

WINNER "Best New Title" in Utne Reader's Alternative Press Awards!

New Perspectives on Politics, Culture, Media and Life

clamor

February/March 2001

The Global Wealth Gap:
Who Wins With International Debt?

Starhawk
on Activism and Spirituality
Ben Bagdikian
On Media

Biking in the US:
Portland and Beyond

Behind The Statistics:
Working Within The Prison Industrial Complex

Plus: Was Abe Lincoln a Racist? • Growing Up In Bahrain
James De La Vega • Ricanstruction • The Cancer Racket
The Case of The West Memphis Three • and more!

\$4 US / \$6 CANADA



www.clamormagazine.org



LUNGFISH

Records & Stuff We Sell:

- 124. NATION OF ULYSSES The Embassy Tapes
Nine 4-track songs from
1992, never released * (C)
- 123. Q AND NOT U 'No Kill No Beep Beep' * (C)
- 122. FARAQUET 'The View From this Tower' * (C)
- 121. BLUETIP 'Polymer' * (C)
- 120. FUGAZI 'Instrument' soundtrack - 18 songs * (C)
- 119. LUNGFISH 'Necrophones' * (C)
- 118. ONE LAST WISH 12 songs from 1986, CD
never released. (D)
- 117. LUNGFISH 'The Unanimous Hour' * (C)
- 80. FUGAZI 'Instrument' - a film/video by Jem Cohen and
Fugazi. 115 min. Available in VHS & PAL video (F)
- 116. BLUETIP 'Join Us' * (C)
- 112. SMART WENT CRAZY 'Con Art' * (C)
- 110. FUGAZI 'End Hits' * (C)
- 40. MINOR THREAT CD has every song! (E)
- 14. DISCHORD 1981 Teen Idles, Minor Threat
SOA, GI*, Youth Brigade
CD ONLY (D)

Price Guide, including postage, in U.S. \$:

		U.S.A.	SURFACE & CANADA	Airmail
(A)	7"	3.50	4.50	6.50
(C)	LP	9.00	11.00	14.00
(D)	CD	10.00	11.00	13.00
(E)	MaxiCD	12.00	13.00	15.00
(F)	Video	18.00	20.00	23.00

We accept Visa / MC / Discover - Call (703) 351-7507 or E-mail or Fax us
http://www.dischord.com e-mail: dischord@dischord.com
Stores: Let's deal direct! Write us or fax us at (703) 351-7582

Illustrated CATALOG!
please send one US \$ or
3 US Stamps or 4 IRC's.



For a plain but complete
LIST of records, send
us a US stamp or an IRC

3819 BEECHER ST. NW, WASH., D.C. 20007-1802

DROWNINGMAN ROCK AND ROLL KILLING MACHINE

REV 96 LP/CD



THE EXPLOSION - STEAL THIS • REV 98 7"/CDEP

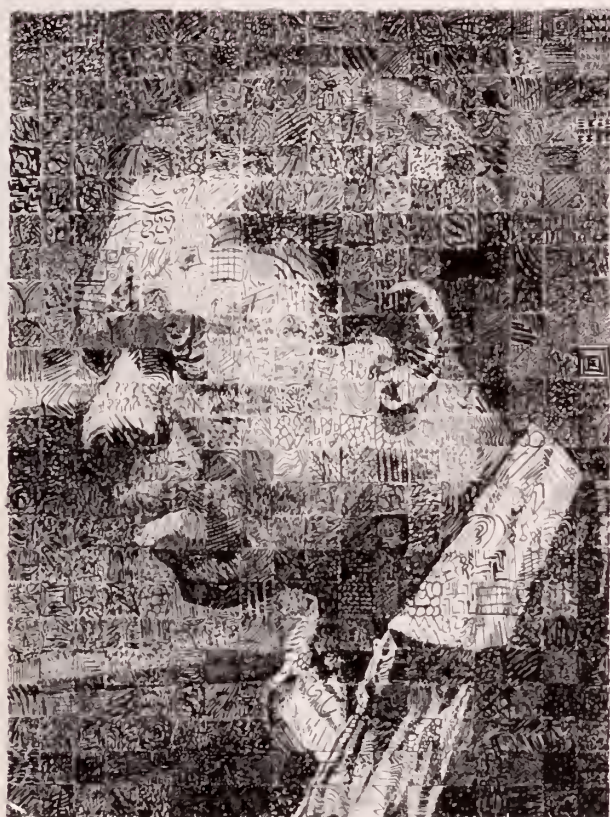


RIGHT BRIGADE - S/T
REV 101 • LP/CD

REVELATION RECORDS P.O. BOX 5232, HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA 92615-5232 • WWW.REVELATIONRECORDS.COM • ORDER DIRECT: 714-842-7584

"I think the main thing a musician would like to do is to give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of and senses in the universe."

-John Coltrane



We think CLAMOR Magazine paints a picture of the world that is rarely found in other magazines. Why is this? Because every other month, we publish the stories, opinions, ideas, and art of everyday people who make this world the vibrant work-in-progress that it is.

However, this approach does not guarantee us success in the mainstream magazine world, and we rely on subscribers and donations to continue publishing CLAMOR.

If you enjoy reading this magazine, please consider purchasing a special sponsor subscription for yourself or a friend. With your help, we can continue publishing a magazine that is relevant, interesting and necessary in a time of dumbed-down mainstream media.

With your sponsor subscription, you will not only receive six issues of truly independent media, you will also receive a 8.5 x 11 mosaic print of John Coltrane done by the artist Nino Russo that is suitable for framing.

Thanks for your support!

return this coupon to start your sponsor subscription and receive a free Coltrane print!

☐ Consider me a supporter of independent media!

Enclosed is my payment for a sponsor subscription:

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$200 ☐ \$_____

Please send my subscription and "Coltrane" print to:

name _____

address _____

email (optional) _____

Return this coupon to: CLAMOR MAGAZINE
PO BOX 1225
BOWLING GREEN OH 43402

EDITORS

Jen Angel • Jason Kucsma

PROOFREADERS

Tony Cavallario, Hal Hixson, Cate O'Brien, Scott Puckett, Kristen Schmidt, Mike Wendling

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Jen Angel • Jason Kucsma

COVER PHOTO

Location: Jos, Nigeria
Photographer: Cate O'Brien

ADVERTISING

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

PRINTING:

Dartmouth Printing Co., Hanover, NH
P: 603-643-2220 / F: 603-643-5408

WEB DESIGN:

Derek Hogue

MISC ILLUSTRATIONS:

Nate Powell, Shawn Granton, Mat Defiler

CLAMOR is a bi-monthly magazine.

Single copies are \$4 ppd and 6 issue subscriptions are \$18 ppd in the US (Outside of the US single issues are \$6 and 6-issue subscription is \$25 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, 2729 Mission Street Suite 201, San Francisco, CA 94110-3131
info@bigtoppubs.com

Clamor is also available through these fine distribution outlets: AK Press, Armadillo, Gordon & Gotch, Ingram, Lumberjack, Media Solutions, Milligan, Newborn, RPM, Small Changes, Stickfigure, Tower, Tree of Knowledge, and Ubiquity.

This issue of CLAMOR marks our one year anniversary, and we are both a bit overwhelmed. When we set out to create CLAMOR, we had this nebulous idea of what we wanted and had a difficult time explaining our concept to people. One year later, we think it is safe to say that a good number of you have picked up on the idea that CLAMOR is by, for and about all of us. It is sometimes confusing in its diversity and elusive in identifying one common ideology. It's a lot like the real world.

As we go to press today, Time-Warner and AOL finalize a merger that makes a media outlet like CLAMOR all the more important—a magazine that provides a thorn in the side of media monopolies. We are witnessing the ever greater consolidation of mainstream media right before our eyes. The control of media, and its link to democracy, is an issue at the heart of independent media, and one of the foremost media critics, Ben Bagdikian, wrote the seminal work on this topic, *The Media Monopoly*. Though the first edition of this book debuted many years ago, the concepts today are increasingly relevant, which is why we've decided to feature an interview with Ben in this issue.

As you've come to expect from CLAMOR, this issue also includes personal testimonies from people about what their lives are like and the issues they are facing. We have an interview with Alano Baez of the band Ricanstruction, who talks about the Puerto Rican struggle for liberation and independence, culturally and politically, as well as Hal Hixson's experience travelling to Nigeria with a strong sense of self-awareness that informs an essay asking us to reconsider exactly how international debt affects developing countries. We also continue to celebrate culture and diversity by featuring interviews with bicyclists in Oregon and Florida, as well thoughts on sexuality, communal living, and masturbation, and working in prisoners.

We hope that this will be the first of many anniversaries, and we want to thank friends and supporters near and far who make this magazine possible. Please remember that our contributors are our readers, and we invite you to share your experiences and ideas with us.

Thanks for reading.

Jen Angel

from
the
editors

[economics]

Seeds of Poverty and Forests of Wealth 9

Hal Hixson

Some Thoughts About Fish and Bananas 13

Andrew McLeod

The Poor Who Are With Us 14

Charlotte Green Honigman-Smith

[people]

The Lives Behind The Statistics 16

Sarah Danforth

The Call For Executive Clemency of Leonard Peltier 19

Greg Fuchs

Night of Power 20

Mumia Abu-Jamal and Ryan James

Wading For Nothing 24

Emily Heiple and Nate Powell

Was Abraham Lincoln a Racist? 27

Ron Sakolsky

[sexuality & relationships]

**A Pair of Tits, The Big Nurse
and the Balance of Power 32**

Jane Graham

I'd Rather Masturbate Than Copulate 35

Charisma Lee

Working on Sexuality in Community Living 36

Bob Banner



[media]

The Media: And Then There Were Six 40

David Barsamian with Ben Bagdikian

Radio Daze: FolkScene and LA's KPFK 44

Michael Amitin

Re/Education 46

Art Middleton

Hollywood and the Big Business of Propping Up Nation-States 47

Marshall Beggs

[politics]

Can You Trust Your Doctor? 50

Gavin Phillips

Ricanstruction: The Politics of Music 55

Richard Gilman-Opalsky with Alano Baez

The Political and the Sacred 60

Yael Grauer with Starhawk

Deschooling the University 64

Sunfrog

[places]

Satan and the West Memphis Three 68

Sean Carswell

Biting the Hand that Fed Me 72

Guilty Expat

[culture]

Words as Weapons 78

Greg Fuchs and ¡Zapatasos!

More People On Bikes 82

John Gerken with The Bike Club in Portland, Oregon

Biking Florida 86

Travis Fristoe

Ida & Low 90

Mike Taylor



Letters

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

Clamor,

...As for feedback on the latest issue I'm still very much blown away each time. The overall quality and diversity of the writers and stories is a major plus. I'm partial to the economics and politics but usually read most everything. The piece in this issue by Scott L. Indrisek was excellent ("We Have The Facts And We're Voting Undecided: Progress And Poverty In An American College Town" Dec00/Jan01). He sounds as if where he's at in his writing is where I aspire to be in the future, I plan on getting in touch with him soon. The continuation of Bob Helms's Philly anarchist history is exhaustive (Anarchists In Medicine and Pharmacy: Philadelphia 1889-1930" Dec00/Jan01). A few friends and myself actually got to go on the exact tour he speaks of in this story and I was floored. This guy is a very valuable asset to the anarchist community who I'm sure will go on to write some amazing books in the future. But really with the exception of the Star wars/WTO piece (I've Got A Bad Feeling About This" Dec00/Jan01) that I always knew was coming I enjoyed everything. You folks are providing a great resource to so many and everyone continues to talk about *CLAMOR* on my travels.

Greg Wells
Richmond, VA

Clamor(ous) Comrades,

Thank you for sending me an issue of your magazine. I loved it. I love the concept: become the media!. Reminds us that change is possible when we act; when we choose to participate in the democratic process, thus *become* the media, *become* the political leaders of this country, *become* the makers of history. As Cesar E. Chavez put it, "Si se puede!" It can happen!

Mario A. Rocha
Soledad, CA

Clamor,

I first want to say how truly pleased I am to have been published in your magazine. I gave my parents a copy of the issue for Christmas and there was just a little more respect when they saw me in a "real" magazine. So thank you for all the work you have been doing to amplify our voices. I sent out little postcards to a bunch of friends telling them to go hunt down this fabulous magazine, not just because I had an article in it, but because it is the only magazine I have been stimulated, inspired, genuinely and deeply excited by in years.

Libby
the Pacific Northwest

Clamor,

I started reading *CLAMOR* recently cover to cover, and I've been pleased with your magazine. I'm impressed with the vastness of subject matter and written voices. Usually there is just one or two articles in a magazine that interest me, or it's more a visual experience (i.e. photography or illustrations). With *CLAMOR* I'm excited to read one article right into the next and so-on. Last weekend I sent away for a subscription and I haven't subscribed to a magazine since I was in high school (Thrasher!). A mighty fine magazine. Keep on rockin'.

Steeb Russell
Bellingham, WA

Hi Jason and Jen,

Hey, congrats on the new issue. As usual, it looks and reads great. Glad to see Sunfrog in there—loved his Idapalooza piece ("Folks Up In Tennessee" Dec00/Jan01). I've been to some of their gatherings and they're a hoot. The Vietnam spread ("Spitting Image" Dec00/Jan01)

was excellent, especially the review. They guy's a good writer although the section he disliked the most is the one I thought was the best. It answers why people do what they do, even when it's not in their own best interest. There's a screwed up section in the Q&A, though. At the top right of p. 41, his answer continues in ital right after my question without a break so it's hard to realize they're separate. Then the next section starts without a question. Did I screw that up or did you? We're probably going to print it in the FE and I want to make sure where the error is. Thanks.

Talk to you,
Peter Werbe
Detroit, MI

Clamor,

In the fifth issue, I was amazed by the things Martin of Los Crudos (Where Do We Go From Here?" Oct/Nov 00) had to say about DIY; truly inspiring. The talent that most of *CLAMOR*'s contributors display has been a great source of motivation for myself. It helps to find meaning in reading, studying and writing—which has been hard for me to find in the past. Thanks for all the worthwhile information you have given me through *CLAMOR*.

Carpe Diem,
Johan Van der Auwera
Mechelen, Belgium

Clamor,

Let me just say that I have been extremely impressed with *CLAMOR* thus far. *CLAMOR* is a welcome addition to the newsstands. I don't know if you all ever saw *LIP*, which was put out by folks in Chicago and had a similar high-quality look to it, but *CLAMOR* seems to really be picking up where they left off. Hope the new year brings you much success. My sub is in the mail (really), and I

A Few Notes on Advertising

As *CLAMOR* grows and more attention is being paid to the people that participate in making *CLAMOR* what it is (both readers and contributors), it is likely that advertisers will begin approaching us with "propositions we can't refuse." After all, a magazine pops up out of nowhere and gets hundreds of subscriptions and sells thousands of copies on the newsstand in its first year? Savvy marketers will, no doubt, want to get involved in what we have going on. Because of this, we wanted to outline our stance on advertising in *CLAMOR* so you all know where we stand on things.

Of course we'd rather print a magazine without any ads. And while there are magazines out there that do forego advertising and subsist on grants and donations made accessible by their non-profit status, *CLAMOR* is not in that camp right now. We have to rely on subscribers, advertising and newsstand sales to keep this magazine afloat. Two of these elements are invisible to you as you read *CLAMOR*, but the advertising is definitely right there in plain sight. We do try to make sure our advertisers offer something that will interest our readers. However, we do not want people to misconstrue our placement of an ad as an editorial endorsement of the products, services or ideas offered by a given advertiser. And while we actively seek out independent businesses to advertise in *CLAMOR*, the budgets of many of these businesses is so small that they often can't take a chance on what they see as an "unknown" magazine like *CLAMOR*. What we're left with is a choice between allowing a corporate advertiser to invest money in advertising in *CLAMOR* and paying for *CLAMOR* with fewer ads, or printing a lot of small ads for rates that hardly pay for themselves. Don't worry, you won't find ads for smokes, booze or cars in *CLAMOR*, but we're not in a financial position to refuse an ad from a corporate advertiser right now. Hell, all this talk could be moot considering the content of *CLAMOR* automatically turns off a lot of advertisers. We can hear it now, "We at Globex would love to advertise in *CLAMOR*, but all this talk about how capitalism isn't working isn't really good for business. Could you tone it down a bit?"

would be very interested in contributing content, especially on issues of race (since that is what I mostly address in my work), if you are interested.

Take care
Tim Wise
Association for White Anti-Racist Education
(AWARE)
Nashville, Tennessee
tjwise@mindspring.com

Clamor,

I got my mom to buy *CLAMOR* today so now she's on the bandwagon. She needs a little clamor in her life anyway. also-I enjoyed the cop/crowd article. all too familiar with cop techniques after N30 and the one year anniversary (we thought we lost andrew to the king county jail that night but he resurfaced at about 1 am).

Themba Lewis
Portland, OR

Corrections:

In a piece reflecting on the protests at the DNC in Los Angeles in the Dec00/Jan01 issue, the title "Anticipations and Preparations: A Weekend Journal from LA Protests at the DNC" should have read "Journal of a Green Hornet: Tales and Thoughts on Organizing at the DNC"

Contact information for Beth Barnett (author of "The City Life of Fake Meat," Dec00/Jan01) and Eric Zass ("Media Alliance versus the National Association of Broadcasters," Dec00/Jan01) was accidentally omitted from the contributor pages. They can be reached via *CLAMOR*.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Talk to people who run businesses or work in organizations or on projects that you think are really worthwhile and who would benefit reaching a readership of insightful, pro-active, free-thinking individuals. Let them know about *CLAMOR* magazine as a possible place for them to reach a lot of great people. Or drop us a line to tell us who we should contact and we'll send them sample copies with our extremely reasonable advertising rates. Thanks



clamor contributors

Michael Amitin (p. 44) is a free-lance writer for magazines and newspapers, with recent articles published in *New Times L.A.* and *Wildlife Conservation*. An honorary member of the sore optimists club, Michael's amuse mints include thrashing about on an open-tuned cuatro (a ten string guitar from Puerto Rico) and flat-back mandolin. He can be be harangued at aspace@ix.netcom.com or 12437 Trail Four, Kagel Canyon, CA 91342

Bob Banner (p. 36) is a writer and student of Buddhism, Sufism and transpersonal psychology. He has written *In Search of Conspiracy: A Novel, Fucking The Pillow & other Real Stones from the Sexual Battlefield*, *Waking Up & other Essays about Life on the Fringe* and has edited *Men Waking Up: An Anthology of Vitally Important Writings*. He has also been writing a book to be called *Waking Up? A Perilous and Joyous Journey in Community Living* about his experiences in psychospiritual communities for seven years. He has written for *Loving More*, *UFO Magazine*, *New Dimensions*, *Adbusters*, *New Age Journal*, *Perceptions*, *Sacred Fire*, *Critique*, *Women's Press*, and others. He can be reached at 805-773-8560 or at 357 Castaic, Shell Beach, CA 93449 or email: bobbanne@eworld.com

David Barsamian (p. 40) operates Alternative Radio, a weekly one-hour public affairs program that is offered free to all public radio stations in the U.S., Canada, Europe, South Africa, Australia and on Radio for Peace International (short wave). He can be reached at PO Box 551, Boulder, CO 80306, (800) 444.1977, ar@orci.com or www.alternativeradio.org.

Marshall Beggs (p. 47) is a 25 year old student finishing his BA in English (w/ Political Science minor) and is planning on becoming a teacher. He has become deeply interested in politics recently, particularly regarding global issues and anarchism. In the past he has been involved in construction, tree-planting and the lumber industry. While he votes as far left as possible, he thinks representative democracy is, largely, a sham. Real change can only occur by influencing people's minds, and this is a task he hopes to achieve through writing. He dedicates this pursuit to his father, who first taught him the value of challenging illegitimate authority. He can be reached at mbeggs@anarchist.com or at Box 552, Gold River BC, Canada V0P 1G0

Sean Carswell (p. 68) is the author of the novel *Drinks For The Little Guy* and publisher of the zine *Talk Story*. He spends way too much time reading left wing literature and watching movies he checks out from the library. You can reach him at yco@aol.com, gorskyc@aol.com or PO Box 320504, Cocoa Beach, FL 32932.

Sarah Danforth (p. 16) lives in New Orleans and is still trying to figure it all out. She is currently looking for the appropriate hammer to smash the system. She can be reached at sarahdanforth@hotmail.com.

Travis Fristoe (p. 86) doesn't know what to do with his life. But you can still communicate via PO Box 13077 Gainesville, FL 32604-1077 for zines (\$3ppd), a comic (\$1) or a plain ol' letter.

Greg Fuchs (p. 78) works with the New York City Independent Media Center. He exhibited photography at OUMBA in Fall 2000 and had work in *A New American Landscape* at Bushwick Studios in 1999. He is the author of *Came Like It Went!* (B.O. Books, Washington, D.C. 1999) and *Uma Ternura* (Canvas and Companhia, Portugal, 1998).

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

Jane Graham (nee Shag Stamp) (p. 32), aka Minx Grill, is a writer, performer, zine maker and voyeur from the north of England relocated to Copenhagen, Denmark, who hopes to get no.9 of *Shag Stamp* out sometime this year. Amongst many other writing projects. Contactable at minxjane@yahoo.com

Shawn Granton (p. 68) just recently moved to the San Francisco area, deciding to give up the benefits of practical living in his home state of Connecticut for the out-of-control rents of the Golden Gate. So far, he has managed to avoid living in a cardboard box in the park, but just barely. You can help Shawn avoid that predicament by sending him a dollar for his self-published comic *TEN FOOT RULE* or two dollars for the MODERN INDUSTRY anthology. He can be reached at 110 Pacific Ave #296 San Francisco, CA 94111 or shawntr@hotmail.com. Or better yet don't send him any money, the bastard probably deserves destitution.

Yael Grauer (p. 60) is a compulsive writer and puts out a zine called *Starlight* when she feels like it. She's also an environmental and social activist, and facilitates workshops on counter military recruiting, and on overcoming sexism (and other forms of oppression) in various political movements. She likes cooking, riding her bike, travelling, hugging trees and looking for the faeries. She sleeps sometimes, too. You can reach her at Shimer College, PO Box 500, Waukegan IL 60079, yael@dojo.tao.ca or starlightdove@hotmail.com, <http://www.tao.ca/~yael>

Charlotte Green Honigman-Smith (p. 14) is a writer and activist living in San Francisco. Her writing has appeared in a weird assortment of publications ranging from *Jewish Currents* to *Alice* and she is currently working on a book about the future of Jewish feminism. For more information on her multiple projects, check out www.geocities.com/yiddishmaydl

Guilty Expat (p. 72) would like to hear from anybody who has spent anytime in Bahrain or has comments on the article. contact via: guiltyexpat@yahoo.com

Emily Heiple (p. 24) is a Little Rock, Arkansas native who is currently residing in Edinburgh, Scotland. She writes fiction and juggles work as a grassroots community organizer in Little Rock and as an educator for the Mothers in Prison, Children in Crisis program for several prisons in the state. She is currently putting the finishing touches on her next book *Playing Too Rough in Sunday's Shoes*, and plotting a return to graduate school someday sooner or later, once she finishes romping across the fertile European hills. She is also a cast member of the Arkansas based sketch comedy show *Fun and Games*. She can be contacted at ehype33@hotmail.com, or 5522 Stonewall Rd, Little Rock AR 72225

Hal Hixson (p. 9) is a student, musician and writer with a strong interest in African affairs. He is currently living and working in Columbus, Ohio and is anticipating entering graduate school in the near future. He can be reached at hixsonfour@yahoo.com

Ryan James (p. 20) is a journalist and activist from Toronto. For six years, he created the comic book series *One-Way Glass*. Currently he's working on a 230-page comic book biography on US political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the MOVE organization. His *CLAMOR* contribution is adapted from writings by Mumia Abu-Jamal. It's an excerpt from the biography, which is set to be finished within a year. In the meantime, Ryan James can be reached at Shock to the System, RPO Spadina West, PO Box 67527, Toronto, ON M5T 3B8, Canada; or at ryan_kj@hotmail.com.

A lot of people like to tell **Charisma Lee** (p. 35) that she's weird. Although she'd like everyone else to think otherwise, it's rather true. She drinks insane amounts of rootbeer and often says she's moving to exotic locales like New Jersey. Send pez dispensers and Star Wars toys to: PO Box 480692, Denver CO 80248.

Andrew McLeod (p. 13) lives in Olympia, Washington, where he is trying to wean himself of his bad dietary habit of "if-I-can't-see-it-it-isn't-there" freeganism. He has a particular weakness for maple bars. Scold him for his hypocrisy at amcl@iww.org.

Art Middleton (p. 46) lives in Lawrence MA where he makes vague comments about complex things and wanders around a lot. To share ideas, ask questions, get a zine, or hangout if you're passing through please write- cornelius_com@hotmail.com.

Cate O'Brien (p. 9) is a photographer and writer living in Charleston, South Carolina. She spent five of her formative years in Jos, Nigeria and is looking forward to a life dedicated to humanitarian aid in Africa. She can be reached at catimaluda@yahoo.com

Richard Gilman Opalsky (p. 55) studies philosophy at one school, while teaching philosophy at another school. "I like to play 'musical activism' with my comrades, counting down to putsch. And I spend my time with Robyn (human), Spartacus (small, squishy, orange cat) and Ramona Africa (chubby, squirming, caramel cat).... Struggling to transform thought into action." E-mail to thoughtandaction@yahoo.com

Gavin Phillips (p. 50) has travelled extensively in his mid-20's. He has an eclectic insatiable curiosity and constantly questions accepted wisdom. He loves writing, books, movies, comedy (he does stand-up), teaching, tennis and most of all, he does not take himself too seriously. It all comes down to passion and humor. He can be reached care of *CLAMOR*

Nate Powell (p. 24) lives and flutters around various towns in the Little Rock, Arkansas area. He's a self-publisher who does many many titles, including the current series *Walkie Talkie*. He sulks down the city streets after a scarring three years at School of Visual Arts in New York City, where he got a stinky bachelor's degree in cartooning and a bucketful of bitterness to soil his fuzzy visage. He moonlights from time to time as an art program director for the local Association for Retarded Citizens, as a cast member on the experimental sketch comedy show *Fun and Games* (www.funandgamescomedyshow.com), as a part of several regional musical outfits, and greatly enjoys traversing thousands of miles to hug near-strangers. He can be reached at soophiebones@hotmail.com, or 7205 Geronimo, North Little Rock AR 72116

ailecia ruscin (p. 13) is an american studies grad student at the university of kansas in lawrence. she writes a personal zine called *alabama grrrl* and keeps busy doing radical community organizing. she is available to do photography work for small zines. ailecia@hotmail.com

Ron Sakolsky (p. 27) has co-edited three books: *Gone to Croatia: Origins of North American Drop Out Culture* (with James Koehline), *Sounding Off: Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution* (with Fred Ho), and *Seizing The Airwaves: A Free Radio Handbook* (with Stephen Quinifer). Most recently, he has written a lengthy introduction to Vachel Lindsay's utopian visionary novel, *The Golden Book of Springfield*. Soon to be published is an anthology of US Surrealist writings which he has edited under the title of *Surrealist Subversion*. As a professor on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Springfield, he currently teaches such courses as "Anarchy and Social Change," "Zine Culture," "Alternative Radio," "The Utopian Imagination," and "Music and Resistance." He can be reached care of *CLAMOR*

Sunfrog (p. 64) is a writer, activist, father, collage-ist, dreamer, anarcho-commune-ist. He started teaching writing because it seemed like more fun than the other part time jobs he'd held since settling in rural Tennessee in 1996. He publishes his own zine *Black Sun* and his recent book is *Utopian Prospects, Communal Projects*. Contact him at sunfrog@hotmail.com

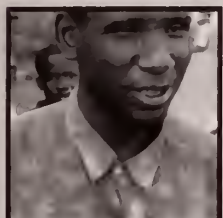
Mike Taylor (p. 90) often takes on too much responsibility yet when granted 'free' time, paces about, making grumbling noises and grinding his teeth. He can be reached care of *CLAMOR*

Seeds of Poverty and Forests of Wealth:

A Light Analysis of International Wealth Inequities

by Hal Hixson

photos by Cate O'Brien



...and in his determination of what he needs he must be governed to a great extent by the gravity of the needs of others.

Thomas Merton - *New Seeds of Contemplation*

What do we need? How do we determine what are our basic needs and what are luxuries? Once we do this on a personal level, how can we transfer these decisions to a national or even an international level? How can we ensure that the basic needs of every person on earth are met?

[economics]



Obviously, these questions are hypothetical, since it would take the participation of a high percentage of the population of the world before any real redistribution of resources would take place. The goal of wealth redistribution seems even more far-fetched when we consider the tight grasp with which wealthy powers hold on to their fortunes. And when we add that the gap between the rich and the poor of the world is growing at an exponential rate, the potential for change seems drastically out of reach.

This article seeks to illustrate the vastness of this global wealth gap and, through the use of various economic indicators, show that there really are only a few who sit atop a mountain of money at the expense of a suffering majority. This inequality will be further explored through an analysis of the factors that encircle and contribute to it, such as the massive debts burdening developing nations and the increasing reluctance of the West to respond to emergencies in the developing world. Specific consideration will be given to the economic relationship between the United States and Sub-Saharan Africa, a dichotomy that clearly expresses the magnitude of the gap. Through these various observations, a picture of the economic inequity in the world will hopefully emerge and, with it, some possible steps toward its remedy.

Foundations

It is always interesting to note the origins of an argument and the foundations on which it stands. The seeds that grew into this article came from several sources, all of which moved my thoughts toward the desire to write an analysis of the current international economic milieu. The initial inspiration came as I milled my way through a mass of African children, their small hands grabbing mine as a multitude of tiny heads bobbed along. In January 2000, I was in Jos, Nigeria, being led by a team

of missionary doctors through the narrow streets of "Blind Town," a subsection of a city that is a virtual sea of hunger and want. Here, first-hand, I saw the realities that people in developing nations face in the shadow of the unprecedented success of global capitalism. And as I sat through the 16-hour plane ride from the heat of West Africa to the crisp chill of Midwest America, the divide between the richest and the poorest of the world's populations took rigid form in my mind.

The second source of motivation was a National Public Radio commentary that aired around July 4, 2000. The commentator, Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor and editor of *The American Prospect*, sought to let a gust of air out of the bulbous red-white-and-blue economic balloon that is the United States by pointing out that though it has become the richest and most powerful nation on earth, America's altruistic impulses are most certainly waning: "Independence Day is a great occasion to celebrate our nation's greatness, but if we think that we're really independent of the rest of the world and won't suffer the long-term effects of global poverty, we're not nearly as great or as smart as we think we are" (Reich, U.S. Gives, 2000). As fireworks cracked and millions of flags flew, I once again thought about the enormous economic gulf that separates America from the rest of the world.

The third and most direct impetus for the construction of this analysis was a single sentence, a portion of which provides the opening quotation for this piece. They are the words of Thomas Merton, monk, activist and poet, and they speak to the central theme of this article—indeed, they speak to a fundamental mandate of life, a principle that should inform any action. But Merton's words do not simply demand a compassion for other people. They instead require that we take others' needs into account when we determine how much we ourselves need. So, in turn, these words

[economics]

not only condemn the proliferation of poverty but also the acceptance and glorification of gluttony. This idea is, of course, central to any criticism of abundant opulence, but the way in which Merton phrases the thought cuts right to the center of greed and leaves us to justify our rapacity in the eyes of the great equalizer. And so, from these collective "seeds of contemplation," gathered over many months, grew the following discussion and all its subsequent conclusions.

Basics of Distribution Inequities

It seems logical that if we want to look at the distribution of wealth in the world, we should begin by looking at the extreme ends to the spectrum. Of course, at the top of the heap is America, a country that has an economy that is growing at a faster rate than any other time in its history. In fact, in the past twenty years, the wealth of America grew from \$7 trillion to \$32 trillion, a rate that exceeded federal expenditures by 400 percent (Reich, *It's the Year 2000 Economy*, 2000).

This is a staggering statistic, but when you consider that not only is America the richest country on earth, but its internal distribution of wealth is wildly disproportionate, you begin to appreciate the conclusion that it is truly a tiny few who control the majority of the world's wealth. To illustrate this disparity further, consider that the richest 20 percent of Americans have incomes that have risen twice as fast as those of the middle 20 percent while the average annual income of the poorest 20 percent has actually dropped from \$10,000 in 1997 to its current level of \$8,800 (Reich, *It's the Year 2000 Economy*, 2000). As the richest members of the richest country on earth are getting richer faster, the poorest members of the richest nation on earth are getting poorer. Now, if you throw the rest of the world into the equation, the distance between the top (the richest 20 percent of Americans) and the bottom (the poorest of the developing world) is nearly too great to fathom.

In relation to the rest of the world, America is the economic superpower. With its population comprising only five percent of the world total, America produces 27 percent of the world's total economic output (Reich, *U.S. Gives*, 2000). This leaves 73 percent of the wealth to be divided among the remaining 95 percent of the world's population and of course, this is not distributed evenly. In fact, the share delegated to the poor of the world is slowly dwindling. In the past decade per capita income has dropped in 80 nations, and 20 percent of the world's population live in degrading poverty, each member of this bracket struggling to survive on less than \$1 per day (Bekele, 1999). And as this substantial population of the world is plunged further into poverty, the West continues to turn its back. In the past ten years the proportion of wealth spent

by the West on humanitarian aid has gone down by 30 percent (Oxfam, 2000). Specifically, the U.S. falls next to last among twenty-one industrialized nations in per capita aid, giving only \$29 per year per American to poor nations (Reich, *U.S. Gives*, 2000). So not only is the wealth divide widening, but the amount of money that rich countries are willing to give to compensate is rapidly decreasing.

Another prominent indication of the West's unwillingness to face the problem of international inequalities is its growing reluctance to tend to emergencies in the developing world. A review issued by the World Health Organization in July 2000 reports that nearly a quarter of its appeals to international donors to support life-saving health programs for victims of war, population displacement and natural disaster yielded zero response. Overall, the WHO has suffered major losses in support recently that affect its ability to provide adequate health care in the developing world. The WHO has received only a fraction (less than 27 percent) of the funds that it requested through the United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), the process by which the UN gathers humanitarian aid funds from donor countries and distributes these funds to organizations (WHO, 2000). To give perspective to this statistic, consider that for 2001 the total amount requested from the CAP by all organizations is \$2.26 billion — the price of two jet fighters (Mountain, 2000).

Not only is total response dwindling, but levels of response vary with respect to geographical region. For instance, in a briefing issued by Oxfam, statistics indicate that the monetary response of the West to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia was far greater than to any of the comparable African crises. In the height of emergency, the former Yugoslavia garnered crisis funds equivalent to \$207.29 per person while Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola, all countries with raging civil wars, received only \$16, \$8.40 and \$47.98 per capita respectively (Oxfam, 2000). In addition to these regional disparities, organizations also suffer from inequities related to the type of work that they do. For example, the World Food Program received 48.6 percent of its required CAP funds while the WHO received only 22.7 percent. This shows an increasing trend toward support of food-related programs over non-food assistance. This is troubling because non-food assistance, including health, education and sustainable livelihood projects, are essential to building peaceful and self-enhancing societies. Although emergency food aid is vitally important, reluctance to fund non-food assistance only contributes to future difficulties. Thus, even within the small amount of money that is contributed toward humanitarian aid, dis-

crepancies in funding persist.

Depths of Disparity: Causes

It is evident from the brief summation above that the international wealth gap is quite vast, and the prospects for its diminishment are slim. What then are the steps that would be necessary to halt this expanding cavity? Some such steps are already underway, but are struggling to advance. One of the most prominent of these is the campaign to end the crippling foreign debt that prevents governments in the developing world from attempting to alleviate poverty. Activist organizations such as Jubilee 2000 are working to reduce debt through grass-roots organizing and lobbying. As will be discussed later, it is through such activist movements that the beginnings of debt reduction are emerging. Though some progress has been made, the people of poor countries continue to bear the burden of repaying enormous debts and in turn, sacrifice monies that are desperately needed for basic human needs. Not only are these debts a monumental drain on the peoples of developing nations, but in some cases they are an even more unjust burden, in that they are the result of loans that were incurred by corrupt government officials (Jubilee 2000 USA, *Developing Country Debt*). These enormous debts trap countries in an endless cycle of payment and poverty, and without debt reduction countries like these will have to continue to divert large portions of their already scarce resources away from health care, education and food security toward servicing interest payments (Jubilee 2000 USA, *The Debt Burden*). To elucidate this point and to draw connections to my central focus on poverty in Africa, consider the following facts:

- For every dollar received in aid in 1996, Africa paid out \$1.31 in debt service.

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) received \$600 million more in debt payments from Africa in 1997 than it returned in loans.

- In Africa, governments are now transferring four times more to international creditors than they spend on basic education and health (Jubilee 2000 USA, *Developing Country Debt*).

Indeed, the heavy weight placed on poor countries by bilateral loans and multilateral lending organizations makes it virtually impossible for them to escape from the depths of poverty; and hence, based partially on this disadvantage, the great wealth divide continues to deepen.

Although the responsibility for the payment of these debilitating loans lies on the governments of poor nations, a closer look at the policies of institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF show that these organizations have contributed to the formation of the

[economics]

Five Ways that Structural Adjustment Programs Contribute to Hunger and Food Insecurity

SAPs favor exports over domestic production (so countries can earn foreign exchange to pay off their debts). Farmers who traditionally produced food for the domestic market are encouraged to produce crops for export.

They often remove subsidies and price supports for small farmers. This also results in a decreased production of basic foodstuffs.

They often remove price controls on basic foodstuffs, an action which makes rice, beans, maize or cooking oil more expensive.

They often contribute to rising unemployment and falling real wages, making it more difficult for families to feed themselves.

They often require reducing or rescinding protectionist tariffs. Local markets are then flooded with imports which undercut domestic agriculture and industry.

Source: Jubilee 2000 USA "Developing Country Debts Creates Hunger and Poverty" www.j2000usa.org

dire economic situation that now exists in the developing world and thus, should shoulder some responsibility for its remedy. For instance, in the 1980's the World Bank introduced its Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), policies that were intended to steer Third World economies toward laissez faire capitalist development. SAPs were meant to accomplish this through public sector waste elimination and the minimization of government influence in the development process (Badru, 1998). But in the two decades since their initiation, these policies have come under increasing criticism. Of course, these criticisms are fed by the fact that SAPs have far from reached their goal of poverty reduction through the development of capitalistic enterprise. In fact, as we have seen above, exactly the reverse is true.

Though the general decline of developing world economies is an indication of the failure of World Bank and IMF policies, there are many more specific signs of the ways in which SAPs have contributed to economic depression in developing nations. For example, SAPs continually favor export-increasing projects over domestic production, a practice that directly contributes to food insecurity in developing countries. This promotion of export over import is maintained in order to ensure that developing nations will be able to

affill their interest payments. In addition, SAPs often remove subsidies and price controls, policies that allow farmers to produce for local markets (Badru, 1998). Hence, SAPs contribute to poverty and hunger within developing countries by continually enacting directives that urge a population to earn income instead of feeding itself.

Possible Cures: Impediments and Successes

"I called long ago for the cancellation of the crippling debt we have had to bear for so long...There are others who have joined their voices in this campaign. There is something called Jubilee 2000. We ask our friends who have stood by us in the dark days of oppression and injustice. This is the new moral crusade to have the debt canceled following the biblical principle of Jubilee. Basically this principle says everything belongs to God; all debts and mortgages must be canceled in the Jubilee Year to give the debtors a chance to make a new beginning."

-Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Speech to the General Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches, October 1997

The logical resolution to the debt crisis would be for wealthy nations to reduce the debts of developing nations. So, why then, is the progress toward this goal moving so slowly? Part of the answer lies in the reluctance of the U.S. to provide adequate foreign aid. America plays an important role in two major arenas of foreign debt, those debts incurred through bilateral loans and those acquired through multilateral lending institutions. The U.S. is the lending nation in a number of bilateral loans to developing countries and could set an encouraging precedent by reducing the payments on these loans. America is also a major shareholder in multilateral lending institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF but continues to show reluctance in its commitment to the contribution of substantial funds for the reduction of debt owed to these institutions. This is a particularly contentious position for the U.S., since it has also continually encouraged multilateral institutions to reduce the payments on these debts (Jubilee 2000 USA, Debt Relief). Thus, in this regard, America is talking out of both sides of its mouth, crying out for debt reduction while holding back funds that would help to make this goal possible.

Although criticisms of the West, and America specifically, are well founded, there have been some significant gains made recently with regard to Third World debt reduction. One such gain was the U.S. House of Representatives' approval of a foreign aid spending bill (H.R. 4811) that increased the fiscal 2001 funding for debt relief from \$69.4 million to \$225 million. This is an important first move toward the final goal of total can-



cellation of the debts of developing nations, but when we consider that the total debt, both bilateral and multilateral, owed by poor countries is over \$2 trillion, this allocation seems like a drop in the bucket. But the significance of this step should not be solely relegated to numbers; in fact, its impact may have more to do with raising the profile of the issue. The passage of H.R. 4811 opens the door for more substantial legislation. In fact, in the same session in which H.R. 4811 was passed, the House voted to reinstate \$44 million in funds to fight AIDS in Africa that had previously been cut from the budget (Driscoll-Shaw, 2000). So although it may only be a first step, H.R. 4811 is indeed a move in the right direction and an initial action toward meaningful Third World debt reduction.

Conclusions

The goal of the Jubilee 2000 campaign is, in its own words, is to be "part of a worldwide movement to cancel the crushing debt of impoverished countries before the New Millennium" (Jubilee 2000 USA). Now, as this deadline moves further into the past, it is clear that the goal is far from reached. What then do we conclude about the state of the world economy at the beginning of the new millennium? It is clear from the above arguments that vast economic inequalities exist internationally, and that the initiatives currently being undertaken are a far cry from what is needed to remedy these imbalances. The relationship between the U.S. and Africa was used as a particularly dramatic indicator of a variety of inequities, from the general gulf that exists between rich and developing nations to the increasing reluctance of Western powers to allocate humanitarian aid. Special attention was also paid to the way in which allocated funds are distributed, an analysis that yielded a picture of even further imbalance and left Sub-

Saharan Africa as a center of "forgotten emergencies." Out of this mass of striking statistics grows a lens through which the world economy seems fundamentally skewed in favor of a wealthy minority. And as we recall the initial seeds from which this lens grew, we should remember the words of Thomas Merton and seek to always "be governed to a great extent by the gravity of the needs of others." ★

References

- Badru, P. 1998. *International Banking and Rural Development: The World Bank in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Hants: Ashgate.
- Bekele, Fehrwot. "Wanted: a just, humane world." *Africa Recovery*, 12/99, p. 3.
- Driscoll-Shaw, Dan. "What is the Meaning of the Vote for Debt Relief in the U.S. House of Representatives?" Jubilee 2000 USA. www.j2000usa.org
- Jubilee 2000 USA. "The Debt Burden on Impoverished Countries: An Overview." www.j2000usa.org
- Jubilee 2000 USA. "Debt Relief: The U.S. Role." www.j2000usa.org
- Jubilee 2000 USA. "Developing Country Debt Creates Hunger and Poverty." www.j2000usa.org
- Jubilee 2000 USA. "Breakthrough in the House of Representatives?" www.j2000usa.org
- Merton, Thomas. 1972. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. New York: New Directions.
- Mountain, Ross. "Mid-Term Review of the Consolidated Appeals." United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 7/26/00. www.reliefweb.int
- Oxfam. 2000. "An End to Forgotten Emergencies?" www.oxfam.org
- Reich, Robert. "It's the Year 2000 Economy, Stupid." *The American Prospect*, 1/3/00, p. 64.
- Reich, Robert. "U.S. Gives, But Only a Little." *Public Radio International's Marketplace*, 7/6/00.
- Tutu, Desmond. "Speech to the General Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches," October 1997. www.j2000usa.org
- World Health Organization. 2000. "Wealthy Countries Not Responding to the Health Needs of People in Emergencies." Press Release WHO 50. www.reliefweb.int

[economics]



Some Thoughts About Fish and Bananas

by Andrew McLeod

I was a vegan for much of a decade, and often pretty militant about it. However, when I moved to Alaska a few years ago, I started occasionally eating wild meat. I never would have anticipated this twist before it happened, and, at first glance, it may appear to be a moral compromise. However, I see it as a continuation of my ethic of doing as little harm as possible to the earth and its inhabitants. What is frequently overlooked when people choose their food is that meat is not the only food with blood on it. When calculating the environmental cost of commercially-produced food, one must factor in the industries required to produce that food. So eating a banana imported from the tropics may be responsible for more death and destruction than eating the same amount of meat.

While it may first seem obvious that killing and eating an animal results in more death than eating an equivalent amount of vegetation, it is really not quite so clear-cut. In a cold climate such as most of North America, a diet that includes wild game may have less environmental impact than a vegetarian one high in exotic and processed foods. For example, getting those innocent-looking

bananas to market is not a pretty process.

First, the land on which the bananas — or any other crops — grow must be cleared for planting. This destroys habitat and creates related problems such as air pollution and soil erosion. In addition, fuel is burned to run the machinery used in preparing the fields.

Then the real fun begins with copious amounts of pesticides and herbicides — which, as the Latin suffix implies, kill stuff. Such chemical inputs also require resources and pollution to create and transport them to the fields. And after their deadly work is done, they do not vanish, but wash into streams and linger on the plants, often causing health problems for workers in the fields, nearby residents, and anything living downstream.

Before the fruit is ripe, it is harvested, packaged and shipped. Resources and habitat must also be consumed in order to create the vehicles, roads, storage places, processing facilities and packaging materials with which the produce is moved to the market (which also must be built using large amounts of resources). And while all those shipments of food are being moved such great distances, critters inevitably get in the way of propellers,

windshields, wheels and the occasional oil or chemical spill.

At each step of this elaborate process, every technological implement must be manufactured and shipped to wherever it is put to use. So the resources used in those production processes must also be taken into account.

Obviously when I eat a banana I don't feel crushing personal guilt over the parking lot that was built for the factory that produced the barrels in which fertilizer was shipped. But I do recognize that I have contributed to the system that created that parking lot.

And as far as organic bananas go, they have much the same effect as their conventional counterparts, except for the use of bio-cides. Similar land-use, packaging, and transport issues apply.

In addition to the physical consequences of global agribusiness, we must also look at the social cost of our purchases. In many countries, such as the Phillipines, there is rampant malnutrition while the nation is a major exporter of food to wealthy countries. And political repression is needed to prevent hungry workers from solving their problem in the most obvious way.

I used to think that a pure and righteous diet was possible, but now it is clear to me that there are only shades of gray. But while everything appears to be a gray area, this does nothing to lighten the shade of such atrocities as factory farming.

Factory farming is atrocious, and I do not believe that it is sustainable to hunt or fish, but that is not the point: it is probably impossible to live sustainably without growing nearly all of one's own food. But even though perfection is impossible, we can still strive for it eating as locally and organically as possible. So in some cases, when not much plant life is growing nearby, eating animals may be consistent with a minimum-impact diet.

The complex global economy has allowed us to become detached from what we eat; and as a result, it has become easy to ignore the consequences of what we consume. In our society, with its highly developed division of labor, it is not reasonable to expect everyone to consume only food that they grew, hunted or gathered themselves.

Whatever one believes about the future, the present contains less abundance of non-human life than did the past, and a portion of this is due to humans eating everything else. We are putting ourselves at risk along with the rest of the planet's inhabitants.

However, when we harvest our own food, we are confronted with the fact that our survival comes at others' expense. We become more in touch with nature and its limited ability to support human populations. Reverence and gratitude may be gained along with nutrition, as we feel our connection to the fragile web of life. ★

[economics]

The Poor Who Are With Us

by Charlotte Green Honigman-Smith

So it's a bleak winter night, and I'm standing in line at the grocery store behind a young Chinese woman who's been shopping with her son, who is maybe eight.

She has a half-dozen big jars of apple juice in her cart, and four two-gallon jugs of milk. There's some block cheese, and dried pinto beans, and some other odds and ends, including two family-size boxes of Froot Loops. I've seen her here before, always getting enough milk and apple juice for a small army, or at least a big family. It always draws my eye, since it seems like a weird combination of foods for an Asian woman to buy. I've always wondered, is it for the little boy's daycare center? Does she volunteer at a shelter? Is her husband a white guy who drinks milk with his bacon and eggs? I'm still idly wondering all this when I realize that the clerk has been stalled in ringing up her groceries by the fact that Froot Loops, (who knew?), can't be bought on WIC.

WIC. Milk and juice. Cheese and dried beans. This food, I suddenly realize, is probably nothing this woman would choose on her own, but it's approved iron- and calcium-rich food that the federal aid program for Women, Infants and Children will permit her to buy. I'm suddenly deeply angry, and baffled. Surely WIC covers fish, dark green vegetables, something beside this middle-American diet? What the hell is this?

While I'm thinking this, she examines a laminated card showing appropriate WIC foods with the checkout clerk, and takes the Froot Loops back to their shelf. She comes back with cinnamon-sugar Life. This, it turns out, is also a problem. Life cereal is on the approved WIC list, but it has to be plain cereal, not the fancy stuff with cinnamon.

At this point I begin to silently lose my

temper. What I really want to do is stick my nose in and demand to know if it's really going to bankrupt the federal government to buy this woman and her kids a box of iron-fortified cereal with cinnamon on it. I want to shove a dollar across the counter and yell "Here! Let them eat cinnamon already!"

I do nothing. I pretend that I don't see anything happening, or hear the checkout clerk explaining that she has to buy the plain cereal. Noticing that this is going on will only shame this woman and her family, not whoever at WIC decided that sugar and cinnamon on breakfast cereal was too good for the children of the anemic poor.

The woman sighs, picks up her boxes, and returns to the cereal aisle for the second time. Her son, bored, protests at this. "Mommy-ah!" he calls, and she calls back to him reassuringly. She returns with two boxes of plain corn Chex, and puts them down on the counter with a gesture of finality. She gives the clerk a long look, and he nods and rings up her purchases. She counts out her money in dollar bills, collects her child and her groceries, and marches out into the night, probably to sprinkle granulated sugar on corn Chex for the next two weeks.

Iron-fortified cereal and cinnamon-sugar—these are a child's equivalent of bread and roses. I'm still angry as I take my own groceries out to the bus stop. I want to live in a kinder world than this one. I want to give that kid and his mother Froot Loops and fresh produce.

I can't. I can't do any of that. But I can remember what I saw, and I can admire that woman, for trying to get her kid a little cinnamon and sugar, and for that look she gave the clerk at the end. I do. ★

[economics]

ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES RECORDS



VARIOUS ARTISTS THE ECSTASY OF THE AGONY

Yes! Guaranteed to be the most bang for your buck. Our new super-low priced sampler is here! With a little know and some strong ambition we managed to squeeze 30 of our current artists and bands on one little CD at over 75 minutes! Tons of exclusive and previously un-released tracks! Now you can sample the fine music and spoken word releases from the mighty A.T.R. roster right now. Everything from new JELLO BIAFRA, VICTIMS FAMILY, and THE CAUSEY WAY, to upcoming MUMIA ABU-JAMAL, NOMEANSNO, and HALF JAPANESE. Comes with a free poster and just \$5.00!

VIRUS 252 CD \$5.00

JELLO BIAFRA



BECOME THE MEDIA

JELLO BIAFRA

BECOME THE MEDIA

From the always controversial Mr. Biafra. An election year special release contains reflections from the WTO events, media issues, and more. Taken from the best of this year's tours. Become the media!

VIRUS 260 3xLP : \$18.50 / 3xCD \$18.00



HOWARD ZINN

HOWARD ZINN

HEROES AND MARTYRS

Zinn takes us back to the labor struggles of the 20th century focusing on Emma Goldman and Sacco & Vanzetti. Zinn opens windows on immigrant life, political scalawags and cold-hearted tycoons of the time.

VIRUS 241 2xCD : \$15.00



JELLO BIAFRA

JELLO BIAFRA

THE GREEN WEDGE

Your not seeing double! An emergency election special release! We managed to release this in time for the upcoming presidential race. Contains speeches from the Denver Colorado Green Party Nominating events.

VIRUS 256 7" EP: \$3.50



JELLO BIAFRA

VARIOUS ARTISTS

LESS ROCK MORE TALK

A spoken word collection from the cutting edge. Combines the likes of Jello Biafra with the latest from counterculture icons such as Penny Rimbaud, M. Gira and Mykel Board. Music never sounded this good.

VIRUS 254 CD: \$12.00

DISTRIBUTED BY MORRIS RECORDS

P.O. BOX 419092, SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94141-9092, USA. SEND \$1.00 (U.S. FUNDS) FOR A CATALOG. ★WWW.ALTERNATIVETENTACLES.COM★

TORTOISE

standards

THE NEWEST FROM CHICAGO'S OWN
AVAILABLE FEBRUARY TWO THOUSAND ONE

DAN BITNEY JOHN MCENTIRE JEFF PARKER JOHN HERNDON DOUGLAS MCCOMBS

ALSO AVAILABLE BY TORTOISE FROM THRILL JOCKEY

THRILL-013 TORTOISE

THRILL-025 MILLIONS NOW LIVING WILL NEVER DIE

THRILL-050 TNT

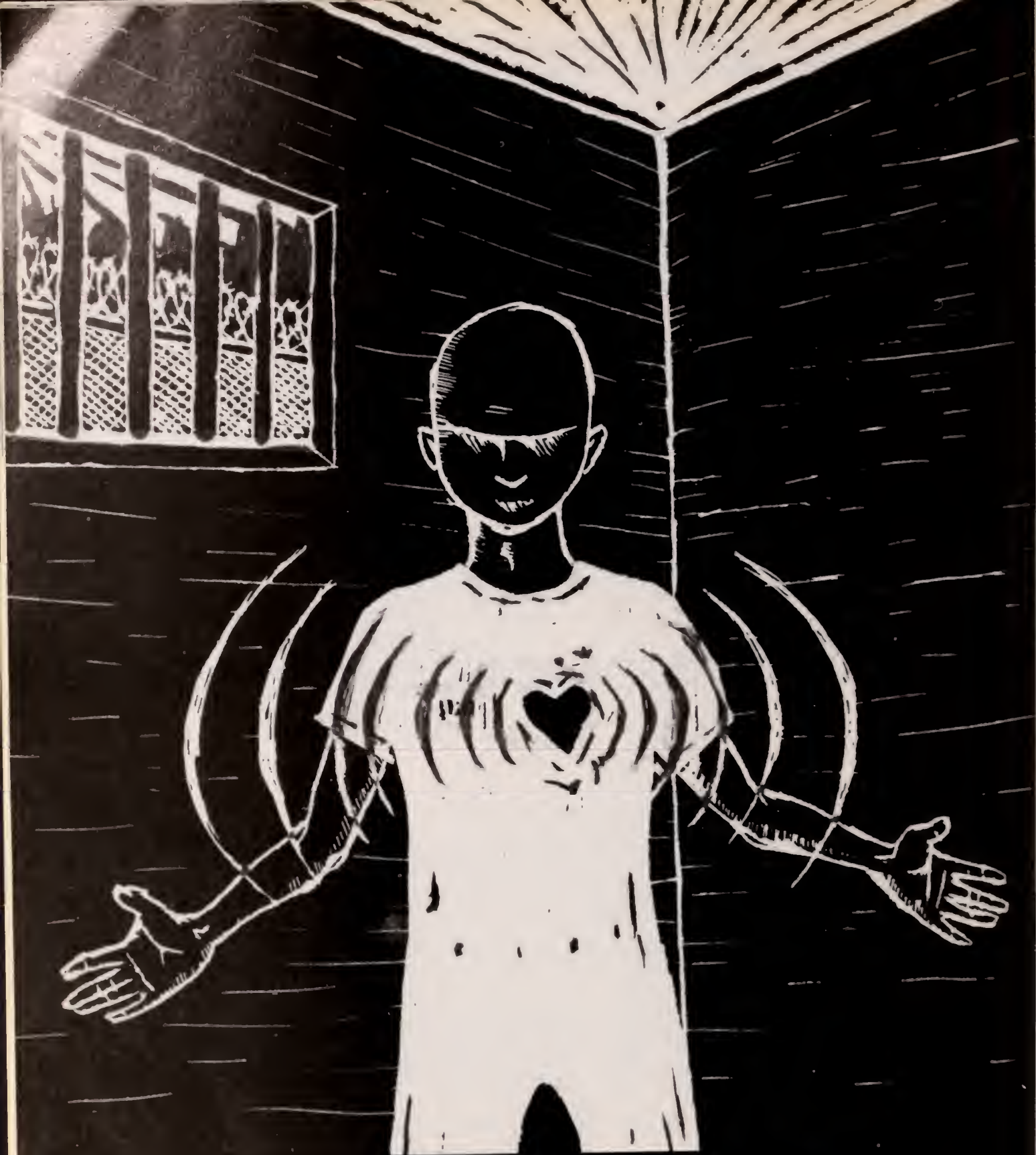
THRILLJOCKEYRECORDS

PO BOX 08038

CHICAGO IL 60608

WWW.THRILLJOCKEY.COM

NOW ACCEPTS CREDIT CARDS



[people]

THE LIVES BEHIND THE STATISTICS: WORKING WITHIN THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

BY SARAH DANFORTH
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN GERKEN

Sometimes I wonder if I could do this in my sleep. 94 West from Ann Arbor to Jackson, with pastures and ponds and billboards that haven't changed in the two years that I have been doing this drive.

Today, while headed to prison for the first time in three months, I scan the billboards as reminders of things that have not changed. It is a simple security, like organizing the cupboard shelves so that coffee cups are always in the same place. As long as the Whitetail Deer Museum still beckons, and the Lloyd Bridges Travelland is still open, then I will still be allowed access inside the prison.

94 West to Exit 141, then right on Parnall Road. Buildings and barbed wire line both sides of the road. I pass Cotton Facility first, then Parnall Correctional Facility. At the first right I make another right, and then drive past Cooper Street Prison and the state police building. I pass the Level 4 Prison that used to be the largest prison in the world, and then I arrive at Charles Egeler Correctional Facility, where I will be returning to my art workshop.

I open the car door, and wince at the sound of rifle shots. There is a rifle range across the street from the prison. Sometimes I see the ruddy-faced men as they leave after pistol practice; they look to the prison as if it gives them a mental image when they pull the trigger.

Before I leave the car, I check to make sure that I am wearing a bra, loose clothing, and no make-up. In the rearview mirror, I see a pale white cross glinting in the sun. I turn my head to see the headmarkers of the prison cemetery, a small piece of earth filled with puny wooden crosses that are shadowed by two large watchtowers. The plaque that faces the road refers to it as a "resting place for early settlers." A large part of the cellblock faces this burial site for prisoners with no family to claim them.

I feel myself becoming harder, tougher, as I walk toward the building. From the outside, Egeler prison looks like most institutional architecture

from the 1970s; it could be a suburban high school or an office building. The only difference is the layers of fencing, the guardtowers, the desolation.

I enter the building and am suddenly amidst a crowded scene. They are moving some prisoners to another facility, and the front room is crowded with foot lockers and toe-tapping, anxious guards. I sidle up against

the wall to watch the procession. The first five men walk through the cell gate and metal detectors, hands chained together at the wrist. I don't know any of them, though some seem to recognize me. I try to make eye contact and smile, giving a small nod of hello.

After the first five men are loaded into a van, the next five men walk through the gates. Instantly I recognize the shifting stride of one of my friends in the art workshop, a 32-year-old African-American Muslim names Jones-El. He sees me, and I watch his eyes light up in surprise, then switch to sadness. I try to remain calm and passive, as I slide over to where he is standing. "Jones-El, where are they taking you?" I whisper. "Up to Kinross, in the Upper Peninsula," he answers, looking away.

We are both thinking the things left unsaid; that Kinross Correctional Facility is known to be a tough and dangerous place, that he will be 12 hours from his family in Detroit, that there are no arts, theatre, or even college education classes up there. And though Jones-El has done nothing to necessitate a transfer, we are both realizing that these 30 seconds are the last that we'll have together.

He shuffles away into a van, and I am left leaning up against the white concrete wall, digging my nails into the palms of my hand to create a physical pain that will cut sharper than the tear I feel inside. I kick my heel against the prison wall, though I do it lightly so as not to draw suspicion. I want to kick that wall so hard. I want to kick and smash all of these walls until they crumble into the ground. I started two years ago, facilitating a theatre workshop with male juvenile sex offenders at a detention center in Adrian, Michigan. Since then, I have been involved with creative writing workshops for both males and females at various juvenile detention centers. I have worked at a Level 4 prison doing theatre for over a year, and I have helped with an art workshop at Egeler for a year and a half.

EGELER PRISON LOOKS LIKE MOST INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE FROM THE 1970S; IT COULD BE A SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL OR AN OFFICE BUILDING. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THE LAYERS OF FENCING, THE GUARDTOWERS, THE DESOLATION.

become the most meaningful part of each week. Within my prison workshops, I have had intelligent conversations and hilarious moments, have had openness and candor with a level of trust that is rare in other parts of my life. I have learned random and practical things; I am becoming knowledgeable about the Nation of Islam. I can make a saw out of two pencils, dental floss, and toothpaste, and

I have learned the various methods of home tattoos.

More importantly, I have seen the injustices that arise out of the U.S. justice system, and I have witnessed the remarkable human spirit that can overcome these injustices. I have begun to understand a little more about oppression, exhilaration and perseverance. I have become tough and strong, and I have also discovered the part of me that weeps and sobs. Doing prison work is navigating through a world of paradoxes, and no sooner does it lift you up than it pulls you apart.

I started writing this piece in an attempt to articulate the stories and experiences that I have had while behind prison walls. I am choosing not to focus on the politics and statistics of injustice that surround the prison-industrial complex. These are becoming more and more well-known, and I don't need to remind people of the startling facts and figures (if you want information, either see the list of sources at the end of this article or give me a cup of coffee and I'll rant for an hour). This piece of writing came out of my need to tell the stories of the people behind the numbers and graphs.

Through my work, I have learned that there aren't just two million people in U.S. prisons right now. There are two million mothers, fathers, artists, writers, electricians, woodworkers, geniuses and revolutionaries that are being ostracized and abandoned. There are two million members of our community that are missing. This is a part of the fight against the prison-industrial complex that we need to start recognizing. If we want to start talking seriously about actual community development and participatory government interactions, we need to think about the voices that are being prevented from being heard.

I think that it is up to us, as activists, artists, as people who speak about equality and ending oppression, to consider the prison-industrial complex as our most important battle. We want community, and yet we can not even build that until our communities are complete again, until we insist that we want our brothers and sisters released from these holding cells.

THE PEOPLE INSIDE

It catches me hard sometimes, completely unaware. I remember practicing a difficult scene in my theatre workshop with Twinkle, a transgendered African-American who was supposed to be playing a racist grandmother. His hilarity, his poignancy, his wonderful personality overwhelmed me, and I found myself looking at fury at the walls holding us in. Why is a person this amazing person locked up? Why is he put in a situation where he is continually raped, abused and put in solitary confinement? We need people

Working in prisons and juvenile detention centers has

like him working with us on the outside.

When I started working in prisons, I thought that the people were completely disconnected from me. I knew no one in prison, no one from my town had ever been sent to prison that I knew of. This didn't bother me; at that time I think that I attributed some kind of glamour to working with this strange and

beliefs of how the world should work. They become forgotten relies, forced into viewing the outside world as it goes by on their television sets without them. They are forgotten by us, for the most part.

The people that fill our prisons are too important to be forgotten. There is a vitality

usually beat his wife. I am aware that one of my role models and best friends is in prison on second-degree murder charges. And yet, I do not enter prison to focus on the charge against him, or against anyone else. I go there to create, to work with vibrant, artistic people whose voices are not acknowledged by the larger community.

A CRITICAL LOOK AT PRISONS SHOWS THAT THEY EXIST AS MIRRORS TO OUR SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS, DISTORTED REFLECTIONS OF THE THINGS THAT WE DON'T WANT TO FACE. WE LOCK UP ISSUES OF POVERTY AND RACISM, TRY TO FORGET THAT THE PEOPLE INSIDE ARE SIMILAR TO US.

different population.

And then I met David. He attended Community High School, the same high school as many of my friends from Ann Arbor. He used to organize anti-nuclear bomb concerts at the park and worked at the fancy guitar store in town. And I talked with Scum-Dog, who had anarchy tattoos and used to do graffiti with some of the same people from Detroit that I had photographed a few years back. And once, when I was attending a performance of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" at Sing-Sing? Prison in New York, a man stopped me on my way out. "Hey, did you say that you were from Ann Arbor?" "Yeah, I go to the University of Michigan." "Hey, I graduated from there, too."

The media teaches us that prisoners are not part of our lives, that they are uneducated, toughened criminals who have always existed on the outskirts of society. In some ways, this is true, although not in the way that it is portrayed in the movies and magazines. Historically, the U.S. government has imprisoned people of color, the poor, and the mentally disabled in an attempt to keep them away from the rest of the public. And so anyone with money usually can hire themselves a decent lawyer that will keep them out of prison, unlike my friend Larry who was sentenced with 5 years for buying alcohol for minors. The police and the courts unfairly prosecute people of color, so that when I attended a punk rock show at prison my flesh gleamed white in the audience of black and brown faces. There are often racial, religious, and economic differences between myself and the men that I work with, but they aren't characteristics that should keep us separated. It is important to acknowledge these differences, but not to use them as a dividing tool. The people I have met who are incarcerated have the same basic emotions, ideas, and beliefs that I can find anywhere else in the world.

And yet the fact of their imprisonment and isolation does not allow us to know anything about their emotions or ideas, nor does it allow them a chance to work for their own

and power within these cages that needs to be part of our community-building. This isn't simply an injustice to them for being unfairly captured and caged for the government's profit, but this is an injustice to all of us. We are being robbed of some of our most powerful, creative, and enigmatic voices. We need to take them back.

BUT... ISN'T IT DANGEROUS?

When I tell people that I work in prisons, their first comment is usually something like "isn't that work dangerous?" or "you must be brave to do that." There is nothing dangerous about teaching art in prisons, nor do I need to be brave to work on theatre with 12 adult men.

I can recall the disparaging comments from family members when I started doing this work. "Don't you understand that these people have done horrible things?" they would say to me when I tried to share a good story from a workshop. Actually, I understand that the reason that people are in prison has less to do with the crimes that they have committed and more to do with their racial and economic status. Still, I do work with people who have been charged as murderers and rapists, as well as with drug dealers, burglars, and arsonists. It is hard to understand that these people are more than these labels. It is difficult to reconcile the brutal and horrific acts that some people have committed, and still hold to my belief that prisons are not an appropriate or just punishment.

I have to think about it in this way, that we have all done horrible things in our lives, that I do not work in prisons to cast judgment, that each person is made up of more than the worst thing that they have ever done, that a series of complex situations and inequalities have led them to be where they are now. I am not saying that it is easy, though. I have caught myself staring into the eyes of one of my friends who is in prison on domestic abuse charges, wondering what could turn his gentleness into such a rage that he would ac-

[people]

PRISON AS PUNISHMENT

I had spent the whole afternoon begging friends for the use of a car to get to my theatre workshop, and my mind was focused on the trials and tribulations of the automobile. As an opening activity, I asked the men what kind of car they would be they would be driving if they could be in a car at that moment. There were responses of Range Rovers and BMWs, foreign cars and pickup trucks. "Louis," I asked when I noticed his silence, "what kind of car would you drive?" "I don't know," he said. "I've never driven a car before." "Really?" I pressed. "Yeah, I've been here since I was 15, and I never got my drivers license to nothing," he said, his face stiffening as he shifted in his chair.

Louis was 35 now, and the silence grew for a moment as I realized all of the things that he had missed in the outside world in the past 20 years. The list whirled in my head as I imagined being unaware of CDs, the Internet, cell phones, ATM machines, and other obvious parts of our lives that he isn't aware of.

Prisons punish people by removing them from society, by taking them away from anything that is comforting or familiar in their lives. It is the classic idea of isolation as reprimand, the idea that freedom is our most precious privilege and any transgression against society's moral codes results in a banishment from that society. It is a time-out period, it is being put in the corner, it is being grounded for the weekend.

Except, of course, it is much more than that. Prisons are overcrowded cages that thrive on violence and intimidation. They become holding pens without any sense of humanity, places where rape, brutality, and drugs exist as the norm. Prisoners are taught to trust no one, to not develop any close attachments, to put on their guard and keep all of their emotions inside. In 1996 Bill Clinton cut all funding for education in prisons, and Michigan in particular has denied civil rights protection to

★ **Subscribe to CLAMOR!**

and save **25% off** the cover price!



Sign up now to show your
support for independent media
and receive six issues of
CLAMOR for just \$18!

Please send my subscription to:

name _____

address _____

email (optional) _____

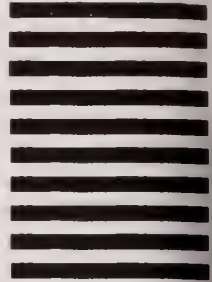
This is a ☐ new subscription ☐ renewal
 ☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later

To order by email: info@clamormagazine.org

Please allow 6-8 weeks for your first issue.



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 25 BOWLING GREEN

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

BECOME THE MEDIA
PO BOX 1225
BOWLING GREEN OH 43402-9991



their prisoners. And after many years of existing in an environment such as this, they are released back to survive on their own in society.

Louis once admitted his fear of the outside world to our workshop. "I am going to get paroled in a year," he said. "It's been 20 years, and I am afraid to live with all these

the sale of drugs on the streets, we imprison both users and dealers. Prisons point out that in this country, people don't have the same opportunities. They prove that instead of leveling the playing fields, with prisons we capitalize on them.

It is easy for me to express this fervency



things that I don't know about."

The existence of prisons as isolation tanks does a much greater disservice to our present society than it does to help or protect us. We've lost family members and intelligent thinkers, and our community as a whole is weakened by our refusal to face the problems that create the basis for criminal behavior.

A critical look at prisons shows that they exist as mirrors to our society's problems, distorted reflections of the things that we don't want to face. We lock up issues of poverty and racism, try to forget that the people inside are similar to us. We push away all the elements that are undesirable to the mainstream, and we pretend that they don't exist. Instead of working to eradicate issues of homelessness in New York, the homeless are put in jail. Instead of addressing the economic complexities behind

and vehemence about prisons, not only because I have learned the facts that make this system so unjust, but because this fight is no longer about just the abstract facts or treatises on the systems of oppression. This is about people that I know, about men who've impacted my life in real ways. I'm trying to stick up for my friends here. I'm asking people to help me.

There are so many things that can be done to fight the prison-industrial complex. Start writing to prisoners. Find out about the different prisons in your area, and make inquiries to the warden about volunteering there. Teach English or History, work with theater, art, dance, maybe yoga. Organize within your group of friends, and plan nights when you watch prison documentaries and discuss the content of these movies. Throw benefit shows to raise money for prison libraries. Stop shopping at Victoria's Secret and Eddie Bauer, stop buying plane tickets from TWA and computers from IBM (they all use prison labor). Boycott AT&T, MCI, and Sprint because of their unfair policies of charging prisoners 6 times

the normal amount for collect calls. Demonstrate and hold rallies that educate the public about the inequalities of the U.S. justice system.

There is so much to we need to do to wake up, educate, and fight. It is all necessary. Fight prisons, get involved, don't forget about the parts of our world that we have been taught to ignore. ★

[people]

THE CALL FOR EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY OF LEONARD PELTIER

It is unlikely that President Bush would grant Leonard Peltier executive clemency. "Bush's record number of capital punishments as Governor of Texas suggests that clemency would not be one of his key concerns," commented Jennifer Harbury, legal advisor for Peltier.

In 1991, Judge Gerald Heaney of the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals recommended clemency for Peltier. Executive clemency is the constitutional power given exclusively to the President of the United States which allows him, following a criminal conviction or juvenile adjudication, to grant a pardon or commutation of sentence.

On Election Day 2000 former President Clinton made the possibility of freedom for Leonard Peltier more tangible than anytime during the last quarter century. President Clinton called into radio stations around the country as a last minute tactic to drum up support for then presidential-candidate Al Gore. He called WBAI, 99.5 FM in New York City, part of the Pacifica Network, and stumbled upon an impromptu interview with Amy Goodman, host of *Democracy Now!* President Clinton responded that he would consider Peltier's clemency petition.

Last summer President Clinton was the first President to visit Pine Ridge since Calvin Coolidge. This signals empathy of Native Americans few contemporary presidents have shown. It was also another way which President Clinton tried to secure his place in history.

Peltier, a Native American and member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), is currently serving two life sentences for the murders of FBI agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams on June 26, 1975 at Pine Ridge, North Dakota. The agents went to the Pine Ridge Reservation to inquire about the theft of a pair of cowboy boots. The men were searching for Jimmy Eagle, who allegedly took them from a drinking buddy during a brawl.

Eagle's trail led the agents to the Jumping Bull property at the Oglala community. Peltier was allegedly mistaken for Eagle. A shoot-out erupted. Peltier admits to returning gunfire in self-defense that day yet denies murdering the two agents.

Harbury, says, "Leonard has been denied a new trial despite overwhelming evidence of FBI misconduct, the use of false testimonies, and the concealment of a ballistics test reflecting his innocence."

"He's also long overdue for parole especially in light of his remarkable human rights achievements and his failing health." He suffers from diabetes, a heart condition, near blindness in one eye, and hypertension. Yet he's been denied because he will not confess to a crime he does not admit to committing.

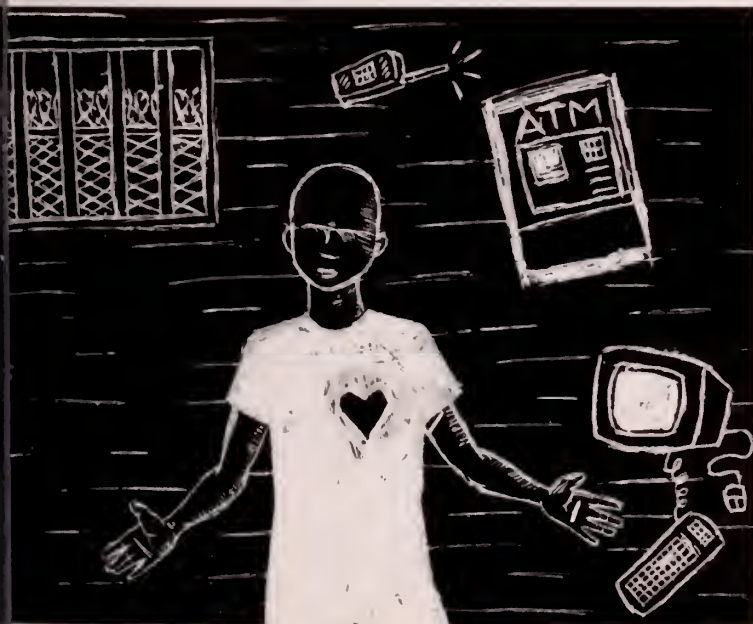
In 1985, U.S. Prosecutor Lynn Crooks said no evidence existed against Peltier. Her admission led to additional trial requests between 1991 and 1994, which were also denied. Meanwhile, all Peltier's requests for parole have been denied. He will not be eligible for parole again until 2008.

As of December 24, 1999 President Clinton has granted only 74 pardons and 16 commutations. Less than 4% of the total number requested and far less than any other President, even President Reagan granted almost 15% of those requested.

Yet, because this case may reflect federal misbehavior and is just one stop in a long history of bad relations between Washington, D.C. and Native Americans it may never be resolved. John Trudell, poet and former spokesperson for AIM, claims, "Leonard is being kept in prison because the FBI is responsible for the killing of its own agents."

-Greg Fuchs

LOUIS WAS 35 NOW, AND THE SILENCE GREW FOR A MOMENT AS I REALIZED ALL OF THE THINGS THAT HE HAD MISSED IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD IN THE PAST 20 YEARS.





Night of Power

words by Mumia Abu-Jamal
illustrations by Ryan James
heart illustration by John Gerken



THE, UH, LIEUTENANT
WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU.



OH BOY, HERE WE GO.



[people]

WE'LL, UH, FIND YOU A PHASE TWO UNIFORM, JAMAL.



WHAT'S UP, MU?

WHAT'S UP, MIN? HOW YOU BE, MAN?



SHIT, YOU KNOW HOW I BE CUZ-- I'M MESSED UP!

ME AND YOU BOTH, HUH?



PUT THIS ON.



JAMAL, YOUR DEATH WARRANT HAS BEEN SIGNED. THE GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA HAS SIGNED YOUR DEATH WARRANT TODAY, EFFECTIVE FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 13, 1995. I HAVE ATTACHED A COPY OF THE WARRANT. THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS HAS SET THE DATE OF THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 1995 TO CARRY OUT THIS ORDER AT THE STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION AT ROCKVIEW. ANY QUESTIONS?



I'D LIKE TO CONTACT MY FAMILY.

YOUR BLOCK SERGEANT WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT.



HEY, MU!

YEAH, MIN?



WELCOME TO THE CLUB, BABY!

SHEEYIT, PARDON ME IF I DON'T CELEBRATE!



[people]

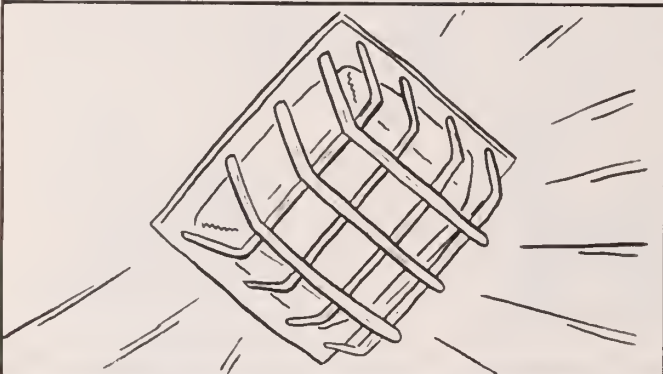
"ON PHASE TWO, LIGHTS ARE KEPT BURNING 24 HOURS A DAY--BRIGHT DURING THE DAY, DIM AT NIGHT.



"THOUGH IN FACT, 'DIM' AT 2 A.M. IS HARDLY LESS THAN 'BRIGHT' AT NOON.



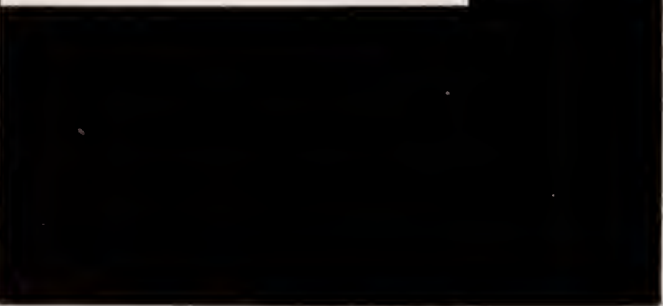
"I SPENT THE SUMMER OF 1995 UNDER THOSE LIGHTS, ON DEATH ROW'S PHASE TWO WITH A DATE TO DIE.



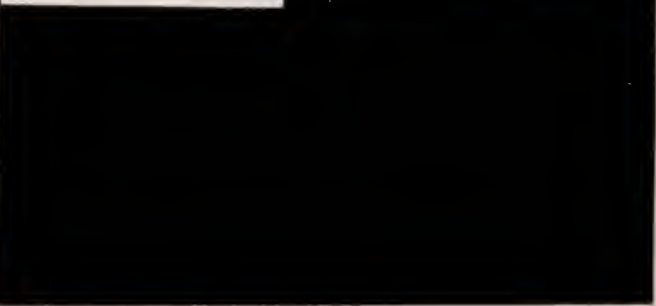
"BUT ONE NIGHT, AFTER THE SUN HAD SET BEHIND THE HILLS OF WEST VIRGINIA, AMID OMINOUS THUNDERHEADS...



"THE FORCES OF NATURE **STRUCK** LIKE A **DIVINE ASSAULT TEAM**. SO POWERFUL WERE THE LIGHTENING BOLTS, THAT THE LIGHTS IN THE BLOCK--INDEED THE WHOLE JAIL--FLICKERED OUT.



"CELL LIGHTS, HALL LIGHTS, YARD LIGHTS, BLACK LIGHTS, PERIMETER LIGHTS, AND LIGHTS ON POLES HAD DIED. NOT EVEN STARS BROKE THE BLACK CARPET. **SO DARK!**



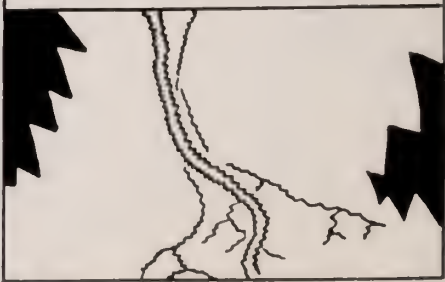
"THEN, A SPLASH OF ILLUMINATION THAT BATHED THE HILLS IN A BLUE LIGHT... A ROLLING **BA-BOOM** OF THUNDER...



"AND A RAPID PROCESSION OF BLINKS AS LIGHTS WENT OUT ALL OVER THE PRISON COMPLEX. IT HAPPENED AGAIN AND AGAIN...



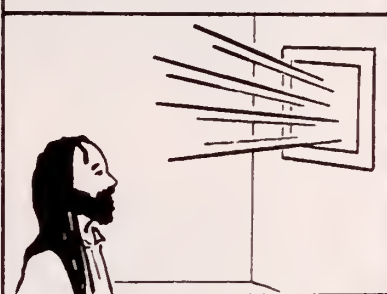
"AND YET AGAIN-- ONE SINUOUS BOLT OF LIGHTENING AFTER THE NEXT, FORKING THE BLACK SKY, THEN WHITE-WASHING IT TO MIDDAY BRILLIANCE FOR THE SPACE OF AN EYEBLINK.



[people]

"I SAT THERE IN THE FIRST REAL DARKNESS SINCE MY ARRIVAL ON PHASE TWO..."

"TRANSFIXED BY THE DISPLAY OF SUCH RAW, PRIMEVAL POWER. THE STRIKES SEEMED SO CLOSE, I FELT THE HAIR ON MY ARMS RISE."



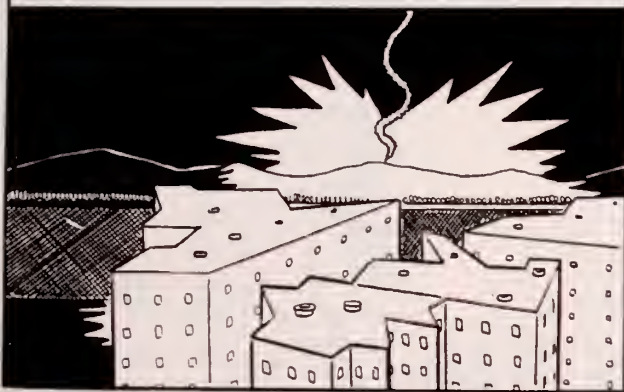
"DARKNESS REIGNED. MAN'S LIGHTS BOWED THEIR MECHANICAL HEADS TO THE POWER THE STORM HAD UNLEASHED."

"THERE I SAT IN THE DARKNESS, WITH JUST WEEKS TO LIVE. YET I FELT BETTER THAN ANY OTHER NIGHT I SPENT ON PHASE TWO. WHY?"



"WATCHING THE VEINS OF NATURE PULSE THROUGH THE NIGHT AIR--MAKING, IF ONLY FOR MILLISECONDS, DAYLIGHT OVER THE HILLS-- I FELT RENEWED. THIS IS TRUE POWER. SEE HOW EASILY IT OVERWHELMS MAN'S 'POWER'?"

"HOW PUNY MAN SEEMED BEFORE THIS DIVINE DANCE!"



"I SAW THEN, THAT THOUGH HUMAN POWERS SOUGHT TO STRANGLE AND POISON ME, AND THOSE AROUND ME..."



"THEY WERE POWERLESS. I SAW THAT THERE'S A POWER THAT MAKES MAN'S POWER PALE. IT IS THE POWER OF LOVE, THE POWER OF GOD, THE POWER OF LIFE. I FELT IT SURGING THROUGH EVERY PORE. NATURE'S POWER PREVAILED OVER THE MAN-MADE, AND I FELT THAT NIGHT THAT I WOULD PREVAIL."

"I WOULD OVERCOME THE STATE'S EFFORTS TO SILENCE AND KILL ME."



ADAPTED FROM: S.E. ANDERSON, TONY MEDINA, MUMIA ABU-JAMAL. IN DEFENSE OF MUMIA. NEW YORK: WRITERS + READERS PUBLISHING, INC. 1996.
MUMIA ABU-JAMAL. DEATH BLOSSOMS. FARMINGTON, PA: PLOUGH PUBLISHING HOUSE, 1997.

NARRATION IS FROM DEATH BLOSSOMS, PP 29-31. ART BY RYAN JAMES.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a political prisoner and journalist who has been on Pennsylvania's death row since 1982. Convicted of the killing of a police officer in a trial marked by corruption, intimidation of witnesses, and suppressed evidence; Jamal has remained outspoken and active despite years behind bars. An international support movement is demanding a fair trial and freedom for Jamal. Write to Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM 8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E Roy Furman Hwy, Waynesburg, PA 15370, USA.

[people]

**WADING
FOR
NOTHING**

words by Emily Heiple
art by Nate Powell

N.P.
8-00

NP.
3-00

"There he is."
 "Who?"
 "That guy that walks everywhere."
 "Oh you mean Nike Air Homeless."
 Laugh.
 "That's what Terese calls him, I think it's pretty funny."
 "Say when did she get out of jail?"
 "Three or a month ago, yesterday."
 "How's it been? I mean, is she adjusting OK?"

"What to being on the outside or to being a mother?"

"Both I guess."

"Well she's too scared to laugh when the lights are out, too serious to smile when they're on. I can't get her to eat meat anymore and she calls JJ 'your' child."

Silence.

"Damn how can she really be Terese when she's not cookin' that BBQ chicken? Oh with that spicy sauce she makes. Maybe they have her trapped in some dank dungeon in the bottom of the prison and this is just an imposter, a phony look alike."

"One could only wish."

They both quickly notice the radio as it loses its FM connection. Something deep inside the car sounds like an old man crying underwater; they both know it's the carburetor but keep quiet nevertheless. Hushed in fear that the other might want to chime in with the solution, silenced in a way that only maternal men can be.

The homeless man who lives on his own two feet walks across the road at the corner of Markham and Fair Park. All day long with one thought in his mind, he masters something beyond the blind comforts of consumption. In the purgatorial heat of this Arkansas July he will never reach Heaven, or maybe he has passed on through that place. Slipped by as the dirty shadow of European descent, dirtied with the stagnant experience of going nowhere. He's nothing like that homeless vet on the bike at McDonald's or the dark men that stand outside of the shelter on Second Street. Anyone in town will tell you that.

The light turns green and the men resume their conversation with a topic a million miles from what's on their minds, evasive and numb they sidetrack in a way that only men can do. The bearded man who wears off his toes to keep from having his bed of plastic and brush overturned makes his way up Markham. Downtown Little Rock is just over the hill. He puts on a broken pair of transistor headphones as he passes by a church.

Outside of the church a group of about 200 people stomp in place on the green grass. They are mostly young and wearing black clothing. On such a hot day it is obvious that someone's life has been taken—taken rather than lost, for blood is still spilling on a dusty highway where, with death, that boy finally

found a way to flee from the anti-glory of post-teenage fallout. In the crowd of people a poet sighs with relief because, finally, she has nothing to say. The faithless congregation mourns with belief in nothing but the present, and it's hard without life everlasting. Why, why did that God who they trusted and feared, why did he take another romantic, driven hard with pessimism, from their world?

"This funeral is kind of weirding me out. He would have never wanted it so religious. He didn't go to church."

"Yeah, but haven't you noticed, when someone dies like this, or whenever anyone really dies the only way to justify it is by religious means or by God? It's just more comforting for everyone to believe that he's happier than the rest of us who are still down here."

"Yeah, it's when death is unwarranted and erratic that we all forget that 'this was what God wanted' bullshit. If God placed a bulldozer in the middle of a pitch dark highway and coordinated everything so that this 24-year-old boy, and I mean that in the best sense, with a guitar and a whole bunch of high school friends on his mind ran directly into it while strapped into a fuckin' death toy Toyota, then every religious institution would fall apart at the seams."

"But then we'd all have to go through life with no conception of Heaven and things would be just a little more dismal and hopeless than they already are."

"I can't believe we're talking about this right now."

The crowd began to diminish with the last light of day. Two of the deceased's best friends sit on the lawn watching cars full of red-eyed people turn on their ignitions and sigh with the relief that this afternoon has finally come to an end. They read as the crowd's lips utter with exhaust that American obsession over putting things in the past and getting on top of life again.

"Everyone just wants to cry a little, mourn for a bit, then forget all of this and regain their faith in the force and themselves as fragile super humans."

"I can't believe he's gone. His body is in the ground when a week ago it was asleep on my couch—and I know he wanted to be cremated."

"Man I wanted to fucking punch that priest when he cut our song off halfway."

"Like that's not proper for his deliverance to Heaven; man fuck that."

"We can't ever let this town forget him."

They both wonder when the last time was that they'd said I love you to anyone. A natural thought when someone falls off unexpectedly.

The homeless man covered in dirt and

[people]

hair kicks a rock off of the sidewalk and into the street. He breathes the last moments of daytime into his lungs. His eyes readjust as the darkness encapsulates that late summer dusk. The most humbling five minutes of the day pass, light is exchanged for darkness in a fury of lightning bug brigades. As he crosses the Third Street Bridge he notices a girl sitting on her bike, balancing with one leg on the metal rails that overlook the train tracks a hundred feet below. The smoke from her cigarette reminds him of someone he once knew. He coughs so that she knows he's approaching.

The girl swings her head around in surprise. She hadn't realized how dark it had gotten. Another day comes to an end and she tries to remember what she's accomplished. The blanket of nightfall makes it difficult for her to see the figure approaching. Purple vision replaces the missing light particles enabling her to recognize the infamous homeless man walking toward her. A sweat breaks out on her brow. She's always wanted to say something to him, ask him what his name is, wave in recognition. But every time he's near she gets scared and feels the pressure of crucial moments. She fumbles in her pocket for something to give him—not money or charity, just an explanation or a vague introduction. All that she has is a letter she was planning on mailing to her best friend.

It had taken an entire week of re-wording and ripping up to get things right, but finally she is ready to send it to her. Unlike her feelings, the words aren't complicated. As she tried to write it she couldn't shake a certain Nietzsche quote from her mind, "That which can be put into words is already dead in our hearts." She doesn't want to rationalize and over-analyze this feeling in her stomach but she has to; the letter is the last step, or maybe the first.

As the man walks past her she looks down at the envelope and without a second to ponder or wonder she plunges it into his hands. He doesn't even look up at her; he takes the letter and continues walking.

She calls after him, "It's not to you, but it's my heart." Did that sound really artificial and cheesy she wonders? "Ummm, I mean, it's too important for me to keep anyway. You can mail it if you want." What have I done, she thinks. Now she's never going to know how I feel. "Fuck Carrie," she says aloud to herself, "the girl lives down the damn street from you, you see her everyday. What's so hard about all this?"

He starts to open the letter then shoves it into his back pocket. Maybe he'll send it or maybe he'll use it to fuel a fire later on. He thinks about just leaving it there, hidden away on his person where it will stick to his skin like papier mache and he'll forget about it until the words bleed. Just one moment after dusk turns the sky and his skin the same color, dark-

ness collapses onto the city. With the sun out of range, the moon begins to cool everything down. Bodies and engines slow to a speeding crawl, giving up the chase instigated by today's monolithic heat index. A car passes and someone yells at the walking man, "Take a bath motherfucker." He doesn't feel dirty; he can't tell the grime on his skin from the asphalt on the streets from the Coke machine in the polar bear cage at the zoo, from the empty pockets that steal his identity as an American (and we just keep calling him the walking man).

Further down the street the ruins of an old pizza place lay buried; an elegy to urban flight usurps the old sign that still hangs above the doorway. Across the street a man sits on a bus bench all alone. His head rests in the palms of his delicate hands. The way he fidgets and stares insists that something doesn't fit right. The homeless man stops to cross the street. A police car slows down as it passes through what looks like a possible situation; the asymmetry between this triangle of human disturbance is invisible to the man on the bus bench. In fact he is unaware of most everything around him. He sinks in the quicksand of his own thoughts as the cop car disappears over the hill.

While waiting for the bus the man realizes that he doesn't understand himself, but not in the existential sense. He just walked away from his fifth job this year. He made it a month and a half at this one. His wife and his son moved out of Memphis with him so that he could start fresh. Yesterday was his 30th birthday and payday so he took them out to dinner, Italian food, to celebrate. Now he has to crawl back home and tell them something that he can't even explain to himself. He mulls over the words in his head:

"Honey, Lanie, I can't work, I cannot do it. I'm not lazy; look at my manuscripts. It's just that I'm not a slave or a willful amputee. My morals eat away at me when I punch the clock; my balls sting and my hair starts to fall out—I know it does." He tugs at the thin black fur on his crown as he continues talking to himself out loud. "I drink coffee in the morning and beer all night and in between all I really see is a paycheck. Do you recognize those words honey? Old song lyrics that I used to swear by. I just never thought it would come to this."

He was no longer talking to her.

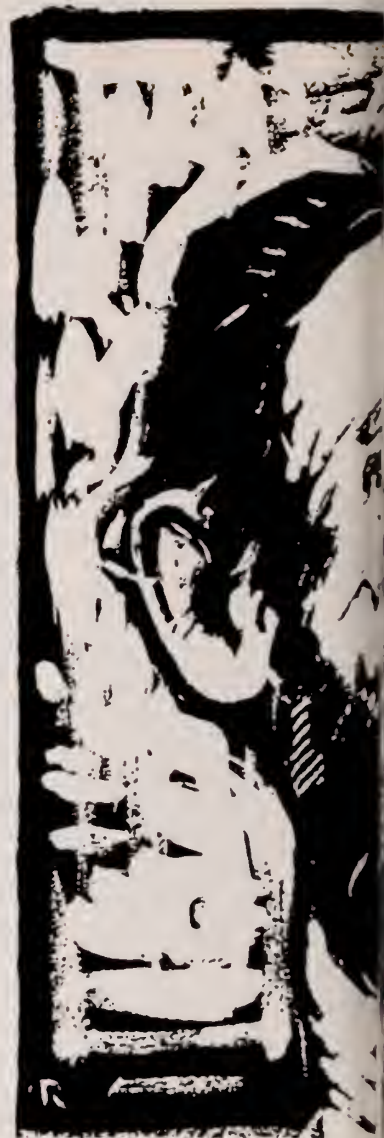
"And if I really don't support this money-hungry Calvinist work ethic then why am I giving up so much of my time and all of my energy to some computer screen that I happen to understand, fueling the fire that's burning me at the stake? Goddammit, we're all just bobbing at the surface, like dead bodies. My mouth and nose are barely over the waterline. Salt water in a dark dirty sea keeps pouring in my mouth and swelling up my dry lungs when I try to yell or even talk. And here we are all drowning, not thinking that we're wading,

waiting, wading toward death. I just wanna find the ladder out of the ocean. The salt stings my pores and there's no shadows to mock and people just stop noticing everything else but their aching muscles, torn from efforts to merely stay alive. But they're doing it so well. And I can't be part of it. And I can't kid myself with productivity and inflation rates. Shit the whole mess is scattered, far far beyond my reach."

The longer he goes the more dramatic it becomes. The man is skilled at talking to himself; he sounds good. The homeless man has stopped right behind him to listen for a few minutes. The look on his face is one of pity. The man on the bus bench talks like a writer, someone who redefines irony and narcissism over and over again. Someone who watches himself as romantically as he does the people around him. His own mind is another country and sometimes the voices are foreign and he transcribes them. His wife will probably leave him soon. Somewhere in the back of his mind he knows this, and it makes him happy. His house will become a coffin and will probably be repossessed in a few years. When he was eight he died for 16 seconds at his friend Steve's pool party.

The homeless man has never been dead, not even in a metaphorical sense. He's never really known anyone that's died and he's never been sick either. The girl on the bridge, her mother shot her father four years ago. He was an asshole, but he never touched a sip of alcohol in his life. He did have a good job though. One he hated inside but could never let go. The pension plans of course. The two guys in the ear both work OK jobs. One will soon become an environmental lawyer, but he'll never change anything. His paycheck will be enough to feed one thousand hungry faces. He'll start to really like grilled salmon and this particular white wine from Italy. The other man's wife was just released from jail. She will never be the same. She will realize more and more everyday how unfamiliar and inhuman the world really is. Over and over she will forget to hug her son.

The boy who the funeral was for hit a bulldozer that was lying in the middle of the highway. A car in front of him swerved and missed it. There weren't any skid marks at the scene but you can still see the charred asphalt where the car exploded. His dad sells cars and the man on the park bench will write about how ironic that is. The homeless man whose name I don't know, he'll keep walking. Soon he'll notice the smell of fall and the leaves will begin to fade into that beautiful stage before death. One day he will send that letter. He'll walk across the entire city to reach the post office and maybe the girl on the bike and her friend will fall in love. ★





Was Abraham Lincoln a Racist?

A Review of Lerone Bennett Jr.'s

*Forced Into Glory:
Abraham Lincoln's ~~White~~ Dream*

by Ron Sakolsky

"I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races [applause]—that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race."

Abraham Lincoln, Charleston, Illinois,
1858

Forced Into Glory was originally conceived back in 1968, when Lerone Bennett Jr. wrote the *Ebony* article, "Was Abe Lincoln A White Supremacist?" While that article has largely been ignored by the Establishment coterie of Lincoln scholars dedicated as they are

to an expunging of the historical record of any unpleasant facts about their hero (and meal ticket), the African-American community has always taken it more seriously. For years, the Bennett article has had a lively word-of-mouth underground circulation in black America. In 1976, African-American novelist Ishmael Reed, in his novel, *Flight to Canada*, obviously used the article as the basis for his hilarious send-up of American racism with Lincoln mockingly featured as one of its central characters.

Bennett's previous book, *Before The Mayflower*, is a respected text in African-American history. Yet even today, just as was the case when the original article appeared, assorted historians and freelance writers have rushed to the front lines to attack *Forced Into Glory* and defend the mythical Lincoln. Many of these "drive-by" reviews are quick to point out that Bennett's book inappropriately and unfairly applies Twentieth Century ideas on race to Lincoln's Civil War America. The argument is that Lincoln was a man of his time and what seems like racism today was based upon the widely accepted, if less enlightened,

understanding of racial issues that was prevalent among white people in the Nineteenth Century. However, Bennett is at pains to point out the dangerous fallacy of this logic. He says, "I have compared Lincoln here not with Twentieth Century leaders but with the white men and women of his own time, and I have suggested that one of the reasons we are in trouble racially in this country is that we have systematically downplayed and suppressed the white men and women who, unlike Lincoln, really believed in the Declaration of Independence."

Who were these men and women? In his dedication to "the real emancipators who forced Lincoln into glory," Bennett includes not only militant African-American abolitionists and rebels like Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner and Sojourner Truth, but such Americans of European descent as fiery

abolitionists John Brown and Wendell Phillips as well as Radical Republicans such as Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens. As to politicians from Lincoln's home state, he singles out Lyman Trumbull, who, unlike Lincoln, opposed the pre-Civil War Fugitive Slave Act by which escaped slaves were hunted down in the North, and who was a supporter of the Confiscation Acts, which called for an immediate end to slavery without compensation to the slaveholders. In addition to Trumbull, Bennett says Illinois can be proud of its first abolitionist State Representative Owen Lovejoy, and his brother Elijah Lovejoy, whose abolitionist printing press was thrown into the Mississippi River and his life taken by an angry white mob in Alton.

Part of the historical mirage floating around Lincoln is that he grew increasingly less racist and more in favor of racial equality over time. Not so, says Bennett. According to an eyewitness account by Henry Villard, with the country on the verge of Civil War, a folksy Lincoln, who was fresh from his victory in the presidential campaign of 1860, "told a story of the Kentucky Justice of the Peace whose first case was a criminal prosecution for the abuse of slaves. Unable to find any precedent, he exclaimed angrily: I will be damned if I don't feel almost sorry for being elected when the niggers is the first thing I have to attend to." Not only did Lincoln use the word "nigger" countless times, but he was a frequenter of minstrel shows and specialized in telling nigger jokes ad nauseam to his political intimates and cronies.

As to for his support for the Fugitive Slave Law, he had no qualms about slave hunters kidnapping escaped slaves right on the streets of his adopted hometown of Springfield, and even

voted to extend the reach of the Fugitive Slave Law to Washington, DC within sight of Capitol Hill itself. For such unswerving support of the Fugitive Slave Law, Wendell Phillips went so far as to call Lincoln a "slave hound." Back in Illinois, Lincoln had previously as a state legislator voted for a racially discriminatory electoral system and Black Laws and Codes which encouraged racist violence and were among the harshest in the country. Partly thanks to Lincoln, as historian Robert P. Howard has put it, Illinois was "almost a slave state." Yet while Lincoln's actions vis a vis the Fugitive Slave Law led to the capture of untold numbers of slaves and free blacks assumed to be escaped slaves, other white

Springfield families secretly took fugitives from slavery to Chicago in wagons loaded with sacks of grain to continue their journey on the Under-

ground Railroad to eventual freedom in Canada. Yet at the time when the slavery question was the most burning moral issue facing the nation, Lincoln was not only *not* an abolitionist, but he contemptuously derided abolitionism itself.

How can we have forgotten the names of the courageous stationmasters on the Underground Railroad, and, adding insult to injury, continue to refer to Lincoln, who openly despised the abolitionists, as "The Great Emancipator"? After all, as Bennett so ably demonstrates, the Emancipation Proclamation was not what it seemed. Even Lincoln's Secretary of State William Henry Seward sarcastically said of the Presidential proclamation, "We show our sympathy with the slaves by emancipating the slaves where we cannot reach them and holding them in bondage where we can set them free." Lincoln's proclamation, in and of itself, did not *actually* free a single slave in the Confederacy and studiously excluded all slaves within territory occupied by the Union Army. Lincoln carefully crafted a "solution" to the slavery issue that would not be offensive to his (white) Southern brothers. It was formulated not in the overriding interest of the aggrieved slaves, but had as its primary goal the preservation of the Union. Once again folks: "Honest" Abe "freed" slaves in Confederate territory where his proclamation held no legal authority and left them in slavery in Union-held territory where he could have freed them. Moreover, the Emancipation Proclamation was specifically designed so as not to apply to the Border States where the extension of slavery had been a hotly contested issue for years.

As Bennett notes, it seems from the evidence of the historical record that the Emancipation Proclamation was, in reality, a ploy

whose goal was not to *immediately* emancipate the slaves, but to keep slavery in tact until Lincoln could mobilize support for his *real* plan which called for *gradual* emancipation with handsome compensation to the slavemasters and an indefinite period of apprenticeship (the terms of which would be controlled by the slaveholders) before full freedom was to be granted. Moreover, such a half-hearted emancipation scheme was to be combined with more serious plans for deporting the former slaves to another country in Africa or the Caribbean so that the divisive race issue would no longer plague fraternal relations between Americans of European descent. Abolitionist, hell, Lincoln wasn't even an integrationist. So much for liberal illusions...

Why then did Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation at all? As Bennett convincingly argues, the real impetus was the Second Confiscation Act of July 17, 1862—the *real* Emancipation Proclamation. This Act signed into law six months before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, provided for *immediate* confiscation of the slaveowners' human "property" and granted freedom outright to those formerly defined as chattel. It also defined the leading figures among the Southern secessionists as traitors and demanded reconciliation *with justice*. So when on September 22, 1862, exactly one day before the effective date of the Confiscation Act, Lincoln, as Chief Executive, signed the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, it, as intended, effectively nullified that much more radical Congressional Act.

In fact, as Lincoln often pointed out to quell the fears of his Southern brethren, the Emancipation Proclamation was a war document which had limited legality and scope and would be inoperative after the war was over. Beyond its wartime nature, it had many legal loopholes which would have engendered a century of litigation. Legally speaking, as Bennett notes, it took the Thirteenth Amendment ratified by the states to consolidate the legal freedoms that the public mistakenly associates with the Emancipation Proclamation. That amendment was authored not by Lincoln, but by the less well known Radical Republicans who *forced* Lincoln into glory.

Beyond the Confiscation Acts, the Radical Republicans in the 37th Congress also revised the military code by which Lincoln had called upon Union soldiers to return slaves to slaveowners, and passed the controversial act which freed all slaves who chose to enlist in the Union Army. These Congressional actions ultimately contributed to the defeat of the slavocracy. Lincoln, on the other hand, feared a black insurrection more than the prolongation of slavery or even the prospect of military defeat. He bent over backwards so as not to offend the slavocracy, and steadfastly refused to arm the slaves as he did other Union sol-

Unable to find any precedent, (Lincoln) exclaimed angrily: I will be damned if I don't feel almost sorry for being elected when the niggers is the first thing I have to attend to.

[people]

diers until late in the war. As a result, many Northern troops felt his actions endangered their lives and impeded the war effort, and Illinois Governor Richard Yates even urged him in a public letter to let black people fight on the side of the Union.

Lincoln's war policy was clearly to win the war *without* touching slavery. His goal was to restore the *old* Union, and he refused to take the high ground by embarking on an inspirational crusade against slavery which would have no doubt buoyed the sagging spirits of the Union army by giving them a just cause for which to fight. As Bennett sees it, instead of taking the opportunity to emphasize the goal of the war as being the completion of the unfinished American revolution that had been stalled by slavery, Lincoln cautiously sought a return to the previous status quo.

Accordingly, during the war, when "troublesome" anti-slavery generals freed slaves in Missouri, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina, Lincoln ordered that they be re-enslaved. And when at the close of the war he approved the creation of "Jim Crow" governments in occupied states, he was perfectly willing to deny the ballot and the other rights of citizenship to African Americans just as he had done in his tenure at the state legislature in Illinois, even though many had joined the Union Army (albeit serving at less than the wages of white soldiers, Bennett adds, a policy from which Lincoln refused to budge).

Wendell Phillips assessed Lincoln with succinct directness. "We think he does not merit the name of liberator." Black abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass, often assumed by historians to be Lincoln's devoted advisor on slavery issues, was even more unkind in his scathing criticism of Lincoln's "inconsistencies, his pride of race and blood, his contempt for Negroes and his canting hypocrisy... In his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man. He was preeminently the white man's President, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men."

Building on Douglass' statement, Bennett contends that Lincoln constructed his whiteness as the centerpiece of his being and his politics. Lincoln was no race traitor, far from it. In Bennett's thinking, white people have choices when it comes to race issues. "Whether a White person born into the group accepts the group imperative or rejects it or puts it in brackets, he or she must take a stand on it, especially in a situation where whiteness is oppressing non-whiteness or where whiteness is struggling non-violently and violently to keep white superior and Non-white subordinate. John Brown and Wendell Phillips rejected the white vow in the name of the human vow, proving among other things, that one doesn't have to be white. Lincoln who was

always talking, even as president, of his 'duty' to whiteness, accepted it. The different choices Brown, Phillips and Lincoln made enable us to say that whiteness has many ways of being white, and that to choose to be a white man is to choose to be a particular kind of white man." While the historical circumstances of gender and race relations are different today, the ethical choices remain the same.

What kind of white man was Lincoln? As a politician, he was often the Great Evader rather than the Great Emancipator. Bennett describes him as a "fence sitter" and a "trimmer" who, while he might say that slavery was wrong in the abstract, almost always repudiated these statements by his actions. Even his old law partner William Hendon called him "a walking contradiction." Born in a Kentucky log cabin as a poor white Southerner, Lincoln pulled himself up by his bootstraps and early on joined the Whig Party. In choosing the party of conservatism and aristocracy, he repudiated not only poor blacks, slave and free, but the very class of poor whites from which he had himself arisen. He fought in the Black Hawk Wars which ended in forced removal, massive reallocations and was part and parcel of the policy of genocide toward Native Americans. He favored punitive Black Laws in the "free" state of Illinois and operated on the assumptions of the Supreme Court's 1857 Dred Scott Decision which

said that black people had no legal rights that white people were bound to respect. He supported chattel slavery where it existed, opposed only to its extension, and had no problem with wage slavery.

While Lincoln talked with a forked tongue about government of the people, by the people and for the people, he resolutely

served the interests of rich white men—industrialists up North and slaveholders in the South. Many of Springfield's wealthiest families were, of course, descended from the Kentucky slaveholders with whom the young Mr. Lincoln opportunistically hoped to curry favor. Even the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates abounded in racist remarks and were not about whether to abolish slavery, but merely whether white supremacy would be best served by excluding slavery from the territories or allowing slaveowners to bring their slaves with them

anywhere they chose. During the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, when Douglas proudly proclaimed that he was against intermarriage, Lincoln replied about himself that it was wrong

to suggest that he was in favor of "niggers and white people marrying together." Lincoln was horrified by miscegenation. In Springfield in 1857, he revealingly said, "There is a natural disgust in the minds of nearly all white people, to the idea of an indiscriminate amalgamation of the white and black races." Not surprisingly, his ultimate plan for separating the two

races was deportation of the black race.

In fact, on the issue of race Lincoln could be amazingly callous. Speaking in Worcester, Massachusetts in September of 1848, he made a shocking impromptu reference to martyred Illinois abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy,

saying to his New England audience, "I have heard you have abolitionists here. We have a few in Illinois and we shot one the other day." Back at the time of Lovejoy's murder in Alton, Illinois, Lincoln had said nothing to condemn the crime. Instead, he matter-of-factly noted, "In light of the Southern origin of most of them, the attitude of the townspeople on abolition

Lincoln pulled himself up by his bootstraps and early on joined the Whig Party. In choosing the party of conservatism and aristocracy, he repudiated not only poor blacks, slave and free, but the very class of poor whites from which he had himself arisen.



[people]

was a *natural* [italics mine] one." Later in 1858, he spoke glowingly in Alton in favor of his lifelong dream for the new Western territories in which they would become a white Utopia devoid of black people. It was this racist utopia that, as Bennett points out, Lincoln characteristically described as "the last, best hope of the world." Essentially Lincoln believed that white freedom necessitated black bondage. As he once said, "We could never get our constitution unless we permitted *them* to remain in slavery" [italics mine].

Now, of course, there are those who will say that Lincoln lied and pretended to be a racist just to get elected, but such an apologist stance is even more incriminating than the original accusation in that it is evidence of the crudest demagoguery. In stark contrast to Lincoln, the Chicago candidate for the U.S. Senate who defeated Lincoln's Senate candidacy in 1855, Lyman Trumbull, courageously traveled the circuit in Southern Illinois delivering uncompromising talks against slavery often at the risk of personal violence. The fact that he won the election is evidence that in reality Lincoln was *more backward* than his fellow Illinoisians in his thinking on racial matters.

Much to the dismay of the Springfield-based Lincoln industry, ranging from scholars to tourism boosters, Lincoln was a disgrace until the very end of his life. As Bennett so ably documents, there is no evidence that Lincoln changed and that he was moving in the direction of equality at the time of his death. In fact, on the last full day of his life, he defended the newly formed "Jim Crow" Louisiana government at a cabinet meeting. In comparison, Radical Republicans, like Thaddeus Stevens, proposed a policy of "40 acres and a mule." While Stevens is often vilified for demanding the meting out of punishment for Southern war crimes, he had no malice toward poor Southern whites. He only focused his wrath on the minority of slave-owning aristocrats. As he saw it, the plantation system must be destroyed and land redistribution for all undertaken, not as charity but as justice.

In his immortal and prophetic words, Stevens said, "To free blacks without land, to trust them to the tender mercies of their former masters and to the protection of state legislation, without giving them any voice in making the laws, is simply to turn them over to the torture of their enemies. To turn them loose unaided and unprotected is wholesale murder." In a similar vein, Stevens' abolitionist counterpart, Wendell Phillips, put the betrayal engendered by discriminatory "Jim Crow" laws into personal terms. "That man made the South a paradise, and when it was done, he shouldered his musket with us and saved it to the nation. Look at him! The gratitude of republics! Disenfranchised, naked, homeless, poor, we give him back to the white man who hates him, to dictate the terms of his existence!...

The Negro has earned land, education, rights. Before we leave him we ought to leave him on his own soil, in his own house, with the right to the ballot, and the school-house within reach."

Unlike Lincoln's defense of Southern apartheid, Charles Sumner proposed a post-war civil rights bill that would have banned segregation in schools, churches, cemeteries, public conveyances and places of public accommodation. Instead of Sumner's visionary plan, we got the disastrous Reconstruction plans of Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. Beyond the sanctioning of "Jim Crow," in 1862, Lincoln established an unofficial black emigration division within the Department of Interior that would facilitate his racist dream of America as a White Eden through the banishment of black people and Indians. Any humanism he had was twisted by white supremacy into what Bennett terms a deeply flawed "racist humanism."

While Lincoln has gone down in history as God's gift to African Americans, the true white allies of the former slaves were those who Bennett refers to as the "radical humanitarians," such as Brown, Stevens, Phillips and Sumner, whose humanism was not poisoned by their racism. Typically, instead of being seen as anti-racist heroes worthy of our emulation and respect for having the courage of their convictions, the latter are recorded in history as humorless ideologues and zealots. But what if we turned consensus history upside down and looked at it from the bottom-up? In response to Lincoln's favored deportation scheme, black spokespeople repeatedly claimed as much of a right as Abraham Lincoln to decide to live in America. And if they were illiterate or their reading skills were minimal, just look at Lincoln's own parents whose white skin privilege guaranteed them citizenship though they were poor and unschooled. Some wags in the African American community even suggested that the easiest way to solve the predicament of race relations in the U.S. would be to remove the real problem—white people.

But, you might ask, what about Lincoln's crowning glory, the Gettysburg Address? The democracy of which he spoke at Gettysburg that was supposedly conceived by Lincoln's forefathers when they framed the Constitution was in reality choked in the womb by white supremacy. But didn't Lincoln say that "a house divided against itself cannot stand"? In fact what Lincoln envisioned here, after a Union victory in the war, was an all-white nation with the former slaves deported so that the white brotherhood could once again live in harmony. As Wendell Phillips put it, "Mr. Lincoln is anti-slavery. He doesn't believe in a nation half-slave and half-free. But he is a colonizationist, and he doesn't believe in a nation half black and half white. Hence preju-

dice makes it impossible to do justice to the Negro." The chances for democracy in America were seriously jeopardized long ago by the fatal compromise between slavery and freedom that legally made each enslaved African 3/5 of a human being, and the possibility of attaining social justice has been negated even further by the subsequent denial of and refusal to address issues of institutionalized racism on the part of politicians like Lincoln and his ilk who have always limited their actions to apologies and platitudes.

Perhaps now, with such hindsight as Bennett offers us, we as a diverse people can embrace, not Lincoln, but those brave individuals and inspiring movements of the past of which we can truly be proud. Let's push the poseurs off their pedestals. This is no time for illusions. ★

Popular Education for a Free Society



The Institute for Social Ecology's education programs, drawing from the best of philosophical and revolutionary traditions, provide an interdisciplinary

framework to guide radical social change. The ISE has year-round study options, from a B.A. degree in affiliation with Burlington College to intensive summer programs, and much more. Contact us for a catalog or visit our website.



Institute for Social Ecology

1118 Maple Hill, Plainfield, VT 05667

(802) 454-8493 / ise@sover.net

www.social-ecology.org

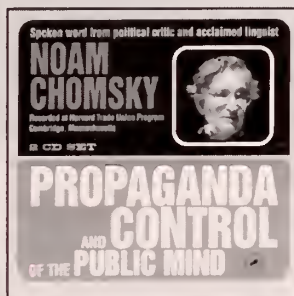
[people]

IT AIN'T A BEER BELLY. IT'S A FUEL TANK FOR A REVOLUTIONARY SEX-MACHINE.



HOWARD ZINN
Heroes and Martyrs 2 CD set

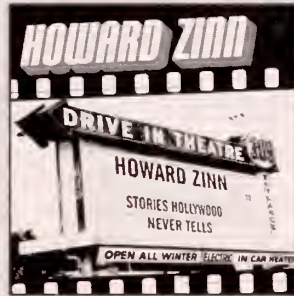
Howard Zinn takes us back a century to a newly industrialized America, the time of robber barons & tycoons, of dramatic and often violent labor struggles like Haymarket & Homestead. His focus is on the organizers and agitators in the worker and immigrant communities: Nicola Sarco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, anarchists whose arrest, conviction and execution on trumped-up murder charges produced storms of protest around the world, and Emma Goldman, feminist, anarchist, propagandist extraordinaire for free love and against capitalist exploitation, for direct action and against oppression.



NOAM CHOMSKY
Propaganda and Control of the Public Mind 2 CD set

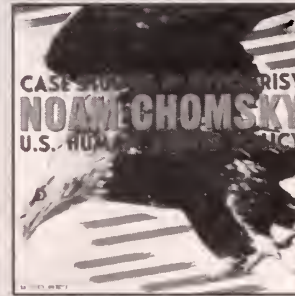
What do Chumbawamba, Bad Religion, Rage Against the Machine and Propagandhi all have in common? They've all featured Noam Chomsky's work on their albums. Word

Chomsky is one of the great resistance figures of this era. In this, perhaps his most cogent lecture to date, he provides an introduction to and synthesis of his key thinking on the media, propaganda and its pivotal role in the relentless class struggle being waged daily. Double CD mayhem from the mac daddy of daddy mums.



HOWARD ZINN
Stories Hollywood Never Tells CD

What sort of view of our history do we get from Hollywood movies? Why are some stories told and others not? In this informal talk given at the Laos film festival, Zinn turns his attention to Hollywood, the stories it tells and the ones it doesn't. He tells of the stories of wars from the point of view of disillusioned deserters, of the differences between "All Quiet on the Western Front" and "Saving Private Ryan" of railroad strikes and the Haymarket Affair, Eugene Debs and the real story of Helen Keller, socialist and anti-war agitator. A spell binding and provocative talk by America's most beloved historian.



NOAM CHOMSKY
Case Studies in Hypocrisy: U.S. Foreign Policy 2 CD set

The U.S. prides itself as the defender of democracy and beacon of human rights, and U.S. foreign policy finds justification in promoting the universal values of freedom and equality. Noam Chomsky shows us how to peek behind the curtain to see what is really at work behind the human rights rhetoric. And he separates clearly the real motives of the ongoing assault on Iraq from various high-minded explanations offered by politicians and the corporate media.

Noam Chomsky's ability to illuminate politics clearly and simply coupled with his honesty, humor and encyclopedic knowledge have made him the leading commentator on politics in our time.



Rock hard. Ride free. This is a work-place democracy.

CD's are \$12 u.s. funds ppd, Double CD sets are \$15 u.s. funds ppd.

G7 Welcoming Committee Records/ Box 27006/ 360 Main Street Concourse/ Winnipeg, Mb/ R3C 4T3/ Canada www.g7welcomingcommittee.com info@g7welcomingcommittee.com

WARNING: THIS BOOK WILL NOT SAVE YOUR LIFE!

Coming in 2001: the Evasion book, and the tentatively titled Crimethink for Experts



"There is a refreshing quality to a book that offers the same amount of information to both the serious reader and casual browser—it is the type of book you'd thumb through in the store and actually decide to buy (or steal) . . . Less a novel than an exploded manifesto, *Days of War, Nights of Love* might be just what we need . . . the book's vehement insistence that living is more important than art carries the argument beyond the typical debate. . . Topics range from anarchy to hierarchy, work to sex, alienation to liberation and technology, but every page burns with a passion for a freer life. . . Towards the end of the journey the personal testimonials about not working and the closing art pieces become an aria* of voices urging you to close the book and live. Glorious even for the most cynical reader, what more can we ask from a book?"

-Clamor Magazine #6 (dec/jan)



that, my friend, is up to you!



Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink for Beginners
\$8ppd (or add \$3 for priority mail)
This elaborately illustrated 292 page book cannot be accurately described in a short advertising blurb trying to convince you to buy it. If you need more information go to crimethinc.com/days

Harbinger.3

Free (donations of stamps and/or cash are appreciated if you are able)
16 oversize pages of revolutionary propaganda, your ticket to a world free of charge.



Send cash to:
CrimethInc. Far East Cell
PO Box 1963
Olympia WA 98507-1963

If you are interested in obtaining these items in quantity, or joyfully live outside of the USA, please get in touch, info@crimethinc.com

*1. A solo vocal piece with instrumental accompaniment, as in an opera. 2. An air; a melody.

A Pair of Tits, The Big Nurse and the Balance of Power

The Representation of Women in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*

by Jane Graham

I was working away from home and wanted some reading matter to take with me, and as I'd run out of books of my own to read, I began looking through other people's collections for ones to borrow. Noticing an old paperback copy of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, I thought to myself, now here's a book that I ought to read. A book regarded as a modern classic, that everyone seemed to have a high opinion of. And I couldn't even recall having seen the movie all the way through.

So that's what I took to read. On a 10-day dancing contract in deepest Germany. On these contracts, away from home and from intelligent conversation, dancing for 7+ hours every night, group accommodation provided, I read insatiably, like I'm popping vitamins, because it's the only thing that keeps me sane, that makes me feel like I'm still an understanding, thinking being and not an automated doll.

So there I was, shortly before my 27th birthday and in the mindset of a stripper and drinks hostess girl, reading a novel which I imagine is now a set text for high school exam papers. And maybe if I'd read it as a feisty adolescent, angry at the world and at the system, I would have applauded its sentiments without a hint of criticism. I would have cried to myself, yes, that's how it is, the Combine, the system, labelling us into sane and insane, crushing our self expression, making us all into scared little rabbits. But I wasn't reading it with a head full of youthful angst – rather one dosed with working cynicism – and much against what I wanted to feel – I wanted to agree with it all – I wasn't too sure if I liked what Kesey was trying to say. Beneath all that swinging sixties, libertarian vibe, there

was an undercurrent which disturbed me. I actually found my -

[sexuality & relationships]



self relating more and more with the arch enemy of the tale, the cog in the wheel of the Combine, the Big Nurse.

I have always been an anti-authoritarian, disobedient kind of gal. But I was reading this book after nights of troublesome men and constant sexual objectification. I had been, I could see, employing strategies similar to those of the Big Nurse to defend myself against the psychological, and occasionally physical, assaults of the men. Without conflict, I had been trying to rise above this kind of mild harassment, in the form of words and body language, with a quiet

dignity.

Women, of course, have been employing and perfecting these strategies for centuries using patience and condescension, not to mention those looks, as their tools. The fine art of cutting men down without losing face. *Breaking their balls*, as McMurphy in Kesey's novel succinctly puts it.

Here in the strip club environment, the relationships between men and women are polarized, condensed to bare essentials and stereotyped, almost symbolic behaviour. In here, there's no messing about, no pretending that what's on the agenda has nothing to do with sex, or indeed money. This makes it easier to study those strategies either gender use against each other, even if everything is employed in an exaggerated, extreme way.

I have a friend who works with homeless people, drug addicts, street people, the most desperate prostitutes. She really has to think about how she dresses for a shift. For her own protection, she has to clearly define her role in the environment as a role of authority; despite a warm, friendly, egalitarian personality, she has to appear distant and non-sexual. She sleeps in the same place as everyone else, though with a locked door to her room, and she must make it clear to potential clients she isn't doing business herself. She has to make a clear differentiation.

One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest describes the male inmates of a mental institution ruled over by a Miss Ratched, otherwise known as the Big Nurse, who though at first sight suggests a kind of matronly, motherly love, is actually the authority figure who keeps them all in their place.

When the Big Nurse is first introduced, it is with a physical description: *Her face is smooth, calculated, and precision-made, like an expensive baby doll, skin like flesh-coloured enamel, blend of white and cream and baby blue eyes, small nose, pink little nostrils—everything working together except the colour on her lips and fingernails, and the size of her bosom. A mistake was made somehow in manufacturing, putting those big, womanly breasts on what would of otherwise been a perfect work, and you can see how bitter she is about it.*

The Big Nurse's tits are mentioned a lot.

They, and the colour of her lips, are integral to the creation of her character. Why did Kesey give her those big tits? One would assume from this excerpt to give her an anomaly, something everyone

else (why! It's only natural) would love, but she has spent a lifetime trying to ignore.

As for McMurphy; *This guy is redheaded with long red sideburns and a tangle of curls out from under his cap, been needing cut a long time, and he's broad as Papa was tall, broad across the jaw and shoulders and chest, a broad white devilish grin, and he's hard in a different way from Papa kind of the way a baseball is hard under the scuffed leather. A seam runs across his nose and one cheekbone where somebody laid him a good one in a fight, and the stitches are still in the seam. He stands there waiting, and when nobody makes a move to say anything to him he commences to laugh. Nobody can tell exactly why he laughs; there's nothing funny going on. But it's not the way that Public Relation laughs, it's free and loud and it comes out of his wide grinning mouth and spreads in rings bigger and bigger till it's lapping against the walls over the ward. Not like that fat Public Relation laugh. This sounds real. I realize all of a sudden it's the first laugh I've heard in years.*

A lot is being said here. Firstly, McMurphy is not like the other inmates – they are cowed, nervous, unsure of how to act toward women, defeated and afraid to leave the familiar confines of the ward. He, however, is big, strong, ready and even wanting to fight, a gambling man with a voracious sexual appetite. He reminds them of that outside world they'd forgotten, he even brings in the *man smell of dust and dirt from the open fields, and sweat, and work.* And he laughs, laughter which in their defeated state they'd forgotten even existed.

There is no denying the power of laughter. Don't think for a minute I am suggesting some humourless feminist regime where we all go around in sexless boiler-suits, scowling at each other. Far from it. I am suggesting that laughter is the most powerful tool available to

us, but rather than one used by men to disarm women, it is a tool which can be used by everyone.

I have a performance act I do. It's a strip show, but I like to think that it's more than that; by deconstructing the medium of striptease, by using comedy and an autobiographical narrative I attempt to bring the discussion on prostitution, pornography and the objectification of women in general out into the open at the same time as giving them some light relief. I call myself *Minx Grill* and part of my act, the part people seem to really focus on, is where I choose a man from the audience and bring him onto the stage, where I sit him down and tie his hands behind his back, and proceed to straddle him, first backwards (groping his crotch and covering his pants in shaving foam) then forwards (topless, I push my tits, covered in aforementioned shaving foam, in his face, thus covering it entirely). My tits, like those of the Big Nurse are, through some chance of fate, big and thus perfect for antics such as these.

I always pick on a man. Sometimes this is hard when it's a feminist gathering and I end up searching out the lone 2 or 3 men hiding at the back. (No, I don't plan it beforehand; almost always, I've never met them before. In fact, I feel more comfortable if I haven't). Why not a woman? Because it's better with a guy, they're just more amusing to see humiliated... but also, more seriously, because for a woman this isn't so much about being embarrassed or humiliated so much as violated. I've never had a man seriously complain about this being done to him. But when someone reversed the situation on me, I felt incredibly uncomfortable. It reminded me instantly of situations where I have been the object of assault, situations which have been very frightening. And just about every woman, if she has not actually been attacked at some time or other, has been in situations where she felt she might be. And being in that situation of apparent helplessness, another body grabbing you, just brings those memories back.

It's more fun to choose a guy who'll really bring a challenge. For one, I don't really like it when they're too shy and uncomfortable, projecting that nervousness onto me. No, I look for a particularly macho guy, one who's been shooting his mouth off all through my dialogue, maybe. A guy like McMurphy. At punk shows, just prizing the bottle of beer from out of his hand, the cigarette from his mouth, removing his leather jacket or his cap usually shrinks him down quite dramatically. And then, without screaming or shouting, with the simple use of shaving foam and my body, I get my own back. And I usually manage to shut them up, at least for a short while. And – I have to say my chains are pretty easy to break free of, even for someone who's no Houdini – they never do anything but sit there meekly while the act is going on.

It was actually a woman who told me after one show that she was unhappy with that

I have always been an anti-authoritarian, disobedient kind of gal. But I was reading this book after nights of troublesome men and constant sexual objectification. I had been, I could see, employing strategies similar to those of the Big Nurse to defend myself against the psychological, and occasionally physical, assaults of the men.



part, that I was abusing my position of power. Interesting, because the men never tell me that. Perhaps I am, because it is my role as performer which enables me to do it so simply; in answer to the oft-asked question, "Jane, how can you do that? How do you have the nerve?" Because once I'd done it a couple of times, I knew that I could. Once I have the wig on, and the make-up, and the high heeled boots and the environment of the stage which makes anything I desire possible, I can do that. It's my show and it's a great feeling.

The Big Nurse, according to the narrative, keeps control over the inmates of her ward without any visual show of power or violence. How does she do it? According to the most articulate inmate, Harding, it is by insinuation. She doesn't accuse. She merely needs to insinuate, insinuate anything, don't you see?

I understand what Kesey is trying to suggest; that you can keep people in their place, in a place of abject abdication, with very subtle, scarcely perceptible ways. What I object to is the notion that matronly women in a state of sexual denial enforce these kind of structures; I don't object to the notion of joy of living, the strength of a spirit which refuses to die. But why does this manifest itself in sexual harassment? Could Kesey have imagined a Big Nurse who went home, took off her uniform and had a good old shag herself? Of course, the Big Nurse, Miss Ratched, is unmarried. She is the stereotyped spinster, so locked into her role she appears unable either to give or to receive love.

I have to remember that *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a book written in the '60s, in the zeitgeist of the time and before the feminist consciousness of the early 1970s. The civil rights movement then was one where women kept to the background, where women's rights wasn't an issue given much thought. As I see it, the basic premise here is that fishing, simple country living and partying with good-time gals restore a man's healthy ego. A good, unrepressed (heterosexual) fuck will sort anyone out.

Perhaps, put simply, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a man's book. Not an anti-feminist, or a pro-feminist book, but one having nothing to do with feminism. Maybe that's a good thing. It's often been suggested that men need their space as much as women, without them turning into places where men talk about feminism. And fishing, hunting, etc., have always been about male space. Yet I'm not quite sure what Kesey would do with a guy who preferred ballet to fishing, for whom the love of a good honest hooker would not help.

At the end, I really thought McMurphy was going to reap his revenge on the Big Nurse by raping her. I came to this conclusion because as I saw it, the struggle for power between them had centred on his sexuality, on his virility versus her motherly sterility, his satin boxer shorts and her tits . . . to overcome her that way was inexcusable to me, and as I read it, I was plead-

ing in my head with Kesey as author not to do that; how, I thought, could such a thing occur in a book that so many people I respect hold in high regard? It was a little like the impending horror which unfolds when a group of people you previously believed to be of like mind as yourself get caught up in some sort of mass hysteria which you alone can see through. But the act instead, though one of physical violence and exposing her breasts (was that really necessary?), does not, to my relief, single out her womanhood.

Not only would I argue that the Big Nurse gets a bad rap, but that all women do. All the other female characters are incidental; the two good-time girls, also referred to as whores, who are portrayed as pleasant enough airheads with no other purpose in life other than partying and swinging; the sexually repressed, Catholic nurse with the cross around her neck and the large birthmark; Mr. Harding's wife (what do we know about her really apart from the fact she has big tits?) and the two mothers mentioned, Chief Bromden's and Billy's, bullies who are indirectly blamed, if not actually for their son's breakdowns but for perpetuating their states of helplessness. Billy's mother especially denies her son's maturity because she is refusing to accept her own age.

And then there is the Big Nurse; a constant reminder of sex, with her red lips and formidable bosom, as much as she tries to hide it – the Big Nurse, working for the Combine, symbol of the matriarchy. Because, as Harding says not long into the book, *We are victims of a matriarchy here*, a sentiment which, though uttered by a character and not the author, I feel at least in part reflects Kesey's own.

I respect and agree with many of the issues raised by this novel about mental health and society's attitudes towards it. But I don't understand this lofty regard in which it is held, uncriticizable, untouchable. *But you can't say that*, argued my brother, *it's one of the most important books of our time*. I just want to argue that maybe it's about time we heard the case of the Big Nurse, and why she employed the strategies she did.

I feel even more disturbed by this undercurrent because of the anti-authoritarian stance of the book and the way it is revered by people whose views I respect; I feel it is more important to discuss it because I see parallels in the punk and anarchist scene and the way women there are held and accepted. Kesey's book parallels the civil rights movements of the times, which, groundbreaking as they may have been in other ways, ignored the issues of women. Anti-authoritarian organizations even today still have a long way to go before they fully accept anything other than the basic heterosexual male, and the right of every other sector of society to the power of laughter. ★



photo: alicia ruscin

I'd Rather Masturbate Than Copulate -or- Why I Don't Want To Get Any

by Charisma Lee

I was about 11 or 12 when I first "played down there," as my Filipina mother always says. The first few experiments were wholly obvious and indiscreet: I'd masturbate in the living room, on the floor or on the couch, with a sheet over me, to conceal my sexual activities. Like anyone was fooled, though. My family, for sure, knew I wasn't playing with my Barbies. However, we never formally discussed masturbation, even to this day, as it has/is always dismissed with a nervous laugh, followed by a change of topics. Only on one occasion has my mother addressed self-stimulation and myself in the same conversation, but that was when I was 13 and she wanted to know if I was still doing it. Aside from that particular event, masturbation still proves to be too radical a subject for adult conversation with my supposedly liberal family. It would be safe to assume that parent-child communication in sexual matters has been hindered by parental inhibitions or by various intergenerational, and in my case, cross-cultural, anxieties. Nevertheless, I still touch myself. Not every day, mind you, but when I feel the need to. I've found it to be very fulfilling and gratifying; sometimes I can't even stop.

Admit it, Masturbation is fun.

Yes, of course, certain people, situations, and things will (and do) arouse me. Still, it is not in me to just go out and fuck everyone/thing that makes me horny. (New Jerseyans and/or scooter owners are the exception). I don't believe I would be satisfied or content with myself as a person. That's just the way I am, one can say, but others might disagree. While I do enjoy sexual inter-

course as well as self-stimulation, I've discovered that my best lover (so far) is myself. Only I have been able to completely please myself, mainly because I have learned what turns me on and what turns me off; I know what I like and what I don't. In some cases, I may not know instantly, but I am capable of figuring out what works best for my body and me. That's part of the learning process. And, with the knowledge I gain from my self-exploration, I can share it with my partner if I choose to do so.

Other advantages include reduced cramping and positive effects on the immune system. Masturbation also helps strengthen Pubococcygeus (PC) muscles. This is especially true in womyn where strong PC muscles are practically the sole factor in whether labor is easy and fast or long and difficult. Ladies masturbating regularly with multiple orgasms can develop strong(er) PC muscles and should have easier labor. (The ease in which womyn orgasm during masturbation counters the stereotype [that we are slowly aroused and irregularly orgasm] without fail). In contrast, the most obvious of all physical gains from masturbating is the fact that one cannot get pregnant.

In addition to knowing and respecting my body and its needs, I have also experienced certain emotional and psychological benefits. Still, there are really only two that stick out in my mind right now (although they are deeply correlated, and can be viewed as one). For example, though I still feel it would be nice to "have" a significant other, the thought of actually being in an exclusive (sexual) relationship is now unneces-

sary. I no longer want to fuck someone or "have" someone fuck me so that I can feel beautiful. It hasn't worked so far, but that's probably only because I never loved, or even remotely liked, most of the people I have slept with. In any case, intercourse, whether it is a penis or a fist being thrust into my vagina, now has a low rank on my list of sexual activities.

Moreover, masturbation it is a relatively safe way of liberating sexual tensions. It is an acceptable release in times when I lack a partner or when I just want to enjoy my body by myself. That is, without the complications of being involved in a sexual encounter with another. I get lots of crushes on various people, but develop a few into full-fledged mini-obsessions. The pessimist that I am, I am inclined to think that, as much as I pine for them, none of the people I like romantically will ever return the feeling. Thus, I back off, and pass the crushes off as "unattainable." However, when I touch myself, I'm not rejected. In turn, I don't feel depressed, and I'm not scared. Masturbating makes me feel happy; it's one of the only times when I'm honest with my feelings.

You see, masturbation is my primary sex life; my sexual base, so to speak. It is unfortunate that mainstream society still deems it too racy a topic to discuss, much less an activity in which to participate. Despite the desire for privacy being both reasonable and understandable, it differs quite a lot from secrecy. While the former is the need to experience something without outsider interference, the latter comes from a preconceived notion that what one is doing is immoral and distasteful. Saying that womyn shouldn't masturbate is like saying that we shouldn't cry when we're upset or hurt, or that we should hold in anger and our other emotions. More people need to realize that masturbation is indeed a normal and natural activity; it shouldn't be treated as an embarrassing secret. Although it is widely condemned, it is universally practiced at the same time. Because not everyone likes to be touched in the same ways or places, no one can teach you the best way to touch yourself, or for that matter, whether or not you should do so in the first place. Regardless of the criticism and flat-out lies, masturbation is a cause for celebration because it is a beautiful and important part of every wimmin's life. (I think I'm gonna go celebrate right now). ★

Suggested Reading

Cunt (Inga Muscio)

For Yourself - The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality (Lonnie Gertrude Balbach)

Sex Information, May I Help You? (Isadora Alman)

The Playbook for Women About Sex (Joanie Blank)

The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria", the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction (Rachel P. Maines)

Women as Revolutionary Agents of Change (Shere Hite)

I'm sure there are lots of other fantastic books out there; check out your local library. They're fun!

Working on Sexuality in Community Living...

by Bob Banner

About twenty years ago I remember sitting among people who elected to be guided by a teacher. In that circle of men and women (ages 22-30), all of us dressed quite elegantly after having just showered due to finishing a most energetic game of volleyball. We sat in newly purchased couches and sofas in a renovated 6-bedroom Victorian house with impeccably cleaned surroundings. We were living in a small town in Northern California.

The group was a fourth way/Sufi-like gathering of like minded people who came together because of Walter, a dedicated teacher of radical self-transformation and "the Work." One peculiar feature of this work/study group or loosely knit "community" of sorts was our working on our sexuality. Of course we gravitated to Walter to work on transforming ourselves, changing ourselves from neurotic obsessed consumers of banal commodities and popular belief systems to mature, responsible, individuated human beings. Many such groups gathered in the 70s around a specific individual or representative of certain Traditions but not many of them had "working on our sexuality" as part of their agenda.

We were given assignments from Walter to: develop our lust, learn how to give excellent fellatio (explicit detailed instructions for the women), decondition our beliefs about who made the grade of being "sexually attractive," understand our judgments about body types... among all the other types of assignments that were relegated to self-transformation, i.e., developing careers, being more creative and efficient with one's time, learning to neutralize our negative emotional responses, exercising, developing teamship, learning survival skills, studying the political and economic situation of the time... learning to stretch our limits.

As for sex, I was conditioned somehow to be attracted to sleek young women who had eyes of romance, madness, danger and innocence. So my particular assignments were to make love with women I did not have any "conditioned charge" with. The idea being to not only decondition myself from certain preconceived judgments but also to develop an intimacy within our cloistered sanctuary of 12 people and one teacher.

We trusted Walter. I trusted him to the point of going along with the assignments. At one point

I had sex with his wife (she seduced me) which I enjoyed for various reasons and then I was to have sex with a former Catholic nun who was much older than I. I didn't like it but was willing to go through the ordeal in order to learn and "grow." A woman, named Cecilia, whom I had no sexual interest in at all, had the assignment to seduce me and because of that we became lovers for more than a year (after we both left the group for reasons that go beyond the scope of this article). Because I was willing to suspend my beliefs about sexual attraction I allowed myself to be receptive to Cecilia's natural sexual energy, even though it was not wrapped in a package that complemented my youthful judgmental mind.

After the many meetings we had in that large immaculately cleaned living room, whether it was a meeting to discuss Wilhelm Reich's *The Sexual Revolution* or study Robert Ornstein's *On The Nature of Consciousness* or watch/study camcorder tapes from our earlier volleyball, basketball or badminton games or discuss our work money situation — we would mill around afterwards and find a partner to sleep with; to work on our sexuality, our "lust," our deconditioning... If Sarah had already made plans to be with George, then I'd ask Gertie. Of course, some women and men were more in demand while others needed assignments from Walter to push through various resistances, patterns, blocks or religious indoctrinations. This was indeed radical since we were tackling some of the most treasured elements of western civilization: compulsive monogamy, possessiveness, jealousy, sexual alienation. We could have sex with anybody we wanted as long as it was mutual and in a setting where the groundwork was one of transformation. Since the foundation was

[sexuality & relationships]



heterosexual, former lesbians and gay individuals had their specific assignments to seduce and have sex with members of the opposite gender so that they could "normalize" their sex styles. This was back in the 70s where the lesbian and gay movement was not very strong.

Just five years ago I found myself again sitting among people who came together because of a particular charismatic teacher, who drew us to him for similar purposes — waking up, becoming clear of our psycho-emotional conditionings so we could live more passionate, full-bodied and full-blooded lives. Most of the work in this community, which had bases houses in California, England, Iceland, Australia and Germany, as well as British Columbia, was to awaken emotionally and spiritually by getting in touch with our fears, our deep grieving from childhood wounds, our repressed rage from what happened to us, our rigid sexual posturings that many of us psychically absorbed from western religions.

This particular community emphasized sexuality because of its deep revelations of our core neuroses and pain.

It became incredibly vulnerable to "do work on our sexuality" with a group of people

whose compassion could be high or low depending on the particular mood of the teacher or the mind of the group. Usually there was much compassion for the persons who had the courage to go into the middle of the circle and start "work-

In one particular meeting, I remember, as we all sat on cushions in a circle on the carpeted floor, I was asked by the teacher to come out in the middle and show everyone how I made love to my newest lover.

ing,” whether it was premature ejaculation, dependence on mother issue, performance anxiety, pleasing energy, withholding orgasmic impulses, “needing a man” complex, murderous feelings of jealousy, just wanting to “fuck,” possessiveness, attraction to violent pornography, being psychically possessed by one’s mother or father or rapist who didn’t want to leave the bedroom... It was much easier and quite milder to get into various psycho-emotional difficulties in community living such as problems living with Anne Marie or hating the writing assignments, or could Harold make the necessary money so his children could go to gymnastics (or whatever)... but when it came to revealing, exposing, and unveiling our sexual stuff in front of the community... it was terrifyingly HOT!

In one particular meeting, I remember, as we all sat on cushions in a circle on the carpeted floor, I was asked by the teacher to come out in the middle and show everyone how I made love to my newest lover. I was extremely reluctant. Who is this jerk anyway?! But because of an accumulation of fear, trust, desire to reveal more of my sexual difficulties and a bit of my willingness to show-off my sexual prowess I surrendered and began to move and act with the invisible partner. Afterwards, the guide asked the rest of the group what their intuitive and emotional/bodily response to what they had seen as they watched my movements. Some said I looked very lonely. (“Well, of course stupid!”) I screamed internally, “I’m moving by myself!” Others said I was simply performing and there didn’t seem to be any intimacy or vulnerability emanating from my “being.” I got defensive initially but knew they were right. I felt so naked, so utterly damaged that somehow I needed a tribe, a community of real intimate friends to share everything so I could become healed. Why couldn’t all this stuff (the secrets, the acting outs, the shame, the abusive rampages...) be worked on already? What happened to our culture, to our modern day culture that people had to go through all this pain and suffering in order to heal? In any event, the vulnerability became so dominant that I could no longer hold back the tears and suddenly broke down in the center of that room. Fortunately, other people in the room shared in my grieving, giving not only validity to my present feelings but in knowing that they also have deep wounds around their sexuality. These wounds, shared wounds, soon became our bonds (and later they became our bondage; but that’s another story).

One of the main attributes of the work on our sexual healing was our willingness to be vulnerable but not mush balls, potent but not cocky. We were always in search for the deeper truth (behind the apparent reality) and sex was the place where one could hide one’s deeper truth and paradoxically it was often the place where deep trust and deep bonds of intimacy could be created and developed. For many of the men, it was either our performance obsession, our judgmental minds, our lack of being vulnerable, our

quick responses from our penises rather than from our hearts that became grist for our sexual healing. And because all this was daily shared in the individual houses as well as in the larger community, it created a very healthy ground for us men to relate to each other... talking, sharing, crying, wrestling, acting out our jealousies, revealing more and more of who we were and who we were not. We were there to heal the emotional and spiritual vacuity of the 20th century and we knew instinctively that our relationship to sex was at the core of not only our own healing but healing the planet as well.

We were not “making love” all the time, not like in the previous experiment mentioned above. It was more of a serial monogamy [even though the teacher/guide had up to four lovers simultaneously, three who lived in the same household; and there was an experiment for the men to have more than one lover before I arrived. I learned from many people that it was a dismal failure.] and it depended on our need, our phase of “development,” and availability of potential lovers. But more than that, it took courage to start making love because we knew that, once you started, all your stuff would be out in the open. And, even if you had 3-6 serial monogamous relationships within the lifetime of the community, your stuff would come up again and again. Whether your stuff was fear of intimacy, addiction to pornography or fear of entering those mysterious psychic and spiritual realms... it was just that... your stuff. And it was very revealing and *can* be very healing! How many people change partners thinking that they will find someone who will be so different than the one before. In the community, they were all there... all your lovers, the jealous ones, the ones who hated you, the ones who adored you, the people you wanted to avoid at all costs... all there... all the sexual energy, possessive energy, jealous energy, crazy mad energy all swirling together making for a very bizarre radical experiment in living.

Another feature of the community that was very healing for a number of us was the freedom and space to touch each other. Not only was massage and body work an integral part of the community in our healing process but we would frequently and spontaneously move into “gerbil piles” — small groups of people laying on the floor or on a bed, or on couches with heads on torsos, legs atop of legs, faces in someone’s belly... you get the picture. The piles could last from ten minutes to an hour depending. They were very nourishing — a surrendering to a tribe of people who needed simple touch who were open to receiving healing energies rather than perpetually living in a physically isolated environment full of mental fantasies deludedly “con-

necting” us somehow, either by masturbating with erotica or romance novels or food or overwork, anything to keep us distracted from some of our basic needs, those primal animal, tribal needs of touch, warmth and social intimacy that got terribly sacrificed along the way.

One thing that many of us felt after having had such regular contact of touch (whether it was being massaged, experience of the gerbil piles or simply interacting with persons in genuinely and deeply felt ways — or all the above) was that that incessant demand for sex, for release (whether imagined or real), dissipated... lost its overwhelming importance and control. It’s not that it went away. By no means! It’s just that when some of our “primal” needs got met we became freer to move on, to go deeper... So when we did engage sexually with a lover we could go deeper into areas that had been inaccessible before. For example, if one is not getting touched, massaged or having some basic primal needs being met, sex may become *the* place for many of those needs to become satisfied. That puts a lot of unnecessary pressure on “having” sex, where it really doesn’t belong. It puts immense pressure on

When two people are in their core, being both potentially alive and vulnerable, that rawness and openness (both emotionally and physically) can make for some very beautiful, exciting, unpredictable and passionate lovemaking.

guaranteeing the survival of that place where your needs are being met. It’s no wonder why people start losing their natural wildness and start to deceive and keep secrets from each other out of fear of

abandonment or fear of losing that place, that sanctuary where some of those primal needs are being met. Having sex with so many hidden agendas and secrets and repressed feelings hanging out on the bedroom’s walls makes for some rather boring and dangerous love making. On the other hand, when two people are in their core, being both potentially alive and vulnerable, that rawness and openness (both emotionally and physically) can make for some very beautiful, exciting, unpredictable and passionate lovemaking.

For example, in the community, telling the truth ranked very high. People’s bullshit detectors and their intuitions were deeply valued and constantly being developed. Because of this I couldn’t help but let go of the various strategies I had used to seduce women. Any falseness stuck out like an erection at a choir rehearsal. So, one time when I was with my lover, Darlene, who had been in the community longer than I and who had much more experience than I in all this “truth telling business” — I found myself becoming quite uncomfortable in shedding the pretenses and opening to feelings I had never allowed a woman to see (assuming that if they saw and felt my vulnerabilities and real feelings — whatever they might be — they’d be out of that bedroom but fast, as fast as a gazelle running away from a stalking tiger). These women (in the community)

[sexuality & relationships]

encouraged us men to be open and honest with our feelings (whether they were feelings of mistrust, anger, grief, uncontrollable ecstasy, orgasmic hooting and howling... whatever). In fact, it actually turned them on, which kept surprising us very frequently, especially at those critical times when we thought "they're never going to love me now after having just revealed all this dark shit!"

So, on one particular night as I was sucking Darlene's breasts, suddenly from out of nowhere I was no longer performing and seeing her with my usual grasping porno image of romanticized desire. Suddenly a deep heaving of my chest grew open with much grief of what I had done with women in the past — all the turning away from my truth, all the peculiar strategies to please them so I could keep them... Slowly and mysteriously they all gave way to the deeper feelings and I found myself wailing and grieving like a newborn infant sucking Darlene's breast of primal nurturance. I suckled as I cried and cried as I suckled until I had an erection that totally perplexed my "mind." I actually thought initially that I had truly lost it, that I had finally become that pervert who I had always intimated I was in my darkest moments. But not so. My heart opened and my penis spontaneously responded. "I" was no longer in control. Neither fantasies nor wild stimulations from outside were necessary to maintain that erection. Spontaneous movements, rawness of both heart and lust swirled together to give our bodies a pleasure that went way beyond mediocrity and safety. We had entered a zone of unknowingness that was delightfully terrifying.

Another feature of making love in the community that blew my mind was that as the tribe evolved into a more telepathic, empathic, intimate organism because of the increase in dependency on each other for support in various ways (money, emotional, travel, insurance, work, sexual, spiritual camaraderie, therapeutic...) and a growing compassion for each other due to learning more about each person's core neuroses and their individual struggles to work sanely with them... we went deeper in ways that were totally unknown to us. When people made love it wasn't in an igloo of separation, cut off from your friends living down the hallway. One actually felt like you were making love to the entire community. Granted, we all read *The Kin of Ata* and other books that emphasized the beauty of tribal living and truly working together for the common good, but nothing prepared us to experience these particular feelings.

When people stayed raw and wild and open in their love-making and remained connected with others in the particular houses, their love-

making often times stretched out from their bedrooms and actually could be *felt*. People felt given to... the energy was not sucked away into an insular two-some but blossomed out. When lovers simply loved their lovers and remained connected with the others — and were making love while they were already happy and not doing it to get someplace or something — then their loving presence exuded outward... the energy was so strong at times you could taste it coming out of the walls.

Sallie Tisdale, in her recent book called *Talk Dirty To Me: An Intimate Philosophy of Sex* writes that she had

always been entranced by the communal homes of certain Native American tribes... "imagining many people bedding down together, their odors mingling, bodies entwined in sleep... hearing vaguely the distant, whispered sounds of pleasure and excitement politely muted... But such scenes seem very far away. Here I am, in the patriarchal, materialistic, sex-drenched, sex-phobic West — and who have I become, here?" First off, it's terribly sad that with her all research and searching, she never came close to anything like she had dreamed of. I feel very fortunate to have come pretty close to that tribal intimacy that some Americans dream of returning to or of discovering for themselves. But I don't want to get too romantic about all this. We have far too much romance about how things were in tribal communities. I think it gives us a way out so we don't have to work at ways to re-create that sense of powerful community here and now.

It takes much work. It takes much work on oneself to let go of the obsessive individualistic tendencies in modern man and woman. Most everything in us, our modernity, our delusions, our denials and distractions and compulsions and addictions militate against what real community is all about. Often we would succumb to bouts of murderous jealousies or indulge in the sexual performance crap or sleepily wallow in sensation and forget who we were with. When those things occurred we were expected to break out of the "cult of two" trappings and ask for help from other people in the house or the community. Can you imagine such a radical act, let alone radical idea? Can you imagine your mother calling up her best friend's husband and having them both come over to help your mother deal with a very sticky and highly emotional fight around your mother's husband's incessant and habitual sexual difficulty (whatever it is)? In the community there was a growing agreement, albeit a reluctant one, that we would interfere if we saw, heard, sensed or felt if "something was off."

There were many many times when lovers who had gone to bed anticipating a wondrous event would later be in the midst of some of their

most challenging personal work... being challenged by your mate of sexually performing as an automaton in order to compensate for his or her unspoken insecurities; or suddenly your partner radically transforms into their mother (via psychic possession or invasion) and wants to "cut your fucking balls off"... or countless other mini-tragedies which often times demanded other people enter into the scene so things could be worked out, resolved, understood, healed...

So, looking back on it today, there were many advantages in these radical experimental methodologies to assist us in our sexual healing. Like in any endeavor, especially in the transformative psychologies department, they are rampant with paradoxes. One person's healing is another person's nightmare and vice versa.

Because of circumstances that are too lengthy to discuss in this particular essay, both communities terminated. Mistrust, feelings of acute betrayal and feelings of deep grief and loss, as well as relief, were experienced. As far as our sexuality is concerned, many of the former members are totally relieved that no one is watching over them; no community member cult member or friend will come knocking on their door in the middle of the night when they hear sounds of crying, anger or abuse and demand that you work on your stuff. Most are either coupled or living alone. Some of our deep bonds have remained regardless of the various betrayals that ensued. Some have even opted for some simple indiscriminate fucking to overcome the incessant demand to "go deeper" for the sake of self-transformation or spiritual ambition. Now, if they say "go deeper," they're probably referring to the penis thrusting to the cervix type of going deeper.

Some are wondering if it's possible that we've been seeking all these alternative ways to actually avoid the inevitable settling down to the marital convention. But some *have* been married and some are very capable of loving more than one person. Some may be fooling themselves and some are truly working on maintaining their integrity and honesty while keeping alive the wildness. When Stephen Levine [co-author with Ondrea Levine of *Embracing The Beloved*] was asked if monogamy was essential for a "conscious relationship" to work [where using relationship as a path toward spiritual yoga], his answer was, "Absolutely. Without exception... If someone tells us that they want to be in a conscious relationship and not be monogamous, we just say good luck."

There are no single answers, no righteous judgments declaring that one way is the right way for all — that presupposes so much knotted insecurity in order to push and demand and dictate what you think is best onto others. Tolerance and compassion of different styles, different tastes, and different modes of sexual behavior, as well as people's decisions, choices, proclivities, lack of decisions, addictions are necessary in a modern global 21st century society. ★

Slowly and mysteriously they all gave way to the deeper feelings and I found myself wailing and grieving like a newborn infant sucking Darlene's breast of primal nurturance. I suckled as I cried and cried as I suckled until I had an erection that totally perplexed my "mind."

DEFENDING ANIMAL RIGHTS



TOM REGAN

Desire & Defense

Sketches the philosophical positions espoused by those who want to abolish animal exploitation, reform it, or maintain the status quo. Regan unravels claims that human beings are entitled to superior moral status and decries the speciesism that pretends to separate human from nonhuman animals.

Hardback, \$24.95

Proceeding from the theories of Marx, Freud, and Lacan, Stratton delineates the structures of consumption and desire that, since around 1850, have brought about the fetishization and spectacularization of the female (and more recently the male) body.

First time in paperback. \$16.95

available from your bookstore, or visit:



www.press.u

ILLINOIS.edu



Get the Right Tool for the Job



Good Vibrations

- vibrators
- dildos & harnesses
- anal toys
- safe sex supplies
- books
- videos
- women owned and operated
- friendly and knowledgeable staff

Visit our stores in San Francisco and Berkeley, call us for a free catalog or find us on the web!

1-800-BUY-VIBE
www.goodvibes.com



THE WHITE OCTAVE
STYLE NO. 6312 THE DEEP

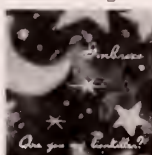
deep elm records sound spirit fury fire



white octave (ex-cursive)
style no. 6312 cd \$12



brandtson
trying to figure. cdep \$9



imbroco (ex-mineral)
are you my lionkiller? cdep \$9



emo diaries 5 compilation
i guess this is goodbye cd \$12

postpaid usa • credit-check-cash-mo • 24 hour turnaround • europe/s. america add \$2 • asia/austri add \$3 • canada/mex add \$1
get all five emo diaries compilations (65 songs) for \$45 • new SAMPLER with 19 songs from 14 bands only \$3 POSTPAID WORLDWIDE

post box 36939 charlotte, nc 28236 usa • (704) DE-DIRECT
order@deepelm.com • sounds, tours, news, contests, more....

www.deepelm.com



THE MEDIA: AND THEN THERE WERE SIX

DAVID BARSAMIAN INTERVIEWS AUTHOR AND MEDIA CRITIC
BEN BAGDIKIAN

ON THE ROLES OF BIG BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT AND INDIVIDUALS IN SHAPING OUR MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

Ben Bagdikian is one of the most respected critics of the media. He is the winner of almost every top prize in American journalism, including the Pulitzer. His career as a reporter and editor spans more than 50 years. He is the former Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. His memoir is *Double Vision*. His classic book *The Media Monopoly* is now in its sixth edition. Interviewed by David Barsamian, Berkeley, California, May 15, 2000.

The sixth edition of The Media Monopoly just came out. In 1983, in the first edition, there were 50 major corporations that you identified that dominated most of the media. Second edition, down to 29. Third edition, down to 23. Then there were 14. Then there were ten. Now there are six. Did you expect this kind of rapid acceleration of concentration?

I did know that concentration tends to make for more concentration. I had assumed, having been a Washington correspondent and a journalist for many years, and seeing antitrust actions during the 1950s and 1960s, that there would have been intervention by the Department of Justice and other interested agencies like the FTC and the FCC. What has happened has been the opposite. They have become extremely permissive about mergers and takeovers that in the past would have invited certain antitrust intervention. The free market religion, and it's almost a form of theology in the minds of corporations, became entrenched with the ascendancy of Reagan in the early 1980s. It held of course that if you leave things to business, they will automatically produce the good society. There is no such thing as a real free market, nor has there ever been during the history of industrialization. A free market means that business is free to do anything it wants. In the nature of competition, every business wants to have

as much of the share of the market as possible, whether you run a chocolate store or whether you run General Motors. As one side succeeds, they have enormous advantages, more money, economies of scale and they begin to use their powers against smaller companies. There is something in particular about media corporations that is not so true in such a degree with other large corporations. Media power is political power. The mass media stand between the political leaders of the country and the people who vote for them or don't vote for them. They must be filtered through the mass media. So the mass media have political power. That power and its impact upon government in practically immobilizing antitrust action on media mergers did surprise me.

Does that account for the permissiveness as you describe it?

That plus the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union encouraged those who are for no government intervention in the economy to say, See, centralized planning in the Soviet Union produced failure and therefore what we must have is no government intervention. The epitome of that was the 1994 Congress. They came in with the idea that they were going to trash the government and get out of town. They did their best to trash the government, which meant regulatory agencies and so forth. Once they were there they decided they would not get out of town. They were all for term limits before. Once they got in they thought term limits was a bad idea now that they were there. What has happened has been that historic events have given the media companies such power that they passed the 1996 Telecommunications Act. That was done in a most bald exercise of corporate power that I can remember. The Republicans had a private meeting with the leaders of the telecommunications industry. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, they said, in effect, to the leaders of the industry, What do you want from Congress? The industry told them, and the Congress gave it to them. It was a disastrous act. The public was told by the news media that this would increase competition and lower your phone and cable bills. The competition will mean more people will be after your business and therefore you'll pay less. I don't

know anyone whose phone bill or cable bill has gone down. 99 percent of our cities that have cable have a monopoly in their community. We have seen the consolidation of telephone companies and cable companies. That legislation has accelerated this at an enormous speed.

But why are you putting the onus on the Republicans? Clinton and Gore were enthusiastic supporters of the Telecommunications Act.

They were. I think they were caught up in the idea that now the political future is in minimizing government and getting the regulatory agencies out of the way. The major media reported this with great glee when there were hearings held on IRS abuses. Congress said, OK, we'll cut the IRS budget and they will make fewer audits of taxpayers. What we have today, factually analyzed, is that there are fewer audits of the very rich and increased audits of the middle class. The IRS reports that they are collecting less than they did before. The rich feel safe from having their questionable deductions audited. The Democrats decided that you can't fight this kind of trend and therefore we will coopt the conservatives and beat them. And that's what they did. Clinton preempted the Congress. He greatly frustrated them. I'm afraid we now have one party with two wings, one more conservative and one less conservative. They behave in remarkably similar ways.

Let's go back to 1983, when you identified 50 major corporations as dominating the media in the U.S. What was the product like? Was it significantly different from today?

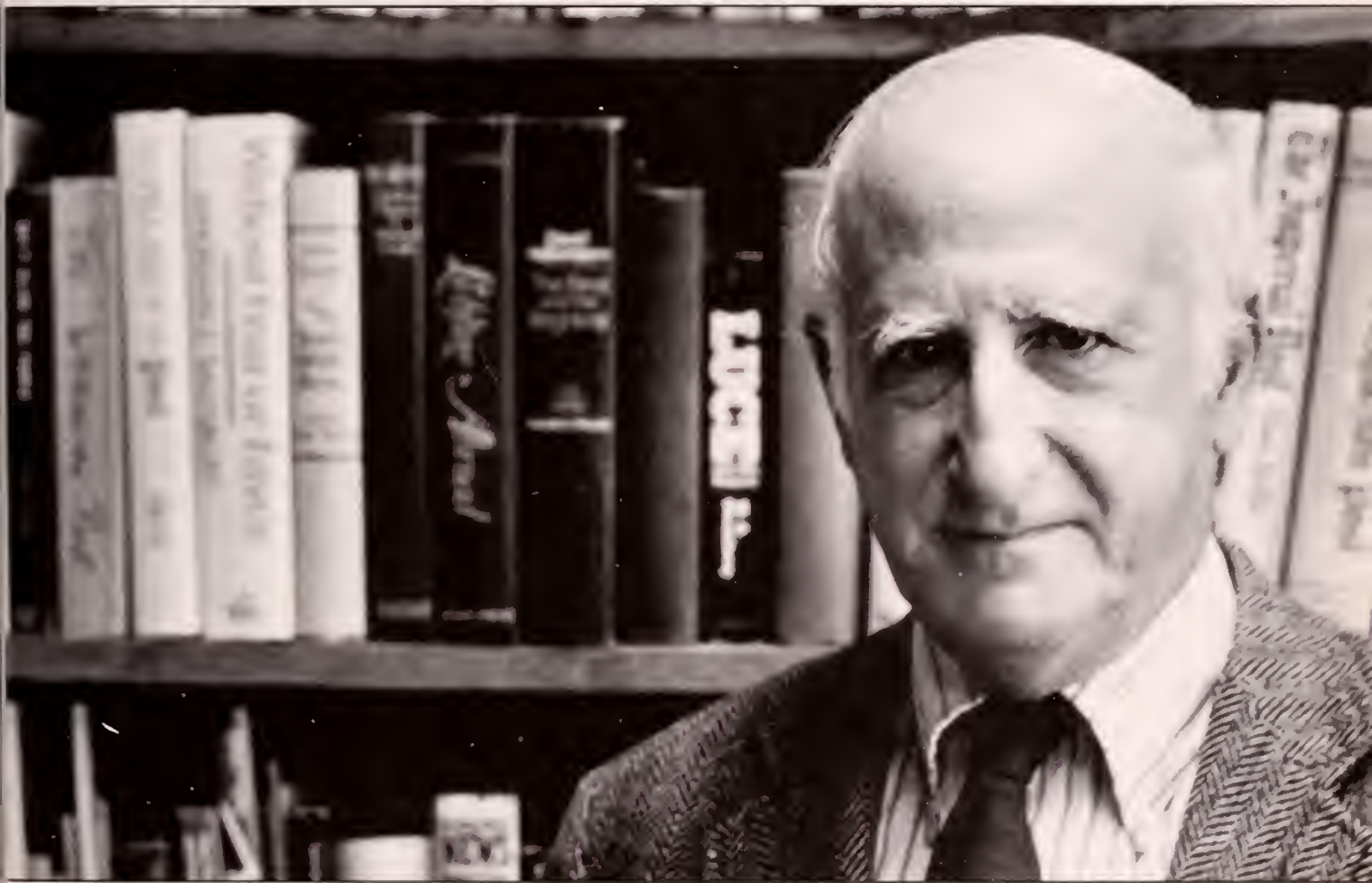
You have to recognize that at the same time these things were happening among the media, there were other great trends in our society. For example, more people went into higher education, and that included journalists. They got a little bit more sophisticated. The public itself became more sophisticated. The 1994 Congress alerted many people, especially Latinos, as to who the enemy was. The new members of Congress and the conservatives wanted to get them out of the way. Affirmative action is bad. Regulation is killing industry. None of the data show that at all. The power of industry has changed. The ratio between taxes paid by corporations and individuals, if you compare in 1950 and now, is stunning. Taxpayers pay many times more propor-

tionally than corporations do, whereas the reverse was true forty years ago. All of these things happened quietly. They did not get much treatment in the major media. If it was reported at all, it was reported as a rather arcane business story. The public knew something was happening that made them less secure in their jobs, made them fail when they tried to get wage increases. Only now is it becoming clear to many workers that they were being exploited by the corporate system and by government. There were massive layoffs of employees, outsourcing

Take the Brown and Williamson tobacco case. The movie *The Insider* showed that the proposed merger of Westinghouse and CBS meant that *60 Minutes* was forced to cancel an anti-tobacco program not for lack of substance but because it would have soured the deal. In another movie, *Erin Brockovich*, Pacific Gas and Electric, a very powerful utility denies poisoning a community in California. PG&E is exposed. The public goes to those movies because they're interesting. There is a group of directors in Hollywood who have been doing

gap between the very rich and the un-rich is getting greater. Those data are not made big stories. They appear and then they disappear. But the people get restless and now they're getting cynical. There's a sign of public anger and cynicism.

While you were preparing the sixth edition there were two major media mergers. Viacom took over CBS and AOL announced its takeover of Time Warner. How did that affect what you were writing in terms of your deadline?



of parts of our industry to low-wage countries, and then factories in those countries doing shameful things to their workers. All of these things are now becoming evident to a large number of people, and some of them are becoming politically active. So I think that we are going to see changes in the dynamics of our politics, not rapid, not overnight, but it's growing.

But again, in terms of John or Jane Q. Public, how have the media changed since 1983? For example, are you saying that the product was better then than it is now?

It was different.

In what ways?

Now the major media are more careful in ways they repress stories. Occasionally it comes out.

AOL BOUGHT TIME WARNER, THE BIGGEST MEDIA COMPANY IN THE WORLD, BECAUSE THEY NEEDED SOMETHING CALLED CONTENT, AS THOUGH IT WERE SOMETHING YOU BUY OFF THE SHELF OF THE SUPERMARKET.

some good films. The print media, seen by perhaps a more educated and influential part of the public, are nervous about losing readers. But that change has been very slow. There are still things that, if they appear at all, only appear in very obscure ways. Those people who are not specialists can't worm out the four-paragraph story in the back pages that tells them, Something's happening here that might affect me. All they know is that they either get laid off or they have lost their job security. The

I had to tell the publisher, I can't avoid adding AOL. We had to do something about it. They did insert a line saying, Wherever there is a reference to Time Warner, it should be read as AOL-Time Warner. That was emblematic of how the argument that there really isn't a big problem with monopoly, because look at all the new channels we've got. We have the Internet and that's liberation of the individual. AOL bought Time Warner, the biggest media company in the world, because they needed something called "content," as though it were some-

GE OWNS NBC AND ALL OF NBC'S VARIOUS SUBCOMPANIES. GE ALSO IS A MAJOR PRODUCER OF NUCLEAR REACTORS. WE HAVE YET TO SEE A DOCUMENTARY ON NBC ON THE PROBLEMS OF NUCLEAR WASTE.

thing you buy off the shelf of the supermarket. I'd like some content, please. Content is programs and stars. Where do these celebrities come from? When you have, as these six biggest media companies do, a dominant position in every single medium, newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, cinema, videos, you use one part of your media empire to create a celebrity or an idea in the other parts of it. You have a TV program and you put the star on the cover of your national magazine. That person becomes an instant celebrity. They then star in one of your movies. If you are Disney, you put into the cute movies a new kind of fluffy character. Disney has more than 1,400 stores around the world that sell nothing but memorabilia from Cinderella to Mickey Mouse. It's a major part of the Disney empire. Take for example *The Lion King*. If you go into a Disney store, you can buy a doll or trinket or a painted art scene from the movie for \$2,500. There you get the tail wagging the dog. You can see a useful sale in one part of these huge corporations by changing the content of the media in another part of the same corporation. GE owns NBC and all of NBC various subcompanies. GE also is a major producer of nuclear reactors. We have yet to see a documentary on NBC on the problems of nuclear waste. What happens then is another thing, self-censorship by the people who work for them. They know it's not going to get emphasis. There is an occasional exception, and it's startling. *Time*, for example, had an excellent issue several months ago by two of the best investigative reporters in the country on corporate welfare.

That would be Donald Bartlett and James Steele.

Formerly with the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The fight in Congress on welfare for the poor was a couple of years earlier. That's when the public needed that information. That's when they had to find out that there was something like \$125-\$150 billion in corporate welfare. The problem was corporate welfare. It wasn't the poor person who lives in the ghetto. There are problems with that. It takes time and money and rebuilding neighborhoods and putting good schools in and doing something about the basic source of this. But that's when the report on corporate welfare was needed. So that *Time*, which did this to its credit, nevertheless, did it when it was no longer going to influence the legislation that was related to it. That's the problem. When people need information on key issues, if they get it at all, they get it after that decision has been made.

Steve Case is the CEO of AOL. He told Conrad Black, the Canada-based newspaper magnate that "the newspaper business was somewhere between beleaguered and dying." What do you think of that comment in light of reports that print circulation is stagnant and declining?

There's no question that newspaper so-called... penetration, that is, percentage of the households in the country it sells papers to, has been going down for twenty years. One reason is that competing papers have begun to disappear. 99% of our cities have a monopoly paper. That's one reason circulation is going down. There's no question that the daily newspaper industry is influenced by these other media. But when these other media are owned by the same companies that own the newspaper, and newspapers now, according to Standard & Poor's, make more than 20% profit a year, there are entrepreneurs who would weep with gratitude to have half that profit. It's now up to 25% and 30% for metropolitan papers. Broadcast stations, however, make between 30% and 60% profit a year. If you can say, newspapers are something we shouldn't pay too much attention to in our investment, that's because in broadcasting we can make more and the future of the Internet will make more. So there's that factor. But there's another factor, too. If you study the growth of communications through the centuries of invention, there's something called technological euphoria. There's a marvelous new invention. I recently read again the history of the telegraph and the telephone. It's amazing. You have statements by important people, saying, This will not only transform the world, it will make for a better, more peaceful, more just world. Remember that in the 1960s when television became a universal household appliance, Marshal McLuhan referred to the "global village," with implications that this would produce peace on earth. It didn't. That's the technological euphoria that a new invention, because it works, will be successful and that because it is so ingenious, it will make the world a better place. Alfred Nobel found out. He invented a stable explosive, dynamite. When he realized that it was useful in wars and would kill more people more efficiently than anything else, he established the Nobel Peace Prize. We still have the Nobel Peace Prize, but we have more destructive wars than ever. The technological euphoria has always produced this feeling that if it works, if it's clever and if you have a big company that knows how to make lots of it, it's going to make the world a better place.

Chomsky, McChesney and others make an urgent connection between media and democracy

There's no question about that. Democracy depends on an informed consent by the voters. If you know nothing relevant about the candidates, if you know very little about their background, if you know very little about what the implications are of the policies they espouse, you're voting blindly. Unless you have citizens informed about the things that affect the central parts of their lives, they are either voting blindly, or, as we are seeing, they're saying, We're not going to vote. That's why there is more and more enthusiasm for Ralph Nader's idea of having a line on every ballot. None Of The Above. That's a message saying, Major parties, you'd better give us something more appetizing or we're going to say, A pox on all your houses.

Let's talk about books. Coincidentally, we're sitting in your den surrounded by many books. One of the six major media monopolies is the German-based Bertelsmann. You say, "Its power in the marketplace is unmatched." There is some interesting information about Bertelsmann's Nazi connection.

Bertelsmann, located in a rather remote town in Germany, didn't seem to behave like most corporations. They were rather retiring in the way they worked but they quietly became very powerful and big. Since they are an old company, preceding the Nazi era, the question is, What happened to them during the Nazi era? They said in their company publications that they suffered during the Nazi era. They had tried to stay out of the whole Nazi culture. That was the standard line. Then a German scholar, Hersch Fischler, looked into this more carefully. He found out that, to his surprise, Bertelsmann during the Hitler regime published pamphlets for the Brownshirts, manuals for the German army that justified expansion into Poland and Czechoslovakia, and that the official history was wrong. But he couldn't get it published in Germany. Bertelsmann, who own a great deal of the media in Germany, is so powerful that even papers they didn't own didn't want to tangle with them. He had to get it published in Switzerland and in *The Nation* in the U.S. That's how it got out. Then Bertelsmann announced, We will establish a committee to look more closely into the history of these things. They did not deny Fischler's research, that in fact they had produced pamphlets for the Nazis.

[media]

These changes that we've been talking about have not gone unnoticed, even by the New York Times. In an editorial last year, they said, "the new media environment has touched off a churning debate among journalists about professional standards." What is that churning debate about?

I hear from these journalists all the time. What's happening at many papers, including some of our most prestigious ones, is that the business side of the paper has begun to dictate the news. The emblematic event was the *L.A. Times*, one of the most influential papers in the country. It brought in Mark Willes, who had run General Mills, a cereal company. He changed the editors of each section of the paper. The news and editorial section used to be edited by a journalist editor. He appointed co-editors, one a journalist and one from the business department. Together they would select the news. He didn't increase the circulation significantly. He didn't increase the profits. But he had the stock price go up two-and-a-half times. At that point it became very profitable for the stockholders at Times Mirror, the owner of the *L.A. Times*, to have a merger with a big company. The Chicago Tribune Company has now bought the *L.A. Times*. Willes' goal was not to improve the paper. As a matter of fact, he demoralized its staff. But it was to improve the stock value of the paper and then merge. It is a case in which all the consequences for the ordinary person are bad and the consequences for those with power are good. That's part of that great shift. That's one reason why we have these wide gaps not just in income, but in job security and opportunity. It is a tragedy that has to be reversed by activists. Ralph Nader's campaign is going to bring up these important issues. People will hear him and say, That's right. That's what I've been worried about, but I couldn't put it in words.

To go back to what you describe as the FCC and other regulatory agencies having all but retired from protecting the public from excessive private power and exorbitant prices, you see an irony in there because the Internet and the satellites were almost completely developed by public money.

They were. The taxpayers paid for those satellites that Rupert Murdoch uses to cover Europe and part of the U.S. It was all done with taxpayer money. When the satellites were put up, there were proposals that a noncommercial system would be developed in the U.S. by taking a very small percentage of the commercial use of those satellite channels to finance a multichan-

nel noncommercial public broadcasting system. That was killed, but it was publicly proposed. There have been similar proposals but it doesn't get anywhere because of the power of the media to control information. How many citizens realize that this dish they get to receive TV programs works only because they paid taxes to create that technology? Look at all the fortunes that are being made on the Internet. We paid to give corporations this little gadget. We made a big mistake not to say, We taxpayers created this for you and we're going to take a little bit of that every year and we're going to use it to create noncommercial media that will be open and diverse. We haven't done it. The reverse is happening. The public is learning more. Part of it is cynical, part of it is angry. We're going to see changes, but they are unpredictable because when you get a cynical public sometimes the man on horseback, the Napoleons, begin to look like the answer to the problem. We have to be sure we let people know you can use democratic procedures to change this, but you have to be active and speak up. You have to support those political movements that serve your interests and not those of the corporations. Corporations already have all the power and the money that they need.

George Orwell is most noted for his novels 1984 and Animal Farm. He also wrote a number of important essays. One is called "Politics and the English Language."

That was one of the most influential essays I've ever read. It let me see clearly what happened when the context of an event was framed by the media and that words had different meanings. True, you might wipe out a village in Nicaragua or Guatemala and that would be a victory for the freedom of people fighting for democratic rights. When you find out what really happened, like Pinochet in Chile and similar dictators elsewhere, you find that these weren't a victory for freedom. This was a terrible human tragedy committed in the name of a dictator. Murder did indeed begin to sound like charity and good works and therefore Orwell's saying that murder can be made to sound like something very sweet and wonderful, when I read that I realized that it makes a big difference creating in the mind of the reader the context for these acts. You want good to succeed against evil. So you have to characterize the enemy always as evil. I think we have had evil enemies. Hitler was evil. My generation is the one who thinks of World War II as the only morally jus-

tified war. I think we really did have to stop Hitler. But subsequent wars, Korea, Vietnam and elsewhere, were all made to sound like if one domino falls, freedom will be lost all over the world. It was a fatal idea. It made the words have reverse meanings. Orwell's insights suddenly made you understand how it is possible to make murder sound like charity.

Talk about some of the venerable figures in radical American journalism. Let's start with George Seldes.

When I was a young reporter I came across his weekly newsletter *In fact*. I became interested in Seldes because *In fact* reported on what was happening in the world and interpreting it in ways that the mainstream media were not. I read the books he wrote after he had been a distinguished foreign correspondent. Reading Seldes grounded me in how to look at the world in a way different from the official view. It was not that you simply rejected it all, but get the best information you can and be skeptical that the whole story is simply in governmental announcements. Today when I see government officials on TV, I say to my wife, They aren't going to say anything. They can't say anything. They are going to say sweet nothings. They are policy people. They make public statements that don't reveal much and that permit them to go any which way. So you read someone like Seldes, who reported what was actually happening, and then you saw the rather bland or sometimes misleading statements of politicians and business leaders and you developed a base of knowledge which wasn't simply rejecting it all but simply saying, There's information that this person isn't giving. So I subscribed to his newsletter. It was always very compact. He had spirit and verve. Then another person whom I came to know and became good friends with was I.F. Stone. He was a formative influence on me as a young reporter. His *I.F. Stone's Weekly* was a valuable source of information. He took government documents, that proved that what officials were saying was either just the opposite or in total ignorance of what was in those records. From Stone I again learned, a very important lesson, both in values and as a reporter, do your homework on a subject and only then can you really report the meaning of what is said publicly. Later in his life Stone learned ancient Greek and wrote a book on Socrates.

To get back to Seldes, one of his books was Lords of the Press.

That was a very important book. He had a sense of drama and passion when he wrote, but he also had information and a point of view that was quite different from the conventional wisdom. The books about publishers were all kind of a history of the saints. You got a biography

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MANY PAPERS IS THAT THE BUSINESS SIDE OF THE PAPER HAS BEGUN TO DICTATE THE NEWS.

[media]

about any big publisher and it was what a wonderful person he was. Seldes and Stone were people who said, They have feet of clay. They have power. You began to understand what happens in the concentration of power. It changes not just individuals, although it certainly does that, but it changes the nature of what they do. People who sit on the top of power pyramids see the world from a very different point of view than those who are down at the bottom.

In Double Vision you write, "In childhood I hated the divided perspectives in my family life. But now, with the luxury of looking back, I would not change them."

I call the book *Double Vision* because I think we all see things in more than one way. It's a good reminder to journalists that when they talk about objective journalism, there's nothing objective about it if you're thinking of scientific objectivity, like adding up some figures and everyone that's competent ends up with the same answer. No two human beings look at a scene and have exactly the same reaction. Each person needs to know himself or herself, to have some sense of where they came from and what shaped them so that when the look upon a scene, they're conscious of what the lens is through which they look. Then they try to look at it from the lens of somebody else. You have both the objective view, you see the obvious things that are measurable and recordable, and then there are the impressions that sneak into your subconscious, that come from your own life experience, which you have forgotten, but which condition a kind of emotional feeling which tells your senses what to pay attention to. I use a crude example with students. A roofer looks at a house and says, I think those shingles should be replaced. A painter looks at the house and says, The south side of that house needs another coat of paint. They're looking at the same house, but they have a different reaction because they come from different angles. I think that's the same for every human being, including journalists. Look at every scene. ★

For information about obtaining cassette copies or transcripts of this or other programs, please contact:

David Barsamian | Alternative Radio
P.O. Box 551, Boulder, CO 80306
(800) 444-1977 • ar@orci.com
www.alternativeradio.org
©2000

Radio Daze: FolkScene and LA's KPFK

by Michael D. Amitin



Say it ain't so Joanne.

Public Radio, that alternative Meeea entrenched at the left end of the dial, hijacked by ghosts perfumed in Hearst spirit?

In a rash of imposter sightings of late, folks coast to coast have noticed NPR and Pacifica donning the cloak and dagger of maverick radio, while favorite and venerated shows fade into the ether compliments of a new crop of latch key management kids getting their ears and loins wet in ivy league board rooms far from the community heartbeat.

Unburdened by the constraints of sponsorship, Public Radio germinated in the aftermath of WW11. With a voice graced in the pleasures of presenting alternative perspectives, and off-the-beaten-path arts, it became... a welcomed rain in a desert of jabber.

Inheriting the cosmic fodder of shows the likes of Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen, (the irascible ventriloquist mimicking the dummy boss), that lambasting lefty Walter Winchell, and Woody Guthrie's Hooverville, NPR ascended like the sweet smoke of Bluegrass singing over distant hills. A sacred untouchable haven.

It was Dick Gregory talking Mississippi hunger, Donald Sutherland doing Nixon at his Waterloo...err gate. Valdez, East Timor, NWA, and Rage.

Alas, Community Radio R.I.P?

A way out west, a groundswell of protest is gaining fire, as hoards of listeners, musicians and programmers alike, rise up to this new brew of "compassionate conservation,"

and hokey-choky control being dished out to the sonic Volunteers of America.

Unclouded in the swirling spate of current controversies, is the debacle that has befallen the award winning Pacifica and NPR show "Democracy Now!"

Host Amy Goodman has been issued the standard shorter-leash stripes, and told in no uncertain terms to "submit content for review" before airing.

In addition to winning the prestigious George Polk Award for its piece, "Drilling and Killing: Chevron and Nigeria's Military Dictatorship", "Democracy Now!" has garnered awards for its coverage of the Mumia Abu-Jamal case, and its story: "Massacre: The Story of East Timor."

In another slippery tower, Pacifica's flagship KPFA in Berkeley, played host to a crotchety band of rent-a-cops who the station hired and placed inside the studio to escort a popular programmer off the air for discussing the problem of centralization and control of program content.

Seventeen dark days later, the weary station awoke, and went back on air. Some staffers were allowed to return, others sent packing.

Since, the infection has spread throughout the Pacifica galaxy, and by golly, even struck the City of Angels, where is told an intimately diabolical tale of the beheading of a 30-year labor of love.

It was in 1969, as the dust of Altamont was settling, when Roz and Howard Larman hauled a makeshift yet state-of-the-art studio

down to public radio station KPFK in Los Angeles. With engineer Peter Cutler in tow, they turned L.A. on to roots music, and to the best musicians pouring in from burghs, hollers, and towns across the map. As FM radio high-tailed for greener pastures, the Larmans' program, FolkScene, served up without-a-net live radio, where performers stood naked before a very unforgiving mic.

The whimsical FolkScene became the epicenter of an entire community, who tuned in every Sunday night for a three-hour fix of intimate, often soul-baring performances. "In a city not exactly known for its roots or sense of community, this show was quite a feat," singer-songwriter Peter Case commented.

The wide-open show evolved into an invaluable live vehicle for some of the finest ragamuffins tolling L.A.'s byways.

Tom Waits came in and sang "Heart Of Saturday Night" when he was fresh off parking 1975 cars on Sunset. Lucinda Williams used three cuts recorded on FolkScene as the cornerstone of her crown jewel "Passionate Kisses."

The merry ride floated along just fine, until five years ago, when Professor Fate intervened and transformed the station's blood from sweet rose to Chromium 6.

KPFK came up with a dandy of a general manager named Mark Schubbs, who presented a self-authored "Y2K Compliant Agreement" to the station's programmers and volunteers replete with an ultimatum to sign or go packing. As the legion's ran for their bic ball points, the Larmans ran for the hills.

Seeing "Y2K" as a ruse concocted to gain artistic control over FolkScene, The Larmans believed the 'agreement' was a trump card Schubbs dealt after seeing their two ace "FolkScene Collection" CD's released without his name as executive hotshot.

The Collection's are part of a rich legacy of archives accumulated over the Larmans' 30-year tenure. Schubbs maintained he sanctioned them while turning a blind eye to the station policy of not allowing programmers to release material for commercial gain, but cannot do so in the future.

"If releasing the two CD's went against station policy, why did Schubbs give us a green light for their release, and why did he allow us to use the CD's as a calling card for fund drives, then go and cash checks generated by them?" Howard Larman said.

Though monetary gain seems to play second fiddle to control in the dispute, there are signs its voice isn't completely buried in the fray. "In a digital world, these broadcasts are infinitely reusable," Schubbs said.

"As of now, none have us are in retirement territory with the proceeds of the two CD's," Larman said.

The Agreement would assign all copy-

right interests to KPFK regardless of the medium, and supposedly indemnify the station against liability suits from the artists.

"We sign our own agreement with the artists on our CD's, where we assume liability when they agree to release their songs". Howard Larman chimes in. "All the artists were so responsive and cool about it. Tom Waits saying he didn't give a fuck, sent back his contract no questions asked."

"The 'work for hire' enables Schubbs to own the copyrights of our life's work. He'd like to have total artistic control over the music, and make the deal with the record company, which is fine except he's not a music person," Roz Larman said.

In the wake of the program's quick disappearing act, listeners' passions have flared. FolkScene alumni such as Peter Case, Dave Alvin, Jackson Browne, Jennifer Warnes, and Katy Moffat rallied recently to raise funds for the their lawyer.

"Long running radio shows are the lifeblood and roots of the city. 'We can't keep cutting our history, cutting our roots. It's the tree biting the fruit.'" Peter Case said.

Roz and Howard's passion for the music was unbelievable. They were committed to something more than a paycheck. As Captain Beefheart once said "love over gold."

"People don't go into folk music to get rich, and believe me the Larmans were the epitome of independence, they weren't about promotion, they couldn't be bought or sold." Case stated.

No blow or blow up dolls from gold chain Harry coming in the station's back door pimpin his promo?

A voice of independence, FolkScene was full of dirt-under-the-nails tales from muddy river country, Celtic jigs to French valse. Tunes ringing out from Appalachian hilltops and Cajun swamps. Clear-eyed soul administered by descendants of road buskers and self-styled minstrels who had something to say about the corporate hit parade, and bands that knew the names of front desk clerks at every blue-light motel coast to coast.

"The thing about our program we like is that we have no boundaries, we play whatever we like. We always treated the studio like our living room, and we all did it for the love of the music." Roz Larman said.

"We started taping shows at home, and when we first got the show we interspersed those interviews with records from Folkways and Rounder." Howard Larman said.

"We were out recording live events all over town for the marathon fund drives we had in those days, and that led to bring in guests to play live on the show."

"We did Don McClean live at the Tropicana Motel as he premiered "American

Pie" for the West Coast crowd. Pete Seeger, Arlo, Hoyt Axton, and Joan Baez came in early on." Larman said.

Over 1500 musicians came through FolkScene including: Mary Black, Randy Newman, Utah Phillips, Rosalie Sorrels, Maria Muldaur, and Canadian legend Stan Rogers.

"The Larmans played stuff you just didn't hear anywhere else. I remember driving around tuning in one Sunday night and hearing Roy Bookbinder." Peter Case said.

"I'd listened to the Larmans in the early 70s when I was a fry cook, and they had Kate Wolf on. When I was finally on the show some years later, it was like: Man! I ain't listening to it, I'm on it! The Larmans stamp of approval sort of validated my career." Dave Alvin said.

"For the hour you were on their show, they treated you like you were the king of the world. They gave you a free forum to tell your story, and believe me the Larmans knew their stuff. They exposed my solo stuff to a whole new audience who may not have known my work with the Blasters.

In the 90's, Iris Dement, Kelly Joe Phelps, Dar Williams, Patty Larkin, and Greg Brown, pulled in adding their prodigious entries to the vast, growing archive of sparkling clear recordings.

"This music's not a sepia tone reminder of a bygone era. More musicians are playing folk stuff than anytime in the last 40 years," Alvin said. "Learned musicians choose this genre. It hasn't been a three chord, capo, Tom Dooley thing for quite awhile."

With Alvin's "Barn Burning" foreclosed in favor of that smoldering campfire fave "Kumbaya" (and vintage Hanson), where will the next crop of busking storytellers find a launching pad of this caliber?

For now, FolkScene fans can tune into Internet radio (the Santa Cruz-based station www.KPIG.com), where the Larmans have found a new, if temporary home.

"FolkScene has been one of the last [places] to hear folk and roots music locally," observes Dave Alvin. "This is a tragedy born of the market-driven state of things. We've come to expect this sort of thing in the corporate world — but hey, this is public radio!" ★

For additional information:

- "Public Radio: In Depth...or Head in the Sand?" by Ed Ayres in *World Watch*, December 2000.
 - Los Angeles Times Calendar Section's of Oct 21, and Oct. 27, 2000
 - Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting: Rachel Coen, Communications coordinator.
 - Media Alliance of San Francisco
 - Roz and Howard Larman @ www.folkscene.com
- Photo above taken from a FolkScene benefit 11/28/00 in Los Angeles at the Troubadour.*

RE/EDUCATION

"There will be time to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet; there will be time to murder and create... Time for you and time for me, and time yet for a hundred indecision's... a hundred visions and revisions, before taking of toast and tea." -T.S. Eliot.

I met a man in Washington DC who asked for \$.50 to help pay for a heart transplant. According to him, "it's a miracle I still alive, man, my heart's the size of a deflated balloon. You talkin' to a corpse." I didn't quite see how the \$.50 would help out in the grand picture of things, and I was not skeptical enough to disbelieve the man's story, so I just listened attentively. In the background were the sounds of a city in action; the ugly rumble of old taxi's and their drivers swearing on the speakers, the slush of feet on gravel, the horn player with his hat on the grass with spare change scattered everywhere. The sun was out, I was in a black sweatshirt, the man had on a maroon jacket. I thought about him when I rode the T back home and if his heart transplant went alright. The T is louder and more obtrusive here, its harder to talk to a man with a heart the size of a deflated balloon when the person next to you is yelling in your ear or across the middle of the train. I miss that.

I met a woman in a convenience store who sat next to me while I was on a break from work. I nodded in a polite fashion as she sat adjacent to me. She sat and rocked back and forth for a bit, my attention slowly losing interest in the book in front of me, and then said, "What's your name?" We exchanged names and she told me about her father who gave her money to buy something at the store but she forgot what. We took a slow walk around the store to help her remember. She needed bread. I was wearing tan slacks and a dunkin' donuts shirt. She was wearing black stretch pants and a Mickey Mouse sweatshirt, one of those that covers one's knees. I don't work there anymore, and thinking back, I wonder if anybody there notices her pacing in front of the isles, completely confused as to what she was supposed to get. She still sits in the front of the store during the summer, counting change in her hand and humming softly to herself, barely audible amongst the clatter of quick change commerce. I sometimes miss working there and breathing it in. I work behind a counter now as a mere employee, not helping in any given situation, just checking in and out-easily replaceable and often unfulfilled.

AND THIS IS RE/EDUCATION. The idea is an open mind and the process is elevating yourself to a point of personal comfort with those around you. Re/Education is about breathing deeper and seeing clearer and loving things more than one normally does. Its about closing text books and meeting living history or listening to the stories that photographs and real books tell you. Its about calling in sick to work so you can ride your bike to the corner of a pond and toss pebbles into it.

Re/Education is the most aggressive and passive form of liberation. It is aggressive because it calls for you to be completely autonomous in your actions; to not comply with administrators and societal standards, to love as you love and feel what you feel. It is passive because you are not hurting anyone or anything, you are engaging yourself in a myriad experiences just for the sake of doing it. It is talking and smiling to everyone you walk past on the street, it is sitting alone on a bench eating lunch and watching the world move around you (and you moving with it). **ITS ABOUT LOVE AND COMPASSION AND LEARNING.** It is the most powerful form of rebellion- love and enjoyment of all that you do in a culture that prefers your classification over your personal definitions of self and world. Engulfing yourself in a pile of positive influences; walking farther, making new paintings, building new swings, listening to thousands of different records, reading different books, trying new foods, watching different styled movies, learning about different cultures- and in truth, learning about yourself. Poetry in motion; your life and mine, (in mine) simultaneously creating and destroying, making the most of our time. With love, please share.



BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOUR AFFILIATES AT THE ELECTRIC PAJAMA PARTY

After felling the evil tobacco corporations in *The Insider*, it seems Russell Crowe has decided to make amends for biting the hand that feeds him. In his latest film, *Proof of Life* (based on William Prochnau's article, "Adventures in the Ransom Trade," about real-life guerrilla kidnappings in Colombia), Crowe chalks one up for the good guys, saving an American corporate bigwig—a very good American corporate bigwig, mind you—from the clutches of evil drug-trafficking guerrillas of "Telacca" (Colombia's fictitious, Hollywood stunt double). Outside Castle Rock Entertainment's good-and-evil world, however, lies another tale, which is no exception to the rule that truth is often stranger than fiction.

The Real Columbia

Colombia is a virtual gold mine for American business. This resource-rich country is being primed for the unfettered exploitation that Republicrats like to describe with code words like "emerging democracy" or "developing industrial nation." But Colombia's most valuable commodity is not the gold or even the oil being pilfered from the ground. Cheap labour and lax-to-nonexistent environmental regulations are what really make foreign capitalists drool. Wages of two dollars an hour¹ are often more than enough to compel peasants to help the American cat burglar to the car with their own belongings. While the American economy virtually depends upon this process, their victims—as the now poorest country in the world, Haiti, can attest—do not fare nearly so well.

In many cases, American corporate imperialism is met with considerable opposition from the local population. This is why it is usually necessary for violent client regimes to be installed in these areas. Men like Suharto and Pinochet top the list of murderers provided with ample funding for "internal security," another code word for "war on the population."² This method is effective, except when these pet killers pull too hard on their American leashes, as in the cases of Noreiga and Hussein; the U.S. tolerates only economically viable atrocities. The Colombian puppet government, on the other hand, has long been an obedient client, becoming both the "leading recipient of U.S. military aid in Latin America and... also compil[ing] the worst human rights record, in conformity with a well-established correlation."³ With President Clinton's recent announcement of a 1.3 billion dollar "aid" package, both categories are expected to increase proportionately.

While the Americans have appealed to the "war on drugs" to justify this (largely) military aid, its scarcely hidden agenda is to crush the guerrilla resistance movement. A rebel victory—along with the subsequent nationalization of resources, democratic reforms, introduction of labour rights and environmental regulations they propose—is what the United States dreads the most, since it would have a disastrous effect on the profitable multinational looting that continues today. This is nothing new. Confrontation of the very same "threats" to American business in Cuba and Nicaragua was justified by appealing to the menace of international communism. With the end of the Cold War, however, the ludicrous notion of a tiny Latin American country threatening the security of the world's greatest superpower is a considerably tougher sell.

The demons in this drug war are the dreaded "'narco-guerrillas,' a useful concept as a cover for counterinsurgency, but one that has been sharply criticized on factual grounds."⁴ Further light can be shed on the on real motivation behind America's dirty drug war when examining the point of view of the guerrillas themselves—which are mentioned in the mainstream press about as often as the human rights record of the paramilitary/government association.

The guerrillas—mostly displaced and broken peasants—realize that their "country has become a privileged place for exploitation by the multinationals, who take everything, leaving [them] with nothing



Hollywood

and the Big Business of Propping Up Nation-States:

Marshall Beggs Comments on *Proof Of Life*

[but] the pillaged earth. [They] want... peace, democracy, national dignity, social justice and development." They fight against "imperialist interests, the representatives of the monopolies and the large landowners, the drug traffickers, the paramilitary and those who bear primary responsibility for the war and the crimes unleashed against [their] people."⁵

The demands from the ELN (National Liberation Army) are shared by the larger and better known FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army). While both groups have deep historical roots, neither group are guerrillas today by choice, as their most recent efforts to enter the political process (which, like America's own "democracy," is dominated by two nearly identical parties representing moneyed interests) as the Patriotic Union (UP), were crushed. Throughout the eighties, UP party members and candidates were targeted for political violence, including "the rapid assassination of about 3,000 activists, including presidential candidates, mayors, and legislators"⁶. Needless to say, the guerrillas quickly learned exactly what kind of democracy the United States favors for its client states and vowed not to repeat their mistake. Naturally, this has been somewhat of an obstacle for peace talks.

While U.S. ally, Colombian President Andres Pastrana waxes sophisticated about his efforts to achieve peace, his army works with paramilitary mercenaries to slaughter his people. "An estimated 78 percent of Colombia's reported human rights abuses last year"⁷ have been committed by paramilitary death squads, that "continue to operate with the support, acquiescence and at times with coordination of the [government] security forces."⁸ The remaining 22 percent of abuses are divided between the Colombian army itself, the guerrillas, and other groups. Just as in East Timor—in which American (and Canadian) support has enabled its Indonesian allies to massacre more than 200,000 people (approximately one-third of the population) over the last 25 years—U.S. "aid" has consisted primarily of training in warfare and torture, and supplying weapons to the leading murderers which, as previously mentioned, only naturally results in a directly proportionate rise in the killings.

Given the reality of the situation in Colombia, it is necessary for the United States to play up the drug story to the full; no atrocities are ever committed—by any nation—without first feigning noble intent. By slandering the guerrillas it is hoped that the aid sent to destroy them can be justified, while attention is drawn away from the real culprits.

The Story Hollywood Tells

Proof of Life plays the "narco-guerrilla" lie for all it is worth. In fact, the lies in this movie are so vulgar and transparent that someone felt it would be a sensible precaution to give all the major players in the story new names! Along with the Colombia/Telacca name change, the red, yellow and blue Colombian flag becomes the red, yellow and black flag of Telacca; the red and black insignia of the ELN becomes the red and black insignia of the "ELT"; Occidental Oil becomes "Ooctonal Oil."

Early in the movie, Crowe introduces the audience to the dreaded "ELT," suggesting that any political agenda they once had has long deteriorated and been replaced by drugs and corruption. Later scenes depict guerrillas working and defending their "cocaine factories." While

[media]

the average North American might not know the difference, anyone living in Colombia, would see this as ludicrous. Even Pastrana himself admits what is common knowledge regarding the guerrillas: "there is no evidence at the moment that [they] are drug traffickers. They do charge the 'narcos' a toll. But the FARC have always said they are interested in eradicating illegal crops."⁹

No reference to the paramilitary groups is made in the film. In Telacca, the guerrillas are the ones committing senseless acts of violence on the civilian population; the guerrillas are the ones who torture their hostages. The contrast between reality and fiction is, perhaps, best shown by the reactions of former prisoners. In Telacca, we are presented with a badly worn and starving Italian who, upon his rescue, hollers, "They are animals! Animals! Look what they have done to me!" while pointing to a missing ear. In Colombia, kidnapped corporate executive Frank Skee "likened his trip through the jungle to ecotourism, an experience that under different circumstances 'could probably be marketed.'"¹⁰

Of course, this film is only the latest in a steady flow of corporate media intended to whitewash Clinton's blood money in the eyes of the public. Some of the most one-sided reports vilifying the guerrillas' struggle have come from Time Warner (CNN, Times), the parent company of Castle Rock Entertainment—the manufacturers of our "narco-guerrilla" flick! Of course, patriotism only stretches as far as the dollar bill; just like Occidental Oil, the big media firms have a personal stake in Plan Colombia as well. Time Warner/AOL sees Colombia as "a key link in the megacompany's plans to rope all of South America's rising internet community into its cybernetic empire"¹¹, in which, as board member Eduardo Hauser suggested, "the growth opportunity is enormous."¹² AOL cofounder, James Kimsey has even gone so far as to journey "down to meet guerrilla leaders and open their eyes to the miracles of capitalism."¹³ It's doubtful that he made much of an impression. As for or those of us who are already properly indoctrinated in greed and exploitation, we have the luxury to close our eyes to its ghastly human costs between handfuls of buttered popcorn.

Proof of Life is only an eggshell in the compost heap of lies and propaganda covering what, for many, are their only windows to the world. It is vital that we think for ourselves when Keanu Reeves shows us that being a scab is a good and humorous thing that makes the girls dig you, or when Matthew McConaughey acts out a revisionist drama about which country *really* cracked the enigma code. It is true, more so now than ever, that—as Orwell so aptly put it—we have "sunk to a depth at which the restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men." Unfortunately, in a culture where our first duty is to scramble for profit, things just don't seem to turn out that way. ★

⁹ Darren Fonda, "Guerrilla Capitalism," *Harpers Magazine* Feb. 2000, 60.

¹⁰ Noam Chomsky *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, Odonian Press 1993.

¹¹ Noam Chomsky "The Colombia Plan," *Z Magazine* April 2000.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ National Liberation Army Homepage. Available at: <http://www.web.net/eln/index.htm>

¹⁴ Chomsky *ibid.*

¹⁵ Fonda, 61.

¹⁶ Amnesty International, "Trade Action Report" 1999. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/intercan/tunion/1999/colombia.htm>

¹⁷ "Colombia's Pastrana Plays Down FARC Drug Links," *Rueters*, July 29, 2000.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Harpers, 61.

¹⁹ Justin Ramondo, "Caligula in Colombia—A Legacy of Shame" August 7, 2000; available at <http://www.antiwar.com/justin/j080700.html>

²⁰ Juan Carlos Perez, Paulo Amaral, "AOL Forms Joint Venture in Latin America," *International Data Group* Dec. 15, 1998.

²¹ Patrick Symmes, "Miraculous Fishing," *Harpers Magazine* Dec. 2000, 63.

Essential Media

Howard Zinn "Stories Hollywood Never Tells"

One of the most prominent, engaging and radical professors around today, Howard Zinn, took a recent opportunity to speak at the Taos Talking Film Festival in 1999 to talk about the stories that he thinks Hollywood has purposely left out of public eye. He suggests that the stories that Hollywood tells actually serve more to present an institutional, establishment-endorsed version of reality that doesn't exactly do much to acknowledge the rich history of people working, acting, playing, and doing on their own terms. In this captivating lecture, Zinn weaves the stories of American history that he thinks should be included in Hollywood's repertoire. Of course, Hollywood won't be jumping to make films that are sympathetic to farmers striking back against government taxation, or child textile workers marching to Teddy Roosevelt's summer home in Oyster Bay, or the Columbus colonization of Native Arawak tribes. This CD was produced and introduced by David Barsamian of Alternative Radio.

-jason kuesma

CD \$15 from Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141
www.alternativetentacles.com



Media Reader Jan/Feb/Mar 2001

This is the third installment in a project that I was really excited to see when it debuted. Media Reader is a free newsprint magazine of sorts that combines feature-length articles, interviews, insightful reviews, and creative and legible design to create an alternative reader that should definitely come out more than four times a year. This issue features excerpts from Jello Biafra's speaking engagements in Philadelphia, the dirt behind what went down with one of the most promising (if not contradictory) revolutionary "businesses," (Unamerican Activities) coverage of protests in Prague and an interview with a doctor on the state of public health. The review section is amazing because it not only critiques the music but also applies a rubric to the aesthetics of the package's presentation.

-jason kuesma

Media Reader is free (send some postage) by writing Media Reader, PO Box 641544, Chicago, IL 60664-1544
www.mediareader.org



"In a pointed response to dreary exercises in academic miserabilism, Sunfrog urges us to instead choose the ludic path to utopia. The book itself is a jubilant welcome to his passionate quest."

by Ron Sakolsky
editor of *Gone to Crotchet: Origins of North American Primitivist Culture*



**Utopian Prospects,
Communal Projects:
Visionary Experiments in
Literature & Everyday Life**

by Andy Sunfrog Smith

Send \$12 (includes postage) to:
1467 Pumpkin Hollow Road
Liberty, TN 37095
sunfrogj@hotmail.com

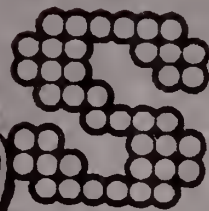
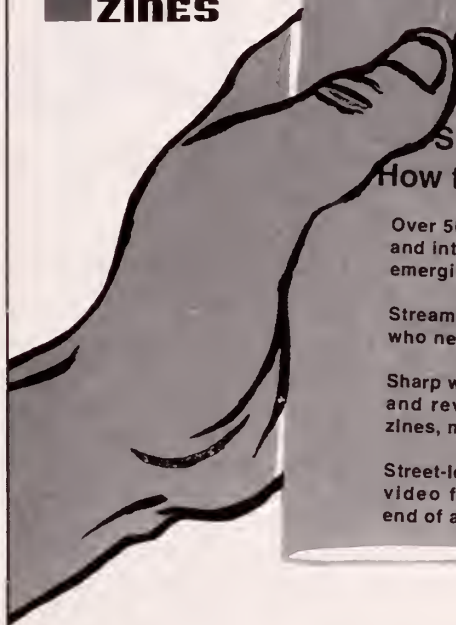
POLITICS

RADIO

MUSIC

FILM

ZINES



SUPERSPHERE.COM

How to avoid monoculture

Over 500 free independent concerts and interviews from established and emerging bands.

Streaming cinema from the filmmakers who never want to get to Hollywood.

Sharp witted, contemporary editorials and reviews of underground films zines, media & music.

Street-level political commentary and video features from the business end of a cop's baton.

ATTENTION BANDS LABELS ARTISTS SAFETY ENTHUSIASTS



I LOVE ALL THINGS

FLYERS, POSTERS,
ILLUSTRATION, PAINTINGS,
WEB, OTHER.

UPSO DESIGN IS HERE FOR YOU



UPSO DESIGN IS HERE FOR YOU. YESTERDAY WAS A HORRIBLE DAY. TODAY WILL BE BETTER.



Can You Trust Your Doctor?

Western Medicine, Big Money, and The Cancer Racket

by Gavin Phillips

"Everyone should know that most cancer research is largely a fraud..."

- Linus Pauling, Ph.D. (1901-1994), two-time Nobel Prize winner

By the time you have finished reading this article, 11 Americans will have died from cancer. This year, about 1.2 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer and some 560,000 will die from it. These rates have doubled in less than 40 years.

In 1971 President Nixon declared the famous "war on cancer." Thirty years and some 30 billion research dollars later we are still being prescribed the same three failing treatments: surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Why?

Three Case Studies

My answer begins with a synopsis of three alternative treatments that have been suppressed for decades by orthodox medicine. First, I must stress that none of these treatments is a guaranteed cancer cure. Some work better with one person than another, depending on the type of cancer. A vitally important role is one of a strict nutritional diet.

Royal Raymond Rife

The first story is about the Rife radio frequency machine. Royal Raymond Rife was born 1888, in Elkhorn, Nebraska. Rife's passions were microscopes, microbiology and electronics.

Rife's genius in building incredibly complex light microscopes is an undisputed fact. Roy built five in total. The largest and most powerful was his "Universal Microscope," made with just over 5,200 parts. Electron microscopes today are more powerful but they kill the minute organisms Rife was attempting to see. You have to be able to see them alive in order to identify them and, more importantly, identify what kills them.

It took Rife about 12 years, between 1920-1932, to isolate the cancer microbe. He named it the BX virus. Rife began subjecting the cancer microbe to different radio frequencies to

see if they were affected by it.

After experimenting for thousands of hours, Rife discovered what he called the Mortal Oscillatory Rate of the cancer microbe—simply, the exact frequency that killed it. Rife successfully cured cancer in over 400 experimental animals before testing was ready for humans.

Dr. Millbank Johnson, a close friend of Rife, set up the Special Medical Research Committee to witness what transpired at this first clinic. In the summer of 1934, 16 terminally ill cancer patients were given three minutes of the frequency every day.

They soon learned that this was too much because the human body needed more time to dispose of the dead toxins. They were given three minutes every third day. Fourteen of the supposedly terminally ill patients were clear of cancer and healthy when the clinic closed after three months. The other two patients were pronounced cured one month after the clinic closed. There were very minimal, if any, short-term side effects.

Rife wrote in 1953: "Sixteen cases were treated at the clinic for many types of malignancy. After three months, 14 of these so-called hopeless cases were signed off as clinically cured by the staff of five medical doctors and Dr. Alvin G. Foord, M.D., pathologist for the group."

In 1937 Rife and some colleagues established a company called Beam Ray. They manufactured 14 frequency Instruments. Dr. James Couche, who was present at the clinic, used one of Rife's machines with great success for 22 years.

The most powerful man in medicine at this time was Dr. Morris Fishbein. He was chief editor of the American Medical Associations (AMA) Journal. Fishbein had failed anatomy and never treated a patient in his life. His only motivations were money and power. He decided which drugs were to be sold to the public based solely on the drug manufacturer's willingness to pay the advertising rates that he set.

Fishbein heard about Rife's frequency machine and wanted to buy a share. The offer was refused. He then offered Phil Hoyland, an investor, legal assistance to enable him to steal the company from Rife and the other investors.

The trial of 1939 put an end to any proper scientific investigation of the Frequency Instrument. This was a lawsuit brought by Hoyland, funded by Fishbein, to try and steal the company and the Frequency Instrument from Rife and the other investors. The trial was the undoing of Rife. Not used to being savagely attacked in open court, he crumbled under the pressure. Although Rife won the case, he turned to alcohol and became an alcoholic.

Fishbein used his pervasive power within the AMA to thwart further investigation of

Hunza.

In the 1970s, the FDA mounted a wide-spread and erroneous media campaign alleging that amygdalin is toxic and dangerous because it contains cyanide. Yes, it does, in minute quantities. If you eat the seeds from a hundred apples in a day you risk serious side effects, possibly death. If you eat enormous amounts of anything you run serious health risks. Aspirin is 20 times more toxic than the same amount of amygdalin.

Orthodox medicine says that Laetrile (a concentrated form of amygdalin developed by Dr. Krebs) was thoroughly tested and found to be worthless. The longest and most famous Laetrile tests ever performed ran for nearly five years at America's most prestigious cancer re-

effectiveness. But they were not interested in further testing of this natural product. The minutes read, "Sloan-Kettering is not enthusiastic about studying amygdalin [Laetrile] but would like to study CN (cyanide)-releasing drugs."

Sloan-Kettering wanted a man-made, "patentable" chemical to mimic the qualities found in amygdalin, because that is where the money was. If a very effective cancer treatment or cure was found in the lowly apricot seed, it would spell economic disaster for the cancer industry.

The Hoxsey Remedies

Harry Hoxsey, born 1901, was an ex-coal miner with an eighth grade education. From

Rife's work. Dr. Millbank Johnson died in 1944. In 1950 Rife joined up with John Crane, an electrical engineer. They worked together for 10 years building more advanced frequency machines. But in 1960 the AMA closed them down. Crane was imprisoned for three years and a month, even though 14 patients testified as to the effectiveness of the machine. Rife died in 1971.

Amygdalin/Laetrile

In 1952 Dr. Ernst Krebs from San Francisco advanced the theory that cancer is a deficiency disease, similar to scurvy or pellagra. His theory was that the cause of the disease was the lack of an essential food compound in modern man's diet. He identified it as part of the nitriloside family, which is found in over 1,200 edible plants. Nitriloside, generally referred to as amygdalin, is especially prevalent in the seeds of apricots, blackthorn cherries, nectarines, peaches, apples and others.

The best way for Krebs to prove his theory would be to have thousands of people eat a diet very high in amygdalin and monitor them—an enormously costly exercise to say the least. Fortunately for Krebs, the experiment had already been carried out.

Nestled between West Pakistan, India and China, is the tiny kingdom of Hunza. The people of Hunza consume 200 times more amygdalin in their diet than the average American.

Visiting medical teams found them cancer free. In 1973 Prince Mohammed Khan, son of the Mir of Hunza, told Charles Hillinger of the LA Times the average age of his people is about 85. More importantly, they live vigorous and mentally alert lives up until a few days before they die.

Only in recent years have the first few Hunza cancer cases been reported. That is due to a narrow road being carved in the mountain and food from the "civilized" world reaching

search center, the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. At the conclusion of the trials, on June 15, 1977, they released a press statement declaring, "...Laetrile was found to possess neither preventative, nor tumor-regressant, nor anti-metastatic, nor curative anticancer activity."

So that is it then, right? It does not get more adamant than that. We can close the book on Laetrile. Unfortunately for the officials at Sloan-Kettering there was an unforeseen problem. When a journalist asked Dr. Kanematsu Sugiura, "Do you stick by your belief that Laetrile stops the spread of cancer?" he replied, "I stick."

Those two words were a major embarrassment to the accumulated demigods on the dais. The reason being is that Dr. Kanematsu Sugiura was the preeminent cancer researcher in America, probably the world, at this time. Nobody had ever questioned Sugiura's data in 60 years of cancer research. Sugiura was asked why Sloan-Kettering was against Laetrile. "Why are they so much against it?" Sugiura answered, "I don't know. Maybe the medical profession doesn't like it because they are making too much money."

Sugiura had to be proven wrong. But other researchers had obtained similar positive results. Dr. Lloyd Schloen, a biochemist at Sloan-Kettering, included proteolytic enzymes in his injections and reported 100% cure rate among his albino mice. This data had to be buried. Sloan-Kettering then changed the protocols of the tests and amounts of Laetrile to make certain that they failed. Not surprisingly they failed, and that is what they reported.

Sloan-Kettering's motives were clearly revealed in the minutes of a meeting that top officials held on July 2, 1974. The discussions were private and candid. The fact that numerous Sloan-Kettering officials were convinced of the effectiveness of amygdalin is obvious; they just were not sure as to the degree of its

the 1920s to the 1950s, Harry Hoxsey and his natural remedies would wage the fiercest battle with conventional medicine this country has ever seen. The remedies were handed down by Harry's great grandfather, John Hoxsey. John, a veterinarian, had observed a horse he owned heal itself of cancer by eating certain herbs in his pasture, and he used the herbs to heal other animals.

Over the years other natural products were added and the remedy was tried on humans. The Hoxsey treatment comprised two components—an herbal tonic that cleansed the body and boosted the immune system, and an external paste for tumors outside the body.

Harry opened his first clinic in Dallas in 1924. By 1950 he had the largest privately-owned cancer clinic in America, represented in 17 states. Although thousands of cancer patients swore that Hoxsey had cured them of cancer, Harry was branded a quack and a charlatan by the medical community.

Dallas District Attorney Al Templeton detested Hoxsey and arrested him an unprecedented 100 times in two years. Hoxsey would bail himself out within a day or two because Templeton could never persuade any of Harry's patients to testify against him. Templeton vowed to put Hoxsey away for good, until his own brother secretly used the Hoxsey therapy. His cancer disappeared and Templeton gave Hoxsey the credit. In a startling about face, Al Templeton became Hoxsey's lawyer and one of his greatest advocates.

In 1939 *Esquire* magazine writer James Wakefield Burke was asked to write a piece on Hoxsey and expose him as a quack. James recalls, "I came to Texas, I expected to stay about a day, get my information, and leave. I became fascinated. I stayed for six weeks, every day Harry would pick me up, bring me to the clinic." James continues, "...He would put his arm around these old men and woman, say, 'Dad, them doctors been cutting you up, I ain't gonna let them sons-o-bitches kill you...' He'd

treat them and they'd get better and begin to get well."

James wrote an article entitled, "The Quack That Cured Cancer," but *Esquire* did not publish it. The late Mildred Nelson treated people with the Hoxsey method for some 50 years, even though initially she also thought Hoxsey was a fraud. Mildred's mother, Della, had contracted uterine cancer and orthodox medicine had given up on her. Mildred's mother and father wanted to try the Hoxsey treatment. She recalls trying to talk them out of it, "They didn't budge. So I thought, well, I'll go down there and see what's going on, then I can get them out of it. I called Harry and asked him if he still needed a nurse. 'I sure do, be here in the morning.' ...By the end of a

year I began to realize, gee this does help, mum had gotten better and to this day is alive and sassy as can be."

Mildred Nelson and James Burke had done something the National Cancer Institute has never done: investigate Hoxsey and his treatments first hand. They found him to be a caring and effective healer who was not profiting from cancer patients. Harry had sworn on his father's deathbed that everyone would have access to the remedy, regardless of his or her ability to pay. As Harry said, "I don't have to do this kind of work; I've got more oil wells than a lot of men who call themselves big producers...Any man that would traffic on sick, dying, or the blind caused from cancer is the worst scoundrel on earth."

Still, the Hoxsey treatment does not work for everybody. Ironically, Hoxsey himself contracted prostate cancer, but had to resort to surgery when his remedies did not work.

It was not long before the infamous Morris Fishbein of the AMA heard about the Hoxsey treatment and wanted to buy sole rights to it, with some other AMA doctors. Hoxsey would only agree if it stated in the contract that everyone would have access to the treatments, not just a wealthy few. Fishbein refused and so began a 25-year media battle between Fishbein and Hoxsey.

The mudslinging culminated in a lawsuit brought by Hoxsey against Fishbein. Much to everyone's amazement, Hoxsey won the case. Even so, in the late 1950s the FDA closed down all of Hoxsey's clinics. Mildred Nelson took the treatment to Tijuana, Mexico in 1963. Mildred treated thousands of patients with cancer until her death in 1999 (her sister has taken over). By all accounts, Mildred was one of the finest, most compassionate caregivers you are ever likely to find. While thousands state that Mildred cured them of cancer and with medical records to prove it, the National Cancer Institute turns a blind eye.

Mainstream Medicine vs. Alternative Treatments

So, what does mainstream medicine say about alternative cancer treatments in general? The Pavlovian response is a rather supercilious, "They rely on anecdotal evidence which is not scientific." Scientists attempt to sweep all patient testimony, verified by a doctor or not, into the realms of myth and legend. They tell us that in order to test the efficacy of a cancer treatment it must be subjected to the rigor of countless double-blind studies, clinical trials and peer review groups. In theory this sounds fine, but in practice several flaws become apparent. In 50 years of cancer research and umpteen experiments, no headway

has been made in finding an effective treatment or cure for the deadliest cancers. At the same time, the incidence of cancer is continually on the rise.

Another point is that these supposed exacting scientific drug trials are in fact nothing of the sort. Clinical oncologists have an obvious vested interest in producing positive results from cancer drug trials. There are cases of outright fraud, as you will see in the Tamoxifen trials. There is also intentional and unintentional bias such as not following the protocols of the experiment, burying negative results, patient selection and statistical interpretation.

There is another factor here that has far more to do with human nature than science. By trying to exclude first person testimony, scientists try to control the path to truth. Only they have access to more exacting truths through their complex procedures and mounds of statistics. In reality, scientists have not copyrighted truth. They are fallible men and woman who have fallen for some age-old human pitfalls, extreme arrogance and the craving for more power. I will take the word of a relative or friend who has cancer and no ax to grind over these scientists with all their personnel and political interests to serve.

The Establishment

Now I turn my attention to the cancer establishment. The agencies involved are the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the American Cancer Society (ACS), the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and the American Medical Association (AMA). These agencies have a long history of endemic corruption and conflict of interest with the pharmaceutical industry. I will begin with the cancer establishment's three primary treatments: surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatment.

Surgery has been around for centuries and is the most successful. Surgery is most effective

against localized tumors, a small percentage of cancer patients. If the cancer has spread to other parts of the body, it is far less successful. If during surgery only one cancer cell re-enters the blood stream, cancer can start again. How many times have cancer sufferers heard the words, "we got it all," only to find a few months later that it has returned?

Chemotherapy drugs were derived from the mustard gas experiments during World War II. They were heavily promoted in the early 1950s by Cornelius Rhoads, head of the then newly formed Sloan-Kettering Center for Cancer Research. Chemotherapy is toxic, causes cancer and wrecks the immune system. Cancer patients often die from opportunistic infections or from the drugs themselves due to

their high toxicity. Chemotherapy has had good results with a few rare cancers, about five percent of cancer patients yearly. But according to author Ralph Moss, the drugs were given to at least 700,000 people in 1991 alone.

It is alarming to note that very few doctors would take their own medicine if they contracted cancer. In one survey of 118 doctors, 79 responded. Fifty-eight (73 percent) said they would never take any chemotherapy due to its high toxicity and ineffectiveness. The pharmaceutical companies are making a fortune though. Chemotherapy drug sales were 3.1 billion in 1989. By 1995 they had almost tripled to 8.6 billion. Predicted sales in 1999 were 13.7 billion.

The final option, radiation treatment, has similar side effects to chemotherapy. Once again, it has proven effective in a few rare cancers, but is given to hundreds of thousands. There is a multi-billion dollar investment in radiation equipment throughout America's hospitals and enormous profits to be made by using it.

Another grubby secret of the cancer establishment is their definition of the word cured. According to them you are cured if you remain cancer-free for five years. If the cancer returns in six or eight years, then that becomes a new case to be cured all over again.

This brings about the absurd situation of some people being cured two or three times in a 20-year period. The fact is of course that they were never cured at all, just sent into lengthy remissions. But it is a convenient way for the cancer establishment to artificially inflate their success rates.

The National Cancer Institute

The NCI was established in 1937 and was supposed to find a cancer cure or effective treatment. In 60 years there have been some small successes with rarer cancers and some technological advances. But for most cancer

[politics]

patients, the chances of surviving have not changed since the 1950s.

It would be great if the NCI was even half as good at controlling cancer as their public relations department is at pronouncing its imminent demise. Over the years there have been dozens of headline-smashing "miracle" drugs that invariably failed to perform anywhere close to the hyperbole.

In the mid-1960s, Dr. Lawrence Burton produced a very promising treatment called Immuno-Augmentative Therapy. The treatment boosted the patient's immune system. He moved the treatment to the Bahamas in 1977. Burton claimed the NCI tried to steal his formula and then take credit for it.

Dr. John Beaty sent 20 advanced cancer

clinical trials it had a success rate of preventing cancer in 45 percent of the woman who took part. But two smaller trials of Tamoxifen in England and Italy showed no preventative benefit. Tamoxifen may just delay the onset of breast cancer.

The NCI hardly mentions the fact that Tamoxifen is a known carcinogen. It increases the risk of uterine cancer for woman under 50 by two times and woman over 50 by four times, as well as other serious side effects. Yet this drug is approved for cancer prevention in healthy woman.

After the embarrassing Tamoxifen episode, NCI director Samuel Broder resigned in 1995. He took a position at Ivax, Inc, a company producing chemotherapy drugs. His sal-

aries are approximately twice what he was earning at the NCI.

Another little known fact is that many drugs developed by the NCI, at taxpayer expense, are then handed over to pharmaceutical companies who reap the massive profits. A good example of this is the anti-cancer drug Taxol that was approved in 1992. The NCI had spent a fortune on clinical trials and developing the drugs' manufacturing process. They then gave exclusive rights to Bristol-Myers Squibb who charge us \$4.87 per milligram, 20 times what it costs to make.

What happens to the hundreds of millions of dollars the ACS collects every year? In September 1990, a study by Dr. James T. Bennett of George Mason University concluded, "The American Cancer Society...had a fund balance

patients to Burton's clinic. Ten experienced tumor regression. According to Beaty, "All ten owe their survival to Dr. Burton's treatment..."

In 1985 the newspapers carried the story that Burton's treatment had become infected with the AIDS virus. The clinic was closed down. Shortly afterwards it was revealed that a top NCI official had spread lies which were published in the AMA journal and in the press in order to close the clinic. In 1987 Dr. Vincent DeVita, head of NCI from 1980-1988, recommended to 13,000 cancer specialists in North America to give chemotherapy and surgery to all woman with breast cancer, regardless of whether it had spread. DeVita was a chemotherapy specialist. Dr. Alan Levin of the University of California put the argument against DeVita bluntly, "Most cancer patients in this country die of Chemotherapy."

In 1988 DeVita left NCI for a \$400,000 a year position with Sloan-Kettering in New York as physician-in-chief of the cancer research area.

A major scandal rocked the NCI in 1994 when the Chicago Tribune broke the story of large-scale fraud in the Tamoxifen drug trials. Dr. Bernard Fisher was in charge of the taxpayer-funded National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project of NCI (about 68 million dollars). Fisher used data he knew to be fraudulent in an article published in the New England Journal of Medicine. Samuel Broder, director of the NCI, was also informed about the fraud but remained silent.

Tamoxifen received enormous media exposure thanks to the NCI. They stated that in

In 1971 President Nixon declared the famous "war on cancer." Thirty years and some 30 billion research dollars later we are still being prescribed the same three failing treatments: surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Why?

ary is approximately twice what he was earning at the NCI.

Another little known fact is that many drugs developed by the NCI, at taxpayer expense, are then handed over to pharmaceutical companies who reap the massive profits. A good example of this is the anti-cancer

drug Taxol that was approved in 1992. The NCI had spent a fortune on clinical trials and developing the drugs' manufacturing process. They then gave exclusive rights to Bristol-Myers Squibb who charge us \$4.87 per milligram, 20 times what it costs to make.

The American Cancer Society

Formed in 1913, the ACS was reorganized in 1944. The new leadership comprised of Albert Lasker, an advertising tycoon, and Elmer Bobst, president of two drug companies. Lasker's wife, Mary, ran the ACS for 30-some years. Mary was only interested in researching profit-motivated, "patentable" drugs.

The big payoff for Mary came in December 1971, when President Nixon signed into law the "war on cancer." During the decade of the 1970s, Mary Lasker and prominent private cancer research hospitals such as Memorial Sloan-Kettering ruled the national cancer program.

The ACS has a committee to identify any doctor prescribing treatments that are not endorsed. For years, the ACS's Committee on Unproven Methods of Cancer Management and the AMA's Committee on Quackery (disbanded 1974) collaborated in persecuting anyone threatening the status quo. According to journalist Ruth Rosenbaum, they "form a network of vigilantes prepared to pounce on anyone who pro-

of \$426.2 million in 1988, and it held net investments (after depreciation) in land, buildings and equipment of \$69 million. That same year, the ACS spent only \$89.2 million, or 26 percent of its budget on medical research."

The ACS is famous for making highly exaggerated and misleading statements. On March 15, 1987, the ACS officially announced, "Caught early enough, breast cancer has cure rates approaching 100 percent." There is no such thing as a cure for breast cancer, only survival rates. As Dr. Dean Burk said, "They (ACS) lie like scoundrels."

The ACS and NCI have been intertwined since the 1950s. About half of the ACS board is comprised of oncologists, radiologists, clinicians and others with a vested interest in traditional cancer research. Key ACS and NCI officials often sit on each other's committees. ACS board members and their colleagues receive grants from one or both institutions. This old-boys network maintains the status quo and guarantees that the vast majority of funding stays within orthodox medicine.

The Food and Drug Administration

In 1970 former FDA commissioner Dr. Herbert Ley said, "The thing that bugs me is that the people think the FDA is protecting them. It isn't. What the FDA is doing and what the public thinks it is doing are as different as night and day." In 1974, 11 FDA scientists testified in the Senate "...that they were harassed by agency officials...Whenever they recommended against approval of marketing some new drug."

The FDA's generic drug scandal hit the news in 1989. Several FDA reviewers were accepting bribes from some drug companies to speed their drugs through the process and derail those submitted by competing companies. According to a Tufts University study released in 1990, it now takes 12 years and costs 231 million dollars to research, test and

[politics]

obtain approval for a new drug. Because of the FDA's glacially slow and inept bureaucracy, many potentially useful drugs cannot be brought to market due to the excessive cost and time involved.

A battle being fought now epitomizes how far the FDA will go in order to protect drug companies profits. For over a year, Jim and Donna Navarro have fought the FDA for the right to give their five-year-old son, Thomas, an alternative treatment. Thomas suffers with Medulloblastoma, a type of malignant brain cancer. After surgery, chemotherapy was recommended. Jim and Donna asked what the side effects were. Fluid on the middle ear, hearing loss, memory loss, hyperthyroidism, spinal growth deficit... the list went on. Worse, permanent retardation. Jim and Donna re-

on drugs testified before Congress and said that the AMA was "...A captive of and beholden to the pharmaceutical industry." In 1987 the AMA was found guilty of conspiring for 20 years to destroy the profession of chiropractitioners.

The War On Cancer

The supposed war on cancer is little more than a grand illusion conjured up by the cancer establishment's propaganda gurus. The formula is eons old. Repeatedly chisel your message into people's psyches, "cancer breakthrough;" scientists say they are "turning the tide on cancer." We become unwitting human satellites, bouncing the deception from one person to another.

There never was a determined, no-holds-

searched their son's cancer for thousands of hours. They found Dr. Burzynski's treatment (antineoplastons) in Houston, that has had some very good success with this type of brain cancer, with minimal short-term side effects.

The FDA has been persecuting Burzynski for over 15 years. They refuse to allow Burzynski to treat Thomas until he has undergone chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Jim and Donna have pleaded with the FDA commissioner Jane Henney, her superior Donna Shalala, and several politicians, all to no avail. The FDA would rather see Thomas Navarro dead than take the medicine of his parents' choice.

The FDA's motives are explicitly clear. Prominent FDA officials protect the pharmaceutical companies' profit margins and are later rewarded with lucrative positions within those same companies. As Burzynski says, "The past commissioner of the FDA—now he is an official of one of the large pharmaceutical companies, with a salary of \$2 million a year."

If the FDA allow Thomas Navarro access to Burzynski's treatment they open the door to other people demanding the same option. Very soon people will want the right to choose any alternative treatment. That is a road the FDA definitely does not want to go down.

The American Medical Association

The AMA is responsible for licensing of all physicians in America. They play an important role in suppressing alternative treatments by networking with the ACS and FDA in identifying and punishing doctors that step out of line.

Since Morris Fishbein's day, the AMA has relied on revenue received from drug manufacturers who advertise in their various medical journals.

On February 6, 1973, two former chairmen and one vice chair of the AMA's council

barred war on cancer. There is a fanatical and hate-filled war being waged against the few courageous doctors and innovative healers who prescribe natural treatments. There is a war of protectionism. Protecting the status quo, protecting the grant money trough, and above all, protecting the pharmaceutical cartel's monopoly.

There have been dozens of very encouraging cancer treatments in the last 70 years—the Rife frequency machine, Laetrile, Hoxsey, Antineoplastons, Coley's Toxins, Hydrazine Sulfate, Krebiozen, Immuno-Augmentative Therapy, Dr. Max Gerson's Diet, to name a few. They all have two things in common. The people advocating the therapy are branded charlatans or quacks and the treatment is denounced as worthless by scientists who have been selling us out for generations.

A radical change in cancer research is needed. Natural, nutritional and other innovative approaches should be studied and made available to cancer patients immediately. Most importantly, we must have medical freedom of choice. For us to achieve those changes, we have to overcome a far tougher opponent than cancer. A battle royal against the \$110 billion a year cancer industry. Ultimately, our greatest enemy is apathy. To succeed, we will need people willing to step up to the plate and speak out, undeterred by being labeled politically incorrect—people with plenty of good old-fashioned guts, character and an iron will to see it through until the job is done. We will prevail. It's inevitable. Because when good people put their minds to something, the mightiest walls of oppression can and will be shattered.

* * *

This article is in no way meant to be a substitute for professional medical care or attention. Always check with a qualified health care provider for all health care concerns. For more information please visit Gavin Phillips' website: www.geocities.com/freec80 or refer to the list of resources included with this article.

[politics]

BOOKS.

The Cancer Cure That Worked: Fifty Years of Suppression
By Barry Lynes

The Healing Of Cancer: The Cures, the Cover-ups and the Solution Now!
By Barry Lynes

World Without Cancer: The Story of Vitamin B17
By G. Edward Griffin

The Cancer Industry: The Classic Expose' on the Cancer Establishment
By Ralph W. Moss, Ph.D.

Questioning Chemotherapy
By Ralph W. Moss, Ph.D.

The Politics of Cancer Revisited
By Samuel Epstein M.D.

ARTICLES

Life Extension Magazine May 1999
<http://www.lef.org/magazine/mag99/may99-cover.html>

"TAMOXIFEN FOR HEALTHY WOMEN," National Women's Health Network
<http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/tamoxife.htm>

CNN Interactive: "British, Italian studies find no proof drug prevents breast cancer," July 9, 1998
<http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9807/09/britain.breast.cancer/>

CNN Interactive: "FDA panel approves potentially powerful breast cancer drug"
<http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9809/02/breast.cancer.drug.02>

"Scientific Genius Dies; Saw Work Discredited" The Daily California, Wednesday, August 11, 1971

The Smithsonian Report 1944
<http://www.rife.de/miscope/miscope6.htm>

"Racketeering in Medicine-The Suppression of Alternatives," James P. Carter, M.D., Dr. P.H.

"An FDA Fable," Robert Higgs, Reason Magazine Oct 1994

"Alternative Medicine and the War on Cancer," Peter Barry Chowka

DOCUMENTARY


"Hoxsey-How Healing Becomes a Crime."

WEBSITES:

<http://www.cancerbusters.com>

<http://naturalhealthline.com>

<http://www.ralphmoss.com>



Alano Baez a.k.a Not4Prophet RICANSTRUCTION THE POLITICS OF MUSIC

Towards the middle of November, *CLAMOR* asked me if I would be interested in doing an interview with New York-based band, Ricanstruction. My initial response was not the most promising. I explained that I would only be interested in such a project if the band is heavy on the content. If not, the band would really need to be extraordinarily experimental. I told them that I had no desire to discuss riffage and personal trifles for the entertainment of some band's fans; but that I was open to reading the lyrics, listening to the CDs, and giving it a try. I had never done a band interview before, and most I had read were hardly worth the whole press run of a magazine. I usually find them to be self-indulgent or aimed to please the folks who have the band's record and are looking to buy a new one. With all those disheartening words, I was unsure if *CLAMOR* would still consider me the person for the job. They responded by being even more convinced that I was a fit for this inter-

view. They sent me *Ricanstruction*'s two CDs and some interviews that they had previously done. I realized that the issues this band addresses are as urgent as they are neglected. So I undertook the interview with the hope that it would turn out like any good article for *CLAMOR*—giving voice to an underrepresented struggle.

This interview was conducted over e-mail between November 20 and November 29 with Alano Baez a.k.a Not4Prophet, vocalist from Ricanstruction. —Richard Gilman Opalsky

CLAMOR: One very characteristic thing about Ricanstruction is the fact that the band claims to be "Anti-politically political," and to be generally leery about "messing with politics." At the same time, you speak mostly about issues that are overtly political. Why not just "fess up" about being an "in-your-face" political band? Why even bother with trying to ob-

scure or mystify Ricanstruction's overtly political content?

Ricanstruction: We've never tried to obscure or mystify where we're coming from. We don't define ourselves as an "in your face political band" in accordance with the shitstem's American Heritage Dictionary, just as we also refuse to accept the slavemaster's definition of us as "slaves". As Marcus Garvey said, "it's now necessary to see ourselves through our own bifocals." And what we see very clearly is that we have always had someone else's politics in OUR face. Our 500 plus year colonial condition is someone else's politics in our face. Our imperialization is their politics. Our enslavement is their emancipation. Our color is their capitalism. The genocide we survived, the poverty and homelessness we endure, the racism we face, the ghettoization and starvation and sterilization; the drugs we sell or the food we steal, and the bombs they drop, are all some-

[politics]

one else's politics. We're just artists who paint on walls and play guitars, and talk about the world we know. We have neither the privilege nor the power to perceive ourselves as some "in your face" political punx who are gonna save us from ourselves. The fact is we're just tryna save ourselves. Right now, after everything has been taken away from us, the only thing that we have in our possession, is the ability to react and the necessity to resist. Ours is a life of self-defense against someone else's politics. We defend ourselves, and we resist, and some of us even attempt to disrupt or destroy these "politricks." What may be politics for you is resistance for us. We're not on some (self) righteous crusade. The fact is that Babylon's politics are killing US.

Can you give us a brief education of what the Puerto Rico Liberation Movement is? Also, could you tell us what is at stake for the people of Puerto Rico in the context of this struggle for liberation?

What's at stake for Puerto Ricans is their very existence. Puerto Rico's colonial condition means the destruction of the land, the decimation of the culture, and the death of the Puerto Rican people. Puerto Rico was invaded by the United States in 1898 during the Spanish American war and since that time Puerto Ricans have endured, resisted and survived the exploitation, injustice and downpression that goes hand in hand with the process of colonialism and imperialism. Puerto Ricans were given, without their request, US citizenship in 1916 - just in time to be sent to fight in world war I in disproportionate numbers. Since then, they have been cannon fodder in every war, "conflict" or invasion that the US has engaged in. Meanwhile, these "US citizens" who have an inalienable right to be killed, don't have the right to vote in US presidential elections, or to politically decide their own fate. Any decisions of consequence, from who will rule their country, to whether or not Puerto Ricans have a "right" to be independent, is decided by the US congress. Puerto Rican land has also been seized by the US government to be used for tourism, and as military installations where war games are conducted, bombs are dropped, and Latin American dictators are trained. The cancer and suicide rates in Puerto Rico are some of the highest in the "US," as are drug addiction and unemployment; and the poverty level is the highest in the US. Radiation experimentation and contamination have been conducted and inflicted on political prisoners, and sterilization campaigns have been carried out on Puerto Rican women without their knowledge. Most of Puerto Rico is owned by US businessmen who make huge profits off Puerto Ricans who are captive consumers for US goods. And the US owned tourism trade rakes in billions of tax free dollars for US businessmen, while

providing little more than jobs as waiters, maids, and prostitutes for Puerto Ricans. Currently, one third of the Puerto Rican nation lives in exile outside of Puerto Rico in order to survive. But those in the Diaspora are met with the same ills that plague the nationless nation of Puerto Rico. Back in the day, the Puerto Rican revolutionary Pedro Albizu Campos said, referring to Puerto Rico's colonial relationship with the US, that the US wants "the bird cage without the bird." This has proven to be true.

At the time of this interview, there is an explosive 'media scandal' surrounding the Bush Gore presidential election. The US, the so-called 'greatest democratic power,' cannot even manage to count its votes. I used to tell people that the popular choice in a presidential election is always overruled by the choice of the Electoral College. I tried to explain that there have already been three elections in US history where the candidate chosen by the people differed from the one chosen by the Electoral College. In those three cases the people's choice of president lost the election, because "direct democracy" was already written out of the constitution as an impossibility. Many of the folks I would tell this to would either be perplexed by the news, or they would flatly reject it as a lie. As you know, both Gore and Bush have decidedly regressive, right-wing agendas and agree on foreign policy, capitol punishment, and military development— And Gore is NOT, as many people don't even realize, for abortion (he rejected a bill which would have provided some federal finding to poor women seeking an abortion and he supports stricter parent-notification laws— both of which mean that he is only for a woman's right to choose if she has a disposable income and is over 18!). As to environmentalism, he would rather drill for oil in Colombia, on the lands of indigenous people who survive off of that land, than in Alaska where our own precious scenery is deemed more valuable. It seems that the only good thing that could come from this 'media scandal' would be an education about our lack of real democracy. People may be forced to learn the math of how elections run, and how they fail to represent the interests of the people. What is the response of the excluded Puerto Rican 'citizens' who are forced to watch this oligarchic circus without being given a vote? Do you think that any real change can come from the ballot box?

The Puerto Rican Liberation Movement has always had a pretty healthy and clear view of US politricks. It's the policy of the movement not to engage in any activity where the US government is involved, because to do so would be to legitimize the illegal occupation and colonization of Puerto Rico. Even the "legitimate" Puerto Rican Independence party is

[politics]

shunned by the real independentistas because it has chosen to engage in US sanctioned politics as a means of gaining independence for Puerto Rico. If we even mention the fact that Puerto Ricans don't have the right to vote, it's merely to put our colonial condition in a perspective that might be more understandable to those who refuse to accept that, in this day and age, the US still owns a colony. In terms of whether or not any real change can come out of the ballot box, the fact that less than half the eligible voting population of the United States bothers to participate, is a clear indication that in the US itself the people don't believe that any real change can come through this process. I think whether we're talking about those who are abused by this shitstem's politics and are in the ghettos somewhere simply trying to survive; or those who feel outside of this system's politics and are out in the streets demonstrating and agitating for change; or those who think this system's not all it should be and are on the campuses trying to move people towards alternative parties; or those who hate the system and are throwing stones through the windows of Nike- We are all gaining a clearer understanding every day of what this shitstem is all about. Just like there are a lot of folks who didn't know what the Electoral College is, there are also a lot of people who are anarchist and don't know it yet.

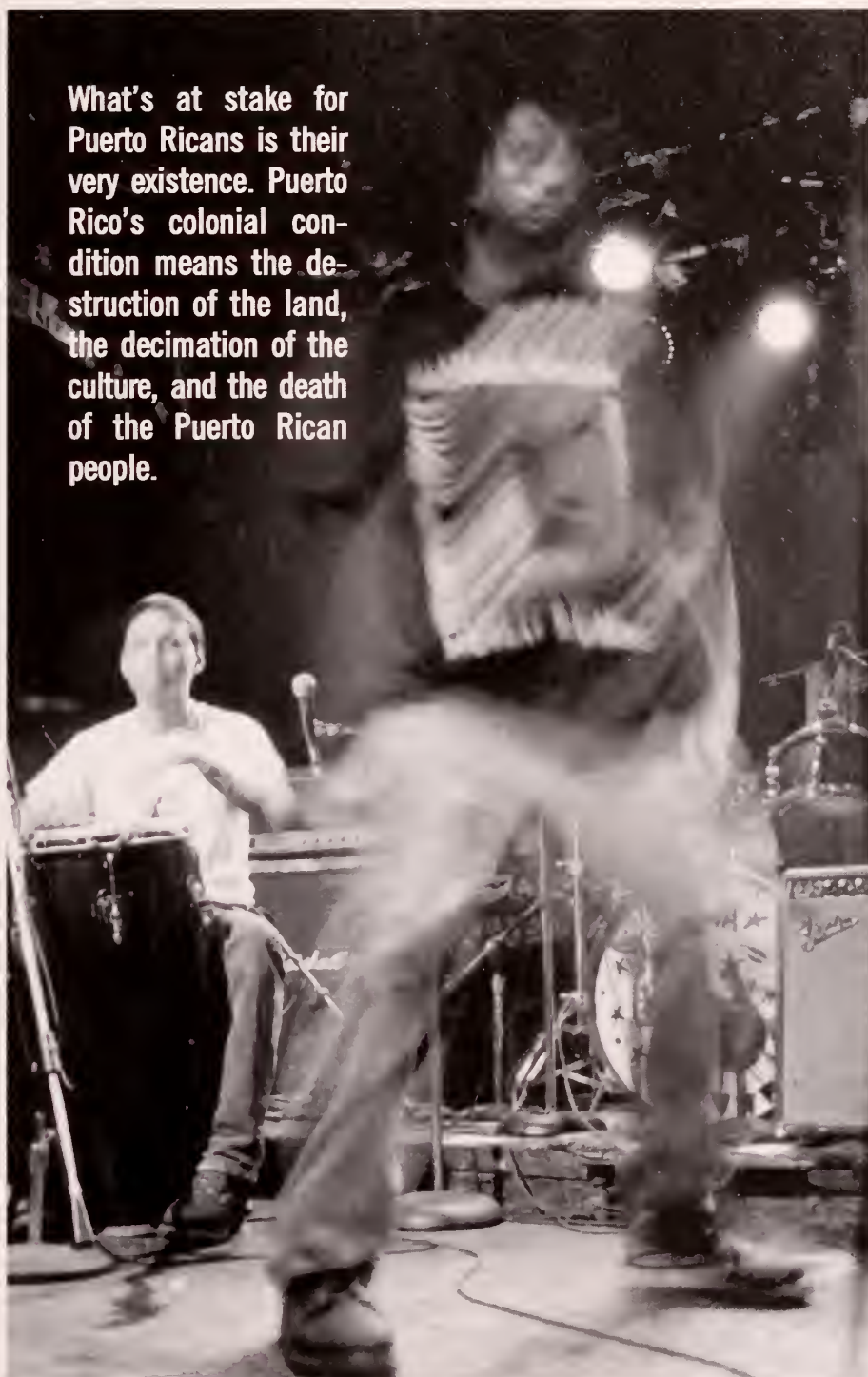
First of all, I have a pretty high idea of anarchism, and I am not sure what you mean when you say, "there are a lot of people who are anarchist and don't know it yet." Anarchism has always struck me as an extraordinarily conscious and self-aware philosophy. Do you really think that people can be anarchist and unconscious of the fact that they are? Secondly, it seems to me that the Puerto Rican Liberation Movement has almost no visibility in the US, and that it is even in the margins of radical American communities. Since the US is the colonizer of Puerto Rico, much of the work towards this cause must take place here, in the heart of the colonizing force. Blacklisted from the mainstream media, what kind of activity can we take up here in the US to strengthen the cause of Puerto Rican Liberation?

Answering your second question first, the Puerto Rican Liberation Movement is not on the margins of the radical Puerto Rican community in the US; it's on our minds every second of every day. We feel it and we know it. This is our reality. We also fully understand that the "mainstream" North American media will never publicize or glorify the reality of Puerto Rico's colonial condition and liberation struggle. After all, we're not some "far off" issue in some "far off" land; we're not a colony of the "evil" Chinese, or the "bad" communists. We are, as Jose Marti said, "in the en-

trails of the monster, and our weapon is David's sling." But just like David the punk we rely on other means to get our message across. The underground, politically minded media is an important collaborator in helping put the message of this struggle out to the masses. After all, isn't that the purpose of periodicals like *CLAMOR*? But at the same time, those in the Puerto Rican Liberation Movement carry no illusions that ours is a glamour issue that the "liberators-come-lately" will embrace and rally behind. But of course, non-Puerto Rican activists and sympathizers are more than welcome to take to the streets in the struggle to free Puerto Rico. It's as simple as that. After all, when we look at the righteous struggles against the WTO, the Republicrats, the fight to free and conserve the land, the battle against racism, sexism, the AIDS crisis, injustice, exploitation, capitalism, imperialism- all roads lead back to the oldest colony in the world. But in the meantime we will continue to occupy US military bombing zones, squat US government-owned land, demonstrate, agitate, disobey, seize the statue of liberty, seize minds, seize the time, be the fly on the elephant's ass and maybe one day, turn this whole shitstem on its fucking head. As far as the question of anarchism is concerned, I can't speak for high-minded philosophers, high brow intellectuals, or higher education high rollers either, but when you get past all the obstacles of ideology, the borders of doctrine, and the passports of protocol, then anarchy becomes action. So when you're dealing with people who can barely read, but are feeding, clothing and sheltering each other and creating autonomous zones that exist outside of the shitstem, then you're dealing with action. When you're dealing with folks who don't know the difference between Bakunin and bombs but are, through resistance and existence, slowly chipping away at the machine and attempting to create a world without masters or slaves, presidents or paupers, leaders or liars, corporations or corpses, then you're dealing with action. But you know, the fact is, we don't have to call it anarchism, or communism, or socialism, or even terrorism. Fuck "isms" and schisms, because after all is said, and said again, we just gotta do what we gotta do.

It is an interesting phenomenon (although entirely predictable) that the US media has covered the East Tibetan struggle only because it is a struggle against China, and not against the US. With the Puerto Rican Liberation Movement, since it is a struggle that directly addresses US imperialism and colonization, there will be no large-scale attention here. While we do have things like punk and CLAMOR, we also have things in the not-so-distant past, like when revolutionary peoples from all over the world assembled armed militias in 1936 to fight against the rise of

What's at stake for Puerto Ricans is their very existence. Puerto Rico's colonial condition means the destruction of the land, the decimation of the culture, and the death of the Puerto Rican people.



Franco's fascist army in Spain. I suppose a question that every activist (or any person concerned with radical social change) is forced to face at some point is how much progress can be caused through peaceful, nonviolent actions? Could you explain what role, if any, forceful or violent action could play in the furthering of the Puerto Rican cause?

The Puerto Rican liberation struggle has utilized both non-violent action, as we're currently seeing in the struggle to remove the US military from Puerto Rican land, and revolutionary violence, as we've seen in the actions of Puerto Rican clandestine armed units such

as the Armed Forces for National Liberation (FALN), and the Puerto Rican Peoples Army-Macheteros (EPB), to engender a revolutionary consciousness in the people. Or, as Bob Marley put it, to help us "emancipate ourselves from mental slavery." But it should always be remembered that we're up against the most powerful, treacherous and violent empire in the history of mankind, so the impact of these tactics on the slavemaster are not always so clear to the eye. I think that history has shown us that we need both non-violent struggle and revolutionary violence if we're going to free ourselves. But it should be understood that this violence, or revolutionary violence, is a need-

[politics]

essary reaction on the part of the slave to the downpressive violence he has been subjected to at the hands of the slavemaster. As Fanon said, "colonialism is built on systemic structural violence which eventually triggers a violent reaction." But, as Fanon also pointed out, that violent reaction can also serve as a catharsis because it "can dissolve the inferiority complex of the colonized ... which has been inscribed on the body during a lifetime of violent oppression."

People in so-called "developing" countries all around the globe have been kicking and screaming about the disastrous effects of WTO, World Bank and IMF policies for over the past 20 years. Yet none of these organizations even flinched until grassroots activity in the Western World flared up during the past three years. Now, they are suddenly changing their rhetoric to address the issues raised by protestors in America, Prague, Germany and France. Still, it is doubtful that we could get anything better than rhetorical changes from these pilots of the global economy. Do you think that the solidarity of people who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of this exploitation with the people in the movements of the directly "downpressed" is required to get the kind of radical change we need?

The only thing the privileged can do is divest themselves of their privilege. The only thing a racist can do is become a race traitor. The only thing the slavemaster can do is stop being a slavemaster. But the slave has still gotta break his own chains.

This leads me to a question about Ricanstruction's music. In various interviews with Ricanstruction, you've talked quite a bit about punk. Also, you talk a little bit about various other forms of music such as Afro-Caribbean music and salsa. Your musical interests are rather diverse, yet punk is amongst the most white, male-dominated music scenes that one could ever find. Of course, there are numerous exceptions to this, but they are still exceptions to a pretty shameful rule. If Ricanstruction is about the kind of resistance we've been discussing, then why form a band that fits within the punk community and gains most of its support from a punk constituency? The people who need to be mobilized the most, by your own account, make up the smallest population in the hardcore punk community. Why not infiltrate a scene that could better mobilize marginalized peoples?

We never believed in being a part of any "scene," but we don't necessarily mind when we're referred to as "punk" because it tends to come from a perception of our attitude and politics, or should I say anti-politics? And punk has a rich and pretty impressive history of dis-

sent, DIY, and dirt under its fingernails. If punk "rule" is still one of "White male Domination," then punk needs us more than we need punk. But really, race, just like gentrification, is a construct that came about for no good purpose. The trick isn't to be categorized, the key is to confound categorization, create new terms for freedom, and ricanstruet perceptions. Your head may be free, and your record collection may be alphabetized, but when you go into your neighborhood reca sto', there are still all sorts of categories and sub-categories. Ricanstruction wasn't formed to fit into any particular constituency. We grew up listening to music, plain and simple, and never categorized it. From So-called punk, to so-called salsa, to so-called reggae, funk, jazz, mambo, ska, boogaloo, bomba y plena, hip-hop, be bop, folk and folklorico. We were and are open to it all. We never cared whether Jimi Hendrix was rock or soul, or Bad Brains was hardcore or reggae, or whether Coltrane was jazz or even punk. Just like we never called ourselves a political band, but instead simply made music about our lives, which others called political. We've played so-called hip-hop shows for Mumia and Leonard Peltier, so-called punk shows for the Zapatistas and the squatting movement, meringue block parties for the homeless and hurricane victims, and we might even play jazz clubs for the hell of it, if the cover wasn't so high. We've done shows where "anarcho-punk" are slammin' with "Santeros", and hardcore "hip-hop heads" are ragin' wit' "rastas". This to us feels like the start of real revolution. Yeah, we realize that we gotta unify if we're gonna make change, but still, after all is played, and played again, we also know that each of us still has our own chains to break: whether they be the chains of slavery and downpression, domination and privilege, or race and racism. It's not an easy thing, but I think that if we can do away with concepts of what is "Black" and what is "White," and instead look at what is revolutionary and what is not, we might actually be well on our way to writing the soundtrack for that revolution we all talkin' about. After all, when the revolution comes, it will sound like everything you've ever heard and nothing you've ever heard.

I was wondering about the other members of Ricanstruction. Every interview I've seen with Ricanstruction has ultimately been an interview with one member- you. Some bands like to say that each member speaks through his or her instrument and that is how their voice comes into the band. I have always found that to be a romantic load of crap. The idea that they don't have any other words to convey or anything to say about the band and what it represents. Too often, the other band members end up being reduced to a back-up band for one person. In the worst situations, they don't

[politics]

even have their hearts in the words that the vocalist is singing... they just want to rock, and to not be bothered by the issues. I don't want to ask you to speak for them, but inasmuch as this is a Ricanstruction interview, you already are. Where are they, and how do they interact with Ricanstruction's anti-political politics?

Well, I can't speak for other bands or other people as to why they do what they do, nor do I consider myself to be an authority on what is "romantic crap" and what is not. But when Ricanstruction came to be, we were just four Puerto Ricans from the same inner-city ghetto, who knew what it was to beg, borrow, and steal to survive, and who believed very strongly in the freedom of our homeland, Puerto Rico. We'd been part of the squatters movement, we wrote on private property, smoked the holy sacrament, been harassed or brutalized by the pigs, had shit jobs or were unemployed or "unemployable," and broke the occasional window. We'd all read "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," "The Wretched of the Earth," "The Bolivian Diaries," "The Art of War," and "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed," and we all wanted freedom for Mumia and the rest of the Black liberationists, and Leonard Peltier, and the rest of the Indian Nations. We'd all been beaten down, but not out, by racism, and we all knew that slavery was still in effect. We made music as an outlet for our anger, our suffering, our deferred dreams, and our dashed ideas; but also for our joy, pride, and love, and to set ourselves free- if only for that moment. We made music because to us it sounded like revolution, and yes, we occasionally made music simply to rock. When we started making music, we didn't have to ask each other if we were dancing to the same drummer. We knew we were. When we started writing, we didn't have to ask each other if we spoke the same language. We did. We never gave much thought to interviews and who would do "em, and we never considered ourselves to be spokespersons for anything in particular. When we did do interviews it was because we were approached by a cool "zine like Profane Existence or Jersey Beat. Many of these "zines tended to approach me because I was perceived as the voice of Ricanstruction since I was the "throat." Anyway, somewhere along the line, I got elected, without any Electoral College, to the position of "Minister of Information," or as I'm otherwise known, "Not for Prophet of Rage for the Ricanstruction anti-Army." Although I personally don't care much for doing interviews, I still think they're useful when you can discuss issues that might inspire others, whether those issues are "political" or personal, artistic or anarchistic. For that reason, I've continued to do them. Anyway, that's the way it is, and at this point in time, whoever don't like it, shouldn't really bother to talk to us at all. But, you know, I think this is

kind of a stupid question- so perhaps I'm not the best person for the job.

Hopefully, you won't find my last couple of questions as "stupid" as the last one. I was just trying to understand a little bit more about Ricanstruction, I know that the band is not just you, and you've explained that you all came together on the grounds of common interest, a common sense of purpose and common experience. I think you'll agree that all these things have a lot to do with the foundation of a movement, and so I DO think it's important. But moving on- you used to do spoken word performances before Ricanstruction. Could you explain some of the benefits and shortcomings of spoken word as compared with Ricanstruction? For the sake of building resistance through education and provocation, how does spoken word compare to playing music?

I've found that both forms of expression can be effective tools for provocation and education. People come to art for different reasons, and they come to "political" art from different avenues. So what will move and motivate them will depend on where their heads are at the time. Some like the more intimate, and often more personal, soul searching of spoken word, while others prefer the catharsis of a kind of full on sonic sabotage. I've had people say they couldn't get into Ricanstruction because they couldn't hear the lyrics but others wanted, or needed, the power and release of the music and didn't really give a shit what I was saying. Which is not to say that one is any more "politically" minded than the other; it's just the different ways of gettin' your revolutionary groove on. For me, personally, I like the power of this thing that some call "punk rock." To me it sounds like liberation. And I prefer the band format because it allows me to interact with my brothers in a way that I wasn't when I was the lone "poet" on a bare stage. I found that I needed that artistic and collective interaction, and that through our music each one of us was collectively speaking volumes. Which may be why I couldn't quite get with your question about where the other members of Ricanstruction's heads were. But in terms of the movement and the struggle, it really is bigger than hip-hop, or punk, or spoken word, or all the other genres and styles and categories. You can bang on an oil can or bang on the doors of the WTO, or scream on the stage or scream on the (wall) streets, or play a guitar or play war (games), or make entertainment, or make the necessary tools to tear down the walls of Jericho. The key is to do something.

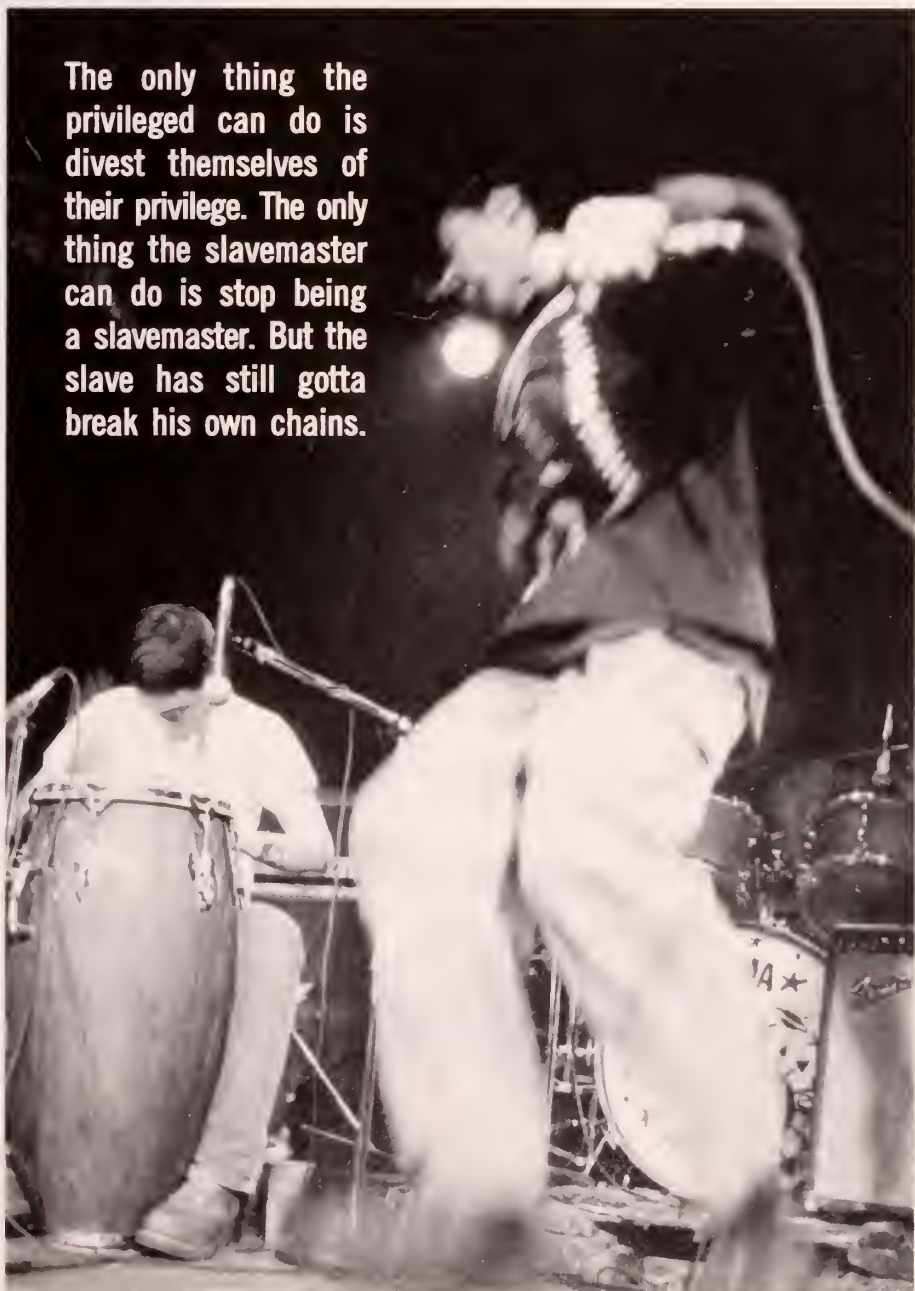
Revisiting your full-length CD, Liberation Day, there is something that I just can't ignore... It barely comes close to adequately representing the depth and vision of your political ob-

jectives. Basically, you get the music and the lyrics, and admittedly amazing cover art. Having grown up around punk, I'm sure you've seen some elaborate packaging for music. Revolutionary music from Crass to Submission Hold has done its best to give us as much as it can for the sake of 'Its Movement'. Surely, you know that you could have given us more content to accompany your music and lyrics... As it is, we don't have any of your elaboration on the lyrics or detailed commentary on the present issues at hand in the Puerto Rican Liberation Movement. I don't bring this up to make a cosmetic point about 'packaging': Ricanstruction clearly has a hell of a lot more to say than thousands of other supposedly political bands, and the lyrics (by themselves) don't even give us what we can get in a short interview... Not everyone is going to get to read the interviews. My question is- for the sake of

an informed resistance, why not use your releases to share more of what you have to offer?

Our simple songs are not a manual or a manifesto, nor are they intended to be, and we're not a "shining path" or the "Puerto Rican Peoples Army." We are, to the best of our ability and within the context of a "punk" (contra) band, reporting and reflecting on the nature of society, ourselves in this society, and the nature of the human soul and its resistance to Babylon. But we know that we are not some kind of "leader-liberator-lyricists" with all the answers on how to get free, and it would be presumptuous for us to define the struggle, or the path, or the "ideology" of revolution for others. As Che Guevara said, "there is no such thing as a liberator; the people will liberate themselves." So it's no longer about follow-

The only thing the privileged can do is divest themselves of their privilege. The only thing the slavemaster can do is stop being a slavemaster. But the slave has still gotta break his own chains.



[politics]

ing the "leader," or the organization, or the pamphlet, or the program, or the booklet, or the bible, or the "man" with the answers and the plan. We've been in the organization and we've read the pamphlet and the booklet and the bible, and seen the program, and followed the "man" and the plan, and all our leaders were false, and all our icons were crucified, and the only real answer we got was to look to ourselves. Yes, read everything, hear everything, see everything, do everything, be everything, take from everything and everyone, find the sources, be your own source and, as Amiri Baraka said "leave the bitter rotten white parts alone." What people need is to have their imaginations challenged, and their heads freed. There's a great deal to be gained from allowing people to think for themselves and draw their own conclusions, and make their own decisions, and decide their own way to liberation day. We believe that as people arrive at an individual consciousness it will become a kind of collective consciousness, and at that point, who feels it knows it. What did LKJ* say: "Do we need another Moses to take we across the sea, and say gwarn**, walk cross, we now free, we now free, as we enter the 21st century. Are we long past that era, that there stage, and it's each and every one that has to rise now to meet the dawning of a different age." ★

**LKJ is Linton Kwesi Johnson- a conscious dub poet from England, by way of Jamaica.*

*** "Gwarn" means "go on" in Jamaican patois.*

For more information about Ricanstruction, check out their web site at www.ricanstruction.net.



The Political and the Sacred:

A Conversation with Starhawk

by Yael Grauer

Starhawk is a social and environmental activist, and has been embracing nonviolent civil disobedience in various political struggles (including those against nuclear weapons, corporate rule and the destruction of old growth forests) for many years. She's also a radical Witch and the author of many prominent books, including *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*; *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics*; and *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery*. When not travelling around giving lectures and workshops, Starhawk works with *Reclaiming*, an organization offering classes, public rituals and training in the Goddess tradition. Yael Grauer was finally able to catch up with her in November 2000.

Did you get involved with activism before you were a Pagan, or was it the other way around?

I guess I got involved with activism even before I was a Pagan, because I was involved in high school in actions against the Vietnam War. The first time I got arrested was when I was 15, for handing out balloons that said: Peace on

[politics]

Earth, Stop the War in Vietnam. We had an active anti-war group and students' rights group. It wasn't until a couple of years later when I was in college that I discovered Paganism.

You've been involved with a lot of political issues that many Pagan communities have embraced. Why do you think that Witches are more politically involved than most other religions (except Unitarians and Quakers)?

I think it helps if you have a spiritual tradition that says the earth is sacred and we have to be involved with it and take care of this earth and the Goddess is involved with each one of us. Every ecosystem on earth is under assault; every indigenous community is either suffering or in a tooth-and-nail struggle for their land. So that helps people understand the importance of doing something and not just standing back and letting the earth be crucified.

A lot of Witches say that the mundane and the mystical are inextricably bound. Do you think that even activists who call themselves atheists are engaging in a form of spirituality?

By my definition of spirituality and the sacred. I think they are. The word sacred is related to the same root as sacrifice. That's what makes what they are doing sacred. If you are willing to make a sacrifice for something, to take a stand or risk yourself, then you are acting in a sacred way even if you don't consider yourself spiritual.

When you're out there in the streets and in the forests, putting yourselves on the line because you care about something more deeply than your own comfort or profit...that's the real definition of spirituality.

We've heard that you've had people contact you from jails because they want to practice Wicca in there and are not allowed unless there's someone in charge.

Reclaiming has had people contact us from jail, and we've had people go in to teach rituals. You can have a priest or a rabbi come into jails, and they're supposed to provide you with religious services. It depends on the chaplain's judgment whether groups like *Reclaiming* can come in. We have people who are officially ordained who do that. Prisoners who are interested can write to *Reclaiming* if they're in an area where we have a group, or if we know a group in their area who can provide someone. We'll also send copies of our magazine to prisoners.

You wrote about AIDS victims as sacred martyrs, especially those who caught the disease through intercourse, as those who die in service of the erotic Goddess. Does that view have an historical basis?

That was something that came to me in a ritual, in a vision. Inanna, the ancient Sumerian goddess of love and the erotic said to me, these people are my holy martyrs. Our culture tells us that if you get a disease because you're sexual, you're bad, and she was saying no, you're good, that's holy; it's my form of worship. If people get hurt doing it we should honor their sexual freedom and their willingness to take risks.

How do you reconcile being Jewish and being a Witch?

For me, Judaism is the religion of my ancestors, and I'm very bonded to it in that it's my roots. There are old Pagan roots that are similar to Judaism in terms of connection to the land and following the seasons and cycles. What I practice myself, spiritually, is my direct connection to nature in the Goddess tradition. If I was 10 years younger I probably would've ended up as a rabbi instead of a Witch, but in my formative years there weren't any womyn rabbis. It was unheard of. There were no womyn in charge of anything except maybe Hadassah or teaching in Hebrew school, and by the time there were I was already used to stripping off all my clothes and jumping naked into the ocean at Winter Solstice. There used to be a Wiccan-Jewish congregation here that did beautiful traditions and rituals. They did High Holy Day services, and we called in Asherah, and we drummed and sang.

Can you change your anger to will?

One of the things we really need to learn how to do is to change our anger to will, because there'll be a lot of anger when you really start looking at things, and a lot of grief, despair, helplessness. Stir in a bunch of abject fear and terror, and you can have interesting mix. You can write a Greek tragedy! Or you can burn out and scream at your friends, or you can go from action to action to action until you collapse from exhaustion. Or you can see anger as energy, as life force energy, because it is, it's your life rising up and saying, "we're under attack here" and telling you to do something, fight, flee, take action. But you need to learn how to contain it, so you can sleep sometimes, so you can kick back and relax. And then anger becomes a tremendous source of creativity, and what we need to keep us thinking about what we can do to keep changing the system.

And the fear...you've said that where there's fear, there's power.

In a sense when you do a direct action you're confronting some of your greatest fears. There's an absolute mass of power of the state and the police. You can get physically harmed

[politics]

or damaged. You can get sentenced to jail. But it's tremendously powerful to do it anyway and not let fear stop you, and then you can find other subtle ways in your life in which you're not doing what you want to do, in which fear is a power used to stop us. If we stop letting it get in the way of your actions, we have a powerful lever to move the system.

Can you say a little about the myth of the American dream?

American culture has been very individual-oriented. There's a lot less of a sense of collective action and process as other cultures. It's kind of deliberately presented that if you're not successful, it's your own fault, you're not as smart, not working as hard, you're lazy or incompetent. But the truth is that most people who are economically successful come from some base of privilege to begin with. There's some room on the edges to move around, just enough to keep people believing that everyone can be president, everyone can rise to the top if they work hard enough. Every once in a while you get a Bill Clinton, who was poor, but really you usually get a Gore or a Bush, who are both competing for the Oval Office and both come from privileged financial backgrounds. In order to have a system where everyone can be president, where everyone can live a deep and abundant life, we need to change the social structure. Because there are a lot of people. The odds are really stacked against them and a lot of people believe that everyone can improve their situation and rise above it. People like to believe that so they won't feel hopeless, but it's not really like that yet.

In The Spiral Dance, you wrote "political awareness can become a tyranny of its own, not least because it locks us into the issues and perspectives of a particular time." Can you say more on that?

I think that there is an aspect to political activism that involves an incredible sense of urgency, people thinking, "I absolutely know what is right." And spirituality advocates that people step back, reflect, and approach the world with a sense of mystery – that maybe they don't always know exactly what is right. I think this is a good quality to bring into activism, to look at some of the deeper issues that way. Also in political activism there's always an issue or a fad of the moment, and you can't always tell which ones are going to be long-lasting struggles and which will be things that don't hold up. You can undermine the depth and complexity of what you do spiritually when you are not connected to what you do on a deeper level. I think it's important to think outside the lines and be a sort of heretic, whether that's a spiritual or political heretic.

The more you lock yourself into a line, the less politically smart we get.

You've been arrested several dozen times for nonviolent civil disobedience. Do you think it's necessary at this point in time to get arrested, in order to help facilitate systemic change?

I think it's necessary at this point in time for people to take some great personal risks. I think it's necessary at this point in time in order for people to defend their freedoms to sometimes risk losing your freedom for a time. I don't think getting arrested is the point of doing actions. It's not the goal, though it's sometimes a consequence. And when it is a consequence, I think it's very powerful. There's nothing like a few days in jail to help you understand the inner workings of the system, because all of the layers that exist to make the system look good and helpful are stripped away. And the times I have been arrested, when I get out it's almost harder than being in, because that awareness doesn't go away. You come back to systems that are supposed to be benign, but are really oppressive.

You write about power over (domination and control), power from within (creative power and ability) and power with (influence). Can you explain these in terms of nonviolent civil disobedience?

When you're doing nonviolent civil disobedience, you need to be in touch with your personal power, to realize it may not look like it but I actually have a choice in this situation. They want you to think that they have all the money and all the power and there's nothing you can do about it, but you can. You can put your bodies in the way, you can get in the way of their functions, you can make them pay attention to you and your concerns. And that comes from power from within as well as the collective power of working together. When you express your concerns and anger in a creative way, then you can do amazing things, and shift that "power-over." Power-over depends on consent, or at least compliance of other people. You see this in prison. A lot of what keeps that system working is fear; a lot of the people in jail comply because of fear. And the people who make the rules are not the ones actually enforcing them. It's left to others, cops, prison guards, people who are also exploited because they're given this small level of power. But it's within a system that doesn't really benefit themselves or their class. We need to challenge this power structure on every single level.

There's an ongoing debate about the big actions that have happened recently, and whether

people should keep investing so much energy in them or focus on more local actions.

I think we need both. I think we need to take some of our energy and bring it back to our home communities and organize locally. But big mass direct action carries an energy with it, a power that unites people that's harder to do locally. Last year was insane, with Seattle, DC, the RNC, the DNC, Prague, one after another. Though it's not always the same people doing the same actions, there are people with some kind of sense of involvement with the whole and there were hundreds of other things going on at the same time. People have to find some sense of personal priority, so you can keep your sanity and not burn out. When I get overwhelmed just by reading the e-mail announcements about actions before I even get to them, I know I need to have a sense of priority of what I want to get involved with.

In Dreaming the Dark you wrote that you defined violence as the imposition of power-over, that a manager who imposes a speed-up on a line can be inflicting violence, even though smiling and soft-spoken, and that a Dine womyn who points a rifle at a government official who is trying to force her off her land is resisting violence. There's kind of a movement-wide debate right now about what exactly violence is and whether or not it's necessary.

I think it's a complex debate about violence versus nonviolence. In some way the greatest violence on the planet is imposed by smiling men who never pick up guns, never punch someone or kick someone, but they punch buttons and have conversations that affect people in ways they never see – that lead to children dying and people starving. I think the debate about violence and nonviolence is not all that illuminating since people seem to take one moral position and argue it, whether they're saying, "violence is bad, don't do it" or "we need to use any means necessary, and if you say we shouldn't you're being divisive." I think we need to look at nonviolence in a different way. It's not about making yourself look better; it's about mobilizing these great resources that we have coming from our imagination and creativity. We deal with a great amount of rage, and we have to do something about it. I have to do something about it so I won't run around the house screaming and breaking things. It's an overwhelmingly unjust world we live in, and I can understand why

someone who feels that rage would want to smash McDonalds or even fight the police. But I also think that as soon as you pick up that rock you buy into what the system is telling us – that violence is the only true means of power, and believing this closes you off from your imagination. We want the people at McDonalds walking out and joining us, because they have the same stake we do. The workers are poor and disenfranchised and don't have a lot of options. Instead of smashing McDonalds, how do we close down McDonalds – really transform the system so that it doesn't even exist anymore? And for that we need a mass movement that is bigger and broader than anything we have now. We need to look more widely at what our actions are and speak more directly to people who don't already think like us. If you put on a mask at an action and hide your face, how can you communicate? How can people know who you are and trust you? I'm not saying you should never cover your face, but you need to know clearly what your goal is. In some circumstances, maybe your greater goal is shut-

ting down a meeting but other times it may be building a broad-based community action. And we need to think about who we want to be joining us in facing police lines or changing the system. What kind of communication are we



having with them?

I saw the anti-war movement in the '60s, that was bigger and broader and deeper than the one we have now, that shut down every campus in the U.S. And I also saw it evaporate, out of frustration, because it didn't seem like we were having an impact at the time. When we look back at it, it's obvious we were having an impact. But at the time, it didn't seem like it, so people got more militant because of

[politics]

that frustration, but without the base to support that. So we spent a lot of energy yelling and arguing about which group was politically correct or pure. And groups got more militant and more isolated and smaller and less effective, and eventually a lot of them self-destructed.

There's a lot of that going on now; there's a lot of people who are heavily involved in political activism but stick mostly to their own groups and don't really interact with the people they believe they're helping.

It's easy to hang out with people who think the way you do. They're supportive, and you need to do that if your thinking is different than most people's. But it's also important to realize that other people are people too, and you need to be in communication with them; you can learn a tremendous amount from that communication.

You speak of nonviolent political actions as an energy working, of magic through connection. Can you explain that?

Nonviolence is very much about working the energy of a situation; violence is an energetic pattern that people (banksters, police, etc.) are familiar with. Control and power-over are what they know. Nonviolence is interrupting that power, doing something unexpected. Yarn [a tactic used in DC] was very effective in keeping the police away, because it's not in their frame of reference or reality. Barricades they know how to deal with. There is an attitude in jail that can get you beat up or singled out because they'll think you're an instigator, that you're going to get everybody all riled up and start a riot. To be effective and organize in jail, don't put out that energy. You have to not be so obvious, to be more low key, have a different tone and body language and then you can be in there and be an instigator and organize and give people legal information and get consensus and they'll never notice. I think this is an aspect of magic, of changing consciousness at will.

Can you describe how you viewed the protests in Seattle as similar to an initiation?

It struck me as some of the same things that happen...in initiation, you're stripped bare, and it's the same going into actions. I take off the necklace I always wear and leave it behind because if I'm arrested I don't want anything to happen to it. It's similar to Inanna's story where there's seven gates to the underworld and in each gate something else is taken off. That's what happened to us in Seattle. In one area, they took our packs and that was one layer, having all of our stuff taken away, and then we're put in a holding cell, and then they remove our shoelaces, and then our clothes and we're put into the same uniform jail clothes. It really seems like an initiatory process. ★

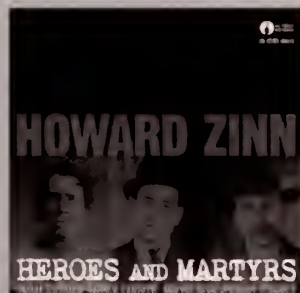
RECLAIMING'S website is www.Reclaiming.org. Their mailing address is P.O. Box 14404, SF CA 94114. Photos on facing page by Elizabeth Gorelik.

Essential Politics

Howard Zinn "Heroes and Martyrs"

In the first issue of CLAMOR, we included an interview with famed radical historian, Howard Zinn. In the film *GOOD WILL HUNTING*, the simple mention that someone should learn what really happened in US History by reading Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States" boosted sales of the book by hundreds of thousands. Chances are, you know who Howard Zinn is. Yeah, he's probably the coolest radical professor around today. Armed with a wit that strikes sharp and a political perspective that encompasses racial-, class-, and sex-based issues, Zinn can weave a historical narrative that manages to turn the lecture into an active moment of engaging storytelling. This double-CD release tells relevant stories about Emma Goldman and the persecution of her character, lifestyle and political allegiance that speaks volumes to us today. The same is true for the retelling of the events surrounding the execution of Italian immigrant anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. Howard Zinn believes firmly in digging around in history not so we can become lost in what used to be, but so that we can learn valuable lessons, apply them to the present and envision a world the way it could and should be. These two CD's will inspire and enrage you. Both of which are vital signs that you are alive and conscious of what is going on around you.

-jason kucsma



Julia Butterfly Hill

Julia Butterfly Hill spent two years living in a tree in the California Redwoods. Her name stirs contempt by some (loggers, some activists) and endearing love by others (loggers [see the video], some activists). On October 27, she spoke at Bates College in Maine about her experience living in Luna (the tree she sat in) and captivated the audience with well over an hour and a half of seamless narratives. For whatever your political stance is on Julia and her action, she is an amazing storyteller and manages to mesmerize with tales of how she got involved, what she did in the middle of the tree sit and how she feels now that it is over and she has moved on to other things. This tape would be a great fund-raising tool for environmental organizations and other activists. She is as inspiring as she is entertaining.

-jason kucsma



\$11 for audiotape (speech only) and \$20 for videotape (speech plus Q & A) to Radio Free Maine / PO Box 2705 / Augusta, ME 04338

Double CD \$15 from Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

DESCHOOLING THE UNIVERSITY

by Sunfrog

Why do radical thinkers and activists feel compelled to work in the field of education? After years of floating between voluntary unemployment, free-lance writing, and a variety of mundane McJobs, I found myself in graduate school, embarking on a path towards a career as a teacher. Now, I work part time teaching writing, literature, and feminism. As a radical educator, I know I'm in good company. Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, Bell Hooks, Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich, A.S. Neill, and Leo Tolstoy comprise a partial list of some of my favorite pedagogical "mentors" and revolutionary thinkers who have addressed the issue and participated in the work of teaching and learning. Many people correctly believe that the fundamentally dysfunctional nature of our alienated society has its roots in institutions like school and the nuclear family, and thus, they argue that long lasting social change must begin by transforming (or abolishing) those traditional sites of oppression to forge spaces for emancipation.

As an anarchist, my role as college professor at a public university seems steeped in contradiction. As an anarchist, I do not believe in the necessity of the State, but the State helps pay my bills. As an anarchist, I reject arbitrary authority in all its guises but have been hired to enact and reinforce a rigidly authoritarian relationship model. The educational system depends on the mythical mentor-and-apprentice or (sadly more true) tyrant-and-slave dynamic that historically exists between teachers and students.

As an anti-authoritarian activist, one of my first tasks is to either confront or make peace with these ethical inconsistencies. As for the former, I still see the State as my enemy. As a temporary, part-time, underpaid, and uninsured adjunct faculty, I feel no false allegiance to my boss, the State. Only through an adjunct union and collective bargaining could a tentative peace be gained with the class that employs and takes advantage of my time and intelligence. Currently, no such union exists in my "right-to-work" state of Tennessee—recently ranked as 45th in the nation for higher education—and I could make more money and have superior benefits as a low-level manager at Wal-Mart.

At school, my true loyalty is to my students, and here, I make peace with the second ambivalence by subverting and abolishing my own authority in the classroom to the greatest extent possible. In this gesture, I see the college class as a democratic learning collective and myself as mere facilitator. With the lessons I've learned about direct democracy, shared power, and cooperative work from radical activism and communal living, I try to incorporate and apply these ideals and practices in teaching. So far, this has been the most rewarding and empowering aspect of my job—for me and for my students. After completing a freshman composition class, one of my students reflected, "From the very beginning, we understood that the professor held no greater power than the students. It wasn't a class where the teacher told us what we "should" have learned. We were able to work with each other very efficiently in a relaxed environment and turned a class that could potentially be boring, monotonous, lifeless, and mundane into an atmosphere filled with intellectual

conversation, challenging topics, and stimulating debates." In the structure of the classroom community and in the process of learning, the real deschooling of the university transpires. Deschooling negates and subverts the rhetorical edifice of academic conformity while simultaneously unleashing the individual and communal power of free expression, inquiry, and problem solving.

In an ideal world, education and liberation would virtually be synonyms. Unfortunately, when authoritarian schooling confines the adventure of learning, the institutional distortion of education threatens the possibility of intellectual growth and creative freedom. Thus, schooling itself becomes synonymous with oppression. As a concept and a movement, deschooling emerges to reclaim and redefine education outside of an antidemocratic, establishment context.

In his engaging and energizing book *Deschooling Society*, Ivan Illich makes transparent the distinction between school as limiting place and education as liberatory process (In fact, this 1970 treatise may mark the first use of the term deschooling, thus commencing the contemporary use of this critical idea and its subsequent movement). Of numerous important points, a few stand out as the most lucid of Illich's attacks on schooling and his lively proposals to construct alternatives.

Illich's "phenomenology of school" shows that the primary purposes of the educational establishment are to (1) segregate children and young people from the rest of the society, (2) provide jobs for teachers and administrators, and (3) domesticate the autonomy, integrity, and vision of students.

Even the most inspired and open-minded educators often find themselves cornered by their own authority. Instead of encouraging free learning, teachers must enforce facile obedience. Instead of acting as inventor, mediator, or thinker, the teacher must succumb to the ritualized roles of cop, preacher, and therapist.

For Illich, reforming the existing edifice can hardly compare with the potential of a revolutionary deschooling. Rather than tearing down old schools only to build new ones, Illich rejects the notion that radical *reform* is even possible. Instead, he constructs an educational vision for "a society which does not now exist"

even as he implies that a revolutionary subversion of commodified learning might in itself lead to the creation of a new society with different economic and political priorities. His vision of "learning webs" avoids bureaucracy and builds networks for real learning. With an immediate, nonprofessional, and horizontal emphasis, people who want to learn could have means to find others with whom to share skills, gain access to educational tools, co-create engaged inquiry, and pursue specific vocational interests.

In the years since Illich penned his visionary critique three decades ago,

the widest embrace of deschooling ideals has come from parents and children, providing alternatives to the public schools from kindergarten through high school. As the high school becomes increasingly standardized and militarized, many teenagers take back their time and learn on their own. In fact, many of the most radical

Even the most inspired and open-minded educators often find themselves cornered by their own authority. Instead of encouraging free learning, teachers must enforce facile obedience. Instead of acting as inventor, mediator, or thinker, the teacher must succumb to the ritualized roles of cop, preacher, and therapist.

and fascinating projects in education occur in the unregimented lives of deschooled teenagers, with several people inspired by dynamic texts like the *Teenage Liberation Handbook* and the anthology *Deschooling Our Lives*. Rather than get swallowed by the mouth of a metal detector, caged by the claws of an enclosed curriculum, chewed up by a generic dress code, and digested by the police state of anti-drug hysteria, deschooled teens create a context for learning based on their own desires.

For adults, the best examples of deschooling occur outside any formal framework and resemble the "learning webs" suggested by Illich. Real communities forming study groups, debate societies, workshops, and salons are examples of deschooling; also, virtual communities like chatrooms and listservs can occasionally become forums for deschooling. This concept only influences the academy from the margins. Today, online and correspondence study programs incorporate some deschooling ideals in a depoliticized fashion, but on the whole, the higher educational empire remains as militarized, standardized, and mechanized as ever.

Lately, we've seen a lot of holier-than-thou hubbub about school and its problems from pundits on the left and the right. The common middle-of-the-road assumptions about college suggest a breeding ground for secular subversion and a training camp for left-wing activism. In the last twenty years, the movements for a more multicultural, feminist, and "politically correct" curriculum have inspired the racist and heterosexist defenders of the "Western intellectual tradition" to sling insults, invoke fear, and predict the end of civilization itself. While the required reading lists for first-year humanities' classes may have changed dramatically, the primary purpose, process, and structure of the university has not. In


fact, so-called tenured radicals have been bought and fully assimilated into the very structures that they had once hoped to revolutionize. In an increasingly tight and tough marketplace especially in English, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, etc., many professors cling quite dearly to their middle-income salaries and the status that their positions provide. Thus, the books that a teacher asks his students to read may ostensibly be radical, but his classroom structure probably is not. In other words, it's entirely possible to mix radical content with a reactionary process. Deschooling the university should be more concerned with the politics of *how* we teach rather than with *what* we teach.

Some primary features of a deschooled college classroom might include: shared power in class discussions including dialogue that lets the teacher listen instead of lead; a mutual learning contract of shared expectations entered into between teacher and student at the beginning of the semester; a flexible and negotiable grading system or no grading system at all; the co-creation of assignments that draw as much from a student's desires and experiences as from a teacher's expertise; the end of boring chalk-and-talk monotone lectures; direct discussion of preconceptions and assumptions about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and politics with a libertarian respect for all positions with an eye for how these issues influence a classroom dynamic; and finally, the transformation of the student from passive consumer into active participant.

Until we abolish school as we know it and replace it with real learning for people of all ages in all contexts, some radicals will attend college or work in the educational system. Armed with ideas and disarming of authority, we might subtly subvert the university-as-information-factory with the politics of deschooling. ★

**vinyl.
films.
zines.
mp3.
videos.**

cds.



Insound www.insound.com
neglecting average culture.

xc

extreme conformity

you've never
seen a zine
like this.

US\$3 ppd
send well-hidden
cash to:

**eXtreme
Conformity**
c/o Larry Nocella
406 Main St. #3C
Collegeville, PA
19426 USA

xconformity@yahoo.com
www.geocities.com/xconformity/

the 3rd Annual **Underground Publishing Conference**



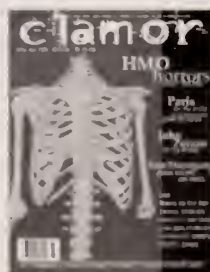
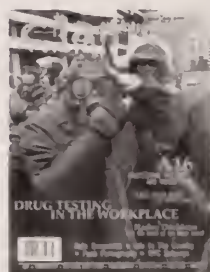
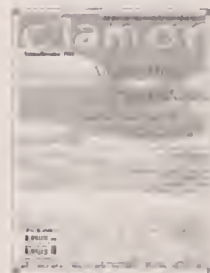
One weekend.
Hundreds of people.
Thousands of projects.
Infinite Inspiration.

Discussions, presentations, and workshops by and for people who create and participate in the world of alternative media. UPCON2001 is a conference for Zinesters, Activists, Comic Artists, Hackers, Low Power FM Broadcasters, Librarians, Web Designers, Filmmakers, Musicians, Artists, Academics, Street Theorists, Readers and Writers. In other words, YOU!



June 23-24, 2001
Bowling Green, Ohio

for more information:
216 South Church St
Bowling Green, OH 43402
email: upc2001@hotmail.com
or visit www.clamormagazine.org



\$4 each
via the following sites

ground.
CLAMOR
PO Box 1225
Bowling Green, OH 43402

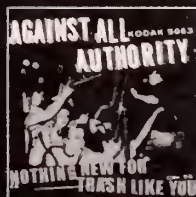
space:
www.clamormagazine.org

visit our website for sample essays
and contents from each issue

AGAINST ALL AUTHORITY

18 song CD of rarities, b-sides and vinyl only tracks.
Benefiting Charity: The Tooth Fairy Project

out 2/6/01



NOTHING NEW FOR TRASH LIKE YOU

out 2/6/01



WATERMARK EP

out 2/6/01



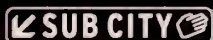
Shopping Spree 7"

The Weakerthans

Enhanced CD single from the "Left and Leaving" lp/cd (Sub City).
Contains Watermark, two live tracks and the Watermark Video.
Benefiting Charity: Art City

Atom and His Package / Har Mar Superstar

New Hopeless Artist Atom and His Package and Kill Rock Stars' R&B Sensation
Har Mar Superstar on a Shopping Spree.
Benefiting Charity: Philadelphia Direct Action Group (PDAG)



order online at www.subcity.net



SELBY & TIGERS



SAMIAM



DILLINGER FOUR



HOPELESS SAMPLER

order online
hopelessrecords.com

also new from Hopeless Records



Bringing basement culture to your mailbox.

saulgoodman

the finest selection of independent music available. period.

8571 Higuera St. / Los Angeles, CA 90232 / www.SaulGoodMan.com

fan@saulgoodman.com / (310) 839-8200

Satan and the West Memphis Three

The True Story of a Modern Witch Hunt: Intolerance and Injustice in Arkansas by Sean Carswell



Satan is in the news again. He burst out of the setting sun and into West Memphis, Arkansas with an entourage of witches, a bizarre ritual that left three children dead, and

lots of loud rock and roll. The small town responded with all the requisite hysteria. A witch hunt ensued.

Three more victims were found, tried in a court of law, found to be witches, and sentenced to life imprisonment. One of the witches was sentenced to death. Then, something strange happened. Voices of reason started to call out from the woods. One voice made a documentary. One started a web page. One released a compilation CD that included the voices of Tom Waits and John Doe. That third voice was Eddie Spaghetti, the lead singer of the Supersuckers. I managed to speak with him recently. I asked him who this Satan was and what he had to do with rock and roll.

"Satan is a cartoon character," Eddie told me. "Satan is the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus or anything like that. He's just a guy who represents the underground aspects of life. To me, you know, Satan drives a cool hot rod. Satan has all the drugs and all the chicks and all the stuff in life that is rock and roll."

"I don't think there's anything inherently evil about all that stuff. There's a lot of evil in the world. There's no doubt about that. But real evil lies in other places. It lies in racism and in people treating other people poorly. I don't see how these things connect."

I, too, have trouble seeing how these things connect, but they all connected in West Memphis, Arkansas. Let me explain.

[places]

Shawn Granton Jan 2001

The Robin Hood Hills Murders

Three eight-year-old boys (Christopher Byers, Steve Branch, and Michael Moore) disappeared sometime after school but before dinnertime on the afternoon of May 5, 1993. The following afternoon, the three boys were found dead in a creek in a wooded area known as the Robin Hood Hills. The bodies were so mutilated and the murder of the boys so brutal that the West Memphis Police Department concluded that it could only be an act of Satan or his followers. A junior probation officer who happened to be on the scene suggested that he knew of a kid who was Satanic. Since the West Memphis Police Department had no experience handling a murder case of this magnitude, and since they had already negligently destroyed a great deal of the crime scene evidence, they decided to focus their investigation on this alleged devil worshipper.

The Witches

The devil worshipper in question is a young man named Damien Echols. Echols didn't fit into the typical West Memphis mold. He spent a lot of time alone, a lot of time reading books by authors like Stephen King and Anne Rice. He listened to a lot of heavy metal, bands like Metallica and Slayer. In his early teens, he began to question the spirituality of his father's fire-and-brimstone church. He converted to Catholicism, and while studying Catholic history, he became so impressed with Father Damien, the nineteenth century priest who cared for the lepers on the Hawaiian island of Molokai, that Echols took on the priest's first name (Echols' original first name was Michael).

Eventually, Echols' spiritual beliefs drifted away from Catholicism and more towards paganism. Echols defines paganism as a "worship of nature-earth, air, water, fire; all the elements." He further explained his beliefs to *Arkansas Times* journalist Mara Leveritt, saying, "I may not agree with everything the pagans teach, but what I believe is logical. We all have to come from somewhere. And certain things, like karma, can be proven. We know scientifically that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. What is that but karma?"

In the spring of 1992, Echols' girlfriend's parents threw her out of their house. She and Echols decided to run away.

That night, they broke into an abandoned house to take shelter for the night. They were arrested within an hour. This led to Echols' fateful meeting with junior probation officer Jerry Driver. "Even when I first met Driver," Echols told Leveritt, "he was on this satanic trip. He started asking me questions about Satan once, so I started trying to explain to him [paganism]." Echols explained that witches and Wicca were old words for pagans, and he explained his ideas about earth, air, water, fire, and karma. Driver, a devout southern Baptist, took this explanation as an admission of Satanism.

After that conversation, Driver began approaching Echols whenever something unexplained happened in the area. According to screenwriter Burk Sauls, who helped create a Web site on the case, "When a piece of guidance equipment disappeared from a train that had passed through West Memphis, Damien was questioned even though the train didn't even slow down when it passed through the small truck stop town. When a girl was killed 100 miles away, Damien was questioned." So when three young boys were brutally murdered, Driver drove the police to Echols' front door.

Any Witch Will Do

The initial investigation into the murder of the boys left the West Memphis police with nothing, so they switched tactics and introduced Vicky Hutcheson into the picture. Hutcheson was in trouble already for writing bad checks. Perhaps to make this trouble go away or perhaps chasing the \$30,000 reward offered by the police, Hutcheson met with Echols and tried to elicit a confession. When this didn't work, she sent her son to the police station claiming that he had been with the three boys on the night that they were murdered. He claimed that he'd managed to escape, and he knew who the murderers were. Hutcheson's son eventually pointed the finger at Echols, but his stories were too far-fetched for the West Memphis Police Department. Finally, Hutcheson sent Jessie Misskelley, a 17-year-old boy with an IQ of 72, to give an eyewitness account. Twelve hours after walking into the West Memphis Police Station, Misskelley had confessed to the murders and implicated both Echols and Echols' sixteen-year-old friend, Jason Baldwin. Thus, the West Memphis Three were born. The confession became the crux of the prosecution's argument.

Misskelley's confession was certainly questionable for a number of reasons. First, pictures of the interrogation room show a baseball bat in the corner. Second, Pulitzer Prize-winning expert on false confessions, Dr. Richard Ofshe, was so convinced that Misskelley's confession was coerced by the police that Ofshe agreed to testify even though he would have to do so at his own expense. Dr. Ofshe did in fact, testify in the original trial that the confession was coerced, though a large part of his testimony was stricken from the record. Finally, Misskelley's lawyer, Dan Stidham, outlined seven major inconsistencies between Misskelley's confession and the actual crime. Among those inconsistencies, Misskelley misjudged the time of death by twelve hours; he claimed that Echols had strangled one of the boys, though none of the victims showed any signs of strangulation; he claimed that the boys had been raped, though the Medical Examiner's report showed no trauma to the anuses of the victims; and Misskelley claimed that the boys, who'd been found hog-tied, were tied with a rope when they had, in fact, been tied with a shoestring. Recent evidence suggests that Misskelley also misjudged the place where the murders occurred.

if HE Don't Drown, Then HE'S a Witch

Nonetheless, a wave of hysteria surrounded both trials. Misskelley's confession quickly condemned him to life plus forty years in prison. Echols and Baldwin, who were tried together, caused more of a stir. West Memphis locals, petrified by exaggerated stories about a Satanic cult in their backwoods, came forward with corroborative testimonies. Two local girls, 12 and 15, claimed to have been in the stands of a softball game when they overheard Echols confess to the murders (though both girls confused the chronology of the events). Michael Carson, a fellow juvenile detention center inmate of Jason Baldwin, claimed that Baldwin confessed the murders to Carson. Carson's counselor from the juvenile detention center immediately disputed Carson's testimony, but the counselor wasn't allowed to testify, lest he break counselor-patient confidentiality.

Prosecutor John Fogleman then turned up the Satanic heat. He offered as evidence Baldwin's collection of black heavy metal t-shirts, Echols' books on Wicca and Druids, and his Stephen King and Anne Rice col-

lection. He stated, essentially, that it's okay to wear black, read books on Paganism, and listen to heavy metal, but when you do all three, there's "no soul there." To corroborate this, Fogleman called to the stand Dr. Dale Griffiths, who received a doctorate through four years of mail correspondence courses given by Columbia Pacific University. Dr. Griffiths has made a career on being an expert witness in adolescent Satanic activities. He testified that the killings were consistent with Satanic rituals for several reasons. For example, three kids were killed and three is a significant number in Pagan religions, the children were eight years old and the number eight has pagan significance, and the murders occurred on the first full moon after a Pagan holiday. This evidence was enough for a jury of twelve to condemn Baldwin (who was still a minor at the time) to life without parole and to condemn Echols to death by lethal injection.

Of course, Echols and Baldwin appealed the conviction. The appeal was denied. According to Robert H. Dudley, Supreme Court Justice of the State of Arkansas, it is not the job of the court to "exclude every reasonable hypothesis." Instead, it is the appellate court's "responsibility to determine whether...the jury could have reached its conclusion without resorting to speculation or conjecture." In other words, judging guilt beyond a reasonable doubt isn't the job of the Supreme Court. They need only to decide if the jury could have possibly been right. Under these rigid standards, they ruled that the crime could have conceivably been committed by Echols and Baldwin. Among their evidence, they found clothing fibers on the body of one of the victims that were microscopically similar to fibers found on Jason Baldwin's mother's housecoat, and, of course, Dr. Griffiths' testimony supplied sufficient motive. Beyond that, they could place Echols near the scene of the crime because witnesses had testified to seeing Echols and his girlfriend, Domini Teer, at a truck stop near the Robin Hood Hills after 9:30. According to Justice Dudley, "The witnesses testified that Echols had on a dark-colored shirt and that his clothes were dirty." And though witnesses passing in a car were able to notice dirt on a black shirt at nighttime, Justice Dudley also concluded, "other evidence established that Domini Teer might be confused with Baldwin as both had long hair and were of slight build."

Jessie Misskelley's 1995 appeal was denied on equally damning evidence.

NEW EVIDENCE

The appeals haven't run out yet, though. The first appeals were based solely on evi-

dence produced at the initial trials. Though that evidence itself should be enough to call into question the guilt of Misskelley, Baldwin, and Echols, there is even further evidence to suggest a reasonable doubt. First, on the night when the murders occurred, police were called to investigate an apparently deranged man who had walked into a Bojangles Restaurant muddy and bleeding. Officer Regina Meek investigated by driving up to the drive-in window, asking if everything was all right, then driving off. Twenty-four hours later, detective Bryn Ridge returned to the Bojangles and took blood scrapings from the walls, but decided that it was irrelevant to the murder of the three boys, and lost the blood scrapings. Second, the Ontario Conference on Religious Tolerance responded to Dr. Griffiths' claims of a Satanic ritual by pointing out that, though the number three is significant in Christianity (the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Ghost), the number three and the number eight have no significance in Paganism. Also, there is no Pagan holiday on the Fifth of May, and Satanists do not hold rituals on a full or new moon. Most significantly, they pointed out that "no evidence has been found that any children have been ritually murdered in the past century in the United States by the followers of any religion."

The most convincing new evidence came from Brent Turvey. Turvey is an experienced forensic scientist and criminal profiler. Defense attorney Dan Stidham was unable to secure Turvey's services before the original trial, but Turvey has since agreed to review the evidence on a pro bono basis. After reviewing autopsy reports, police reports, eyewitness accounts, the crime scene video, autopsy photographs, and all the other available forensic evidence, Turvey came to conclusion very different from that of the West Memphis Medical Examiner. Based on the nature of the injuries and the placement of the wounds, Turvey attributes the attacks to a fit of rage associated with child abuse, not a Satanic ritual. Turvey went on to develop an in-depth criminal profile of the murderer. The profile came chillingly close to describing victim Christopher Byers' stepfather, John Mark Byers. John Mark Byers was also found to be in possession of a knife that held traces of both he and his son's blood, he has been in and out of jail and mental institutions both before and after the murders, and was seen beating his other son, Ryan, in the middle of the street on the night of the murders.

While I would be hesitant to convict John Mark Byers or the strange man from Bojangles on such flimsy evidence, surely a jury should be hesitant to convict Misskelley, Baldwin, and Echols on the same level of

flimsy evidence.

Turvey unearthed a final interesting piece of evidence. He noticed that wounds originally believed to be caused by a serrated knife were actually bite marks. This opinion was confirmed by forensic odontologist Dr. Thomas David. Dr. David went on to confirm that the bite marks did not match bite impressions by Misskelley, Baldwin, or Echols. While this should certainly raise a reasonable doubt to the guilt of the West Memphis Three, during a Rule 37 hearing (a hearing where an appeal is made or new evidence is introduced), Arkansas Judge David Burnett (the same judge who presided over the original trial) dismissed the evidence, claiming that he didn't think the marks were bite marks. He later said that "he'd never even heard of odontology before."

THE VOICES OF REASON

Finally, the voices of reason started to appear. Filmmakers Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky brought all the inconsistencies of the trial to light in *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills*. HBO has given the film a lot of airtime, and it has had its effects. According to Eddie Spaghetti, "Everybody who sees the film, the first thing they think about is, what can I do?"

Photographer Grove Pashley, screenwriter Burk Sauls, and art director Kathy Bakken asked themselves what they could do, and decided to put together the West Memphis Three web site www.wm3.org. The site consists of a case synopsis, trial transcripts, statements from the lawyers, examinations of the evidence, police reports, statements by the victims' parents, polygraph tests, updates, and links to further information. On March 20, 2000, Yahoo picked the site as their pick of the week. Since then, the site is reporting four to eight thousand hits a day.

Trey Parker of South Park, himself a creator of a cartoon Satan and the victim of puritan values (the Motion Picture Association of America threatened to give the South Park movie an NC-17 rating if they didn't take out the line "If I had a nickel for every time God fucked me in the ass, I could buy some tropical cream for my ass"), was seen wearing a West Memphis Three t-shirt on Access Hollywood. He also shouted "Free the West Memphis Three" while receiving an award at the MTV Video Awards. Most recently, musicians like Rocket from the Crypt, L7, the Supersuckers, Joe Strummer, and the Murder City Devils have put out the "Free the West Memphis Three" compila-

tion. All of the proceeds from it will go to Misskelley, Baldwin, and Echols "when they get out of jail," Spaghetti says. "We designed it that way specifically because we want to send out a message that we really believe that they're going to get out."

Getting out

Damien Echols told Salon.com that he takes some comfort in knowing that he'll get out of jail. "This may sound kind of morbid," Echols told reporter Stephen Lemons, "but I'm on death row. So at least I know that one way or another I will get out. Either I'll walk out or they'll carry me out." Ideally, Echols will walk out.

The first step in helping the West Memphis Three gain their freedom is to understand that the American criminal justice system has more to do with politics than it does with justice. Take, for example, prosecutor John Fogleman. Three years after convicting Misskelley, Echols, and Baldwin, Fogleman told *Phoenix New*

Times reporter M. V. Moorehead, "There was a remarkable lack of physical evidence against anybody." Fogleman, of course, knew this at the time of the trial. He also knew that he was in the middle of a whirlwind of hysteria. If he didn't gain a conviction, his career would suffer. So he used the hysteria to his advantage and prosecuted Misskelley, Baldwin, and Echols not for murder but for committing the crime of being different. He may have strung up three young men who were very likely not guilty, but his career benefited. Fogleman is now a Circuit Court judge for Crittenden County, and he's in a solid position to run for an even higher public office. Judge David Burnett may have unjustly barred legitimate evidence—evidence that may have prevented a conviction—from being presented in court, but he kept his job and his high standing in his community. And the people of West Memphis may very well have captured the wrong witches, but they can rest knowing that someone was punished for the horrible deaths of those three boys. But also understand that politics go both ways. If a man like John Fogleman has no scruples about

condemning a man to death with no physical evidence, then certainly he'd have no scruples about freeing that same man if public opinion demanded it.



There are over 7,400 minors in adult prisons, and the number has risen consistently over the past 15 years. In our rush to be tough on crime and execute our criminals, are we supporting a trend that allows police and prosecutors to incarcerate people simply because they are different, poor, and powerless?

The World Outside of West Memphis

At first, it's hard to believe that something like this could happen in modern times. It's scary. When I think that Echols and Baldwin were convicted for being into such mainstream bands as Metallica and such mainstream authors as Stephen King, it makes me scared to think about what the police could find in my apartment, in anyone's home. If Anne Rice is evidence of the Occult, then does Nabokov's *Lolita* become evidence of pedophilia? And what about the NOFX album with the song "Murder the Government"? Is that proof of terrorism? "If allowed to go far enough," Jello Biafra argues on the Free the West Memphis Three comp, "this could happen to anyone. It could happen to me. It could happen to you." But is this trend continuing?

Last year, California passed Proposition 21, which basically made it easier to try children as adults, made it a crime to be in a gang, and defined gang by some very loose, vague

terms. Oregon has declared the anarchy symbol (an A with a circle around it) as a "gang symbol." America now has 25 percent of the world's prisoners, and the highest prison population per capita of any country ever, with the exception of the former Soviet Union and apartheid-era South Africa. There are now three thousand people on death row, and, according to The Justice Project (www.theJusticeProject.org), there has been a "serious, reversible error found in nearly seven out of ten capital cases in [a] 23 year period." There are over 7,400 minors in adult prisons, and the number has risen consistently over the past 15 years (more than doubling since 1983). So, again, in our rush to be tough on crime and execute our criminals, are we supporting a trend that allows police and prosecutors to incarcerate people simply because they are different, poor, and powerless? Is this the connection between Satan, the under-

ground aspects of life, and the real evil in people treating each other poorly? ★

Sources:

www.wm3.org, specifically Burk Sauls synopsis, trial transcripts from the 1996 Arkansas Supreme Court Appeal for Baldwin and Echols and the 1995 ASC appeal for Misskelley, Dan Stidham's synopsis, Ed Mallet's appeal information, and various others not quoted directly

www.crimelibrary.com/classics/westmemphis/2.htm

Salon.com

www.witchvox.com/cases/wm3_1.html (reprint of Mara Leveritt's Arkansas Times article)

Phoenix New Times, 11/14/96, M.V. Moorehead's review of *Paradise Lost*

phone interview with Eddie Spaghetti, 10/9/00

www.TheJusticeProject.org/

U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics

www.midsouthjustice.org/

Biting the Hand That Fed Me

Growing Up a British Expatriate in Bahrain

History Lesson

At the age of fifteen I remember finally starting to pay attention at school. I was attending a British school in the Persian/Arabian Gulf state of Bahrain, and we were studying the Civil Rights Movement of 1950s and 60s in the United States. We were reading about Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and non-violent peaceful protests. However, it was the two minutes that the teacher dedicated to the figure of Malcolm X utilizing descriptions such as "hate monger," "separatist," "racist," and "extremist" that caught my attention. I immediately borrowed Malcolm X's autobiography from a friend's father and it became the fastest book I had read up to that point. Upon finishing the book, I felt smug knowing that my teacher was wrong in his description of Malcolm X: things were not so straightforward and Malcolm went through various ideological changes. More importantly, I learned not to blindly accept what I was taught in school. I was convinced that I was now able to think for myself. So I carried on my own independent study into African American culture and history (an interest that is still with me today) thinking I was experiencing a political awakening.

However, while I was busy trying to make sense of the atrocities committed against Americans of African origin and other minorities throughout the history of the United States, I remained ignorant of Bahraini culture. I was blissfully unaware of crimes against humanity that were being committed everyday under my nose, on the sunny, palm tree-dense islands. I never stopped to ponder the state of democracy or civil liberties in Bahrain. I never stopped to consider the huge disparity between the rich and the poor. I never stopped to consider the implications of being an expatriate in such a culture. And as a British teenager, it was not in my interest to do so.

Thousands of years of history crammed into a few meager paragraphs

Bahrain is an archipelago of 33 islands tucked away in a corner of the Arabian Gulf, with Saudi Arabia to the West and Qatar to the south. In the 1960s a Danish archaeologist became convinced that Bahrain was the site of the ancient civilization of Dilmun (3000 BC), which lasted for two thousand years. After years of excavation of many of the thousands of burial mounds by an international crew of archaeologists, it is now widely accepted that Bahrain was indeed the center of Dilmun (which at various times in history covered a large area throughout the Gulf and Eastern Saudi Arabia). Considering its geographical location, it was and still is exceptionally fertile and green due to the freshwater springs that bubble up from beneath the land and sea (the name Bah-rain, means "two seas" referring to the salt water sea and the fresh water springs that lie beneath it). The islands are in a key position for trade between the East and Middle East. As more and more traders passed through, Dilmun and later Bahrain became known for its abundance in pearls and the skilled divers that harvested them. Until the discovery of oil, (in 1932 Bahrain was the first Gulf nation to discover oil and the first to reap its benefits) pearls contributed significantly to the wealth of islands.

However, location, fertile land, fresh water and wealth also ensured that throughout its history Bahrain has been subject to conquest and occupation by a variety of outside peoples. Up until 1971, Bahrain had been at one time been occupied by the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Omanis, the Portuguese and the British

[places]

center: The "Old Souk" - Manama,
upper right: House in Sehla; lower
right: "kholeji furnishing" - one of
the several businesses targetted.



by a guilty expat

Empire. Many Bahrainis will argue that Bahrain is still under occupation by people who do not belong there.

The current rulers of Bahrain arrived on the islands during the mid-eighteenth century. The Al-Khalifas are descendants of a powerful nomadic tribe from mainland Arabia. They are not native to the islands. The indigenous people of Bahrain, often referred to as Bahamahs, are of Persian descent. Furthermore, the Al-Khalifas and the ruling class are predominately Sunni Muslims, whereas the native Bahrainis are Shi'a Muslims. These ethnic and religious differences are at the core but not necessarily the reason for the ongoing tensions in the country. The British ensured the rule of the Al-Khalifas throughout their own occupation, until Bahrain gained independence in 1971. For three years Bahrain had a National Assembly, a constitution (drawn up with the aid of Britain) and a system that resembled some form of democracy until it was gradually broken up and dissolved and political parties were outlawed. Yet, the British and Americans continue to help advise and manage all aspects of the government, security and military.

Why the Shi'a are uprising.

Presently, Bahrain has a majority Shi'a working class population (the majority still made up of native Bahamahs) but is still governed and ruled by the minority Sunni Muslim families, in particular the Al-Khalifa royal family. Human Rights organizations, the British government, and the US government are all in agreement, to some degree, over the current absence of democracy, basic freedoms and civil/human rights. Yet, They also agree that Bahrain enjoys a 90 percent literacy rate (including women) and that there are very few poor. It has to be said that

roots of a very desperate problem. A visitor to the island only has to walk into a Shi'a village to see people living in wooden shacks and walking around barefoot. Many others can be seen begging in the capital city of Manama. There are also several hidden "shanty" towns that have been barricaded from the view of the main roads, scattered around several locations.

The majority of the wealth goes to the Sunni who make up an estimated 20-30 percent of the population. The Shi'a experience many difficulties trying to make their way up the employment ladder. Jobs with influence and managerial positions are much more likely to go to a Sunni. Human Rights Watch states that between the years 1981 and 1991, 15,800 of 74,200 new jobs in the economy were filled by expatriates, and that unemployment amongst young men in Shi'a communities was twice that of the official 1994/95 rate of 15 percent ("Bahrain: Routine Abuse, Routine Denial. Civil Rights and the Political Crisis in Bahrain" June 1997, Human Rights Watch - www.hrw.org).

The "Public Security" is made up of largely Pakistani expatriates. Expatriates from Britain, other European countries, the United States, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa are employed to do skilled and technical work. Menial labor and domestic servants are imported from the Asian subcontinent, the Philippines, and other Asian countries. Many biased expatriates argue that Bahrainis are not yet trained or educated well enough to occupy skilled jobs and are unprepared to work for such a low wage as the people from countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh or the Philippines who occupy menial positions.

Obviously, there are exceptions to the roles that people from various backgrounds are forced to assume. For instance, Indian and other

[places]

people from the Asian sub-continent do occupy high paying skilled technological managerial positions. Shi'a do make their way up to well-paying influential positions. However, Shi'a dissidents claim that to be an exception has a potentially high cost. It has not been unknown for a Shi'a Bahraini to disappear for several weeks and come back to work a shadow of his/her former self. Why is the country set up this way? Because nothing should pose any remote threat to the secure position of the totalitarian Al-Khalifa regime.

There is alleged freedom of the press, but there have been suggestions that when it comes to sensitive issues, the newspapers receive their "news" from the Ministry of Information. The English-speaking media (newspapers, TV and radio stations) are operated by British and multinational broadcasters, reporters and entertainers. Bahraini Arabic journalists have to be careful about what they report and the opinions they offer. Human Rights Watch/Middle East also reports of warnings issued to foreign journalists, who may be trying to cover delicate issues.

It is difficult to know where to begin with a description of the oppression that the Shi'a villagers face from day to day. Since the plight of occupied Palestine has flared into bloodshed yet again and has mobilized the Arab world, I will begin there. Obviously, the working class, village-dwelling native Bahrainis feel very passionately for the Palestinians and are capable of tremendous displays of support for the Palestinian cause. The authorities are well aware of this and have organized several "legal" rallies in solidarity with Palestine. While this seems harmless, people were positioned within the crowd waving pictures of the Amir and Prime Minister and protesters were encouraged or "persuaded" to chant pro Al-Khalifa slogans. Furthermore, when the people decided to organize their own rally outside the American Embassy to protest the obvious pro-Israeli position of the United States, they were met with rubber bullets and tear gas. At the time of writing, the US Embassy and the American high school have both remained closed as the US authorities have announced a "Delta" state of emergency in Bahrain.

The reason for the double standard is because most rallies in Bahrain are a call for democracy and justice. They are pleas for the re-installation of the Bahraini constitution and the release of hundreds of political prisoners. Most dissidents are not even calling for the Al-Khalifas to step down, they are just asking for more of a say in the running of their country and an end to the fear of being a working class Shi'a.

This is the country where I grew up, from the age of nine to eighteen. The same place in which people are exiled for having the wrong political beliefs; where teenagers are held in captivity for spray-painting anti-government graffiti. Where prisoners are held without charge or trial for months, if not years. This is where there are regular allegations that thousands of people are regularly tortured in remote prisons, where prisoners are whipped and beaten or have their fingernails pulled out to make them confess to having anti-government opinions. If that fails then electric shock torture may be used to force them to give up the required information – all the while British security officers watch over the atrocity.

Where the hell is that then?

Representations of Bahrain in the outside world

People from outside the Arab world get to hear very little about Bahrain. Since many people have such difficulty finding Bahrain on a map, it is not surprising that they know very little about the politics and culture of the island. Yet, this ignorance is also two sided. My interest and understanding of Bahraini culture and politics was not really sparked until I started to look back on events I witnessed and examine them along side current representations of the country.

One event that I tend to look back on frequently is an event that put the Persian Gulf, including Bahrain, on the map. That was, of course, the Gulf War. The war highlighted several issues concerning Bahrain.

First, the "special" relationship with the West (The US navy base for the Persian Gulf is in Bahrain). The United States and Britain continue to deem it necessary to be on good terms with the Bahrain due to its geo-political location. Perhaps this is why they are willing to overlook the lack of freedom and democracy that they state as reasons to go to war in other countries. And why they are willing to ignore reports by numerous individuals and agencies about alleged abuses of human rights, that they might otherwise publicly condemn. The Gulf War and its consequences have demonstrated that since World War II the United States and Britain will take extreme measures to ensure their dominance in the region. They will continue to pretend to crush one oppressive regime while supporting another, if it is within the interest of oil, arms trade or control over a strategic location.

The war also provided Bahraini dissidents an opportunity to renew their campaign for reforms and the re-installment of the constitution. In part they were inspired by Kuwaitis who took the opportunity of the re-building of their country to make some positive (albeit meager) changes towards a more open and democratic society. They were also aware that Bahrain was now on the international stage and perhaps somebody would listen to their cause.

Of recent, Bahrain has found its way back into the media spotlight again. The first event involved a US marine who helped an Al Khalifa princess escape to his country so he could marry her. This was a fascinating story about two people who never should have had any interaction according to the structure of society in Bahrain. Most mainstream media reported it as a romantic story where love sees no cultural barriers and triumphs over everything. Yet, even the briefest report on the incident had to question why she had such difficulty escaping and what this suggests about the position of women in Bahrain. So while the story did little to highlight the pro-democracy cause, it did give the outside world a chance to ponder over the difficulties many Bahrainis might be facing. The plight of Muslim women transcends all class lines and divisions and is an issue that has also been highlighted, to some extent, during the recent uprisings. For example, several professional Bahraini women petitioned the government for better representation and basic rights, only to be threatened with the loss of their jobs if they did not withdraw the petition.

A few months later the USS Cole was on its way back to Bahrain after refueling in Yemen, when it was the target of an alleged suicide attack, presumably to protest US backing of the Israelis. All US military, diplomats, officials and citizens were soon put on red alert. Consequently, when the Bahraini people put on their own unauthorized display of Palestinian solidarity outside the American Embassy, the embassy was shut down and barricaded. The American school was closed and expatriates from most western countries were issued warnings from their own embassies concerning the potential threat of terrorist attacks. While this was another opportunity for the Shi'a and other dissidents to make their voice heard, the situation probably did more to promote anti-Arab sentiments. The conflict in Israel, Palestine and the occupied territories has unfortunately polarized people and it seems many people in the West have difficulty in sympathizing with Arabs. This might be a result of the fear of being labeled an anti-Semite or because of the media's biased representation of the conflict. Or it might simply be a result of the long tradition of misunderstanding and even fear of Arabs and other peoples of the Middle East.

Americans will turn out in the thousands to show support for Ti-

center: Petrol Stations had to be guarded during the height of the unrest in '94. A Pakistani security guard was burnt to death while guarding one. - Budaiya Rd; upper right: House in Sehla; lower right: khoeji building

[places]

help us spread the word!

send a

gift subscription

to a friend for only \$15!
that's six issues of clamor at
over 25% off the cover price!



Please send a gift subscription to:

My address is:

name

name

address

address

email (optional)

email (optional)

☐ Hey! Sign me up for one year for \$15
too while you're at it!

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later

C1202

Order by email: info@clamormagazine.org

Please allow 6-8 weeks for your first issue. Outside of the US, receive one subscription for \$25, or two subscriptions for \$42.



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

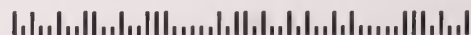


BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 25 BOWLING GREEN

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

BECOME THE MEDIA
PO BOX 1225
BOWLING GREEN OH 43402-9991





betans suffering
under Chinese
occupation.
Rock stars
throw concerts.
Bumper stickers
from Portland.

Maine to Portland, Oregon scream out "Free Tibet." The government even pretends to confront the Chinese on their human rights record before signing trade agreements. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of people suffer needlessly under bombing raids and inhumane sanctions against Iraq. Palestinian children who throw rocks are being shot at by a US-funded military. The Kurdish people are fleeing to the hills and being beaten and raped in Turkish and Iraqi prisons. And hundreds of men, women and children are being harassed, detained without charge and tortured in Bahraini prisons, while British security advisors watch over it all.

"White filth and easy living"

Western expatriates enjoy a lifestyle far removed from that of their home countries. It is a life on a sunny palm tree covered desert island. Of sports clubs and nightclubs. Of friends of multitudinous nationalities. Of sailing and diving amongst coral reefs. Of fishing and watching extraordinary Middle Eastern sunsets. Of wandering in the Zouk to buy cheap gold and electronics. Of living in enclosed "compounds" with swimming pools, tennis courts and squash courts. Gated communities guarded by ex-guerillas.

There was even a beach called the "Sheikh's beach," where the current Amir's father, Sheikh Isa, had a beach house. The rules were simple: No Arabs, no Indians (or any people from the Asian sub-continent), and no cameras. This was a beautiful white sand beach with free drinks for predominately white westerners. In theory, people of color, such as African Americans, were allowed in, but they would often have to prove their nationality. I remember on several occasions having to smuggle in Arab and non-white friends of mine in the back of the car. This beach was closed when Sheikh Isa died and his son took over.

[places]

This is not to say there is no interaction with the local communities. Many Bahrainis attend American and British schools and people are free to mix and socialize as they please. However, this is usually between "well to do" Bahrainis who can afford to go to such schools. Expatriates can usually feel safe to walk into a village to enjoy cheap but tasty food and enjoy conversation with the local people. Likewise many westerners enjoy good work and social relations with Bahrainis of all sects, ethnic origins and economic levels. On the surface, Bahrain appears to be an idyllic place to grow up or raise a family while earning a substantial and tax-free salary. Those in power thrive on the well being and comfort of the Americans and Brits. If they are happy, they are less likely to question the things. Less likely to jeopardize their temporary but comfortable (often luxurious) life-style.

During my first few years in Bahrain, I remember there was limited interaction with local Bahrainis from the nearby village. We did not speak each other's languages very well but we shared some common interests in riding BMX bikes and breakdancing. We did learn to swear at each other in the appropriate language and even developed some form of friendship but it did not last long. It could have been that as we became teenagers our interests changed to the point that there was no longer any common ground. Yet, looking back it seems that during the late 80s and early 90s, the expatriate and local communities became increasingly segregated.

New western-style shopping centers were springing up. Cable and satellite television were introduced. People became obsessed with fancy cars and new technology. The pager and mobile phone became a part of wealthy expatriate and privileged Bahrain culture long before it did elsewhere. McDonald's inevitably found its way to Bahrain—now there are at least four on the main island. Miller, MTV, VH1. Some relatives back home still asked whether there was running water or not, or whether we rode camels to school but we probably lived with more technology and luxury than they did. If you avoided the villages, Bahrain began to resemble any western city with its billboards and chain stores. Coca-Cola, Dairy Queen, JC Penny, British Home Stores, Heineken, Marlboro. Most of which was out of reach to all but the wealthier Bahrainis and expatriates. You could go from air-conditioned house to air-conditioned car to air-conditioned job/school to air-conditioned club and back home again and barely acknowledge the existence of village-dwelling Bahrainis. There was no longer any need for interaction with working class Bahrainis.

Expatriates and the plight of the people of Bahrain

During the mid-90s, the unrest in Bahrain became a potential threat to the comfortable existence of western expatriates. Stories had circulated for years about how 20 years earlier, a white person could not drive through a village without having their car attacked, but most people felt Bahrain was becoming more "civilized." Therefore, most people chose to ignore the rallies, protests, graffiti and odd explosions in the night. Very few stopped to really consider why Bahrainis were taking such actions. Then mid-night explosions began to occur more frequently and the graffiti began to make its way out of the villages and onto compound walls where the "expats" lived.

Most people chose to condemn these actions, again without considering why they were taking place. There is often the feel of a neo-colonialist mentality that propagates distrust for local people during times of tension. Put simply, expatriates know very well that their jobs are secured by the regime that dissidents are rising up against. No matter how pro-democratic or outraged by lack of civil and human rights

enlightened expats may be, they are always going to find it difficult to identify with forces that ultimately want them out of the country. This is not to say that Bahrainis are xenophobic, they just want more autonomy. Therefore, until foreign workers have made enough money to return comfortably back to their own home countries they will continue to fear a Bahraini uprising.

As a result of rising tensions and acts of violence in the Middle East since the first part of October 2000, the Department of State is extremely concerned about the possibility for violent actions against United States citizens and interests throughout the region. US State Department October 2000

Who am I to comment or judge?

In December 1994, I was visiting Bahrain during a time that the uprising had found renewed energy and enthusiasm. I had heard several stories about protests and riots in the villages, exploding gas canisters, roads blockaded with burning tires and isolated attacks on workers from the Asian sub-continent and several western expatriates. I had no way of determining the authenticity of these stories as rumors spread around the island like wild fire. However, I could not ignore the abundance of anti-government/Al-Khalifa, pro-democracy slogans spray-painted all over the villages and the huge barbed wire topped compound walls where expatriates reside. Some of these slogans had been painted over by security forces but more would appear. Even when the security forces attempted to paint over the slogans it was obvious they were trying to hide something.

My brother, a friend, and I decided to drive around the island one afternoon to have a look at all the graffiti. We were leaving the city center when we saw several helicopters hovering over a particular area. There were also columns of black smoke rising from the area. We decided to investigate and drove over to what we determined was the Shi'a village of Jidhafs. There was a heavy police presence on the roads surrounding the village, so we drove in through the narrow back alleys. As we got deeper into the village, we could see hundreds of people waving black flags and chanting in the face of the heavily armed security who were marching towards them. A thick black smoke was in the air from the burning tires that are popular to set on fire during protests. The security forces were unlike any I had seen before in Bahrain. They were dressed in all black combat gear with riot helmets and shields. We tried to drive closer to get a better look when we came across one of the security policemen. He motioned wildly for us to turn around but there were several cars behind us and it was difficult to turn in the confined area. Then the tear gas began to fly. We were trying to turn the car around when a tear gas canister was shot through the air towards us and landed about 50 feet away. Unfortunately, we could not turn the air-conditioning off before some of it leaked into the car. On our way out of the village I attempted to take a few pictures with my friend's camera but panicked as the security forces furiously directed us out of the scene. On the way home we stopped by the sight of the aftermath of another protest and found a burnt flag. I can say that at that point, I knew I had witnessed something exceptional and it was my responsibility not to ignore what I had seen. Elsewhere the island was peaceful and calm as usual. The people in the city center of Manama had no clue what was happening just a couple of miles away.

The Bahraini government, when questioned by outside parties

about the treatment of dissidents in Bahrain, repeatedly insists that these people are Islamic fundamentalist terrorists (a military wing of Hizbollah-Bahrain). The official take on the tensions in the country is that it is a direct result of the influence of Iran and the Iranian revolution. This view posits that there is no abuse of human rights in Bahrain and that terrorists construct rumors to aid their cause, which is to replace the Bahraini government with a pro-Iranian regime. Such an opinion certainly helped deter sympathy for Bahraini dissidents and covers up some of the issues they are trying to tackle.

However, groups such as the Bahrain Freedom Movement (BFM) and the Popular Front (PF) for the Liberation of Bahrain and the National Liberation Front (NLF) are made up of Bahrainis from diverse sectors of society who are not necessarily Shi'a fundamentalists. Furthermore, they are not necessarily calling for anything

that radical, nor are they calling for the overthrow of the Al-Khalifa regime. While there is little doubt that there is a pro-Iranian Islamic fundamentalist element to the opposition forces, most Bahrainis are simply calling for the re-instatement of a democratic assembly and the constitution that the British helped draw up for Bahrain's independence. They want the freedom to call for reforms without fear of losing their jobs or being harassed. They want the leeway to petition the government for development in areas such as the treatment of women and the judicial system. They want an end to the arrests, detaining and torture of anybody suspected of being critical of the current regime.

It should be mentioned that there have been several horrific incidents that have been used by some opposition forces to highlight their

cause. For instance, a group of Bangladeshi workers were burned alive and a restaurant that British people were known to frequent was attacked. While it is easy to condemn such tactics, it does highlight the desperation of the people involved. While violence and killing should never be encouraged it is hard to lecture people who have suffered and seen friend and relatives suffer continual abuse of the same scale by the authorities. Furthermore, the largely peaceful movement does not condone such attacks.

In discussions with friends who have lived in Bahrain, there is often debate over whether the Bahraini opposition groups are any better than the regime that they are trying to reform or allegedly overthrow. While I am not arguing for a pro-Iranian regime or an Islamic revolution, it is not up to us to decide. Even if Bahraini dissidents are calling for revolution (which it appears they are not), it is up to them. As people who grew up as expatriate children living a privileged (in comparison to many Bahrainis) lifestyle, it is up to us to consider the implications of what are present in Bahrain implies. In fact, we should consider that our parents, by their very presence hindered steps towards egalitarianism. That while we were taught about freedom and democracy and the struggles to attain it throughout history in school, people living right next to us were still fighting for those basic rights and many of us were oblivious to this desperate struggle. It is time that these double standards were realized and crushed. ★

More information at:

www.vob.org (Bahrain Freedom Movement)

www.hrw.org (Human Rights Watch)

www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/99hrp_index.html

(Official US opinion)

www.gulf-daily-news.com (English "newspaper")

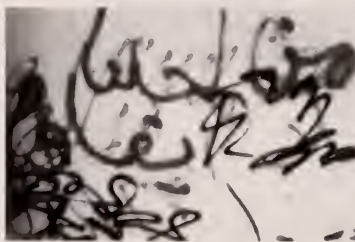
www.welcome.to.bhro (Bahrain Human Rights Organization)

www.amnesty.org

[places]



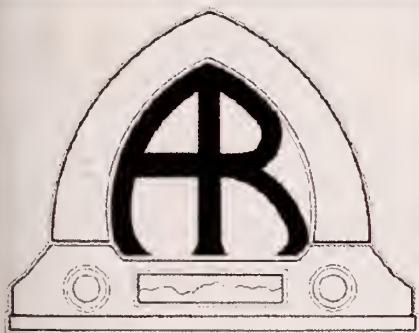
upper: Anti-government graffiti on a shop front, often painted over by morning. lower: Same as above, but on a house wall near the village of Budaiya.



THE ZINE YEARBOOK

Is now accepting nominations for Volume V: excerpts from zines printed in 2000. Read anything good in a zine last year? Tell us about it. All nominations due by March 31, 2001. Book available starting June 2001. For complete guidelines or more information please contact:

The Zine Yearbook / PO Box 1225
Bowling Green OH 43402 /
zineyearbook@yahoo.com
Previous editions still available.



ALTERNATIVE RADIO

Programs featuring Amiri Baraka, Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, Barbara Ehrenreich, Ralph Nader, Michael Parenti, Cornel West, Vandana Shiva, Howard Zinn, and many others.

For livestream webcasts:
www.alternativeradio.org

See Where to Hear AR

For a free catalogue:
800-444-1977

ar@orci.com

AR Box 551 Boulder, CO 80306

BS 2000



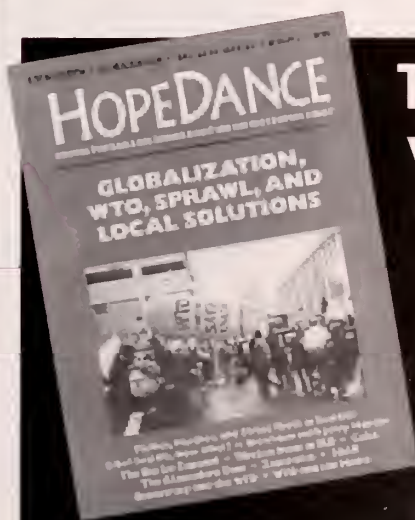
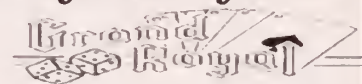
brand
new
record

"SIMPLY MORTIFIED"

in stores

February 6, 2001

www.grandroyal.com



Tired of bitching and whining at the world? Want a new kind of activism that is positive, hopeful and inspiring?

Learn about going beyond environmentalism and enter into the new realm of ecological sustainability, restoration, and radical lifestyle transformations.

Read how local people are solving global problems. Read how one publication is networking and connecting sustainability activists throughout the central coast of California... and beyond....

\$10 for 6 issues; \$3 for a sample issue.

Click to www.hopedance.org or email hopedance@aol.com or mail to HopeDance Magazine, POB 15609, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406.

Words as Weapons



[culture]

James De La Vega, Subcomandante Marcos and ¡Zapatasos!



words and photos by Greg Fuchs



James De La Vega teamed up with ¡Zapatasos! to raise awareness in New York City about the continuing Zapatista struggle in Chiapas, Mexico. By extension their street theater announced the publication of *Our Word Is Our Weapon Selected Writing of Subcomandante Marcos* (Seven Stories Press, 2000). Juana Ponce De Leon, editor of Marcos' collection, introduced De La Vega to Rebecca Ramirez, performance artist and director of ¡Zapatasos!

On New Year's Eve, 1993, the Mexican state of Chiapas entered the international consciousness when the Zapatista guerrilla army seized control of the colonial city of San Cristobal de las Casas as well as five towns in the surrounding Chiapas highlands. They declared the rebellion a response to the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement and called for freedom of all indigenous peoples.

Before this day they were invisible like most indigenous peoples in the modern world. Their goal has been to collectively reverse 500 years of colonization and de facto genocide by demanding independence.

Marcos, the spokesperson and strategist for the Zapatistas, also is invisible. He has gone masked and unknown since the uprising in Chiapas began January 1, 1994. His power lies in his invisibility. The mask worn by all Zapatistas challenges and critiques the crass individualism and strong patriarchal power, often represented by the face of the father, a nation's leader, are both hallmarks of Western capitalism.

James De La Vega too is invisible. Everybody on the Lower East Side has read his writing on the sidewalks but few people have actually seen him. You may walk over a sentence or enigmatic phrase written in chalk, for example, "Capitalism Breeds Dishonest Men -Marcos," but you won't see who wrote it. Which is not unlike any writer really. How many people would recognize even John Grisham on a New York City

sidewalk? Yet, De La Vega's stealth is vital to his survival unlike Grisham's. Many graffiti writers and taggers run the risk of fines or even arrest.

Reverend Billy, another downtown performance artist and Minister of the Church of Not Shopping, in the Jones Diner asked, "You know that guy? Does De La Vega live in the neighborhood? I never see that guy. How do you know he's not me?"

Several times during November 2000 the ¡Zapatasos!, arrived on various highly trafficked public spots in New York City dressed as Zapatistas, wearing ski masks or red bandannas and military-green shirts. They marched, carrying pens as long as rifles through Astor Place, the New York Stock Exchange, Spanish Harlem, Union Square Park, and the West 4th Street Subway platform. At each location they would stop to perform a script that Ramirez wrote inspired by Mareos' writing.

The first performance, actually a rehearsal, may have been the most successful. The ¡Zapatasos!, met De La Vega at Union Square. They didn't have the script so they marched around Union Square South silently while De La Vega threw-up a drawing in masking tape of Subcomandante Mareos. While De La Vega laid down the tape the ¡Zapatasos!, marched around him. Monica Banis, an officer with the city park services, provided an unplanned dramatic ending. She showed up towed by a Union Square sanitation worker threatening to fine or arrest everyone involved and pulled-up the tape drawing.

True to his nature, but unfortunately for all, De La Vega missed the three other ¡Zapatasos!, performances I attended. The best of which was held in the lower Manhattan financial district. The ¡Zapatasos!, marched solemnly around the New York Stock Exchange, the epicenter of Western capitalism; the belly of the beast. Near the entrance of the Exchange the ¡Zapatasos! performed for the hundreds of hastily passing traders, brokers, security guards, and tourists. ★





a few words from the ¡Zapatasos!...

¡Zapatasos! ¡Zapatasos! ¡Zapatasos! ¡Zapatasos!

Mexico/ Mejico
Blue oceans, brown skin, white skin, and blue skies, colorful dollars and shiny pesos.
The oh so beautiful land that pictures and commercials show.
AAH! (rest)
The ocean waves that sound, near the cruise ships and golden sun.
America Corporate America
Those same waves are crashing here, like bare feet on asphalt.
The trued sound of people running to arrive in America.
Barefoot in the land where dreams come true.
People leave there own country
(stomping)
A country without education,
No jobs, no money, no food.
The Politics of Mexico
Mexico has been controlled by the PRI for the last 75 years.
Political Party PRI has taken ultimate control.
PRIs work in giant palaces that are built to reel in members of high society to work
As undercover officials acting as they are working for the people of Mexico.
Men shout on podiums, "We want to save Mexico!"
Working for the system, Working for the System, Working for the system And
pocketing \$
Mexico's second to last president became a millionaire for the so-called job of
"Saving the Mexicanos!"
"Oh no, I am not a millionaire."
Meanwhile Chiapas, the third largest producer of agriculture continues receiving
nothing for the endless efforts of labor
Here in this part of Mexico, 34% of inhabitants are illiterate 65% have not completed
their primary education.
State dwellings lack electricity, drainage, sanitary services.
22% of the working population receives no income (4X)
Nearly 40% receives less than \$2.00 a day
Per day
The Mexican Palace of Officials becomes large while these #'s increase,
The Palace is growing in money, money, money
While the people are growing fatter, fatter, and fatter
Mexico's Politicians have become undercover
robbers thieves/smugglers/and criminals.
Nobody can stop them.
Nobody can see it because there, nobody sees.
Why Don't Things change?
Politicians take advantage of the ignorance caused by the illiteracy that they
helped create.
The government specifically knows that poor people don't know the real situation.
The population believes what politicians tell.
Government officials running for office hand out gum and candy to voters.
!Chicleto, Chicleto, si votan para el presidente de PRI;
The people accept this garbage because of their ignorance.
The lack awareness, The lack of education, the lack of \$ to buy a newspaper
Who will change it?
The Zapatista movement
The Zapatista movement is a peaceful effort by armed people.
Article 39 of the political constitution of the United Mexican States
declares that people have the right to change the government.
Yet corruption has not allowed any change:
Te llevo a la carcel/ I will take you to jail
Te pago cinco mil pesos, vete!/ I will pay you 5000 pesos, now go!
Te mato!/ I will kill you!
The government fears the Mexican people
That is why you see so many soldiers, soldiers, soldiers, and police,
police everywhere you turn.
Zapatistas are fighting for a democratic change in the government of Mexico.
Zapatistas are fighting for liberty and justice for the majority.
Zapatistas and their current leader, Subcomandante Marco will continue to fight.
They will one day attain freedom, democracy, and justice.
Tierra y libertad-Viva Zapata.



More People On Bikes!

CLAMOR talks with folks from *The Bike Club* in Portland, Oregon

Do you despair at the idea of taking your bike to a shop, paying too much for something you could probably figure out how to do if you had the chance, access to tools, and a space to do so that wasn't intimidating?

The Bike Club is a bike workshop and bicycle lending library in the basement of a house in NE Portland. Every Sunday they open it up and have a day where anyone is welcome to come and use tools, books and get a little help fixing up their bike. It's a project that inspires the hell out of me and is part of a larger trend that includes the *Bike Church* in Philadelphia, the bicycle lending library and free-shop in Oakland, as well as the Yellow Bike Project.

The Bike Club is an example of how to take an idea that you have and do it. It can be that simple. I think that this sort of casual direct action also fits into larger trends within various communities right now towards direct grassroots activity. That grassroots energy and those ideas are getting more and more people into the streets and have to be realized in our everyday lives, and projects like this are one way of doing that.

This interview addresses how to take your idea, have fun and see that it carries out your ideals of community interaction and positive change. It explores the learning process that happens in the course of taking something like this on. It also touches on how to make your project sustainable, a problem that can be a tremendous hurdle. And while there aren't nec-

essarily any answers offered, I think the perspective that is illuminated is an important one.

It seems like the communities that I consider myself a part of all have a few common threads running through their collective consciousness these days: gardens, bicycles, sustainability and autonomy, just to name a few. It's not all brand new, but I feel like there has been an upsurge in the last few years of amazing projects along these lines.

The Bike Club is one of those projects. Heather, Mike, Pete and Raki were interviewed for CLAMOR by John Gerken

A good place to start might be just talking about how this came to be.

Heather: I think *The Bike Club* came to be over a Scrabble game in the rain, probably about a month after Mike moved out here from Philadelphia. I'd been living here at 19th Street for a few months and Mike was looking for stuff to get involved with and I was wanting to do something with this space that we have in the basement. It's a pretty amazing space and there was just a huge mountain of bikes that were knotted up together and weren't running. Pete and I had been talking about it for a long time too; we mostly just wanted to get the bikes running and then clear out the space to see what we could do with it. So Mike and I probably cleaned the basement for at least two months. And then, once that happened...

Mike: I think once we had the bikes all hang-

ing on hooks in a clear space, what should happen next just kind of presented itself.

Heather: I think there were a lot of really difficult times when we said, "What the fuck are we doing?" There were a lot of conversations every week asking what exactly are we trying to create here? We knew that we wanted to work on bikes, we knew that we wanted to learn how to work on bikes and we knew that we wanted people to come do it with us.

Pete: Basically what is the purpose of this space and what is the purpose of us fixing up these bikes, and once we have them fixed up what are we going to do with them? We definitely threw around a lot of ideas and the one that seemed to make the most sense was to have a lending library. It made sense to me just because there are so many travelers coming through Portland, and people get bikes stolen, people's bikes break down... also, if we create a space where people can just come and work on their bikes and have access to books about how to fix bikes, and hopefully have access to tools and parts, people can be sort of self-sufficient without having to pay bike shops to do it.

Heather: That was actually where a lot of my desire came from. I hadn't had a bike for a while, but all of a sudden I was riding my bike everywhere and I realized that how it was running was important to me. I was taking more of an interest in learning how to do that by

myself. But it was really hard to get people to show me how to do it without being overbearing, to give me guidance without taking over and being pushy. I was insecure because I didn't know what I was doing. I think a lot of people are like that, they want to know how to work on their bikes but it's hard when you don't really know where to begin and you feel like you should know. I wanted to create a space where I felt comfortable to fuck up as much as I wanted to, or as much as I ended up fucking up. And where other people felt comfortable doing that too.

That's one thing I think you have done. It's not an intimidating environment to come do something that you might not know how to do at all.

Mike: It's pretty cool because none of us really knew what we were doing. And obviously we're still learning. It's a cool thing when people come in with something and they say, "I don't know how to fix this." And we're like, "Yeah, we don't know how to fix that either." And then we bust out the books, and we just pool together and make it happen. Which is pretty much the coolest thing in the world as far as I'm concerned.

Heather: That's been one of the most incredible things to learn is that it's just so much easier to tackle something you know nothing about with somebody who knows as little as you do. Just having someone there to plug through it with you, it's amazing what people can learn if they just go at it together.

And when we started we didn't have tools. There was a period of time where there were little bike angels showing up, like we'd go down in the shop and there would be a stand there.

Mike: We've had amazing donations.

And that's how you've gotten most of your stuff?

Mike: Yes.

Heather: It's always easy to get bikes donated. There are bikes everywhere, and that's the other force behind this project is that we were seeing bikes trashed on the street everywhere.

Pete: Or in people's basements.

Heather: We just started by getting in the van, or Mike saying "I found a pile of bikes on the side of the road and I picked them up." But parts and tools and the stands and stuff should have been more difficult to acquire than they really were.

Mike: We've had a few good fundraisers, one rummage sale and a one-year anniversary potluck/raffle/show.

Heather: And that was a breakthrough because the yard sale was so much work. So it was really awesome to realize that really all we had to do was throw a party to raise some money. Give away some beer and ask for donations for it.

So someone that just walks in here, shows up here on Sunday, what do they get? What's available?

Heather: It depends on what they're looking for.

Mike: Somewhere around fifteen bikes are always in the library, give or take a few. Depending on how many we have, those are available.

Heather: Sometimes there are no bikes to lend out, sometimes all the bikes are in.

Mike: Summer's been a little crazy that way, the last few weeks all the bikes are out. More than anything I think people use it as shop space. I think a majority of people that come by do so to work on their bikes.

So what's the system that you've got now? And is it working well?

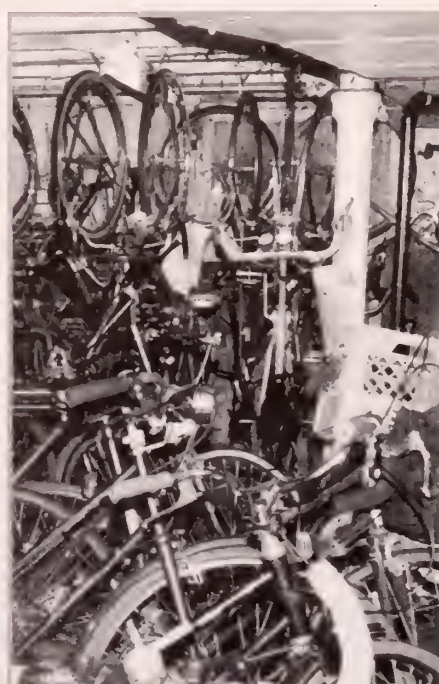
Mike: We've got a chalkboard which lists all the library bikes and we've got a notebook so you can sign your name and phone number, sign up on the board so when people come in they can see right away what's available.

Heather: We ask for a five dollar deposit that's refundable if the bike comes back within a week and if it comes back in the same shape. The system works pretty well.

That might be a cool requirement, five dollars plus an hour of coming in and just working on some bike.

Pete: Ideally, you try to convey that to people. But it's a question of how much effort do we want to put in to making sure that people come and do their time? We just do this for fun, and we want to provide a service for people. It's really hard to enforce that, to call up people who are maybe in town for a month and don't really have a phone number that's steady, to try to track them down and say, "Hey you haven't come every Sunday to give an hour worth of work."

Mike: One thing we figured out too is the people that are going to donate time are going to donate time regardless of whether they are borrowing a bike or not. I think we've found



it works out a lot better for us if we don't give it too much attention, because it's pretty much out of our hands. When we first started out we were trying to be pretty hardcore about that exchange, if someone would borrow a bike to put some time in. But then that just took up too much energy. And it works itself out. It's been a continual learning process for how to make it work smoothly and make it a positive experience for all involved.

Heather: It's difficult to require that people come help out because everybody has different levels of experience. It almost takes more time for us to show people how to work on things. This project is great for people who really are truly motivated to learn how to work on bikes.

But it's not like a free bike shop, you can't just come here and get stuff fixed.

Heather: Yeah, there was a lot of confusion. A lot of people at the beginning would bring their bikes by and wanted us to work on them. Now I think we've just gotten into the habit of saying, "We're not a bike shop, we provide a space, we can chime in if you need a little bit of help." The idea is that people should come ready to take on their own projects.

Mike: And given that, I'd say a fair amount of our time is spent working with other people. We don't just say, "Stay away!" We definitely work with people on stuff.

Do you think there might soon be an effort to make this more of an organized thing?

Pete: If the interest was there we would have it like that. It is pretty organized, but the fact is it seems pretty farfetched to have it become an institution.

That's what I was getting at, the difference between this and something that would be considered more of an institution.

Mike: I think either way it's a tough thing for a person to just come and feel comfortable joining up with something that already exists. We're all good friends here, and that's got to be a weird thing. That's where I feel like some

of it's on us to make ourselves more accessible, somehow. At least in my experience, any groups that I've gone to check out at a meeting or something, it's pretty weird to go in there and all these people have been hanging out for weeks and weeks. It's intimidating even if it's the nicest people in the world.

Heather: And we've learned that it really is most important to make sure that it's consistently fun for us. Really if we wanted to make it more sustainable and make it more organized and make it more of a cooperative, it would take more effort on our parts. It would take more than a Sunday. It would take planning meetings and things like that, and the bottom line is pretty much we have Sundays to offer.

Mike: The fact that we've been doing it a year and a half is pretty wild to me, just because we didn't really have a real clear agenda. That's pretty young as far as anything's really concerned and I feel like it has continually gotten better. So I'm pretty confident it will grow into whatever it's going to become, but I'm not sure exactly when or what form. But it will happen. This compared to even six months ago is quite a big difference, I think. It's just a pretty slow pace, which is cool. I'm not in a hurry.

Heather: It's also limiting to be doing something like this out of a home.

That was actually one of my questions is how that is, to have that be a part of your own personal space.

Pete: It's interesting just because you get kids coming over, like you get off of work and there's a kid showing up at your door on a Thursday night saying, "Fix my bike! My tire's flat!" It's almost kind of surreal, I've just been lifting lumber all day and then there's some rude ten year-old at the back door looking for something because he heard that this house is a bike shop. But again, if we wanted this to become an institution, we could find a space to do that.

Heather: It sometimes poses challenges to have it out of a home but I like that aspect of it. I like that we open up our backyard. I think it's good for the community to open up our backyard and be there every week doing something fun and productive.

So do you get a lot of people from this neighborhood coming by?

Mike: Mostly kids, young kids.

Heather: That was one of our major debates at the beginning too; do we really want to do this project just for punk kids or do we want

to open it up and involve more people of different backgrounds?

Mike: I think with that too it will be another thing that will happen slowly. I mean, we can't handle more than the punk kids and the neighborhood kids right now. But once we get to a point where there's more people, hopefully we'll be able to broaden the scope a little.

I think the other thing too is that we all have a bunch of other stuff that goes on in our lives too. This is my every Sunday, I love it, but that's all I can really give to it. So that's limited to a degree too because we all do have other stuff going on.

I wanted to ask that, what compromises you could foresee in making this more of an institution. And I can hear that pretty clearly in what you're saying about it as something fun, and it extends beyond that in a lot of really positive ways, but at the core of it it's just something you wanted to do that is fun.

Pete: It's hard to remember that we should really try to reach out to people or whatever. I feel like I'm opening up my house, it's a resource that is here, we have all kinds of tools and parts and books and some knowledge, and sometimes I am feeling that I just want to help somebody get their bike running great. But on other days, I just can't. And I don't want that pressure of having this commitment to the community to do that. But I think it's great if it is helping the community. That's obviously part of it but the underlying thing for me is that I'm learning something and that it's fun.

Mike: I think that as far as it being fun and then the positive things that come of it, it's all kind of the same deal. It's fun to me because of the neighborhood kids that come by, and because I can show someone how to do something or learn how to do something from somebody. That's why it's fun; it's not separate. I have fun through the whole process of it. Every step of it is pretty enjoyable even if it's kind of terrible. The struggles are kind of fun as well, in a weird sort of way, because it's a learning process.

Pete: There are definitely times where Sunday comes around and I'm exhausted already from a crazy weekend, and then it's hectic here and I just totally abandon the project I started in the morning because I'm helping people out and I get frustrated. But then I usually come away from it thinking, "Well, I learned a better way to deal with young kids, or I learned how to teach somebody how to do this, or I learned a better way to do this for myself."

Mike: There are plenty of times where at 11:30 Sunday morning, Bike Club is the last thing in the world that I feel like doing. But I'll still come, and I'll get started and I'll get into it and I'll leave and be really glad that I came.

So what is your dream scenario for this?

[culture]



Mike: I don't think we're too far. Eighteen bikes in a bike library, that's pretty cool, but this summer's been a real shining example that that's nowhere near enough.

Heather: It's hard to have a dream bigger than this, when we started cleaning out the basement and we have membership cards now!

Raki: When I tell people about this, like I told my dad and he was like, "I wish I had that!" I'm just totally impressed and it's just amazing to me with where it's at. And it's cool that it's so grassroots and there's no shit, like if it was a shop. It's just hanging out, there's no bureaucracy.

Pete: My dream is that people who get something out of this resource will just respect it and make some sort of an attempt to give something back to it. I guess you just kind of have to come to the conclusion that even if you're dealing with people in your own community, like anything else, there are some good people and some bad people. And some are willing to give back and some aren't.

Heather: That's something we've had to learn too, is how to feel comfortable expressing that to people when we get let down. My dream is that it will always be existing with or without us. That more people will get involved. It would be nice to know that there were enough people involved that it would be sustainable. I've got a lot of ideas for how to build something like that, but like we talked about earlier, I don't know if we really have the time or the energy to work towards that.

I feel like I see that with a lot of projects, even when they're not necessarily rooted in just having fun, like Food Not Bombs or something, where there are only three people doing a ton of the work and when they can't make it, or when they're burnt out after doing it for two years, it's going to end. Even though there are so many people around who are supportive, and they show up but maybe they don't feel included or inclined to keep going. With projects that are really grassroots I think it's a really hard thing to negotiate that, figuring out how to make that accessible and sustainable and flexible and actually still continue when the few people whose passion and motivation made it happen decide that, for one reason or another, they can't make it anymore.

Heather: We've kind of just stepped back and been enjoying what we're doing now. We've stopped making an effort to make it bigger than it really is. But, as with any project, the more people you have involved, the more ideas you have, the less work everyone has to do. The more fulfilled people are, the more people can bring their own skills and add that. And right now, we have enough stuff where we could get somebody started with their own Bike Club on the other side of town. We could donate twenty bikes right now to somebody else's basement, and we could throw them a party and get them some money. So that's a neat idea, too, getting people to start their own spaces like this so that we're not so overloaded and so that people can experience the joy of starting a project from the bottom up.

And that addresses the whole idea of if you ever feel like you should get a space, and with that become more of an institution. It could just spread out laterally instead, to different houses.

Mike: That would be great. "I don't think we can help you here, but you can go down to The Bike Club on 38th in Southeast and I think they'll have what you're looking for." That would be incredible. That would be the ideal.

When we were first talking about this Pete, you were talking about how it also came out of a commitment or passion for alternative transportation.

Pete: Absolutely. Bikes are certainly my passion, one of them anyway. And I guess the political side of it we haven't really touched on, but obviously it's fun for us to get bikes working because the idea is that we're doing something that is enhancing the community.

Heather: I think everything we're doing is political, even if we don't say it. Everything, from opening up the house and being out in the community where people see us, getting people on bikes which is just so important.

Pete: I did an apprenticeship at a shop because I thought maybe I wanted to work on bikes for a living. That was a strange experience, and I'm not sure if that's something I do want to do or not. But I know that I do want to work on bikes regardless of whether I'm getting paid for it or not, because basically I hate cars. That's a big part of it. I feel like there's got to be a turnaround at some point because bike

ridership in the United States is so low right now, like kids just don't ride bikes that much anymore. It's not considered cool to ride your bike to school. At some point that's going to turn around, and if we're here to help a kid out and get a bike going, and make the bike look cool, then that is kind of setting an example. We're not telling them, "Biking's really cool, you should ride your bike more!"

Heather: "Hey ten-year-old, do you know how your bicycle riding is affecting the environment?"

Pete: Yeah, they ask us why we're doing this, they think it's a shop and they ask how much things cost. "Well, it doesn't cost anything, but it would be good if you could learn to do this for yourself so that next time you don't have to ask us." It's not like we lecture people, "You'll be a better person for knowing this!" It's just that this is what we know, and it's not some exclusive thing. It's easy stuff and it would be cool if kids knew how to do it.

Heather: It's just really empowering to learn how a machine works, for anyone. To learn how to do something on your own is so empowering, even if it's the smallest thing.

I think that's what's really great about the approach of it not being a co-op shop. It's not like the Eco Bike, here's the implications of DIY club. It's just, here's the stuff and you've got to do it. While that may put some people off, it's like you said, it's very empowering too. And I think a lot of people, without even realizing it, can absorb that attitude. Like they'll bring a friend and show them, look, you just pick it up and do it.

Pete: That's why we don't have signs that say, Ride a Bike, it's better for the environment and all this kind of stuff. It's just obvious. Maybe we don't promote that enough, but it's just that this is something we believe in. If you want to know why, you can ask us, but it hasn't been like we're trying to push an environmental agenda.

Heather: Honestly, I would much rather work on a bike on Sunday than protest something outside of some building.

And maybe that gets through to people more, on some levels.

Heather: It's been really hard to put on paper just what we're doing. Maybe someday we'll sit down and try to write out or verbalize why we're doing it. It's just so implicit for all of us, I think. ★

contact The Bike Club
C/O Heather Peton
PO Box 1902
Portland, OR 97207
(503) 282-9048 ask for Pete.



BIKING FLORIDA

I've been riding my bike around since I was a kid, but it's only in the past few years that I've noticed that all my friends have been taking these amazing trips using just their bicycles and sense of adventure. Like the bicycle, the beauty lies in its simplicity. You pedal. You go. So, in hopes of inspiring future autonomous fun, here are 8 interviews with people who've taken off on their bikes.

Interviews by Travis Fristoe

Name: Dan Gacedon

Age: 24

Profession: bike mechanic

Where'd you go?

Gainesville to St. Augustine. For my birthday. 48 hrs. or so (at least that's what I intended to do). It's a short ride. 85 miles roughly one-way. I just thought it'd be great to ride to the coast. Like it'd be a fantastic journey.

What kind of bike did you take?

My road racing bike. Like I say, it was only a short ride. I could go into details about the bike itself, but I'll spare you. Let's just say small, light and fast.

Provisions?

Let's see. My friends donated cases of some gross chocolate "health bar" so I had about 10 of those. Beyond that: 2 water bottles, one for straight water, one for some sort of juice; plus one of those water-holding backpacks which held about 70 oz. of water; a couple of tubes (one bad, that sucked); tire irons; allen



wrenches; a map; arm & leg warmers; 10 or 20 bucks; but oh those "balance" bars. ugh.

How fast (miles per day?)

Well, I left at 3pm the first day because I had to work for a while. And I rolled back into town at 3pm the next day. 170 miles in 24 hours. God, it was brutal. I got 4 hours sleep on some dumpstered cardboard and a towel I stole off a condo porch. And then back on the bike.

Trouble with other traffic?

None. I praised close-to-the-shoulder-riding truckers for the tail winds. I'm serious. By mile 140 or so I was needing all the help I could get.

Would you do it again?

Sure. I do it a lot if I get the chance. Throw caution and preparation to the wind. Why not?! I would carry good tubes next time.

Why'd you do it?

Like I say, it was a trek to the ocean. And really I feel my best while pedaling. Just the mechanic repetition of my legs; it lets my mind just go and my thinking gets as mechanical as my movement. And for the self-sufficiency of human-powered transport.

Advice to those wanting to take a bike trip?

GO! Trust your bike. Relax. Your bike is the best invention EVER. No matter your pace. Never mind fancy stuff. Just keep everything in good shape. Get to know your bike well.

Name: Yvette Koch
Age: 23
Profession: Women's Health
Care / Abortion Counselor

Where'd you go?

From Gainesville to the coast of Florida (St. Augustine), then to Brunswick, Georgia & the hostel in the woods there. Then back home.

What kind of bike did you take?

A road bike that I put together after my TEAMFUJI got stolen. It was a MIYATA three ten that my friend Dan helped me build a week before I left.

Provisions?

The works, sort of. Stolen trail mix & dried fruit to stockpile the vegan revolution; a borrowed tent that barely stayed up and then was used only once; bike lights that I forgot to take out at night; and one change of clothes (from bike to civilized punk!).

Name: Don Fitzpatrick
Age: 29
Profession: teacher (middle school)

Where'd you go?

I rode my bike from Gainesville to Tampa and back over a Spring Break about 4 years ago. I used small roads, mostly 2 lanes. I went through several cool small towns. I ate peanut butter sandwiches in a gazebo outside a town hall. Women crossed the street to see what I was up to. They offered fruit & tea. I stopped in lots of cool places to drink, read & eat. I pushed my bike through highway shrubs and peed behind trees. I sat under shade trees and pondered the regular business of my life. I wandered along a railroad track in Wildwood and thought about how much faster the train was going compared to me.

What kind of bike did you take?

I rode a big, blue GIANT mountain bike that I'd had since 1989. It had a green Publix milk crate on the back. I love the bike because I had it when I moved to Gainesville. I fell in love with Gainesville and probably myself on the seat of this bike. It was nice and significant to ride it back to the home of my parents.



How fast
(miles per day?)

Between 70-80 miles a day.

Trouble with other traffic?

Jacksonville, Florida hates bike traffic. Everyone looked at me like I was a space alien in my helmet & I ended up unwittingly riding over a bridge that had a one-foot-wide raised shoulder. It took over 20 minutes for me to walk over when I got too piss-scared to ride more.

Provisions?

I took water, peanut butter, bread, *Cometbus* #42, a bike pump, an inner tube & some extra clothes. Preparation was not very complete. I was of the mind that if I thought about it too much, I might just lame out and drive home. Also, I wasn't putting myself in harm's way. Help was at most 1.5 hours away.

How fast (miles per day?)

I averaged about 10 mph. It took me maybe 12 hours to finish the ride. I took lots of breaks. I was tired, but also *Cometbus* was so good that I kept wanting to stop and read. My butt started hurting after a few hours. I rode the last 3 hours without letting my butt touch the seat. I wasn't wearing bike shorts and the bike seat was the one it came with. My hands also hurt a lot. I'd shake them a bunch to try to keep them fresh. I had one recurring thought: *gloves!*

Trouble with other traffic?

I had no trouble with other traffic. Ocala was a bit sketchy because the side of the road and the curb were the same thing. The traffic was pretty close to me. Some of the

Would you do it again?

In a second! But now, knowing the work it takes, I'd probably be a much bigger whiner about getting started. It is a strain to my neck, back & crotch to be on a bike for so long.

Why'd you do it?

Why not? I wanted to go to Nicaragua but couldn't afford it. So given the few travel options in the U.S. that don't completely rely on spending money everyday, riding your bike is not only punk but completely self-propelled. Travel slot / gut is not a question.

Advice to those wanting to take a bike trip?

Make sure you know some elementary bike mechanic rules. Don't try to sleep on the St. Augustine beach when your body is deliriously exhausted! Leave early every morning so you can ride for a few hours on sleep fuel. Take a few hours to eat toast, read, write, and re-energize with coffee; then finish off the day riding until sunset in the worst Florida heat. It's amazing.

highways were white lines ending at the concrete's edge, but all the traffic slowed down and went well around me. One truck scared me with its rush of sound and air. One lady locked her door when I pulled up next to her.

Would you do it again?

I will definitely do it again. I want to ride & camp & see more small towns.

Why'd you do it?

I did the ride because the Jeff Zenick zines are so good. *Destined for the Eternal Minor Leagues* (\$1 to PO Box 877 / Tallahassee, FL 32302) and the rest are all about having fun riding around the towns near your town. He camps, draws & hangs out. That was my initial motivator. Also, Monica had done the ride and said it was fun.

Advice to those wanting to take a bike trip?

Wear padded shorts. After about 4 hours, my butt hurt so bad I couldn't sit down. Wear sunscreen.

[culture]

Name: Carissa Benjamin
Age: 25
Profession: massage therapist / instructor and student.

Where'd you go?

East Coast- Virginia to S. Maine. Then we took a ferry (the Scotia Prince) to Nova Scotia & rode south shore & up through Halifax and north to Pictou where we ferried to Prince Edward Island & rode there also. 1600 miles.

What kind of bike did you take?

TRIEK mountain bike with touring style tires - 800 series. One guy in a Newother countries or the West Coast where bike touring is more common York bike shop actually laughed at our bikes, asking us, "Do you know thatbecause it's great to talk with other cyclists. you're riding entry level bikes?" Yeah, **so what?** You can take anything.

Provisions?

I do recommend upgrading components on an old bike. I had 2 rear pan-mentioned she went cross-country on a bike so it just made sense. niers, a handle bag & a sleeping bag. We carried one tent between us.

Name: davidhayes.com

Age: 37

Profession: soon to be unknown

Where'd you go?

Gainesville FL to Cedar Key FL. (But don't get me started... 2 weeks in California bike/train in 1980; 1 month CA & OR 1981; 2 months!: CA, NV, UT, AZ in 1982).

What kind of bike did you take?

Schwinn 'Heavy Duty' 1-speed coaster brake cruiser with basket. Roll (partner in crime) - borrowed mountain bike.

Provisions?

Water bottles, sleeping bags, tent & cash. Severe backfire: summer plus Gulfside Florida equals 6,000,000 mosquitoes at 5 pm. Either get in teeny tent and stay there from 5 pm to sunrise or get motel. Motel gotten.

How fast (miles per day?)

50 something.

Trouble with other traffic?

Only near garbage dump & rampaging reeking garbage trucks.

Would you do it again?

Hell yeeeah. Found a Gator skeleton.

Why'd you do it?

Ummm... I tend to get an idea and just go with it.

Advice to those wanting to take a bike trip?

Get a good map and travel the back roads. I think on my 80's trips we averaged 70 miles a day (that's 0 to 100+), and we figured \$10 a day (20 *up*-years ago). I hate to say it this way but... **JUST DO IT.**



How fast (miles per day?)

We started slow, about 30-50 miles day. Then about 60-70 and the longest day was 97 miles. Averaging about 10 miles hour, but that included all our rests, breaks & hills with heavy, heavy bikes.

Trouble with other traffic?

Not really. Almost got hit once or twice but that was because I fell in front of oncoming cars. A heavily-weighted bike & new SPD-clip-less pedals affected my ability to maintain balance. At least initially it did.

Would you do it again?

Oh my God, yes! But I'm more interested in touring

Why'd you do it?

I don't have a car and wanted to travel. A woman friend of mine had

Advice to those wanting to take a bike trip?

Just go. Make it happen. Don't let people discourage you. When we told people what we were doing they thought it was nuts: "Two girls, alone on bikes - Canada? What?" They didn't get it & weren't too supportive. Don't listen. It's amazing & easier & more fun than one might expect. Everyone was great. We honestly did not really have any bad experiences.

Name: Mike Taylor

Age: 24

Profession: post-intellectual... uh, post-intellectual

Where'd you go?

We cycled first to St. Augustine, which is on the east coast of Florida, then north to Brunswick, Georgia.

What kind of bike did you take?

A (rigged) SPECIALIZED "Hard Rock", which is marketed as a hybrid (mountain-street), but is basically a mountain bike frame.

Provisions?

Too many... Yvette carried a tent on her rear rack. I carried saddle bags (they have bike names which I can't remember) full of CLIF bars, dried food, fruit, rain gear, bike tools, flashlight, extra spokes, multi-tools, plastic tarp to cover the tent, sun-screen, spare bike tubes. Yvette had a helmet. I had a baseball

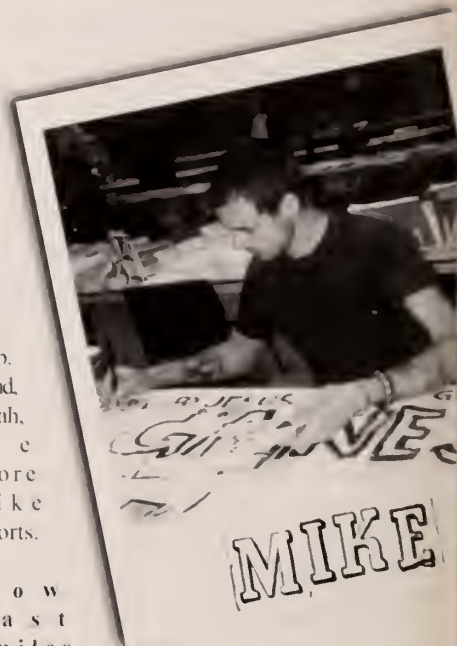
cap.
And,
yeah,
we
wore
bike
shorts.

How fast (miles per day?)

We averaged about 17 miles per hour. A few times we kept it around 22, when we were tired it was around 15. The first day we did about 80 miles, which is more than we meant to. An easy day was 40 miles. 60 was a reasonable goal.

Trouble with other traffic?

Once, on a bridge in downtown Jacksonville. We kind of got stuck on that route; we wanted to visit friends, and it turned out the only way



Name: Monica Reedy
Age: 23
Profession: punk rocker

Where'd you go?

Gainesville to Tampa, mostly using U.S. 301.

What kind of bike did you take?

It was a SCHWINN "Frantic" – just your basic hybrid, pretty unremarkable in every way but functional.

Provisions?

Tire levers, a spare tube, a patch kit, a map, 5 Cliff Bars and 2 bottles of water, which I refilled about every 3 hours. Oh yeah, and sunscreen.

How fast (miles per day?)

I'm not sure exactly. It took me about 13 hours and I think Gainesville and Tampa are about 130 miles apart.

Trouble with other traffic?

to cross the St. Johns River besides Interstate 95 was a fine choice of dangerous suspension bridges with no shoulders, lane changes, and littered with glass. One of the scariest moments of my life.

Would you do it again?

I will do it again, but better.

Why'd you do it?

We couldn't get the time or money to fly to Nicaragua and we needed a vacation. Bikes are the immediate option, the polar opposite of virtual space. And we are the punks.

Advice to those wanting to take a bike trip?

Train. Learn to fix the stuff that could go wrong. Do your stretches religiously. Wear gloves so your hands don't go numb. Drink lots of water; eat small meals often. Plan your route & have a rough idea of where you want to sleep. If I do a Florida trip again, I'm taking bug repellent.

Just what you'd expect – the occasional bottle was thrown (none of them hit me; I don't think they were trying) and the occasional insult shouted. U.S. 301 has some pretty deserted stretches and I think the assholes were just bored.

Would you do it again?

Absolutely, I should have already.

Why'd you do it?

Um...why not?

Advice to those wanting to take a bike trip?

2 things- sunscreen and mace. I used a lot of sunscreen on my face and arms but not my legs, for some stupid reason, and I spent the next two weeks pulling sheets of skin off the tops of my legs. The mace is for dogs – one chased me for a while outside of Dade City. By that point I was so exhausted it was outrunning me. I think it stopped because I was too easy to catch.

Name: Kurt Burja
Age: 27
Profession: English teacher / Graduate student

Where'd you go?

(Summer 1999) I went on a 5-day bike trip across the Netherlands with my friend Theun. We rode from the Hague (which is on the West Coast) to Maastricht (which is in the southeast corner between Belgium & Germany).

What kind of bike did you take?

I don't remember—it was Theun's brother's mountain bike. Nothing fancy but it rode great.

Provisions?

Let's see: we brought a 2-person tent, sleeping bags, mats, a stove, cooking gear, rain gear & some easily transported food (dry soup, etc.).

How fast (miles per day?)

Everything was in kilometers so I don't remember exactly,



but I think about 50-60 miles a day.

Trouble with other traffic?

No. Cycling in the Netherlands is ideal in so many ways. Not the least of which being that bike trails criss-cross the entire country and bicycles have their own separate traffic lanes alongside all roads.

Would you do it again?

Absolutely.

Why'd you do it?

Theun & I had been planning a bike trip for awhile, and ever since I'd lived in the Netherlands I'd wanted to cycle from one end to the other.

Advice to those wanting to take a bike trip?

1. Train a little. Don't hop on a bike and expect to ride for days. Do some rides beforehand.
2. Use a good seat. Honestly, one of the life-savers.
3. Cycling computer: a must for keeping track of distance, average speed, etc.
4. Sun block, water, Cliff bars / Luna bars.

[Despite what you read in the interviews above, not everyone in Gainesville rides around their bikes all day in the hot sun eating peanut butter and health bars. What a wonderful world it would be, though, if they did.]

IDA & LOW 10/11 Jacksonville



Punk rock grows up. It must be hard for Don Littleton to grow as an artist when there are throngs of young music enthusiasts still fawning over The Hated, who broke up more than a decade ago. And I wonder what it feels like to have to return from a brief affair with the Big Time to the tepid embrace of the "independent label".

But they kept the \$1.00 show \$8 for drinkers, as if the show being 21 wasn't enough of a nod to the arbiters of impaired decision making... what the music sounds like takes a backseat in my memory to how much I was made to feel like an audience member.

As stagnant as it can feel to go to poorly attended shows with poor sound, where the door is a standard \$5, unadjusted for inflation since 1993, but is the answer to reinstate the old rule of dressing room and polite applause? Will it help to restrict admittance by age? Maybe partying will help...

THE NEW YEAR
NEWNESS ENDS

FEATURES MATT AND BUBBA KADANE FROM
BEDHEAD

TG220-LP \$14 / TG220-CD \$14

Recordings available 2.20.2001.
Touring this spring.

Mail Order these and other titles from Touch and Go Records.
Write for your FREE catalog, P.O.Box 25520, Chicago, Illinois 60625.
Visa and Mastercard orders please call 1(800) 3-TOUCH-U [usa only].



Shipping News
Very soon, and in pleasant company

In stores January 2001.
U.S. tour in Spring of 2001.

Illustrations Records O/S 5 Lp-012/Cd-014



PROPAGANDEH

TODAY'S EMPIRES, TOMORROW'S ASHES

FEBRUARY 6TH 2001

CD/LP



FAT WRECK CHORDS P.O. BOX 193690 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94119 www.fatwreck.com

Nobody can stop them.

Nobody can see it because there, nobody sees.

Why Don't Things change?

Politicians take advantage of the ignorance caused by the illiteracy that they helped create.

The government specifically knows that poor people don't know the real situation.

-¡Zapatasos! performing in front of the New York Stock Exchange, (story p. 78)

