

A LOUD AND CONTINUOUS UPROAR OF MANY HUMAN VOICES

clamor

June/July 2000 US \$4 / CAN \$6

A16

PROTESTING THE IMF
AND WORLD BANK

ABC NO RIO

A Photo Essay

DRUG TESTING IN THE WORKPLACE

Harley Davidson
and the Birth of the Biker Rebel

Auto Economics • Life In The Country
• Punk Pornography • NYC Subways



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grapeOS

[the boys are back in town with four
new songs]



Reflector

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CD/LP \$9.00/\$7.00

Status Recordings

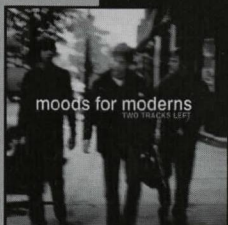
[Often compared to Hoover and Sunny
Day Real Estate, Reflector rocks out!]

Moods For Moderns
"Two Tracks Left"

CDep/12-IN \$6.00 each

Doghouse Records

[ex-empire state games]



m.i.j.

"The Radio Goodnight"

CD/LP \$9.00/\$7.00

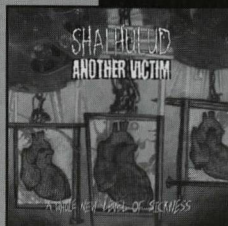
Caulfield Records

[Impressive expanding power-trio with
roots in high energy, melodic post-punk.]

Shai Hulud/Another Victim
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Trustkill Records

[fury from two of hardcore's best]



At The Drive In/Sunshine

split

MCD/12" \$8.00/\$6.00

Big Wheel Recreation

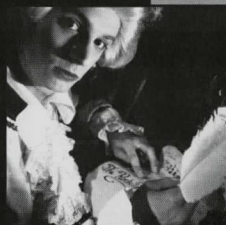
[progressive-aggressive rock]

Botch
"We Are The Romans"

CD/LP \$9.00/\$10.00

Hydra Head Records

[evil math rock]



Piebald

"The Rock Revolution..."

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Big Wheel Recreation

[catchy indie-pop]



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D I S T R I B U T I O N

[P.O. Box 434]

[Toledo, OH 43697-0434]

[Phone: (419) 726-3930]

[Fax: (419) 726-3935]

[E-mail: info@lumberjack-online.com]

[On The World Wide Web: www.lumberjack-online.com]

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EDITORS

Jen Angel • Jason Kucsma

PROOFREADERS

Vincent Romano, Kristen Schmidt, Mike Wendling

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Jen Angel • Jason Kucsma

COVER PHOTO

courtesy of Independent Media Center
www.indymedia.org

ADVERTISING

rates and deadlines available upon request.
please call 419-353-7035

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Jim Engel, Pete Menchetti, Brian Edge, Paul Kucsma Keith Myers, and Advertisers

PRINTING:

consultation/service facilitation by
Chris Geib at Fast Company
525 Ridge Street, Bowling Green, OH 43402
419-354-3278

CLAMOR is a bi-monthly magazine. Single copies are \$4 ppd and 6 issue subscriptions are \$20 ppd in the US (Outside of the US single issues are \$6 and 6-issue subscription is \$30 in US Funds). Checks may be made payable to *Become The Media*.

BACK ISSUES are available for the standard single copy rate.

DISTRIBUTION:

Clamor is distributed to stores and distributors by Big Top Newsstand Services, 1990 Lombard St. Suite 100, San Francisco, CA 94123, 415-447-4284, info@bigtoppubs.com

CLAMOR MAGAZINE

Post Office Box 1225
Bowling Green OH 43402
clamormagazine@hotmail.com
www.clamormagazine.org
419-353-9266 / 419-353-7035

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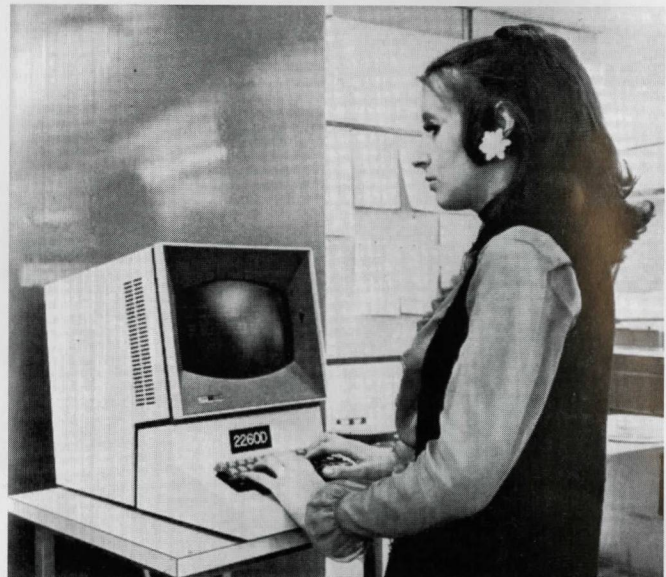
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**IF THEY HAD KNOWN
WHAT WE WOULD
DO WITH IT, THEY
WOULD HAVE NEVER
INVENTED IT.**



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Letters

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

clamor,

I was forwarded something quite strange today. It seems you have run a review of Robin Hahnel's "Panic Rules!" in your magazine. I heard it was a very positive review (which is great, I loved the book). I also heard that the reviewer made this final remark:

"Yes, hard core anarchists and marxists beware--Hahnel isn't reaching the overthrow of capitalism. In fact, he believes it can function in a way to truly benefit everyone."

This is, of course, patently false. I don't pretend to speak for Hahnel but anyone who has read anything at all from him knows that he says no such thing. Anywhere. In fact he spends a considerable amount of time criticizing capitalism. He even developed, along with Michael Albert, an alternative economic model which would quite please anarchists (and perhaps even Marxists). It's called Participatory Economics. I encourage you guys to read about this economic vision and perhaps even review some of the books about it (Looking Forward, South End Press or Political Economy of Participatory Economics, Princeton University Press). You can also read about it online at www.parecon.org.

Nevertheless, I am quite happy you guys reviewed his book, favorably too.

Best regards,
Jean-Rene David

clamor,

wow. I just bought your second issue at the newstand and I am excited about clamor in a big way. I said an especially big Right On when I read the articles on sexuality, love and non/monogamy. Thanks for getting that dialog out in the world in a slick glossy format. yum. I have renewed delight in hanging out at the newstand again!

Libby

clamor,

I'm sorry not to have responded earlier but opposite to most other people my CFIDS has only left me one gear. I have to manage my little remaining energy very carefully. Trying to keep my mailorder going, helping at our local @ infoshop are my priorities. Unfortunately reading all the material that is sent has to come later nowadays.

I received *clamor* #1 all right. I expected something professional and it looks even better than I thought it would. The advertising is indeed minimal too (but not absent). I haven't read all of it (maybe 50%) but I guess I can say the content of what I did read leaves me with ambiguous feelings. The article about internet-safety was excellent, very revealing (and affirms my nightmares). I appreciated Jane's honesty (something I'll be able to talk about when she

hopefully visits) and some other columns. Other stuff I didn't like at all (e.g. Matt's piece about boxing).

I usually promote/encourage collective zines but from what I've seen now, *Clamor* is TOO diverse. There's no focus really. Everything, all subjects are lumped together. I mean: an average person will be interested in 30%, the next one in another 30%, etc. That would be OK if the price wasn't that steep. Unfortunately it costs a lot (more than any other zine I know) for people here. I would have preferred a bit less quality (of printing I mean) and more focus. I'd also like to state that I don't understand why you have to pay the contributors?... It also appears too regularly, I think: the readers won't have had time to digest the first issue and the next 2 or 3 are already there.

It's definitely a zine that I would like to READ if it was a bit cheaper and didn't appear that regularly. A person in my condition is stressed to keep up the pace whereas I could well do with a break or time/ room for something else. *Clamor* is not alone in the zine-world after all.

Thanks for letting me still feel part of our community... Take care!
Brob (Tilt!)

Corrections

The photos accompanying "Coney Island, The Cylcone and Mom" (April/May 2000) were accidentally unattributed. The photos were taken by Gabi Moisan. She can be contacted at suzukibeane@earthlink.net

clamor contributors

In addition to being your virtual tourguide to New York's literal underground, **Fred Argoff** (p. 78) also publishes a zine called *Brooklyn*. He can be reached care of *clamor*.

Robert Augman (p. 22) is a volunteer and coordinator of the Civic Media Center, a non-profit reading room and library of the non-corporate press in Gainesville, FL. He also publishes the zine *My Views Change Over Time* and the pamphlet *Anarchy: The Way I See It*. You can write him at: PO Box 2671, Gainesville, FL 32602-2671.

Nathan Berg (p. 28) is a writer, activist and a chef, not necessarily in that order. You can contact him care of *clamor*.

Chris(tine) Boarts Larson (p. 35) has been documenting the punk scene photographically and publishing a free zine called *Slug and Lettuce* for over a decade. Her photographs of urban and rural decay were compiled in a photo essay in the first issue of *clamor*. You can write her directly at PO Box 2632, Richmond, VA 23261-6632.

Davida Gypsy Breier (p. 74) works for The Vegetarian Resource Group as a writer, webmistress, and answerer of questions. When not cleaning up after her bad little dogs she publishes *Leeking Ink*, (a per-zine) *Xerox Debt*, (a review zine) and *The Glovebox Chronicles* (a car zine). She can be reached at PO Box 963, Havre de Grace, MD 21078

Carissa (p. 73) edits the zine *Screams from Inside*. She can be reached care of *clamor*.

Basil Elias (p. 14) is a truth-seeker, someone who wants justice, an end to oppression, and to fill his heart with love. He works on many projects including *The Planting Seeds Community Awareness* project, as well as writing and healing. See the Planting Seeds ad in this issue for contact info.

Evan Endicott (p. 7) is currently a third-year subject in the great mind-control experiment known as "University Education." Headquartered in lovely Evanston, IL ("The birthplace of prohibition"), Evan spends most of his free time irritating uptight locals with late-night electric guitar insanity. His article on employee drug testing in this issue was written under the influence of "Premiers Symptoms," a collection of early singles by the French electro-funk duo AIR. You can reach Evan at e-endicott@nwu.edu.

Mike Fournier's zine, *Frame 609*, tells lots o' stories similar to the one contained herein somewhere (p. 80). Mike lives in Boston and finds it really difficult to write about himself in the third person. If you have hints, you can contact him at mikel26@juno.com. ✓

Travis Fristoe (p. 30) lives in Gainesville, Florida & admits that the Wal-Mart story is more of a rambling book review than incisive article. Maybe next time. You can reach him at obscurist@hotmail.com

Jane Graham (p. 44) lives in Copenhagen, Denmark and is the author of *Floozy*, published by Slab-o-Concrete which is a brash tale of sleazy strip clubs, hitch-hiking and Northern England. She publishes a zine, *Shag Stamp* and is a performer, sometimes under the alter ego of Minx Grill, doing a mix of comedy, story telling and burlesque. She is currently working on a novel set in the lapdancing clubs of Europe. Contact her at janeminx@yahoo.com

Robert Helms (p. 52) hails from Philadelphia and edits a jobzine about selling your body for money called *Guinea Pig Zero*. You can reach him care of *clamor*.

Je-Free (p. 68) lives in Florida and does several zines including *No Power to the Little People*. Contact him at rhythmless@hotmail.com

Jenell Johnson (p. 67) is just about ready to immerse herself in an unspecified number of years in graduate school, studying English and communication theory at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She's still actively

involved in punk, and has done more bad fanzines than she's likely to admit to. Contact her at jenelljohnson@hotmail.com.

Loolwa Khazzoom (p. 42, 71) is a published author, and the editor of Behind the Veil of Silence: Arabic and Iranian Jewish Women Speak Out, an anthology. She is also a self-defense instructor with Women Defending Ourselves; and has done ground-breaking work as a Jewish multicultural educator, founding organizations in California and New York and offering workshops internationally. Loolwa Khazzoom also is a musician. She has performed original rock and traditional Middle Eastern and North African Jewish music locally. She currently is putting together an original band, Grrl Monster! See more of her work at www.loolwa.com.

Amanda Luker (p. 69) currently lives in Minneapolis, working as a cook, an editor and a freelance writer. She does a small zine called *Eyes on the Street*, available for \$1 pp. Contact her at mndonx@aol.com.

Andrew McLeod (p. 20) is a co-op geek in the process of moving to Olympia, Washington after a self-imposed exile in Alaska. He may be reached at amcl@iww.org.

All of **Richard Opalsky's** (p. 18) 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

Mike Q. Roth (p. 50) hails from Pittsburgh and has been known to make up one half of the editorial staff of the zine *Here Be Dragons*. He is also involved in the Mr. Roboto Project, a punk rock show space and zine library. He can be reached at PO Box 8131, Pittsburgh, PA 15217.

Billy Tile (p. 57) self-publishes several independent comics including *Tile* and *Invisible Robot Fish*. Contact him at BillyCSQP@aol.com.

Mike Wendling (p. 47) lives in Montgomery, AL where he is a reporter for a news wire service. He can be reached at mikewendling@hotmail.com. ✓

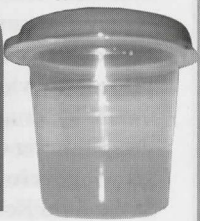
Peter Werbe (p. 39) is a staff member of the *Fifth Estate*, the longest publishing English-language anarchist newspaper in American history. Sample copies are available from 4632 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48201. Peter is also the Public Affairs Director for WCSX-FM and WRIF-FM in Detroit. His interviews are broadcast via the internet at wcsx.com and wrif.com in Real Audio, Sundays at 7am and 11pm EST, respectively.

Shawn Wilbur (p. 54) is an anarchist bookseller and proprietor of Pauper's Books. He can be reached at the bookstore 206 North Main Street, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402/419.352.2163.

Part intellectual, part hippie, and part redneck, **Theo Witsell** (p. 58) co-runs Tree of Knowledge Press, a publishing and distribution outfit for alternative media projects. He is currently co-editing a book called *The DIY Guide* and finishing up the new issue of his zine *Spectacle*. When necessary, he scrounges his living working as a botanist. If not out roaming the woods in search of rare plants or staring shamefully at the pile of old mail, he spends his time writing, building stuff, gardening, tracking mountain lions, and hanging out with his partner Tanya. He shares fifty acres in the Ouachita Mountains of west-central Arkansas with his dog Bobby, a mess of cats, some chickens, a black widow spider, and the wildlife. Write him at p.o. box 251766 / Little Rock, AR 72135 / theo_witsell@yahoo.com.

evan endicott
photographs of model Renee Cavallario by
Jen Engel and Jason Kucsma

chemical mccarthyism



drug testing in the american workplace

A few months ago, I applied for a job with a new telecommunications company in Chicago. Because the company had just started up, they were hiring anyone they could find who seemed capable of shucking HBO and the like to high-rise apartment dwellers, and I figured I fit the bill. A number of my friends had started at the company doing door-to-door sales during the summer, and had made thousands of dollars already. I noticed that my wallet had lost some serious weight since my return to school, and figured it was time to look for a new career, since my current job at the student center paid a painful \$6 per hour. I sent in a resume, breezed through an interview, and was already spending the fortunes I planned on making when I was hit with the dreaded message from my supervisor:

"So, everything looks in order. Just need to schedule you for a routine drug test and then we can get you into our training program."

Uh, pardon me? My friends hadn't made any mention of this. Fortunately, I had a week or so to prepare, and prepare I did—I resisted the temptations waved in front of my nose by my stoner buddies, drank water like a marathon runner who'd sprung a leak, and ate vitamins and cranberry supplements to "cleanse" my tainted system. Still, I was a nervous wreck when the time arrived to make my bodily donation to science.

The lab that conducted my test was a shady walk-up in a seedy downtown district, operated by three employees whose medical qualifications seemed dubious at best. After a brief wait I was ushered into a room to fill out a stack of forms, a process I had to postpone, owing to the gallon of water I'd guzzled on the way to the testing facility. The nurse obliged

and took me next door, where I was handed a plastic cup and told to "produce a sample."

I don't know how many of you have ever been forced to urinate in front of an absolute stranger before, but it's just a tad embarrassing. It didn't help that the nurse looked like Norman Bates in his Mama get-up, either, or that the sample container was the size of a Dixie cup. Fortunately, I had to go so bad that I didn't really have time to be mortified, so I delivered a sample promptly and was sent on my way. As I walked out the door, a lab technician shouted, "Good luck!"—a comment I found disconcerting. After all, what did luck have to do with science?

As it turns out, quite a bit (urinalysis isn't quite the exact science some proponents would have you believe). I ended up "passing" the test, but my experience left me wondering about the logic of urinalysis. I was indeed a drug user (abuser, according to the Republican regime that first recommended drug testing in the workplace) and I had managed to get the job anyway. And the test hadn't altered my behavior one bit—in fact, as soon as I found out the results I lit up a celebratory spliff and chuckled at my accomplishment. So why have pre-employment drug tests? Do they really benefit employers? Do they really keep employees on the straight and narrow?

I decided to find out why innocent (and not-so-innocent) Americans were having their urine ritually collected and analyzed for traces of mind-altering chemicals. The results of my search were startling, and prompted me to put this article together so that the vile practice of pre-employment pee inspection could be exposed for what it really is. To begin with, a little history lesson is in order.

Employees subject to drug tests must report any prescription medicines they use.

THE COLD WAR VOID: "We need a new enemy, Mr. President. Those damn Russians have given up the fight!"

With the fall of the Evil Empire in the mid-'80s, America faced a grim future. The villainous specter of nuclear annihilation no longer kept the unstable populace united in fear of imminent death, and the Republican regime, led by Ron and Nancy Reagan, was scrambling for a new disease to blame the country's social ills on. But what evil could possibly replace those vicious Commies in the Kremlin?

Why, drugs, of course. It had been awhile since the mass drug hysteria of the '30s and '40s, and Americans had been growing increasingly tolerant of illicit substances. Just look at the Acid Revolution of the '60s, the cocaine-fueled discos of the '70s, and the crack-ridden ghettos of the '80s—yes, Americans had forgotten about the sinister substances lurking right around the corner from their suburban homes and schoolyards. Ron and Nancy decided to put a stop to this. Nancy's contribution was the intelligence-insulting "Just Say No!" campaign, which produced some of my childhood's most hilarious television commercials ("I learned it by watching you, dad!") and tried to convince people that drugs like marijuana were just as harmful as physically addictive narcotics like heroin and cocaine. Ronnie's efforts were not nearly as laughable.

Chief among them was the workplace drug-testing program designed by J. Michael Walsh (director of the Division of Applied Research and the Office of Workplace Initiatives at NIDA, the National Institute on Drug Abuse) and championed by Reagan and Bush throughout their respective terms in office.

The gist of the program (which remains unchanged today) is simple: drug users, whether crack addicts or weekend marijuana smokers, make less productive workers than their "straight" counterparts. Among the statistics "cited" by the Reagan-Bush administrations during their efforts to instate workplace testing were the following:

Drug users...

- have 2.5 times more absences

- are 3.6 times more likely to be involved in a workplace accident
- are 5 times more likely to file a worker compensation claim
- use 3 times more health benefits...than non-users.

The bottom line for any government statistic is, of course, money. And according to Reagan, the cost of drug abuse to U.S. Industry during the '80s was roughly \$50 billion a year. Bush revised this total in 1989, asserting that the figure had risen to somewhere near \$100 billion. Whatever the cost, the answer was clear—pre-employment testing should be instituted in both private and public industry, and random tests should be admitted to keep the workplace "drug-free."

WEIRD SCIENCE

The interesting thing about the figures cited by the Republicans is that no one knows where they came from. The statistics were usually quoted without any citation at all. When pressed for answers, the right-wing attributed its stats to the mysterious "Firestone Study." It has a nice ring to it, sure, but when the ACLU began researching the study for their September 1999 report (entitled *Drug Testing: A Bad Investment*), they ran into a major roadblock—the study doesn't exist. Turns out that in 1972, at a luncheon address to executives of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, an unidentified speaker stated that employees with "medical-behavioral problems" (on average) had 2.5 more absences, used 3 times more medical benefits... Well, you see where this is going, right? Keep in mind that the speaker didn't mention how this information was collected, how many workers were examined, or even what the aforementioned "medical-behavioral problems" were.

Eleven years later, Sidney Cohen, editor of the *Drug Abuse and Alcoholism Newsletter*, discovered the Firestone speech in a collection of essays and reproduced its anecdotal evidence as "research statistics" in his publication. Not only did Cohen imply that the figures were scientific data collected from a methodologically sound study, he also identified the study's



Do you want your employer to know that you are on anti-depressants?

subjects as "illicit drug users"—quite a leap from the actual speech's terms (the uber-vague "employees with medical-behavioral problems"). From 1983 on, proponents of drug-testing (from The Partnership for a Drug Free America to the purveyors of urinalysis tests and products) have been preaching the Firestone statistics as gospel truths, and employers have been taking their words on good faith.

An even more ludicrous statistic is that drug users cost businesses \$100 billion a year in lost productivity. Let's take a look at how this figure was created. In 1982, NIDA, under the auspices of the federal government, surveyed 3,700 households throughout the country. The Research Triangle Institute (RTI) was contracted by NIDA to crunch the numbers and deliver a significant anti-drug statistic. Their finding: the household income of adults who had ever smoked marijuana daily for a month was 28 percent less than the income of those who hadn't. RTI labeled this "reduced productivity due to daily marijuana use," then extrapolated this figure to the general population to reach an estimated total "productivity loss" of \$26 billion. Then they added the estimated costs of drug-related crimes, accidents and medical care to reach a total figure of \$47 billion—the "costs to society of drug abuse."

There are a number of things wrong with the RTI study, but I'll just touch on a few. The first is the basic conclusion that marijuana use was responsible for the lower incomes of the specified families. Lower income families vary from higher income families in myriad ways. Suppose, for example, that low income drinkers prefer Miller Lite, while high-income earners drink Hennessy scotch. Would you believe a statistic that told you "Miller Lite has been shown to reduce productivity, while scotch is responsible for higher productivity levels and higher earning potential?" It's a basic scientific principle—correlation does not imply causality. I learned that in high school! Makes me wonder where the government finds their "scientists."

Another thing: did you notice the strange variable that RTI used to calculate productivity loss? Why choose "marijuana-use-daily-for-a-month-ever" to indicate "drug abuse"? The answer is simple. RTI did collect data on current use of drugs (including cocaine, heroin, amphetamines and LSD as well as marijuana) among these households, but could find no correlation at all to the use of these drugs and decreased income. In other words, current cocaine abusers showed no difference in income than their straight neighbors. So if Walsh and the rest of the anti-drug zealots can state that daily marijuana use for a month at some point in a person's life decreases productivity, then they must also concede that current use of heroin or cocaine does not decrease productivity. Of course they have not done this, and probably never will. Walsh's approach seems to entail *finding data to support an existing conclusion*—the exact opposite of established scientific method.

The result of all this "junk science" is nothing to scoff at. Drug testing has been widely instituted in private businesses

over the past decade, and in 1996, "the share of major U.S. firms that test for drugs rose to 81 percent." All of this time, energy and money has been expended by U.S. employers without one shred of evidence demonstrating that drug users decrease productivity or that urinalysis can facilitate a drug free workplace.

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

Finally, an antidote to the specious claims of the right-wing is available—the truth. In 1994, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the nation's oldest and most prestigious scientific body, published a report entitled *Under the Influence? Drugs and the American Work Force*, which addressed each of the claims made by proponents of drug testing.

After reviewing the evidence, the NAS concluded that "the data...do not provide clear evidence of the deleterious effects of drugs *other than alcohol* on safety and other job performance indicators."

Two recent studies that the NAS examined were conducted with post office employees to determine whether pre-employment drug tests were a good predictor of job performance, including workers' likelihood of having accidents or sustaining injuries. In both of these studies, researchers found no difference between employees who tested positive at the time of hire and those who tested negative. In addition, in a review of 213 employees who were given post-accident drug tests, 96% tested negative. Based on these and other studies, the NAS concluded that illicit drugs have very little to do with industrial accidents.

The reason for this, according to the NAS, is that very few workers who use illicit drugs use them at work. Rather, they indulge occasionally on weekends or after work, and the residual effects of their use are minimal. For stimulants, the residual effects are akin to slight sleep deprivation (without drugs), and for marijuana users, the effects "appear slight if they exist at all."

Similar studies confirmed that Republican statistics regarding absences and medical benefits were also suspect. Using the patient database of California's largest HMO, NAS researchers compared the health care costs of people who used marijuana with people who didn't and found no significant difference, even when they compared a smaller sample of heavy, frequent marijuana users to non-users.

The main point of the NAS study is that drugs in the workplace are not nearly as widespread (or damaging) as the Drug War's generals would have you believe. Most drug users who work use illicit substances off duty and are responsible employees. In addition, for employees who do use substances at work, alcohol is far more impairing than stimulants or marijuana—and yet alcohol cannot be detected by urinalysis.

In 1990, the government spent \$11.7 million to test roughly 29,000 workers.

THE ABC'S OF URINALYSIS

I suppose I should take a minute to explain exactly how urinalysis works. The main misunderstanding about drug tests among the masses is that the tests actually detect current levels of intoxication or impairment at the time of the test. If that were the case, I wouldn't have nearly as much of a problem with urinalysis—after all, it is an understood part of the employer-employee contract that you will not come to work intoxicated. The problem is, drug tests based on the analysis of a urine sample (as opposed to breathalyzers or blood tests) detect drug *metabolites*—the chemical “footprints” that certain drugs leave behind long after their effects have worn off. Thus, these tests do not measure the amount of a drug currently in someone's system (or their level of impairment), but the traces of this drug which may appear days or even weeks after ingestion. For some drugs, this critical period is extremely short—for alcohol it's only a couple of hours, for cocaine one to two days, and for marijuana two weeks or so (though that figure can vary greatly depending on one's usage patterns). This means that a person who smokes a joint on the weekend could test positive for THC metabolites a week later and be fired from their job, even though their “habit” has no effect on their performance at work. In addition, someone who is actually using on the job (especially if their drug of choice is alcohol or cocaine) could easily escape detection, because their body has not had time to break down the drugs in their system and produce metabolites. So urinalysis is biased toward implicating occasional marijuana users—probably the most innocuous type of “drug fiend” that exists.

The Reagan-Bush administrations' claim that drug testing can ensure a drug-free *workplace* is a lie—what anti-drug crusaders really want is a drug free *workforce*. Urinalysis is simply another form of social control. By instilling a fear of detection (followed by unemployment) in the populace, the government hopes that recreational drug users (and especially pot smokers) will stop indulging because the risk is just too high. All of the concern about rampant drug use in the workplace is just an elaborate smokescreen to obscure this very simple fact: the American government does not like people to alter their brain chemistry unless they are paying heavily for it (via alcohol and tobacco taxes). If the work place was really the concern, the government would suggest that employers use impairment tests, which measure employees' vision, reflexes and coordination to determine if they are capable of performing job tasks. Such tests are already in place among certain employers, and have the added bonus of detecting fatigue as well as alcohol or drug intoxication.

TRUE OR FALSE

Urine samples can be screened in a variety of ways, vary-

ing in accuracy and expense. It's probably obvious that most companies who institute pre-employment testing will use the cheapest, easiest method available—a process known as “immunoassay,” which recognizes drug metabolites based on a “rough outline” of their chemical makeup. Immunoassay is a “quick and dirty” method; problem is, it can't distinguish between drug metabolites that have similar chemical structures. The result of this flaw is something called a “false positive”—that is, the test states you have consumed an illegal drug like amphetamines when really you ingested an over-the-counter decongestant. Another common mix-up results from the ingestion of antihistamines, which can trigger positive readings for methadone.

Gas chromatography/mass spectrometry is a more expensive, precise test, and can distinguish cold remedies from amphetamines and antihistamines from methadone. However, false accusations are still an issue, as certain legal medications produce the exact same metabolites as illicit drugs. Examples of this nature include Codeine, which contains metabolites that are chemically identical to heroin, Marinol, which produces THC metabolites, and even poppy seeds, which contain morphine metabolites. These results are known as “innocent positives,” since the metabolite being tested for was actually present in the person's blood—it just wasn't connected to illicit drug use.

One relatively new type of test touted as the paramount of accuracy by testing advocates is the “hair test.” Dr. Werner Baumgartner, company chairman of Psychemedics, the largest commercial hair testing company in the U.S., has made spectacular claims about his company's techniques, boasting that Psychemedics can tell when, how much, and which illegal drug had been used from any hair sample. Most of the air was let out of Baumgartner's sails in 1990 when WJLA, a television station in Washington, D.C., conducted a special investigative report on Psychemedics. Reporters set up a dummy company called Bald Eagle Security, and sent six pre-treated hair samples to Psychemedics for testing. Only two of the six samples were correctly diagnosed.

Another sinister flaw in hair testing procedures is the fact that small amounts of a drug can be more easily detected in certain types of hair. As the ACLU report reads, “All else being equal, dark-haired people are more likely to test positive than blondes, and African-Americans are more likely to test positive than Caucasians.” Beyond the obvious racial bias attributed to hair testing, it remains unknown how hair products and treatments (like bleaching) affect test results.

All of the above point to one simple conclusion: drug testing, particularly that which is administered in blanket-fashion to potential employees, is woefully inaccurate. Even if the testing method is sound, human error remains a factor (judging by the lab conditions I witnessed during my tests, a *major* factor) and all positive results should be confirmed with a second, more accurate test. Unfortunately, companies aren't legally required

Out of all these, only 153 tests came back positive. (that's .5% of the total).

to share test results with those tested, so many people who test positive initially are simply told they are "unqualified" for the job.

FROM BAD TO WORSE

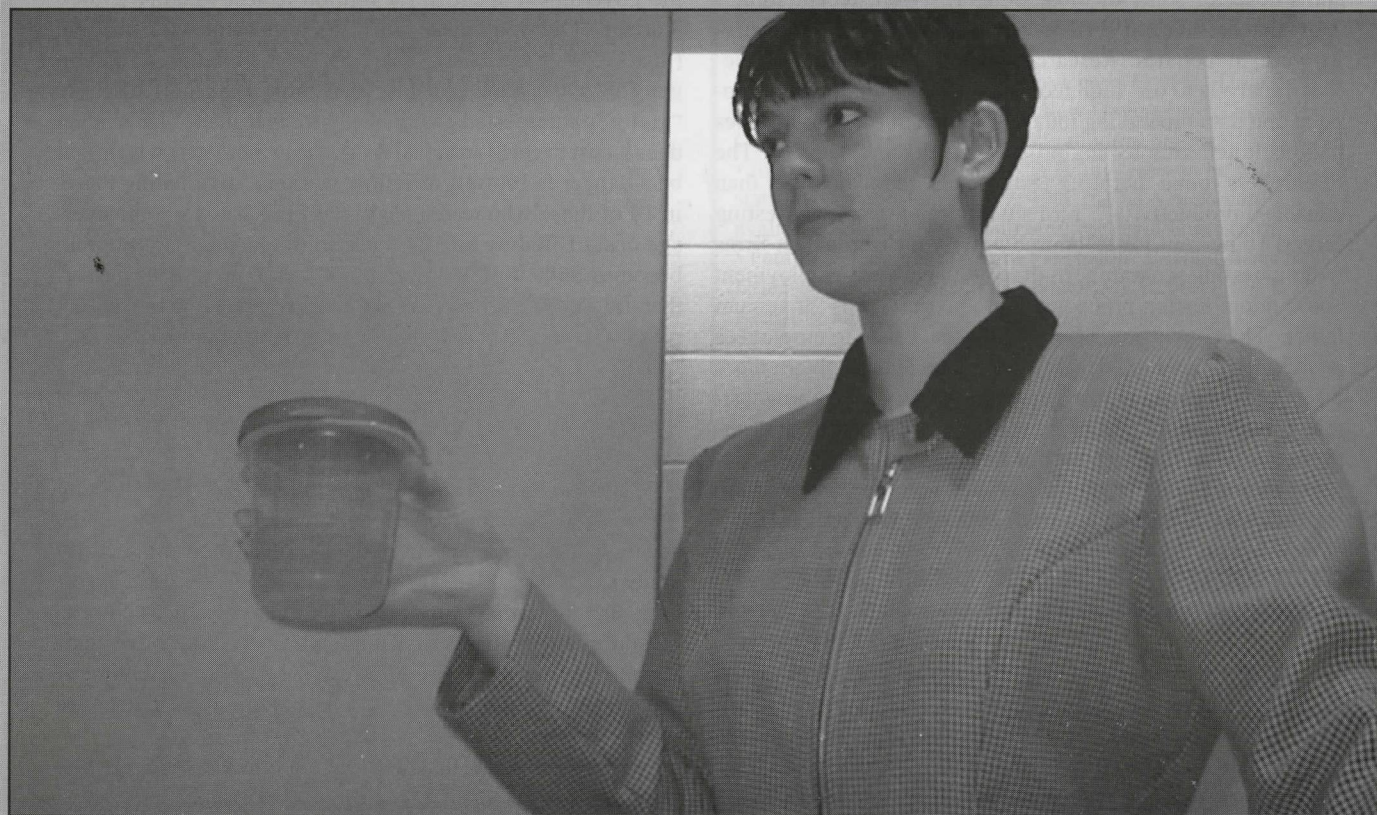
So far I've mainly talked about what drug testing *doesn't* do—it doesn't deter drug use, doesn't have any sort of legitimate scientific support, doesn't increase productivity, etc. But a far more important question is, what does random testing *do*? What effect does it have on the workplace and the workforce? In the past couple of years, numerous studies have been conducted to answer these questions, and the results are startling.

One interesting effect of random drug testing is that it actually favors the abuse of certain drugs. For example, many former marijuana users will actually forgo pot and ingest harder drugs that urinalysis doesn't detect as well. In a survey of American truckers, researchers found that more drivers were abusing alcohol and cocaine because they were afraid that their pot smoking would get them fired if a random drug test was assigned. In the military, where random drug tests are a requirement, LSD has replaced marijuana as the drug of choice among soldiers (urinalysis does not detect LSD residuals). I don't know about you, but to me the idea of people tripping

while carrying loaded weapons is absolutely terrifying (*Jacob's Ladder*, anyone?).

According to the ACLU, "drug testing deters highly qualified workers from applying"—no pun intended, I presume. Surveys show that although the majority of Americans approve of drug testing in the work place (probably because they don't know any of the facts), the minority opposed to such practices is substantial—as high as 40 percent. This group includes two types of people: long term users who refuse to change their habits, and non-users who find drug testing to be an unjustified invasion into their private lives. If employers have a large applicant pool, then they will probably not be concerned about the deleterious effects of their drug-testing programs—but in smaller pools where a few highly-qualified applicants compete for a few positions, employers should be concerned that their intrusions may turn away some of the best qualified workers. Indeed, this has been the case. In a report from the R. Brinkley Smithers Institute for Alcohol-Related Workplace Studies, researchers found that some employers "have dropped pre-employment screening because it unduly hindered their ability to recruit employees with the proper skills."

Drug testing also has a serious impact on workplace morale. For one thing, the actual process of collecting urine samples is, for many, a degrading and embarrassing experience, especially when it involves direct observation (as many programs do). In addition, employees subject to drug tests



Many former marijuana users will forgo pot and ingest harder drugs that urinalysis doesn't detect as well.

must report any prescription or over-the-counter medicines they use—a measure that is meant to protect them from false positives but which constitutes a major invasion of privacy. Do you want your employer to know that you are on antidepressants? Test results will also indicate that you are pregnant, if you are. Some companies won't hire a pregnant woman, knowing that she may have to take time off work for maternity leave. Do companies have any right to know such personal information?

The anxiety experienced by employees subject to random drug testing is impossible to dispute—fear that they will be called a criminal and drug abuser, fear that they will be falsely accused and have to go through a lengthy and expensive litigation process just to get their job back, even fear that a manager with whom they don't get along will somehow generate a positive test to get rid of them—all of these concerns lead to increased suspicion and distrust between workers and employees. Such an antagonistic relationship between worker and boss is surely going to hurt business.

Which brings me to the big Kahuna, the single issue that has served as backbone and foundation for the entire drug-testing movement—*productivity*. Reagan, Bush and their colorful cast of sycophants shouted about productivity every chance they got. They told us how drug fiends were destroying American business, that hundreds of billions of dollars a year were being lost (maybe Bush should've looked up his son's nose for some of those dollars). Well, recent studies show that the Reagan-Bush era's claims about lost productivity were, in fact, lies. Researchers applied a standard productivity analysis to 63 "high tech" firms in the computer equipment and data processing industry. Some of these companies had instituted drug testing programs and some had not. The researchers found that drug testing had "reduced rather than enhanced productivity." Firms with pre-employment testing scored 16 percent lower in productivity measures than firms without testing programs. In firms with both pre-employment and random testing procedures, productivity was 29 percent lower. The conclusion: "Companies that relate to employees positively with a high degree of trust are able to obtain more effort and loyalty in return." It's really pretty basic; drug testing without probable cause is invasive and distrustful, and employees respond to such tactics negatively. If you don't respect or trust your boss, chances are you won't work very hard for him or her. Chances are, the company will suffer.

IT'S THE MONEY

I guess it's no surprise that lurking underneath all of the "say no" rhetoric and "good intentions" of drug testing proponents is a far more basic motive: greed. Let's face it—the drug testing industry is a gigantic money-making machine.

Remember, this is an industry that didn't exist fifteen years ago. Now, hundreds of companies account for billions of dollars of profit, all for providing a "service" that serves no useful purpose and ultimately harms thousands of American citizens every year.

To see what I mean, just type "drug testing" into the search field of Yahoo next time you're surfing the Web. More than 20 companies pop up, all eager to offer you their "drug analysis" services, some even going so far as to provide "at home kits" so you can see what chemicals are ruining your sullen teenage daughter's mood. And then consider the antidote to all of this, the shady companies advertising on the back cover of *High Times*, promising to save you if "Ur-ine trouble." Billions and billions of dollars, folks. It makes you wonder who really foisted drug testing on an unsuspecting populace—politicians or big business? Either way, you can bet it wasn't anyone with the public's best interests in mind.

Clearly, logic and facts will not persuade the powers-that-be to strip away drug testing programs (they don't understand "foreign" languages). My only hope, it seems, is to appeal to businesses through the only language they understand—dollar-speak. Well, how about this? Drug testing is not *cost effective*. Ooh, I said the magic words. Yes, it's true. A study of the federal government's own drug testing program estimated that it cost more than \$60,000 to find a single drug user. The math behind this is simple enough: in 1990, the government spent \$11.7 million to test roughly 29,000 workers. Out of all these, only 153 tests came back positive (that's .5% of the total). Take .5% of the total cost and you get \$58,500. Now consider that more than half of these "guilty" parties tested positive only for marijuana. How much does it cost to catch an actual drug *abuser*, someone who might be a danger to himself or fellow workers. Estimating that 1 in 10 of those who tested positive fit this category, the average cost of finding a drug abuser through a testing program becomes \$600,000. Hmmmm. Testing companies assert that drug testing programs save employers money in the long run, but as you can see, the numbers don't add up.

CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

The way I see it, something has got to give. Drug testing is costly, ineffective, and unconstitutional. Hell, it's not even accurate. Citizens are being asked to place their job security in the hands of private businesses whose only concern is volume, that is, turning a profit. What motivates these companies to maintain standards of quality or to ensure that their labs are free of error? Absolutely nothing. Meanwhile, American businesses, and, more importantly, American citizens, are being swindled.

The worst part is that there are fair alternatives available.

Reference checking, Employee Assistance Programs and impairment testing have all proven themselves to be effective methods of preventing drug abuse in the workplace. Impairment testing in particular may hold the key to our nation's drug testing woes. Already in use by a small number of employers, these tests measure an employee's vision, reflexes and coordination and compare the results to the employee's baseline to determine whether he or she is capable of performing the job safely. These tests can also measure fatigue or stress, leading to a safer workplace. All of these methods are cheaper and less invasive than urinalysis.

All of this makes one wonder: "If drug testing is so ineffective, and there are better alternatives available *right now*, then why does urinalysis exist in the first place?" Simple. Drug tests are our government's attempt to manufacture negative consequences for drug users who might otherwise experience none. The college grad who smokes pot on weekends might lead a healthy, productive life, thus disproving government propaganda that "marijuana can do nothing for you." To fulfill their own prophecies, the government must prevent this capable individual from achieving success, and barring him from employment is the easiest way to do just that.

How about hiring people based on their qualifications and not on their off-duty habits? How about rejecting government-imposed social controls and preserving every citizen's right to freedom and privacy? What makes the search and seizure of our bodily fluids any more constitutional than the seizure of our property?

I leave you with a quote from Federal Judge H. Lee Sarokin, who ruled against the constitutionality of drug testing programs in 1986. Though his decision was overturned three years later, his wisdom still rings true:

"We would be appalled at the specter of the police spying on employees during their free time and then reporting their activities to their employers. Drug testing is a form of surveillance, albeit a technological one. Nonetheless, it reports on a person's off-duty activities just as surely as if someone had been present and watching. It is George Orwell's Big Brother Society come to life."

☿



glossary

ACLU: American Civil Liberties Union

NAS: National Academy of the Sciences

NIDA: National Institute On Drug Abuse

RTI: Research Triangle Institute

resources

From the homepage of the American Civil Liberties Union:
<http://www.aclu.org>

- Their report, "Drug Testing: A Bad Investment," was my main source of info (and guide for other places to look). It is available for free at: <http://www.aclu.org> in .pdf format.
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From the homepage of the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws: **<http://www.natlnorml.org>**

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Mike Gray, *Drug Crazy: How We Got Into This Mess & How We Can Get Out*. New York, New York (1998). (This is the best book I've ever read on the topic, with a comprehensive, practical assesment of the facts.)

Clarence Lusane, *Pipe Dream Blues: Racism and the War on Drugs*. Boston, MA (1991). (This book focuses on a particular (and highly significant) aspect of the War on Drugs: the racial biases and prejudices that have plagued National Drug Policy for the past two decades.)

i am an arab

In many progressive conversations, race in America has been divided up into African American, "White," Asian, Chicano and sometimes Indigineous People. In these same conversations, Arabs and other people of Middle Eastern descent have been either invisible or pushed into the "White" category. Why?

I did this interview with Hussein Ibish, communications director of the largest grassroots group fighting for the rights of Arab Americans, the American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee. I chose this interview and these questions because I believe that it is time to recognize Arabs and Arab Americans in modern conversations about racism, and to acknowledge the grand achievements Arab Americans have made.

In your opinion, who are Arab Americans?

Arab Americans are U.S. citizens whose national origin can be traced to any of the states in the Arab League. My best guess is that there are about four million Arab Americans. Large scale Arab immigration into the United States began towards the end of the last century and has been increasing in recent years. The Arab American community is very diverse regionally, religiously and in terms of assimilation into mainstream American culture. There are large numbers of both Muslim and Christian Arab Americans. However, there are broad areas of consensus within the community and a genuine and growing feeling of commonality and common interest.

Is there an Arab American community?

Certainly. I think that the Arab American community began to see itself as distinct group that required political organization along ethnic lines in the 1960s as many groups in the United States began to organize. Arab Americans were participants in and deeply affected by the civil rights movement and other transformative social developments in this country during that decade.

The 1967 Arab-Israeli war was probably the definitive moment in drawing the diverse Arab American community together as a political group. Arab Americans were shocked and horrified by the elation that the Israeli conquest of east Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights was greeted with in much of American society, especially in the press. Arab Americans were completely unprepared for the almost total identification in the mainstream of this country with Israel in its aggressive war of conquest and the complete disregard for the legitimate rights and concerns of the Arab peoples, especially the Palestinian people.

Interview by Basil Elias
April 2000

american

This led directly to the founding of the Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) organization, the first major national Arab American group, and all the other national Arab American organizations that followed.

In the ensuing decades the Arab American community has been growing in size, stature and political cohesion. This is in spite of two major crises, the Lebanese civil war and the 1990-91 Gulf War, both of which were very traumatic and divisive and caused major rifts in the community. I feel, however, that since the Gulf War crisis, the Arab American community has managed to come together in a way which has made us stronger than ever and the future is clearly a bright one for our community and our national organizations.

What are some of the issues and struggles that these communities face?

Our community faces extreme levels of discrimination. The stereotypes against Arabs which are prevalent in American society are among the deepest and most harmful faced by any group in the United States. The Arab-bashing that pervades both the entertainment and news media is, I believe, quite without parallel in the contemporary United States. We never cease to be amazed by the levels of misunderstanding of the Arab world, Arab culture and Islam which are so widespread in our society. It makes life very difficult for many Arab Americans. Our children grow up in an atmosphere where many aspects of our identity and the faith of many of our people are subjected to constant attack in the media, which has a profound and pervasive influence. These stereotypes have a serious and highly damaging effect even on laws and law enforcement in the United States, and much of the most serious discrimination against Arab Americans is conducted by our own government. It's not an easy position to be in, but I'm glad to say that we are fighting back and with increasing effectiveness.

What do you see as some of the common stereotypes and misconceptions of Arabs and Arab Americans?

Well, there are so many it really would be impossible to list them all. But I do think that the idea that there is a generalized conflict in the world between Arabs and Americans, or between Islam and the West,

is very widespread and very dangerous, as well as completely untrue. This idea, which is promoted by the news media in its often reckless reportage, by the entertainment industry with its constant representation of Arabs and Arab Americans as fanatical anti-American terrorists, by scholars who write about a "clash of civilizations" and even by government officials who seek to justify aggressive American policies in the Middle East, creates an image of the Arab as the enemy and the "other." You can certainly imagine the effect that this atmosphere has on Arab Americans.

The fact is that our people are routinely singled out for special security concerns solely on the basis of their ethnicity, and it is because of these outrageous stereotypes. We have been working hard on combating them, but there is clearly still a long way to go. Paramount Pictures, a major Hollywood studio, has just released a film, "Rules of Engagement," which takes Arab-bashing to a new level. It paints all Arabs, men, women and children, as murderous, vicious, anti-American terrorists. This film is so vile that it can only be compared to other films, such as "Birth of a Nation" or "The Eternal Jew," whose sole purpose was the demonization and vilification of an entire people. Its very disturbing that such a film could be made in our country in the year 2000.

Other harmful stereotypes endure as well. The anti-Semitic image of the greedy, vulgar, uneducated and dirty Arab oil sheikh, imagery largely borrowed from defamatory stereotypes of Jewish bankers that prevailed in western nations during the first half of this century, continues to exist. The reaction to the recent rise in oil prices shows that these stereotypes have not been dispelled.

There are also outrageous stereotypes about Arab women and the role that they play and are accorded in Arab culture and Islam which are highly unfair and damaging. And, of course, the image of the Arab as a racist and anti-Semite is also very prevalent, and needless to say, entirely unjustified. These just scratch the surface though. Stereotypes against Arabs and Muslims draw on a long history of western antipathy towards the peoples of the Middle East, and therefore they are well-developed, deeply entrenched and extremely complex. Dispelling them thoroughly will probably take generations to achieve.

Who is the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee? What does it do to represent Arabs in America?

ADC is the largest Arab American membership organization in the United States. It was founded in 1980 by former Senator James Abourezk following a decade of vicious anti-Arab stereotypes, largely of the "oil sheikh" variety, that followed the 1973 oil crisis. The final straw was the use of these stereotypes by the FBI in the "ABSCAM" sting, in which an Italian American agent was disguised as an "oil sheikh" and bribed a number of members of Congress who were then arrested for corruption. The head of the FBI at the time said that they used the stereotype because people needed to believe that the agent was a person who would be capable of offering bribes to politicians, even though there had never been a case on record of an Arab or Arab American actually trying to bribe an American politician. The sight of the government embracing and promoting these stereotypes led directly to the creation of ADC as a civil rights organization for our community, and there is no doubt that it was badly needed then and remains so to this day. ADC is a grassroots organization which is comprised of many local chapters in cities and regions around the country. ADC has a legal department which deals with matters of law and discrimination, a communications department; which I head, which deals with the mass media and explaining our perspective to the public; an organizing department which is the link between the grassroots and the national office; an education department which deals with

educational and curriculum issues; and a governmental affairs arm, NAAA-ADC, which deals with government and legislative matters.

What are some issues the ADC is currently focusing on?

Well, first of all we have to deal with issues of discrimination on a daily basis. There are individual cases of discrimination, which are dealt with by our legal department, and stereotyping and bias in the media, which my department handles. Beyond that there are several issues, both domestic and international, which we have been focusing on.

Domestically, there are two issues of official discrimination which we have been emphasizing. First is the use of secret evidence in American courts. Most people don't know this, but since the passage of the 1996 "Anti-Terrorism Act" the government has been arresting people without charge and holding them in jail on the basis of secret evidence which is withheld from the defendants and their attorneys. Some people have spent years in jail for no apparent reason. This law is applied almost solely against people of Arab ethnicity and Muslim religious affiliation. It is an intolerable violation of the basic human and constitutional rights of these individuals and we are committed to abolishing this practice.

Also, there is the matter of airport profiling. Also since 1996, the government, in the form of the Federal Aviation Administration, has mandated secret passenger profiles for airport and airline security. The contents of the profiles are secret but the number and scope of the complaints we have received from Arabs and Arab Americans who have been singled out for abusive, intrusive and harassing special security measures is truly shocking. I dare say that there is now hardly an Arab American who has not suffered this or who does not know a close friend or relative who has been singled out in this way. It's intolerable, and is all the more galling since the FAA has never been able to point to a single instance where someone who was a threat to airport or airline security has been identified or thwarted by these profiles. Profiling now seems to have extended beyond air travel, such that during periods of heightened tension, such as the run up to the new year in 2000, almost any Arab American who came to the attention of law enforcement for any reason, even the most mundane, was identified as a suspected terrorist, often publicly, solely on the basis of their ethnicity. We are doing our best to challenge the use of racial profiling by U.S. law enforcement.

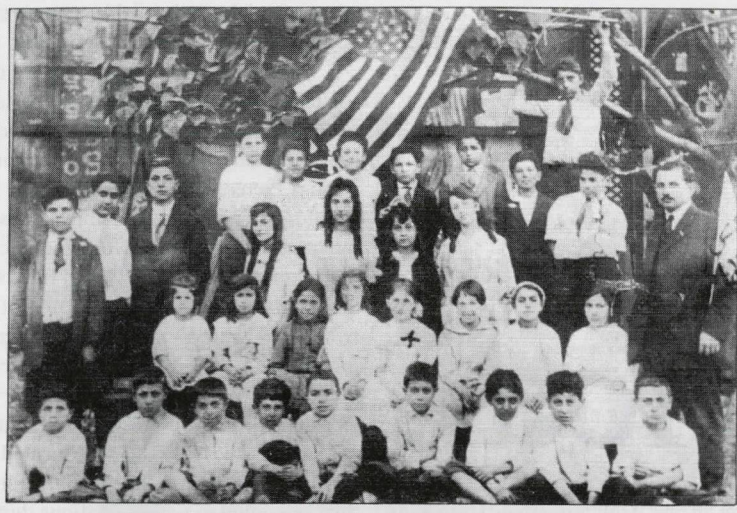
In terms of foreign policy, we are deeply opposed to the U.S. sanctions on Iraq. These sanctions have resulted in the needless deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, mostly children. The Arab American community strongly opposes these sanctions and we feel that if these victims were of a different ethnicity, such a policy, which is certainly murderous, perhaps even genocidal, would not have continued for years as it has. Lifting the sanctions is a matter of the utmost urgency for us.

Finally, we are opposed to the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem. We seek to make U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict more even-handed and to secure Palestinian human and national rights. This in-

cludes the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes from which they were expelled by Israel.

Personally, I've been frustrated by the miscategorization of Arabs as "white" or "Caucasian," such as in the census report, on the application of the college I attended, and throughout many institu-

tions in the United States. I don't understand how a group of people with such a strong cultural and ethnic heritage, a people who face discrimination based on these identities and for many on their dark skin complexion, and a people of non-European descent are left out of many mainstream discussions on race. Have you, as the communications director of the ADC, seen this as a problem as well? If so, what do you believe people can do to rectify this, to bring Arab Americans into the conversations on racism, and more specifically, what are some ways that you



Early Arab immigrant family in the United States.

believe we can go about ending anti-Arab racism in America?

I think that many of us share this frustration. The only time that Arabs in the United States are considered "white" people is on the census forms and in terms of affirmative action or other minority protection programs from which we are excluded. One glance at any aspect of the mass media makes a mockery of this characterization. Therefore it is important that this is corrected as quickly as possible, but it is a long term project and we are working on it.

Last year, due to the efforts of our activists in San Francisco, that city now recognizes Arabs as a minority group for purposes of city contracting. This is a major step in the right direction and we hope to replicate it around the country. Including an Arab category in the census forms would also provide us for the first time with reliable figures about the Arab American population nationally. So this is very important to us and we continue to press for it. Of course we need to be involved fully in the national dialogue on race and civil rights, and we are doing our best to demand inclusion and ensure that our voices are heard.

How do issues in the Middle East affect Arabs in America?

We believe that much of the worst discrimination against Arab Americans, whether by racist individuals or by the government in secret evidence cases and racial profiling, is strongly linked to Middle East issues. The fact is that Arab Americans disagree with the highly aggressive and one-sidedly pro-Israel stance of our government. The link is quite clear and much of the discrimination we face is an extended form of political repression.

What are some monumental cases of discrimination against Arabs in America?

The ABSCAM case I have already mentioned. Many of the worst cases do involve political repression of Arab critics of U.S. Middle East policies. The case of the "LA8," seven Palestinians and a Kenyan who were activists in favor of Palestinian human rights, is a

major instance. For 12 years the government tried to deport these individuals solely on the basis of their political beliefs, all the while acknowledging that their activities would have all been protected by the First Amendment had they been citizens. We fought and are continuing to fight this case. In February, 1999, the Supreme Court ruled in the case, which is known as *ADC v. Reno*, that immigrants have no access to regular courts and that the government can deport people for any reason it chooses including race, ethnicity, religion or political views. It was a shocking decision.

Several of the secret evidence cases also stand out. Nasser Ahmed spent over three years in solitary confinement without charge on the basis of secret evidence. Last February, Mazen Al-Najjar, a professor at South Florida University in Tampa, passed his 1,000th day in jail under the same conditions. There can be no justification of this kafka-esque situation.

What are some monumental stories of resistance?

The battle against secret evidence is one of the best. The whole community is united against it and we have wonderful allies from the immigrants' rights, civil rights and lawyers' organizations. Several Members of Congress, most notably David Bonior (D-MI) and Tom Campbell (R-CA), have also denounced the practice and have introduced legislation against it. This is a battle we are winning and we are going to win. The same is true on Iraq sanctions. Its days are numbered because of our successful efforts to expose the utter immorality of such a policy and the support we have gotten from so many people of conscience around the country and around the world.

If someone who didn't have previous knowledge of the information we've talked about here wanted to become more informed, or wanted to participate somehow—to be an ally to Arab Americans, where can they turn? What authors, organizations, or other resources could they begin with?

Well, our website, www.adc.org, would be a good place to start. Other than that I think that the writings of Professor Michael Suleiman, who has authored several major works on the subject, would be very informative. And if people want to help, they need only contact ADC. Our struggles are at the cutting edge of the battle for civil rights inside the United States and for a more just and peaceful world internationally. There is much to be done, but we are fighting the good fight and we will prevail.

The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee can be contacted at: 4201 Connecticut Ave, N.W.; Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20008, USA, phone: (202) 244-2990, telefax: (202) 244-3196, E-Mail: ADC@adc.org, Internet: www.adc.org. The ADC website contains specific and detailed information about the topics mentioned in this interview, as well as press releases, news reports, action alerts, petitions, and information about the organization. ☐

Rules of Engagement

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee protests films like Paramount's "Rules of Engagement" because of the racial stereotyping it relies on. Negative portrayals of Arabs and Arab culture are also used in movies like "True Lies" and "The Siege." Before and during the release of "Rules of Engagement," the Committee circulated a flyer outlining the offensive material in these kinds of movies in general, and in "Rules" specifically:

- Repeated portrayals of Arab children as hateful, vicious and murderous. These children are shown several times during "Rules of Engagement" shooting guns at the film's US Marine protagonists and shouting curses.
- "Rules" portrays Yemeni society as an anti-American mob just waiting to erupt at any second. The images of Arabs in the film are stereotypical - veiled women, men in headscarfs, and all shouting fanatical, angry slogans and firing automatic weapons at a peaceful U.S. embassy.
- For most Americans who see it, "Rules of Engagement" will contain the most "information" about Yemen that they will ever receive in an hour and a half, and possibly in their entire lifetime. Needless to say, this is a grotesque defamation and complete distortion of Yemeni society.
- Paramount refused to cooperate with Arab-American organizations that attempted to set up a constructive dialogue on the film in the months before its release. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee first contact Paramount with concerns about "Rules of Engagement" in January, with no cooperation. In retrospect, it is easy to understand why Paramount stonewalled all attempts at dialogue and refused even the elementary courtesy of a pre-release screening. This movie is absolutely indefensible in its portrayal of Arabs and Arab culture.
- "Rules of Engagement" and movies like it define the Arab as the quintessential "other" in contemporary American culture, depicting all Arabs, men, women, and children, as the inherent, irrational and implacable terrorist enemy of the United States. These images have contributed to the high incidence of hate crimes against Arab Americans, and to the use of racial profiling.



The End Of Chaos Through Anarchy?

An Anarchist Primer by Richard Opalsky

1. Anarchy stands opposed to organization and institutions.
2. Anarchy promotes unfettered freedom, a liberated state of social chaos. 3. Anarchy is rooted in destruction, since what is being destroyed is oppressive. If you agree with any of the three preceding descriptions of anarchism, or if you are sympathetic to the way they characterize anarchism, then this article was written for you! Statements 1, 2, and 3 are all false statements. In fact, anarchist theory suggests massive re-organizational efforts—nonetheless organized; it promotes freedom, but only through a new social and economic order; and it is far more focused on being constructive than it is on being destructive.

By the end of this article, it will be clear that anarchy does not mean any of the ideas numbered above. My hope is that people start to ask why it is that they were led to believe that anarchy meant any of those things, and that we may begin to understand the real merits and pitfalls of anarchism. But, before we begin, I should point out that I do not self-identify as an anarchist. In fact, I do not self-identify with any one school of political thought. My political views consist of what I see as the best parts of various radical politics. I happily admit that anarchism, the politics that has always been the most dissatisfied with the existing state of government and mass culture, does lend a lot to my thinking.

The underground and alternative communities, where we find those more likely to tout the title of “anarchist,” often seem more confused about what anarchy is than the conservative mainstream. The public finds anarchism a laughable and unserious theory, mostly unaware that there even is a theoretical foundation for it. And the idea of anarchy in practice is a frightening hypothesis for them. Sadly, there are too many punks with “circle A” logos on their T-shirts, drinking themselves into a stupor of exhausted lifelessness, and claiming that being an anarchist is their main reason for not caring about society. These folks have made an unfortunate choice in naming themselves, since they are just as opposed to the potential of anarchism as are the capitalist leaders who sit in the World Bank consortium. This may sound a drastic comparison, but an apathetic community that calls itself “political” is as counter-progressive as tobacco companies.

Anarchy has its history in France, Italy, Spain, Russia and the U.S., and has its thickest roots stemming from the early 19th century. “Anarchism is really a synonym for socialism. The anarchist is primarily a socialist whose aim is to abolish the exploitation of man by man,” writes Daniel Guérin.¹ A fellow named Adolf Fischer further clarified that “every anarchist is a socialist, but every socialist is not necessarily an anarchist.”¹ Anarchists are mostly sympathetic to the aims and politics of the socialists, but they are frustrated with the lack of impact that socialism has had on popular, prevalent politics. The anarchists do not think that they know a more immediate and forceful route to a socialist utopia, but they do have their own ideas.

They believe that the socialist organizations already have been accounted for in the design of capitalist society. Such groups have their rights to free speech and assembly, unless, of course, they use these rights to achieve positive visibility through the viscous of the mainstream media. We often see what provisions the government has lying in wait for oppositional voices that finally make themselves audible. Whenever we hear that these constitutional rights are being violated, we usually learn that they were being used to articulate dissent. Protesters are shot at, beaten, jailed and gassed, and the media holds out microphones all day until they snatch a quote that can be used by the public to rationalize the abuses of these rights.

So anarchists share in the firm belief that governments have unpublicized, but well-thought out and militarily-backed plans for whomever they perceive as subversive. There is nothing conspiratorial about this. Anyone can read about the counter-insurgency or “crowd control” tactics of the military and police, or President Hoover’s Counter Intelligence Operation (COINTEL) during the civil rights movement, and one can still find the occasional copy of the old U.S. Senate’s *Directory of un-American Activities*—a manual which lists almost every non-governmental agency or organization that focuses on minority groups or social and economic justice that has not aligned itself with the laxative politics of mainstream America.

The most unifying of all anarchist beliefs is the belief that social, economic, and political justice can never be achieved through reform. Reform means action taken towards changing the prevalent system by **adding** amendments to its laws, new stipulations to old laws, and **subtracting** (nullifying) laws that are no longer applicable. Reform is the bending of the system’s rules—the smoothing of its rougher edges. The political right, as well as the political left, is happy to seek their own kinds of reform: the first seeks reform through NAFTA and taxation, while the latter seeks reform through affirmative action and taxation. Anarchism in its current form is only about 160 years old, mainly because it rests on the absolute lack of faith in reform—a lack of faith which could only follow 6,000 years of government irresponsible to the interests and will of the people. Today, 200 men own 80 percent of the world’s wealth. This means that the remaining 20 percent is left to be “shared” by approximately six billion people. It is hard to imagine that this is the will of the people.

The anarchist idea is not that government cannot work under any conditions; it is the idea that reforming oppressive and corruptible government into just and honest government cannot work. This is a common mistake of many self-identified anarchists. Anarchy is not reacting to the *idea of government*, but to *actual existing government*. Errico Malatesta wrote: “Those anarchists opposed to organization

make the fundamental error of believing that organization is impossible without authority."² It is true that the fathers of anarchy, Michael Bakunin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, spoke rabidly about government. Sometimes they did so as if it were an abstract idea to be opposed. But one must be cautious: the job of the fathers of anarchism was to substantiate the idea that the accepted model of a warring, class-based government cannot be transformed into an egalitarian paradise through legislative measures of its own design. It was and still is the first step of anarchy to disconnect all activity against oppressive institutions from those institutions themselves. Graham Purchase, in his book *Anarchism and Ecology*, points out that this route is already quite popular.³ There are many organizations that exist without the funding and endorsement of the state or federal government. There are cooperative record labels, grass-roots food and clothing outreach groups, independently owned and cultivated organic gardens and farms, alternative news media free of any advertising, and some dedicated groups trying to house the homeless. While some of these groups appeal for government funding, others enjoy their status as "other"—community based, community run, and community supported.

Anarchism, from theory to practice, begins by forging families, groups, organizations and co-ops, not just to pick up the government's slack, but to provide more and more of the services we now enjoy. This is what Purchase refers to as the way to de-centralize power. The de-centralization of power is the natural outcome of disempowering an oligarchy (the rule of the many by the few). To disempower an oligarchy, there needs to be the mass reclaiming of public space via direct action, the ultimate utilization of our own spaces thus far un-coopted, and the mass patronage and support of every non-governmental/corporate organization that provides a service alternative. But this is an extreme oversimplification intended to spark some thought. There have actually been a good number of anarchist communities and kibitzes throughout history which have been founded and run according to these principles. The main problem with taking this route is that most of the would-be 'uncharted territory' has been pretty well cut up and proprietized already.

The anarchist view that reform does not yield radical change is a view that follows logically from witnessing thousands of years of leftist reformers entrenching themselves in the system only to produce cosmetic change. By "cosmetic change" I mean that certain things *are* changed for the better, but only on the surface. That is not at all to say that the legalization of abortion, the liberty to grow hemp, and a less combative stance towards other nations *are/would* be merely superficial. What it means to call these changes "cosmetic" is to acknowledge that they are examples of progress which leave their main causes untouched. "Unreformed" goes the basic capitalist allowance to make more money as individuals and a nation than can ever be spent on superfluous comfort. The fact that we live in an industrial nation where basic human needs are off-limits to all but the highest bidders is accepted as a fact of our existence. Anarchists understand that the illegality of abortion, the war on drugs, and wars of all kinds exist for the maintenance and perpetuation of oligarchic society. Legis-

lation regarding them is effectual, but never strikes at the root of the problems most people endure. This root, oligarchy itself, remains the unshaken bedrock of our society. Affirmative action, for example, is an effective social program that we must defend from the right-wing efforts to abolish it. However, the very existence of affirmative action testifies to the fact that racial inequity is the default of society. This is what the anarchists mean by "cosmetic." Rush Limbaugh and friends see affirmative action as unnecessary because they believe that racism has long been abolished, and many more "liberal" Americans content themselves with the merit of our humanitarian society which has the heart to establish affirmative action—but the anarchist view is that racial injustice *cannot* be equalized through additions and subtractions to an historically and institutionally racist nation. Noam Chomsky, one of our more cautious anarchists—although perhaps the greatest anarchist thinker today—describes anarchy in his book *Class Warfare*. Recalling the ideas of John Dewey, Chomsky writes: "Politics is the shadow that big business casts over society... attenuating the shadow doesn't do much. Reforms are still going to leave it tyrannical... you can't even talk about democracy until you have democratic control of industry, commerce, banking, everything. That means control by the people who work in the institutions, and the communities."⁴

So, the first move towards anarchy is to reject the concessions that have been safely reserved for dissidents, and to act in accordance with the theory that real government must be built, not out of the tired body of our old oppressive stalwart, but out of ourselves. It requires creativity, organization, and the maximization of tactics already widely implemented at the grassroots level. Anarchy is not utopian, as many of the more faithful ballot-enthusiasts might believe. Anarchism is rife with practical ideas for how to govern in new ways. In Seattle, the protesters decided many of their large-scale actions by employing an old anarchist method of consensus. Consensus is a de-

centralized decision-making process where only those people who participate in the consensus are beholden to take part in the action under the rules elected for its governance. Not surprisingly, the chant around these "consensus-choosing" elections was, "This is what Democracy looks like!!"

Emma Goldman once wrote: "A practical scheme, says Oscar Wilde, is either one already in existence, or a scheme that could be carried out under the existing conditions; but it is exactly the existing conditions that one objects to. And any scheme that could accept these conditions is wrong and foolish. The true criterion of the practical, therefore, is not whether the latter can keep intact the wrong and foolish; rather is it whether the scheme has the vitality enough to leave the stagnant waters of the old, and build, as well as sustain, new life."⁵

Those anarchists opposed to organization make the fundamental error of believing that organization is impossible without authority.

- Malatesta



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¹ Daniel Guerin: *Anarchism*, New York, 1970

² *Anarchy*, London, 1942

³ New York, 1997.

⁴ Maine, 1996.

⁵ *Anarchism and Other Essays*, New York, 1969.

Many people find democratic decision-making to be unfair because it allows a majority to determine outcomes and make decisions despite the concerns of minorities. Consensus is an alternate process of decision-making in which progress is not made until all members, including minorities, agree to move on—even if it means agreeing to disagree. This decision-making process is often used by collectively-run businesses and organizations that have a non-hierarchical structure where all members have equal voting power and where there is no “boss” or “president.” Following are some of Andrew’s suggestions and observations.

Nearly everyone who has ever been involved in consensus decision-making has seen it happen at least once: There is a proposal under consideration that enjoys widespread, perhaps nearly universal, support, but in the end it is blocked by one or more members for reasons unclear or seemingly unreasonable. Such failed attempts at consensus often end in frustration, and participants may wonder what is so democratic about a process in which a small minority can override the majority and maintain a status quo.

There is certainly no consensus for doing nothing in such situations, and perhaps a majority of the group would block a proposal to do nothing. In such cases, it is necessary to look beneath the obvious surface issue to find out if something else is really causing the resistance.

At times, it will appear that there is a shortcut, and consensus will be rammed through because the opposition simply gives up to avoid another long, agonizing meeting. While this may solve the problem in the short run, it makes future consensus more difficult, as trust is replaced by antagonism.

So how can a group get at the issues behind the issues? If all paths forward appear to be blocked, it is time to start looking for roundabout ways of reaching the goal, backtracking to find out where the wrong turn was made.

These steps offer a map of alternate routes: Each step offers a fork in the road, with one way leading to resolution and the other leading to an eventual dead end. So if the group is unable to reach consensus, it can go back one step at a time until it finds agreement.

Once agreement is found, even if it is on the basic level of acknowledging that there is a problem that the proposal aims to solve, the group may proceed along a different road to agreement. These steps are somewhat flexible, and different in every case, but here is an outline of one possible process:

1. Determine that there are concerns that need to be addressed.
2. Decide that those concerns should be addressed collectively by the group.
3. Decide how these concerns should be addressed.
4. Build a shared understanding of information about the concerns.
5. Agree upon a definition of the problem and any visions of how to overcome it.
6. Agree upon a specific strategy for solving the problem.

7. Agree upon how that strategy will be implemented.

Most often, people jump right to the last two levels, and ignore the earlier foundational steps. This is usually fine, and it would do more harm than good to start every attempt at making a decision with a discussion of whether there are in fact concerns and whether the group should be working together to address them. However, there are occasional situations in which this is not clearly the case, and the facilitator should be able to recognize this and back the process down to the appropriate level, rather than just assuming that agreement exists where there is none and pushing blindly onward.

To further illustrate these steps, it is best to take the example of a decision that frequently ties the collective process in knots—asking someone to leave. From the initial block, we can work backward through the questions that must be answered, consciously or unconsciously, to reach consensus.

Say the group’s treasurer has failed to pay the electric bill, resulting in the power being shut off the night of the annual benefit show. This is not the first time this sort of thing has happened on her watch, and many members of the group feel that she is unreliable and should be shown the door. However, she is otherwise a solid group member with valuable skills and a good personality. As a result, there is a small bloc that is adamantly opposed to simply firing her, and the expulsion proposal is effectively dead in the water, despite a solid majority no longer wanting her in the collective.

So what is the question that needs to be answered before consensus can occur?

- The hang-up may be at step seven, in which case there is not disagreement that the treasurer needs to leave, but there is disagreement over whether to phase out or give the boot. Someone may be blocking because the proposal is for immediate expulsion, with no time for transfer of responsibilities.
- Often step six is the problem, as there is a lack of consensus on whether the proposal at hand is appropriate at all. Some members may feel that expulsion is not necessary, or cruel and unusual punishment due to special circumstances.
- At step five, the group would first need to agree that the problem even has anything to do with the treasurer’s competence or reliability. It could be that there simply wasn’t money to pay the bills (being the week before the annual fundraiser and all), and she called the utility company to let them know the situation. Or perhaps there is a problem with the job description, or a miscommunication. If the group does establish fault, it still needs to agree upon and follow due process and a procedure for asking a member to leave. If they don’t have this, they will have to create it, which could involve its own series of meetings.
- Assuming that this procedure is in place, the group could move back to step four, determining what information is needed. It may be that the opponents of expulsion don’t know about the previous failures to pay the bills. Or perhaps the proponents don’t know that the problem is actually a lack of funds, and the treasurer is actually doing a bang-up job of keeping the creditors at bay until the ben

efit cash rolls in. It is important at this step to make sure that everyone is on the same page about the situation at hand, and also about all of the options available. For example, newer members may not be aware of a rarely-used conflict resolution process.

- Once it is determined that everyone has all of the relevant information, but there is still a disagreement, the third step looks at whether the group is handling the situation appropriately. It might be better to attempt to handle the situation in a committee dealing with financial or personnel issues, or possibly in an ad-hoc conflict resolution forum. In this case, the group could postpone decision until other, less drastic avenues have been pursued.

- Step two asks whether perhaps this is not even something for the group as a whole to decide, period. Unless our treasurer also has been causing problems in other areas of the group's function, it could have been better to simply leave this to the financial committee, rather than dragging the whole collective through a divisive and stressful process.

- The first, and deepest, step asks whether it was really that big of a problem? Maybe it was a huge pain in the ass to scramble for a bunch of candles and extension cords to run the sound system. But on the other hand, it made clear the need for the fundraiser, and possibly increased the amount of donations, while adding a campy appeal to the evening.

At every step, it is beneficial to have an understanding of what is being decided. If one person is saying that

the problem is a flaky treasurer, and another replies by blaming the fundraising committee for causing the situation by rescheduling the benefit for a month later, and another remarks that it isn't fair to fire someone without a probationary period, and a fourth just thinks it was a cool candlelight concert, the group is almost guaranteed a chaotic and ultimately unresolved discussion.

Obviously, to fully discuss all seven levels would take endless meetings, but hopefully it will be possible to work back through them until the real problem shows itself. Then the debate can begin in earnest.

By calling attention to each of these levels when appropriate, we may make great progress toward resolving our differences, rather than just covering them over. If a process is truly inclusive, constructive and well informed, then a good decision will generally be made and most people will recognize this. They will also be more comfortable with the process itself, which will in turn lessen the likelihood of their blocking consensus.

If you do not take time to find out what question is really lacking an answer, consensus will feel more like searching for something valuable, and like fumbling around in the dark looking for a way out. But these steps will provide another tool that can make the difference between consensus and stalemate.

Then, instead of a process that can be reduced to waiting until one side gives in out of sheer impatience and frustration, we can take another step away from the divisive pitfalls of majority rule and towards the full potential of consensus.

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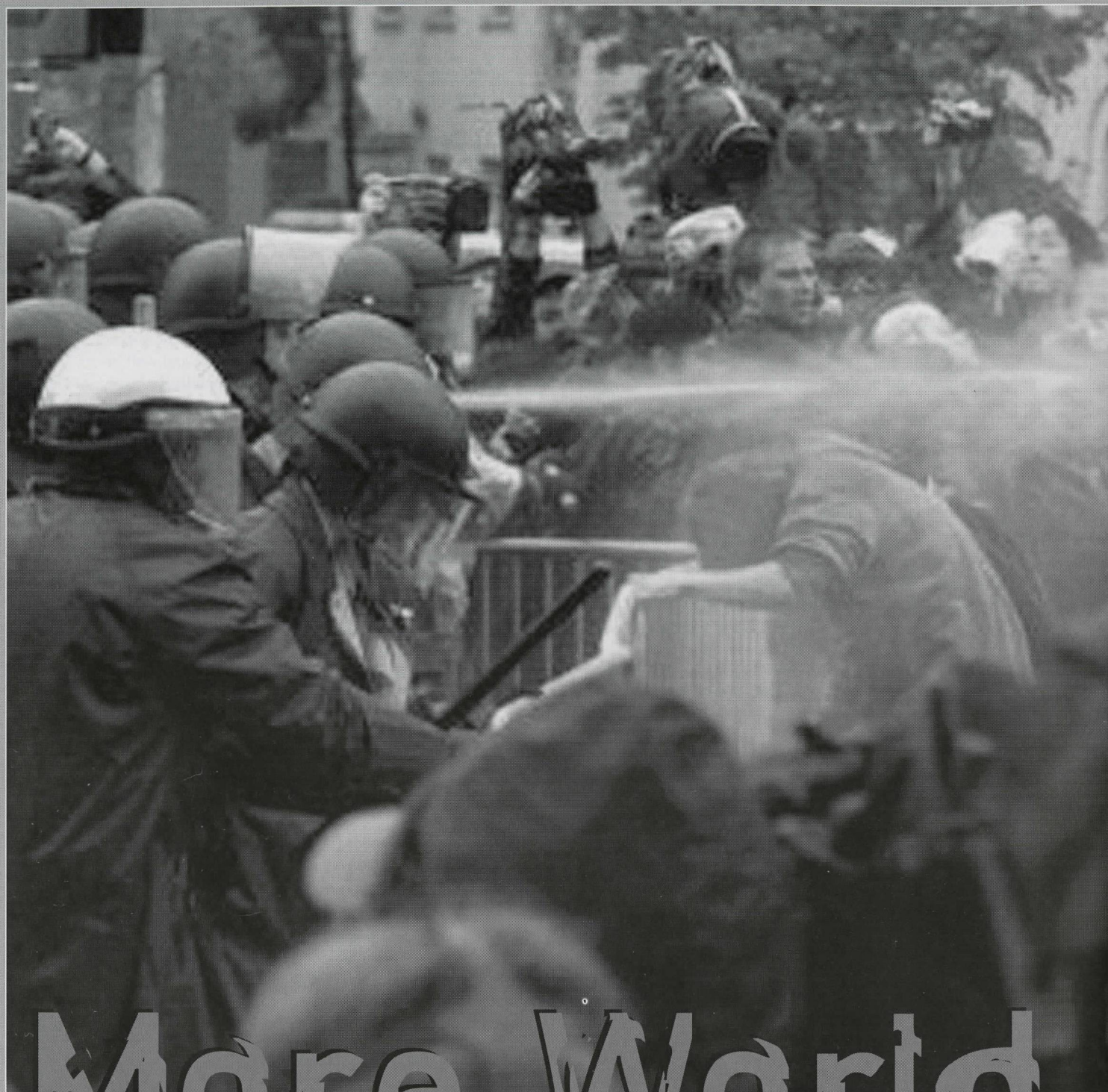
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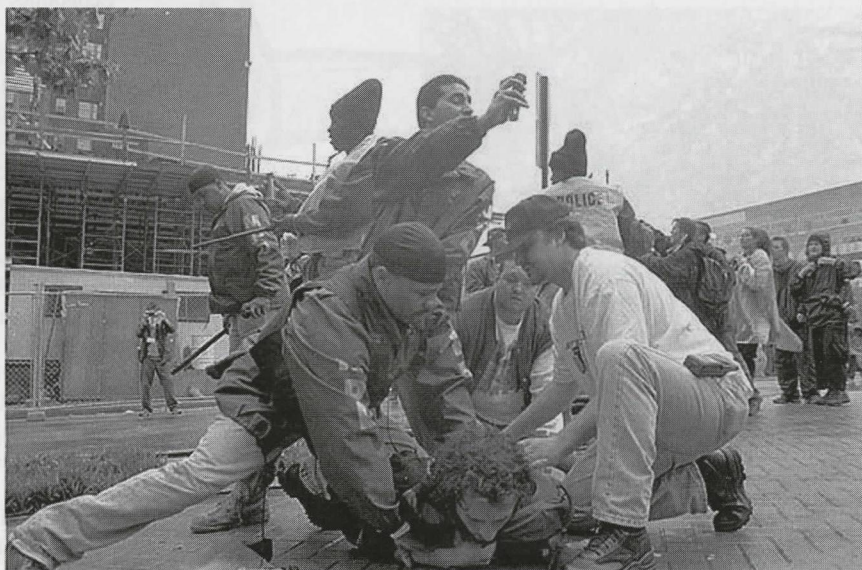
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Less Bank!

Rethinking Global Trade

by Rob Augman

A16 protest photos from Washington, D.C.

courtesy of Independent Media Center
(www.indymedia.org)



This essay originally appeared as a pamphlet handed out in Washington D.C. at the A16 protests.



The World

The world is an intricate system, an incredible balancing act of scientific amazement. It is a living environment of such complexities, of life forms living off of each other, an incredible relationship. Each and every part relies on the existence of the other parts. It is a complex organization of animals (human and non-human) and the environment we live in. But the environment we live in is being destroyed. Its forests are being cut down, trees are being turned into toilet paper and the land is being cleared for cattle and highways. Animals are killed and turned into food, clothing, and medicine. The seas are flooded with oil, and the air is pumped with gasses. It has been like this for hundreds and hundreds of years. And it continues at an alarming rate because of further human development. But even our (human) quality of life isn't prosperous. Human development is full-time jobs, traffic jams, fast-food, war, and parking lots. So why are the world's resources being drained, the environment polluted, the animals killed, and the humans reduced to wage-slavery? To maintain a system of power: the economic system.

Economics

Economics is the system that defines how goods and services are distributed.¹ To decide on how the goods and services will be distributed is actually to decide that some will receive and some won't. It is the law that justifies rationing goods and services (even the most very basic necessities) to coerce people into doing certain tasks (work). This is justified by the assumption that there is a 'scarcity of resources.' 'Scarcity of resources' is the idea that there isn't enough food, water, land, etc. for everyone and that it must be regulated. But the problem with that theory is that there isn't a scarcity of resources. There is enough for all and starvation, poverty, and disease only exist because the economic system supports the inequality of the resources, over-consumption by those in power (those who control the means of production) at the expense of those who in turn lack the resources. This is a balance beam that has been way off balance ever since economics began and will always be off balance as long as economics exists.

Economics also is the justification for using threats of starvation, homelessness, disease, imprisonment, and murder as a tactic to achieve goals.²

Economics is the idea that the world is owned. And without work, even if that work is completely unnecessary, you have no right to enjoy the world, no right to even the most basic necessities of life. Economics is the law that turns every human into a worker and everything else into products: a world of commodities.

The Bank

The bank is the heart of the economy. Without the measurement of the goods and services, we can't buy, sell or trade. The bank is where these measurements and calculations take place and where the balancing act occurs. It's where the system of inequality is validated. It's the institution that justifies evicting people from their homes and throwing them out on the streets. It's the institution that justifies picking people off the streets and locking them in prisons. The bank is the belly of the beast, the tangible monument of the economy. It is the enemy of all who seek total liberation from wage slavery, environmental destruction, inequality (on any scale), and animal liberation. It is the enemy of all who seek human, animal, and earth liberation from the systems of domination.

Free Trade vs. Fair Trade

We are not here to argue 'fair trade' over 'free trade'!³ 'Free Trade' is how one group of people (in this case, corporations) gain advantage over others (in this case, the people of the Third-World). 'Fair Trade' is an accommodationist attempt at making an evenly bal-

anced list of exchanges, which still leads to first-world domination.

It is most important to realize that the argument over trade is merely a matter of to what degree the world is exploited; to what degree the environment will be extracted from, to what degree the people will be forced to slave, to what degree the animals will be killed. It is an argument over who will control and ration out the resources. The anarchist point of view is that the world would be better off if the rainforest wasn't used as a paper factory, but respected and treated as a living environment. We don't see the rivers, lakes, seas, and land as a dumping ground, but as essential parts of an ecosystem. We don't see the air we breathe as a balloon to fill smoke with, but as something that sustains all life. We don't see people as simply workers but, like us, essential and individual members of our complex community. We exist only because our environment and our community allow us to. And we must treat the world as such. The real issue at hand is 'trade' itself.

Trade

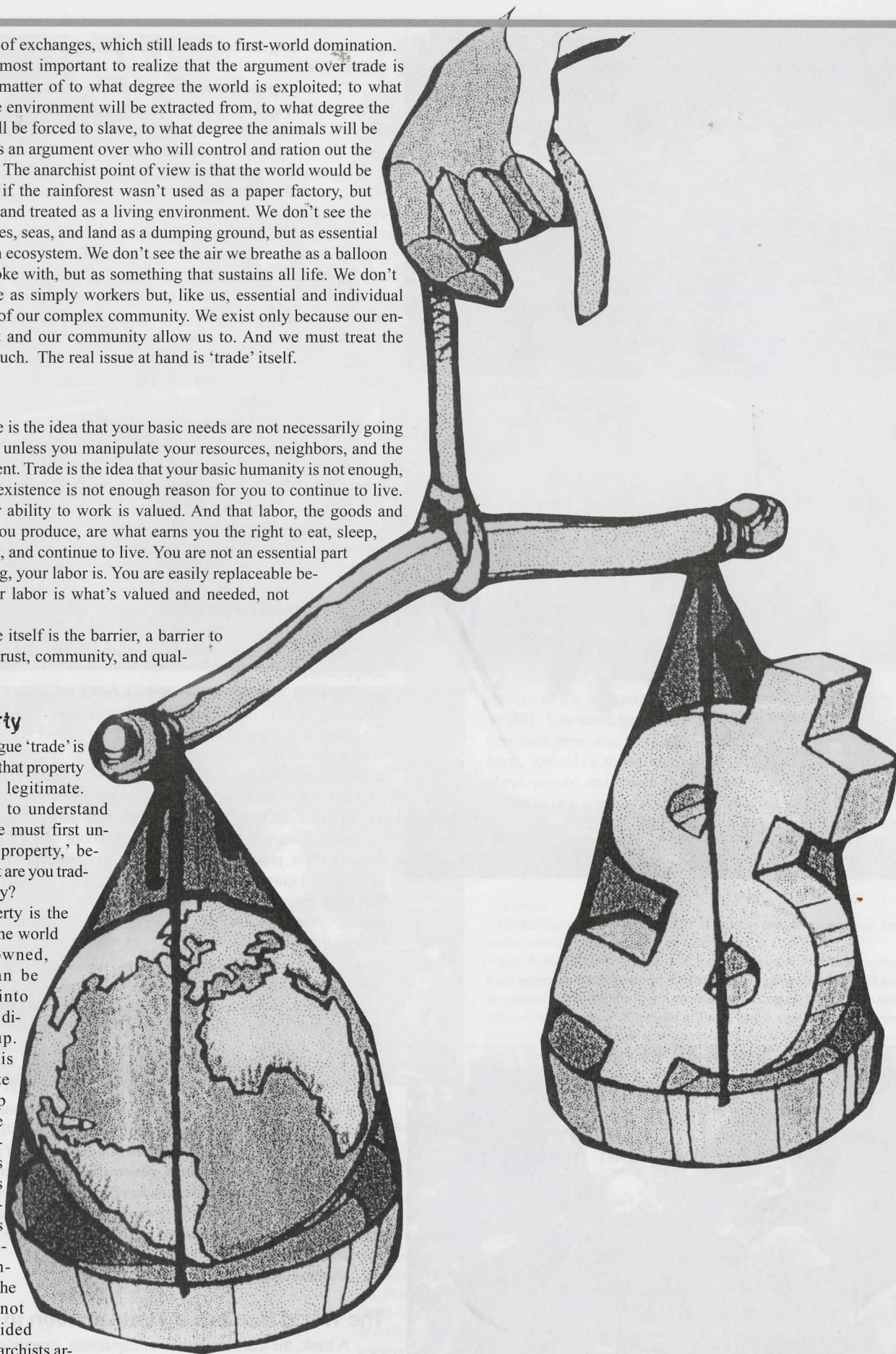
Trade is the idea that your basic needs are not necessarily going to be met, unless you manipulate your resources, neighbors, and the environment. Trade is the idea that your basic humanity is not enough, that your existence is not enough reason for you to continue to live. Only your ability to work is valued. And that labor, the goods and services you produce, are what earns you the right to eat, sleep, stay warm, and continue to live. You are not an essential part of anything, your labor is. You are easily replaceable because your labor is what's valued and needed, not you.

Trade itself is the barrier, a barrier to freedom, trust, community, and quality of life.

Property

To argue 'trade' is to assume that property rights are legitimate. Therefore to understand 'trade,' we must first understand 'property,' because what are you trading anyway?

Property is the idea that the world can be owned, that it can be split into pieces and divided up. Property is the private ownership of the world's resources (the goods and services). As 'fair traders' complain that the world is not being divided 'fairly,' anarchists ar-





gue that dividing the world is not just unfair but more importantly, undesirable.

Dividing up the world into pieces called 'property' automatically institutes a law of competition and no matter how 'fair' you divide it, as long as it remains as 'property' it will always be fought over. The ownership of property means the limit of its usefulness causing reactionary violence that attempts to reclaim the obvious usefulness that it can serve if it is unowned and serves the needs of the community.

The ownership of property makes cooperation impossible, and instead mandates relying on a competitive, 'everyone for themselves,' mentality. Quality of life becomes an issue of individual struggles of rampantly acquiring as many goods and services as possible because ownership of property drastically decreases the usefulness of goods and services leaving each individual with nothing but the sum of things that they own. You only have access to what is yours. You don't have access to your neighbors' car. So the only way possible to raise your quality of life is by increasing your own property. It's a system of over-consumption leading to environmental destruction and over-work, isolationism through non-cooperative lifestyles, violence by those compulsively protecting property and by those lacking basic necessities, and a very weak and even absent social community.

In cooperative communities, however, the unity of people is incredibly powerful. When the goods and services are shared amongst the people the usefulness of those goods and services goes up. It keeps consumption down, causing less strain on the environment and the workers (ourselves). Quality of life is also improved by living in strong social communities that create a great sense of trust and appreciation for our neighbors in collective efforts and cooperation.

Property is the seed in which violence is hatched. That violence may or may not be justifiable. But property never is. We come here today to protest not only the further spread of capitalist policies and structures but more so the spread of capitalist ideology. A capitalist ideology pits person against person in the workforce and in the community. Under capitalist structures we must constantly fight and manipulate each other. The trick is to have us constantly fighting for elbow room so that starvation, homelessness, prison, and death are the constant threats keeping us at work and quiet. Capitalism is a game of competition. Not one that aims to serve the peoples' wants and needs but one that maintains a constant game of catch-up for things that are profitable. One of the problems with a structure of competition is that there must be losers. The losers are in war, ghettos, sweatshops, and prisons. The losers are you and me.

Commercialism is a way of life as much as a system for making economic decisions. It is a way of thinking and relating to others, a system of values. It is a life driven by fear and greed, a life of forever competing against others and fearing the consequences, a life whose guiding motto is "do in others before they do you in." It is not a life of consciously coordinating our interrelated economic activities, a life of equitable cooperation with our fellow human beings. Therefore globalization is not just the spread of the market into new countries and regions, penetrating deeper into areas of life that were previously governed by other systems of social rules. Globalization is also the replacement of the diverse modes of human intercourse with the single mindset and values of universal commercialism.

-Author unknown

The World Bank is a contradiction in terms.

A bank, the main institution of capitalism, cannot improve the



quality of life for humans, animals, or the environment (the world). You can't have the world and the bank. They are complete opposites working in different directions! One, the bank, towards a monitored, world of surveillance, constant check-points, and search and seizures, a world of constantly trying to prove one's worth. The other, the world, towards a free land, strong community, collective decision-making, and shared resources. You must choose one. You can not have both. Quit pretending that you can. Choose the world!

Footnotes

¹ Globalization is expanding that definition to encompass how *the entire world's* resources will be distributed.

² The World Bank offers loans to poor countries only if those countries agree to the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). These programs "include cuts in government spending on health care and education, increases in the cost of food, health care and other basic necessities, mandates to open markets to foreign trade and investment, and privatization of state-run enterprises." — Center for Economic Justice

³ Opponents of 'free trade' are commonly marked as supporters of 'fair trade'. This mistake is due to the overall assumption that 'trade'

as we know it must exist as 'property' is so ingrained in our culture as a reasonable way to conduct our lives. Anarchists oppose 'free trade' and 'fair trade' because of our opposition to 'trade' itself and of 'property.'

For more info:

Anarchist authors:

Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Enrico Malatesta, Peter Kropotkin, Michael Bakunin, Pierre Proudhon, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Daniel Guerin, Howard Ehrlich.

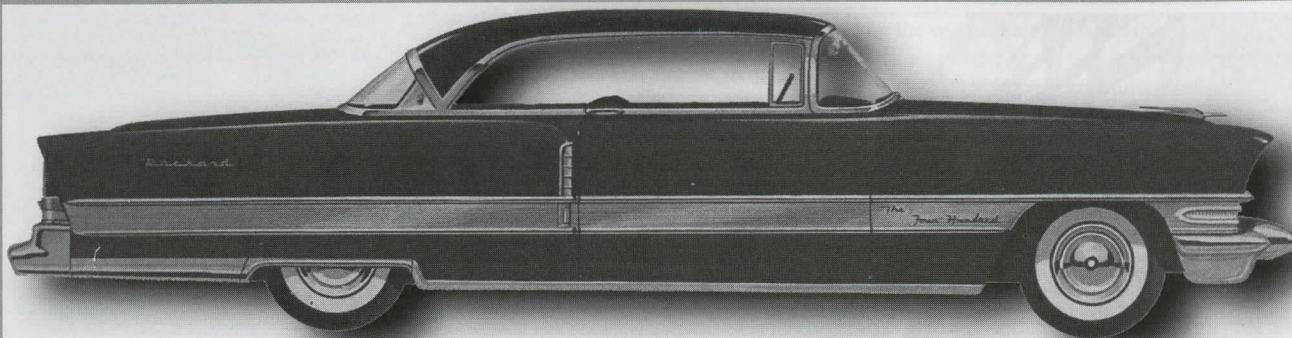
Anarchist book publishers or distributors:

AK Press (PO Box 40682 San Francisco, CA 94140-0682)

Death-Metal Militia. dmmdistro@juno.com or PO Box 17838 Clearwater, FL 33762 USA).

Anarchy on the internet:

www.infoshop.org



DRIVING OURSELVES INSANE

The True Cost of the Automobile by Nathan Berg

As my vehicle and I sat completely still in the gridlocked traffic that perpetually plagues Chicago, I couldn't help but reflect upon a certain statistic that I had recently uncovered. Over the next twenty years, driving delays—just the amount of time Americans spend in traffic jams—will cause us to waste 146 billion gallons of fuel, which will in turn throw an extra 146 billion pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and increase travelers' costs by \$41 billion. Of course, that statistic fails to recognize the cost of the eight billion hours per year that we spend stuck in traffic, nor does it compute the psychological and emotional costs of such a brutal combination of stress and boredom. It also neglects to mention the health-related costs of breathing the toxic air created by our overuse of the automobile and doesn't speak of the overwhelming amount of damage imposed upon our environment. And above all, since it speaks only of time spent in jams, the statistic showcases a mere fraction of the overall effects of our car-addicted culture.

While this dismal view of our four-wheeled mania engulfs my thoughts, an even uglier scene fills the field of vision just beyond my windshield. On the ten lanes of highway going either direction sits bumper-to-bumper traffic as far as the eye can see, which probably isn't as far as it should be considering the dense, rust-colored smog that smothers the city with its wretched (and rather dangerous) odor. There are countless bridges, on-ramps, and exit ramps—once called 'cloverleaves'—which now bear a much stronger resemblance to a large plate of fettuccini than anything else. Of the landscape that surrounds the highway I can see nothing but cement, used either in the millions of buildings and structures that fill the city or the seemingly endless miles of roads designed to take cars to and from them. On the highway itself, motorists cut into each others' lanes, unsuccessfully attempting to somehow escape this urban jail cell faster than the rest, causing a constant workout for car horns, middle fingers, and foul-mouthed lips. Others stare ahead with blank faces—zoning out to escape the reality of their current surroundings. Worse yet, a large number of drivers spend their time talking on cellular phones, no doubt complaining to the person on the other line that they are 'stuck in a traffic jam,' remaining blissfully ignorant of the fact that they ARE the traffic jam.

My 'inconvenience' was soon over and I safely returned to my small, somewhat bikeable hometown in western Wisconsin and prayed that I wouldn't have to endure traffic congestion for a long time to come. A few weeks later, in early April of this year, my prayers were answered. The Ford Motor Co., in a joint venture with Maytag, un-

veiled what they perceived as the next logical solution to the issue of congestion; a Windstar minivan equipped with everything from a refrigerator to a trash compactor to a microwave oven. This 'concept car' also included a mini-freezer and cooler, a washer/dryer, a built-in wet/dry vacuum cleaner, a TV in the ceiling, and Nintendo plug-ins on the floor! Ford is quick to point out that the average American spends 80 minutes of every day commuting, depriving them of time that could be much more efficiently spent doing laundry or making dinner. They designed this vehicle with the intent of helping time-strapped commuters make better use of their current 'down-time.' While there is no current plan to put these dorm-rooms-on-wheels into production, there was a certain suggestiveness that this is what the future might hold for automobiles, even going so far as to indicate the possibility of on-board computers that would be linked to home appliances to let you know how much milk is in the fridge and whether more would need to be picked up on the ride home.

Never mind the fact that inattentive driving accounts for a huge number of fatal car accidents every year. There is something appalling about a high-speed society, choked and suppressed in every possible way by its fixation with the personal transport, trying to solve its problems by creating vehicles that can do our chores and entertain us at the same time. Our love affair with the car has quite blatantly cost us our environment, our physical and mental health, our ability to create a quality system of public transportation, and even our sense of community, and we're supposed to believe that the solution is to throw some microwaves into the mix?

Car Troubles

We are now so immersed in a world run by the car that attempting to assess all of the ways it pervades our society is a near impossible task. It has changed how we work and play, where we live, and even what we eat. We've designed our cities with the personal vehicle at the forefront and we spend absurd amounts of money to keep these expensive infrastructures intact. We've ravished the environment and squandered precious fossil fuels to supply our four-wheeled habits. We've forfeited our health and emotional well-being by leading fast-paced lives that try to keep up with the speed of our cars.

For all of our efforts to control and manage the use of the automobile, we are now under its control. For all its promises of making our lives simpler, the car has quite literally run us over. With scientific evidence that the world's oil supply is not very far from being completely depleted, meaning that our current mode of transportation is headed for some big changes in the near future, now is as good a

time as any to assess the damages it has caused and start a dialogue to find rational, intelligent means of curbing our infatuation with the car.

Exhaust Troubles

Even when I was just a baby I was aware that automobiles were terrible for the environment. I'm not sure if the term 'global warming' was around quite yet, but there seemed to be a widespread recognition of the fact that car fumes were doing a significant amount of damage to the atmosphere. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, six of the seven main air pollutants come from automobiles. These pollutants trap in heat when released into the atmosphere causing concern over the melting of polar ice caps, rising ocean levels, and extreme climatic change. But while scientists continue to debate the effects and possible outcomes of global warming, and the automobile industry continues to deny their findings and lobby against legislation and treaties designed to curb the problem, other environmental damages caused by automobiles often go unnoticed.

Pavement now covers 2 percent of the United States and 10 percent of all its arable land. Our urge to design cities and highways that cater to cars has now created a system in which we are downright reliant upon them. Suburban sprawl, which chews up an average of 1.5 million acres of farmland every year, is a direct result of cities planned solely for the automobile. New development takes place on the very outskirts of cities where under-funded public transportation usually doesn't reach and other modes of transportation (like biking and walking) are virtually impossible. And so the story goes; between 1960 and 1990 Americans increased their miles traveled by 198 percent with 133 percent more registered cars, 126 percent more fuel, and 91 percent more licensed drivers. During that same period, the population increased 39 percent. So while we continue to lose three acres of farmland to suburban development every minute, we are also increasing our dependence upon the very source of its problem.

Road building is also a great threat to the animal kingdom. Where more roads are being built through natural habitats, often on the very edges of sprawling cities, animals are being flattened at an alarming rate of one million per day. For some endangered species, such as the mountain lion of Southern California, cars are the leading cause of death. All of these roads and parking lots also generate poisonous runoff which, when relocated into the water supply, threatens the health of animals and humans alike.

Some of the most obvious environmental damage, however, goes unseen and unreported. How much industrial damage is done to our skies and water solely through the production and disposal of car tires, for instance? What about all of the steel and plastic and rubber and leather used in the production of cars? What about all of the oil, gasoline, antifreeze, and other myriad chemicals used to keep them running? What about all of the dumps and landfills where outdated automobiles are allowed and left to decay? What about the vast amount of asphalt used to create roads or the amount of salt and gravel used to combat snow and ice on these roads in the colder climates? The statistics proving the amount of damage caused to the environment via the automobile are out there, it's just that we don't pay much attention to them.

Body Repairs

The automobile also causes a saddening amount of damage to every human on this planet by way of grave health issues. As I write these words President Clinton and the NRA are engaged in a spat about gun violence and control. Clinton is calling for more restrictions and regulation over arms, often pointing to the 4,000+ children killed by guns every year. But what of the car, which now has as much likelihood of killing a young, suburban male as a gun does of killing his inner city counterpart? Statistics show that 47,000 Americans are killed in car accidents every year, which comparatively equals

a medium-sized plane crash every single day for a year. It is also estimated that an additional 30,000-60,000 people die annually from health-related problems stemming from motor vehicle emissions. Why, when tobacco companies are being chastised for the poor health problems and deaths they cause, is the auto industry let off the hook?

In the early 1920s, automakers began adding lead to gasoline to alleviate engine knock. Lead, whose dangers as a poison were first noticed over 2,500 years ago, would end up killing as many as 5,000 people every year until it was phased out in the early 1980s and eventually banned in 1986. However, leaded gasoline is still used throughout much of the Third World and is responsible for toxic pollution and countless deaths. In Mexico City, four million automobiles toss an estimated 32 tons of lead into the air each day!

There are literally hundreds of health problems that can be associated with the motor vehicle. One of the most noticeable is a general lack of exercise that somehow causes normally intelligent folks to drive everywhere, even if the destination is but a few blocks away. Cars are also responsible for many mental health problems, with the term 'road rage' receiving more attention than ever. Combine all of the ill health effects, from dangerous emissions levels to the high rates of death for car accidents, with all of the mental side effects of a car-happy society, and you've got a recipe for personal disaster.

Structural Damages

So entangled are we in the automobile's web that we rarely pause to evaluate just how much they affect our society. From our driveways to the parking lots and from the rural highways to our dinner tables, every person on this planet is affected by the automobile. What can be said of a population who spends so much time, energy, and money on our 'need' for personal transportation that it can't keep up?

One of the more striking aspects of our modern 'car culture' is how it has changed the very structure of our cities. Once upholding efficient and effective public transportation systems, cash-strapped city governments are now seemingly forced to spend more on the building and maintaining of streets and parking lots than lesser polluting and more sustainable means of transport. For every dollar spent on public transportation, seven are spent on the motor vehicle. Here in America, nearly half of all urban areas are covered with pavement, with more land given to the car than to housing. When making any new design for a city project, the car (and how well it will mesh the plans) is often the first aspect to be studied. As economist Donald Shoup put it, "Form no longer follows function, fashion, or even finance. Instead, form follows parking requirements." And parking 'needs' are drastically apparent considering the formula that suggests every car needs seven parking spaces: one at home, one at work, one for shopping, and the rest being taken up by pavement in between all of these spaces.

City structures are also affected by new development (read: sprawl). Affluent suburban neighborhoods are often designed for families with three or more automobiles and money that should be spent repairing shoddy inner-city roads is often spent not just on new road building, but also on the sewer, water, and utilities requirements of new development. Such development also affects local economics in that money is more often spent in the new Wal-Marts, Taco Bells, and Blockbusters often scattered on the outskirts of towns, while once thriving downtowns are left to decay.

And, wouldn't you know it, cars have created an almost caste-like system of class divisions, defined by the haves and have-nots. Those who do not have access to personal transportation are typically minorities and the elderly and are also the usual make-up of the lower class. The inner-city poor, who often can't afford the high costs associated with the car, and whose roads are in a constant state of disrepair, are dependent on public transportation which has been dilapidated in order to fund suburban development. They are thereby denied

equal access to good jobs when the time and money spent on getting to and from these jobs often exceeds the benefits of having them. They are also subject to inadequate health care when emergency transport is forced to weave through the urban jungle to serve the poor and public transportation is inefficient at getting them to a hospital in a prompt manner. Also, because of the exuberant costs of new development, they are heavily taxed and their share is spent on roads they will never drive going to homes they will never be able to afford.

Inside these homes dwell the offspring of the automotive age,

...cars have created an almost caste-like system of class divisions, defined by the haves and have-nots. Those who do not have access to personal transportation are typically minorities and the elderly and are also the usual make-up of the lower class.

whose family structure has drastically changed in order to adapt to a society reliant upon the car. In the modern world, parents will spend much of the children's upbringing playing the role of chauffeur, carting the kids to school, football practice or the mall. When they reach driving age, they can then get their very own automobile (practically a right of passage these days), making for three-person families with three automobiles. The traditional family dinner is virtually gone with parents and children driving their separate cars, running their separate errands, and often settling upon the lure of drive-thru fast food when dinner time comes.

Fast food could also be said to be a product of the automobile. In our quick-paced society, good food has almost become more of a nuisance than a staple, and more and more Americans are opting for the 'meal behind the wheel.' Even those rare dinners at home are often pre-packed, 'easy-to-make' affairs, since no one seems to have the time or energy to cook a fresh, healthy meal. Furthermore, the ground transport of food has changed our past reliance upon local produce to

make way for agri-business, which can produce more food on environmentally damaging corporate farms (heavily reliant upon pesticides and genetic modification), then ship it all over the country using an immense fleet of 18-wheelers, causing yet more environmental hardship.

The Chicanery of the Sticker Price

Just as it is difficult to accurately assess all of the societal effects of the automobile, it is also quite difficult to compile a full-scale cost assessment with regard to its overuse. Because the cost of a new car is out of reach for many Americans, it will take a large percentage of income from all but the mega-wealthy in order to purchase a new vehicle. As expensive as it might be, the cost of a new car is well overshadowed by hundreds of other 'hidden' costs. As Elliot Sclar noted, "We buy our cars to go to work and then we work to buy our cars."

The cost of gasoline, which recently went through the roof, is still drastically inexpensive when compared to its cost in other First World nations. What's different in America is that our city structures often require more mileage, meaning a heavier dependence upon gas and higher levels of auto exhaust being thrown into the atmosphere. Also different in America is the notion that everyone should have their own car (or two...or three) and the price of gas does not reflect the actual costs related to such a society.

Beyond the cost of gasoline lies millions of other expenses including insurance, parking fees, vehicle maintenance costs (which seem to be greater and greater as automakers use planned obsolescence as a norm), registration fees, and money spent on traffic tickets.

As mentioned earlier, an ungodly amount of funding from every level of government goes towards the creation and maintenance of roads and highways (often called 'subsidies' when referring to public transportation or any other industry but the automotive). In the United States it would cost \$24.6 billion to simply maintain the roads we have

Of course, Wal-Mart's way of doing business is America's way. Other giant retailing chains differ only in that they aren't as fast, as tough, as successful.

- In Sam We Trust, Bob Ortega

One hundred million people shop at Wal-Mart every week. The company grosses roughly \$160 billion in U.S. sales each year. And while Wal-Mart may be only one of innumerable corporate franchises homogenizing the American landscape, its sheer size and audacity demand a closer study. How did it get so big and what does it presage for the future? Wal-Mart stands alone¹ as a symbol of what's questionable about recent trends in American business.

The question of Wal-Mart inextricably entails the crisis of unions, city sprawl, government kick-backs, sweatshop labor, Southern paternalism, and, thankfully, also grassroots resistance and the power of critical thinking. By using Wal-Mart as a foil, the issues unfold with an arresting urgency. But by studying the discourse critically, real opposition becomes possible; a successful blueprint for local action unfolds.

It came from the South

Wal-Mart started in Arkansas in 1962, growing rapidly throughout the 80s to become the behemoth we know today. Under the guise of positive growth, new jobs and greater consumer variety, Wal-Mart fell easily into the good graces of

De-Constructing Wal-Mart

by Travis Fristoe

in their current state. However, we 'only' spend \$13.4 billion to maintain these while we spend \$16.4 billion building new and wider roads, ensuring that we fall behind on repairs and also ensuring that these new roads that are built will be even less likely to receive the maintenance they require.

Environmental degradation from the automobile may be the hardest to assess yet. The World Resources Institute estimates the costs of various types of damage from car pollution to be \$200 billion per year. As disturbing as that might be, this cost can never truly be understood, as the environment cannot have a price tag put on it and much of our environmental damage cannot be undone, no matter what the cost.

According to author Ivan Illich, the amount of time and money we spend on our cars averages to a mere five miles per hour, which could easily be surpassed in efficiency by public transportation, bicycling and walking, were our cities set up with those modes in mind.

Some Positive Steps

Solving all of these problems associated with our addiction to car culture will not be easy. Many Americans have quite literally fallen in love with their four-wheeled monsters and dutifully ignore the amount of damage they cause to our society. Nonetheless, we must begin calling for more sustainable, rational, environmentally friendly modes of transportation. Some look to the development of electric cars as the solution, which would rationally finger the internal combustible engine as the sole source of the problems with cars. Given the information we know about the problems with car culture, it is not just pollution we should be alarmed by, but a whole society that has been uprooted in order to make way for personal transportation.

As taxpayers, activists, and ordinary citizens, we must begin demanding that our cities be defined, as they once were, by the pedestrian. The construction of well-placed bike trails and walking paths, coupled with a moratorium on new road development, would not only

make our cities more beautiful and open, but it would also make us healthier. It would free up billions of dollars every year which could go towards the creation of an effective public transportation system, which would in turn help relieve the growing class gap plaguing our country. We could call for accuracy at the gas pump, raising the price of fuel so that it accurately reflects the true cost that cars have on our lives and immediately diminish the number of car users.

As with all issues, the key is to stay informed and make your voice heard. There are thousands of people in this country calling for the reform of our car-addicted society and they have a wealth of decent information amongst them. Accompanying this article is a list of good sources to start with so that you might also help in creating a society based more upon rationality than upon speed, more upon community than upon the suburbs. Someday, we will look back and wonder how we ever let the automobile take us over so overwhelmingly, but we will revel in the fact that we were smart enough to change it and bring about a more healthy (and relaxed) planet. ☿

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the towns it approached. By focusing on small rural towns and county seats in the South, Wal-Mart spread rapidly and easily dominated the local, independent competition. They were welcomed as a sign of progress, sophistication and low prices.

Cities pretty much paid for Wal-Marts to come to town. In exchange for expected sales tax revenues and job opportunities for the community, cities offered property tax breaks and infrastructure subsidies, sometimes even tax-exempt bonds to finance construction of the new business. Wal-Mart prefers building on the outskirts of town, where land is not only cheaper, but it's also not zoned as "commercial". This allows Wal-Mart to not only avoid the regulations that other merchants had to pay, but also build larger parking lots to convenience suburbanites. Such tactics leave downtown areas, formerly the heart and anchor of a community, to become hollow cores where the majority of citizens neither live nor shop anymore. Commerce spreads to the edge of cities, and Wal-Mart, along with other franchises, overruns the landscape. Just look around.

Aside from the promised jobs and sales tax windfalls, what other effects do Wal-Marts have on communities? Money spent in Wal-Mart (or any chain) doesn't stay in the local economy. Profits go back to the corporate office to be divided amongst stockholders and executives. Wal-Mart does offer jobs, but overwhelmingly they are minimum wage jobs² with no benefits³ and zero job security. How's that for a vision of the future?

Economic impact studies, like any statistic, can be interpreted many ways. Sure, a new Wal-Mart will bring in new jobs and add millions to the commercial tax base. But what about the businesses that close in Wal-Mart's wake and the jobs lost there? In Greenfield,

Massachusetts, factory owner David Bete was skeptical enough of the Wal-Mart-financed report that he decided to consult local economists and do his own research. By factoring in the impact of businesses closing after Wal-Mart opens (lost jobs, lost tax revenue, commercial and residential property values negatively affected by such closings), Bete's figures showed Wal-Mart adding only eight jobs and \$33,800 a year in tax revenue⁴. Probably not the kind of changes any city would want.

For the Record

My local public library has five biographies of Wal-Mart and/or its founder Sam Walton. Not unusual for such a wealthy American figure but the problem lies in how overwhelmingly one-sided the books read. The *Made in America* series, a collection of biographies for children about entrepreneurs like Mary Kay, Ross Perot and Sam Walton, offers this reasoning for Wal-Mart's

effect on local economies:

As every successful idea took off, Sam kept trying to come up with new ways to get more customers. In the 1970's, pharmacy and pet departments were added, along with automotive centers, where cars could be fixed. If these attractions put the local pet shop or drug store out of business, Sam was more than willing to hire the former owner. Not only did this provide the person with a job, but it also tended to bring their former customers to Wal-Mart. (Keith Greenberg's Sam Walton : America's Most Successful Shopkeeper)

So by this logic, if your local mechanic goes out of business because of Wal-Mart, then he can simply go work for Wal-Mart's automotive department at a fraction of the salary? And if downtown businesses can't compete with Wal-Mart, then they should close up





and head to Wal-Mart? Only one of the books on Wal-Mart, Bob Ortega's *In Sam We Trust* approaches the subject in any sort of critical manner. Such voices and questions must be added to the discourse if there's to be any chance of an autonomous future. The landscape (physical, economic and cultural) is being mapped constantly, and a critical eye (and voice) becomes necessary for survival.

*It's not really a corporate stockholder's meeting . . . is it?
It's a happening-it's a revival.*

- Sam Walton on Wal-Mart's annual retreats

In 1985, *Forbes* magazine announced Sam Walton as the richest man in America. He won the award five years in a row. That didn't quite gel with the image he meticulously cultivated of being a down-to-Earth, humble businessman who drove from store to store in a beat-up pick-up truck. Walton made continual avuncular and hand-wringing store visits. By listening earnestly to the workers and wearing a name tag (just like the ones they wore), Walton sublimated worker dissatisfaction with glad-handing and Southern charm. By making himself accessible on occasion, Walton was able to pacify, at least temporarily, the legitimate gripes of employees.

Walton's management style is exemplified best in the annual Wal-Mart retreats. The retreats incorporate elements of high school pep rallies and 4th of July parades. "Mr. Sam" spells out the Wal-Mart name cheerleader-style before asking if everyone was "thinking about doing these extra little things" for customer service. Then he leads a rousing sing-a-long of "God Bless America" and at the height of the frenzy, a polite reminder that all the cheer was meaningless without an increase in sales. In true Wal-Mart fashion you can get reimbursed for mileage to the event but never get a free ride there. The fact that Walton's antics weren't dismissed outright (the president of the company pleading on one knee for better sales and service from his employees?) proves his charisma. Such fanatical reinforcement would seem absurd if employees didn't remark that 52-hour weeks were modest.

Such patronizing is typical of both Walton and Wal-Mart. "There's no need for a union at Wal-Mart!" the new employee handbook admonishes. Be a "team member" or "associate" instead of a union member. The library where I work has a union, but most employees consider the union dues too expensive and unnecessary. "We already have medical benefits and we get paid well," they tell me. But what if our medical coverage got better - like full coverage and no deductible or co-payment? Or our pay got better? These changes

don't come from the kindness of administration and HMOs. Improvements in the workplace happen when workers unite and demand such things.

Which is exactly what a group of Wal-Mart truckers decided to do. In 1976, Wal-Mart truck drivers and dock workers at the Bentonville distribution center, angry at the endless overtime expected of them, called the Teamsters. At the time, the workers were handling double the warehouse's capacity.

Walton met with the workers and dissuaded them from organizing with a mix of self-deprecation ("I don't know how I could have been so stupid") and anti-union sentiment ("Can you imagine having some Teamster in here saying you can't talk to me, that you have to go to the union and make them talk to me? You think I'm going to listen to them more?"). His ploy worked and the

workers voted against union representation. Such tactics are typical of Walton's administrative style: patriarchal, charming and utterly disarming.

Most Wal-Marts are in the South and lower midwest, which are "right to work" states, meaning you can't be forced to be a union member just to work in a particular trade or place. "Right to work" frames the debate - the phrase implies that unions are keeping you from that great Wal-Mart job. Somehow, the purpose of unions has been obscured by business⁴. How such a role reversal - management as the worker's friend and unions as meddlesome and ineffective - came about is nothing short of a miracle. A miracle for business leaders and corporate earnings translates to a slow cancer for the majority of the American workforce.

As we move increasingly from a manufacturing to a service economy, unions and their hard-fought benefits disappear. Why has health care increasingly become the employee's responsibility rather than the employer's or the government's? Because we let our benefits fall apart. The 40-hour work week, medical coverage, and pensions are all the result of individuals forming unions and fighting like hell to get their employers to compensate them fairly for their labor. As the strength of unions dissipates, so does their bargaining power. At the risk of sounding obvious, there is a direct link between the decline in worker benefits and the weakening of union representation.

Worker dissatisfaction arose again in 1981 in Searcy, Arkansas and they were angry and committed enough to sign union representation cards. The National Labor Relations Board, who does about as much for American labor as the American Indian Council does for Native Americans, gives companies six weeks to prepare for a union vote. Wal-Mart used the time shrewdly. Not only did Walton threaten to take away their profit-sharing⁴ but he also said point-blank he'd shut down the place before he'd let a union in. If that wasn't enough, management erected a 90-foot long bulletin board detailing all the violent strikes and corruption the Teamsters have ever had. Needless to say, Wal-Mart won the vote.

Wal-Mart remains the largest non-unionized company in the country⁵. Wal-Mart has one unionized store, and it's in Canada where the Ontario courts had to rule that Wal-Mart intimidated workers and demand that the union be recognized. Union drives at Wal-Mart will have a formidable but not impossible task ahead of them. The crucial point, and one that unions should emphasize, is that pop-psychology is not the same as worker's rights. Being called an "associate" does

not give you any more say in how things are run and how you are compensated. A pep rally isn't a raise. Again, such understandings are obvious but need to be reiterated cumulatively to show the power dynamic at work.

Buy American?

Few companies employ rhetoric as successfully as Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart's "Made in America" campaign taps directly into the feel-good consumerism of the Wal-Mart experience. Wal-Mart imports more goods than ever, but the Buy American campaign puts the burden of the lowest price on American manufacturers. Basically, Wal-Mart gets their products from whoever sells the goods cheapest. But when they get it from an American manufacturer, the product is hyped with "Made in America" signs. "One of our big objectives was to put the heat on American manufacturers to lower their prices" admitted a Wal-Mart board member. And if American manufacturers can't compete with foreign competitors, then it's their own fault, right? There is causality. There is a pattern. And the Wal-Mart slogan of "Keep America Strong" begs the question of - strong for whom?

"Green" products came into their own in the 90s as public consciousness of the environmental consumer repercussions grew⁵. Soon, every store tapped into "saving the world" by buying things with some sort of recycled content. I'm certainly not against more Earth-friendly products, but the labels need to be examined. Know the difference between "recycled" and "recyclable" packaging. Take, for example, the "eco-friendly" paper towels available at Wal-Mart. These chlorine-bleached, un-recyclable paper towels wrapped in plastic get a green tag because the cardboard tube is recycled. Sure the recycled tube is a good start, but what about the rest of the product and packaging?

On a larger scale, Wal-Mart's charity demands a closer look as well. Despite philanthropy at less than half the average corporation, Wal-Mart can appear generous and caring by giving out \$1,000 high school scholarships in small towns where such gestures seem grand and sweeping. Wal-Mart also matches funds from employee bake sales. A pattern exists of maximum publicity at a minimum of effort and cost. Which is not to decry the scholarships, only to point out their token nature. If philanthropy and the future really does belong to the private sector (i.e. corporations), we need to demand much more from them.

The question of international sweatshop labor must also be a part of any meaningful discussion of Wal-Mart. "Are you trying to save the world?" was the question labor activist Charlie Kernaghan was asked when he started his campaign against sweatshops, and Wal-Mart's Kathie Lee Gifford line in particular. Both Gifford and Wal-Mart were perfect targets for the sweatshop issue: Wal-Mart because of its dubious "Buy American" campaign and Gifford because her image hinged on being a caring, Christian mother. Wal-Mart denied the allegations, saying they'd shut down the factory months ago. Kernaghan rebutted, "Pulling out of Honduras is not a just solution. Why not send the kids to school and hire their parents?"

A week later, a Manhattan factory full of garment workers sick of overtime and not being paid in weeks approached the Union of Needle-trades, Industrial and Textile Employees. Their timing was impeccable. The workers were making Kathie Lee clothes for Wal-Mart. In a desperate bid to save face, Gifford's husband Frank Gifford rushed to the scene with an envelope full of hundred dollar bills to soothe the ire of the angry workers. Not all situations can be so easily remedied, and thanks to countless activists worldwide, the issue of sweatshops has become unavoidable.

Kernaghan pushed his point by flying in 15-year-old Wendy Diaz, a Honduran worker from the Kathie Lee factory. Would Gifford agree to help clean up the sweatshops? What choice did she have? Gifford eventually agreed to meet Diaz. No sooner had Diaz finished explaining the conditions in the factories when Gifford breaks into tears

proclaiming how hard it's been on her too, all this bad publicity. Surrealism aside, this anecdote verifies that celebrities and companies can be held accountable for their actions.

Wal-Mart and Gifford responded by saying the factory had been closed and the subcontractor fired. But closing the exposed sweatshops isn't the answer. It gives the corporations and managers an easy out. Foreign labor has become an unavoidable part of modern living. Efforts should instead be focused on improving wages and conditions in the workplace worldwide. Independent investigators and unscheduled visits to factories are the only way to achieve enforceable and just conditions.

Give 'em Enough Rope

Wal-Mart's own quotes provide the fuel for debate. When they told a *60 Minutes* reporter that "there are good business people and bad business people. And the ones who aren't good business people don't stay in business," they revealed their own moral justification. They were saying point-blank that fiscal success is the measure of a business, regardless of the means.

To back-up and simplify, my major problem with capitalism in general and Wal-Mart in specific lies in world view. Rather than seeing downtowns as unique, viable communities, they see weak businesses ripe for takeover. Outskirts of town look like the ideal, cheap spot for a new Supercenter rather than a fragile environmental area to be protected and maintained. People's value comes from working their jobs and/or buying their products. Wal-Mart's obligation is to turn a profit for their stockholders. It's up to individuals and individual communities to impose any sort of sustainability and moral responsibility.

We have almost adopted the position that if some community, for whatever reason, doesn't want us in there, we aren't interested in going in and creating a fuss. I encourage us to walk away from this kind of trouble because there are just too many other good towns out there who do want us. - Sam Walton

Opposition to Wal-Mart includes not just small business owners whose livelihood is directly threatened, but also concerned environmentalists and community activists. There are plenty of reasons to be wary of Wal-Mart, don't limit yourself to a single/simplified label¹⁰.

Rather than seeing downtowns as unique, viable communities, they (Wal-Mart) see weak businesses ripe for takeover. Outskirts of town look like the ideal, cheap spot for a new Supercenter rather than a fragile environmental area to be protected and maintained.

Wal-Mart will affect your local economy. Locally-owned independent stores will close. Even if they are inevitably moving into town, you have a right (and moral obligation) to demand certain things from them. City commission and planning meetings are overwhelmingly dull. But to add your voice to the discourse, you must stand up and be heard.

One of the finest examples of resistance was in Boulder, Colorado when Wal-Mart offered to build an "eco-store." The store proposed a solar-powered sign, skylights, a recycled asphalt parking lot and a holding pond for wastewater and run-off to irrigate the shrubbery. At the Boulder meeting, council member Spenser Havlick suggested that the entire store be solar-powered and that affordable housing be built for Wal-Mart workers since no one would be able to afford Boulder rent on a Wal-Mart salary. The request was met with

silence. Wal-Mart's tiny environmental efforts shouldn't just be mocked. Instead, we should demand more. Negotiating (playing "hard ball") is an unavoidable part of business and unless you like getting squashed, I suggest we start standing up for ourselves and our communities.

Again, the key to sustainable and winning resistance is the ability to interpret their strategies and statements; to not ignore their ads in disgust. Or walk away in a defeatist haze of nihilism. But to think and act/react critically to the current state of affairs. The difference, as we say in the library field, is between information and knowledge. Because you can beat Wal-Mart. And I don't just mean shoplifting cans of spray paint from them¹⁰. Small groups of concerned citizens have stopped Wal-Mart from entering their towns. It's the only thing that ever has. The future, as the Clash once said, is unwritten.

Endnotes on the conspiracy : Former Wal-Mart executives now run Kinko's & Blockbuster; John Walton, heir to the Wal-Mart fortune, is a leading advocate of privatizing schools. Caveat emptor.

Notes

1. Maybe Disney is as creepy, omnipresent and revelatory as Wal-Mart, but I had to pick just one. Go write your own article about the "Celebration" town and failed "America" historical theme park.
2. Wal-Mart's first workers were paid less than half the minimum wage.
3. Jay Bradford, a state senator from Wal-Mart's home state of Arkansas tried to sue Wal-Mart for passing the burden on to the state's citizenry. Meaning that their part-time, minimum-wage workforce made so little money on the job that they often had to turn to the state for public assistance. The measure never passed, but its mere presence should clue you in to the amount of backlash Wal-Mart necessitates in this battle.
4. Ortega, Bob. *In Sam We Trust*; p. 287.
5. Admittedly, union corruption and mob ties have done a pretty good job of shooting themselves in both feet. But grassroots and rank-and-file labor movements are still a valid antidote.
6. Profit-sharing is an incentive program whereby workers can buy Wal-Mart stock at a discount. Theoretically, as the company does well, so do the workers who profit from the stock's increased value. A few workers did cash in big in the 80s, but fewer than one in 50 ever accrued as much as \$50,000 in stock (*In Sam We Trust*, p.349). Such tactics are common nowadays in lieu of traditional benefits.
7. Ortega, Bob. *In Sam We Trust*; p. 220.
8. Environmentalism being the 'radical' idea that wrapping non-reusable, non-recyclable products in non-reusable, non-recyclable products might not be such a savvy idea. Especially as landfills fill up much faster than we build them. Not rocket science, but consumerism is more often than not based more on escapism than responsibility, especially in America.
9. Like people asking why I'm a vegetarian: Is it for health reasons? Spiritual reasons? Because you dislike the slaughter of animals? Why not all of the above?
10. While shoplifting from such stores is certainly better than paying, it's more of a small, guerilla tactic than larger community opposition. As the band Palatka says, "If you're so inclined, take refuge in petty theft: put the fun back in funding your own lifestyle and revive a dying left." Just don't get caught. Wal-Mart does prosecute.

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Doing It Out



a photo essay by chris

themselves: ABC NO RIO



bo arts larson

Nausea live at ABC NO RIO



One of the foundations of the ideologies behind the punk scene is that of breaking down barriers. We strive to be equal; as band members, show organizers, zine writers, artists, record labels, distributors, fans and audience participants. Punk culture was formed as a reaction to distinct “us” and “them” boundaries that were a direct result of the union between big money and entertainment. People that were interested in self-expression started to take things into their own hands and create avenues to make their art, voices, and sounds seen and heard. The Do-It-Yourself ideology that underlies the punk spirit has been manifest in punks doing shows in their basements and living rooms, bands putting out their own CDs and records, and zinesters photocopying their zines and handing them out for free. These days there is a solid network characterized by an atmosphere of collectivity and premised on respect, freedom of expression, and having a good time; not on making money, being cool or having any one person in charge to tell you what to do. This network serves as a unifying force for zines, record labels and the “kids” to communicate with each other and shorten the distance between the cities and towns they live in. This is the basis for a strong network of people who are doing things for themselves and keeping the spirit of punk alive.

In late 1989, I moved to New York City, eager to get involved in the scene. The time was ripe for a new movement and I found a group of folks starting to organize regular shows in a collective art space known as ABC NO RIO (a partially derelict building deep in the lower east side of Manhattan). With an art gallery, and a performance space for spoken word, poetry and occasional live music shows, this was a community arts center with a lot of potential. Though the arts collective had been around for over a decade, the early 90s spawned the evolution at 156 Rivington Street with the “Saturday Matinee.” These weekly hardcore and punk shows brought on the formation of a venue that would be “collectively-run, all ages, not-for-profit; supporting bands that are not sexist, racist or homophobic.” It was an environment rich with social and political activism, artistic expression and a strong collective community-based spirit. For anyone who has been involved in any of



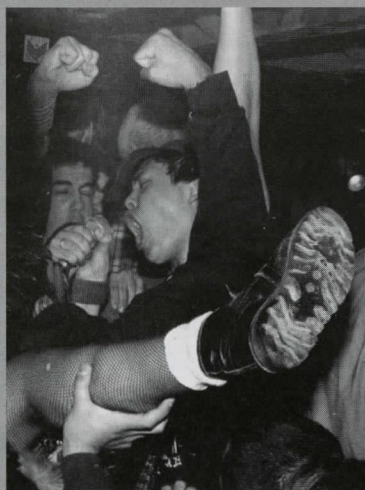
ABC NO RIO's diverse activities over the years, they know it's a place that has touched people's hearts deeply and made a tremendous impact on everyone involved.

For me, the punk community and ABC NO RIO are completely interwoven. This is a place that has been the focal point of my life for the eight intense years that I lived in New York City. The collective spirit and idea that everyone is part of a whole has always been at the heart of the existence of ABC NO RIO. The faces in the crowd, the organizers of events and all the others make up a true community. A place like ABC NO RIO helps us to remember that the foundation of equality is that the "us" and "them" are one in the same. These photos are a tribute to the people who passed through the punk shows in the early 90s at ABC NO RIO. ç





Throughout ABC NO RIO's existence, there has been a struggle to slip through the cracks of the system in order to stay alive. To this day, ABC NO RIO is still fighting the city to keep the space open and active. Currently the collective is in the process of raising money to bring the building up to code—at which point the city will sell the building to the collective for a token amount of \$1. ABC NO RIO is an extraordinary place! It is a perfect example of what can be done when a group of people have dedicated themselves to supporting something that they believe in. If anyone is interested in making a donation to ABC NO RIO, helping out, or just getting more information, please write to ABC NO RIO 156 Rivington St., New York, NY 10002



Rogue Riders

Harley Davidson and the Birth of the Biker Outlaw



Peter Werbe interviews author Brock Yates

Motorcycles command an almost iconic position in American popular culture, symbolizing rebellion against or a retreat from the security of staid, middle-class life. The image of the lone rider in getaway/escapist rock songs like Bob Seger's, "Roll Me Away," or the ambivalent figure of the outlaw biker represent a desire to be free of a routinized daily existence marked by work, consumption, and television.

Brock Yates captures this spirit in his *Outlaw Machine: Harley-Davidson and the Search for the American Soul* (Little, Brown, 1999). He tells the history of the company that produces the motorcycles most closely associated with the phenomenon and about the people who ride them.

Yates, editor-at-large for *Car and Driver* magazine, has also written numerous screenplays including "The Cannonball Run" and "Smokey and the Bandit II." Among his other books are *The Decline and Fall of the American Automobile Industry*, *The Critical Path*, and *Dead in the Water*.

clamor spoke to Brock Yates at his home north of New York City.

clamor: How did Harley-Davidson motorcycle become an outlaw machine? Was it always like that?

Brock Yates: No, it really wasn't. The founders, the three Davidson brothers and their pal, William Harley, who created the company in 1903, imagined it initially as a transportation device, as a rival to the automobile, as most of the early motorcycle manufacturers did.

But Henry Ford blew that whole idea away when he was able to

photos courtesy of San Francisco Chronicle and Harley-Davidson Motor Company; taken from Brock Yates' *Outlaw Machine: Harley-Davidson and the Search for the American Soul*

build a Model T which was almost as inexpensive as a motorcycle and obviously a whole lot more versatile. So, through the 1920s and 30s, it slowly transformed itself into a sporting machine which it remains today.

The outlaw image was created in 1947 following a famous mini-riot in Hollister, California that got blown all out of proportion with a picture that appeared in Life magazine. Then, of course, the "Wild One" film came along in 1954 with Marlon Brando, even though he rode a Triumph in the movie, but it still enhanced the Harley image.

Also, there was the public awareness of the Hells Angels, and all the biker flicks of the '60s like "Easy Rider" that helped to create the outlaw imagery of Harley-Davidson. The company tried in vain to turn that idea around; they hated the idea that they were viewed as anything other than your normal white bread, all-American product. Now, they've become more comfortable with their image and are pretty cleverly exploiting it.

In your book, Outlaw Machine, you describe the 1947 incident referred to as "the raid of the cyclists." Wasn't there a short story by that name at the time?

Yes, in Harper's magazine in 1950, which was the inspiration for the Stanley Kramer's 1954 movie with Brando and Lee Marvin. But again, "Cyclists Raid," the title of that short story, was based on the Hollister riot, so they all were linked together and created the imagery of bikers as bad guys on motorcycles who were going to ride into your town and rape and pillage.

There has always been a distinction between the so-called good motorcyclist and what has been called the one percenters. The Hells Angels used to wear "1%" patches. They were the one percent bad guys, but the idea of outlaw bikers obviously had to have some existence in reality.

Oh yeah sure. There is no question that the motorcycle clubs of the late '40s grew out of World War II. Every war has young men who come home and are uncomfortable with peace time. We had the opening of the great Western frontiers after the Civil War, and the so-called Lost Generation after World War I in the roaring '20s. World War II produced a lot of young men that didn't just want a peace time life. Out of that came hot-rodding and also motorcycle clubs. The Hells Angels were created in Southern California in Fontana and San Bernardino, and other working class towns in 1948.

But they weren't the first. There were a whole bunch of what we now refer to as outlaw clubs or "gangs" that were already in business and operating widely in Southern California prior to the Angel's creation.

Tell us some of their names.

The Booze Fighters and the Pissed off Bastards of Bloomington, which I thought was a particularly good one. They were a pretty wild bunch of guys and for the most part were veterans of World War II who had come home and wanted to continue to raise some hell. It was hard for a lot of guys to make that adjustment from outright warfare to come home to what was a placid existence, especially in southern California.

You mentioned the mini-riot in Hollister, California in the late 40's and suddenly the image of motorcycle riders changes completely. Before that was the image of motorcycles either neutral or benign?

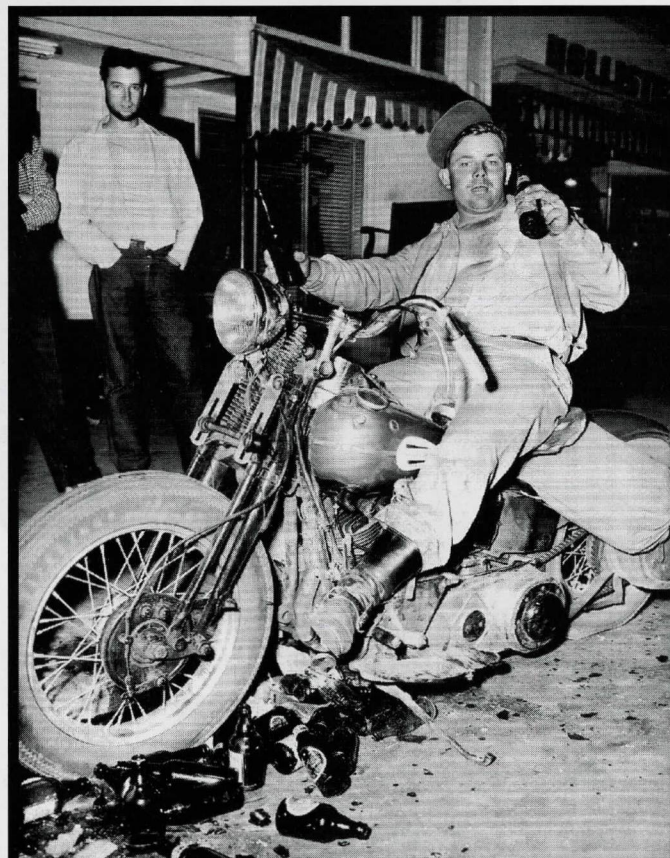
Yes, but they always had a kind of raffish image. Adventurers tended to ride motorcycles, especially in the '20s and '30s. The machines were high powered, fast and dangerous; they were difficult to ride, and it took a lot of skill and bravery to ride a big motorcycle especially like a Harley-Davidson, an Indian, a Henderson, or an Ex-

celsior—some of the early bikes. You had to be a pretty ballsy guy to climb onto one of those things to begin with. There were a lot of varied social riders and people who cruised around at relatively low speeds, but there was always the element of guys who were hard riders. They rode fast, and they rode hard. In Los Angeles and other big cities, there was always an element, who were not known then as "bikers," but guys who hung around motorcycles shops and tended to operate a little bit on the edge of the law. So, there was always a certain quality of outlaw associated with parts of the motorcycle culture.

In Detroit in the 1950s there was a badass club that all rode Triumphs. The only Harleys around were the big, fat-wheeled ones that looked like ones that traffic cops rode. How did Triumphs disappear and the Harleys take over?

A couple of things happened. British bikes were pretty well accepted. Brando rode a Triumph in the "Wild One," although Lee Marvin, who plays a bad guy, rode a Harley. Harley-Davidson won its imagery by default in the sense that British motorcycles—Triumphs, BSAs, Nortons, etc.—fell on hard times because of the invasion of Japanese motorcycles in the late '50s and early '60s. They began to drive the Brits out of the marketplace and Indian had already gone out of business in 1954.

By the middle 1960s, if you wanted a big American motorcycle, and many veterans had pretty strong feelings about "Buy American"—there was always a patriotic element associated with the motorcycle clubs—they really had no choice but to ride a Harley. Especially if you wanted a large displacement, big, noisy, tough-guy motorcycle, it was the only one on the market.



Eddie Davenport poses for the San Francisco photographer Barney Peterson during a lull in the July 1947 bike riot. The photo's appearance in a subsequent issue of Life magazine permanently transformed all motorcyclists into bikers and outlaws.

The chopper was created in the middle 1950s by customizers, mainly in southern California, but the concept spread around to other big cities. There were a lot of spare parts available for Harleys and you were able to customize and mess around with them a lot easier than you were able to do with British cycles, and Japanese motorcycles were considered unacceptable. You just didn't ride a "rice burner." They were never considered part of the motorcycle culture in that sense.

What was the reaction at Harley-Davidson headquarters? I'm reminded of Zig Zag cigarette rolling papers during the 1960s when the drawing of the Zig Zag man on the wrapper became the emblem of marijuana smoking. The company absolutely denied their product was being used for illegal purposes. So, here's this staid, old line motorcycle firm and their product is being radically chopped and becoming the emblem of outlawry. How did they react to that?

Oh, they hated it. In fact, they were the ones who originated the phrase, "one percenters," through their public relations firm. They denounced these guys who were chopping motorcycles up, saying they were only one percent of the market and therefore, don't pay any attention to them. That was pretty interesting because the motorcycle clubs, the Hells Angels and the others, the Pagans and the Outlaws, thought that was pretty good, so they immediately accepted that appellation and said, "Yeah, we are one percenters." It became a badge of honor that had backfired on Harley-Davidson although they continued right through the '60s to refuse to service a Harley that had been chopped or customized. They wouldn't honor warranties for motorcycles that had been customized, or chopped up as they liked to call them in those days. Harley-Davidson hated this rebel side of their image for a long time.

Did the sudden appearance in the national consciousness of the Hells Angels, beginning in the mid-1960s in their confrontation with poet Allen Ginsberg and the anti-war movement in California, and then movies like "Easy Rider" with Peter Fonda and Jack Nicholson, and Brando in the "Wild One," give rise to a great upsurge in sales?

No, not really. Harley-Davidson was in a whole lot of financial trouble throughout the 1960s and early '70s, mainly because they were not addressing this rising market. They were continuing to build big cruisers, the big Super Glides, and the monster baggers, the big chrome-laden, heavyweight motorcycles. They built the Sportster back in the late '50s and they had some sporty motorcycles, but for the most part they were addressing a more conventional, a more traditional customer base.

The whole rebel side of their image really passed them by until the grandson of one of the founders, Willy G. Davidson, who is a brilliant designer, sensed what was going on out there, and created a series of motorcycles in the 1970s that reached out to this more raffish, more adventurist side of their customers. It was really this Davidson and a couple of other guys who were able to identify what is really the true Harley-Davidson image now.

Well it's changed a lot. I was just in Royal Oak, a trendy Detroit suburb, and in front of an upscale bar were maybe 25 Harleys. A friend of mine said, "Gee, must be a lot of lawyers in there."

Yeah, RUBS—rich urban bikers. They are the mother lode of prosperity for Harley-Davidson right now. Some old line bikers have said to me, "Geez, we can't afford them anymore." These are working stiffers who worked hard to afford a \$7,000 or \$8,000 motorcycle, but now a lot of the better Harleys are going for \$15,000 and \$16,000. So, it's pretty pricey and there is a different customer base. A much bigger one, and one that has produced an awful lot of profit for the company, but there are a different bunch of guys buying them now.

Does the subtitle of your book, "The Search for the American Soul," mean the machine itself suggests something about us as a people?

It was meant to imply a certain lament for loss of individuality, a sense of loss of the open road, and the sense of freedom that in a broad manner Harley-Davidson represents. It is a very subtle feeling, but something I think Harley riders in particular feel very strongly. There is a strong sense of adventure and individuality. It's an unruly motorcycle; it can be ill-mannered and tricky to ride. It can be rebellious. It has a lot of American qualities; it's a very American product.

The Harley has not become confined to lawyers. When you see these huge assemblies of motorcycle runs, you know the outlaws are still out there.

What's neat about those are, if you go to the big rallies at Sturgis, South Dakota or Laconia, New Hampshire or bike week at Daytona, everyone mixes up together. It's open season. Everyone gets along. It's an amazingly orderly crowd. A lot of people get a little nuts when they think about 300,000-400,000 bikers all gathering up, especially in a little town like Sturgis, which has only about 6,000 people. But everyone has a good time. There are amazingly low levels of violence and trouble. It defies logic, but everyone is there to kick back and ride their motorcycles, party a little bit and have a good time. It's really a nice scene.

Are they all outlaw bikers?

Everyone wants to be an outlaw a little bit, even for just a weekend. Even a lawyer from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He can put on decal tattoos, not shave for a couple of days, put on his leathers and run around on his Harley-Davidson and act like a bad guy. There is a certain sense of emancipation, a kind of release, a lot like Mardi Gras or Oktoberfest, where people just let go and guys go down to a big bike rally and behave like total idiots, and then come back home and put on their three-piece suit and figure they had a little relief for a couple of days.

Are the hardcore biker gangs that were involved in warfare with one another and accused of a lot of criminal activities still intact?

It is politically incorrect to call them "gangs." They like to refer to themselves as clubs. They won't deny the fact that some of their members are probably involved in drug trafficking and some illegal activities like prostitution or one thing and another. On the other hand, though law enforcement agents tell you the clubs are criminal associations like the Mafia, I don't believe that. I've hung around with a fair amount of them and they live by their own code and they live outside the law, basically by their own laws. However, in terms of being a menace to society, they are wildly over exaggerated. Drunk drivers are a hell of a lot more of a menace to the American society



While these U.S. Army soldiers appear ready for combat, these military version Harley-Davidson WLAs were actually used primarily for dispatch service and behind-the-lines patrol duty in World War II.

than any of the motorcycle clubs.

Their danger element to the normal citizen is zero. It's no more than if you went into an Italian restaurant run by the Mafia, or a Chinese restaurant run by the Chinese tongs. As Bugsy Siegel said, "We only kill each other." The turf wars between motorcycle clubs really only involve each other.

And they probably are the one percent.

Yes, absolutely. They won't deny that. That's their lifestyle and that's what they choose to live. It's a lot like marijuana busts. Marijuana is easy to detect, so it's easy to bust people. Motorcycle clubs are easy targets for law enforcement. I'm not trying to diminish what law enforcement is trying to do, but the clubs are easy to infiltrate. They mostly consist of white males, so undercover work is easy. It's a hell of a lot harder to get into a Vietnamese gang or some other ethnic gangs that are a lot more dangerous and involved in really hardcore criminal activities. If a police force wants some quick publicity, it's a

feel good kind of thing with the biker clubs.

And, undercover cops love to grow their hair long, smoke reefer, get to ride motorcycles, and then bust people. Let me ask you about the future of Harley-Davidson. Is it healthy, strong, and moving ahead? Is it increasingly moving into that upper middle-class market base?

It is a very well-managed company. They are doing a good job. There is some concern they may be saturating the market. They have opened up a big factory in Kansas City and they are producing their smaller displacement bikes out there, but they are pretty savvy people and I doubt we will see any major slump in that market presuming that the whole economy doesn't collapse.

Up until the last year they managed to keep demand ahead of supply, but now that is changing a bit, but it's not like the early '90s when you had to wait a couple of years to get one. You can pretty well find a Harley now, but you are still going to pay the long buck for it.

Into the Night!

by Loolwa Khazoom

If I die in a car crash tomorrow,
and I didn't go out for this walk tonight,
I'll be sorely pissed.

So began one of my many nighttime prowls, at 3:00 a.m. Since establishing a rigorous daytime schedule a few months before, I had not been going on my regular excursions; and I was beginning to feel the impact. A bit lethargic, a bit too comfortable (which soon becomes "complacent"), and experiencing renewed fears of stepping my foot out into the dark. Tired or not, it was time to lace up the tennies and get my butt out there.

"Energy begets energy, life begets life," I remember reading somewhere. Ain't it the truth! The more I go to the front line and do the very thing I am afraid to do, the less afraid I become to do it. And the more I act on my desires, the more I become aware of what they are.

Do we pattern our lives in ways we authentically want? Or do we seemingly want to pattern our lives those ways, as a result of old, deep-rooted fear? Fear surrounding certain behaviors may be so pervasive that the behaviors do not consciously strike us as desirable. Or even as options.

I have spoken with women who do not feel this society is

violent towards us. "Do you feel safe walking around by yourself in the middle of the night?" I always ask. "Well, I don't go out in the middle of the night," they usually reply. Viva la problem! Growing up without certain freedoms presented as an option, we may not envision them in our lives at all. Without knowing the world outside the cage, we may not miss it. And so we may not see the bars.

Reorienting myself to become a morning person has made life easier for me, by making it more comfortable. When I have to be in bed by midnight, going biking in the hills at 11:30 p.m. is no longer an option. Struggle erased. I don't have to muster up the courage to overcome my fear; I don't even have to see my fear. For all intents and purposes, after all, I'm not biking simply because I have to go to bed.

I feel that at least occasionally we need to push ourselves beyond what is comfortable, to find out exactly why it is so comfortable. We must exercise our option to live another way. Because without the option, we don't have the freedom. And without the freedom, we don't have the choice. Without the choice, we don't have the power.

So when I found myself wrapping things up and heading off to bed that night, I stopped and considered the possibility of going for a short walk. I'm tired, I thought. And indeed I was. But if the world were perfectly safe; if there was no doubt I could walk outside for a couple of minutes and return unharmed and even unhassled, would I do it? The answer was yes. So off I went, into the night!

On several occasions, I have heard gunshots in my neighborhood. And a few years ago, not too far away from where I live, a friend witnessed a random street mugging and murder, at 10:00 p.m. But that was at 10! I was walking at 3!

Truly, when is it safe for us to be anywhere? On a Saturday afternoon a few years ago, in my apartment in Los Angeles, I was getting ready to clean my car. As I headed out, a beautiful song came on the radio. I just had to stay and dance to it. Five minutes later, cleaning my car in the apartment garage, I heard noises and looked towards the sounds. I didn't see anything, so I kept cleaning. Within minutes, I saw a man leave the garage; and shortly after, a woman appeared from the area where I had heard the noise. She informed me the man had robbed her at gun point. At 1:00 p.m. On my home turf. I was grateful for that beautiful song.

During college in New York, I heard a woman speak about being assaulted at 3:00 p.m. on the corner of Broadway and 116th - a bustling area across the street from both Barnard and Columbia. A place anyone would think "safe" at that time of day. But there some strange

man was, bashing her head against the pavement, in broad daylight, with people walking by.

So where and when is safe? I find that the outrageous level of violence in our society, especially towards women, actually is freeing. If a woman might be attacked in the middle of the afternoon, in her own home, by someone she loves ... hell! We might as well party naked in the streets around the clock!

The shroud of fear and taboo around a woman walking alone at night has been fostered by a myth of high-risk danger in the very place and time I believe it is least likely to exist. Let's not forget that statistically speaking, a woman is more likely to be assaulted by a boyfriend in a bed than a stranger on a street. What more, I find that walking alone at night has been the source of much of my power. "Aha!" I thought to myself one glorious night. "This is why they've said it's dangerous. It's not dangerous for us; it's dangerous to them!"

As a woman, I feel intrinsically connected with the dark, wild night. The cool, refreshing air. The waxing and waning, luminous moon. These features of the night are roots of my female power. And it is out in the night that I reconnect with the universe and my soul. I howl at the moon. I dance in the shadows. I come alive. And I carry this life force with me into the days and every part of my existence.

And when I do not go out at night, I feel myself shrinking back, fitting more into the death role society has cut out for us as women. Method to the madness? I believe so. Cut off from our source of power, we become weaker and weaker, more dependent and more willing to accept handouts instead of demanding our full glorious space. And by keeping us inside or attached to male companions, we are more susceptible to the real danger – being attacked by the men we know and love.

The more we go out into the night; the more we take our power, the more threatened is the entire fabric of this misogynistic society. So of course the myth will persist, even when reality flies in its face...

Out on my excursions, I have thought of a number of ways to feel safer: First, I know many women – including myself – would hop into a car late at night and drive to some other indoor space, then get back in the car and drive home. With a little fear perhaps, but we would do it without thinking much. Well, every time we get in or out of our cars, we are exposed. We are rather comfortable with this reality, I believe, because we are going somewhere, supposedly from a safe place to a safe place.

Well, what if we extended this reality? If I lived in the house next door, I would need to go outside it to get into my car. Same thing if I lived in the house two doors down. And three doors down. And four. During my more terrified walks early on, I got myself through entire neighborhoods thinking this way. What might be the most frightening factor, I realized, is not the actual act of going outside, but the act of defiance – the act of going "out of bounds;" the act of going outside for myself, just for fun and just because. That's power. That's self-nurturance. That's taking charge. And that is going against all the rules.

Second, I have thought about all the ways I could (God/dess forbid) be killed or maimed – car crash, plane crash, terrorist attack when abroad, natural disaster, snake bite, attack by bears when camping ... Thinking of all these possibilities and about how random it is what might happen and when, I gain perspective: Life is about living, not avoiding. We can't escape risk even by hiding in a closet. (After all, it might cave in during an earthquake.)

Along these lines, I also have thought about how we never know when our time will come. If this were my last night, I have said, how would I feel about this walk? Invariably, my mood becomes lighter; I shrug off my fear; and I end up happily dancing and skipping in the street.

A few years ago, I read about an accountant who was killed by an old lady who couldn't see well and drove her car through the glass front of his office. That story did it for me. If I could lead a boring safe life and get killed anyhow, in a chair at my boring job, forget it! I'd rather go out bold, brilliant, and beautiful, living my life the way I want.

Third, when I first started walking by myself at night, I walked in the middle of the street. That way, I learned in self-defense training, I could avoid anyone possibly hiding in the bushes; and I could see anyone coming towards me. Yeah, I more recently realized, they can see me, too. No thanks. I now walk on the sidewalk, in the shadows. Who said, after all, that I won't be behind the bushes, jumping out at all the bad guys? Hmm? Real power kicks in here, when we stop viewing ourselves as potentially being "acted upon" and begin seeing ourselves as actors.

Besides, anyone hiding behind bushes in the wee hours of the morning, waiting for a victim, has got to be a moron. Hiding behind bushes during the day or evening, when there actually is foot traffic, makes much more sense. Someone that intent on finding prey, I am certain, will be more inclined to look in the places and at the times the "prey" usually roams. It is one of the reasons I sense that walking late at night actually may be safer than at other times.

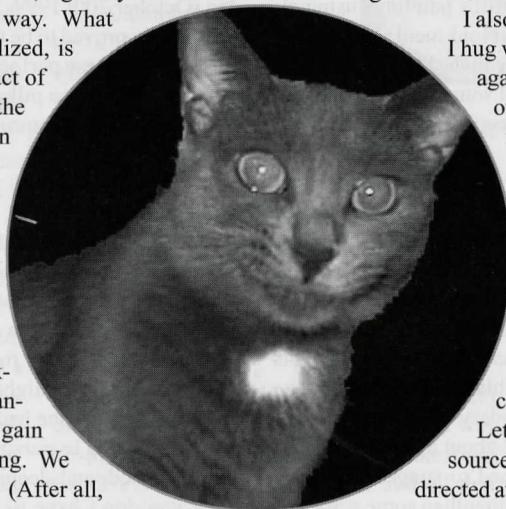
We have lots of cats in our neighborhood, and they're already out on the prowl whenever I get to mine. They truly inspire me. They're about five percent my size, yet they have no compunctions about sitting their little butts outside, wherever and whenever the hell they please. Sure, they dart into the shadows when they hear potentially threatening sounds. But I can too. And just as you bet they'd scratch my eyes out if I cornered them, I too can attack anyone who hassles me.

I hang out with the night cats as I walk down the street. I approach them respectfully, stopping at a distance and squatting down closer to their height. I invite them over and pet them only if they come. If not, I respect their privacy and continue on. But most of the cats love the unexpected attention and walk themselves under my hand or against my leg. It's great connecting with them, especially as I identify with the cat family. I learn from their behavior and nourish my lioness Leo self. Together with my cat sisters, we take back the night and take over the streets!

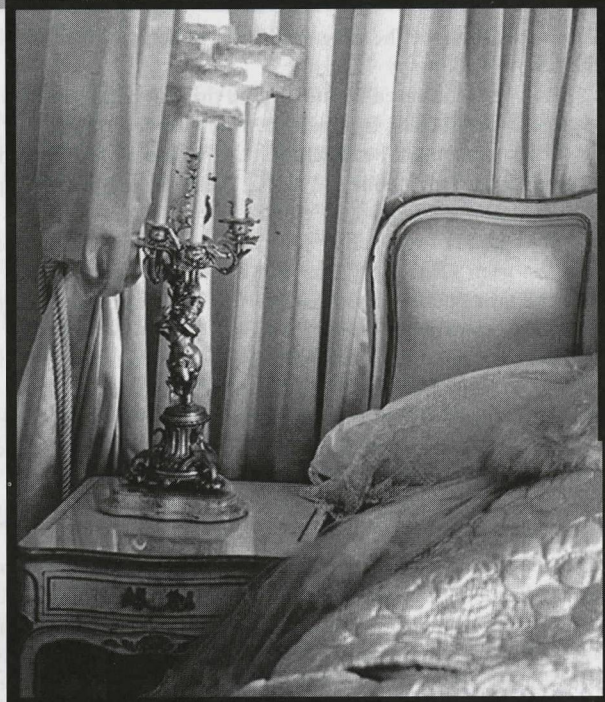
I also gain strength from the trees, a few of whom I hug while passing by on my prowl. When I press against them, they drain all the negative energy out of me and fill me with a new, strong, positive charge. They also teach me to stay rooted and strong and to continue reaching towards my ultimate, despite all destructive forces which may be around: Even if a tree gets cut down, after all, it gets cut down as a tree, always growing, always stretching. It does not shrivel into a ball to hide from the axes...

And so I call on all of us to be like the cats and the trees, to nourish our wild selves. Let's prowl in the dark and feed our energy sources. Let's do what's dangerous to the system directed at our destruction. Let's do what gives us life...

Let's go out into the night!



My Bed.



The Art of Tracy Emin

by Jane Graham

The Turner Prize is an annual British contest for contemporary artists. The shortlist usually consists of 'installation' art, a very late 20th century term for work which has gone beyond traditional sculpture, with its typical materials of wood, bronze, clay, etc., and instead utilizes space, often decorating a room with found, supposedly normal articles, suggesting that something we might take for granted can be elevated to the status of art. It is this kind of modern art, with nothing familiar to latch onto, that causes staged hysteria amongst the British tabloids whose familiar headlines complain, "-But is it art?" and "-Anyone can do that."

The Turner Prize in particular has always been accompanied by hype and rich opportunities for the proletarian British media to ridicule it. Recent prize winners have included Damien Hirst's dead animals preserved in formaldehyde, or Chris Ofili's paintings using elephant dung. They are easy targets for the tabloid media's supposed outrage, but I would suggest all this mockery underlines a very British love affair with modern art; it gives us all something to complain about, something that, over the years, has become familiar in its incomprehensibility.

If the media needed another familiar icon to surpass preceding years' elephant shit or hunks of exhibited meat, in 1999's shortlist they found it in Tracy Emin. She'd already sunk the image into the memories of popular consciousness when she appeared on a live television discussion panel on the competition in 1998 drunk and critical of the whole charade, finally walking out midway through the program, muttering something about wanting to phone her mum. This was what live television excels at – the public loved it, it was the scruffs against the snobs, maybe not as legendary as Bill Grundy and the Sex Pistols, but certainly the most talked-about arts program discussion in Britain in recent history. It seemed to suggest a lack of pretension, that she was 'a normal person' rather than some scrubbed

clean television personality or an artist with no connection to the real world.

As she'd appeared to be making a mockery of the intellectual snobbery of the art world, it almost seemed like an act of revenge by the common people to then have her as one of the frontrunners for the prize the following year.

It was hardly surprising that Emin's 1999 nominated piece, "My Bed" ('98) was the popular choice to win. Basically, the work is an unmade bed where she, the artist, supposedly spent a week considering suicide after a break-up with a boyfriend. Described as, "covered in urine stained sheets and torn pillows" and "surrounded by champagne corks, used condoms and soiled underwear," it has been exhibited along with other Turner prize nominees at The Tate Gallery, London (October 20th 1999- February 6th 2000). During the first week it had already proved to be the most 'interactive' piece of the collection, when two Chinese performance artists were arrested after jumping in the bed and having a pillow fight. One of them explained it by saying, "we were trying to improve the exhibition." They were later released without being charged.

Tracy Emin did not win the Turner prize, which was announced on November 30th 1999; this went to a far more contemplative artist, Steve McQueen. But with the publicity she garnered from the short-listing, this seems relatively unimportant.

In an earlier work of hers, entitled "Everyone I Ever Slept With From 1963-1995," Emin exhibited a blue camping tent with the numbers 1963- 1995 made from cute, pink appliques, and affixed on the inside were, as you might guess from the title, the names of over one hundred men that she had gone to bed with. "My Bed" would appear to be continuing to pursue this particular preoccupation.

Why beds and sleeping? It's something incredibly human, something you don't have to be an artist, or educated, to identify with.

...the work is an unmade bed where she, the artist, supposedly spent a week considering suicide after a break-up with a boyfriend. Described as, 'covered in urine stained sheets and torn pillows' and 'surrounded by champagne corks, used condoms and soiled underwear', it has been exhibited along with other Turner prize nominees at The Tate Gallery, London

Emin has consistently paraded her neuroses and mistakes as valid material for her art. In "My Bed" she has deliberately aired her dirty laundry—literally. The British love their celebrities to be human, to be imperfect—and maybe it is this focusing on her fragility which has made Tracy Emin more well known among the general public than the actual winner of the Turner prize.

Emin uses the bed in this latest piece symbolically as a place of refuge during depression. When we sink so low into the depths of despair, we retreat into our own personal hiding place; our bed, to sleep and sleep and sleep, the covers pulled high over our head.

The earlier work, "Everyone I Ever Slept With..." uses bedding to connect many people, suggesting memories of physical pleasure. Instead of loneliness and hiding from the world, the bed is a place of intimacy and togetherness with another human being. If you were to compare, for instance John Lennon and Yoko Ono's hippy happening in the sixties, when they spent a few weeks in bed together, with Emin's "My Bed," the emotions and motivation behind the pieces are completely different. While Lennon and Ono were rejoicing in sentiments of peace, love and harmony, Emin is reveling in the depths of despair.

The simple title, "My Bed," suggests that the bed is a hugely effective icon in modern society. It refers to something intensely personal and private, something more than the simply functional piece of furniture it literally is. What does the bed, and the bedsheets, the space that is the bed, the bedroom, mean to us? And not simply a bed, but "My Bed?"

A bed doesn't have to be the focal point of a bedroom, but it usually is. It is, after all, the bedroom. A few years ago, I moved into a new apartment which was completely unfurnished, and I had no furniture to speak of. I acquired a double mattress from a friend and initially placed it in the main 'living' room while all my debris and unpacked belongings went in the 'bed' room, a temporary measure while I sorted myself out and obtained more furniture—as yet

or something, waiting for him to finish his work and asking myself if maybe it didn't look a little compromising, whatever must he think, I wondered? The mattress couldn't help but become the focal point of the room, because apart from my stereo and a few boxes and tea chests, it was all there was in the room. And a mattress in a room always seems like some sort of sleazy invitation.

Into that apartment with its mattress on the floor, I eventually acquired a bed, and moved myself into the bedroom. This completely affected the aesthetics of the room. Not only did I now have ever-useful 'under the bed' space, but I also had to wrestle with decisions about what—and how much—space it should occupy. I considered pushing it along its full length against one wall and into the corner of the room, with the headboard against the adjoining wall, giving myself a large amount of space in the center of the room. But in the end I opted for the traditional central location, jutting out into the middle of the room and open on both sides. While this uses up a lot of space, the idea of a bedroom, surely, is to draw attention to the bed, with all the earthly pleasures it signifies.

A double bed in the center of the room is a sign of adulthood; the marital bed, the traditional site of the conjugal rites, the passage into sexual maturity. It also has something amusing about it, conjuring up scenes from '70s British sit-coms, the couple in bed in their nightclothes, reading, a bedside lamp on a bedside table on either side—one side of the bed for the husband and one for the wife, and somehow, in this place of togetherness, a rift of incommunication between them.

Compare that furniture arrangement with the bedroom you had as a child—my bed was always shoved up against the wall to make room for debris and toys, later a desk and all that schoolwork paraphernalia. Maybe you had to

I had no chairs, no sofa. Yet I knew because of the nature of my self-employment, my priority was to get a phone connected. So when the phone engineer came over to do the connection work I had the bizarre experience of sitting on the edge of my double mattress a couple of feet away from him, flicking through a magazine

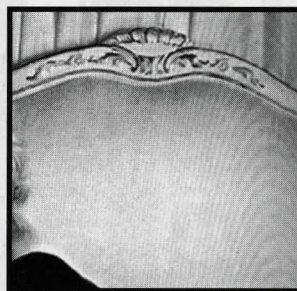
share with a brother or sister, maybe you had bunkbeds, which I hate, or those beds on ledges with cupboard space underneath. Then suddenly, as an adult, you go to the other extreme, from creating bed space in an already crowded area to having a room solely for that purpose. Suddenly the bed becomes more than just something you sleep in.

I still have an aversion, just as I did growing up, to sharing my bedroom. I'm selfish and I like my own space and as Emin has illustrated, the bedroom is often the only personal space we have in an overcrowded world.

Yet there is something about a double bed, especially when you become used to sharing it, that makes sleeping alone in its vast habitat often unsettling. Some people find it like rubbing salt into the wound of loneliness; I see it more as a luxurious treat, and as for Mae West, she claimed to need at least this much space simply for herself. "I have never been able to sleep with anyone," she wrote in her autobiography. "I require a full-size bed so that I can lie in the middle of it and extend my arms spread-eagle on both sides without their being obstructed." Indeed, she had a choice of beds: a square one in the boudoir and a round one in the bedroom.

Sheets on beds, as opposed to quilts, were common in most homes in England about 25 years ago. I remember that growing up in the '70s my family was considered very modern in having duvets at home, but then my parents drank percolated coffee and wrapped themselves in formalist style home decor like the idealistic young things they were while most of England was still living in a world of frills and chintz, still wary of things with the prefix 'continental,' as wary as they were then of coffee

and spicy foods, and stuck to their layers and layers of sheets. I remember the chore of staying at my grandparents' house and having to make the bed. I was used to the simplicity of a quilt, not the ritual of having to tuck in and straighten and fold and goodness knows what else an endless supply of sheets and blankets in some past generations' involved ritual. Making a bed is just about one of the most boring things to do as a kid anyway, so this just cinched it. And then when you got tucked in at night by mom, you were tucked in so tight and so competently and with so many lay-



ers that you couldn't turn over, and sleep would be a battle with the sheets so that when you awoke this complicated perfect equation had been irrevocably ruined.

Sheets on beds seem stifling, clinical, and institutional. Quilts, on the other hand, are homey. In America I first heard the word 'comforter' for bedding. Those beds made with sheets seem hardly comforting. It's difficult to imagine in the States either quilts or coffee, they're at the very cornerstone of domestic life, being a 'yuppie' thing. That rather than considered 'modern,' they're something patchwork, something colorful, something made by great grandma whoever and passed down through generations.

Of course, things have changed a lot in England in the last 20 years and quilts are now commonplace. They seem part of that revolution when housewives' lives got easier, along with things like tea bags and the pill; no longer was making a bed a lengthy chore.

The first time I'm invited to sleep in someone else's bed with them is always exciting and a little nerve-racking for me. It's quite a gesture of trust, letting someone into your bed. Like entering into Emin's installation, it's an invitation into their personal refuge, their most intimate place. It's something quite different to doing it up against a wall in a back alley or booking into a hotel room as a Mr. and Mrs. Smith, to lie on an anonymous bed where many couples have been; this belongs to someone, it contains their history.

By allowing us into an intensely personal space where she spent an extremely low point of her life, Emin is forcing us to experience the intimate, no matter how uncomfortable it may make us feel, especially as it is not in our culture in England to air our dirty laundry. When she came to do a lecture at the art school I attended several years ago, one of the things that for some reason has left an indelible

print on my memory was her saying how she spent one summer in Turkey with a man with, "the biggest cock she'd ever seen." After the lecture one of my fellow students complained that it was topics like that which gave us more information than my friend was comfortable with hearing, and she really "didn't need to know that." You could argue it has absolutely nothing at all to do with the art in question, but I would say it has everything to do with Emin's work, it is part of it; this is Emin's tactics, and it wouldn't be appropriate to view her art without knowing all that extraneous material you might feel "is more information than was required."

Of course you can argue that it's all just an act – is it really her life, or is it just art? Or has she reached a point where it's difficult to distinguish between the two, to know which came first – is she producing art based on her life, or actually altering her life to fit into the kind of art she wishes to make? Have her biographical details become mythologized to a point where it's impossible to remember the original story?

In the end, I don't think the literal beginnings matter so much. I think what is more important is why we the public are so fascinated in an artist who insists on giving us all the gory details. Several years ago Damien Hirst was the darling of the avant-garde with his displays of dead animals. But for all the shock of mortality, these works were completely emotionless, clinical; for all their considered bare rawness, they seemed to me to wear a mask of smug irony. Perhaps Emin's vulnerability is just as much a mask. Who can say. But at least the aromas of stale urine mixed with champagne speak more than the cold stench of formaldehyde.

In their act of sabotage, I think the Chinese performance artists and their pillow fight merely added to the piece, giving it a life inde-

pendent from the artist who created it. Beds often have a life of their own, creaking with every indiscreet movement, unsubtle pieces of wood and metal that they are, giving away secrets, mocking at the act of love; the sound of a bed creaking is like an inadequate British sex comedy, as basic as Sid James' laugh. Double beds are vast habitats to be enjoyed and savored, not pushed to one side or to be only slept on at the furthest edge. Stretch out wide, bounce up and down, let the bedposts creak and appreciate this most basic, human piece of furniture. ☿



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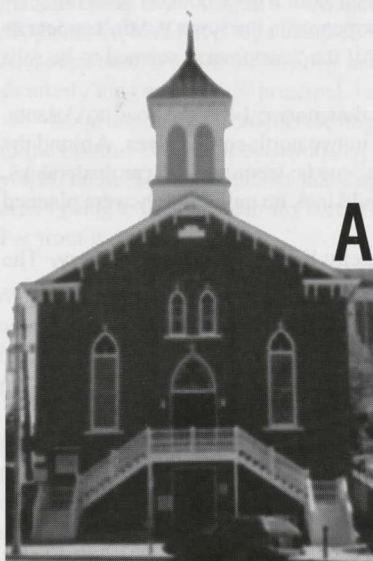
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Ten Things You
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A Yankee in King Cotton's Court

a midwest perspective in the deep south

by Mike Wendling

"Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial 'outside agitator' idea. Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country."

-Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail

Why couldn't they have given me Boston, I lamented, or maybe Seattle? I would have taken New Haven, even.

My six-month job in Cleveland was up, and in looking for another position with the same company, I had a few choices to pursue. Albany, New York — too close to home. And too damn boring. Albuquerque, New Mexico — only a two-month temporary slot, and I was looking for something a bit longer.

I eventually got the job opening up in Montgomery, Alabama.

In the middle of February, when the weather in the Northeast is at its worst, with surprising ease and a nearly equal amount of fear, I packed up most of my things and started to drive south from my parents' house in Buffalo.

After a brief stop in Cleveland, I started toward the deep South. Quickly, the sort of mania that can only descend on a long car trip alone fell over me. I drove as fast and as far as I could. The weather got warmer and the accents got thicker. I scared myself into believing I was headed for some sort of Heart of Darkness, with Interstate 65 taking the place of the Congo River.

The company put me up in a Holiday Inn on the outskirts of town while I found a place to stay. It was horrible. Montgomery is ringed by an enormous bypass highway containing every sort of chain business you can imagine, along with constant, 24-hour nail-biting traffic. I resolved to find a place as fast as possible.

The one consolation was the Waffle House restaurant next door. I had seen about 100 Waffle Houses on the way down, and it was my first chance to actually eat at one. The waitress called me "darlin'," as if to fulfill some sort of stereotype, and I ordered a cheese omelette. It was light and fluffy and came in a puddle of grits. The last time I remember having an omelette that good, it was in a fancy French restaurant in Washington, D.C., and it cost \$25. And it didn't come with grits.

I checked out a few uninspiring apartments. One was in a nasty-looking complex about four miles outside of downtown. The minute I looked at it, I knew I didn't want to live there. But I let the manager,

who didn't seem to have anything else to do, show me around anyway. He told me that rent includes garbage, water, and monthly bug spraying. To make conversation, I asked him if the bug spraying actually works. To my surprise, he answered with what sounded like the plain truth.

"It really depends on the weather," he said. "A cold winter will kill the bugs, warm weather and you get 'em everywhere. Spraying don't have much to do with it, really."

The last apartment I looked at was in a building a bit closer to the center of the city. It's owned by two guys who live in a nearby house. When I drove up, in front of the house were three cars, four refrigerators, and a pickup truck.

After looking at the apartment, one of the owners — let's call him Ed — took me inside the house and showed me around. The tour took at least twice as long as the showing of the apartment, and for a minute I thought he was going to offer me the house. He proudly showed me some art that he said was swapped for rent and is now worth thousands of dollars. He told me that he's going to remodel the rooms according to general themes — and for these he has picked "Art Deco," "Southern Belle," and "Happy Days."

In the kitchen, Ed showed me an antique Coca-Cola machine with two fronts.

"Guess what that's for," he said.

"I don't know," I said.

"Now, mind you, this machine is from the '40s," Ed said. "And it's from here in Montgomery, Alabama." He said it just like that, long and drawn out: "Montgomery, Alabama."

I still didn't have an answer.

"One side was for blacks," he said, "and the other side was for whites."

I took the apartment. It's in a good location, near the middle of town and close to work, and the rent is only a bit more than what I was paying up north, living with a roommate.

My new home is two blocks south of the Alabama governor's mansion, where George Wallace used to live, and about five blocks

east of the F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald museum, where F. Scott apparently penned *Tender is the Night* (a book which, incidentally, has nothing to do with Montgomery). That said, there's nothing really special about this neighborhood; the city's small, and nearly everywhere you go you'll bump into history of one sort or another, usually marked by a stately blue sign emblazoned with the state and American flags.

Nearby are two schools, the private Huntingdon College, and historically black Alabama State University. Also not far away is a street that contains, according to one of my coworkers, "the only stretch of bars in Montgomery that's worth a damn."

I know the stereotypes, and I wasn't surprised to find that people take their sweet, precious time down here, whether serving you in a restaurant or showing you around an apartment. I'm not that kind of person. I like my coffee black, and while I value leisure and "vacation," when I've got something to do, I want to do it and be done with it.

A few days after I moved into my apartment, the maintenance man, Mike, dropped by to clean the stove. Whoever had lived in the apartment before hadn't bothered too much about cleaning it, and Mike and another resident who was helping him — let's call him Pete — sprayed some noxious substance on the stove, inside and out, and said they'd be back in a half hour to "clean it up good."

Three hours later, they arrived again at my door, toting five bottles of Michelob. To my surprise, they got right to work, in between slugs on one of the bottles.

"How you guys doing?" I asked after a while.

"Just fine," said Mike. "But we'd like it if you had a beer with us."

So I did, and I sat at the table while they scrubbed away.

After cleaning the stove, Mike then tackled the floor and the sink, which had gotten rather dirty during the cleaning of the stove.

I offered Pete a chair and he proceeded to tell me, a total stranger, all about his life, his relationship troubles, his degree from Auburn University (which he only managed after being placed on probation: "Me and my buddies, we went down to Florida one too many times to pick up some stuff," was how he explained it), his job at the factory, and what he was doing with his girl for Valentine's Day.

Throughout the conversation, during which I revealed that I worked as a reporter, and that I was originally from upstate New York, and probably nothing else, Pete didn't seem eager or forthcoming. Far from it. He actually looked dour and downtrodden.

"When you're young," he said, "you're just worried about women, and going out all the time. Things are different when you're older."

Pete told me about the rest of the buildings' residents. I found out that I lived with a schoolteacher, a man who collects pythons and, mostly, students.

In Montgomery there are numerous pawn shops. There are chains of pawn shops. Entering one, as I did several times but may never do again, just feels dirty, though they're as clean and well-lit as any Sears or Wal-Mart. The bigger shops tend to deal exclusively in things like electronics and jewelry; that is, expensive stuff, luxuries, the first to go when somebody's rent is due and they have no money at all.

I tried buying a stereo from one of these shops. I tried to pick one that looked like it didn't mean much to anyone. How you tell this, I don't know, but I tried anyway. I also tried to pick one that worked, and failed miserably.

About 20 minutes after taking the thing home, it broke. The CD player wouldn't acknowledge CDs, the turntable didn't spin, and the radio was stuck on a Baptist station. So I called the pawn shop and played my first game of: "try not to sound like the Yankee sucker you've just been taken for."

It worked, and I got my money back in full when I took the

stereo back the next day. But on both trips I noticed something — although there were quite a few people in the store, it didn't appear as if anyone was buying much. All the "customers" seemed to be selling.

Interstate 65 slices near downtown; I-85, the road to Atlanta, branches off, splitting the city in two north-south halves. Around the city are those horrible "bypass" roads; teeming with car dealerships, strip malls and outlets, they could look no uglier if they were planned that way.

The roads, more than the city limits, define Montgomery. The city has no suburbs, per se, but has expanded through steady annexation and continues to add land.

Like most American cities, relentless growth has pushed homes further and further away, so that some of the ritziest houses are well past the bypasses, more than a half hour's drive from downtown. That's no time at all for a city like New York, but this is a place where you could walk from one corner of downtown to the other, and not break a sweat (at least in the winter). More proof, I guess, that the germ of urban sprawl has infected pretty much the whole country.

There's poverty here, and more of it than in the North. I can't quite dismiss pawn shops as a cultural expression that it's okay to have secondhand goods, or the many establishments that accept down payments against projected tax refunds as some strange sort of anti-government sentiment. There's just not a whole lot of money around here.

Once, about two weeks into my stay down here, a man came up to me in the grocery store and asked me for some change.

"Just 55 cents," he said. "You see, I'm new in town." As if that somehow explained it. I gave him the money, and as I did, I realized that the two quarters and a nickel had been the only cash I had on me. But of course I had a credit card and bank cards and a checkbook.

At least, or so it seems, the poverty isn't crushing. It is not the poverty of neglect and constant hard labor that James Agee and Walker Evans found down here when they put together "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men." It is, for the most part, a poverty of relativity; of seeing people in nice homes with nice lamps and nice pasta dishes to eat. Not to mention the barrage of advertising, marketing, and consumer culture, a disproportionate amount of which seems to originate from Out There, that is, outside of Montgomery, outside of Alabama.

Yet the kinds of things that go along with poverty aren't particularly noticeable — here I'm talking primarily of crime. There are places in Montgomery you wouldn't want to live, and places where you don't want to be after dark, but compared to the long stretches of blight in even a mid-sized city in the North (Cleveland, for instance), these areas are few. The city had its first murder of the year in late February, on course for a yearly total of about six. In Ohio, there are towns of 15,000 that are more violent.

And outside of situations involving commercial transactions, people throughout the city are generally polite, kind, even hospitable. Some people I've met will go out of their way for you not because you're paying them or you're a white man or because they think you're special, but rather, because that's just what they do.

Of course, no discussion of the South is complete without talking about the thing behind the Confederate flag and the symbols and the rhetoric and the counter-rhetoric: race. Race coats politics down here. It jumps out from the editorial page of the *Montgomery Advertiser*. It lives and defines and for some people, it is their crutch or their nemesis, their reason for being, and for this reason alone it is something that simply can't be ignored.

Yes, race is still the most important issue in the South, and while (perhaps) the hardlines of both the extreme left and right have been mollified since the '60s, people still disagree as much as ever.

You have to go back to medieval Europe to find a population

that has clung to the flag of a vanquished nation for as long as some people down here have been attached to the Confederate battle flag. And even then, it's rare for an army and a county to be destroyed for so utterly long and still, in principal, have "followers."

To be honest, the Confederate flag isn't flying from every porch in the South. You see it occasionally, maybe even no more so than you do in the North. And those that display it, most of them, anyway, aren't going to participate in any sort of armed rebellion anytime soon. Far from it.

Thus the question is raised: why put it up at all? It's the symbol of a culture that is not only gone but even in its romanticized form is anachronistic and outdated in the modern world; and it's also something that's offensive to a significant percentage of the population. To me, that doesn't seem worth the hassle.

Blame it on "identity politics" or "new capitalism," but the reason I think most people fly the battle flag is that it gives them something that "belongs to them;" something they can identify with as other people identify with the Baptist Church or the Democratic Party; something that they identify with that isn't Wal-Mart or Winn-Dixie. And as with most symbols that people hold dear, an attack on the flag is personal; by calling for the flag's removal from, say, the South Carolina statehouse, you're not only insulting the person who's flying it, but also their history, and their ancestors, who may or may not have actually fought in the Civil War, or owned slaves.

Eventually, the Confederate battle flag will vanish from the South, as it should, but while there are people who need something to attach to and to identify with, there will be people down here who choose this potent, evocative, controversial, (dare I say racist) symbol.

When President Clinton visited Selma in March, he entered a city whose schools are only slightly less segregated than in the 1950s. Instead of legal segregation of public schools, Selma has settled into a kind of monetary segregation, where the rich folks (mostly white) send their kids to private schools, and the poor folks (mostly black) send their kids to public schools.

Selma's claim to fame, of course, both now in and probably well into the future, is the 1965 march to Montgomery led by Martin Luther King Jr., a mass action that led to the Voting Rights Act.

Around the same time each year, the local television stations like to show footage of that now-famous march to Montgomery. It is brutal and it is ugly. The unarmed marchers are thrown backwards on a wave of violence, of fire hoses and truncheons. Skulls are broken. Wrists are fractured. It is naked and extreme, sickening, state-sponsored violence.

But the brutishness of those videotapes serves to show us something about the present day. Today's battles aren't as clear cut. The lines are not as defined; it is more difficult (though not impossible) today to point at something and say, "This is wrong. This is an injustice." Yet the South, and the nation, is still adjusting. Having thought so long in black and white, it's difficult to think of shades in between. And all the other colors besides.

Besides race, moralism is pervasive down here. By "moralism," I mean, primarily, Christianity. Within the Christian religion, the population is actually quite diverse, with no less than 65 denominations listed in the Montgomery phone book, so I may indeed be guilty of overgeneralizing. But the basic signs aren't hard to spot. The city is awash in religion and religious language, from the churches to the billboards to the newspaper to the Mormons who live upstairs. And even Mike the maintenance man asked before he brought beer into my apartment, just to be sure. This was after he asked if it was okay to come over at all on a Sunday: "It's not a church-going day for you?"

I have mixed opinions when it comes to the immediate (as opposed to historical) influence of religion. On one hand, religion can

make a person who might drink all day, curse every second word, and hit his children refrain from doing those things. Religion can convince a rich person to give her money to a poor person, and it can do it a lot easier than a government can. And religion can give hope to those less well-off, and sustain that hope until, like what happened 35 years ago, rise up when the times and the leaders are right and they've had enough.

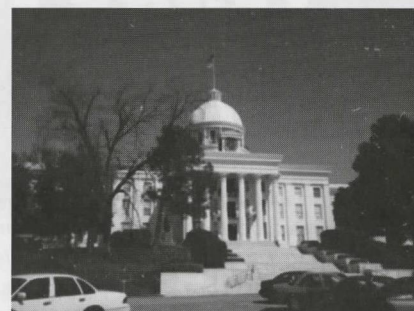
But of course, religion's pervasive moralism makes outcasts of those who do things that, under most circumstances, hurt no one but, perhaps, the person doing them. The idea of "victimless crime," emphasis on the word crime, has given us laughable laws against private sex acts and a bloated war on drugs, among other things.

Heavy-handed moralism also tends not to work a lot of the time. If you're told not to do something you're going to want to do it, either because it feels good or just to see what it's like.

And one of the most insidious things about religious moralism is that it tends to stifle discussion and nonconformity, and that leads to all sorts of social ills, both named and unnamed.

Spring has arrived; strange native purple blooms are filling in the spaces in front yards and side alleyways and the railings on my porch.

I'm here until the summer and into the start of football season, which has long surpassed planting season as the most important time of the year. I keep thinking that, thrown into this place almost by chance, I'll find out something basic about myself. But I'll settle for finding something basic out about this place; I'm understating the case when I say it's different, like no place I've ever lived, or will ever live again. ☿



Strange Bedfellows...

Victory Records and the Porn Industry

Originally I meant for this article to be a well-researched article full of quotes and documented information from a plethora of resources. But alas, extracting information and opinions out of hardcore bands and pornographers proved more daunting a task than I had thought and my hectic schedule did not allow me the time to adequately hound them for the answers I was after. So what you have here is perhaps more of a critical analysis and a preponderance of the subject at hand. Hopefully this will spark some dialogue.

So our story begins while I am at work one day wasting some time checking out the punkrock.net messageboard. There was a thread entitled something along the lines of "Ewww, this is gross!," so of course I click on it, only to have a porno advertisement pop up on my browser. To find out that Victory Records had supplied the soundtrack to a porno was a bit surprising, but I can't say that I was terribly shocked. Victory had made some waves within the hardcore community before by placing advertisements in pornographic magazines. So when I found out about this movie, it merely aroused my curiosity.

You see, I enjoy both porn and hardcore (though not really the Victory Records lineup). The hardcore community in general is probably split on the issue of pornography. Many are adamantly against it, while many do consume it. However, up until this point, the connection between the porn industry and the hardcore music community was coincidental at best. This video, entitled "The Legacy," marks the first major partnership of porn and hardcore music producers that I am aware of. Thus, I was interested in seeing what this meeting of the minds would create.

Initially, there were two main things that made me curious. Number One: which of the many bands on Victory Records agreed to lend their music to the video? Number Two: what type of storyline would be reflected in the video? Would the content of the video be geared towards the hardcore music audience? Or would this just be your average, run-of-the-mill, porn video with a hardcore soundtrack?

Well, I stopped by my local West Coast Video with the intent of just seeing whether they stocked the video. Searching in the back room I found what I was looking for. After seeing a woman wearing

a Victory Records T-shirt, I realized that I had no choice, I had to rent it.

Victory Records: some background

Now if you are not educated on what the hardcore/punk music community is, you may wonder what is so special about this collaboration with the porn industry. To most involved in hardcore, it is more than just music. While definitions of hardcore vary, at its very base level, it is a manifestation of the DIY (do-it-yourself) ethic. Aside from the sound and the very practical DIY ethic, there tends to be a deeper ideology behind hardcore. A sort of egalitarian thought, based in anarchism, and containing the tenets of anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-homophobia, amongst others.

Some people have said that because this video is affiliated with Victory Records, that many within the hardcore community are trying their hardest to make this video look worse than it is. Victory has left a bad taste in the mouth of many members of the hardcore community over the years. Whether it is because of their dealings with One Life Crew (a racist, misogynistic band), Earth Crisis (a militant animal-rights band, whom many believe tarnish the image of the animal-rights movement) or simply because of their endless parade of cookie-cutter, tough-guy, macho hardcore; many hardcore fans simply dislike Victory. To many, this simply represents another reason to hate Victory.

To be honest, I'm no fan of Victory Records. I can't think of many records that they have released that I would really care to own. I call into question many of their business practices and the very image that they portray. To me, they embody many things that I dislike about the hardcore scene. However, for a brief moment when I first read about "The Legacy," I was intrigued and hoping for the best.

I like pornography, but damn if it doesn't become absolutely redundant. The storylines, the music, the sex scenes, everything. But with this video being done in collaboration with a hardcore label, I thought perhaps we would get something a bit different. Maybe we would get a bit of hardcore/punk rock twist. Perhaps the video would be centered around a group of people who were supposed to be "hardcore." Hey that would be cool. Regardless of how surreal and ridiculous that might appear (but aren't all porn storylines surreal and ridiculous?), it would surely be a change of pace and something that would make this video different than the hundreds of others in the back room of the West Coast Video.

Well, alas, you can probably tell by now that my hopes were squashed. Aside from almost every cast member wearing a Victory Records T-shirt or one of their band's T-shirts and the inclusion of the "hardcore" music, very little of this video separated it from your average generic porn. As much as I wanted to be able to say that this video exceeded the average porn, in many ways it fell below my expectations.

Why?

I suppose I hold ventures by members of the hardcore/punk community up to a higher standard. I look around and see so much cre-

or Soul Mates?

ativity and energy and I begin to think about all the possibilities. We can do so much and control so much of our destinies. While the ability to build our own automobiles and make our own chainsaws still remains out of our reach, we have proven exceptionally capable of controlling our own media and entertainment. So why not our own pornography (or erotica, if you prefer).

Punk-created porn has existed over the years. I remember when I first got involved in punk, seeing the ads for *Taste of Latex*, a fetish magazine in issues of *Maximum Rock&Roll*. I have also seen various other erotic fanzines and even some videos, but I cannot ever recall seeing any major, well-done production before. Especially none that utilized bands or a record label of any recognition. Perhaps it has to do with punk and hardcore mainly being a youth-oriented scene, with most people dropping out in their mid 20s, but "The Legacy" is significant in that it is the first of its kind.

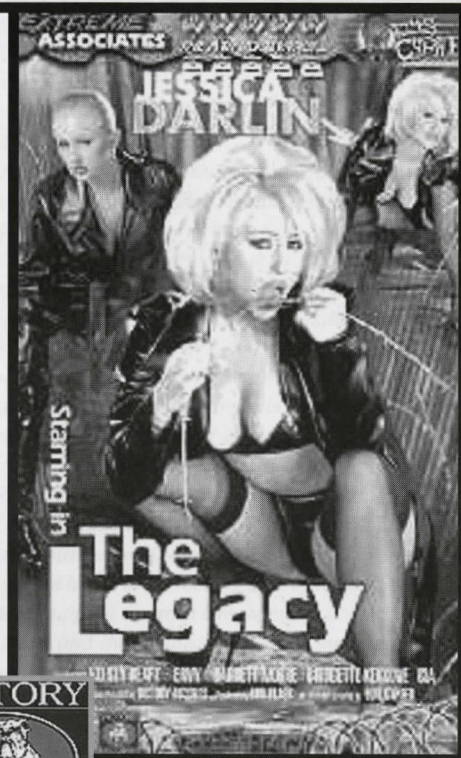
Sal, of the hardcore band Electric Frankenstein (the only band involved with this project who returned my e-mail questions), says "I think that punk and porno have a lot in common in that they are both independent projects, involve strong lifestyle decisions and are outcasts from mainstream society..." I would agree. Punk/hardcore and porno have both created their own businesses outside the mainstream and created their own distribution channels. They both have their own unique communities and lifestyles.

While this may be true, hardcore and punk are about more than just doing-it-yourself and certainly more than just a look or a sound. Indeed, as I mentioned before, there are the deeper ideological implications that we must deal with and also the simple question of creativity. Just because something is created in a DIY manner and just because something exists outside the confines of the major media, does that immediately make the project positive? Does that make it something that we want associated with hardcore? I would say no, the project would have to meet the ideological and creative standards of the community, as well as the practical standards. I guess this is why I felt let down by "The Legacy."

The storyline was the first major letdown. When I posted something on a messageboard about how I wished the movie would have been about a group of hot and horny Animal Liberation Front (ALF) members, somebody asked me, "What the hell does the ALF have to do with Victory Records?" Well, I would respond, the ALF has more to do with Victory and hardcore in general than prostitution. Yep, that's right, the storyline revolved around a prostitution ring. The story is actually a bit more complex than that, but almost everybody who ends up having sex is doing it under the guise of prostitution. Really, can you get a more trite, uninspired storyline? I didn't think so.

Perhaps a more disturbing problem with this video was the portrayal of women. To begin with, having the women portrayed as prostitutes is not the best way to kick things off. Not that prostitution is inherently degrading or disempowering to women. However, within the context of a porn, it becomes difficult to set up positive sexual interactions.

Additionally, there were some displays of power which disturbed



by Mike Roth

me and my fellow viewers. While not outright abusive and certainly not indicative of rape, there were some moments in the movie that were questionable, to say the least. At one point, two men force their way into the main character's home and basically say "Have sex with us. You're a prostitute. It's your job." Although she willingly says "yes," the scene still left a bad impression in my mind. Is this the type of thing we want hardcore to be associated with? For that matter, is this something that we want associated with porn?

Overall, the video was exceptionally male-centered. A quick indicator of this was the complete lack of male-on-female cunnilingus. This is a main criticism of porn in general, that it caters only to men's desires and disregards the needs of women.

So you are sitting there are saying, "Well, what did you expect? It's porn and porn is trite and boring and tends to be male-centered and treats women poorly. Just because the hardcore community got involved doesn't mean it's suddenly going to be enlightening and exciting." Well, perhaps we should. Punk and hardcore are about creating alternatives. We didn't like the way the record industry ran things, so we created our own alternatives. Why can't we do the same thing with porn?

The answer is "We can!" If we want, we can create porn that isn't paint-by-numbers. Porn that is creative and exciting. Hell, I bet it could even be funny and intelligent. Our porn could celebrate all sexual orientations and fulfill the erotic needs of all the sexes. Best of all, it could be about people like us starring people like us (of legal age, course).

Just because Victory Records failed at satisfying me (it's not the first time), does not mean we should give up on the idea that they started. Let's combine those lusty desires with the punkrock/hardcore ideals that we have.

For more information on Victory Records, visit www.victoryrecords.com.

For more information on "The Legacy," visit www.extremeassociates.com or www.jessica-darlin.com.

For some positive (though not related to hardcore) examples of porn (as well as lots of other fun stuff), visit Good Vibrations at www.good-vibes.com.



Cilestine Dismembered: The Octave Mirbeau Experience in English

by Robert Helms

Crossing the Atlantic and studying a new language can bring on strange revelations about one's own native land and the narrowness of its culture. I was to become alarmed as I discovered a great French anarchist writer, Octave Mirbeau (1848-1917) and the reasons why his name means nothing to most people in the English-speaking world.

Of all the personalities in the movement's history I have sought to know, Mirbeau is the most underappreciated. In addition to being a highly acclaimed playwright, novelist, short story writer, and satirist, he was among the most important art and literary critics in Paris for over thirty of the most famous years in that city's cultural history. He was also a prominent anti-militarist figure in the Dreyfus Affair (which nearly turned into a civil war), a feminist of rare insight, a passionate lover of animals, an environmentalist, and a naturalist who wove plants of every kind into almost every page of fiction he wrote.

Known for his extremely cutting attacks on the abuses of government, the church, the rich, and the military, sparing no detail of cruelty and weird immorality, Mirbeau became famous in France, and eventually somewhat wealthy. The bust on his grave by August Rodin, made by the artist as a token of personal gratitude, may illustrate his importance to French culture. His work was required reading for French students until the Vichy government disallowed it during World War II. Today, his books are again available in every French bookstore, his more obscure titles are back in print, and his plays are being revived in the theaters of Paris.

For all that, even well-educated Americans will respond to his

name by confusing Mirbeau with Mirabeau, a hero of the French Revolution. During the great anarchist's life, only one of his plays was produced before audiences in England and the United States, and a few dozen short pieces found print in English-language journals. Only one novel (our present subject), and selections from a travel book were translated into the language while Mirbeau lived.

Octave Marie Henri Mirbeau was born in Normandy in 1848, the son of a country doctor. At the age of eleven he was sent to be educated by Jesuit priests, and was raped by one of them before leaving four years later. This experience would make a permanent atheist of him. He entered college, and studied law without success. After a few years of partying in Paris, he was drafted for army service in the Franco-Prussian War, reaching the rank of lieutenant, and was discharged in 1872.

Through the rest of the 1870s, Mirbeau pursued a career in journalism in the capital, where he became acquainted with the country's leading literary figures, including Zola, Huysmans, and Maupassant. His politics during this period were distinctly right-wing, and most of his work was published under various pseudonyms. Then, in the mid-1880s, influenced by the writings of Tolstoy and Kropotkin, he became an anarchist, defending the cause for the rest of his life. Also, he married an actress of doubtful talents—and known as a high-class prostitute—named Alice Regnault. At this point, Mirbeau ploughed forward and flourished, using his own name and becoming one of France's leading intellectuals.

Some writers have been carried across the vacuum between one language and another through the work of individual translators who dedicated their careers to the promotion of a great mind. One example is Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian dramatist. Had it not been for the constant, tireless work of an English intellectual named William Archer, you can be sure that there would be few among us now aware of the feminist classics *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, nor would the silence have been broken so early on venereal disease in English by the timeless play *Ghosts*. Archer's importance as an activist can be measured in extreme terms for recognizing the power of the playwright and then freeing him from the restraints of a regional language and placing him on the world stage. Octave Mirbeau had no such archangel-figure to move all of his masterpieces into English, one by one, as they were released during his lifetime. One anarchist, however, Benjamin R. Tucker, made persistent attempts at breaching the wall between the cultures for the Frenchman who inspired him. His efforts bore little fruit.

Tucker had a long and distinguished career as one of North America's leading Anarchist-individualists, but he is best remembered as editor of the newspaper *Liberty*, which ran from 1881 through 1908, out of New York City. He published not only the paper, but a long inventory of books and pamphlets as well. He brought out original works and translations by others, but many were translated from the French by Tucker himself; as early as 1874, he produced theoretical volumes like *What is Property?* by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and later, novels like *The Rag-picker of Paris* by Felix Pyat in 1893.

In the pages of *Liberty*, there are seven short passages by Mirbeau, taken by Tucker from various Parisian papers, radical or otherwise. He was not the only English-speaking anarchist to appreciate the author. Emma Goldman would touch upon his work in her literary lectures, and others, such as Leonard Abbott, would treat his work in their publications. Another anarchist journal, *Free Society*, ran a few translations as well. However, they were all deterred by the sheer lack of translated material by him that could be obtained by readers whose interest had been piqued.

In 1900, Mirbeau released his classic novel *Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*. It is the tale of a poor but intelligent and very attractive young woman in her daily struggle to support herself by cleaning up after rich degenerates in their luxurious homes. The chapters come as the diary entries of Cilestine as she goes from job to job, from lover to lover, and slowly but surely falls under the influence of Joseph, the coachman she works with. Joseph is the epitome of all that was rotten in France in the time of the Dreyfus Affair; a vicious anti-Semite who rapes and murders a little girl in the woods, where she was collecting escargots.

As is the case with most of Mirbeau's work, *Le Journal* is at once hilarious and cruel. It is a fine document of radical labor, as well as an adventure in love and sexuality. Throughout the book, Cilestine describes every nuance of the ridiculous depravity she observes in her employers, but in the end she becomes even more corrupt than they are. Upon reading the original book, the prominent anarchist editor Jean Grave commented, "what filth and decay there is under the pretty surface of our society!" The ending is actually so disturbing that both films based on the novel (by directors Buquel and Renoir) had the ending changed about so as to leave the audience on an optimistic note.

Benjamin Tucker lost no time in producing his translation, which he published in the same year as the French original under the title *A Chambermaid's Diary*. Before he could release it, however, he had to get the manuscript past the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, whose members acted as special agents of the U.S. Post Office Department under the direction of Anthony Comstock. This was when the slaughter of a book took place, and Cilestine's tale was robbed of

its saucy power.

Tucker's edition carried the following disclaimer, explaining what had happened:

To Monsieur Octave Mirbeau:

I offer you my sincere apology for mutilating your brave and admirable work. In publishing it in English, I have omitted certain portions, much against my inclination. Perhaps you, who live in a land that enjoys a greater freedom of the press than we know in the United States, will wonder why I was forced to do this. Let me, then, explain to you that the men whose ugly souls your Cilestine does not hesitate to lay bare are types, to a greater or less extent, of most of the men who we place in our halls of legislation to make our laws, in our halls of execution to execute them, and in our halls of so-called justice to interpret and enforce them, and that among the laws which they have made are some, aimed ostensibly at the suppression of obscene literature, that are really intended to protect from exposure their own obscene lives and those of others of their ilk, and to protect from attack the social evils and political institutions upon which they thrive.

These lawless lawgivers hope, by obscuring the sufficiently sharp line that divides the vulgar appeal to eroticism from the earnest narrative of the honest thinker and the truthful picture of the conscientious artist, to brand both with the same condemnation, and thus secure immunity for those who, by all the various forms of exploitation, deal, as Cilestine bluntly says, in human meat.

This is why it is unsafe to publish in the English language those portions of her diary which I have omitted. But, if, as I hope and believe, the portions that are here printed shall do something to change the public opinion that sanctions the claim of these law-givers to legislative power, I am sure that you will excuse a liberty which under other circumstances would be an inexcusable act of vandalism.

Benj. R. Tucker

Tucker knew that the complete novel would have drawn him a jail sentence had he published it. Nor was he the only translator of Mirbeau to apologize this way. In 1908, selections from his journal of an automobile excursion No. 628-E8 (using his license plate number as the title) were serialized in *American Magazine* with a similar statement. The translators explained that the book was being refit with a "shortened wheelbase and other alterations" so as to be safe for American roads.

The reasons for these mutilations by honest translators can be traced to one Christian fundamentalist. Anthony Comstock was born in Connecticut in 1844, and served in the Union Army during the Civil War. In 1868 he joined the YMCA's campaign against obscene literature, which led to the passage of federal laws in 1873 banning all literature relating in any way whatsoever to human sexuality or reproduction from the U.S. Mail. Before he finally croaked in 1915, he won the convictions of some 2,500 people and burned about 160 tons of supposedly "obscene" literature, which, by the way, included writings by actual physicians that contained the word penis.

The cruelty of the "Comstock laws" is illustrated well by the case of Ida C. Craddock, who ended her own long battle with Comstock one year after *Chambermaid* was released in New York. Ida was a stenographer and shorthand teacher who worked for the Bureau of Highways in Philadelphia's City Hall, who was described by her co-workers as "handsome and well-gowned." During the 1880s and early 90s, she was very active in the Freethought (atheist) movement, and she also wrote two primers on shorthand while living with her mother above the family's drug store. Around 1893, she began writing and lecturing on her developing beliefs in religious eroticism and also on marital relations. She was a Unitarian, but also a priestess and pastor of the Church of Yoga (her own denomination). Ida believed that she

was married to a spirit, and that she regularly had sex with her spouse. The anarchist leader Voltairine de Cleyre played host to “the scholarly Miss Craddock” at a public lecture and commented later that Ida “thinks that can happen now which every [Christian] believed did happen nineteen hundred years ago!”

Craddock was fired from her job on a complaint from the local postmaster after he seized copies of her pamphlets, including *Helps to Happy Wedlock*. From this point Ida’s life was a brave confrontation between her own thoughts and the government’s brutal Puritan dictatorship. She was a patient for three months at the Pennsylvania Institute for the Insane in the summer of 1898. After her release, she began traveling around the United States, but criticism and persecution followed her every step. She was confined in psychiatric wards and then prison in five different jails. Finally, Comstock nailed her for the last time in New York City for disseminating the “indescribably obscene” pamphlet *The Wedding Night*. She was convicted without the jury ever seeing the pamphlet, and sentenced to five years in the penitentiary.

On the day before Ida was to begin serving her sentence in October 1902, she opened the veins of her wrists and turned on the gas jets, preferring death to more prison. Comstock had crushed another soul. However, he was not content to stop the flow of literature on sex. He would actually boast about all the sinners he had driven to suicide. There were about 20 such desperate people destroyed by God’s policeman, and he publicly gloated over many of them during his long reign of terror.

Let’s turn our attention back to Cilestine and her adventures. Why did Mirbeau’s novel fail to really light the torch in English, as it had in French? What subjects were omitted for fear of Comstock and his agents? Here I’ll show a few examples, from a page-by-page in-

ventory I made between Tucker’s volume and the complete —and very fine, albeit British —translation done by Douglas Jarman in 1966.

References to hetero-sex other than the missionary position were too risqué. One rich lady Cilestine worked for is negotiating with a priest in the confessional booth, trying to get permission to relieve her husband of his sex-deprived tensions by means of “certain caresses,” because she had gynecological problems that made child-bearing too risky. The confessor gives the church’s permission for her to commit this “mortal sin” twice a week, as long as she gets no pleasure from it and donate 200 francs a year to the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin. The talks collapse on the money issue, and she storms out. But this whole conversation (one page long) was deleted by Tucker.

Another female boss had the sad habit of standing in front of a mirror every morning and night, “minutely examining herself” in the nude, and asking for the young maid’s opinion of her figure. “Look, Cilestine, they’re still quite firm, aren’t they?” But the maid keeps her true reaction for her diary:

“Belly, rump, breasts were like deflated wineskins, sacks that had been emptied, leaving nothing but fat, flabby folds of skin; and her buttocks were as shapeless and pock-marked as an old sponge... she refused to accept the inevitable eclipse of her own beauty. In a last appeal to love, she relied more and more on expensive remedies and all the refinements of coquetry. And love responded, but what kind of love? That was the tragedy.”

The poor woman debauches herself by night in sordid dives, with shady-looking men who come to her house by day to blackmail her.

Lesbian love was deleted as well. Another of Cilestine’s bosses has a husband who takes no sexual interest of her, and so she asks for the maid’s advice on how to draw him back to his nuptial duties, and whether the husband had another woman. Cilestine urges her boss to

Chumbawamba: WYSIWYG

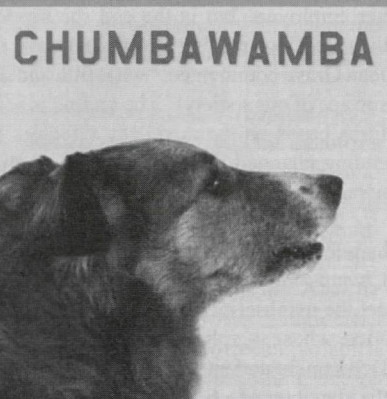
“By the time I got to Woodstock, it was going up in flames.” I’m sure I’m not the only one who had been waiting for Chumbawamba’s new album with a certain amount of uneasiness. In 1993, Robb Johnson and Pip Collings could joke about “Chumbawamba at #1, OK” (“Nobody But Yours” on *Hearts Desire*, Irregular Records), and we all knew it would never happen. Late in 1996, I received email from Alice Nutter, telling me that, no, she really couldn’t help me with the names of any U.S. distributors of the band’s music, and that the band was contemplating their own mail-order distribution if they couldn’t get any North American distribution. Then, in 1997, *Tubthumper* shocked us all by becoming exactly what we thought a Chumbawamba record would never be — a hit — and a lot of us found the joke a lot less satisfying than it had been in ’93. There are folks — anarchists and punks among them — for whom nothing fails like (mass market) success, and more than a few of us wrung our hands a bit about whether singles like “Tubthumping” and “Amnesia” (to say nothing of “Top of the World”) were “political enough.” The lack of liner notes in the U.S. release only compounded fan anxiety. None of which could entirely eclipse the fact

that *Tubthumper* was one of the most infectious records of the decade, and that, deeper now than ever in the belly of the beast, Chumbawamba was still doing what they do best — and stirring shit up.

WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) isn’t going to please everyone. Those who responded to *Tubthumper* solely as the great pop record it is may find the more overt politics of WYSIWYG a turn-off. Once again, the music is sly, eclectic pop, peppered with pop culture references. If this record doesn’t make you move — and then move again to a different beat — it’s not Chumbawamba’s fault. Styles range from the “Tubthumping”-style pop anthems (the single “She’s Got all the Friends [that money can buy]”) to near-a capella (on a lovely cover of the Bee Gees’ “New York Mining Disaster 1941” that might almost have found a place on the *English Rebel Songs* album). Topics range from their own new-found stardom (“I’m in Trouble Again”) to censorship (“Ladies for Compassionate Lynching”) and Disney-built utopias (“Celebration, Florida”). The packaging — complete with fold-out canine sex poster and “eye and arse photography” by Casey Orr — is delightful, slick and disturbing all at the same time.

And the liner notes are back — funny and pointed in a way that will remind fans in the U.S. why we missed them so much the last time around.

WYSIWYG certainly doesn’t answer all the questions raised by Chumbawamba’s entry in to the musical mainstream. But it should allay most fears that the band’s unexpected pop success has taken away their political sting. Some folks will deny themselves the pleasures of this new album out of anti-pop pride, but don’t you miss out on this (serious) fun. —Shawn Wilbur



take her own lover, but she won't hear of it, and returns to the mechanics of luring a man to one's bed.

Then she would make me feel her breasts, her arms, her thighs, her legs, comparing every part of our two bodies so completely shamelessly that, blushing with embarrassment, I began to wonder whether this was not a trick on her part, whether behind the grief of a deserted woman she had not been concealing a desire for me.

All six pages about the two sexually deprived boss-ladies were left out of Tucker's edition. Another deletion, of nine pages this time, dealt with objects in the possession of the employing class. Cilestine accompanies her boss on a vacation into Belgium. The rich lady, like everyone else, has to pass through customs, and all her luggage is opened.

Then, just as it seemed that he had finished the inspection, he produced from the bottom of the trunk a long red velvet case and demanded: 'And this? What does this contain?'

'My jewelry,' madam replied with complete assurance and not a trace of embarrassment.

'Do you mind opening it?'

'But what's the point? It only contains my personal jewelry.'

'Open it.'

The tension between the customs guy and the rich lady escalates. She threatens to complain about him to her powerful friends, but he won't budge, and he is ready to force the lock open if she doesn't give him the key. A small crowd of curious travelers has formed around them, and Cilestine is just as curious about the secret case as everyone else. The lady, having failed to snatch the case from his hands, finally faces defeat, and...

At last, blushing with confusion but resigned, Madame took a tiny key from her purse, a sweet little golden key, and trying to prevent the onlookers seeing what was in it, opened the red case, which the customs officer held out to her, though still keeping a firm grip on it. Directly he saw what it contained, he leapt back with a gesture of dismay as though he were afraid of being bitten by a venomous snake.

"For Christ's sake!" he swore. Then, controlling his amazement, he exclaimed cheerfully, Why on earth couldn't you have told me in the first place... If I'd only known you were a widow!"

All of this, and other little gems of juicy humor, were deleted. It should come as no surprise by now that sex toys might annoy Anthony Comstock. Other scenes lost for 66 years in half the world included one where Cilestine's lover is dying of tuberculosis and, with his diseased phlegm smeared across her own lips, she bravely fucks the man to death. Another lover was a spoiled rich guy, who takes her affections for granted. This affair was included, except for certain moments, like:

I had no sooner got into the room and locked the door than he flung himself on me, and threw me brutally on the bed, my skirts in the air...

Mirbeau described one minor character as "an ardent pederast," but Tucker deleted those three words. Longer discussions of gay male sexuality are entirely missing, along with Cilestine's own detour into lesbian love, which she describes as "a curiosity that for a long time had been plaguing me." One man Cilestine worked for puts his arm around her and pleaded with her to "be nice to him," and after some resistance, she finds out what he wants, in another short clip missing from Tucker:

"Well then my dear, just shout at me at the top of your voice, ten, twenty, a hundred times, Shit!"

Joseph, the coachman under whose influence Cilestine will descend, is represented thoroughly, except for the cruelest details, such as when the body of his 11-year-old victim is found in the forest near where they worked.

"Her private parts were terribly torn and swollen, as if she had



Benjamin Tucker

been forced, with the handle of a woodsman's axe."

Probably the worst of all the deletions that were lost to the Anglophone world for a lifetime is the seven page tale of high Catholic foolishness that's so funny and self-contained that it's been anthologized as a short story, and is one of Mirbeau's most popular at that. This is how I first realized that something was missing from the version I had read (a later, bootlegged edition of Tucker's work, which left the translator unnamed). In conversation someone talked about this, *their favorite part of the book.*

On the exterior of a certain church in Normandy, there were carvings from an earlier age which were "as gay and bawdy as a chapter of Rabelais." One of the nuns comes to the pastor in a frightful state of agitation, telling him,

"I have seen a man on the church, stark naked!"

"...Stark naked, on my church? Oh, what terrible times we live in ... But what was he doing there? Surely, not fornicating?"

"But you don't understand," interrupted Sister Angela. "I never said it was one of the parishioners ... It is one of the statues."

The pastor makes light of it at first, but the nun pressures him to rid the church of its obscene devil, which was the carved figure of a smirking man, pointing his erect "instrument of impurity" straight down from the top of a high, arched doorway. There is a dramatic scene where the priest climbs up a ladder, on a dark and moonless midnight, and swings a sledgehammer at the offending member as the nun clings to the ladder below, reciting the Litany of the Blessed



Ida Craddock

Virgin. He smashes it off, and it clatters down to some corner below.

The next morning, an extremely devout parishioner named Mlle. Robineau was leaving mass, and she saw an object on the floor of the cloister which she took to be "a holy and precious relic, petrified in some miraculous spring... Indeed, God moves in most mysterious ways."

She takes the object home, places it carefully on her private, improvised altar, kneels down and prays to it, but her paternosters and aves keep getting interrupted by "impure thoughts." The tale concludes as follows:

"Poor Mlle. Robineau. When she finally discovered what the stone object really was, she almost died of shame and kept repeating

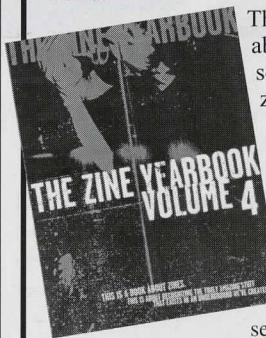
over and over again: And to think how many times I kissed it!"

There are many other deletions, and it staggers the mind to think of how badly we've been robbed, stripped of the culture that is our birthright as thinking people, by these pea-brained, right-wing religious fanatics, throughout the centuries to this present day. How many authors lie suffocated, how many books do we only think we've read? Anger and rebellion are very much in order.

On an optimistic note, there's one artifact of Mirbeau that was actually saved by a censor, though not by Comstock. Over in London, Mirbeau's play *Business is Business* was performed in 1905. But before this was allowable by law, the producers had to submit the script to the Lord Chamberlain's office. Strangely, it's still sitting there in the British Library, and it's the only English language copy of that play on Earth. It brings to mind the census: don't tell them anything. If any good ever comes of the information, it'll happen long after you're dead.

Benjamin Tucker's disclaimer vanished from all but the first printing of his translation, but he did leave Cilestine's diary with a good amount of power, in spite of its missing limbs and the dryness of his English. We can forgive him for his unwilling dissection, we can acknowledge that his apology was from the heart, and we can be grateful for his struggle to get Mirbeau's work past those who would expunge all great literature from the world. ç

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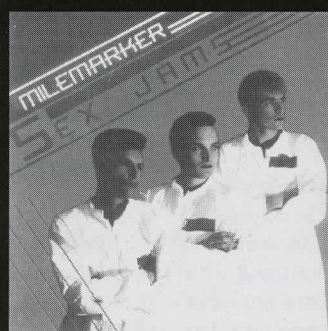
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-Doug Holland in *A Reader's Guide*

The Zine Yearbook Vol IV is jointly published by Become the Media and Tree of Knowledge Press. For more information on how to nominate a zine published in 2000 for Vol V, please write: Become The Media, PO Box 1225, Bowling Green OH 43202 or becomethemedia@earthlink.net. Please order directly from

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1
i got home at nine,
and turned on the tv.
i gotta un-wind,
for an hour or three.



2
but i was disgusted,
the news was announced,
five kids just got busted,
with guns and an ounce.



3
so i turned the channel,
to "cooking with gill".
some guy in a flannel,
was making "fish dill".



4
the "shopping show's" selling
new wax for your floors,
that also works well
taking marks out yer' drawers.



5
the talk show i saw,
showed a really bad fight.
a dwarf in a bra,
smacked a large transvestite.



6
i think i'll "affix"
the next station with "vile".
what words shouldn't mix?
"marathon.", "gomer pile."



7
crime rates are increasing!
a "paulty shore" flick!
a new stock is ceasing!
it all makes me sick!



8
my eyes are unglued,
and i feel like a jerk!
hold up! i'm rescued!
by the cartoon network!

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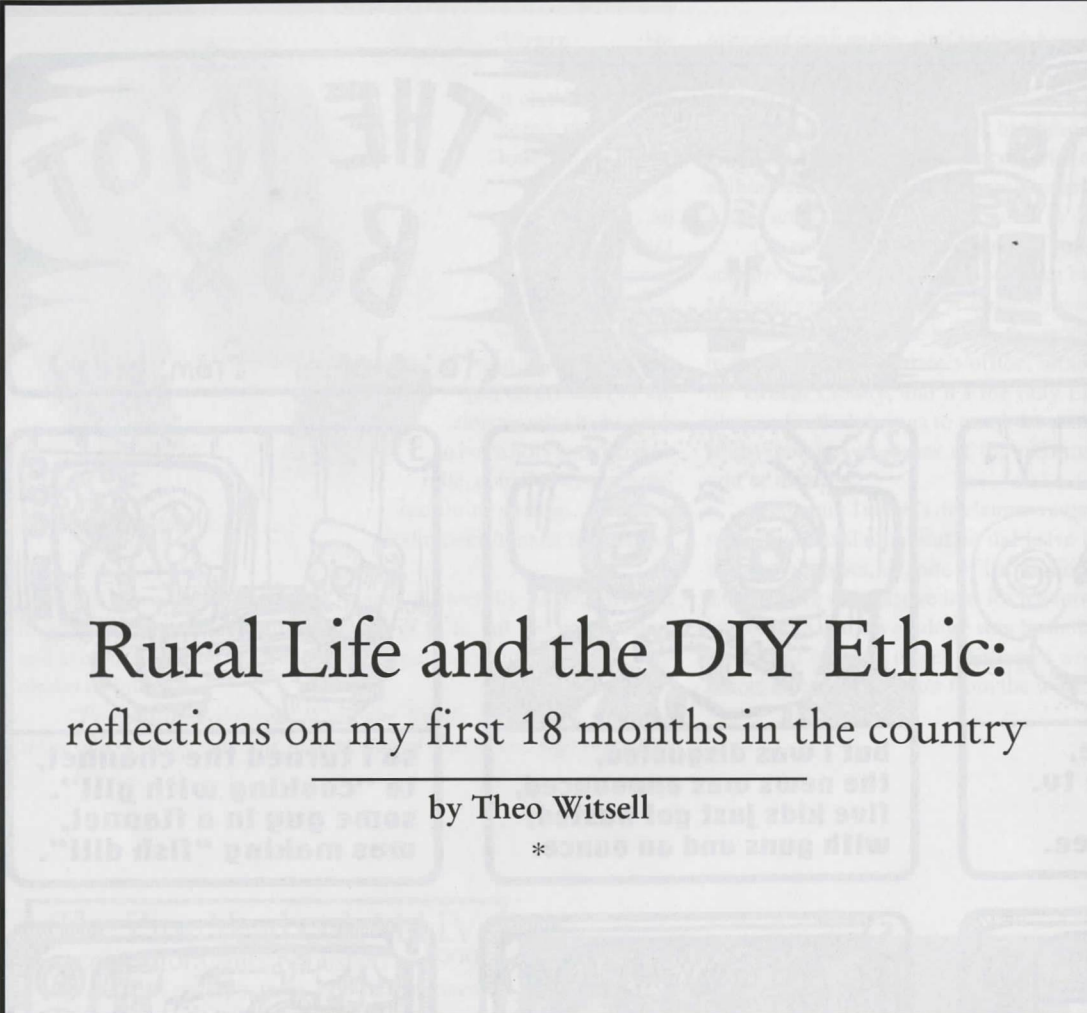
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Rural Life and the DIY Ethic:

reflections on my first 18 months in the country

by Theo Witsell

*

What is DIY and Why is it Relevant?

DIY stands for three simple words: do-it-yourself. And like any other group of words, it probably means different things to different people. Some folks, upon hearing it, probably think of young newlyweds, short on cash, who are decorating their house with tips from Martha Stewart. Others doubtlessly think of home-improvement wizard and TV personality Bob Vila. Some might even think of the defiant young punk musician putting out her band's record herself, instead of trying to get signed to Warner Bros. Still others, myself included, will fill your ear with a lot of long-winded analysis and then champion some vague ideal they call "the DIY ethic" as one of our greatest tools in the righteous struggle against the destructive juggernaut of global capitalism.

I suppose I would define this ethic, which will be the backbone of this lengthy treatise, as "the simple principle that our lives would be more fulfilling, more interesting, and essentially more free if we took steps toward a more decentralized, self-reliant, and cooperative future". (I suppose it should really be called the "do-it-ourselves" ethic, but "DIY" has a nicer ring to it than "DIO," so I'll stick with tradition here). This ethic can be realized in an infinite number of ways, but all of them result in the individual or community taking power back from the large, impersonal, and inefficient institutions (such as banks, corporations, governments, the "health care" industry, insurance com-

panies, etc.) that run our lives and push us around on a day to day basis. These institutions, regardless of their perceived necessity, function by controlling more and more of our lives while making huge profits and trapping us in an endless cycle of labor and consumption. In the process they keep untold human potential from being realized... and it sucks! The idea that such massive centralization can be effective in serving the needs of something as unique and diverse as individual people is ludicrous. It becomes more and more transparent to me with every encounter with these institutions and the authoritarians who promote and run them.

Putting the DIY ethic into practice can be done in millions of small, simple ways. By doing things like fixing our own homes or vehicles ourselves (rather than paying someone else to do it), by creating our own media (like this fine publication is doing), or by healing ourselves naturally when we are sick (rather than relying on the pharmaceutical industry and its doctors), we take the power back. We can grow gardens in our yards or in vacant lots and save hundreds, even thousands, of dollars—as well as knowing for sure what is in/on our food. We can do it on a larger scale by, for instance, organizing entire communities to implement alternative technologies (like solar or wind power) and reducing dependence on expensive utility monopolies that we have no control over. It goes further too. My involvement in the underground (punk) music and activist scenes over the past decade or so has also convinced me that a DIY approach to culture (in which you are an active participant rather than just a passive consumer-observer) will result in the most vi-



brant, exciting, and interesting art and culture. Needless to say, this is in direct opposition to the corporate-based culture handed to us by the major media, in which the role of the individual is generally that of an audience member, consumer, or walking advertisement (wandering the school or mall decked head-to-toe in Nike, Polo, or Gap logos).

While this cultural approach to DIY is vitally important, it doesn't go far enough. We need to take the ethic further and implement it into other areas of our lives. What good is community control over our art and music when our most basic and necessary resources, such as food, shelter, and energy, are controlled by corporate monopolies and we must labor our lives away to pay to have our needs met? I guess that lack of control gives us something to write angry rants about or scream punk lyrics in protest against, but it doesn't get us very far along towards being any more free or self-reliant. So really, why not work toward taking control of providing ourselves with these resources and meeting our own needs?

Why not? Well, for one thing it's inconvenient. It's a lot easier to let someone else provide for us. It takes a lot of work to raise a garden and build houses and learn about how to fix automobiles. It's not as easy to design, build, and maintain a passive-solar cooling system or a photovoltaic electrical system as it is to write a check for a hundred bucks a month to the power company. It takes a lot of work (and sometimes, unfortunately, a lot of money) to break the cycle of dependence. At the same time though, it can be very fulfilling, and expensive investments (such as a solar electrical system) will pay for

themselves over a relatively short time. While I can't even pretend to have broken the cycle, I can say that I've been making efforts to reduce my dependence, or at least be conscious of it, over the past couple of years. These efforts have been met with varying degrees of success and failure – a few of which I'll share with you here.

My Rural DIY Fantasy: Dreams and Reality

A couple of years ago, all fired up with the DIY spirit, I was browsing in a junkshop when I found a dusty old book called *Build It Better Yourself*. It was published by the folks at Rodale Press (of *Organic Gardening and Farming* magazine) back before the organic gardening boom of the 1990s when they were still a bunch of homesteading hippies. It's a wonderful book with hundreds of do-it-yourself projects for the farm or homestead, complete with photos of bearded longhairs building cool stuff and having a great time. I used to sit around my cramped apartment reading that book and dreaming of someday living on a farm and building all the great projects in the book or restoring an old barn or something. I've found that rural folks (as well as many elements of the urban poor) come much closer to realizing the DIY ethic than the urban middle-class stock that I spring from. Perhaps this is more out of necessity than out of a conscious desire to liberate

Theo on his farm in Arkansas, September 1999, riding the tractor that would become a thorn in his side.



At the Midwest Underground Media Symposium, May 1999: (left to right) Chip, Tanya, Mary, Theo, Ashley, Jason, Robert (front).

themselves from the dead-end road of corporate subservience, but I'd call it a truism nonetheless. And since I'm flirting with the rural lifestyle myself, I'll focus on it here, even at the risk or romanticizing it more than I should, which I'll get to in a minute. But first some pertinent personal history...

I grew up as a city kid. I was raised in the heart of downtown Little Rock, the capital city of a quarter million in the dead center of Arkansas, where the Ouachita Mountains rise up from the fertile bottomlands of the Mississippi Delta and the tall pines of the West Gulf Coastal Plain. As the city sprawls, the old self-reliant rural culture and the more modern capitalist, consumer-oriented, suburban one converge like the natural divisions of the landscape. The conflict between these two ways of life and the nearly universal acceptance of the latter as "progress" (and thus as something that is unquestionably desirable) occupies much of my thoughts. It's hard to keep from thinking about it as I watch again and again as irreplaceable natural and cultural features get gobbled up by an endless expanse of concrete and prefabricated chain store mediocrity. In an attempt to feel better (though sometimes a feeble one) I think a lot about the alternatives that we could implement if we chose to... alternatives based on more eco-centric lifestyles, sustainable technologies, mutual aid, and a large-scale embracing of the DIY ethic.

My parents were about my age when they bought and moved into a condemned and totally dilapidated Victorian house, built in the 1880s and literally falling down around them. They didn't have a lot of money and had the grandiose idea to restore the house themselves in their free time, despite friends and family thinking they had totally

lost their minds. They became self-taught DIY masters: my dad studying Victorian architecture with hammer and saw in hand and my mom researching the decorative techniques of the Victorian artisans, spending hours scraping away layers of paint with a scalpel and then painstakingly recreating the original stencil work. This went on throughout my childhood, me being passed up through scaffolding to the second floor bedroom as an infant because there were no stairs. I had a little tool kit before I was eight and learned basic carpentry from my dad while I was still in gradeschool. My mom taught me to paint early on too and they taught me, intentionally or not, that if I wanted to I could do just about anything I set my hands and mind to. Looking back, that confidence is perhaps the most valuable thing they have ever given me, and it is essential to making the DIY ethic a part our lives. This knowledge, that we *can* do things ourselves, is the key to decreasing our dependence and increasing our freedom in all sorts of ways, both literal and figurative.

It was later on, in the late 1980s, through my involvement in the underground punk music scene that I was re-exposed to the DIY ethic. I remember being 14 and going to see this band Econochrist play an all ages show in a little club (really just an abandoned building with some sound equipment) called the DMZ. I was amazed that these kids, just a few years older than me, had just started their own band with no help and that there was this network of young people around the country that booked tours for similar bands, published their own magazines, and put out their own records. That realization—that there was nothing preventing me from doing these things too (except my own illusions)—completely revolutionized my life. I started playing

in bands and then self-publishing—something that has been central to my life ever since. This event and many others like it were probably essential in helping me escape an uninteresting, prefabricated future filled with football, fraternity parties, and Abercrombie and Fitch athletic wear.

Growing up as I did, though, I had a lot of romantic notions about life in the country. Each fall, the weekend after Labor Day, our extended family on my dad's side would get together in some rented cabins along the Buffalo River in the Ozark Mountains of north-central Arkansas. I was fascinated by the local folks up there - particularly by a family that were friends of my great Uncle. They had lived up there in the backcountry for generations, scraping out a living however they could - farming, working underground in the lead and zinc mines, timbering, and more recently by capitalizing on the tourists like us who came up to hike and float and fish on the river. They ran a little canoe rental and shuttle outfit with a little general store. Over the years they seemed to have tried every gimmick imaginable to lure in the tourists' dollar - a cheap plywood mini-golf course... rustic cabins... you name it. What struck me most about them was that they always seemed to make do without the amenities, in the form of abundant services, that city dwellers often take for granted. They were always fixing their own buses and canoe trailers, they built their own cabins, knew practical skills like plumbing and welding and wiring, and got by however they could because there weren't a lot of people (or finances) around to do it for them. I always thought this was cool

My mind was reeling. I had instant plans to make a living farming medicinal herbs organically, growing most of my own food, raising cruelty-free livestock, building a root cellar and greenhouse, and outfitting the whole place with solar power. The prospect of having to bust my ass didn't even bother me. Hell, I was looking forward to it! As for funding all these projects, I hoped to scrounge and salvage all the materials, share the house and associated costs with a few like-minded folks, and work for money as needed. No problem! Where there's a will there's a way, right?

The First Year: The "Real World" Gives My Hopes a Hearty Ass-Kicking

Meredith and Gabe left for Alaska in October and my partner Tanya and I moved into the drafty old farmhouse with fall in full effect. We fell into a decent routine, coming to terms with the 30 to 40 minute commute into town (she working full time and in school part time and me vice versa). Meredith left her chickens and two of her cats, which kept us pretty busy. I enjoyed the work outdoors and took long walks in the forest, learning all the native plants. We'd rise at 5:00 am weekdays when the roosters would start crowing, feeding first the animals and then ourselves. I lapsed on five years of veganism when my pal Chip asked me to give him one good reason why eating our chickens' eggs was unethical and all my arguments were against factory farms.

I suppose I would define [DIY], which will be the backbone of this lengthy treatise, as "the simple principle that our lives would be more fulfilling, more interesting, and essentially more free if we took steps toward a more decentralized, self-reliant, and cooperative future."

even though I had no real concept of the poverty and history of the people in that part of the state.

The Great Hook-up

Now, fast forward to the fall of 1997. I'd just moved back to Little Rock after two years spent living in Atlanta, Georgia. I had moved into a small apartment downtown, in the same neighborhood where I grew up. It was at about that time that I met my friend Meredith who was living on a neat old farm in west Pulaski County in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains. Her place was doubtlessly in the eventual sprawl path of Little Rock but still very much in the country, and beautifully so! She and her partner Gabe were planning a move to Alaska and one day surprised me by asking if I'd be interested in taking over their place for a nominal rent plus caretaking responsibilities. I didn't even have to think twice. I was giddy at the prospects and, in retrospect, not quite understanding of the amount of work that would be involved.

The place was like something out of my wildest hippie dreams: 50 acres (mostly wooded) that back up to several thousand acres of undeveloped forest (owned by a timber company) and a big mountain, an old house (heated by a wood stove), two barns, a cabin, fertile soil, a pond, three creeks, fields, an awesome chicken coop... I couldn't believe my good fortune! I came out and house-sat a couple of times, learning how to feed the chickens and guineas, and taking care of the dogs and ten cats that lived there. I spent three days exploring the land, finding over 150 species of native plants and seeing all sorts of wildlife.

As winter approached, challenges began to present themselves. First and foremost, neither of us had enough free time to take on a lot of the projects I had so idealistically dreamed up. In reality we had our hands full just taking care of what we had going already, and as it got colder the days became shorter and shorter. Firewood rapidly became an issue. I borrowed a chainsaw and Chip and I cut a massive willow oak that had fallen in the back field and split it into stove wood with axes. Just as it was running low a tornado that devastated most of downtown Little Rock provided us with enough free wood for two winters. It's fulfilling to sit comfortably on an icy night around a raging fire, fueled by renewable energy you and mother nature collaborated on providing. It also takes a lot of work, time, and discipline to chop and stack a sufficient supply before winter sets in. Plus, the stove didn't heat the bedrooms very well and we had to rely partially on electric (resistance) heating on the coldest nights, which is in no way inexpensive.

One of my big plans was to grow a good portion of my own food, so I was tilling ground before winter left. We had marginal success at gardening during that first spring but this slid into abject failure by early summer because neither Tanya or I had the time to properly tend it. Bugs ate the eggplants, tomatoes rotted on the vine, and Bermuda grass crowded out the peppers. Then the well went dry during a nasty drought and the garden was more or less lost. I can only imagine what real farmers must lose when droughts wreck their whole livelihood. We vowed to do it right this year (and things are definitely looking up).

One of the best things about that first year was meeting and

becoming friends with my pal Tom. I certainly can't go on talking about rural DIY culture without introducing him. Tom lives about a half mile down the creek from us and has been living out here, farming organically, for about 20 years. Prior to that he lived up in the Ozark Mountains in Madison County—way out in the backwoods. He moved up there from Little Rock in the 1970s, right out of high school, to work on a blueberry farm. On his first day there they got him up at dawn and butchered a hog right in front of him to test his mettle. He stuck around though, eventually buying his own land and living in an old Air Force ambulance. Tom has more practical DIY experience than just about anyone I know and has helped me out immensely over the past year and a half with his knowledge (and his willingness to share it) of mechanical things, plumbing, agriculture, farm implements, livestock, carpentry, and life in general. He has also lent me dozens of much-needed tools... I go over to his farm almost daily and we compare recent dumpster scores (to the amusement of our girlfriends), barter, and shoot around DIY project ideas as I milk him for advice on one thing or another. We are also both obsessed with mountain lions, which are active in our area (but supposedly extinct), but that's a topic for a whole other article.

Part of our rental agreement is to maintain the entire place. This includes keeping the many structures painted and in good repair, mowing, keeping fields bush-hogged, running off poachers, fixing fences, replacing washed out bridges, cutting fallen trees, keeping the well pump working, maintaining the septic tank, etc. All this is in addition to the many self-imposed responsibilities (caring for all the animals, maintaining birdfeeders, gardening, building outhouses for activist/small press retreats, raising chickens, and so on). Trying to balance all of this work and responsibility with our already busy lives has been the source of my biggest frustrations. I suppose the logical analysis is that two already busy people can't handle that kind of workload. We tried a third housemate for a while but it didn't really last. I guess cooperative living situations only work if everyone agrees on certain central goals and principles and then makes the same commitment to seeing them through.

It wasn't all frustration, though. We pulled off a great event in September—a three-day “punk/activist/zine geek retreat” for all the small press types we associate with at Tree of Knowledge Press. It was a gathering of over 100 writers, zine editors, activists, punk rockers, and other miscreants. Tom dubbed it “Tickstock” and we had one hell of a good time. Folks came together from all over the country (even a few from the UK, Canada, and Japan) and we made great food, played music around the campfire, had good discussions, swam, hiked, camped, and just had a great time. It was a testament to the amazing people and power of this DIY culture we've got going. We even got practical and built a great outhouse and an outdoor shower to accommodate the masses. It was the highlight of my summer.

“It takes a mighty good dog to whup a coon...”

As if to keep our excitement and good luck in check, the timber company began a massive logging operation the week we moved in. It lasted months and devastated hundreds of acres around Blue Mountain, which rises about 600 feet above our house (900 above sea level). It wasn't a clearcut, but it tore the woods up pretty bad, displacing wildlife and breaking hippie hearts. It bordered our property on two sides, though there was still a nice buffer of woods. As the weather turned colder the wildlife became bolder in their search for food. I think Meredith's dogs, which she took to Alaska, must have functioned to keep the raccoons, 'possums, foxes, and other predators from getting at the poultry (I'm also convinced that the logging played a role by making a mess of the local food chain and de-

stroying a lot of habitat). It started with finding a single 'possum in the henhouse one night and chasing it away before it did any damage. Shortly after, however, the slaughter began. We lost one bird after another—two in a single night once. And all this in spite of dozens of “I'm-sure-that's-the-last-place-they-can-get-in” type repairs to the massive chicken coop. Trust me, hungry raccoons can perform miracles, even busting right through a fairly sturdy wooden wall! Tom told me they carry cordless drills and claw hammers, and I believed him after that.

In desperation I decided that getting some dogs would be the best answer to this dilemma. I went down to Uncle Jack's Feed and Farm Supply, and told ol' Uncle Jack (the eighty-plus year old farmer who runs the place) that the coons and 'possums were slaughtering my birds and that I aimed to get some dogs to keep from losing all of them. He shook his head, looked me dead in the eye, and said in all seriousness, “It takes a mighty good dog to whup a coon...”. Then, after a pause he finished with: “... but any dog can whup a possum... and a possum can whup a coon”. I thought this might be some sort of heavy, metaphorical riddle he was using to convey some deep rural wisdom but found out later that it is an actual fact, having to do with the size and shape of each animal's mouth. In the mean time he loaned me a live trap to catch the coons and suggested that I put a lidless 55-gallon drum with a dead chicken in the bottom next to the fence where the 'possums came over. This, he told me, would trap the 'possums so that they couldn't get back out and “you can shoot 'em right there.” I opted to just use the trap and caught and relocated five coons and a 'possum (all of them remarkably well-fed).

Just for backup we went ahead and got two puppies—chow/lab halfbreeds named Dinner and Bobby. I sat them down and explained that the chickens were their pals and the predators were to be kept away from them. The pups, however, seemed to have some difficulty distinguishing between the two groups and promptly killed one of our favorite hens. Now we had two rambunctious dogs, each capable of jumping pretty much any fence I could construct and neither with any ability or interest in protecting the rapidly declining chicken population. Plus, we were now charged with the added responsibilities of taking care of two needy pups. Despite valiant efforts on our part, including but not limited to me in my underwear at 3 a.m. fighting a huge (and powerful-mad) 'possum with a broom, it was only a matter of time until that flock of poultry was no more. Other memorable experiences with wildlife included a bobcat killing my sister's cat, Malcolm, which we were watching while she was away. There were also a lot of coyotes that would howl down from the mountain around dusk (I even got a great photo of one), and I found mountain lion tracks and scat nearby as well.

Ted and Lucy (Tanya's parents) came to stay for a week in the spring. Lucy is absolutely terrified of snakes. I mean, she has an irrational fear of them unlike anything I've ever witnessed. Up until their arrival I'd seen maybe three snakes all year. Then, on the day after their arrival, we saw five snakes of four different species (two venomous), the most dramatic being a seven foot long black rat snake that came right under the picture window where Lucy was sitting eating her lunch. They ended up staying only one night and getting a motel in town for the rest of their stay. It was pretty funny.

Rural-style DIY law enforcement (pros and cons)

The people out here, as a whole, are a lot less reliant on cops and other official law enforcement than people in the city. As a

result, they are also a lot more well-armed. There's a sign hanging in a local small engine repair shop that sums up the local attitude on such matters. It has a picture of a handgun, pointed straight out at the reader, and the words "We don't call 911". This isn't just a hollow threat either. Take, for example, the local liquor/drug/gun store (no shit!), where a foolhardy armed robber received a fatal bullet from the proprietor for his efforts. Tom told me about attending a "neighborhood watch" meeting at the nearby North Point Baptist Church a few years ago. A sheriff's deputy came and talked to a vigilante mob of local residents after some crime in the neighborhood. Tom said some of the neighbors seemed almost bloodthirsty, asking questions like, "If a person comes in my house can I shoot him?" When the deputy answered in the affirmative (by saying "if they're in your house, they're bought and paid for"), he was asked, "Well, what if he comes in my carport? Then can I shoot him?" At this point another neighbor said "What you do is shoot 'em and then drag 'em into your carport." Sadly, the neighborhood watch program was short-lived. It seems that the signs were stolen and the posse dissolved, everyone going back to freelance vigilantism or poaching.

Speaking of poachers, our next door neighbor Ronnie, who is sort of an old-west cowboy type, has told me some crazy stories about chasing poachers off his land. He lives on 80 thickly-wooded acres

and spends a lot of time riding around the woods on his four wheeler putting out wildlife food. This attracts the wildlife, which in turn attract the poachers. I remember Meredith telling me about coming home and finding Ronnie and a friend of his patrolling his property boundaries on four-wheelers with assault rifles in hand! It's not just poachers he has to worry about either. One day he was back on the remote reaches of his land and came back up to his house to find a van in his driveway, a woman standing next to his house, and a man half way in his back window. Ronnie, armed to the teeth but always polite, drove up and casually asked if he could help them. The guy, still in the window, said that the guy who owned the house had hired them "to clean out some bird nests." Ronnie pulled his gun and the man ran for his van. Ronnie shot out his tires as the guy pulled away and the woman bolted for the woods. The sheriff later caught the guy (with flat tires) trying to escape a few miles on down the highway. There was a helicopter-led manhunt for the woman, who was picked up by an off-duty deputy as she was attempting to hitchhike on a nearby highway.

This is nothing, however, compared to stories Tom has told me of life up in Madison County, where the old west mentality is really still alive. For example, Tom was involved in a lawsuit over access to a road that had been used by everybody in the area for a hundred years or more. It crossed the property of this one guy who didn't

We went ahead and got two puppies—chow/lab halfbreeds named Dinner and Bobby. I sat them down and explained that the chickens were their pals and the predators were to be kept away from them. The pups, however, seemed to have some difficulty distinguishing between the two groups and promptly killed one of our favorite hens.

Theo in 20 years?



want people using it anymore. Trouble was that the guy had no legal basis for closing the road since the county had been maintaining it for ever so long with public money. Well, he closed it anyway, shutting some folks (Tom included) off from accessing their own property. A group of folks got together and filed a lawsuit against the guy and tensions rapidly escalated. Some locals paid Tom a visit and told him that "this lawsuit business is a bunch of bullshit." Now these folks weren't siding with the guy who closed the road—quite the contrary. They just thought a lawsuit was a cowardly way to settle the problem. They told Tom that he was clearly in the right and that it was his place—in fact his duty—to go and burn the other guy's house down! That was a fairly common form of retribution up there, as I'll get to in a minute. Similarly, some other folks decided to use the closed road just the same. Another guy drove up the road to pick up his two-year-old son at a friend's house. On his way back down, the road-closer stepped in front of their truck, rifle in hand, and sent a bullet through the radiator. Well the guy in the truck got out of there and when the word spread about what happened, he was approached by the locals who asked what he was gonna do. The general consensus was that he was obligated to go and kill the guy who closed the road. In fact, he lost considerable status in the community for not going and killing the guy!

Don't get me wrong—I am a firm advocate of taking care of people who violate you (and others) in a DIY manner, but there can be a downside. I guess the main problem is that sooner or later people start enforcing their own personal beliefs as "law" and people who violate social norms end up with their houses burnt down. Surprise, surprise, it's not hard to find examples of this in Madison County, which, as you may have guessed, is a pretty staunchly Christian place. Not your typical, moderate, church-on-Sunday brand of Christianity either. It's more of the evangelical, faith-healing, snake-handling, baptizing-in-the-river kind up there, and when new people move in to the neighborhood, you can bet they get scrutinized by the locals. Undesirable elements had better be careful. Tom told me that one

time a bunch of hippies were at the local swimming hole, families with kids, all bare-ass naked. Some locals came down the trail with their families and discovered, to their horror, the immoral mass of hair and nudity. Needless to say, this was a serious infraction of social norms and some houses burned in them hills that night. A similar fate befell a group of lesbians who were living collectively in the northern part of the Arkansas Ozarks near Eureka Springs. These women, intentionally or not, were violating just about every cultural norm there was. They wore pants, drove trucks, didn't go to church, and most of all, hung out with other women. A (male) friend of Tom's was helping these women build a house and as it neared completion they came back to find it burnt to the ground. It turns out that the local people thought they were witches. Seriously. This was in the 1970s.

Sometimes this DIY-justice-gone-awry took more subtle (yet just as effective) forms. For instance, some people who lived over off Cave Mountain Road (very rugged country) were busted for growing marijuana. The county road grader, who was the most meaningful government employee to most people in Madison County, refused to grade their road. He just passed it up. Up there, if the roads aren't graded periodically, they become impassable. This was as effective as anything at running people off that violated someone else's concept of right and wrong.

Perhaps the truly pious felt that they had to take the law into their own hands up there, considering the degree of corruption in the local officials. Madison County, of course, is a dry county, which means there is all sorts of bootlegging going on. The interesting thing is that the main bootlegger in the county is the Democratic party (who has controlled the county for as long as anyone can remember). On election day, folks would go by the community center in the town of Huntsville, walk past the old geezers who served as election marshals (and roamed the streets out front toting rifles), vote (on numbered ballots), and then go by the home of the local Democratic party promoter for their "election day booze!" The



Theo (right) with Paul Kane, early summer 1999

Democrats would also bring booze to barn dances at the blueberry farm where Tom worked. It didn't stop there either. Madison County is the source of a lot of the marijuana that is grown in Arkansas. This is, of course, illegal but there was an interesting arrangement between with the sheriff and the growers. It wasn't uncommon to come home to find a percentage of your crop missing and a note from the sheriff saying that he had taken his share of your plants. His plants were then sold or traded for booze, which was sold or distributed to ensure loyalty. In return, he looked the other way. This was fairly common knowledge.

Back here, in west Pulaski County, things are considerably more tame though still sufficiently exciting. The illegal drug manufacturing here revolves around crystal meth, cheap speed that can be made from household chemicals in trailers, barns, or woods. People on meth are pretty scary though, and there's no shortage of them running around out here—the occasional shotgun killing or body in the river bearing witness to this. Another exciting prospect is the potential for property owners warring against the poachers. These assholes would come onto our place from the timber company land (where they have a hunting lease) on four wheelers to spotlight deer, stick used hypodermic needles in our "Posted: No Hunting" signs, and leave beer cans and feces around. Meredith and Gabe had been threatened at gunpoint on their own property in the past when they told some drunk/high yahoos to leave. So they had tried being nice, failed, and were in the process of escalating the struggle when we moved in. Gabe had fashioned some "nail boards" out of old slabs (the waste planks from sawmills with the bark still on one side) by nailing dozens of big nails through them and placing them under the leaf litter on the four wheeler trails back in the wood. At least one unsuspecting bubba had lost some tires as a result. This may seem drastic but consider that this same group of "hunters" had strung piano wire at neck height along mountain bike trails on the timber company land and damn near killed some people.

I was a little uncertain as to whether or not I wanted to engage in

some rednecks drove down our driveway in the middle of the night, came almost to our house and went off-road through Ronnie's land and slaughtered a flock of wild turkey that he had been feeding for years. Despite all this, we seem to be winning the war against the poachers—at least for the meantime.

Ignorance Makes You a Victim - A Case Study

Learning more about the machines that we use day to day can be a valuable DIY strategy to decreasing dependence and increasing freedom. By this I mean knowing how they work and how to repair and maintain them. The legendary punk band, The Dead Kennedys, have a song called "Trust Your Mechanic." It goes, "Trust your mechanic to mend your car, bring it in to his garage... he tightens and loosens a few spare parts, one thing's fixed—another falls apart... and the rich eat you." That scenario (and analysis) is probably more true-to-life than most people would like to believe. I saw an exposé once on *60 Minutes*, or some similar TV show, where some people took a car, deliberately created some simple problem with it, and then took it to a bunch of mechanics in New York City to see what would happen. They had it repaired and then had their own mechanic explain what was done. Almost all the mechanics ripped the people off beyond belief. It's a classic and well-known scenario in which opportunistic leeches are able to suck money out of our pockets because we have no idea about how our cars (or homes or appliances or bodies) work. In our fast-paced hustle and bustle society, people don't feel like they have time to learn about how to do simple repairs or maintenance themselves. There is this feeling that the time that they would have to invest into doing it themselves is "worth more" than the cost of repairs, or there is the misconception that the average person can't comprehend the "complex mechanics" of a car engine or dishwasher or whatever. The result is that we often end up getting screwed.

A fine (if not somewhat embarrassing) example would be the

People were trespassing "jest lookin' at the deer" (even though they had loaded rifles strapped on their four wheelers). Plus, right after we moved in other weird stuff started happening.

a guerilla war with a bunch of well-armed crank heads so soon after moving in, so I removed the nail boards in favor of a less destructive strategy. I made a wall of boulders across the trails, pulled up the flagging that marked some new trails they had made, and put up some new barbed wire fencing and signage where old ones had been cut down. Word had spread locally that Meredith and Gabe were moving out and many locals were hoping to get access to hunt on the property (which was teeming with wildlife because the animals had realized they were more or less safe there). People were trespassing "jest lookin' at the deer" (even though they had loaded rifles strapped on their four wheelers). Plus, right after we moved in other weird stuff started happening. One evening we got home to put the chickens up and one had been locked (from the outside) in a small carrying cage stored behind the barn. Another time Tanya came home to find a truck full of rednecks in our driveway who claimed they were "just turnin' around." I wouldn't mind if people were just hiking around and treating the land and wildlife with respect, but they were poaching deer, turkey, coyotes, and who knows what else as well as rutting out the trails with their tires and leaving trash everywhere. It got worse when

problems I had with my MTD Lawn Tractor last spring and the bullshit I (unnecessarily) put up with in order to get it fixed. The spring rains were in full effect and the grass in the fields was growing like mad when I took a break from mowing and the damn thing wouldn't start up again. Back then, I didn't know much about engines or starter motors and I didn't even know how to begin to solve the problem (the classic "helpless-victim-of-the-mechanic"). So I took it to the shop despite Chip's suggestion that it would fix itself if we'd just put it up on blocks in the yard and drink a case of Pabst. I told the mechanics that it wouldn't start, paid the \$40 deposit, and left it with them. This was near the beginning of June. They told me it would be at least three weeks before they could even look at it and I made the mistake of leaving it with them (even though I could've gotten a book and figured out how to tear the whole damn thing down and rebuild it in that time). Anyway, to make a long story short, I got it back at the end of July and the grass was so high that it had to be mowed with a full-size tractor and a bush hog. Furthermore, the repairs cost about \$400, which was more than I paid for the thing (used) and a considerable sum for me. I didn't ques-

tion the \$200 labor charge or the long list of parts that were replaced (mainly because I didn't understand what they were or how they worked).

Anyway, I got it back and used it to mow once before we had the big three-day campout & retreat at the farm. Then, during the retreat I was using it to haul firewood (I have a little homemade trailer for it) when I tried to start it, only to discover the same exact problem again. I was sure pissed. I pushed it aside and it sat lifeless through the winter. Then one wet spring day this year I decided I would fix it before the grass got out of hand. I knew from a recent successful attempt at fixing my jeep (with a little help from Tom) that the starter was spinning but the bendix gear wasn't engaging the flywheel. I took the flywheel cover off and sure enough, the bendix gear was stuck in the down position. All it needed was a little oil and VROOOOM! It started right up. This took less than two minutes for me to diagnose and fix and was exactly what was wrong with it last spring.

I ran in and found the invoice from the old repairs. There were all sorts of other things listed... replacing both blades and (more expensively) the spindle assemblies that run them, replacing the fuel filter and spark plugs, cleaning the fuel tank, adjusting the carburetor, "fixing the mowing deck," and more!

Now, when I had these expensive repairs done, they handed me a box of old parts that they had allegedly removed and replaced. I stuck them in the barn thinking I could re-use them in a pinch. Well, it just so happens that as I was mowing paths in the back forty the next week I tore up one of the blades on a big rock. In the process the spindle assembly was mangled beyond repair and had to be replaced as well. I propped the whole machine up on its back wheels and assessed the situation. Lo and behold, both spindle assemblies were old, rusty, and cracked - one broken entirely. There was way more wear and tear on these than there would be had the mechanic put new ones on as he said he did, especially considering the relatively small amount of mowing I did with it since he (allegedly) worked on it. I ran out to the barn and grabbed the box of parts he gave me and compared them to the ones on the mower. The spindle assemblies were compatible, as were the blades (which looked fine by the way, just a bit dull), but there were some other parts which had no corresponding ones on my machine anywhere! Furthermore, I found some other parts still on the mower (brakes) that were totally worn out and had been for some time... and the "fixing the mowing deck" seems to have consisted of putting a flimsy piece of wire where a sturdy steel cotter pin belonged! I was mad as hell and vowed to buy replacement parts at another shop no matter how far I had to drive. I found another shop and replaced all the damaged parts for about \$80 and two hours of my time.

So that long-winded business is to illustrate that I was screwed out of a lot of money because I didn't know anything about a piece of machinery that I owned and operated. I don't know for sure if any of those old parts came off my machine or not, but the evidence is not in the mechanic's favor. I think they were just old parts they had lying around and were trying to seem convincing. They probably saw what was really wrong and immediately knew that I was ignorant as to what was up, saw a chance to make some quick cash, and took me for a ride.

Just as a side note, the practical experience I got in machinery repair since I took that mower in has allowed me to pull off a number of DIY repairs: the mower (mentioned above), my jeep (twice), a borrowed Ditch Witch/bulldozer, the Lawn Tractor, and a weed eater. I learned as I went on all of these and in every case I felt totally empowered and happy when I completed the repairs without paying through the nose or calling a professional. There are a number of great DIY repair books at your public library so check them out. When

I have a rainy day and some spare time, I have an old busted push mower and a dismantled dishwasher I want to tinker with, and I'm excited about meeting the challenge with my growing skills.

The Last Six Months: Getting it Together

So the first year was exciting and I learned a lot, but it was also a bit of disappointment. I tend to have lofty plans and am notorious for taking on more than I can handle (just ask Jen and Jason how late this article was). Most of the shortfalls seemed to come from not having enough time to get everything done. I was still in school and was working a lot plus co-running Tree of Knowledge (though my pal Mary did most of it). I was spread too thin. Over the last six months, though, I've intentionally made my schedule more flexible and things have been much better in terms of realizing my DIY plans. I got a good part-time job at a nearby State Park, go to town a couple of times a week to attend a couple of classes and have a couple days a week to work around here. The gardening is really taking off now. I totally rebuilt half of the big chicken coop (with all scavenged materials!) and it seems to be varmint-proof. I got some new birds (all of which are still surviving months later), built a new roof for the pump house, started painting the main house, built a (hopefully) escape-proof pen for Bobby (Dinner was lost to the highway - R.I.P.) with plenty of room for him to run around, and did a hell of a lot of yard work and minor repairs. We even had a tremendous bonfire on New Year's Day to bring prosperity to the land and its human dwellers during the year. It's been very satisfying lately even though Tanya recently moved out and I've had no luck finding a suitable roommate to replace her yet. I'm more excited and inspired than ever now. My pal John Gerken was just here. He, Mary, and I are working on a DIY how-to book called The DIY Guide, and we worked on that a lot. I'm amazed at what people are capable of...and saddened by what we settle for.

I hope this wasn't too long and that you found it interesting. I'm working on a full-length zine about my experiences and ideas as they relate to DIY and living in the country. I had to force myself to stop this article because I still have a lot of great stories to relay. There's lots to tell about Alexander Harbour's grave, ol' Pig Napp and his money box, Daffandill's cabin, Mrs. King and the woman with the PhD, the mountain lion project... there is so much colorful history—not just here, but anywhere! It won't be on TV, so we have to tell it to each other. There's so much to learn.

This DIY stuff is important. College is fine and can be great, but practical skills such as gardening, carpentry, plumbing, mechanical ability, cooking, and so on are proving more useful in many respects. I suppose if I put my mind to it I could use my brain to screw people over and make a ton of money. I could hire people to make all my dreams a reality, but I would much rather live more humbly and do at least some of the things myself. Social systems don't last forever and practical knowledge is likely to prove infinitely valuable in our lifetimes.

Tom tells me stories of life in Madison County, some of which I've relayed here, and the differences between him and the locals in Madison County strike me as being extreme. In many ways, though, they aren't. It's the same out here. Sometimes I feel like I'm from a different planet than some of the old locals out here, but I feel like I have a lot more in common with them than with the hordes of yuppies that are clearing 5-acre lots and building 6000 square foot homes with three-SUV garages, even if it is just the common thread of the do-it-yourself ethic.

Oh, and for the record, Bobby is a mighty good dog and can, in fact, whup a coon. ☿

By Jenell Johnson.

Illustration by Theodore Henessey.

Do You Get It?

This article has proven to be much harder to write than I had originally anticipated. After muddling through a first draft, I presented it to my best friend, who has always played the part of brutally honest sounding board. "I don't know, Jenell," she said, peeking up over the pages, "if I read this, I don't think that I would like you."

Yeowch. Not what I wanted at all. And so I started again, ready to face questions that have been nagging for years, trying to match answers that didn't point fingers, yet didn't shirk from responsibility.

I planned to write about feminism, of what it has meant in my life, of how it has disappointed me (and how my one big Freudian slip of a mind just had to scratch out "disciplined"), and why I believe it has gone so wrong. I wrote about rape whistles and safe spaces, of Andrea Dworkin and Larry Flint (and how I hate them almost equally—almost equally—at least Larry Flint can appreciate cheap irony and a good massage). I wrote of my friend Tara, a queer exotic dancer who, in addition to holding the beloved title of "most flaming red Marxist I've ever met," also identifies as a feminist. Paradox? I don't think so. I am, however, a sad minority, and thus wrote of the well-intentioned disempowerment coming from within "our" own ranks. I write "our" and I write as a feminist, and I also only speak for myself.

And suddenly the beautifully (and painstakingly trained) coherent essay I'd planned had dissolved into an evocation. And instead of plotting and planning and theorizing it all down to the last socially-constructed molecule, I now speak from the gut.

Let's invent something new. Something past feminism. Something that picks up where feminism lost its course—where it stumbled off the trail and now sits ditch-dirty, spinning its wheels and whimpering along to Tori Amos. Let's rescue feminism, because I still believe in it.

I call feminism by another name—a word that I haven't thought up yet, something that punches my gut and tickles my throat. Why a new word? Because "feminist" doesn't seem to apply anymore. I no longer see the world as a kaleidoscope of penises and vaginas. There are power structures more complex than patriarchal construc-

tions, even more complicated than that omnipresent trinity of the lefty academe, raceclassgender. Maybe "genderist" might be more appropriate, but I don't even think a label is necessary. What does it truly mean if I say that I'm a feminist? Maybe that I believe in the equality of the sexes? Ahh—but why the "fem"? Truthfully, when I think of what it means for me to be a feminist, I just think that I get it. Or at least I try. I get that there are a lot of fucked up things floating around in the world, and some of it happens to be a result of gender inequity. "Ooh, Jenell, what a rebel you are! Shying away from labels? That was sooo last year!"

Alright. So I will say it another way. I do not "identify" with Gloria Steinem, or with the girl sitting in front of me in my English class, for that matter, because we both have estrogen flowing through our veins. I do not count as "sisters" those women who are setting themselves on fire in front of the porn shop downtown. I do not have "brothers" who recognize their "potential" as rapists and who have gotten in touch with their "feminine" side—weird mutated forms of Robert Bly who wished they had breasts.

I will not—for God's sake!—ally myself with the Republican Party by virtue of Elizabeth Dole's cunt! I have no "brothers" or "sisters"—I have, or rather I want to have PARTNERS. Partners who span race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, lack of religion, shoe size, whatever. Partners who, well, who get it. You can go ahead and stick your own definitions on what "get it" will mean. But I've got a feeling that they would all be pretty similar. A little ambiguity can go a long way to eradicating the notion that the entire world can be broken

down into black and white (or penis and vagina).

Feminist ideology, in my opinion, has become as dogmatic as any religion or communist regime with a big "C" (remember kiddies, small "c" good, big "C" bad). Dogma by its very nature disallows dissent in order to unify. More specifically, this is why we have all those lovely pre/suffixes like anarcho-, socialist-, militant-, third wave-, etc. that beg to be attached, and is also why my aforementioned friend Tara was shouted down in every Women's Studies class we had together. The problem is, when we try to affix the generic label of "feminist" to all these different ideologies, the evil Catherine MacKinnons of the world come marching to specify what a "true" feminist ought to be, and Voila! the ranks are split!

So what do I want? I want a safe ambiguity. I want to be able to have an open dialogue about how a woman's naked body wrapped around a pole could be an instrument of her power without automatically losing my title as "feminist." Same goes with any kind of dissent from within the ranks. As much as I do actually believe in binaries, the world is not divided into the feminists and the anti-feminists. I used to refer to myself as an a feminist, that is, someone without feminism. But to do that would be to deny the very



I want to be able to have an open dialogue about how a woman's naked body wrapped around a pole could be an instrument of her power without automatically losing my title as "feminist."

real fights that women and men before me have fought to ensure my freedom to do almost whatever the heck I want. "Almost," as in recognizing that there are still battles to fight, but also that I am willing to fight them! I refuse to use the reality of sexism as an excuse for inaction or apathy.

So whaddya say, partner? Wanna fight with me?

A Manifesto By Je-free

my nature is my own

We are constantly in search of answers and reason. This is a series of thoughts and questions I have put together. This is based on my experiences and my interpretations of what it means to be alive.

Humans express thoughts and emotions through words that have been created from an alphabet, and which are used to communicate with one another. Words are extracted from our vocabulary and used to explain our feelings and ideas. These thoughts are being generated by impulses. What creates these impulses? These ideas are forms of energy created by unknown frequencies or vibrations. We try to explain ourselves with symbols, with words, which represent thoughts being processed through our minds. Therefore, all that is understood of living is energy. All that exists is indefinable. The origin of all life remains unknown. One's life applies to one's reality.

Throughout my life, I've questioned the reality of any living god or ruling power. If one must define the unknown, this is my version... If there is a god, let that god be the force of life: the one undeniable power of all existing energy. We are the unknown, and yet the answer to our vast confusion and complexity lies in the simplicity of it all: WE ARE WHAT WE ARE... the indefinable product of existence. What we as living beings think and then create is natural. Our thoughts, actions and reactions, natural? Natural does not mean anything other than what exists. Natural is life and life is absolute.

My nature is my own. My actions are products of instinct. For one to label me as being "wrong" would only be judging from their own principles.

One may live by their conscience, but remain pacified in fear of persecution. Laws and regulations are subject to individuals' opinions and standards of living. To enforce one list of rules on life is a violation of all that is truly free. If I were to force my ideas of what's right and what's wrong, I would be ruling another's life. Exploiting one's right to live as a free being is oppression. One cannot own another nor have the power to govern another's life. Yet these are the rules we live by. Our laws are just interpretations of ideas. These laws act as a medium for conveying or transmitting authority. We fail to recognize that laws of control only apply to the individual's reality. We all define our realities by our own experiences and individual knowledge—rendering all laws to an act of infringing on one's personal freedom. Freedom is not an option un-

der the hands of a central ruling party, such as a government. Authoritarian regimes assert that laws cater to protect citizens from each other and from themselves.

This may be seen as a logical organization, but to say that one must live by another's standard of living is an act of tyranny. Then to imagine one would be imprisoned and denied their right to live as a human of individual nature is repression. That the ruling body creates laws by the standards of the majority creates an autocratic structure of living — not much different than the evil autocracies we have read about in our high school history texts. Opinions and ideas are then forced upon the citizens of that state. Government becomes the ultimate restriction of life — despite rhetoric that suggests otherwise. Government exists for reasons and those reasons are to enforce one standard of living, one idea of what life is, one list of rights, one list of wrongs, and one list of rules to distinguish all of the above. The force of life continues within these power structures, but are we actually free to experience it?

Life does not only apply to human reality. Life is all energy that exists. We, as humans, hold power to continue the process of life by having children, growing food and other vegetation, and creating energy and the tools that run from that energy, such as computers. Computers have evolved from the hands of humans as an extension of our minds. They, too, are a form of life. Is this evolution? We turn our lives over to computers when we depend on them to store information and calculate problems that are unable to be conquered by the human mind. Yet they have been created by humans. Are they a continuation of life? an extension that will outlive the animal race? The force of life is indefinable, and all extensions of life are living. Everything is built on living matter, and all that is living is natural. All that is natural is life.

Are all my actions, all my fights for human and animal liberation futile in the uncertain future of our existence? Is everything I strive for an arrogant attempt to prolong humanity at the expense of our surroundings? Am I the old man dependant on machines to breathe, although I don't wish to continue my life (but am afraid to die)? I don't believe so. I am human and will continue my fight. Not to prolong our existence, but to actually experience what it is like to live as a free product of life.

The question of right versus wrong does not apply. It's undeniable that the world is controlled by government — creating a world where it seems as if life is an all-liberating force, and government is an all-restricting force. Although I recognize this as natural, I cannot help but feel as if the existence of a supreme power denies us the ability to experience life as each of us would individually do.

By recognizing this, I label myself an Anarchist. By Anarchist, I believe in true freedom. By true freedom, I mean that no one entity has any power over an individual's existence. As an individual, I must recognize that there is no authority but my own. I shall not let my life be taken away. At this point, I look around and realize that it is impossible to live with this philosophy of freedom. If I were to step over certain lines, I would be incarcerated for my actions. Therefore, my life is not my own. It is a constant series of compromises. What's the point in living when we cannot live on our own terms? We are not living for our-

selves, but merely surviving to experience those moments of pleasure, those places where we actually feel what it is like to be free. These rare places are found in friends — with those shared moments when you look into the eyes of another and feel as if there is nothing more real than those feelings. To be held in the arms of a loved one, or to sit upon the land and see nothing for miles and close your eyes and imagine a world of your own as the sun casts across your face. We walk beneath the surface in search of these moments where nothing is compromised. I am happy. I find enjoyment in the paths I choose to walk down. I can smile, laugh, play, but by no means am I free. If government is something one feels is necessary to live, one must at least recognize that living under that government's rules makes you anything but free.

I respect this notion as a theory of living and I accept this as what you may feel is right. But we must also acknowledge the difference between freedom and government. Slogans such as "land of the free" are insults and a mockery to true freedom. They are lies, not in some anti-government way, but by definition of the word "free." It's a joke. Are we fools? Do we really believe we are free? Some might say that by living in America, we are more free than people in other countries, but should we settle for this as our freedom? Hardly. It only reveals the truth of our "free country." We maintain this great freedom and wealth by taking advantage of the rest of the world, particularly the third world. Freedom and government cannot co-exist!

The question often asked to people who make similar assertions to the one I have just made, "What will become of our world if anarchy is achieved?" cannot be answered. If you believe in freedom, then you believe in freedom.

A life with anarchy is a life that is to be created by each individual. By focusing on what it means to be free we are creating an anarchist society.

The question of how to deal with violence in an anarchist society seems quite silly to me. A vast majority of violence in our history has been predominately created by governments—one

supreme ruling power with a license to kill and justify it with greed, religion or simply asserting that "we are right and they are

Government becomes the ultimate restriction of life—despite rhetoric that suggests otherwise.

wrong." No individual can even begin to imagine committing the levels of violence that the government has. Are we protected from violence under the current system? Is not violence often a product of poverty? And is not poverty a direct by-product of capitalism? Capitalism benefits certain circles of wealth, while tying down and crippling other income levels. Capitalism and governments only exists because we allow ourselves to be the victim. We support our own imprisonment. We sacrifice life for safety and end up with neither. We actually support war, slavery and the destruction of our environment. We pay taxes and rent, and we gladly salute these icons of power. It becomes a web with no way out.

If people choose to take back their lives, to really

achieve true freedom we must create alternatives such as growing our own food and teaching ourselves and each other. We must find alternatives to capitalism by creating community, building trust and communication. By creating alternatives, I mean separating ourselves from those dependencies. We must absorb the power back into our own hands. We must accept responsibility for our own actions and find our own answers instead of looking to the government to solve our problems.

Revolution armed with knowledge, not guns, and a desire to be free is what we must work for. There are those who would (and do) fight to defend their country. And there are those who will fight to demand liberation. Violent revolution is a powerful tool, but one that must be used sparingly to avoid counter-productive results. No revolution will happen overnight, but I think it is fostered by the long process of learning and recovering from the damage that governments and corporations have wreaked on our civilization.

By passively observing, we are submitting ourselves to an oppressive reality. Take a look at your life and think for yourself. I guess the question we must ask ourselves is: "Do we believe in freedom, or do we believe that compromise is living?" ç

A Review By Amanda Luker

Get On The Bus: Thoughts On *The Cruise*

I remember the first time I met David. I was crossing the bridge from Loring Park to the Walker Sculpture Gardens with a couple of other students. We were spending the day recording observations of the urban field environment for a project. David, with his long walking stick, its wood almost as gnarled as his skin, yelled up from the base of the bridge for us to wait for him. An older Black man with a graying beard and a definite smile in his eyes, he leapt into an on-the-spot poem. Rhythmic beats and full, rounded words drew us all into his spell as he strode across the bridge with us. One of my project partners, wide-eyed, began frantically scribbling down his words, as if they could ever have the same impact coming off a sheet of paper. As his poetry came to a winding end, he asked us to sign his coat and stick, mumbling about sending them to Washington or something.

David is a Minneapolis face—everyone knows him, many have been charmed and many have been annoyed by him. I have given him more money than I care to admit, which unfortunately has gone to his bad habits. (If I have money, I always try to share, at least a little.) Every winter, we wonder if David is going to make it, sleeping outside or in doorways, and every spring he is back, mumbling inspiring words to the pigeons in the park.

What is our obsession with crazy geniuses, especially those who suffer during their lives? There are countless movies on that exact theme: *Amadeus* (insane composer), *Pi* (obsessive mathematician), *Rain Man* (savant whose brother uses his abilities to win money). Perhaps it is because our society more and more celebrates not those who are simply good, but those who are the best, the most prolific, the fastest—in the spirit of good old capi-

talism, which requires optimum skill to "get ahead." However, if these folks are socially awkward, which many geniuses are, they are shunned and ignored in life, though glorified after death, much like ever-emerging Christ figures, as the mythology goes.

I can't say that I haven't fallen into the trap of this kind of idolatry either. *The Cruise* (1998), a short black and white documentary, presents us with another humorous caricature, one who thinks too much and wins us over with his candidness and brutal honesty, focusing on cities and sex, and sex with cities. He's the crazy genius right up my alley.

Timothy Speed Levitt works as a tour guide for Apple Tours in Manhattan in New York City. "Can you hear me in the back?" he begins, his outgrown flop of hair blowing in the wind atop the double decker bus. He launches into his spiel on Greenwich Village, nasally reciting what could be a free-flowing beat poem: "Greenwich Village... one of those rare districts that occurs once in a while in human history... fear, a basic theme in all of our lives, constantly afraid along the streets of Greenwich Village, under threat of assassination and the assassins are our dreams, triumphant—the by-product of such a pursuit: creativity and radicalism, which are further themes of Greenwich Village lineage." From this he dives into a grocery list of the famous people who have lived within the blocks that make up the neighborhood, which includes Mark Twain, Thomas Paine, Eugene O'Neill, Willa Cather, Dylan Thomas, Dorothy Parker, e. e. cummings and the publishers of the influential Socialist magazine, *The Masses*.

From what we see of Levitt conducting his tours, he knows his stuff. He easily rattles off factoids and famous quotations, such as that the World Trade Center has its own zip code, Manhattan is only 2.5 miles wide at its widest, and 14 miles long, urban historian and theorist

Lewis Mumford called the Chrysler Building "uninspired voluptuousness" and Greta Garbo said New York was the only place for her, since it was the only place she could truly be alone.

During his tours, there is always some slight laughter in the background, due to his comical appearance and dramatic invocations. Unfortunately, Levitt was blessed with recurrent

Levitt's cruise is the place where voyeurism and flaneurism meet. It is the sexualizing of a city gaze, encouraging people to wander, observe, analyze and develop their own kind of relationship with the city.

acne, the fashion sense of a clown and substandard hygiene. In fact, for the film's purpose, he is a sad clown, complete with the stiff-legged, pigeon-toed walk of Charlie Chaplin, with long umbrella, cigar and felt hat. And the audience soon realizes that there is a dual purpose for his tour guiding: Levitt is looking for affection, be it from a woman or the city, even admitting with all sincerity that he came into this job to "meet and seduce beautiful women."

Where women have rejected him, the city has both embraced and shunned him. In his mind, the city has taken on the spark of human life, capable of a reciprocal relationship. So what is the city? Is it the conglomeration of everyone who has ever set foot in it? contributed to it? Is it just buildings? Is it the land underneath or the sky above? In the most post-modern way, it is the unique convergence of all of these things, and Levitt sees both the beauty and the inhumanity of them. In the past winter, he claims, his relationship with the city was "vitriolic" and he couldn't believe how angry it was with him. At the time, the city was a monster to him, a "cyclops." But he patched things up, and once again is seeing the city as a "scintillating muse who sings to me at night."

He also sees the destructiveness of cities—their gluttony and ba-

nality. "Civilization is the amputation of everything that ever happened to us... [and the] molestation of everything that we could ever be," he pessimistically decries. As he cruises with a tour down Madison Avenue he sees imminent devolution: "Civilization has never looked like this before... this is ludicrousness and it cannot last... the new Anne Taylor store on the right!"

Levitt is light-years more in tune with communicating with the city than with people. As he describes it, each tour he guides is one closer to his death, so the tours are his personal search for perfection. They are his way of making love to his muse, the city, and begging for its respect and devotion. In one scene, he rests his head upon the pillars of the Brooklyn Bridge. He fingers the stones. "One of the things I like about being friends with the triptyches of the Brooklyn Bridge," he muses, "is it never contradicts me, and if it makes me feel futile, it does it indirectly, with aloofness... [with] no victory in its subjugation of me." Later in the film, he takes the time to respond to all of the people who have hurt him in his life, and it paints a disturbing picture of his human relationships. To his mother, he says, "If I had known this when I emanated from your bloody thighs, I'm sure I would have crawled back in!"

But to a terra-cotta building, the only building by Louis Sullivan in the city, Levitt is able to love it with his gaze. He stands before her, floored. Following the curves in the intricate carvings he sees as chasing a nude woman through a field, he lets out a series of groans, grunts and "don't stop!" as he ogles the "undulations of her curvature in the terra cotta."

The title of the film refers not only to the time Levitt spends shuttling folks around, trying to explain the city to them, but rather to all his meanderings. The cruise is most easily defined by what he calls "the anti-cruise." If a city street is blocked, it is the anti-cruise. If a door is locked, it is the anti-cruise. Every nook and cranny of the city is a piece of the cruise, and he resents anything that holds him back from finding all of them. To fill out the sexual metaphor, perhaps he imagines it is a force that is keeping him from getting to third base with his love, scoring when he evades the anti-cruise.

His distaste for the grid plan comes from both a hatred of the anti-cruise and an anarchistic need for originality. "The grid plan emanates from our weakness, he says, and it is homogeneity in a city when it is not at all [homogenous.]" Levitt advocates throwing out the grid plan and starting over. He hates how it forces everyone to walk at right angles, almost guaranteeing redundancy and stagnancy. He fears that it means he will "relive all the mistakes my parents made." His genius here shines through: he sees past the veiny lines on a map, those that have formed his urban prison, and advocates for the freedom of civilization, beginning with removing the constricts. For this and more, Levitt is either laughed at or ignored, a perfect candidate for a documentary.

Levitt's cruise is the place where voyeurism and flaneurism meet. It is the sexualizing of a city gaze, encouraging people to wander, observe, analyze and develop their own kind of relationship with the city. As Levitt describes the cruise, "it is about flesh...exhibitionism." Less and less do people really stroll these days—it is a European thing, whereas Americans tend to rush. They are the "commuters," as Levitt sees them, "running toward their destinations, and away from themselves." Levitt walks the streets of New York City, with his nose in the air, not out of haughtiness, but to take in all he can and to point out the noteworthy. For Levitt, the cruise never ends. ☿

The Cruise is an independent film directed by Bennett Miller. Visit the official website of The Cruise at www.thecruise.com. The Cruise and director Bennett Miller won the Don Quixote Award/Special Mention and the Wolfgang Staudte award at the 1999 Berlin International Film Festival, as well as the Audience Award for Best Documentary and the Special Jury Award in the Feature Competition at the 1998 Newport International Film Festival.

Assets & Liabilities



The scenario was typical: Boy meets me, boy becomes infatuated with me, boy realizes I take up space, boy runs like hell. What was atypical in this situation was the guy's honesty about the dynamic. He actually admitted feeling intimidated by me.

"You're interesting, awesome, talented, beautiful, exciting..." — these being the reasons why he did *not* want to be involved with me. "It's OK that you're a strong woman, there's nothing wrong with that..." Gee, thanks for the tolerance. I suppose appreciation would be a bit much to ask?

The scenario was typical: Boy meets me, boy becomes infatuated with me, boy realizes I take up space, boy runs like hell. What was atypical in this situation was the guy's honesty about the dynamic: He actually admitted feeling intimidated by me. Although he acknowledged this feeling very well might be the product of his "shit," he did not seem interested in cleaning up his feces.

Alas, my very assets appear to be what most men view as my liabilities. I believe my experience is typical, and I believe it is a product of social training. According to our spoken and unspoken rules, women must not develop to our maximum potential. We're supposed to starve ourselves; shave ourselves; use paint, expensive creams, and surgical knives in our faces to erase ourselves; avoid "too"-heavy weights to minimize ourselves ... all to maintain that pre-pubescent, doe-eyed, blank slate of a look. We are discouraged from developing our minds to the point of being intellectually aggressive; our voices to the point of being heard loud and clear; our presence to the point of taking up full space; and our strength to the point of being a physical threat.

Men grow accustomed to and, over time, dependent on girls and women living at half-mast. So when men encounter women such as myself who run full steam ahead, I find they have a panic-and-bolt reponse, seeking refuge in the arms of some safe young lass who plays by the rules (accompanying manual included).

by Loolwa Khazzoom

Everything that makes me unappealing to most men, however, is exactly what makes men totally hot to most women. Women, after all, have been encouraged to crave a developed human being. He started his own organization by the time he was 21? Cool. He wrote three books by the time he was 29? Excellent. He started his own band? Amazing! He says what he thinks, fights against injustice, and kicks the ass of people who mess with him? Buy me a ticket – I'm flying out to spend the rest of my life with him!

But when the shoe is on the other foot – when the woman is the accomplished one – chances are the man is gonna buy a ticket, all right...a ticket *outta there*. In a society where a man's ego is cultivated to depend on a woman's secondary role, where a man's sense of self is based on a woman's *lack of self*, an indomitable woman is an expendable woman. A woman with less is one a man wants more.

My friend Angela is bright, creative, playful, drop-dead gorgeous, funny, eager to learn and grow....Fact is, if I were a lesbian, I'd be panting after her. Angela is a gal who can wear a Jackie Onassis dress with bushy armpit hair and sparkling silver Halloween socks. "So why don't I have a boyfriend?" she complains.

Whoever takes on society requires to some extent that everyone around her take it on as well. If a gal cracks ongoing jokes and gets a crowd roaring, her boyfriend has to share – or not even get any of – the spotlight. The gal has overcome her training not to be aggressive in her humor. Can the guy overcome his training not to get more attention than his partner? Can he handle all the socialized implications baring down on his ego? Will he?

For every doctrine with which society thinks women over the head, there is an inverse doctrine with which society thinks men over the head. I believe both sexes suffer from these limited roles. But I also believe that unlike men, women have gotten the short shaft in terms of the basics – personal space, economic opportunity, and personal safety.

For this reason, I feel women generally have been more willing to butt heads with society and change things. I don't believe any feminist revolutionary actually has desired or enjoyed the constant battle. And men, I believe, have enough of the goodies that they're not going nuts without personal revolution. So why take on the internal chaos and external threat that goes hand-in-hand with transformation?

A few years ago, a friend of mine spent the summer with me and left various books of hers in my bathroom library. I picked up *The Rules* and began reading. I thought it was a joke book. I thought it was hilarious. Then I found out that women all over the country had formed groups to study it. That book was beyond serious; it was a threat to female sanity. My laughter took on a homicidal edge.

What really pisses me off is women downplaying or erasing our assets because men aren't doing their work. It makes things worse, girls! In a society where men can get sex without transformation, they'll never fucking change. What more, if we have to minimize ourselves to be around men, are we really "getting a man," or are we getting an insecure limp-ass – a dead weight adding burden to our already burdened lives?

Once upon a time, not so long ago, I felt apologetic about the amazing things about myself. Over and over again, men had treated my assets as liabilities, breaking up with me because of the many

qualities distinguishing me from a doormat. Though I did not want or try to change myself, I did grow to feel shame for being powerful, outspoken, and passionate. I also came to feel beholden – indebted and ingratiated on some level – to men who *tolerated* those qualities in me, to men who did not try to steamroll over them.

I once spoke with a man who claimed all men benefit from patriarchy – even the nice guys. "How?" I asked. "In a world where so many men rape women," he replied, "a man can get brownie points just for not being a rapist. A husband can get brownie points for doing something as basic as putting away dishes." The dude was right.

Because of the plethora of asshole men, I came to find myself searching for a *non-asshole*. How sad is that? Alas, I find the phenomenon is quite common: OK, he doesn't listen to me, but he doesn't hit me when he gets mad. No, I'm not attracted to him, but he listens to me. I sure as hell don't enjoy his company, but he splits the housework ... Fuck that shit. I want – no, *demand* – an artistic, spiritual, playful, intelligent, sensitive, drop-dead gorgeous man. On a motorcycle. So eat me.

During two years I took a break from men, I did a major attitude check. I decided it was time for me to treat *myself* as the hot goddess that I am, regardless of what kind of men may exist on the planet and what they may think of my bodacious being. "One

of the things about equality is not just that you be treated equally to a man, but that you treat yourself equally to the way you treat a man." (Marlo Thomas).

Forget about men's attitudes towards me. I've got an attitude towards men. The tables have turned, my friends. My assets are my fucking assets, and the only liabilities I see now are the limp, threatened egos of men who can't hold a flame to my fire. Rather than squelch my spirit to make room for The Man, I amplified it to make room for The Woman. I got louder, sillier, and smarter. I became unabashedly more demanding, outspoken, and aggressive.

On that note, I transformed into The Hunter, becoming as much of a go-getter in my sexuality as I've been in the rest of my life. I decided what I wanted and got my butt out in the world to find it. I began shopping for men like I shopped for clothes: If it didn't fit, damn thing was out the door.

I became the entitled one, the one around whom men had to revolve, as if the whole world were radical feminists and the losers had to get with the program. I found men responding to my attitude shift, chasing after me in the very places they condemned me in the past. Suddenly I was the one being panted after. Whereas men used to complain, they started to apologize. Lo and behold, I found myself in the driver's seat of my love life.

I haven't found a guy who can hack the long haul; but the fact is, I'd rather live with the fullness of my being and see men as occasional bed-warmers than I would live in some corner of my self with a steady squeeze. I know that as long as patriarchy reigns over the state of male-female relations, my man-loving radical feminist being is like an orchid in the arctic. But I'd rather be a solitary, breathtaking flower any day than petals frozen to the ice of the tundra. ¢



Farewell...Forever

by Carissa Screams

Judy Minosky was beaten last night by her stepsons. She called my mother and my mother brought her to our house. I came over to uncomfortably watch my neighbor and co-worker in her bathrobe cry hysterically in my mother's arms. My mother kept telling her that this always seemed to happen to strong women. Judy nodded her head back and forth as if she was listening intently, but for some reason I could tell she wasn't. I could do little to soothe her pain so I became the fetch and carry girl. I ran to get tissues. I ran to get sleeping pills. I ran to get water. I knelt down and watched Judy suffer. The phone rang and my mother and Judy sat frozen, not sure whether to pick it up. I walked slowly to the phone and mutter,

"Hello."

"It's George, can I talk to Judy or your mother." I looked over to Judy and she screamed,

"Why would I want to talk to someone who lets me be dragged across the floor?"

"I'll talk to him," my mother said assertively taking the phone from me. She spoke calmly to Judy's husband and without saying goodbye, hung up the phone. It was almost as if she was ordering a pizza or calling 411. It was like she was just getting information, and the person on the other line was not even real.

"Your husband said it's safe to come home now." Judy continued to whimper into her tissue. My mother held her in her arms and rocked her. "Well, that's just the way it is with men. You've got to let them know they are always right. I always wanted to believe that the ego of the man was a creation of society. That's bullshit. The ego exists all right and it comes before everything in a man's life." My mother was right that the ego exists in men, but it also exists in womyn. Only womyn are told it is inappropriate to have an ego toward anything. They are quickly put in their place when they have egos. Sometimes I think my ego is comparable to men's. Usually in situations of pain, it is not I that am hurt, but my fragile ego.

Although this country always professes equality, why is it that I only see womyn sobbing at their friends' houses unable to come home because their husbands frighten them? We can say all we want about equality of men and womyn, but there are no laws on the books that protect us. The ERA has never even been passed, and when it was first brought up in Congress, it was brought up as a joke. The biggest problem is womyn's inequality in terms of economics. According to the AFL-CIO, womyn still make 72% of what men make. Over a lifetime, that adds up to more than \$100,000 which could have been used to buy a house or start a business. I have worked in academics, non-profit, huge corporations, trading houses, Wall Street brokerage firms, law firms, etc., and I only see womyn working in low paid/part-time/secretary jobs and the men all have jobs as executive directors. Even men who don't have college degrees still make at least \$40 an hour working as carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, etc. There isn't a job in existence specifically for womyn that pays even close to what men make for semi-skilled labor. What's really shameful is that womyn often don't have the opportunities and resources to become as qualified as their male competitors. Even though just as many womyn have college degrees as men, the men are much more likely to make high salaries to start with, and since they have more money, they have more freedom. They can save their money and eventually quit and have ample time to look for a better job, without having to resort to the first thing available. When you are making more money and thus, don't need to work as much, you can take on internships and volunteer jobs that will give you relevant experience. Furthermore, firms

are just more likely to hire men for better jobs because they assume that men have it more together, and are more capable of learning new things.

I think unequal amounts of money that men and womyn have creates a position of submerged status for women. Maybe this is the reason I always feel unequal to men. I always feel I should perform for them in some way to make up for the fact that they are a rock star, or entrepreneur, or scientist, or professional and I am just a woman who is beautiful. I feel so bad that just for them to spend time with me, and to pay attention to me, or tell me I'm beautiful, I must sleep with them. I feel it's the only thing I can give them in return for their attention, because there is nothing else I have that they want. Their attention is this valuable to me.

James came over the same night as Judy. We took a walk down my street and he kept begging me to come over. He kept telling me how he missed me so much and thought of me constantly and how I was the first person he wanted to see when he came back from tour. I knew it was all bullshit and immediately told him all the horrible stuff I heard about him. I don't know why he would miss someone who acted so hateful to him. I said over and over how he was going to hurt me and he kept insisting that that would never happen intentionally, as if that would make me feel better.

I think that he is decisively trying to fool me into falling for him simply to build up his ego. Once that happened, he would squash me like a bug. I think deep down he enjoys the power to squash people. He wants to have a big impact on me while I insist he never will. So why does he put up with this?

We take a shower together, or more like he takes a shower and I shiver at the edge of the bathtub watching him. Time passes and we are on his bed. He attempts to have anal sex with me. When he is inside me I start screaming in pain. I beg him to stop. He just giggles and says,

"Oh come on Carissa, just a little bit longer." But soon the pain is so bad I physically push him off me. I stand before him apologizing as if I did something wrong, as if I was inadequate. All the while blood was trickling down my legs.

That night I lay awake. He slept on the opposite side of the bed. When I tried to sleep close to him he said irritably,

"I can't sleep when you try to hold me." It occurred to me that I couldn't ask anything from this man, not even physical affection that felt good to me. I sat up in horror staring at him as he slept. I wanted to roll up into a ball and disappear. I wanted to cry like I've never cried before. I wanted to disappear and reinvent myself. I wanted someone to cry to, but how will I explain how I let this happen? How do I explain that Judy and I were lansman? Lansman, as in, we came from the same village in the old country. We were kindred spirits. Our struggles were the same. I was the same. It made me feel so desperate because no matter how strong I thought I was, I couldn't think of a way to stop it, and neither could Judy. Thus, we sat helpless on our friends' couches crying fervently.

I realized then that there was nothing I could do but get up from that bed. Otherwise, I was a disgrace. I was simply submitting to the abuse, and unlike in the workplace, I could walk right out. I took a shower by myself. I was happy to have the shower all to myself, instead of sharing it with a man who constantly hogs the shower. He lets me freeze to death at the other side of the bathtub simply for his own pleasure, while I am miserable. I wanted to get his smell off of me. I wanted to feel clean and new again. As I dressed, he woke up.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I guess you did hurt me, James. It was unintentional, and that was what bothered me the most. It is unintentional that you don't respect me as a human being, and therefore, it's stupid for me to be here. Farewell. Farewell forever."

The Travelling Vegan

Davida Gypsy Breier visits the United Kingdom

If you are a vegetarian you have probably been reduced to eating chips, pretzels, or a bag of nuts for dinner while travelling. After the third day of meals from a plastic bag one starts getting a little bitter...and rather queasy. I work for The Vegetarian Resource Group, and one part of my job is to assist vegetarians in finding places to eat while travelling. Some of the information at my disposal comes from our restaurant guide for the US and Canada, guidebooks, reliable Internet sources, experience, and word of mouth. I suggest fantastic sounding restaurants, wondering all the while what they are like myself.

This past January I started asking my own questions about where to eat and stay in the UK. Somewhat impulsively, I planned a trip and would be travelling through England, Scotland, and Wales for 12 days. Unlike past trips, I knew where to look for the information I needed. Perhaps some of my experiences and resources will help keep other travelers from the mind-numbing brutality of chips for breakfast, chips for lunch, and chips, with a side order of nuts, for dinner.

I flew overnight and when I arrived I had but one concern - coffee. I thought ahead and brought some small aseptic boxes of soymilk. Although many coffee shops in the US offer soymilk, I found that only very veg-friendly places offered it in the UK. Also, specify that you want your coffee black, if you desire neither milk nor sugar. I was able to restock my soymilk easily, as just about every town we stopped in had at least one health food store. I tried to find brands that were palatable plain, so that I could finish them off once I had lightened my coffee. I noticed that British soymilk tended to be creamer and looked more like cow's milk than American brands.

Patrick and I spent the first few days in London. The first night

there we joined our gracious hosts, Rachael (*Red Hanky Panky*) and Jo, and several of their friends for dinner at Heather's Restaurant, an all vegetarian restaurant in the Deptford section of London. It was somewhat expensive at £13, for an all-you-can-eat dinner buffet. The soup, a spicy Thai mushroom, was excellent, but entrees were on the bland side. I tried the vegetarian haggis, which was an onion stuffed with beans and grains. Almost all of the desserts were vegan and I tried the treacle (molasses) tart. According to our dining companions, the desserts were the highlight of the meal. **Heather's Restaurant, 74 McMillian St., Deptford, London SE8 3HA; 020 8691 6665; heathers@dircon.co.uk, <www.heathers.dircon.co.uk>.**

The next day we explored London and eventually ended up at Food for Thought on Neal Street in Covent Garden. The coffee and olive and oregano bread were terrific, but the stir-fried vegetables were rather tasteless and oily. About this point we began to suspect an aversion to spice and flavor was going to be an ongoing problem with British vegetarian cuisine. The restaurant was so crowded that we ended up eating outside on a front step with the pigeons. **Food for Thought, 31 Neal St., Covent Garden, London WC2H 9PR; 0171 836 0239.**

Next we journeyed south to Brighton. I had several reasons for wanting to visit Brighton, one of which was Vegetarian Shoes. I admit to a certain shallow weakness for black shoes and boots. I haven't worn leather in about 10 years and have relied upon cheap synthetic shoes. A few years ago at The Small Press Expo I noticed Jesse Reklaw's (*Concave Up*) boots and asked him about them. They were from Vegetarian Shoes. I had



This Page: The New Kensington Pub, Brighton, England

Next Page: The 13th Note, Glasgow, Scotland; Vegetarian Shoes, Brighton, England



coveted a pair since. I decided that if I were going all the way to England, my one act of decadence would be a new pair of decent shoes. One pair turned into two pair—oops, so much for self-control. I got a pair of non-leather Doc Martens Coppa shoes and a pair of Vegetarian Shoes' Derby black boots. The Docs were so comfortable that I've worn them almost everyday since I bought them. You can request a catalog from **Vegetarian Shoes, 12 Gardner St., Brighton, East Sussex UK BN1 1UP; 01273 691913; information@vegetarian-shoes.co.uk; <www.vegetarian-shoes.co.uk>**. If you are in the US you can also order from Pangea: **Pangea, 7829 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda, MD; (301) 652-3181; PangeaVeg@aol.com; <www.veganstore.com>**.

Brighton is essentially vegetarian utopia. There were more vegetarian restaurants than I could count. After my shoe spree, Patrick and I ended up at The New Kensington pub for breakfast/lunch. It is an all-vegetarian pub. I never expected to eat a full, traditional English breakfast, which is basically the antithesis of all things vegan. For just £2.80 (about \$5) I had "sausages," hash browns, beans, toast, mushrooms, and tomatoes. I also ordered a side of chip (fries) and drowned them with salt and malt vinegar. It was one of the **best** meals I had on the trip. After breakfast, I moved to the bar and ordered a vegan cappuccino (£1) off the blackboard. It was perfect. If you are ever in the area, I encourage you to go to The New Kensington pub. **2V's Vegan and Vegetarian Café, Kensington Gardens, North Lanes, Brighton; 01273 681907; lousia@slipjam.freemove.co.uk.**

Although it isn't going to be helpful to other travelers to the area, I feel I should credit Erica (*Girlfrenzy*) and Fiona, our hosts in the Brighton-Hove area, for one of the most delicious meals of the trip. They amazed us by whipping a bunch of nuts, vegetables, fruits, and

tofu into a feast before our very eyes, even if they did try and shame us into eating Brussels sprouts. They also shattered the myth that we were forming about the lack of flavor and spice in England foods.

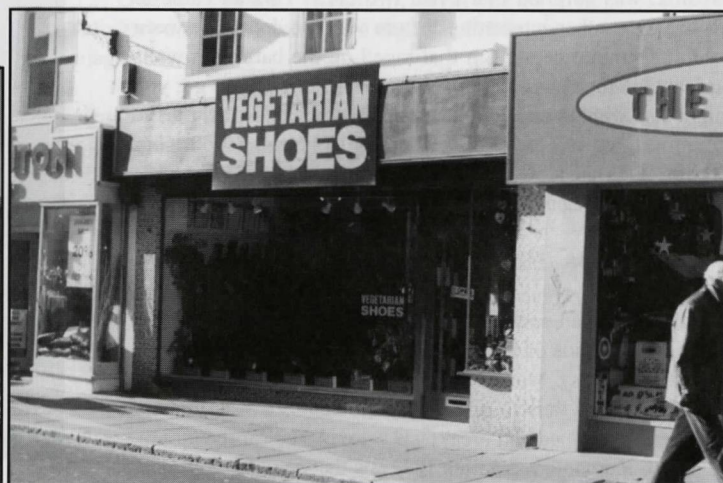
The next evening we found ourselves in Hastings looking for a friend of a friend. After arriving at her house, Lady Jan took us out for din-

ner. We finally located an Indian restaurant that was open. The server was very helpful. After we ordered he came out of the kitchen to let us know that cream was used in the preparation of one dish, and would we like to select something else. Letting your servers know what you do not eat and asking questions seem to be the easiest methods.

We continued along the south coast to Dover. While wandering around Dover I found Holland and Barrett, a health food store, and bought some Cheatin' Barbecue Bites, made with wheat and soya protein. This was fortuitous because it would be that last food of substance that I would have for quite some time. On a whim we decided to take the ferry to France for a few hours, just because we could.

If I have one morsel of advice it is to warn you that a bad French accent will not help you if you are a starving vegetarian in Calais, France at 9pm on a Tuesday night in January. Two days after the veg-paradise of Brighton we found ourselves in the veg-hell of France. We wandered up and down Rue Royale looking at menus. Deep-fried (unspecified) meat, internal organs, and various cute animals were the standard on the menus. We eventually ended up at Café de Paris, where I would unsuccessfully attempt to convey the idea of veganism. I thought settling for a "green salad" would be safe. It came with green beans and beans mixed with mayonnaise, white squiggly things in mayonnaise, a few leafs, and beets. I **hate** beets. I don't speak a word of French, aside from "fromage," a word I learned 10 minutes before from reading all the menus. If anyone knows of a good universal hand gesture for milk that won't get me thrown out of a restaurant, please let me know. I eventually convinced our waiter, Dave, that I just wanted greens with vinegar. What I got were greens drenched in some form of toxic French vinegar. I shut up and ate them feeling my stomach pickled. I will learn to bring the Vegan Passport (available in the US from The American Vegan Society, PO Box H, 56 Dinsah Lane, Malaga, NJ 08328; (609) 694-2887) or Speaking Vegetarian (ISBN 0-87576-222-0, Pilot Books) with me when I travel in future, as I never know where I'll end up.

We spent the next day driving north toward Scotland, eating at gas stations and truck stops. By the time we reached Whitby, I was determined to have hot, edible food. We found a guest house a few blocks from the North Sea that was open and rented a room for the night for £15 a person. The gentleman at the guest house asked me what I wanted for breakfast. I told him I was vegetarian, and not to worry about it. He asked if an omelet would be okay. I told him I was vegan, and that I knew it was short notice and said I'd be fine with just juice and toast. We found a laundromat and grocery store. Dinner that night was a repast provided by Safeway. There was a microwave in the hallway at the bed and breakfast, so we got some ready-made Safeway Pilaf Rice and Spicy Potato Wedges. It might have been the



hunger, but they were exceptionally filling and tasty. If you are staying at a bed and breakfast, check and see if you can do some of your own cooking, it might make eating easier.

The next morning we went downstairs for coffee and much to our delight we found fresh fruit, Provamel Yofu (a soy yogurt), toast, coffee, and juice. I was very impressed that with no advanced warning the owners found soy yogurt in between our arrival at 6 p.m. and our appearance in the dining room at 9 a.m. The gentleman from the night before came in to check and make sure everything was satisfactory. He said they had only been open for a few months. He asked me about vegetarianism and veganism and what they might want to have on hand for other vegans. I gave him some information I had with me and thanked him again for going out of his way for us. This is a good lesson for those vegetarians among us - many people are interested in learning more, so take the time to help create change when you are given the chance. I hope he gets more and more vegetarian guests, and they find the hospitality as charming as I did. If you happen to be passing through Whitby consider staying at the **Aldersmith Guest House, 24 Crescent Ave., Whitby, North Yorkshire, YO21 3ED; 01947 602919.**

We arrived in Edinburgh, Scotland in next night. After checking into a hotel we went in search of dinner. I had read about Black Bo's, which happened to be located nearby, so we walked there. The deep fried chili tofu balls and potato leek soup were tasty, but I was almost too tired to eat. While on the expensive side (£26 for two), it was quiet, pleasant and most importantly, not a bag of chips. **Black Bo's, 57-61 Blackfriars St., Edinburgh EH1 1NB; 0131 557 6136.**

We spent the next day wandering around the lovely, ominous city. One aspect of British dining I enjoyed the most was the proliferation of baked potato shops. They usually offer several different vegetarian toppings. That afternoon, I happened to have a container of hummus with me that I had bought earlier. I decided to give a hummus topped baked potato a try and it was a delicious discovery. The baked potato shops offered a cheap, easy and filling meal.

We drove to Glasgow that night and explored the city the next day. For the last year I had read about The 13th Note, an all vegan restaurant in Glasgow. I was anxious to see what all the fuss was about. There is nothing as satisfying for a vegan than to walk into a restaurant and be able to choose **anything** you want, instead of trying to figure out what three dishes on the menu might be vegan. Patrick had a Thai curry and I tried the "Cream Cheese" Spinach Dumplings. Both were great, and Patrick, a fry connoisseur said their "spicy" chips were the best he had on the trip. The coffee, complete with frothed soymilk, was so good that I had two cups. This all came to £15.60. One other interesting feature was the debate between communism and capitalism that raged on the bathroom walls (at least the men's room, according to Patrick). If you go, you might also want to check out the fabulous bookstore across the street from the 13th Note - Pulp Fiction. **13th Note, 50-60 King Street, Glasgow G1 5QT Scotland; 0141 553 1638; <www.13thnote.com>.**

Tips, Resources, and Advice

Lodging: We had spent the first half of the trip staying with friends and friends of friends, all of whom were vegetarian, so that part was easy. Many of the places we traveled to were by the seaside, and thus tourist towns. However, it was January and many of the bed and breakfasts were closed for the month. There are many all-vegetarian B & B's that sounded lovely in

my guides, but I wasn't able to check them out. If you are capable of making plans in advance (which I apparently am not), call ahead to guarantee the B & B can cater to you. It seems many are vegetarian or at least veg-friendly. We arrived into some cities rather late and relied on the hotel restaurants. Either they were accommodating or I was too weary to care I was eating another baked potato.

On the road: There were basic vegetarian junk foods at truck stops and motorway rest areas. We discovered Philias Fogg tortilla chips and probably ate our way through a case. If anyone knows where to get them in the US, please let me know. I did find some pre-packaged foods at the rest areas that surprised me. The *Taste of the East Selection Pack* came with 2 onion bhajis, 2 vegetable samosas, and 2 vegetable pakoras. It carried the Vegetarian Society symbol. While greasy, it wasn't bad.

I noticed many packaged foods with a green circle and white V with the text "approved by the Vegetarian Society" on them. I asked John Davis of The Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom and The International Vegetarian Union to explain about the labeling:

There is no strict legal definition, but we have Trading Standards Offices in every part of the country who can prosecute anyone using a false label on any product. Our local office told me they would



consider that labeling something containing fish as vegetarian would be illegal, but it gets more difficult when it comes down to rennet, free range eggs, etc.

The most used symbol is the Vegetarian Society's trademark (see <http://www.vegsoc.org/business>) which is licensed for over 2000 products and is legally protected. It allows for ovo-lacto products but no battery eggs, free range only.

Apart from that anyone can put on a label saying 'suitable for vegetarians' but there are no guarantees other than Trading Standards Offices. It is very common practice as there is such a high percentage of shoppers looking for vegetarian products - all the supermarkets have their own V signs and they are usually reliable, most of them copy VegSoc's definitions very closely. 'Suitable for vegans' is still relatively rare, and will almost certainly be genuine - The Vegan Society licences its logo too.

Difficulties: There might be animal fats in breads and pies. Also check candies, as gelatin(e) is a common ingredient. Some chips (fries) might be cooked in animal fat, so you'll want to check.

There are different words for different food ingredients across the world. In Europe, some food ingredients are noted as "E" numbers. The ones to definitely avoid include:

- E120 - cochineal (red food coloring made from crushed beetles)
- E542 - edible bone phosphate
- E631 - sodium 5'-inosinate
- E901 - beeswax
- E904 - shellac
- E920 - L-cysteine hydrochloride

In addition, the following "E" numbers may be animal derived: 101, 101a, 153, 203, 213, 227, 270, 282, 302, 322, 325, 326, 327, 333, 341a, 341b, 341c, 404, 422, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 470, 471, 472a, 472b, 472c, 472d, 472e, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 481, 482, 483, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 570, 572, 627, and 635.

To read more go to: www.ivu.org/faq/food.html. For information about food ingredients in the US you can order a copy of the *Guide to Food Ingredients* from The Vegetarian Resource Group (see below).

If you have Internet access or can use a computer

at your local library, one of the best resources for vegetarians is The International Vegetarian Union website (www.ivu.org). The Global Directory lists websites and contact information for vegetarian groups around the world. Many of the websites contain restaurant lists and additional information that might be very useful. There are also links to travel bulletin boards where you could post your questions and concerns.

Other good websites for restaurants include www.vegeats.com and www.veg dining.com. www.vegeats.com has a great search feature and I'm always finding new information.

Resources:

Books

Viva! Guide to Vegetarian Brighton By Jo Lacey

Viva! 12 Queen Square, Brighton BN1 3FD, 01273 777688, info@viva.org.uk, www.viva.org.uk

Lists hotels, places to eat, and shops.

Vegetarian London, By Alex Bourke and Paul Gaynor, and **Vegetarian Britain**, By Alex Bourke and Alan Todd

Both by Vegetarian Guides Ltd., 8 Titian House, 18 Nassau Street, London W1N 5RE, England, Tel +44-20-7580 8458, www.vegetarianguides.co.uk, info@vegetarianguides.co.uk

They are currently working on Vegetarian Europe.

Scotland the Green by Jackie Redding

Possibly out of print. This was a friendly, helpful guide to food and lodging in Scotland.

Websites and Organizations

The Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom

Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4QG, 0161 925 2000, info@vegsoc.org, www.vegsoc.org

Founded in 1847, it is considered the oldest vegetarian organization in the world.

The International Vegetarian Union

www.ivu.org, A global directory of vegetarian groups, contacts, history, and information.

The Vegan Society

Donald Watson House, 7 Battle Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN37 7AA, 1424 427393, info@vegansociety.com, www.vegansociety.com, Vegan group in the UK, founded in 1944.

Viva!

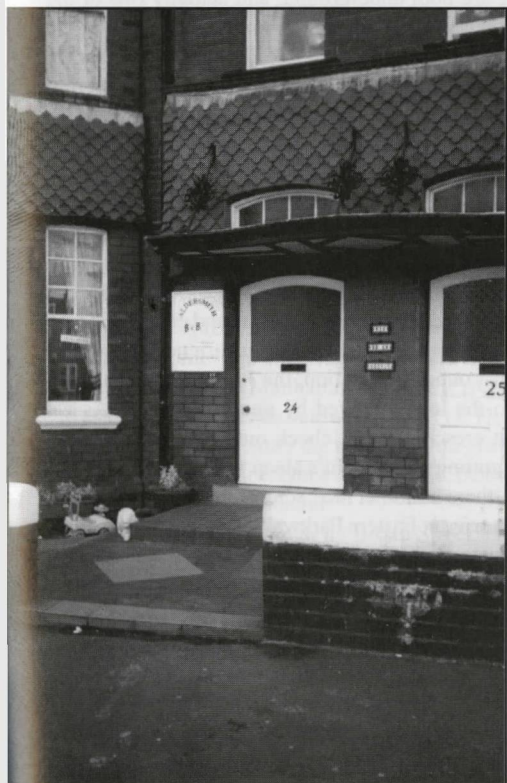
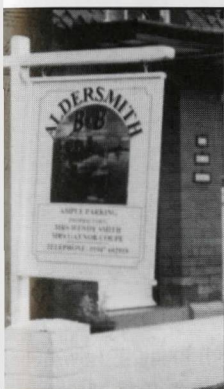
12 Queen Square, Brighton, BN1 3FD, 01273 777688, info@viva.org.uk, www.viva.org.uk, Publishers of Viva!LIFE, a magazine.

Vegan Village

www.veganvillage.co.uk, Restaurants, shops, and lodging in the UK

The Vegetarian Resource Group

PO Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203, www.vrg.org, vrg@vrg.org VRG carries several travel guides and can point you to sources for others you might need. If you have any other travel questions, write VRG and perhaps I can help. ¢



An Atypical Ride Through New York City with Fred Argoff



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When you utter the terms “New York” and “subway” in the same sentence, there are a whole range of images that leap into your head. The concept of sightseeing isn’t usually one of them, but you’d be missing out on a chance to get a look at this city that very few of the millions of tourists who come here annually get to experience.

By way of explanation, the insistent use of the word “subway” isn’t always technically correct. There are several lines around town that are, in fact, elevated (around here, we call them “els,” as opposed to Chicagoans, who refer to their above ground lines as the “L”). All clear now? Very good; just let me set the stage, and we can be off on our adventure.

I’m inviting you along for a ride on one of the oldest els still running in New York. In Manhattan, the line is known as the Nassau Street subway; in Brooklyn, it’s the Broadway el; and for residents of the borough of Queens, the Jamaica el. Officially, however, on the city subway map, you’ll find it listed as the J train. We’ll start our trip at the Jamaica, Queens terminus—that’s a subway station, but if you catch a train at its starting point, you have the best chance of getting the favored spot at the front of the first car. That means you have the fascinating (often bordering on hypnotic) view from the front-facing window.

The first two stops on the line are both underground, and actually two of the newest stations in the city, having opened for service at the end of 1988. Out of the Sutphin Boulevard station, though, we see a light up ahead (1) and begin our ascent to the elevated part of the line (2). The original el in this part of town first went into service in 1888, so when you take the J train, you’re confronting a lot of history.

Much of this line is built along a standard pattern: there are two platforms on opposite sides of the tracks (3). Keep your eyes peeled for the crossover tracks out 111th Street station—that’s a blast from the past! The old Lexington Avenue el, which made its last run in the autumn of 1950, used that crossover at the end of its rush-hour rumble across town.

Elderts Lane station marks the border between Queens and Brooklyn. Just as our train pulls into the station, we’ve crossed the (unmarked) line and entered Brooklyn. The next stop is Cypress Hills, where we’re about to experience one of the most fascinating parts of the trip. Just out of this station, the J makes two consecutive 90-degree turns (4, 5)—one to the left, followed by one to the right. As we round the second turn for arrival at crescent street, check out the house standing right by the tracks. It must be hard getting a full night’s sleep from that bedroom!

Out of Alabama Avenue station, there’s another nice, screeching turn as the tracks pick up Broadway, Brooklyn and we arrive at Eastern Parkway. This is one of the most intricate elevated complexes ever constructed (6) and, as it happens, the only remaining place in New York City where you can transfer between two elevated lines; as we approach the station, you can see the tracks right overhead that carry the Canarsie line (designated as the L train). There’s also a subway line running below ground here—it replaced the original Fulton Street el at the end of the 1930s.

The J now runs in a straight line for the rest of the way across Brooklyn. Our particular train is schedule to make the run as an express, and so there’s a brief lurch to the left as we cross over to the center track. On our approach to Myrtle Avenue (7), there’s more evidence of the system’s history: just above the tracks sits a remaining spur that used to carry the Myrtle Avenue el—the line went out of service



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toward the end of 1969. The Myrtle Avenue/Broadway station has recently been spiffed up with the addition of some stained glass panels. On a sunny day, they're impossible to take your eyes off!

Zippering through the local station on this part of the line (8), we come to Marcy Avenue, the last stop in Brooklyn. At the end of the 19th century, before the Williamsburg Bridge was built, this line ran straight to a terminus at the East River. After the bridge opened in 1903, the river terminal station became a spur line, as most traffic could then run directly into Manhattan. The spur line was closed and demolished just before World War II, and now, our train veers to the right (9) as we advance to the bridge.

Crossing the Williamsburg Bridge is a slow, rumbling affair (10), though the view is incredible. New York doesn't have rivers so wide you can't see the other side; nor does it have mountains that reach up to kiss the sky. What it does have is a cityscape that's pretty well unmatched. Perhaps that's just me as a native New Yorker talking, but come here and see for yourself, and tell me if I'm wrong.

As we reach the Manhattan side of the river, our elevated journey comes to an end as the J line descends below ground (11). That doesn't mean our sightseeing trip is through. Just as we enter the tunnel, if you glance to the left you'll be able to make out a huge, empty space. Once upon a time, that was a terminal for all the trolley lines serving this part of Manhattan.

If you ride the J train to its Broad Street terminus, you'll pass through several stations that make the trip worth your while. There's Bowery station—a strong contender for the title "Least Used Station In The City". There's Chambers Street, with its unusually high ceiling and an absolute forest of square-ish, tiled columns. And there's Fulton Street, where four different subway lines converge. There are enough ramps, tunnels, and staircases at Fulton Street to challenge even the most jaded transit buff.

Now, I ask you: has this been wonderful, or what? Take this same trip, and you'll never be able to think of the city or its subway system in the same way again. Also, I don't need much urging; I could write up another such subway tour again. I'm a confirmed straphanger!

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Prologue 12.1.99

Ed showed up with a plastic New England Comics bag and a card.

"It's in a comics bag," he made sure to emphasize. I nodded. "It was my birthday gift. New England Comics is right down the street. 'Open the card first, dude.'"

"Okay."

Ed was pretty stoked on the birthday card that he had selected for me: the legend "Today you're eight!" over a field of football helmets. I was pretty stoked on it, too. I'm rather a big fan of giving people cards of the wrong occasion as an antidote to the by rote-ness of the whole need to give cards in the first place, if that makes a lick of sense.

"Cool. Thanks, Ed."

"Now the bag!"

I figured that it was going to be something Preacher related. I had introduced Ed to the series last fall, when I moved back to Boston (for the first time), and he plowed right through all of the graphic novels and loose comics at a breakneck pace. As quickly as I had. For Ed's birthday, I had bought him a Jesse Custer action figure, and figured he might return the favor.

I found, instead, a set of strings, a string cutter, some picks... guitar stuff.

"Good thing I called before I came over," Ed said.

Before Ed went back to Worcester for work the weekend before, we had made some tentative plans to get together on my birthday and do something. True to form, he called me up Wednesday. I told him about my birthday-observed/pot luck party on Monday (and how Brendan had passed out sitting up in a kitchen chair), how Jan had had me come over right at midnight to give me my present, an Ovation acoustic/electric. I had been telling Jan how neat it would be to play Superchunk songs in the subway for a long time.

"I was going to get you those Preacher figurines," Ed explained, "but then you told me about the guitar. So I got you the tool kit, dude."

I thanked Ed. I would have never thought of buying that stuff.

"So where do you want to go to dinner?"

"Shit. I don't know. Where do you like?"

"It's your birthday, dude."

"Um... Grasshopper?"

"Cool."

I busted out the guitar, played Ed a few little piddly Superchunk riffs. On his turn, he played entire Bitch Magnet songs back to back. I have a long way to go, I thought, before I will be ready to play in the subway.

Ed and I grabbed Kristina and hopped in Ed's car. Ed fiddled with the ubiquitous sketchy tape deck, which only played one time out of a hundred, it seemed, no matter how much one coaxed and/or pleaded with it. Somehow, though, the equally ubiquitous Elvis Costello tape decided to play and we drove down to the restaurant, finding a parking space not too far from the door. We sat down, ordered, started talking. Kristina bailed after a few minutes.

Some of the topics of discussion that evening, I remember, were downright grim, but did little to blacken my mood. It was my birthday and it felt good to be hanging out with Ed, eating dinner. Birthdays are weird for me. I want people to know that it's a special day for me, but, at the same time, I don't really feel all that comfortable telling people that it's my birthday just to get some kind of reaction out of them. It felt great to have people over for my birthday, but everyone came over a few days before the day itself. Hanging out in Grasshopper was nice. We had both been busy with our respective trips.

Just having a little time to chill out and chat was great.

By the time we got done with our food, it was like nine-ish. The usual drink-at-the-Model-on-Wednesday thing was on, but nine was early. Real early. Nobody gets there 'til after ten, as a general rule. So we hopped in Ed's car and drove to his place in Brighton to hang out for a little bit. The Costello taped flipped over and over and over before Ed gave up and turned on the radio.

Me and Ed and his roommates Ian and Elyse played some PlayStation and smoked cigarettes for a while before we called up a cab to go to the Model. A cab, I thought. Cabs are a luxury for me. I can count the number of times

I've taken one, almost on one hand. When push comes to shove, I'd usually rather walk and save the cash. But there were a bunch of us going down to the bar and it was cold outside. Two dollars each for a little bit of comfort? Well, yeah. Sign me up. We called, went to the landing to wait. Diana came home, parked her car, and decided to join us. The cab came a few minutes later and dropped us off at an almost empty bar. 'Almost' denotes that aside from the usual Wednesday night crew, very few people were there. Pam, already a little in the bag, yelled that it was my birthday with mechanical regularity. She started to sing every few minutes. I felt a little weird, self-conscious. People bought me some drinks and we all talked.

12.2.99

Whenever Fugazi comes around, I go. That's how it's been for ten years. So when Uncle Jay told me that he wanted to get a bunch of people together to drive down to Providence to see them play the day after my birthday, I told him that I'd love to. He bought me a ticket; I busted out their records and listened to them all for the zillionth time. All of the repeated, sometimes chronological, listens confirmed the already firmly cemented theory that the general public catches onto the last Fugazi album by the time the new one comes out. They're generally that far ahead. Every time a new record comes out, people grumble for a little while, but then, a year or three later, the new one comes out and the last one is really rad, dude.

When Uncle Jay told me about the show, he told me that he'd be driving a bunch of people down in Barry, the Slow Fore bus. I asked if there was space and he laughed and told me of course there was, silly. As it turns out, me and Kristina and Dave Stoops and Jamie and Joe and Denise and Ed and Mary and Diana all sat, and comfortably, at that, in the bus, and ate some of the cookies that Miriam had given me for my birthday as Uncle Jay piloted Barry down 95 to Rhode Island for the show. I took my turn up in the front with Jay, smoking and trying to talk over the roar of the little boombox he had hooked up to big speakers. Someone put on 'OK Computer' at some point, which all ten of us agreed on. Diana started singing in a very silly voice and the rest of us followed suit.

Parking in Rhode Island is just no good. We had to drive around the whole city (maybe) a few times before we got a space big enough to accommodate Barry's Herculean HandiVan proportions. Stoops jumped around, hanging onto lampposts and pretty much anything else that he could make his body adapt to on the walk to Lupo's, keeping us all pretty well entertained.

Sketchy bouncers greeted us and took our tickets. We were pushed through the very small admittance area and into the club proper, which seemed a lot more cavernous than I remember. I saw Fugazi twice in

Four Days,

two days in 1996 and the club seemed a lot smaller, more intimate at those shows. I had sandwiched myself right up front during the first one. At the second, my pal Marcia was taking pictures on the side of the stage and saw me, amidst the carnage and press of flailing bodies and literally pulled me out of the mess and over to her photo perch, from which I watched the rest of the show. Perhaps that's why the club seemed so big: it had been a few years since the band had been

Four Cabs

Mike Fournier

smoke and steam rise from the stagelight silhouette of the crowd.

The band rocked, as they always have. On the ride home, we all did the mandatory recap thing, and some people talked about how the band has slowed down a lot in terms of the amount of energy that they give off when they play. A fair assertion, maybe, but given that the band has been chugging along for 12 or 13 years now, I think we can cut them at least a little bit of slack (I can, anyway). I remain convinced that they're one of the best bands right now, period.

Conversation, as it is wont to do, veered off here and there and then started to subside a good bit, given the lateness of the hour. A few of us in the back of Barry remained awake and lively. Pretty much everyone started up, though, when the van hit something in the middle of 95 north with a resounding thump. Jay, in the front, yelled back to all of us that we shouldn't even worry about it, so we didn't.

Several minutes later, we pulled over. Jay told us that Barry was overheating. Jay and then Joe got out of the van to check under the hood and see what was up. Dave, sitting at the table in the back with me, postulated that if it was a problem that pertained to overheating, then perhaps we should get some water "in the big friggin' lake over there" to the right of the van—a lake that was, actually, the ocean. I nodded, yep, and got out with him. We foraged around and found some empty bottles in the back of the bus and hopped over the chainlink fence, with the aid of some trees, and headed down to the ocean. We crossed over the bales of hay that were lined up levee-style and immediately realized their function as we sank into a quagmire of amazingly yucky and stinky mud. Damned if it wasn't a great time, though, as Dave and I sank and almost fell and even managed to get some of the smelly, silty ocean water into the narrow-mouthed soda and juice bottles. We got back the fence and passed the not-full-enough bottles over to Joe, who, in turn, made us a lot happier by giving us empty Dunkin' Donuts coffee cups. We were stoked, man. It was going to be a lot easier to get more water. So Dave and I ran down to the water, mud be damned, and filled the cups up, all the while giggling and talking about how stinky the mud was, how someone must've gone poo there, and got the cups and brought them back to Joe, at the fence, who told us "forget it."

"What?"

"Forget it. It's hoses."

As it turns out, the 'thump' that had jarred everyone had been a piece of metal, which had bounced up and severed the coolant hoses. Joe had handed us the cups and we had bounded down to the water while Jay poured the water in the bottles into the radiator and watched it gush right back out onto the road.

Jay called Triple A on his cell phone while me and Dave walked up the highway a bit to see if we could maybe find a T stop. The prospect of getting the ten of us all home, off the side of 95 was a little bit daunting. Dave and I climbed up this little bridge overpass hill and

by, and we had arrived late enough to miss seeing the Ex play (and well, from what I have been told). I guess the club always seems smaller if you're in the front instead of kinda to the right of the stage, watching

through a natural hallway of trees with very sharp pine needles. We established that it was before midnight and that if it came right down to it, we could take the train back home, as we were not too far from the Savin Hill T stop. Rad.

We walked back, still giddy, singing Jawbreaker songs ('Tour Song,' in particular, seemed pretty appropriate). Diana was walking towards me and Dave, heading a single file line. The tow truck, we

found, was on its way. When it arrived, the operator told us that Barry was way too big to fit on the back of his truck and told us we'd have to call another truck, this time a bigger one, and that Triple A might not even cover the tow.

The train was starting to sound pretty good. I smoked and waited to see what would happen next, keeping an eye out on people's watches and gauging if I still had enough time to walk back up the highway to get the train. Dave called Elizabeth on Jay's cell phone and she said she'd come get us all. All eight of us (Joe had elected to go in the tow truck with Uncle Jay). Diana and Denise said 'fuck that' and managed to wave down a cab within thirty or so seconds, who took us all home for a flat fee with the motor off. I was still giddy with the adventure of the bus the whole way home.

12.3.99

Terry G. Lorber II moved to Boston.
Thank God.

Terry and his pal Ned had been apartment hunting for a little while and even checked out this one place pretty close to here, on Harvard Ave. Turns out, though, that Ned found a place in Cambridge, right near the Somerville border, while Terry was driving to Seattle with Jason Breslau the BHBJRJJ. Terry flew back, he and Ned moved in, and a roar of approval emanated from the city of Boston (okay... from our booth at the Model one Wednesday).

Terry invited me to over to check the place out, and I found it to be pretty rad. Two bedrooms, one big (Ned's) and one not-so-big (Terry's), with a smaller third room as the office/computer room where the two of 'em house their web server. The kitchen and living room are rad and the back porch is big. We won't talk about the trellis that covers (kinda) the heating vent that runs down the ceiling of the hallway, though.

Terry and Ned announced that they were going to be having an 'open house' on this one Friday night, a chance for everyone who hadn't seen the place yet to do so. That was pretty much everyone, I think. They kept the whole thing very low-key, not very much fuss. I think they told me on Monday night, at my birthday observed party, and I made a mental note to go over there.

I called Amanda up and asked if she wanted to go and she said yep, she did. We made plans to get together by way of the bus stop. We were going to catch the 64, get off at Central, and then walk up Prospect to Terry and Ned's place. We agreed on a time and that was that.

I got on the phone and called over there right before it was time to go meet Amanda at the bus stop. I was expecting to get Terry. Ned picked up the phone and told me that Terry had gone back to New Hampshire for the evening because his dad went to the hospital with chest pains.

Whoah.

I told Ned that me and Amanda would be over soon and walked to the bus stop, still a little bit in shock, and told Amanda what was going on. I explained to her that I have known Terry's dad about as long as I have known Terry himself, that he was my Scoutmaster, that

me and Terry and two other guys had gotten our Eagle Scout the same year with Terry's dad at the helm. Then there wasn't really a whole lot to say.

Terry's and Ned's open house, was a little odd. I mean, Terry wasn't there because his dad was in the hospital, which cast a pallor over the whole evening. A few people showed up, saw that there was really no one there, and left. I had some drinks and hung out as best I could. Worried, mostly.

What was supposed to be a lot of fun wasn't because of the circumstances involved. I made the best of it, I guess, and had the best time that I could given that things were so goddamn weird. It wasn't too bad, I guess... we stayed late enough so that taking a train or a bus home wasn't an option. Me and Amanda called a cab up. I went downstairs to smoke and wait for it while she hung out with Ned. The cab drove by, saw me, backed up. I told them my friend was upstairs. I ran up three flights and collected Amanda. We got in and told the driver where to take us.

12.4.99

The catering season, from what I understand, is completely seasonal. And December, as we all know, 'tis the season. All four companies that I work for were calling me to see if I could work on this day or that day, whatever. As it turns out, I had scheduled a lot of my month of December in the middle of November, when the staffing coordinator of company #4 had called to see if I wanted any jobs for that week then went on to tell me that December was looking pretty crowded and was I available? I told him I was and the whole month got packed in pretty fast.

It was a nice contrast from the end of November. The few weeks before Thanksgiving were fairly busy, then things went dead for a few weeks, seemingly in preparation for the onslaught of jobs that were coming in December. There were a few weeks where I didn't work. I didn't mind, really, because I knew that I was going to be doing a whole lot of stuff in the weeks to come.

My first job was in December was going to be on the second. The day after I scheduled it, Uncle Jay told me that Fugazi was going to be playing. A no-brainer there. I called and cancelled.

After that, my first job in December was going to be on the fourth, a Saturday. A call on my machine when I woke up, though, told me otherwise. The job's attendance numbers had waned to such a low level that the number of staff working the party had to be cut. I was one of those people.

So I hung out, savoring the time that I had to myself before the barrage of nine-hour holiday parties that I knew were coming faster than I could really do a damn thing about. I walked around Kenmore Square and on down to Newbury Street, window-shopping, picking up a few of the Christmas gifts I had yet to buy.

I got home, had some dinner, decided that I would go on over to Kendall to see Jan at work.

Sometimes there's nothing like a good long train ride. It was one of those nights as I sat and read my book, transferring over at Park Street for the Red Line. I had a good time hanging out by myself.

I walked to the restaurant, sat down at the bar, and continued to read for a while. Jan came out and beamed at me. We went in the back to have a smoke. We each had a beer, too. Shortly thereafter, it was time to go. Jan's car was in the shop that day because someone had driven by and clipped her door in Brookline one Monday when she was going to do shiatsu at her studio. We took a cab back to her place, all snuggled up against the cold. ç

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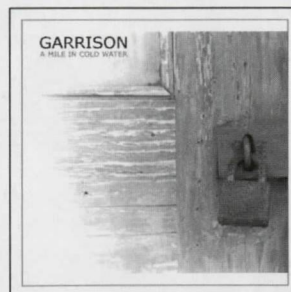
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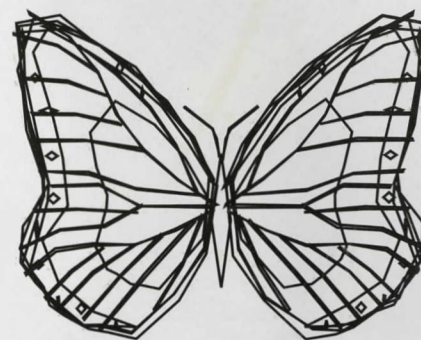
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