were scrambling to save their wounded comrade just before Christmas in 1902 had every right and reason to approach Gordon for help, so Dr. Solotaroff came down from New York and asked him in person. To his surprise, Gordon refused to give help of any kind, and wanted nothing to do with the whole affair. Emma Goldman and other anarchists despised him bitterly for this.

Dr. Gordon died of "acute gastritis" less than four years later, after relocating to Newark, New Jersey. Further research is needed to answer the remaining questions, but one cannot help but wonder whether the anarchist doctors made a medical practice unfeasible for "that dog Gordon," as Goldman would later remember him, by shunning him in their professional circles. (11) He had alienated some of the most prominent physicians in the city, and several of them lived and practiced close by him in the Jewish quarter.

Voltairine took years to become active again, and suffered severe pain from her wounds until her death. Dr. Gartman took over her medical care in early 1906, and turned her around



Voltairine de Cleyre in 1901, courtesy Arden Archive

to riot in 1908: a very substantial sum, in the middle of an economic depression. (12)

Another anarchist who knew Gordon and who figures prominently in the medical scene of his time was Max Staller (1868-1919) who, along with his longtime comrade Leo Gartman, established the Mt Sinai Dispensary at 236 Pine Street in 1900. This clinic filled the need for free or cheap health care for the thousands of poor Jewish factory workers living nearby. Gartman served as its first treasurer, Staller as its first president. In later years, as the dispensary evolved into a hospital, Staller stayed on to administer. He also played a leading role in organizing the Jewish Consumptive Institute and the local Branch of the County Medical Society, both in 1910. After returning from Chicago with his medical degree in 1895, Staller and his wife were active in staging amateur Yiddish plays with a group they called the Star Specialty Club. Earlier still, Staller was a leader of the Knights of Liberty, the Jewish anarchist & atheist group which had counterparts in other U.S. cities from 1889-1893. Staller served as the manager of a successful strike by the ladies' cloak makers in 1890, and was arrested on one occasion while trying to avoid the police by fleeing through a window to the fire escape. He was charged with making an incendiary speech and inciting the audience to riot, but he denied having done this and was acquitted. (13)

Gartman and Staller, in spite of their promi-

nence, large families, and material success, remained conspicuously modest when they died. Both men lie buried at the Montefiore Cemetery in suburban Jenkintown, and neither have a marker on their grave. One can safely guess that there were explicit wishes to that end in both cases, since otherwise the relatives would have had not the least trouble in buying simple tombstones, or even large, beautiful monuments.

Aside from the doctors, there were several pharmacists on the anarchist scene in Philadelphia, who had an impact on the movement that derived, in large part, from their profession.

Jacob L. Joffe was involved in the anarchist movement at least as early as 1901, when Voltairine de Cleyre mentions in a letter to her mother that her friend, Esther Berman, was learning the pharmacy craft in the shop owned by another friend. Berman seems to be the same person as Esther Wolfe, who in 1905 became a partner in the Joffe & Wolfe drug store at 701 South 3rd Street.

Another young woman to learn the profession through an apprenticeship with Joffe was Natasha Notkin, a Russian-Jewish nihilist who came to the US

in 1885, at age fifteen. Although no known photograph of Notkin survives, there are many reports of her, all through the years from around 1890 until 1917. As a member of the Knights of Liberty, she took part in organizing the Yom Kippur Balls, a short-lived effort to draw working-class Jews away from religion by arranging social events during the high holidays. When two of her comrades stood trial for incitement to riot in 1891 after a meeting was raided on the night before one of the balls, Natasha was called as a witness for the defense. Some four decades later, her court appearance was recalled by a comrade. She was drop-dead beautiful, and wearing her hair bobbed, as was the habit of dissident Russian women of the time. (14) Both before and after opening a drug store with Joffe in 1907, she was the Philadelphia distributor of the anarchist papers *Free Society* and *Mother Earth*.

A few years later, she founded the Ladies' Liberal League (LLL) along with Perle McLeod, a Scottish anarchist who may have received training as a nurse in later years, Mary Hansen, who originally came from Denmark, and Voltairine de Cleyre.

The LLL was a secular venue for public lectures on a wide range of social topics, and medical doctors, both male and female, figured prominently on the speakers' list. The venue seems to have been a means by which radical physicians aired their views to the public. The



Dr. Leo Gartmann (from obituary)

non-anarchist guest speakers from nearby institutions included Dr. Henrietta Payne- (continued from p. 69)

Westbrook, a local practitioner and author who advocated marriage; Dr. Frances Emily White, the poet and medical education reformer from Women's medical College, and Dr Michael Valentine Ball from the State penitentiary who spoke against current beliefs on criminology, and with whom Leo Gartman co-authored a short medical article in 1897.

Finally, George S. Seldes Sr. ran a pharmacy at 946 So. 5th Street from 1899 to 1906. A Russian immigrant and an intellectual of high repute, he corresponded with Leo Tolstoy and Peter Kropotkin on the subject of pacifism. Poor George came home one frosty day to discover that all their letters had been used by the cleaning lady to get the fire started in his wood stove.

The anarchist professionals of old Philadelphia demonstrated that the movement had attracted the brightest and most accomplished people in the city. Their participation brought the scene to a high pitch and beauty that was remembered with longing for many decades thereafter. ★

Endnotes

1) Reitman graduated from the College of Physicians & Surgeons at Chicago on May 17, 1904, barely passing his exams. He did much to educate transients and the public about venereal disease and other social causes. See Roger A. Bruns, *The Damndest Radical*, (Chicago, 1987).

2) For example, Voltairine de Cleyre detested Reitman's tendency to drink (sometimes with money derived from the movement). Both she and Emma Goldman were displeased by his much-publicized race through downtown Philadelphia in the fall of 1909. Alexander Berkman found him "politically and socially confused."

3) Maryson (1866-1941) was a frequent contributor (sometimes as "F. A. Frank") and editor in the Yiddish anarchist press, and he translated many anarchist texts into that language. He authored books including *The Theory and Practice of Anarchism* (1927). Solotaroff (1865-1921) and Cohn (1869-1939) were just as active and prolific.

4) All of the existing discussions of these Philadelphia doctors and pharmacists, considered as such, would take up no more than a page of text. Many, however, are mentioned in Paul Avrich, *An American Anarchist: The Life of Voltairine de Cleyre* (Princeton, 1978). It was, in fact, by reading that book that I became interested in the present topic.

5) There is a name confusion between David A. Modell and his relative, Dr. Daniel A. Modell, who died in 1932. They lived at the same address for many years of this period; Daniel became an M.D. in 1893, whereas David appears in the city directory as a student in 1900 and as a teacher in 1903. David was certainly a very active anarchist, writing and translating movement material. Daniel's anarchism is less clear: he was treasurer of the Socialist Literary Society in 1914 (which had anarchist members), but further research is needed on this obscure physician. See Avrich, *An American Anarchist*, etc. p. 130, where the two are (incorrectly) merged into David.

6) See David B. Tierkel, *The Juvenile Stage: a history of the hebrew-Yiddish dramatic Societies, 1890-1940*, p. 31. I am indebted to Mr. Harry Boonin for leads on Gartman the actor.

7) Phone interview with Nancy Silberstein (granddaughter of Leo Gartman), June 25, 2000.

8) Interview with Naomi Gartman Bregstein by her nieces Nancy Silberstein and Judy Nicholas, Nov. 4, 1991; obituaries in *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, and *Jewish World*, 3/31/1930.

9) *Free Society*, March 8, 1903; Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 196; Federal Census Records, 1900; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 16, 1919.

10) He is not to be confused with another Dr. Samuel Gordon who earned his degree in Philadelphia in 1906. Gordon and de Cleyre once attempted suicide together 11) *Living My Life*, p. 332

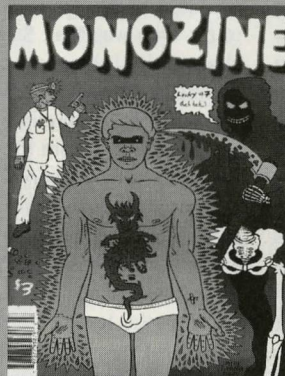
12) *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* Feb. 22, 1908

13) *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, August 8, 1890. Mrs. Staller also sang at the 5th annual Russian Tea Party, an anarchist fund-raiser ball, on March 1, 1901. See also Boonin, *The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia: a history and guide, 1881-1930*. Philadelphia, 1999

14) See Chaim Lieb Weinberg, *Forty Years in the Struggle for Social Liberation* (Philadelphia, 1952), p. 44.



essential people



Monozine #7

Monozine is never boring. You would think that seven issues all on the same theme would get boring after awhile, but it never does. Why? Because Todd prints lots of stories about vomit and poop.

Being the sophisticated reader that I am, I was wary the first time that I read *Monozine*, the zine all about being sick. I clearly remember assuring myself that I would not think that bathroom humor was funny, but there I was, actually laughing out loud to stories about people shitting themselves and projectile vomiting.

The beauty of *Monozine* is that each story is told in a first-person, narrative style and is completely unedited. Despite some very bad

grammar and spelling, this makes each story personal and engaging. Imagine a bunch of people sitting around trying to gross each other out with their worst stories of being sick. But it's not only illness, it's tape worms, dead bodies in the garage, and cockroaches in your ear canal.

Even though most of *Monozine* is humor, here and there you will find an intense story about a life-threatening illness or trauma. This new issue features a story about a rape that resulted in years of psychosomatic illness. This personal narrative reveals a story that could never be told through a mediator.

This thick zine has much insight into our lives and reveals our fascination with other people's pain and misfortune. Todd Lesser offers humor, insight, and entertainment-and of course, lots of stories that will leave you squirming in your chair. -jen angel

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Why I do not care for drugs or religion...

by Pete Lewis

This is a story about how I threw a friend out of my warm house onto the cold streets. A story about how I turned down the chance to say that at least I helped that friend out one night. At least I gave a homeless non-stranger a bed for the night. At least I saved him from a beating. At least I saved him from another night in jail. At least I was practicing what I preach just once. But I turned him away. I wrestled with what there was of my conscience and I still could not let him stay.

First, Me.

I still remember how I became an atheist at about 10 or 11. A bald Welsh headmaster used to read Bible stories before classes three times a week. In particular, I can remember him spitting out some story about the good Samaritan and that it was more interesting to me to watch his spit spray the younger kids in the front row. I also remember thinking this bloke does not sound very Welsh. You see, he thought he and I had something in common. We were two Welsh Christians living in the predominately Islamic Bahrain. He used to quote Welsh poetry and verse to me. I didn't care for being Welsh. It meant nothing to me. Dylan Thomas – didn't know him, didn't want to.

This headmaster used to say "Oh Captain, my captain ..." when we crossed paths in the hall. He used to tell me the rugby results after Wales was crushed yet again by some far more glorious nation. He often related his Bible stories to Wales and with those refer-

ences he would often add, "Ask Pete. He will understand." Wrong. Wales meant nothing to me and God meant less than nothing.

By the age of 13, I began to feel guilty about not being a good Christian. Even so, in front of my friends I would declare that Jesus was a wanker. Then I would go home and say a little prayer and follow it with what I could remember of the Lord's Prayer before I went to sleep after a day of blasphemous showing off. I might also pray after I got my self all worked up about what happens after death, shitting myself about the concept of eternity and shitting myself even more with the idea that I might cease to exist one day. Even this little voice in my head will cease to exist. Shitting myself about the absolute nothingness. That's when I might pray and promise to be a good Samaritan. The next day I would go back to being an atheist. A daylight atheist. But it was a start.

This headmaster didn't know that I was Catholic. He didn't know I was the only Catholic in a school full of Protestants back in Wales. He didn't know how gutted I was that I could not be in the same choir as my school friends. He didn't know that all I wanted to be was an atheist with no nationality. That I tried and tired to forget all that Bible nonsense. Forget tying myself to one country.

By the time I met Owen, several years later, I was over it. I knew who I was and I was comfortable. I slept soundly all night and walked the streets with a confidence I had never imagined possible. I considered myself a whole and decent human being. I believed I was capable of true compassion. I stopped eating animals. I stopped supporting companies who I felt exploited animals, the environment or workers. I became an ethical consumer. I did volunteer work. Conservation work to protect my local beauty spot. Teaching illiterate teens and adults. I marched against fascism. I campaigned for the environment and human rights. I was so bloody PC that I developed a reputation: *We can't go to McDonalds, Pete is with us. Don't get your petrol from Shell ... some shit about their neglect of the Ogoni people in Nigeria, where they get their oil. Sorry Pete,*

Consequences: Beyond Resisting Rape By Loolwa Khazzoom

"Hey girls! Tired of harassment? Wish you didn't take that shit? Ever feel like punching out one of those guys?" reads the advertisement for Loolwa Khazzoom's new book, *Consequence: Beyond Resisting Rape*. It's a challenge and an invitation to re-examine our attitudes about sexual assault, and to find creative solutions in battling harassment.

More than likely, you have already read something written by Loolwa in the pages of *clamor*. If you are like me, you were inspired and challenged by her don't-take-shit stance to harassment and sexual assault. *Consequence*, then is no letdown. The pages are filled with stories recounting day-to-day encounters with sexual assault, and more importantly, her calculations on how to deal with this harassment.

A major theme in *Consequence* is freedom, how we define freedom and how it is defined for us, and also what it means when we reclaim our lives as free individuals. Loolwa speaks to the daily experience of being a woman in a patriarchal society that is horrifyingly accepting of violence against women. She describes numerous situations in which she attempts to simply take up space, to do whatever the hell she wants to do, but constantly comes up against men infringing on her will, whether verbally or physically.

Beyond Resisting Rape, though, suggests something more than self-defense. Loolwa asks what our tactics are for dealing with (or not dealing with) harassment. Avoidance, silence, and politeness are all too common strategies that women choose when confronted by the odd stare, grope, or nasty comment. What she suggests, and actively demonstrates in her experience, is a strong reclamation of our space, our sense of peace, our bodies.

Loolwa fights back, not just with words but with fists. She encourages women to find whatever tactics they are comfortable with, whether that is hitting, running, yelling, laughing, singing, talking, or dancing. By "living in the threshold of pos-

sibility," we have at our disposal a variety of methods with which to address harassment.

The act of re-examining what our options are for dealing with those who assault us is an acknowledgement that the daily shit that happens to us, as women, is unacceptable. Being leered at, being afraid to walk alone at night, being talked over and talked down to, having to explain to strange men why being whistled at is not a compliment, being physically violated, etc., is simply the daily experience of a woman.

And Loolwa says it's high time we start taking matters into our own hands. Instead of "legal self-defense" which calls for a certain amount of violence to already have been achieved, why shouldn't we rely on our own judgement and intuition? We need to set our own limitations on what is acceptable, when it's time to fight back and what tactics we will use to defend ourselves.

"Let's do something that has impact, consequence; something that will deter assault, something that will turn the assaultive energy around- in the heat of the moment- and give us power instead of taking it from us... Assault against women happens every day, every hour, every minute, every second, multiple times a day in every woman's life, in many different forms. None of this assault should be happening, period. And I think it is time to stop it, whatever it takes."

Loolwa kicks a lot of ass, both on paper and for real. It gives me courage to know not only that there are women out there actively and creatively fighting back against assault, but also that I have the option of doing the same.

-Sarah Stippich

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I'm not vegan anymore.

I gave money to people who asked for it on the streets. I bought homeless people food. And I felt I was modest about the whole thing. I was thinking, I'm decent. I'm doing what I can. In the words of Ian MacKaye, at least *I'm fucking trying!*

More importantly, none of it had anything to do with trying to live up to some Christian ideal. It was the caring face of punk rock. It was community action. It was being active, of course. None of it was about fear of burning in hell. Honest to Christ it wasn't.

Now, Owen.

I knew Owen through skateboarding. We had absolutely nothing in common apart from our joy of freedom around on our little planks of wood. I used to offer him rides to go skate at certain places and he used to motivate me to skate all the time. That was it. Not really a friendship as such. Outside of skateboarding, we kept our distance and mingled in different crowds. This was how it was for a couple of years.

I enjoyed his company but I never really felt the urge to force our relationship past that of occasional skateboarding partners, mainly because he liked to talk without listening. He had a tendency to brag about his achievements and plans in life. As far as he was concerned, he was going to become a professional skateboarder and then start up his own company. He talked about leaving Wales for San Francisco to be a skate superstar. He was also studying media at college and had grand aspirations in that field as well. Essentially, he was an expert in anything he became involved with in the slightest way and he was not afraid to advertise it. It became impossible for anyone to challenge him. He was who he said he was and you couldn't tell him different.

Thus, people always kept their distance. They would tolerate him but never offer him friendship. To make the situation worse, he assumed everyone was his best friend and he could count on them for anything and vice versa. None of this is out of the ordinary; everyone has encountered such people while growing up. Some grow up and learn the virtue of humility but others carry on living under the illusion of greatness. I think Owen was just after acceptance. He was tired of being rejected by his peers and his abusive and unstable family.

However, at this point he didn't have to worry about having a roof over his head or where his next meal was coming from. At 18, his parents gave him a car. Unlike the United States, the vast majority of young people do not own cars in Wales, so Owen's car offered him some new found popularity. Of course he revelled in it. He would drive people everywhere and anywhere because it meant they needed him for something.

At the same time, Owen discovered drinking and drugs. Again, this is nothing out of the ordinary. He started off with the occasional binge of booze and pot. His use became more frequent and he started dealing pot to fund his own use. At first he only dealt to friends but he soon realised that, just like a car, drugs provide people with more and more friends. Owen soon began using drugs on a daily basis. For a couple of months that autumn, he started each day with a potent magic mushroom brew and spent the rest of the day drinking vodka which led to a drastic personality change.

Owen soon sold all his belongings and gave most of his money away because materialism and consumerism were evil. He walked around town blessing people and exorcising their demons. The town centre was his garden and he made sure it was kept clean and pure. Other days he would stop buses to demonstrate how much power he had. He would simply walk into the road and raise his hands. Then he might shout at a couple of girls and call them a couple of pigs and then go on to lecture about being peaceful and tolerant. I used to see him walking around the city centre in the middle of winter wearing nothing but a skirt (? Unclear sentence and context). Barefoot and bare chest, arms reaching for the heavens, ghetto-blasters in one hand, skateboard in the other, screaming at any one who took a second look him. He continued eating magic mushrooms every day.

At one point, his parents went on holiday and he proceeded to empty their house of all negative energy. The television, the VCR, and the video camera among other items ended up in the back garden. He began to pick up litter and clean the streets. When his mother questioned this, he tried to explain how everything he was doing was battling the three demons. The blessing, the purifying, the cleaning, destroying material goods, denouncing material possessions. So his mother kicked him out.



Lovesick
Self-Titled LP

Lovesick is three people from Michigan, making music that they love, rooted in the community they love. After a few other releases, this is their first full-length LP, on Chicago label All Please Sound.

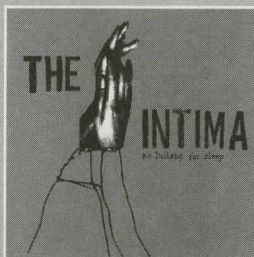
I can't really describe the music because I'm not so good at that. I can't compare them to other bands because there's no handy point of reference. I can tell you that there is guitar, bass, drums and singing on this record, it's mostly loud and fast,

yet always melodic. The music and singing is obviously heartfelt. It's emotional but I wouldn't call it emo. It's based in punk/hardcore but I don't know if I'd call it punk rock. Musically, they don't sound like your average band, and there's a level of honesty to them that I find lacking in most bands. The music is unique, invigorating, and challenging, and it all comes together around thoughtful lyrics and singing that is more involved than the usual blah blah mouthpiece blatherings. This record is a document of a band that has been making music together long enough to really gel, and it's certainly the best recording of them to date.

What I can say is that I know how much this band's music and words mean to me and a lot of other people. I know that they completely believe in what they are doing, and are a shining example of how to make music in the DIY scene, as well as how to use a band as a tool for opening communication between people; how to create and cultivate community through performances and recordings. And they're simply just good at what they do, they fucking rock. This is music that I don't only enjoy listening to, that not only makes me shake my ass. It completely inspires me as well.

- John Gerken

\$8ppd in the US from:
All Please Sound
PO Box 47772
Chicago, IL 60647



The Intima
No Lullaby For Sleep CDEP

There are so many good things to say about this band that it made writing this review a bit daunting. In addition to being amazing individuals, they make some beautiful music together. How do you summarize a general vibe that you get when you meet four different people who each, in their own way, holds the potential to inspire and excite? You don't, really. So we'll

stick with the release for the time being. Themba, Andrew and Alex play the traditional rock strings and drums while Nora fills out the sound with her violin. Their sound can go from minimalist, repetitive rhythms and riffs to more frenzied moments that make you wonder what holds it all together.

The power and beauty of the music might cause you to overlook it on the first listen, but the lyrics are all political and deserve recognition as being politically charged without bludgeoning the listener with rhetoric. One song starts off with Andrew singing an inspiring quote from Emma Goldma, "To the daring, belongs the future" repeatedly, and it's only days later that you realize you've had it stuck in your head and inspiring your actions. Thousands of progressive thinkers spend their entire lives trying to figure out how to make politics accessible. It's easy: make sure there is a great soundtrack. Make people dance, bob their heads or tap their toes and their hearts and minds are yours. The Intima do just that, and then some.

- jason kucsma

\$6 ppd in the US from:
Zum Records
PO Box 4449
Berkeley, CA 94704
www.zumonline.com

He told me, as he laughed hysterically, "I offered my mother love and she repays me with this." Looking back, I am in no position to question his parents, but they could not have cut Owen off at a worse time. He was 19.

One day, Owen left a trail of destruction through the town centre. I don't know all the details, but it had something to do with buying an apple. Even though he drank a bottle of vodka before 11 a.m. that day, he still believed in the positive energy and goodness of fruit. He had no money on him and tried to convince the shopkeeper that he would be back with the money later. The shopkeeper obviously refused. Owen then said he would pay one hundred pounds for the apple if only he could pay for it later. As he later asked me, "Who would refuse one hundred quid for an apple?"

After multiple refusals, Owen left the shop and leave a trail of mayhem behind him. He scared and insulted people and someone called the police. They found him bathing his wounds in a water fountain at the centre of the city. Clothed in only his underwear, he was trying to wash away the impurities with the icy water on a cold February day.

While all this was going on, he was looking for places to sleep every night. At first this wasn't too difficult. He stayed with one friend for a couple of nights and then moved to another. He began to stay with students who rarely objected when he came along with booze and drugs. But when they were at college or his friends were at work, he rearranged their houses to emit better energy and emptied their refrigerators of bad food.

The nights on the street became more frequent. The drugs became harder. The beatings became more severe. The police became less understanding and so did everyone else. His relatives and friends told him where to get off. They tried to show him the ills of his ways, that he had no power and there were no demons to fight. No one wanted to hear about the spiderwebs and demons. No one wanted to hear why he was convinced he was the sun child. No one would listen when he told them he was blessed. And he knew they were all wrong. He was the only one who knew the truth.

Who the hell were they to tell him he was wrong? He was blessed. But what you get for being blessed is life on the streets. Being cut off from your past life. People walking a wide path around you. Loneliness and isolation. The longer Owen spent on the streets, the deeper he went into his own impenetrable world. Soon he convinced himself he was Jesus.

Owen and I.

During this time, Owen occasionally came to my house. I lived alone in my parents' place while they lived overseas. It was dry, warm and homey. I was far from wealthy but at least I had a solid roof over my head. Owen would come over and I would offer him a peanut butter sandwich. I remember being pissed off that he scooped about a quarter of the jar of peanut butter into each sandwich. He always asked for a pair of socks. And that was the routine. He came over and we chatted about his arrest or beating. The last fight he had with his parents. The last time he was the sun child. Then he would have a sandwich, put on my socks and leave.

One day, Owen came over and seemed unusually calm and collected. We conversed in a respectable manner about irrelevant goings on. I think he was trying to prove his sanity to me. The act didn't last long. Owen made himself comfortable on the settee, stretched out and began to snooze.

"Look mate, you can't sleep here," I said, as friendly as I could sound.

No reply.

"Owen, man. I'm on delicate ground here. It's not my house and I nearly got kicked out myself last month." This was true, but that is definitely a story for another time.

"Please ... just for one night. I'll sleep down here and I'll be out first thing in the morning."

"No I'm sorry ... I ..."

Silence. While I try to recap how things went. Let me just restate that I lived in that house alone. Plenty of room for a guest for one night. It was warm and comfortable and no one would ever know that he stayed over one measly night. But I had heard the stories and feared for the television, the video, the ornaments. I feared he would clear out all my food. All my peanut butter.

"... I just can't let you stay."

He was visibly disappointed. "Well can I use your phone then, so I can find a place to crash tonight?"

"Of course. Go ahead."

So Owen phones a few friends, but none of these people are in the mood to have their houses re-arranged, blessed or exorcised. Owen keeps phoning every number he can remember. Eventually, he resorted to calling

ing his family. An uncle pretends to be glad to hear from him but after a lengthy conversation is unprepared to come and pick his nephew up and offer him a place to stay.

As more people reject Owen, he has more difficulty pretending that he is a calm and

collected person. We can all play the fool. It's easy to pretend we are being chased by demons or pretend that you are the sun child, but what if you're convinced you're the sun child and you're pretending to be what everyone else sees as normal? That must be difficult and I could see that Owen was retreating back into his own world. He eventually called his parents, who at this stage had moved hundreds of miles away. The phone call did not go as he planned and it ended with him in tears.

Enter Jesus Christ.

Owen started to tell me that he was Jesus Christ. The saviour of mankind. He was going to save everybody. I tried to reason with him. I tried to tell him that if he wanted help from people he could not go around proclaiming he was Jesus. "But why? Who the fuck are they to say I'm not Jesus? I am and that is that. It's a fact. You can deny it, Pete, but you would be wrong. You can't tell me that I'm not Jesus."

He had a point. How could I say he was not Jesus? Here was a young man who was at his wits' end. He had been through some shit. Maybe he brought it upon himself but that wasn't for me to judge. At that moment, I had a desperate person without a friend in the world in front of me. No place to sleep. No food to eat. He is Jesus Christ. We are alone in my house. Me and him. No one around to hear our conversation. No one for me to discuss Owen's phone calls with. No outside opinion to discuss how to handle the situation. Just Owen and myself. Just me and Jesus. The saviour himself. And he is ready to save mankind, if only someone would help him first. If someone could just take that first step.

Owen started to take his clothes off and pray. Nearly naked, he knelt in front of the hallway mirror and prayed, rocking back and forth in desperation. Tears and muffled crying underneath his secret prayers. I couldn't stop him. Who was I to stop him?

I called the number he called last; his father.

"I have your son here. He's desperate. He has nowhere to go. What do I do? Of course it's your fucking business, he's your son. I know he's done drugs ... Yeah I know he wrecked your house but what about now? ... Now, right now! He says he's Jesus, he's naked, alone and in my house. He can't stay ... What do you mean it's my problem?" He's your

I tried to reason with him. I tried to tell him that if he wanted help from people he could not go around proclaiming he was Jesus. "But why? Who the fuck are they to say I'm not Jesus? I am and that is that. It's a fact. You can deny it, Pete, but you would be wrong. You can't tell me that I'm not Jesus."

(continued from p. 73)

fucking son, mate!"

His father had had enough. He said there was no more he could do until Owen started to help himself. Owen overheard my phone call and bolted out the front door.

I shouted after him. "If you can't find anywhere else, come back."

"Yeah, whatever, I'll be all right," he replied.

Pathetic. I'll help you if nobody else does. If there's no one else, come back and count on me. So I booted Jesus out on his ear into the cold dark night. He was arrested and spent a couple of days in a cell. He later told me it was the best thing that could have happened. At least it was a bed and food for a day or two.

After he left, I called a help line named the Samaritans for advice. What could I do for Owen? How could I convince him to get help? How do you get someone committed, if you think they are a danger to themselves and others? I called the Samaritans because of my failure to be one.

I spoke to the good Samaritan and he said all he could do was help me because I was the one who phoned and asked for help. I was the Samaritan's only concern because Owen didn't make the call. He was out of reach.

It is easy to say now that Owen was never really all that stable and his parents were far from supportive. He was experiencing difficulties at college and finding a job. To make matters worse, he discovered alcohol and drugs when he was trying to find out who he was and assert his

identity. And nobody else wanted to know. These are things that most people go through. Most of us pull through it but Owen was unable to do so. Was that his own fault?

Afterward.

I told people who knew Owen about what had happened. Most told me that I did the right thing, that he was a nutter, a psycho, a lunatic and a junkie. The more people told me I did the right thing, the more terrible I felt. I became increasingly angry at such ignorant comments about Owen. No one wanted to look into why he sank to such a level. All they knew was that he talked nonsense, was frequently arrested, that he smelled, that he did drugs and slept rough. No one wanted to look beyond that. No one wanted to question how all this could have happened over a period of one year.

This seems to be the general attitude about homeless people. People think they could stop drinking or stop abusing jobs if they really wanted. People say that they should just get a job. People say they don't want their taxes going to support such stinking and lazy people. This saddens me even more, especially after seeing what happened to Owen and my own failure to help somebody at their wits' end.

And that was my religion down the toilet once and for all.

The last I heard of Owen, he had calmed down considerably. People who saw him said he was a shadow of his former self, very humble and quiet. However, as another winter approaches he is still on the streets. ★

The Normal Guy

Fiction by Arron Spencer

It felt like today was the future. It was like what he saw on T.V. ten years ago, he thought, while he drove his shiny, silvery sports car at 90 miles per hour, weaving with all the other shiny cars on the gray, city freeway, lined for miles with pre-fabricated cinder block walls and bright, flashy billboards.

Going 90 there was nothing to see. Time flashed by in a rushed blur of fleeting thoughts and roadside trash. Then the red lights collected up ahead and everything suddenly slowed down. All the people in their cars felt stuck and grew anxious and impatient in one collectively felt blunt emotion. The little glimmering bubbles trickled slowly down their chosen tributary, weaving in and out, trying to see up ahead in anticipation of moving fast again.

He went to work the same time as everyone else, every day, felt the rush of flying over the smooth pavement one moment and then the sluggish struggle of the inevitable traffic jam an instant later. His automatic desire was to get off, leave the road, go somewhere he could be free: where he did not have to wait to get somewhere, where he didn't feel like a faceless, blank number, like a digit, like everybody else on that road.

"How ugly," he thought, "that so many of us act out the same routine every day of the week." There was no beauty in the certain, comfortable predictability of it, in the sameness of the innumerable business women and men trying with so much effort to impress each other, to get ahead, climbing their way to some cloudy, hazy, poorly defined concept of "success." Even those who did not desire success in any conventional sense aimed for it, cheated for it, cut corners to get ahead of the others, merely because it was what people did.

"What a sad game," he thought. "Even the winners feel like losers, as if they just didn't do enough with their lives. It's a game that we



Community Integration

...or How I Potlucked on the Clock

by Libby

Pete and Duke* are like my new best friends, two old guys with Down's syndrome. I work with adults with developmental disabilities and lately I've been pretty pleased with myself for my ability to do whatever I want on the clock as long as I bring the guys. It's what my employers call community integration. This means going for walks on sunny days, checking out the art museum, having coffee at Stuart's, and even listening to various friends play music at bars. I take Pete and Duke most often because they are fun and mellow. Duke is especially fond of cowboys and music, so anytime a friend of mine is playing a gig during my shifts I try to schedule in a little community integration. Duke gets so excited he stims out: his face lights up with mouth slightly gaping, as he pulls his thick hands in towards his chest, tensing his muscles so tightly he shakes. It's almost orgasmic, in a

short, slow, old-guy kind of way. I love to plan community integration that will give him that thrill: Willie Nelson on the stereo as we drive around town, watching construction sights, looking at llamas, and drinking soda at the bar with country music playing.

So, we were out at Boundary Bay Brewery listening to Robert Blake and Jan play some old-time music on guitar and mandolin when Erik joined Pete, Duke and I at the table where we were sipping our root beers. Erik can be spotted at all times of day and night around town with his backpack. He's a floater, a punk forest ranger, a political university student, a wanderer about town, a good guy. He invited me to his birthday party. I regretfully informed him that I would be at work but asked, half-joking, if I could bring the guys. He shrugged and showed his crooked smile—he's up for it if they are.

get caught by, reeled into and coerced into playing. And once we're in, with our debts and payments, we're stuck, and forced to run along the track until we're far enough ahead to slow down and take a permanent break, without getting trampled by all the others, but by then most of us are old. Most people really are reluctant to play and just want to quit. I hear it every day: 'Arrgh! I hate my job!' Too many people live the biggest part of their lives stressed. There's got to be some other, better way for us to live our lives."

He wondered what was realistic—if there were any way he could leave and never come back. He wanted to actually live for once, continuously and consistently, like he had imagined as a kid, memorizing shapes in the clouds on lazy days after school with his friends, sitting around, talking, cracking jokes, wrestling in the grass and falling in love. Was that part over already? He felt so young. It was just months ago, he thought, when he last played like a kid with his whole gang of friends. It felt like a dream that he could remember if only he could manage to dole himself out some extra time to think hard about it. How would he be happy again when now his whole life revolved around his career, securing his future and his weekend plans? The predictability left a deep void in him.

"The other option is to get off the track, just drop out of the race, run away, quit competing, retire early, live simply, find some people who want to do the same thing, who feel the same way, and live with them."

But he didn't think that would make him happy. He desired the end of all of the world's frantic commotion. He knew that if he ran away, he would eventually, on some lazy day, catch sight of it again in his small curve of the world. The thought of having to run from it, over and over, just to be caught up to again and again, made all his hopes of any possibility in that just, green future, where he had real time to laugh, play, and be creative, fade far away into the darker chambers of his consciousness.

He knew how the parasitic nature of modern life worked. He understood that it depended more and more upon unexploited resources in little-known parts of the world, where people lived uninterrupted by the grinding roar of modern civilization; in nature, with their family, friends, and land, rooted, for all of their lives without material needs, and with little desire for the items of convenience that most of us now depend on for survival. These types of people were powerless against the great momentum of the chaotic machine. To be one of these people, isolated from mod-

ern society, permanently retired from the start, was complete subversion of the status quo. Before he went that route, he wanted a revolution in consciousness and in the way "civilized" societies viewed their position in the world. Great changes needed to be made before he was safe living a life apart from the blind scream of the massive system..

There was so much he liked, actually loved, about experience, about being alive, aside from his meaningless job. He hated his job, but of course he didn't want to admit it to anyone or to himself, because he did it so much, every weekday, sometimes Saturdays, and because so many of his thoughts were dedicated to it. But just thinking of work when he was at home or feeling happy—forcing himself out of bed every morning, sitting in his car, waiting in traffic ... he dreaded all of it with sweaty anticipation, like he dreaded being in front of a crowd without anything to say. He hated the coffee everybody drank to stay awake, hated the balmy, stuffy air in his building, hated talking like a robot, so proper, like it was the army, only he talked business instead of military strategy.

And that was important, he thought. The military is formal, inherently organized and planned out. If spontaneity should occur within the ranks it might topple the entire order. It might be like lighting a powder-soaked fuse whose spark grows instantly in intensity—with vibrant variations of color until it becomes a hot, white flame, with the power to ignite a deafening, blinding, windy explosion, that topples everything that years and years of dedication, training, thought and experience had gone into. Spontaneity would be the explosion destroying everything that had created the slick, greased, efficient machine that nothing could ever stop—where nobody thought, and nobody created, and nothing was ever original, where everybody looked the same, thought the same, felt the same. He shuddered.

This system, this machine, this business, was not human, was not for humans. It didn't bring anybody alive, didn't make people feel loved or nurtured. This system was purely designed for efficiency. Mistakes and the people who made them were always corrected or disposed of. And those who were expected to make mistakes weren't even given a chance. This was near perfection. And though people strive and die for the ultimately blissful result of perfection and that one great ideal, when something runs so smoothly, it cannot be human and cannot be alive. When the people running it feel like drones, or faceless insects, like one amongst the

The next day at work I tried to have no expectations. Sometimes my clients just do not want to have anything to do with my self-serving community integration. Or all the cars will be out, or other staff and clients will have plans. But I got to work and it felt like summer camp, with everyone shooting hoops in the parking lot and smoking cigarettes. No one had plans for the evening so my biggest obstacle was what vegan dish to make for Erik's birthday potluck. I scoured their refrigerator and cupboards. There was a carton of egg product with an e-z pour spout, ham, yogurt, fish sticks, tater tots, and a million boxes of Hamburger Helper and macaroni and cheese. I almost made Tuna Helper without the tuna. Then I spotted the Smokey Cowboy beans and rice and all these little boxes of pasta dishes that are self-proclaimed great side dishes at your barbecue.

The guys busied themselves taking apart a stereo on the back porch with butter knives while I made the prepackaged food and a birthday card. As I loaded up bags with their plates and cans of pop and the obsessively important paper napkin, Duke got maniacally thrilled signing his D

all across the birthday card, laughing and laughing and signing his name: DDDDDDDDDDD. I rounded them up, signed out for the car and we were off.

It was strange for me to arrive in a car and I wasn't sure where to park. I realized as I helped the guys up to the house how rickety the steps are and how the cracks in the sidewalk were difficult for them to navigate in the seven o'clock shadows. When I got to the kitchen I was greeted by my housemates that I hadn't seen for days, as Erik welcomed us with only mild surprise. Robert Blake was going to play some music later and I was proud of just making it there. I introduced the guys around, patting myself on the back for working work into my life.

And then it got tricky, and a bit awkward, as the reality of the situation set in. The guys were not versed in potluck etiquette. I tried to help them through the line, pointing out the foods they might like and advising them to leave food for the others at the party. Pete wanted a hamburger and all Duke really wanted was salad, which is strange because one of my great-

est accomplishments at work has been slipping him some greens under a pile of Bac-Os, cheese, and ranch dressing, but there was no salad, or meat, on the table. Pete and Duke sat stiffly at a little table while everyone else was out on the porch, balancing plates on their healthy, young knees. Part of my job is to coach them so they eat slowly and don't choke on their food. They ate slowly. I could hear the clock tick as the three of us chewed our Smokey Cowboy beans and rice.

I started feeling like some seventh-grade reject sitting silently in the corner with the 'tards. I just sat staring at my plate, wondering what was I thinking, bringing them to a potluck? Potlucks are all about eating and conversation. Pete had decided to only growl that night and Duke is always the silent cowboy type. What do you do with guys who don't talk? It took me six months of working with Pete and Duke to learn their ways of communicating with a few signs, mumbled language, and the ritual of their days. I almost cried. Because it wasn't all about doing what I want to on the clock and dragging the guys behind me—it was about testing my

("Normal Guy" continued from p. 75)

endless lines of ones, without connection, love, color, or changes, without drama or beauty and all that makes life worth living, it ceases to exist for humans, or for anything dynamic. It ceases to be alive in any organic sense. Instead of humans making creative, original decisions, emulating the dynamism attributed to all the living beings on earth, instead, this process was devoid of all that, devoid of joy or even true satisfaction.

This was what slavery must've been like. This is what it must feel like to be a computer, to see the future's course all planned out on a spreadsheet, to subject a beautiful, meaningful existence to the cold, calculated, one-dimensional plane of straight lines and perfect predictability.

In the business world, especially in the one he worked in, like the military, people did not run the factories, or make the decisions based on their experience, intuition, talent, or even pleasure. They let the demographics speak for themselves. They let the machines in the factory assemble the parts. They waited for the stock ticker to come back to tell them if their business was popular, which it always was, because who doesn't need a faster modem, more memory or the latest high-speed processor? It was becoming a game that he played, that everybody played, not because it fulfilled their dreams, because it made them happy, satisfied, loved, or because they had always wanted to do just that one thing, but because it was what made them money, gave them safety, security, made them feel successful, which gave them a fleeting sense of acceptance and made their parents proud of them.

"Sad, its really sad," he thought, waiting there on the freeway, late for work, in his shiny car that wasn't going anywhere at all, among lines of other people, feeling similar feelings, doing nothing about them, stuck, going no place. "This way of life is all completely meaningless! Why does everyone put up with such a wasteful life: squandering their time at college, getting grades, so they can get a degree and a diploma to show

He knew how time worked, how it deceived everybody into thinking and feeling that they've got days and days until they'll actually have to stop for a moment, act on their core feelings and do some genuine thinking about what it was besides a big house or a nice car that they wanted out of this life.

their folks what a good kid they were, what a successful person they'll grow up to be, and then to get some job they hate so they can get promoted later to another job they'll hate even more, where they'll have to follow even more rules and act like they know more than everyone below them so they can tell people what to do, and get paid for it, and be so tired when they get home that there's nothing that sounds better and more

relaxing than to have all their worries and concerns and passions placated with a cold beer and some chips, sacked out in front of the T.V., like a bag of flour? Why do people put up with this way of life? It's boring, meaningless, repetitive, it makes people crazy, sick, lonely, and angry, and all our real living is done in just two little days at the

end of the week."

He could go on and on forever like that, thinking about how mundane his life was, never doing anything about it, knowing the entire time that if he didn't, he'd be old soon and it would all be over, even the ability to critique would be drained from him, wrung out of his mind and dried up. His imagination would wither. His curiosity would disappear. He knew his life was short. He knew how time worked, how it deceived everybody into thinking and feeling that they've got days and days until they'll actually have to stop for a moment, act on their core feelings and do some genuine thinking about what it was besides a big house or a nice car that they wanted out of this life. He knew what he wanted. And it wasn't this. But he was stuck, in debt, afraid, and had always been a mediocre person - a dreamer, not a doer. This day was no different from any other.

He felt hot in his suit; his eyes squinted at the glare on the road, at the bright reflections in his rearview mirror. His collar felt tight and his tie felt tighter. His head pulsed in his skull. He felt like he was being trapped and tied down. He was overwhelmed with frustration. He could

ideals that we can have a community that embraces Pete and Duke. It was the first time I had invited the guys to my world, not some activity around town, to just hang out. And it was going nowhere, slowly.

But then people started filtering in for seconds, stopping to chat in the comfy chair next to our table. And someone said, "Hey Pete, looks like you're still hungry. Let's see if there's any food left in the kitchen." We all listened to some music in the living room and then I had to take the guys back for medications and bedtime. Everyone was polite and friendly, even if we had nothing to say. It was small, but important.

That night as I biked home from work, I got to thinking about the whole party and community. And while developmentally disabled guys are pretty obvious in their lack of integration, so many of our subcultures don't integrate. Punks have attitude, hippies are stoners, students and activists have their rhetoric and everyone has a dress code. There are people like Erik, who mingles with them all in his own uniform of wool, but we all need some integration.

We need bridges, people who make those connections on a personal basis, who find the

points of common interest, forming individual relationships and slowly bring others across. We need activities, like a giant croquet party or basketball game or piñata or building houses or cooking or whatever, just something to occupy our hands when the words are slow in coming. Common physical activities that can help us get over our fears and shyness.

A good party is revolutionary in that way. The role of hostess is essential to a diversified cause: being able to make connections and put people at ease, helping to be the ambassador between seemingly disconnected groups, translating when vocabularies and language fail, helping you through the potluck line and pointing out what food you might like.

So I try to play hostess and make work a party. It is especially challenging because Pete and Duke are from a generation of people who were institutionalized without question. Doctors told confused parents that the best thing for their child would be to take them out of their home. Fifty years ago, that meant sitting in a urine-stained corner and watching TV, and having all your power and choice taken away. If they had been raised around their families or in a pro-

gressive, supported, living situation like they are in now, I believe they would be more socially adept. They would possibly have greater language capabilities if they had been talked, read or played with as children. It seems a lot of the adults I work with are not so much challenged by their physical conditions but by being raised in fucked up situations. They all have quirky habits and rebellions related to food and hygiene are often based on the ways they were treated as kids. Yet my clients spend much of their energy trying to be normal Americans: dressing in non-descript clothes, eating at McDonald's, and vacationing at Disneyland. Which is funny, because I spend much of my energy trying to avoid and subvert homogenized American culture.

Work isn't all potlucks and country music. Every time I talk about work I realize how much I learn from the challenge of assisting folks in daily living, how often I see myself in these disabled adults. Pete has been teaching me how to be affectionate. When he's not growling, he holds my hand and dances with me, and playfully pretends to punch and shoot me. And Sal is just like most people, with the way she talks about work and family, dates and primping and her cat. The funny part is that's all she says, repeatedly: "Work." "Debbie." "I got date." "Shower." "Kitty-kitty." Sharon and Roger, with their romantic relationship, show me all the ways that men and women, and roommates, are sweet and fight and miss-communicate. There is always something just slightly off about it, making it is humorous and obvious, and enlightening. We have parties where people get excited and stim out, flipping forks across the table, or become frustrated because they want to sit in that chair or have more cake.

Maybe most selfishly, I leave work thankful of my capabilities. I can drive and write checks and wash my hair if I choose to. I can make choices about showering and leaving my house. I can fall in love and get pissed off or be messy or lazy, and no one documents it in a logbook for the state to inspect. I have friends, loads of them, and I can make new ones whenever I want. I can call my parents on the telephone without needing assistance dialing or speaking. I can order food in a restaurant without being asked to repeat myself twenty times.

Why do I get paid to take old guys with Down's syndrome to potlucks? Why do I fill out forms on community integration at the end of my shift? Because getting over fears and misconceptions of others doesn't come naturally for groups who have been traditionally segregated. It is as important for my guys to learn how to interact in social situations as it is for the community to see these guys living their lives. When they are out renting a movie, shopping at the mall or dancing at a bar, people have the opportunity to see that folks with developmental disabilities aren't freaks, contagious or dangerous. And sometimes Pete and Duke need a little help to get out of their apartment and try something new in the world. Don't we all? ★

* clients names have been changed

feel the pressure building, his head pounding. His skin tickled while cold trickles of sweat beaded on his forehead. He needed to be released, felt there was nowhere he could go, nothing he could do. These feelings, thoughts and problems were engulfing him, swallowing him and he was drowning in the oblivion of the sucking, empty vacuum into some unknown darkness. He had to do something NOW or he would explode with energy and madness.

He felt like he would do something "irrational." "Don't get crazy," he told himself, taking a few deep breaths of recycled freeway air. He turned on the air conditioning and he found some soothing music on the radio. He looked around at all the other people in their cars. They looked dull and anxious. They all looked just like he felt. He put on his darkest sunglasses and with his feelings calmed, dreamed of what he would do once he got off of work. As he daydreamed, he nudged his car forward a few feet along the road: a few feet closer to work, a few feet closer to the weekend, a few feet closer to those two warm weeks in Hawaii, a few feet closer to retirement, old age and all that lay ahead in his short life that was slowly melting away, day by day. But he tried not to think about that. "Think Good Thoughts," he read on the bumper in front of him. Think good thoughts. And he started feeling better, with the cool air drying his sweaty hands and the mellow music softening his anxiety.

He had to do his job.

He couldn't just NOT go to work.

Soon he was content sitting in traffic, with the calm voices on the radio to soothe him, looking out the window and in the mirror, just thinking softly, like all the rest of the people in their cars. "I guess it's just what I have to do. This is just how people live these days. There's no going back. This is reality. You can't just change reality." He felt like he could never mend these feelings of powerlessness so he comforted his complacency, and gave in for the moment, feeling impotent about his situation, and just tried to forget about it. He didn't feel like fighting and all he really wanted to do was go back to bed, he thought. He blamed the day of the week for how he felt. He was hard on himself over the weekend. It was normal to feel like this. Everybody felt like this. This was just how Mondays were. ★

Towards Social Justice:

Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez

by Chris Crass

"Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez is a national and international treasure. Her life and work provide a model of internationalism and solidarity, as well as local organizing. 'Think globally, act locally' was her practice long before the slogan was created. 'From work for decolonization at the United Nations, to the Civil Rights Movement, to pioneering the women's liberation movement, to local organizing in New Mexico and California, to top-rate journalism and political theory, Betita continues to blaze trails and create priceless legacies, mentoring countless social activists, young and old, male and female, people of all colors, gay and straight, always with astonishing patience and intelligence.'" This is how Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz describes her friend of 30 years. Dunbar-Ortiz has been involved in radical politics and activism since the sixties. She founded one of the first groups of the Womens Liberation Movement, Cell 16 and helped edit their journal, "No More Fun and Games". She is the author of *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie* and she's a regular reader at the Anarchist Cafe nights in San Francisco.

Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez lives in the Mission District of San Francisco, where she is involved in many different projects and campaigns. Her main project is the Institute for MultiRacial Justice, which she co-founded in 1997. She serves as the co-chair of the Institute and edits the Institutes publication, *Shades of Power*.

The Institute aims to "serve as a resource center that will strengthen the struggle against White Supremacy by combating the tactics of divide-and-control and advancing solidarity among people of color" (from the group's Mission Statement).

The Institute serves as a clearinghouse of information about joint work done by communities of color locally, regionally and eventually on a national basis. The Institute provides educational materials to help build greater understanding and respect between people of color. Working to build solidarity between communities of color, the Institute holds educational forums on topics and issues that are not only important to communities of color, but that have divided people of color. Forum topics have included immigrant rights and bilingual education and the these events bring together organizers from various groups to have a dialogue about the issues. These forums and other work done by the Institute try to provide a site for people from different communities of color to meet with each other and find ways to support one another.

In October of 1999, Martinez and the Institute put together the *Shades of Power Festival: Alliance Building With Film and Video*. The festival's program stated, "the movies show how different peoples of color in the U.S. have related and worked together in common struggles for social justice. A few of the videos focus on a single group whose struggle continues today and needs support from other people of color." The festival featured movies about Ethnic Studies student strikes in '68-'69, the Puerto Rican Young Lords Party, Angela Davis, June Jordan, Yuri Kochiyama, the Japanese Internment Camps during WWII, housing struggles by Latinos, Filipinos, African-Americans, repression and resistance at the U.S. Mexico border, labor organizing and environmental justice campaigns. In all, about 20 films were viewed. Between movies, there were four discussion panels with organizers from various groups on gentrification in San Francisco, immigrant rights and environmental justice. Hundreds of people went to the festival.

The other main project of the Institute is publishing *Shades of Power*. It is published as a step in the direction of creating an anti-racist, anti-capitalist ideological climate. *Shades of Power*, which is currently on its 6th issue, is full of articles on organizing around environmental justice issues, police brutality, violence in public schools, workers' rights, im-

migration and incarceration - to name a few. All of the articles focus on pro-active campaigns and positive activism with special attention paid to alliance building among people of color.

Shades of Power helps the Institute work towards their long-term goals. According to their mission statement, the Institute is "committed to linking the struggle of Third World unity with struggles to build a new society free of class relations, sexism, homophobia, environmental abuse, and the other diseases of our times".

Working with women's groups is a special focus of the Institute, "because women have often taken the lead in building alliances among people of color". Organizing with youth is also a major focus of the Institute with the goal of developing autonomous youth initiatives. The Institute was active in the youth led campaign against Proposition 21 in California. Prop 21, the juvenile crime initiative, makes it easier to prosecute children as adults, broadly defines gangs and gang membership to include most aspects of hip-hop culture and criminalizes it and plays on social fears of crime committed by young people of color - regardless of the fact that violent youth crime has declined significantly in the last few years. When youth organizations like Third Eye Movement, Homey Network and the Critical Resistance Youth Task Force mobilized and organized thousands of young people, the Institute offered support and solidarity. As Roxanne stated earlier, Betita is a mentor to countless activists and organizers. Her years of experience, her firm dedication to radical social change and her wisdom and insights into organizing have influenced and inspired many who are active today, especially young women of color organizers.

In addition to the Institute, Martinez is also involved with many different organizations in the Bay Area, such as the Women of Color Resource Center and Media Alliance. Betita is also the author of the book *De Colores Means All Of Us: Latina Views of a Multi-Colored Century*, published by South End Press in 1998.

Betita's book, *De Colores Means "All Of Us"*, which hit the shelves last year, is a chronicle of organizing and alliance building throughout her years of work. The book is a collection of essays that range from discussions on attacks against immigrant rights and affirmative action to contemporary struggles for Ethnic Studies led by Latina/o youth. Betita's book is full of essays that develop a radical Chicana perspective and analysis on society, race relations, history, dynamics between men and women in past and present activism and on the future of building a multiracial, anti-racist, queer liberationist, feminist, anti-capitalist movement. The essays are packed with stories, examples of past activism, models of past and present organizing and inspiration to implement lessons in the book into our organizing efforts.

Elizabeth Martinez traces her political consciousness back to her childhood. Her father had moved from Mexico into the US and after quite a few years of financial hardship ended up working in Washington DC as a secretary in the Mexican Embassy. She remembers growing up with stories of the Mexican Revolution, Zapata and US imperialism. Also, Martinez grew up in a middle-class white suburb of DC and was the only person of color in school, which made her painfully aware of racism and white supremacy. After World War II, Martinez went to work at the United Nations as a researcher on colonialism decolonization efforts and strategies. During the McCarthy Era, her section chief and other co-workers at the UN were fired for having past or present connections with Communism. In 1959, three months after the Cuban Revolution claimed victory, Martinez went to Cuba to witness a successful anti-colonial, socialist struggle. This trip to Cuba had a profound impact on her.



and the Institute for MultiRacial Justice

In addition to Cuba, Martinez later traveled to the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Vietnam (during the war) and China to witness how people were implementing socialism.

When the sit-in movement swept across the South in 1960, a new and exciting form of direct action organizing was taking shape which soon led to the formation of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. SNCC was one of the most important organizations of the 1960s as it successfully experimented with various forms of community organizing, direct action tactics, radically democratic decision-making and an egalitarian vision that inspired and influenced countless other groups and projects in that '60s and into today. While SNCC, along with the Southern Civil Rights Movement, is generally remembered as a Black led struggle with the involvement of whites - Betita was one of two Chicanas working full-time for SNCC; Maria Varela was also a SNCC organizer. Martinez originally served as the director of SNCC's office in New York. Betita edited the photo history book, *The Movement*, which not only raised funds for SNCC, but also brought graphic images of the Civil Rights movement into homes across the United States. Martinez was an organizer with SNCC in 1964 during the Mississippi Summer project (often referred to as Freedom Summer).

In 1968, a year of revolution and repression around the world, she moved to New Mexico to work in the land grant movement of Chicanos/as struggling to recover lands lost when the US took over half of Mexico with the 1846-48 war. There she launched an important movement newspaper, *El Grito del Norte* (The Cry of the North), and continued publishing it for 5 years along with other activism. *El Grito* reported on international activism and sought to show connections between different struggles. At the Chicano Communications Center, which she co-founded in Albuquerque, she edited the bilingual pictorial volume *500 Years of Chicano History* at a time when almost no books existed on the subject. The pictorial became the basis of her educational video *Viva La Causa!* which has been shown at film festivals and classrooms across the country. In all of this activism, she worked with and trained many young Chicanas/os.

In the late '60s when the Women's Liberation Movement exploded across the country with feminist groups, publications, protest actions, manifestos and speakers everywhere, Elizabeth Martinez was in New Mexico helping shape the newly developing movement. In her essay, "History Makes Us, We Make History" from the anthology, *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices From Women's Liberation*, Betita talks about developing a Chicana feminism that confronts race, class and gender inequality. In that essay she writes about the whiteness of the Women's Liberation Movement and the sexism in the Chicano Movement and the need to struggle against all forms of oppression. During this time, Betita was made an honorary member of WITCH (Women's International Conspiracy from Hell).

Since 1976 she has been living in the Bay Area. Betita became deeply involved in leftist party building politics for 10 years. In 1982 she ran for Governor of California on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket; the first Chicana on the ballot for that office. She has also taught courses in Ethnic Studies and Women Studies at Hayward State University. Martinez has traveled all across the United States speaking on colleges and in classrooms about race, class, gender issues and organizing. She has teamed up with longtime activist Elena Featherston, also a co-founder of the Institute, and they have done joint speaking tours called "Black and Brown-Get Down", which aim at building alliances between people of color. She has consistently been a mentor over the years to new and long-time activists and organizers helping transfer skills,

knowledge and experience in effort to build our movements. In addition to editing *Shades of Power*, she is also a regular contributor to *Z Magazine* and other publications.

The Institute for MultiRacial Justice is just the latest project in a long list of efforts to make the world a better place. Like her other projects, the Institute works to develop long-range goals and vision to guide activists from one struggle to the next. As we move from one crisis to the next - from welfare reform, to the ending of affirmative action, to the bombing of Kosovo, to Mumia's execution - we become worn-down and burned-out. Betita reminds us that we must remember that we are part of a movement, we are part of something much bigger than ourselves and we are not alone in the struggle. She reminds us that while we confront budget cuts in Ethnic Studies programs or new attacks against the civil rights of homeless people, that we must hold onto our goals - solidarity, community, revolution, egalitarianism, a new world. She reminds us that as activists, as organizers, we have a responsibility to teach and train others - that we have a responsibility to actively build a new world.

Martinez also has much to say to us about how we build movements for social change. After the massive resistance to the World Trade Organization in Seattle, Martinez wrote the widely distributed and highly influential essay, "Where Was the Color in Seattle? Looking for reasons why the Great Battle was so white". She writes, "Understanding the reasons for the low level of color, and what can be learned from it, is crucial if we are to make Seattle's promise of a new, international movement against imperialist globalization come true." Through interviews and observations she writes about the lessons that organizers - people of color and white - must learn. We must connect the issues of imperialist globalization to local community issues. White radicals need to develop and put forward an analysis of corporate domination that understands racial oppression in the third world and in the United States. She writes that radicals of color need to be networking and connecting their work with a global framework. White radicals need to go beyond their familiar circles and form coalitions with people of color with an understanding of how white activists in the past have betrayed people of color. White radicals need a strong race, class and gender analysis and it should be central to their political worldview. It must be remembered that white radicals have a responsibility to develop anti-racist politics and actively confront white privilege. As radicals of color organize in communities of color, white radicals interested in movement building must strengthen the anti-racist politics of predominately white groups and activist communities.

Martinez also has much to say in her writings about the day-today organizing work that we engage in. She stresses that we must take education and training folks seriously. If we are to become a participatory, radically democratic, feminist, multi-racial, anti-capitalist, queer liberationist, internationalist movement - then we need to work at it. We need to teach each other skills, tactics, and political analysis so that we can all be leaders in a movement for our collective liberation.

Martinez and other radicals of her generation have much to teach the younger generation of today. It is critical that we listen, learn and develop relationships based on common respect. ★

For more information about the Institute for MultiRacial Justice or to receive *Shades of Power* write: 3311 Mission St., #170 SF, CA 94110 or email i4mrj@aol.com. For an inspiring read pick-up *De Colores Means All Of Us*.

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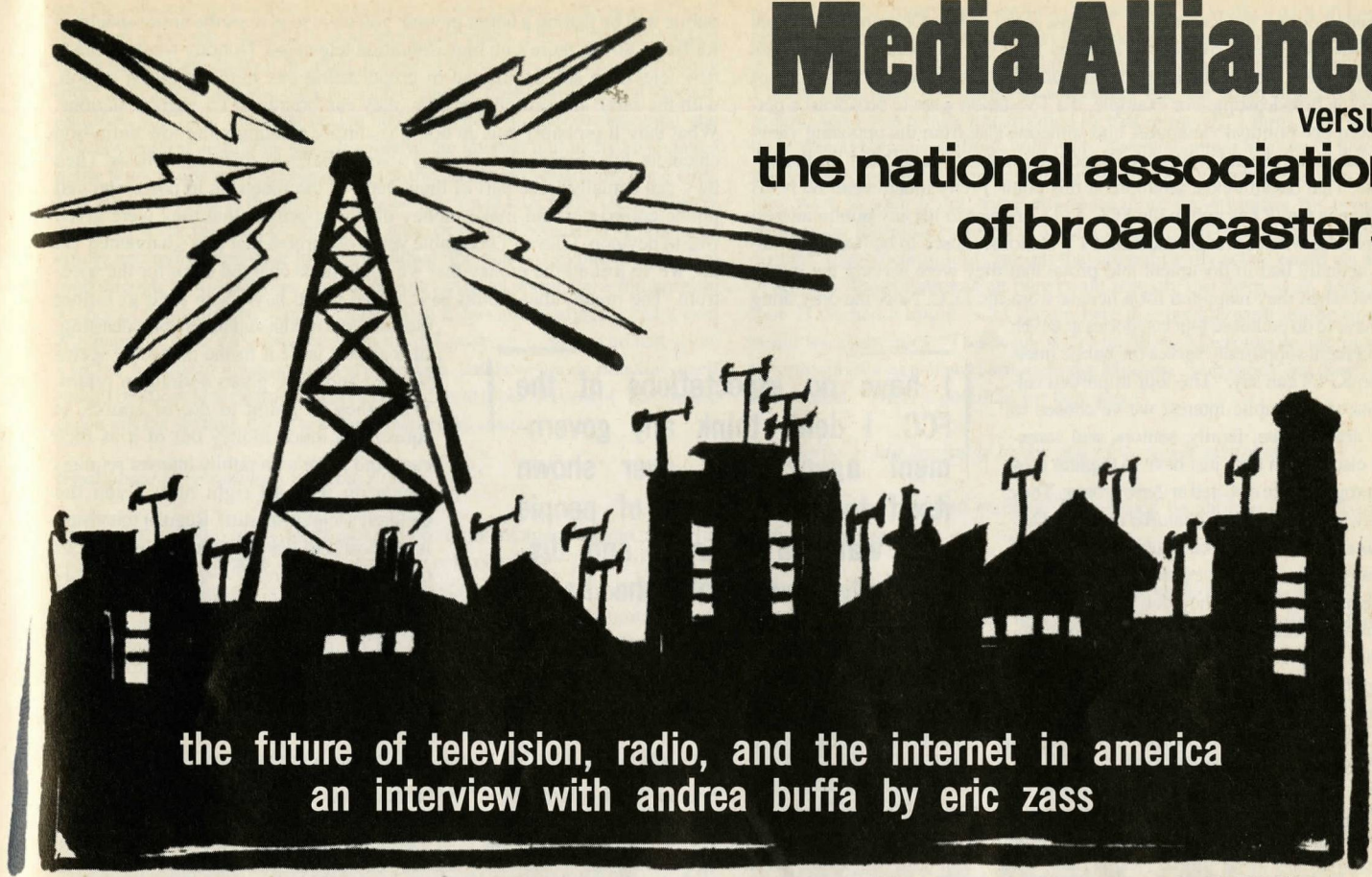
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Media Alliance

versus

the national association
of broadcasters



the future of television, radio, and the internet in america
an interview with andrea buffa by eric zass

It's almost ironic that a culture that is so incredibly saturated with information, in which new forms of media are rapidly being developed and new sources are constantly springing up, that we are at such a loss for genuine communication, and that most of what we do receive is being dumped on us by the same few, profit-driven sources. The proliferation of new technologies has, to a large extent, allowed the dominant media to extend its influence over the world, instead of allowing a more diverse collection of voices to grow and develop. And far from becoming a place where people from different cultures can gather to exchange ideas, the internet is rapidly becoming a place where American—and to a lesser extent, Western European—corporations vie to spread their economic and cultural influence across the rest of the world. Similarly, the increasing conglomeration of the radio has meant that we can now sit back and enjoy an endless repetition of Britney Spears melodies, broken occasionally by commercials, and even more occasionally by a sound-bite of Bush Jr. or Gore complimenting themselves respectively for the increase of American prosperity and democracy. Television continues to become more and more comfortably homogenous and pleasantly vapid—both in the content (or lack thereof) of its news programs and the mainly European cast of characters that do daily grace your screen. The future seems as bright, with the world's largest companies rapidly gobbling each other up and finding new, innovative ways of preventing competitors and individuals alike from gaining access to the public.

For all this, we can sing the praises of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). In the past few years especially, they have won a stunning set of victories—most of them unreported in mainstream (that is, their own) media—to safely contain the threat posed by new media, and in fact to use it to deepen their own oligopoly immensely. There are few groups that congress so fears (after all, they can restrict access to potential voters), or is as pampered by than the NAB.

If nothing else, the incredible black-out of important information has meant the creation of a new underground of media sites and information outlets that choose not to ignore critical, if unprofitable, news.

Media Alliance, a non-profit group founded on providing information and training to media activists, has a 22-year history of disagreeing with the

NAB and other representatives of the privatized media. The group holds instructive classes on everything from improving journalistic skills, to setting up a web-page, to operating specific programs like Adobe Photoshop and Powerpoint. In addition, they organize events, produce several papers and newsletters (both print and electronic), and hold protests to raise awareness of these issues and improve media literacy. In September, they helped organize a largely successful three-day protest of the NAB's annual convention in San Francisco. Andrea Buffa is the executive director of Media Alliance, an informed journalist and outspoken media activist. I was able to meet up with her in October, following the protests. Interview by Eric Zass.

Clamor: Tell me about the NAB—who they're comprised of, what their goals are and how they go about fulfilling them.

Buffa: Basically, they've been around as long as the Federal Communications Commission. They're a trade association and lobbying group for the broadcasting industry. So their members are comprised of smaller individual television and radio stations, as well as the big networks. They represent the interests of the large networks, generally. The innocuous side of what they do includes trade shows and little scholarship programs—stuff like that. The really horrible side has to do with their being one of the most powerful lobbying groups in the United States. They spend millions of dollars every year on campaign contributions and lobbying on telecommunications issues, and they've achieved a

string of victories on behalf of the big corporations they represent that are generally detrimental to the public interest. In the last few years especially. In 1996 they were the major backers of the Telecommunications Act. One of the problems with that act is that it lifted a lot of the restrictions on multiple ownership

**People who have immense power
don't just give it up. They have
to be forced to give it up.**

by one company of many radio and TV stations on the same market. They were able to lobby Congress into giving them the entire digital television spectrum—which people estimate was worth about 70 million dollars—for free. Lately, they've been lobbying vigorously against low power FM radio and are working in the Senate right now to totally squash that measure. We'll find out about that in the next week. They managed to get much of the Fairness Doctrine

[media]

eliminated during the Reagan era. The last shred of that Doctrine—the equal time provision—was voluntarily lifted by the FCC this week. The Fairness Doctrine was a piece of legislation that made sure that there was some kind of fairness in broadcasting. For example, if a TV station were to broadcast a person from one political viewpoint, and someone else from the opposing viewpoint asked to respond, you were supposed to provide equal time for that response. That doesn't exist anymore at this point. Pretty much what the NAB has done is that it has gotten the FCC and Congress to lift any public interest requirement whatsoever on radio and TV stations. It used to be that these stations actually had to document and prove that they were serving the public interest when they reapplied for a license from the FCC. Now the only thing they have to do is choose four categories in which their content supposedly serves the public interest. So KPIX can say, "The four important categories of the public interest we've chosen to serve are children, family, seniors, and something else." Then they just have to explain how their programs are directed at these groups. They can say, you know, "One Hundred and One Dalmatians serves the children's public interest." It's basically all bullshit. They don't have to have any local news at all. They don't have to have any public affairs programming. Lots of commercial radio stations have totally eliminated their public affairs programming altogether. The stations here in the Bay Area—if they have any public affairs programs at all—schedule these shows in the middle of a Saturday or Sunday night or at five in the morning on a weekend morning.

Why? Because it's not sufficiently profitable?

Yeah, I suppose so. I think it's also because they don't want the public to have any expectations of the stations to provide them with meaningful information. They want the public to think their only obligation is give them the same music all the time and that's fine. People don't even know anymore that these stations are supposed to serve the public interest. I don't think they want them to know or really even to think about it. A lot of stations used to have public service announcements to raise awareness about local events. Many stations don't even have those anymore. So they do nothing to serve the public interest. And that's the NAB's job: getting rid of those regulations so broadcasters can make as much money as they possibly can.

Can you talk about the Telecommunications Act of 1996?

It was a nightmare. There was no coverage of it by the mainstream media. It basically deregulated the radio industry entirely. Since then there's been this incredible consolidation of stations. Big companies buying up smaller ones. Now we have these massive, massive radio conglomerates. Before the Telecommunications Act was passed the largest company owned about 45 stations. Now the largest, Clear Channel Communications owns 900 stations. They did own a thousand, but were forced to get rid of some of them. That one company, for example, controls something like 45 percent of the market-share in Cleveland, and 50 percent of the market-share in Denver. You go across the country and this single company controls 30 to 50 percent of the market in almost every major city. So that's one company dictating lots of the information—and the music—that people in this country are able to hear. This is why we hear the same 30 songs on the radio over and over again. And you're hearing the same songs and getting the same information in every major city as well. Then, within each market, you have four companies that basically control everything. In San Francisco, four companies control 80 percent of the radio market. And we're actually one of the few radio markets that has alternatives—we have KPFA and KPOO and a few other fairly independent stations. Most other cities don't have any of that. It's been a mess in terms of deregulation and the number of owners of media outlets. The digital TV thing has just been a fiasco.

How do you think that will develop?

Well, the NAB basically said, "We're going to invest all this money creating this new technology. Since we're going to invest all of this money, and the

public will be getting a better picture, you have to give us the entire spectrum for free." So far, there's no high definition television. Nobody wants to buy a new television set. So instead of broadcasting one high definition station, with the same amount of spectrum, they can broadcast six regular stations. What they'll probably end up doing is simply creating more low definition channels. For example, on channel 5 you'll have six different options. Then they can actually lease part of their share of the spectrum to pager and cell phone companies and make money off the spectrum that they were given free to develop. I haven't been able yet to document that that's happened. So far, we've lost all the money that we could have charged them for the spectrum. The money that would have raised could have been used to further

independent media and public broadcasting. Instead, we gave it to the corporate sector for free and were given nothing in return. What they're going to do, of course, is squeeze as much money out of it as they can. And there's no public interest requirements on it at all right now. Even the children's television stuff. Regular television is supposed to designate a certain number of hours to children's TV—which are mainly commercials masquerading as TV shows anyway. But there aren't even those basic requirements on digital TV at all right now.

Is that because of the abandonment of the Fairness Doctrine?

No. It's because, as a new service, they haven't yet come up with new public interest requirements for it. The broadcasters want to have no requirements at all.

How exactly could corporations cut off access to the web's infrastructure?

There are a bunch of different ways. Right now most people dial up to the internet through a phone line. But as the amount of audio and video on the internet increases, that method is way too slow. Most people are moving toward, or will move toward, a high-speed internet connection, either through broadband cable, through DSL, or through wireless. Right now phone lines and DSL are federally regulated to be common carriers. They have to let any internet service provider onto the phone lines to get you to the internet. You can choose between free service, IGC, Earthlink, whichever service you like. You can choose an ISP that gives you total access to the internet, or an ISP that limits your access and supposedly helps you figure things out—like AOL, for example. Now, what the cable companies are saying is that, since cable is not federally but locally regulated, they're not subject to common carrier regulations. They feel they don't have to give access to other internet service providers. So if you get a high speed internet service through cable, you have to use their hand-picked internet service provider. For example, if you get access through AT&T, in our area, you have to use Excite@home. The problem here isn't only that you can only choose their chosen service and you have to pay whatever they want to charge. The larger problem is that they will direct you to certain content on the internet, and they can prevent you from getting to certain content as well. Right now they haven't reached the point where they're blocking off certain sites. What they do instead is they have certain agreements with various companies. If a company pays them more, they allow quicker access to that company's site. If the company doesn't or can't pay, they'll give you slower access. For example, if Excite has an agreement with Paramount Pictures, you may be able to download an entire feature film pretty quickly. But because the Bay Area Video Coalition, which is an independent video collective, can't afford to pay an extra fee to Excite@home, you're going to get really slow-going access to their site. That encourages people to go to the faster sites, which can afford to pay more. That's where things are headed right now. So far, it hasn't reached the point where you're actually prevented from getting to sites. They're putting up speed-barriers, basically, and creating fast lanes and slow lanes. We'll see what happens from there.

But how would they be able to control the actual architecture?

Actually, many private companies do now control the architecture of the internet,

[media]

and they are moving to make it increasingly more expensive and more difficult to put up a website—especially with audio and video. They'll only allow you to put up a certain amount of either. It's going to become, I believe, something more like cable where you have a bunch of glossy, flashy professional stations, and then you have the local access stations which are not professional and nobody looks at them. The infrastructure of the internet will likely be changed in the years to come so that you can go to the bigger, professionally done sites. You'll be able to get to the other stuff, too—but it will look really shitty. There's not going to be the kind of choice we have right now because it will be a lot harder and more expensive for an individual like you or I to put up a site that meets people's expectations. A lot of people are upset about this—but because it's not all happening right now, it's still hard for people to imagine that it ever will happen. There's a professor at Stanford, Lawrence Lessig, who just wrote a sort of manifesto about internet architecture, and how the architecture itself should be allowed to distinguish between different types of content. You should check out his writing. It's at www.nogatekeepers.com.

What about their relations with the FCC?

I think that just like many other national government agencies and powerful lobbying groups, there's a revolving door between the FCC and the NAB. Many people go from working at the FCC to become lobbyists with the NAB. There're a lot of more complicated relationships, too. Right now, for example, one of the chief spokesmen for the NAB is Colin Powell. His son, Michael Powell, is one of the five FCC commissioners. Basically, it operates as a revolving door.

If the FCC does go ahead and license low power stations, how would that change radio?

One of the most important things for community groups—especially groups and people with a more radical political perspective—is to control some portion of the infrastructure of the telecommunications system. Actually having your own media—your own radio station or webpage—is one way of doing that. It's far better than getting a story on what you're doing into a more publicized mainstream outlet. You actually get to control the media. In terms of getting to understand and operate a small part of the broadcasting infrastructure, it's extremely important. It also means that, if these low power stations work, we could argue with the FCC that there's actually room for more, and maybe potential for digital micro-television.

It's pretty obvious that low power radio stations would be important for the community and neighborhoods. They would give people access to music and information that they're not getting right now—whether local bands, or broadcasting community meetings, announcing local events, or whatever.

A lot of church groups have applied for stations. I've worked a lot on Pacifica radio issues and KPFA radio. A lot of people who weren't previously familiar with the station will say, "I was flipping through the dial, and all the sudden I heard somebody talking about something that I'd never heard discussed before, and I was totally transformed by that moment." I think that, because there would be more stations with more diverse content, that we'll have stations disseminating information that people wouldn't otherwise hear unless they were to seek it out, there would be more opportunities for people to come upon this stuff by chance, and be transformed by it. That's really important. Also, if community groups that are politically active could get a hold of some of these stations that they could actually use them as an organizing tool. If we had a micro-radio station here that people were tuning into, we could tell everybody "This week we're targeting Macromedia and their development of a new headquarters in the Mission. Everybody get down there and protest." There's potential for that, too.

How large would the range be for these low power stations?

They're 10- to 100-watt stations. That would be about a one to five mile radius. Pretty small.

Is there any legitimacy to NPR and NAB's claims that low power would interfere with other public interest stations—like reading services for the blind or aviation signals?

No. It's all bullshit. If you look back to what NAB was saying at the beginning of their argument, they didn't mention anything about reading services for the blind. They were saying that it would interfere with their stations. When that argument was proven false, they went to their reading services for the blind excuse. The fact is that most of the reading services for the blind stations are in the non-commercial part of the radio band—the lower numbers. All of the new low power FM stations would be in the commercial portion of the spectrum. There may be a handful of cases where they would be in the same portion of the spectrum, and the FCC has already said that they wouldn't allow new stations to interfere with their signal in any way. I think it's totally a red herring and it's just despicable.

Same with aviation?

Nobody's even taking that part of their argument seriously. It's just absurd.

What were the initial objectives for the September 20-23 protests?

To spotlight corporate ownership of the media. To turn people on to the fact that there are alternative media being formed. And to build momen-

The National Association of Broadcasters

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), founded in 1923, is both a trade organization providing services for its members—8,000 commercial radio and television stations—and a lobbying behemoth.

While organization vaguely boasts commercial broadcasters' community service role, they are clearly more interested in preserving broadcast owners' monopoly on the media (and their revenue streams). The NAB's lobbying efforts and prowess rank them amongst the best (or worst). For instance, in 1998, before the current political fight for Low-Power FM, the NAB spent \$5.2 million on lobbying alone, which made them the 35th highest spender (Center for Responsive Politics). The NAB aggressively continues their efforts to expand private ownership of public airwaves allowing them to brag about how they recently "quashed attempts by the Clinton Administration and some in Congress to include new analog TV spectrum fees in the 2000 Budget saving the industry \$200 million." In October William Safire wrote, "In terms of ripping off the taxpayers with not a peep from the media, nothing compares with the broadcasters' lobby. This phalanx of free-loaders has stolen the free use of great chunks of the most valuable natural resource of the information age."

In January 2000 the FCC announced their plan to start licensing Low-Power FM (LPFM) stations, 10 to 100 watt broadcast stations that allow local groups to reach a community's needs, and in some instances entire communities, underserved

by commercial radio, and since then the NAB has been waging an all-out offensive against LPFM. The NAB started their lobbying efforts with a compact disc that simulated interference between stations—interference that NAB claimed would occur if LPFM stations were allowed on the air. FCC chairman William Kennard called the NAB's compact disc "a misrepresentation of the engineering facts," and stated that the broadcasters are simply afraid of competition. Nevertheless, the NAB succeeded in getting the House of Representatives to pass a bill (HR 3439) that would essentially kill LPFM. Fortunately, they failed to gain the necessary number of votes in the Senate (based largely on efforts by John McCain, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee—in August McCain introduced an alternate bill (S 2989), co-sponsored by Bob Kerrey, that permits the introduction LPFM and addresses any potential interference issues). Undaunted, the NAB is currently attempting to tuck provisions (riders) in spending bills that would accomplish their goal of killing LPFM.

—Babak Rastgoufard

Sources: Associated Press, Center for Responsive Politics, National Association of Broadcasters, New York Times, San Francisco Bay Guardian, San Francisco Chronicle

Branding the Cash Cow for Milk Money

Andrew Cornell Critiques the Dairy Council's Successful Campaign

As ESPN cut to a commercial during the skateboard finals of this year's X Games, a voice over announced, "The X Games are sponsored by Milk. With nine essential vitamins. Got Milk?" "Whoa, whoa, whoa!" I thought. Maybe I even yelled it at the TV. It seemed absurd. Hell, it was absurd. We all know that companies sponsor concerts, athletes, TV shows, and just about everything else imaginable these days. We accept that, for better or worse, as a fact of life. We also know brand name products enough to recognize that when the bass-heavy voice of the announcer says that "The Real World" (or whatever other lame show you are watching) is "brought to you by Pepsi," they mean that the Pepsi Corporation shelled out the bucks. But brought to you by milk? Indeed, it was true. Later that night I found out that milk also sponsors the VH-1 show "Don't Quote Me!" and a number of other programs.

Since when, you might ask, can an inanimate animal product like milk pump cash into a commercial sporting event or TV show? The answer, it seems clear, is since milk became a brand. Since milk, the common noun, became Milk™, the soon-to-be trade-marked proper noun. And that has been slowly happening over the last seven years, right under our noses (you know, where you get a mustache)!

In *No Logo*, Naomi Klein writes that in the early 1990s, nearly every corporation producing consumer goods for consumption in the U.S. realized that the key to making money was selling a more compelling brand, not a better product. To sell a brand, companies create an image for their products—a personality that a consumer identifies with and tries to claim as his or her own, in part by buying the company's products.

By 1993, even dairy farmers had caught on to this marketing trend. Ever since, they've been successfully morphing their product—traditionally one of the most local and generic available—to a high profile, competitive brand replete with a spunky personality of its own.

Milk is usually produced by regional dairies that homogenize, carton and ship it to local supermarkets. Milk consumers have traditionally had little choice in what brand they buy. And for the most part they didn't care. Each grocery store carried one type of milk, and the product of one dairy

was virtually indistinguishable from that of another. So the only decision to be made was whether to buy 2%, Skim, or Vitamin D.

Milk producers were taking a beating in sales in the 1990s. They had to compete with giant soda retailers and trendy new brands of sports drinks and bottled fruit juice (whatever happened to Snapple, anyway?). Individual milk producers had no mouthpiece with which to convince consumers that milk was a cooler, healthier, more satisfying beverage choice than these other options. They didn't use advertising to compete with other brands of milk because there were no brands. Roeloff Dairy, the farm that supplied cartons of milk to my high school cafeteria and local supermarket, never tried to create an image for itself, write a catchy jingle, a funny slogan or create flashy packaging to catch the attentions of shoppers.

To recapture a significant share of the beverage market, milk producers realized their product too needed to speak to consumers' desires. They needed to explain what type of people drink milk. However, dairies remained too small to each spend millions of dollars to create individual highly competi-

tive corporate identities, each trying to out-cool one another. So milk producers decided to take the opposite tack of competitors in other industries. Ingeniously, they banded together and infused the Dairy Council of California with money for what has become one of the most popular media campaigns of the decade: "Got Milk?" The campaign was so successful on the West Coast that it soon went national.

Milk now has its own catchphrase, its own font/logo and hundreds of celebrity endorsements—from the Dixie Chicks to Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge to the cast(aways) of *Survivor*, all donning overdone milk mustaches in the ads.

The "Got Milk?" campaign is overwhelmingly successful because it casts milk drinking as the thing to do at every stage in life. The milk mustaches imply that by drinking milk the consumer can regain or celebrate their youthful playfulness. At the same time, milk is the healthy, smart, *adult* choice since it contains "9 Essential Nutrients." What's more, the idea that milk is something people crave, buy impulsively and choose over name brand drinks like Mountain Dew gives it the essential air of hipness that marketers need to capture the critical global teen market. With one well executed ad campaign,



Andrea Buffa • Media Alliance, continued

tum for a media democracy movement. I think we did all those things. It was really exciting to be part of it. I think everyone who was a part of the action felt really good about what we accomplished. In terms of movement building, it was really great. We had folks here from New York and Austin, Texas and West Virginia—just all over the place. We made some good connections, raised awareness. We received no coverage from the mainstream media. It was a total blackout. There were a few minor pieces in the San Francisco Examiner—mainly about the National Lawyers' Guild attorneys who were arrested for trying to see their clients at the courthouse, but nothing about the actual demonstrations. So, it was bad in that sense. In terms of movement building, it was great. We got on lots of community radio stations and were able to talk about media democracy and put it out there on the radar screen. In that way, it was really successful.

Do you think any attention from the FCC or maybe even congress? Any feedback?

I don't know about congress. I know that there were many FCC staff people at the NAB convention. They certainly saw the protests outside. We handed

out lots of flyers to convention-goers. I know that there were a number in the room when I jumped up and grabbed the microphone.

What did you say? It wasn't reported in what I read. I'd only heard that someone had grabbed the microphone during the convention.

I said, "I'm here on behalf of the free speech protesters. The airwaves belong to the public, not to corporations!" and then [cups her hand over her mouth] security slapped a hand over my mouth and dragged me away—as I kept yelling.

Were you jailed?

Nope. I was just thrown out of the Moscone Center—carried out by a security guard. What was exciting too is that we made our own media. We had an independent media center that was based here at Media Alliance. We had a radio station streaming content onto the internet 24 hours a day. We wrote articles about what was happening. We had a lot of photos and video. We got lots of hits on our website. Lots of people saw what was going on through the media that we created.

[media]

the act of purchasing a carton of milk is now proof that the buyer is full of youthful playfulness, teenage trendiness and adult practicality.

Perhaps the best indicator of just how successful the ad campaign has become is the deluge of imitations and parodies. First came the disturbingly sexist shirts depicting large breasted bikini clad women who lent new meaning to the "Got Milk?" slogan. *Adbusters* magazine made a "Got Soy?" parody and the United Steelworkers of America sold "Got Union?" shirts at its 2000 International Convention. Perhaps the most well-known takeoffs have been People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' attempts to dissuade people from drinking milk with "Got Beer?" and "Got Prostate Cancer?" billboards, both of which were harshly criticized and quickly removed.

The overwhelming success of the "Got Milk?" campaign should be a warning signal for activists fighting the ever-increasing influence of corporate advertising on our culture and personal thoughts. The skyrocketing profits attributed to the "Got Milk?" ads will likely encourage producers of other generic ingredients and food staples to replicate the Dairy Council's strategy. At a time when sports teams play in stadiums named after banks and supposedly alternative or rebellious youth cultures are officially sponsored by shoe companies, branding basic food ingredients and other generic items is one more giant leap towards an advertising saturated and completely cross-marketed world. It's a claustrophobic world where we can't avoid manipulative inducements to shop and consume, and a world in which any organic idea, authentic emotion or inspired creative outpouring will be harnessed and warped to sell goods and services.

The Dairy Council will argue that they have no choice but to brand their product, since it's necessary to survive in the current commercial climate. While the ads undoubtedly bring in more sales, it's unlikely that people would stop consuming milk without them. My point is not to put dairy producers at a competitive disadvantage to other brand retailers like soda manufacturers by refusing them the right to develop a brand; instead, my point is to attack all branded items and the advertising industry in order to reduce our consumption of all products to times when we need or autonomously want them and not consume them out of the impulsiveness of manufactured desires. Milk, until the current campaign began, was a good example of that more natural mode of consumption.

While it is disturbing enough that advertising executives are creating branded identities around food staples, the milk campaign signals a number of additional distressing developments in the ways advertisers attempt to manipulate us into buying their clients' products. First, dozens of celebrities agreed to appear in the ads, donning silly white mustaches without compen-

sation, smug in the belief that they were using their mass appeal as a public service to convince people young and old to drink healthy, wholesome milk. Putting aside animal rights issues and the emerging evidence that milk is not nearly as healthy as previously claimed, these celebrities have unwittingly played a part in further branding the mental environment for the private profit of an industry. It would be positive for a famous athlete or leading politician to say, "Drink what is healthy, not what has the flashiest ad," but in the case of the milk campaign, they're simply helping to make more flashy ads and helping advertisers to further dominate our lives and thinking.

Most alarming of all is the fact that events and programs like the X Games are now willing to claim to be sponsored not just by a company, or by a trademarked brand-name product, but by anything at all. Gillette sponsors events, or the Gillette Mach 3 Razor sponsors an event, but razors in general don't sponsor events. If the Dairy Council can fund an event and leave its name completely out of the picture, instead claiming that milk sponsored the event, producers in other industries will seek similar opportunities, leading to branding campaigns even more deceptive and manipulative than the current ones.

Everyday objects in our lives become de facto brands when they are associated closely enough with company or industry promotions. When these mental relationships are cemented in consumers' minds, the mention of any type of good becomes an immediate advertisement for the brand name product. The gotmilk.com Web site brags of this already happening with small children. "We've even heard from consumers that their kids

come into the kitchen, cookie in hand, asking for a "glass of got milk?" Thinking about milk equals thinking about "Got Milk?," including all the aforementioned market techniques that induce someone to drink milk. This might seem innocuous enough in the case of milk, but the prospects of it as the newest marketing trend are chilling. If IKEA began an analogous campaign around chairs and was successful, the comment, "You can sit on the couch or in the chair," would become an advertisement for IKEA. Then come companies that provide services. What if cruise lines built a campaign based on their capacity to provide romance?

Are we likely to see flour and sugar get catchy radio jingles of their own? Are we going to be carpet-bombed with rock stars endorsing tarragon and other cooking spices? Will roofing nails and reams of paper suddenly reflect the personal convictions and lifestyle choices of the people who use them? I'll bet money on it unless we quickly develop an effective resistance movement to the corporate branding attack. Got spray paint? ★

The overwhelming success of the "Got Milk?" campaign should be a warning signal for activists fighting the ever-increasing influence of corporate advertising on our culture and personal thoughts.

What do you think we can expect from the FCC?

Nothing. I have no expectations of the FCC. I don't think any government agency has ever shown itself to be a friend of people who want to diversify and disseminate power into the hands of the general public. We lucked out with the FCC in that Chairman William Kennard got pissed off about the consolidation of the radio industry due to the Telecommunications Act. He saw low power FM as a way to allow minority broadcasters into the system. But Kennard is not great at all. There's discussion going on right now on access to high speed internet connections. It's an issue at stake in the Time Warner/AOL merger. He's not doing anything on that, and he probably won't do anything about that. It could unfortunately lead to the infrastructure of the world wide web becoming something very different from what it is right now. It would allow corporations to basically close it off. I expect the next FCC Chair, who will be appointed by the next president, will be worse. If you look at it historically, the FCC has almost never opposed the interests of the NAB. The FCC commissioners that have tried have paid a heavy price for doing so.

since they're so closely aligned with the NAB. What do you see as the best way to get these issues raised?

I think that what we need is a media democracy movement that is connected with the other social justice movements that are growing in the United States—like the anti-corporate globalization movement, the movement against the prison-industrial complex. People who have immense power don't just give it up. They have to be forced to give it up. The people who don't have the money to lobby extensively, do have the numbers—and we're far more creative and intelligent. We need actions that are actually going to force the powers that be to give up some of the media system's infrastructure to us. At the same time, I think we need to create our own viable alternatives—which people are doing by putting together the independent media centers and by starting micro-radio stations and micro TV stations. We're creating a whole independent media system to parallel the corporate media. ★

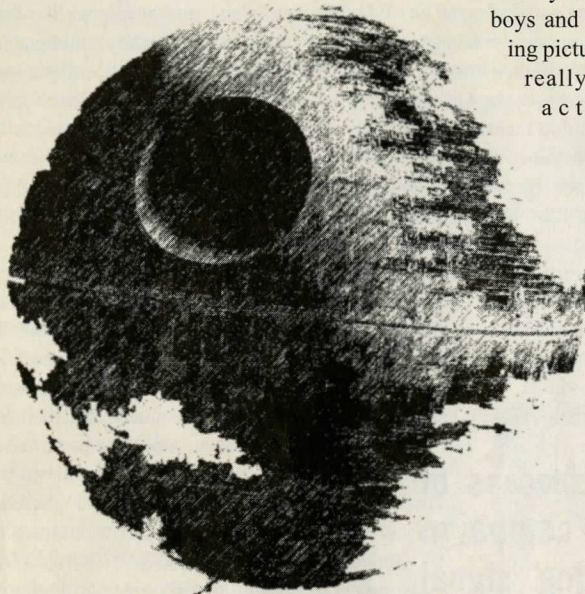
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It doesn't seem that protesting the FCC is going to make much of a difference

A few years back, I shared an apartment with a guy named John. John was a Star Wars fanatic. Before moving into that apartment, I'd seen all three Star Wars movies a few times and liked them, but I never thought too much about them. Right after the original Star Wars had come out, I had a baby-sitter who had sketched Luke Skywalker over a hundred times. Most of the sketches showed Luke holding the light saber in front of his face, blue eyes staring intently, hair feathered perfectly. After that, I thought of Star Wars fanatics as pimply, teenage girls who couldn't get dates so they'd spend Friday nights yelling at

seven-year-old boys and drawing pictures of really bad actors.



John, though, helped me to see the light.

John was definitely an atypical Star Wars fanatic. He was an ex-Marine, a veteran of the Gulf War, and the most competent man around women who I've ever met. To call John a womanizer or a player would demean his artistry. John never lied to or misled women. He was never cruel or condescending in any way. He dated more women over the course of two years than most men date in a lifetime, and I never heard any of them call him an asshole. He was just a cool, confident guy who never passed on an opportunity to ask out an attractive woman. He was kind of like a living Fonz, only without the whole 30-something man-hanging-out-with-high-school-kids creepiness about him. Yet, he still had a three-foot plastic Darth Vader in his closet. - in the original packaging, next to a box full of Obi-Wans, Stormtroopers (regular and white-caped for the snow), Luke Skywalkers (regular and Jedi-robed), Princess Leias, Boba Fetts, and so on. He hung Star Wars posters on the walls of our living room. He watched the trilogy with women whom he thought he might get serious with. He watched the movies alone. Often. It baffled me. I had to understand. I started watching with him. I asked questions, and he filled me in on the back story. He knew all the trivia about every sound effect and every planet and every character. Gradually, I came to understand.

Before written languages, oral cultures passed down epic tales. Everyone in the culture memorized the epic and, in that way, the culture passed its values down through the generations. We also can learn a great deal about ancient cultures by studying their epics. Humanities classes help us through the Iliad and the Odyssey and, through them, we learn about ancient Greek values. We understand ancient Greek navigational patterns and sexual practices and warring tactics. We understand ancient Greek governmental systems and religions. We can then move on to the Aeneid and figure out what the Roman Empire copied from the Greeks and what they held important on their own. We can learn a great deal about Middle Ages England from Arthurian legend. If we do enough research, we can find similar epic tales that existed everywhere from Ireland to Japan. But no true American epic ever existed. Longfellow tried it with his poem Hiawatha, but it didn't really catch on. And some could say that the Bible is our defining epic,

but I'm talking about epics that people not only know, but memorize, and how many people in our culture really know the Bible? If people say they do, ask them about the part where Rebecca lies on her back with her servant on top of her and her husband fucking her servant. I guarantee they won't recognize that part of the book. For a while, it looked like America would never have its Iliad or Odyssey. Then, in 1977, Star Wars came out. Everyone saw it. Everyone memorized it. It exemplified American values and allowed those values to be passed down through generations. Now we can study it and understand what those American values really are.

The first Star Wars movie is easy to dissect. A lot has changed in our society since 1977, and hindsight brings lucidity. The plot is classically American. You have an all-American kid, blond hair, blue eyes, working on a farm. The farm is on a planet called Tatooine. I'm not sure what

I've Got A Bad Feeling

The Phantom Menace and the *Star Wars*

I could've accepted the plot parallels between the selves. I could've accepted the parallels between those parallels had existed by themselves. When I my local library, checked out the *Phantom Menace*, ety. What I found shocked and amazed me.

language the word Tatooine comes from, but I know that it's a place with wide open spaces that make everything look dead. The people there struggle to grow food in overworked soil. Weird people drive around in big, rust-colored trucks and sell junk farm equipment that often breaks down before you get it home. And dangerous people live in the hills and they may just shoot you for driving through their towns. All of this leads me to believe that Tatooine translates to the stereotype of the Midwest. So in this stereotypical Midwest is this all-American boy who just wants to go into town to buy power converters (which may or may not be a Holley carburetor), when, out of nowhere, a war is thrust upon him and he has no choice other than to fight it. First, he needs a team, so he joins up with a small time punk who has a fast ride and loves to work on it, and the punk's buddy, a long-haired guy who doesn't say much, just hangs around and helps out in fights. The Midwest farm boy and his two greaser buddies then go off to war.

The bad guy is Darth Vader. You can tell he's a bad guy because he's trying to take over the Midwest, just like the Soviet Union was trying to do in the '70s (according to most people who lived in the Midwest in the '70s). So the blue-eyed, blond farm boy and the two greasers pick up a broad, fuck around in their hot rod for a while, then get down to the business of killing everyone in the evil empire. It's a simple Cold War tale. It reads like a National Security Council document from the 1950s. Good is purely good. Evil is purely evil. Everyone leaves feeling happy that the good guys spent all their money buying elaborate weapons.

The Empire Strikes Back continues the Cold War myth, going so far as to begin on a planet that is all ice, and ending with a main character frozen. Return of the Jedi admits that the Cold War has begun to thaw. Out of the ice surfaces cuddly creatures that appeal more to the lucrative children's market, and we all get stuck watching what seems like a Disney ending. It was a fitting way to swing us into the Reagan years full of national pride, lots of weapons, and unbridled consumerism. Hindsight makes all of this easy to see. What seemed to be hidden deeply in the camouflage of the day is now glaringly obvious in the same way that it's glaringly obvious now that Ronald Reagan wasn't really a president as much as he was an actor who the Republican Party hired to play president. The values of the *Phantom Menace* may be hidden as deeply in the

camouflage, but as a kid who has grown up on the first three Star Wars movies, and as an adult who has experienced the secondhand Star Wars fanaticism, I'm more prepared to see what's going on underneath the Phantom Menace.

Shortly after the Phantom Menace came out, I ran into an old friend of mine, Todd. Todd and I had gone to graduate school together, and we currently write for the same magazine. We tend to agree on most political and social issues, so when something new surfaces, we like to approach the subject and compare notes, to check to see if the opinions we have formed separately are still similar. Running into Todd last summer and finally getting a chance to sit down and chat with him, one of the first things he asked me was, "How did you like the new Star Wars?"

"I liked it," I said, because I did. I don't want all of my criticism in this article to give you the impression that I hated the movie. I liked it.

About This:

Trilogy as an Extended Allegory for the American Midwest
Phantom Menace and the WTO riots if they'd existed by themselves, an elected queen and an American election ruled by royalty if combined the two, I became mildly obsessed, went down to and proceeded to look for more insight into our modern soci-

by Sean Carswell

"Really? I had real problems with it," Todd said.

I asked him what the problems were. He answered by asking me to describe the plot to him. "You've seen it?" I asked.

"Yeah. I just want you to put the plot in your own words."

So I thought about it for a while and said, "A greedy Trade Federation forces a trade embargo on another planet which causes that planet's people to starve, so a couple of Jedi nights go to the greedy planet's leaders and try to work out a settlement and when they can't, they bring the queen of the second planet before a Congress that does nothing so everybody fights in the end." I paused, thought about what I'd said, and said, "That's pretty much it, isn't it?"

Todd nodded. "Not a very good plot, is it?"

Well, no, it's not a very good plot. But I didn't want to admit that, so I scowled and shut up and waited until Thanksgiving weekend, when the leaders of a greedy trade organization got together to force embargoes which would result in people starving and our leaders and congress did nothing about it, so everyone fought. This time, though, it was no movie. It was a protest against the World Trade Organization, and it was very exciting. I couldn't help drawing parallels between the Battle in Seattle and the Phantom Menace. I called up Todd and finally made my counterpoint. He called me a fanatic but agreed to watch the flick again when it came out in video.

I, myself, was slow to rent the movie again, mostly because I don't rent movies all that often, and usually when I do, I like to rent things I haven't seen yet. Also, I'll admit it, I was afraid of genuinely becoming a fanatic.

Then, I saw a picture of Natalie Portman on the cover of some magazine. It sat in a rack next to a magazine with George W. Bush on the cover. It reminded me of something that had bothered me about the movie when I saw it in the theaters last summer. What bothered me was Queen Amidala, Natalie Portman's character. It didn't bother me that the nation was ruled by a 14-year-old girl. I could suspend disbelief on that. What bothered me was that she was both a queen and an elected official. I couldn't understand that. How does a democracy have royalty? Isn't everyone equal in a democracy? Shouldn't a person's bloodline have nothing to do with her ability to rule a country? And if that's the case, then isn't it either a ridicu-

lous coincidence or a sign that something is seriously corrupt with the electoral process if a country elects a ruler based on who her parents were? This threw me off right away last summer. Now, one year later, I'm living in a democracy where supposedly no royalty exists and bloodlines have nothing to do who gets elected as the ruler, yet, after the first Tuesday in this coming November, my ruler will either be the son of a former president or the son of a former senator from Tennessee. So now Queen Amidala really pisses me off because she translates as either King George W. (and remember, it was a King George from whom Americans first fought to free themselves) or King Al Jr.

I could've accepted the plot parallels between the Phantom Menace and the WTO riots if they'd existed by themselves. I could've accepted the parallels between an elected queen and an American election ruled by royalty if those parallels had existed by themselves. When I

combined the two, I became mildly obsessed, went down to my local library, checked out the Phantom Menace, and proceeded to look for more insight into our modern society. What I found shocked and amazed me.

The first very telling thing about American culture came when the Jedis found themselves on Tatooine. The Trade Federation had already landed on Naboo and took over the people there. The people of Naboo were suffering greatly. The Gungans, hidden in their underwater ghetto, were in a great deal of danger. The Jedis and

Queen Amidala were on their way to the Senate to clear everything up when the hyperdrive generator on their ship blew out. The Jedis and the queen landed on Tatooine and found a trader, Watto, who had the hyperdrive that they needed. Watto, however, wouldn't accept the currency that the Jedi offered him. This launched the Jedis and the queen into a long, complex, and extremely risky plan that included putting a young boy's life in extreme danger. The likelihood of the plan actually working was also very low, but the Jedis and the queen (and the young boy's mother) saw no other choice, so they went through with their plan. Now, I understand that all of this is necessary, in the context of the movie, for the advancement of the plot. I accept that. My problem, though, is that I see another choice. They have money. Watto just won't accept it. The part that they need is right in front of them. Watto's ownership is the only thing that kept them from taking it, fixing their ship, ending the suffering of half the people on a planet, and preventing the other half of the planet from being taken over. Doesn't it make a hell of a lot more sense for the Jedis to just take the part, fix the ship, and leave the planet? Yes, they would be stealing the part, but, ethically speaking, what's more important: paying a man the proper amount of money for something in his possession, or ending the suffering of the masses and protecting the life of one young boy? The answer is clear in America. It's more important to pay for property. Money always takes precedence over the well-being of the masses. That's the way the system is set up. America is not a humanitarian country. It's a capitalist country. The great majority of laws and legislation are geared towards protecting property at the expense of the people. That's why it's the only industrialized nation in the world that doesn't have a universal health care system. That's why law enforcement and prisons siphon so much money away from education. That's why no dole exists for the downtrodden, but McDonald's gets millions of dollars to bring Chicken McNuggets to China. That's why unions have been crushed. Qui-Gon Jinn knows this, so he doesn't even contemplate taking the hyperdrive generator. Instead, he puts a boy's life at stake and leaves everyone else to starve. And when it's all said and done, they pay the man. Like good Americans.

The precarious plan that the Jedis and queen subject the boy to involves a pod race that's straight out of NASCAR, right down to the

smarmy, catch-phrase-obsessed color commentator, the fat guy in the sky box, and the dangerous hill people hanging out in the infield. Essentially, Qui-Gon Jinn bets his ship and the future of the people of Naboo on the pod race. They enlist the help of the slave boy, Anakin Skywalker. The fact that Anakin is a slave brings about two interesting parallels. First, the queen responds to Anakin's slave status by saying that she didn't think slavery existed anymore. But she's a queen. Shouldn't she be up on foreign affairs? It reminds me of the time Kathie Lee Gifford supposedly first heard that her line of clothes was made in Southeast Asian sweatshops. Kathie acted as if she hadn't known all along, as if she couldn't possibly share in the blame. But she sponsored those clothes. Shouldn't she have known something was up when she was paid millions of dollars to endorse clothes that sold for 10 bucks, retail? Of course slavery still exists in the galaxy. It doesn't matter if it's Naboo, Tatooine, or Manhattan, if people live in castles and don't have to work, of course there's a slave whose work fuels that economic inequality.

Qui-Gon Jinn and the queen tell Anakin that they're not on Tatooine to free the slaves. They're more interested in affairs at home, which, in all fairness, need their immediate attention. Qui-Gon Jinn does free Anakin, though, after Anakin wins the pod race. The rest of the slaves in the Tatooine ghetto, though, the slaves who don't demonstrate a proficiency in pod racing, are left to wallow in their poverty, doomed to a crushing fate if they try to escape the ghetto. Again, this is awfully similar to American ghettos where kids who show some proficiency in a spectator sport are freed from their impoverished fate while the rest of the poor are left to wallow helpless in the ghetto. The rest of the poor in American ghettos also tend to be doomed to a crushing fate if they try to escape (unlike the internal bomb the Tatooines use, Americans use the prison industrial complex).

The last, glaring America/Tatooine parallel comes with Anakin's freedom. Qui-Gon Jinn is incredibly impressed with Anakin. Anakin has volunteered his pod and his pod race talents and asked for nothing in return. Anakin's spectator sport success directly aids Qui-Gon Jinn on his mission. Anakin proves to be a smart, good-natured and selfless kid. His unique talents make him a perfect candidate for Jedi training. Qui-Gon Jinn even believes that Anakin is the chosen one. Yet, before Qui-Gon Jinn barter for this amazing kid's freedom, he gives the kid a blood test. How representative of the '90s is that? In a society so obsessed with the contents of a person's blood and urine that the results of a blood or urine test are more important in the hiring process than a person's intelligence, good attitude, work ethic, unique talents and education, I guess it just makes sense that our heroes and saviors should have to stand up to a blood test, too. I guess it's not so absurd if the practice started long ago in a galaxy far, far away.

The parallels between Tatooine and America are most likely unintentional. George Lucas, when writing the Phantom Menace, probably tried to create a bizarre and imaginative world, and to make this world believable, he anchored it in the society surrounding him. It is not my contention that Lucas was attempting to suggest to his viewers that money is more important than people; that royalty generally maintains power, even in a democracy; that most kids in the ghetto won't make it out of the ghetto unless they're great athletes; or that blood and urine tests are the best ways to screen employees. More likely than not, these are all cases of a society's values being so ingrained in a writer that he doesn't realize he is promulgating them.

When the main characters reach the Senate, though, Lucas is clearly taking overt political jabs. Shortly after arriving on galactic capital of Coruscant, Queen Amidala is informed, "There is no civility, only politics... the Senate is full of greedy, squabbling delegates. There is no interest in the common good." Also, the Supreme Chancellor (the president) has "little real power. He is mired by baseless accusations of corruption." This isn't subtle. This isn't a hidden meaning. This is authorial intrusion. The movie even goes on to show the actions of the Senate, which essentially amount to a group of bureaucrats who respond to crimes against humanity by appointing a committee whose job it is to do nothing. The bureaucrats are all on the payroll of the Trade Federation. This isn't just a parallel to the legislative and executive branches of the Ameri-

So I put this equation together: forced to live in crappy, unnatural conditions plus receiving all the negative aspects and none of the positive aspects of a global economy equals working class. So, of course, when it all comes down to the battle, who has to actually fight it? Is it the poor, invisibly suffering Naboo middle class? Of course not. It's the Gungans. The working class fighting a war to keep the rich in power.

can government. This is a direct attack.

It's probably no coincidence, either, that the man who turns out to be the purely evil force in the galaxy is a politician battling for free trade.

What really breaks my heart about the parallels between the Phantom Menace and the society I live in, though, is the battle at the end. More specifically, what breaks my heart is the role of the Gungans in the battle at the end. When Jar Jar Binks first entered the movie, I noticed his Jamaican accent. I wondered at first if the Gungans, then, were supposed to relate to the Jamaicans in the same stereotypical ways that the greedy businessmen of the Trade Federation had Japanese accents and the gangster/junk merchant had an Italian accent. I also thought that the Gungans might be Jamaican because their ears look a lot like the hairstyle of a rasta guy who lived in my old neighborhood in Atlanta. The more I thought about it, though, the more I realized that a direct line couldn't necessarily be drawn between the Jamaicans and the Gungans. The Gungans relate to a broader demographic.

The Gungans are innocent bystanders forced into a battle, unlike either the people who live within the Trade Federation or the people of Naboo. Throughout the movie, we are told that the people of Naboo are starving and otherwise suffering, but we don't ever see any of the people of Naboo, with the exception of their politicians. We have no idea what a town in Naboo looks like, what the customs of Naboo are, or what the overall quality of living in Naboo was before the Trade Federation came along. All we know is that the people of Naboo are starving due to an invasion by the Trade Federation. Therefore, in the context of the movie, the Trade Federation is bad. But we don't know anything about the Federation, either, except that two of their leaders are unethical men. But is there more to the actions of the Trade Federation? We don't know. It reminds me of the popular American reaction to the bombing of Yugoslavia last year (right around the time the Phantom Menace hit theaters). We knew that the people of Kosovo were starving and otherwise suffering, but we didn't ever see much of them. The mainstream media didn't explain much about the Kosovar refugees, what their lives were like, what their customs were, or anything like that. Likewise, the people of Yugoslavia and the nature of their conflict with the Kosovars was completely ignored. The mass media presented only one important bit of information: that Milosovic was the next Hitler. Therefore, we knew that the Kosovars were good and the Slavs were bad. The movie, the American government, and mass media demanded that we not ask any more about the situation. Good is purely good. Evil is purely evil. There is no room in between for questioning the powers that be. I know this, though. I know that the leaders of Naboo, the Trade Federation, Yugoslavia, and America all let people under their jurisdiction starve. All of them do. I know this, too. I know that Yugoslavia, at least, has universal health care.

I digress. We're talking about the Gungans, here, and what breaks my heart about their part in the battle. The Gungans, unlike the people of

Naboo and the Trade Federation, are suffering. We can see that. We can see that the Gungans have been forced to live underwater even though they are clearly not aquatic creatures. And this is before political disputes between the Naboo and the Trade Federation bring on the invasion. We can also see that the resolution of the trade disputes won't make life any better for the Gungans, but their quality of life will continue to get worse until the disputes are resolved. So I put this equation together: forced to live in crappy, unnatural conditions plus receiving all the negative aspects and none of the positive aspects of a global economy equals working class. So, of course, when it all comes down to the battle, who has to actually fight it? Is it the poor, invisibly suffering Naboo middle class? Of course not. It's the Gungans. The working class fighting a war to keep the rich in power. Queen Amidala's plan couldn't be more transparent, too. Essentially, her plan calls for the Gungans to walk out into a field and get shot at and die until she can get back into her castle. What the hell kind of plan is that? Where are the middle and upper classes of Naboo? They benefit from the global economy. Why don't they stand out in the field and get shot? They're the ones who are so dependent upon trade that they can't even feed themselves on a lush, green planet like Naboo. Why the hell don't they fight their own fights? Why do the poor bastards who get nothing from the government always have to die for the government? Why is it always the working class?

Queen Amidala gets into her castle, though. She remembers the Gungans. She treats them well. The movie ends before she can force them all back into the swamps. This allows me to calm down and remind myself that, by and large, it's just a movie.

All of this begs questions about life imitating art and about the intentions of the author. Neither of these questions interests me too much.

As I mentioned earlier, I don't believe most of these parallels are intentional constructs of George Lucas. The subtle ideas hidden in the Phantom Menace exist in the movie because they exist all around us. By and large, they are rarely articulated notions that lead to a number of the problems that our society faces today. The solutions to these problems exist just as subtly, though, in all four Star Wars movies. They're packed in a little frame and given a number: R2-D2.

Think of that little guy. In the first movie, he introduced Luke to Obi Wan. He delivered the blueprints of the Death Star to the rebel forces. Then, he rode shotgun on the ship that destroyed the Death Star. He even stopped the trash compactor from crushing all the protagonists. In the second movie, he drove Luke Skywalker to Yoda and went through Jedi training with him. In the third movie, he helped spring Han Solo and Princess Leia from the grips of Jaba the Hutt, and he picked the lock to the shield generator, which allowed Lando Calrissian to blow up the Death Star again. In the fourth movie, he restored the protective shield to the escape ship, he jacked up the hot rod pod, and he made it possible for Anakin to blow up the droid ship, thereby disabling all the warriors who were killing the Gungans. Basically, of all the protagonists of all the Star Wars movies, R2-D2 was the hero. He saved everyone's ass and no one saved his. And no one ever really acknowledged him as anything more than a cute bucket of metal. R2-D2 teaches us, though, that the unrecognized little guy has all power. He builds and fixes things. He's a courier, navigator, mechanic, student, radical and electrical technician; he's a laborer and a grunt. His ability to do the actual work and apply himself to a cause allows him to win his freedom. To hell with the soldiers and politicians. Everything depends upon that little guy. ★

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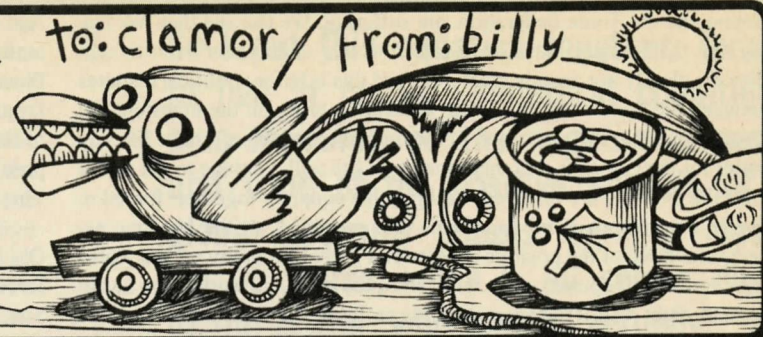
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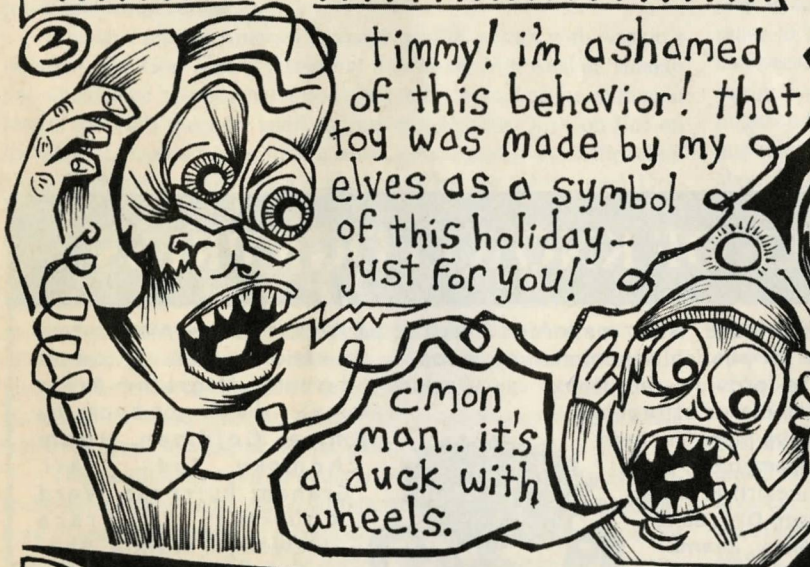
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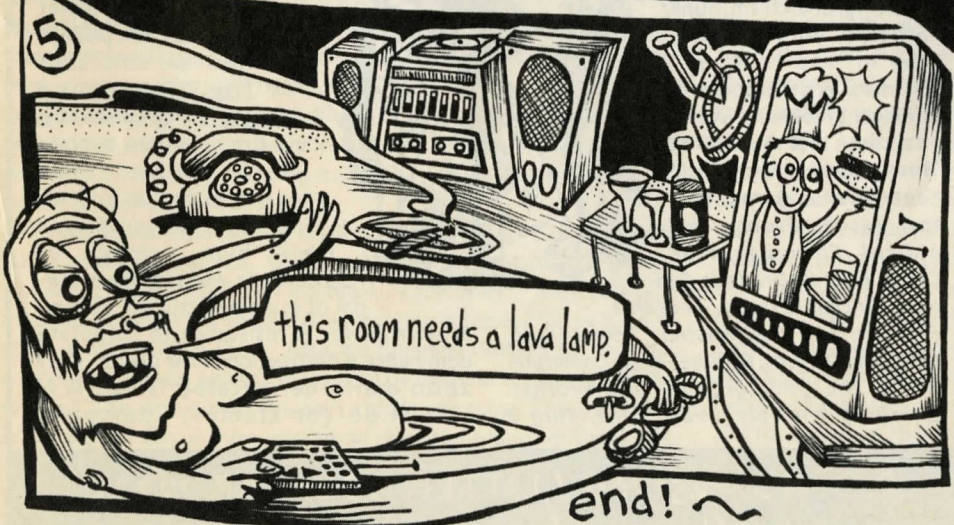
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c'mon man.. it's a duck with wheels.

ive had it with this selfishness! expect a dirty lump of coal next time, brat!!

5



end! ~

WRITE ME FOR COMIX!

TILE COMIX

billy mckay

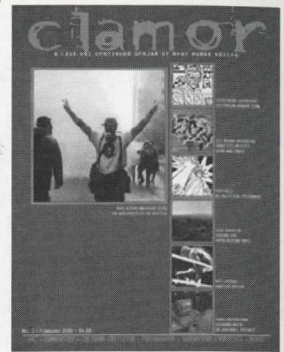
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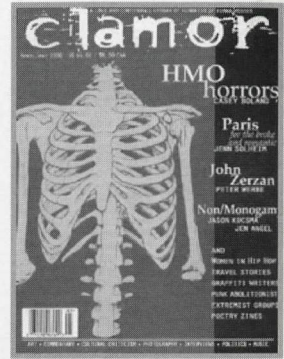
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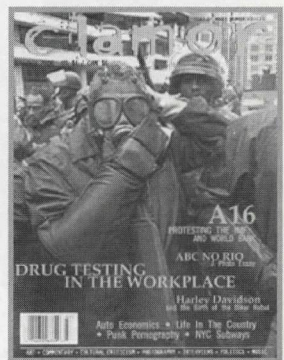
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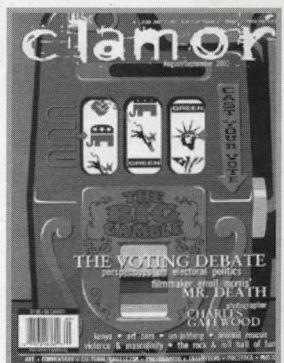
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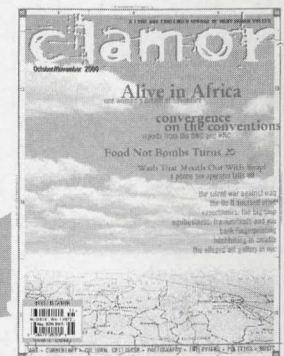
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Critical Theory of Masculinity, Adult Liberation,
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"If we just look inside each one of us, a thousand rebellions sleep
... I will try everything to kill the sleeping cop in me."
"Chorus of One," Strike Anywhere, 2000