

clamor

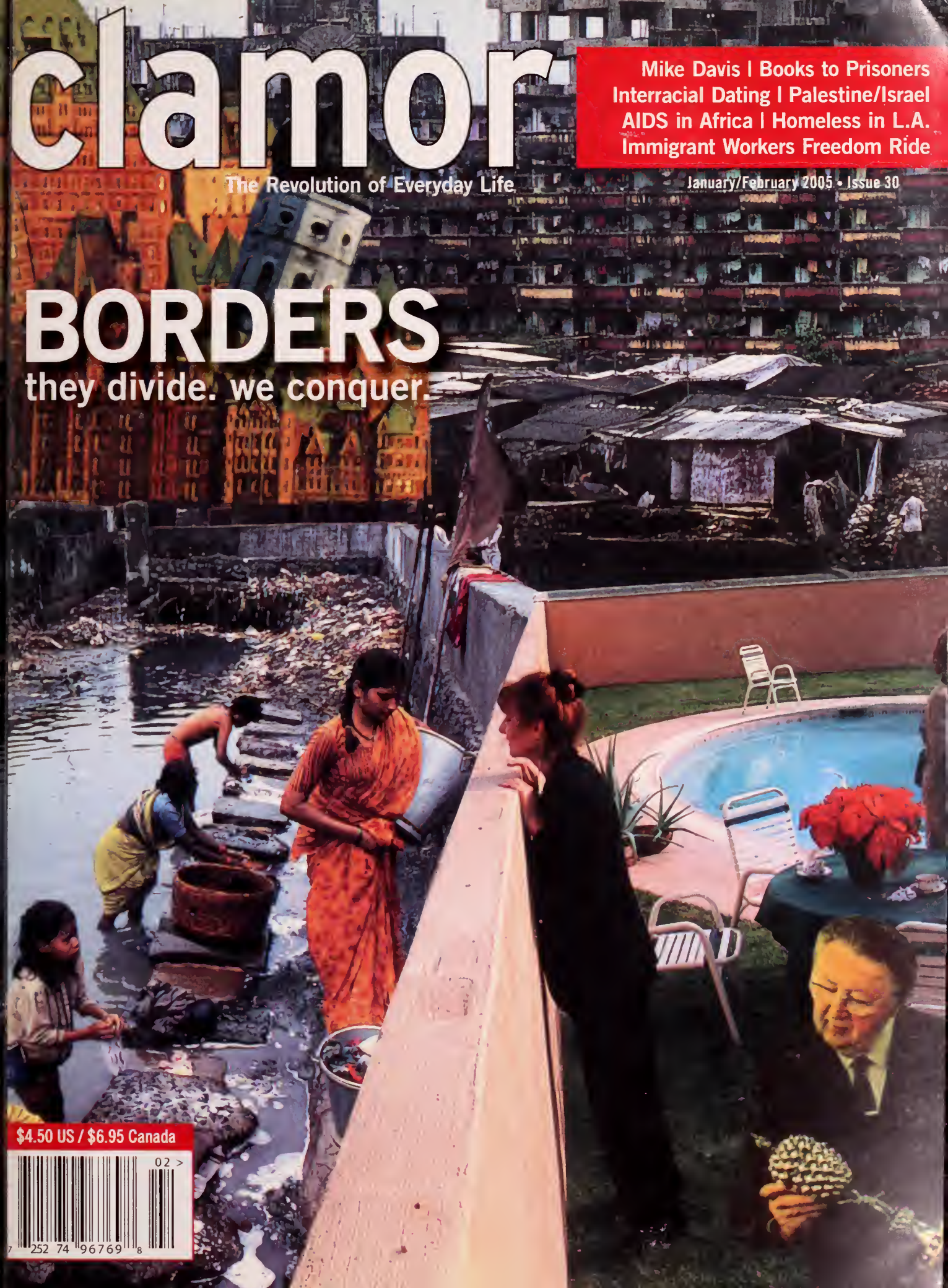
The Revolution of Everyday Life

January/February 2005 • Issue 30

Mike Davis | Books to Prisoners
Interracial Dating | Palestine/Israel
AIDS in Africa | Homeless in L.A.
Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride

BORDERS

they divide. we conquer.



\$4.50 US / \$6.95 Canada



02 >

7 252 74 96769 8

BRIGHT EYES

2 NEW ALBUMS JANUARY 25



I'M WIDE AWAKE, IT'S MORNING
DIGITAL ASH IN A DIGITAL URN

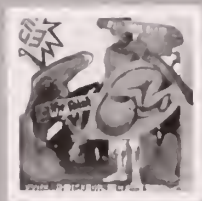
OUT NOW

LUA CD SINGLE FROM I'M WIDE AWAKE, IT'S MORNING

TAKE IT EASY (LOVE NOTHING) CD SINGLE FROM DIGITAL ASH IN A DIGITAL URN



SON AMBULANCE
KEY



THE FAINT
WET FROM BIRTH

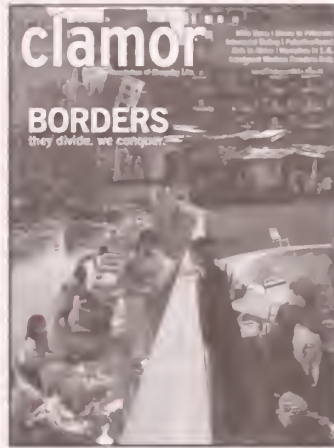


THE GOOD LIFE
ALBUM OF THE YEAR



BEEP BEEP
BUSINESS CASUAL

WWW.SADDLE-CREEK.COM | INFO@SADDLE-CREEK.COM



the revolution of everyday life...
delivered to your door

subscribe now.

\$18 for one year
at www.clamormagazine.org
or at PO Box 20128 | Toledo, Ohio 43610

EDITORS/PUBLISHERS

Jen Angel &
Jason Kucsma

CONSULTING EDITOR

Joshua Breitbart

Jason Kucsma

WEB DESIGN

Derek Hogue

CULTURE EDITOR

Eric Zassenhaus

VOLUNTEERS

Mike McHone,
Jake Whiteman

ECONOMICS EDITOR

Arthur Stamoulis

PROOFREADERS

Patricia Smith, Mike
McHone, Kristen

MEDIA EDITOR

Catherine Komp

Schmidt, Hal Hixson

PEOPLE EDITOR

Keidra Chaney

Elliot Adams

SEX & GENDER EDITOR

Brian Bergen-Aurand

PRISON MAIL

CORRESP

Sean Jones

POLITICS EDITORS

Madeleine Baran
& Amanda Luker

COVER THIS ISSUE

by J. Powers
from *Coming to America*
zine, available at
www.clamormagazine.org/infoSHOP

REVIEW EDITOR

Keith McCrea

LAYOUT & DESIGN**TOOLS**

Thanks to a generous donation, **Clamor** is designed using licensed Adobe software.

ADVERTISING

Rates and deadlines available upon request. Please call 419-243-4688 or visit www.clamormagazine.org/advertise

PRINTING

Westcan Printing Group
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Phone: 866-669-9914

Clamor is a bi-monthly magazine. Single copies are \$4.50 ppd and 6 issue subscriptions are \$18 ppd in the US (Outside of the US single issues are \$6 and a 6-issue subscription is \$25 in US Funds). Checks may be made payable to Become The Media.

BACK ISSUES

Available for \$3.50 + postage. Visit www.clamormagazine.org for more info.

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, Desert Moon, Doormouse, Gordon & Gotch, Ingram, IPD, Kent News, Last Gasp, Media Solutions, Milligan, One Source, Small Changes, Stickfigure, Tower, and Ubiquity

Clamor (ISSN 15-34-9489) is published six times a year (Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/June, Jul/Aug, Sept/Oct, Nov/Dec) ©2004 in the US by Become The Media Incorporated | PO Box 20128 Toledo, OH 43610 | Phone 419 243 4688

Postmaster: Send address changes to.
Clamor Magazine
PO Box 20128
Toledo, OH 43610

Periodicals postage paid at Toledo, OH

from your editors

In November after the election, I had the fortune to sit next to an Israeli man named Gadi on a flight from Cleveland to Detroit. He was on his way to Europe and then home, and I was on my way to my sister's house in Wisconsin.

Our conversation, which touched on everything from Bush and Kerry to Iraq to the security wall being built by Israel, gave me the opportunity to reflect on world politics from an outsider's perspective. Much of the discussion dealt with physical borders of nations and peoples — how many Israelis believe that Palestinians will have their own state eventually and the security wall will become a fortified border like the US-Mexico border, how Europeans and Israelis feel about the reelection of Bush, what it's like to live in the US as a foreigner.

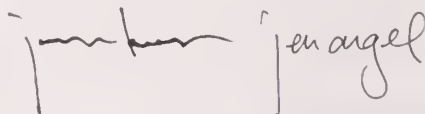
As someone who has traveled very little outside of the US, I don't have much experience with physical "borders." But it seems like they are everywhere, and they're not just about nations and politics. Sure, we have articles here about crossing borders like the ones mentioned above (US/Mexico, Palestinian Territory/Israel), but most of what's in this issue is about the cultural and social borders and divisions everywhere — it's all about "us" and "them." How does sports medicine designed around men deal with women's injuries (p. 40)? How do you feel about dating outside your race (p. 14)? What do you think when you see a homeless person pushing a shopping cart (p. 16)?

More importantly, this issue is about people dealing with the consequences of these divisions. What happens when a transgender person, post-sex change, meets people who have only known him as a "him," yet others still refer to "him" as "her" (p. 43)? And while you may be aware of the implications of illegal immigration to the US — but what happens when you've lived here for years and you want to do the right thing and become a naturalized citizen, only to hear lawyers tell you it's not possible because you entered the country clandestinely (p. 8)?

Us and them. In our last issue, we talked about community, and different ways that individuals are finding and helping each other — it is important to take this time to talk about the divisions between us.

As we approach our fifth anniversary, Jason and I, and everyone else here at Clamor, want to thank you for your continued support. We've said before that we can't do it without all the support from our readers, donors, advertisers, and contributors — and it's 100% true. Please continue to share the word about Clamor with your friends, family, and co-workers. A personal referral is the single-best way to help Clamor grow and continue work that we, and you, think is crucial.

Thanks for reading!



PS: Please take a minute to tell us what you think about Clamor Magazine using our online survey at www.clamormagazine.org/survey.

our mission

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

clamor

Number 30 | January/February 2005



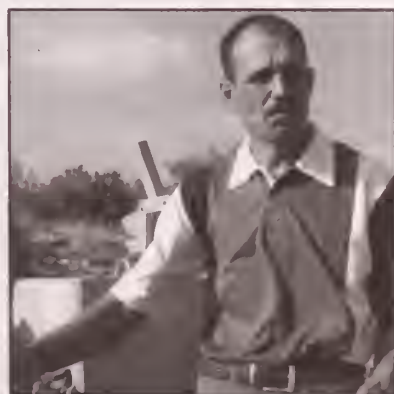
p. 8



p. 46



p. 50



p. 56

PEOPLE

- 8 **Guinea Pigs in the Land of Man-Made Beauty** by AK
- 12 **Raheel Raza: Faith Without Boundaries** by Joanna Hammer
- 14 **The White Guy Mystique** by Courtney Becks
- 16 **Planet Trolleywood** by Irene Svete

MEDIA

- 18 **Books Behind Bars** by Abby Sewell
- 21 **Soft Porn and Mickey Mouse** by Anja Tranovich
- 23 **Alternative to What?** by José Orozco
- 26 **Patrick Dillon: Radical Filmmaker** by Robert Hirschfield

POLITICS

- 30 **Mike Davis: Reluctant Prophet** by Jim Straub
- 34 **There's No José Here** by Gabriel Thompson
- 35 **La Frontera** by J.D. Pluecker
- 37 **Roma Revolt!** by Daniel Opperman

SEX & GENDER

- 40 **Biology vs. Training** by Emily Keller
- 43 **Don't Call My Boyfriend "She"** by Anna Mills
- 44 **The Waiting Room** by Marie Kazalia
- 46 **We're Persians!** by Yasmine Mohseni
- 46 **Dudes Against Dudeness** by Andrew Willis

ECONOMICS

- 50 **Get On the Bus!** Interview with Maria Elena Durazo by Lyn Goldfarb
- 53 **Living in a Postcard** by Rebecca Hartman
- 54 **Infected by Inequality** by Arthur Stamoulis

CULTURE

- 56 **The Shrinking Map** by Liv Leader
- 59 **The Making of a Mule** by Kristen Kidder
- 60 **Of Dolphins and RoboRats** by Irene Tejaratchi
- 63 **One Life, Two Worlds** by Laurel Luddite
- 64 **The Way Things Could Work** by Marisa Jahn

MURMURS

- 67 **What We're Talking About...**

THE LAST PAGE

- 74 **Scaring the Crap Out of the Company** by Adam Welch and Charisse Domingo

Open Letter to Progressive Media

During the run up to the elections, most progressive and radical media closed party ranks and embraced a mentality of Anybody But Bush. Given the abject failure of the Kerry campaign and the Democratic Party as a whole, and the waste of millions of dollars and millions of volunteer hours that could have strengthened our movement and made life better for millions of downtrodden Americans had those resources been given instead to community organizations, progressives and radicals need to question their support for the institutional left.

The Democrats have no excuses aside from their own incompetence and elitism. Even if motivated only by competitive self-interest, they could have challenged the disenfranchisement of millions of voters of color in Florida, Ohio, and elsewhere, or simply waited for provisional ballots to be counted, to have sustained a substantial chance at victory. The Democrats have signaled unequivocally that preserving the "unity" of a racist government is even more important to them than the survival of their party. Their highest loyalty is to the rich, white capitalists who control our country, and the entire world. We knew this all along. We have no more excuses for pretending otherwise.

A party that is so amoral, and so contemptuous of its grassroots constituency that it won't even defend their civil rights, does not deserve a shred of support from us. Under another four years of Bush, progressives and radicals need to rethink our strategies. The kind of change we ostensibly want will not come from above.

However, progressive media in particular mirror the elitism progressives purport to fight against. The voices of people of color, and queer and transgender people, are minimized or excluded. The reliance on academics and professional "experts" is so heavy that readers of many publications come away with the idea that you need a university degree to fight for change. Radicals are made to support the hegemony of progressive doctrine, or face marginalization. Even the moderate Ralph Nader was made a pariah. Privileged forms of resistance by white American activists are celebrated regardless of their efficacy, while the dangerous and necessary resistance of people in the global South is trivialized, condemned or ignored. Criticisms of the movement, particularly for failure to overcome racism or other forms of privilege, are silenced.

Our independent media have a responsibility to improve their failings and be accountable to the movements they intend to represent. Accordingly, we issue the following demands

Acknowledge a hegemony of resources. White, college-educated activists have far greater access to

communications, cultural media, and other resources than the rest of the movement, particularly poor communities and communities of color. Many retain a position as gatekeepers, allowing them to exert control over the movement and censor out criticisms that challenge their privilege and power. White, college-educated activists need to recognize their control over resources and admit the need to equally redistribute these resources, so other segments of the movement may empower themselves. Support existing organizations in oppressed communities, and allow voices from those communities greater uncensored access to our media.

Confront racism within the movement. Being theoretically opposed to racism does not automatically make us anti-racist. If we grow up white in a white supremacist society, we are infused with white privilege and racist attitudes we may not even recognize. It is the responsibility of white people to educate themselves about racism. We need to read the many activists of color who have written about racism (Malcolm X, bell hooks, Elizabeth Betita Martinez, Ward Churchill, Mumia abu Jamal), and give communities of color more access to our media. Focus on and support activism coming out of communities of color. Publish criticisms of the racism of white activists, even when it makes us uncomfortable. Work with activists of color as allies, learners, and supporters, not as leaders, teachers, and saviors.

Stop mimicking the corporate media's deification of experts and academics. Because of their privilege and extensive training, many academics and professional experts are so aloof from the daily realities of oppression that they can only offer inane commentary wrapped up in big words. Even when academics do have something intelligent to say, disproportionate or exclusive reliance on college-educated activists disempowers people from lower class backgrounds and presents an elitist face to the movement. Publish the words of the many outspoken activists who never went to college, and do not maintain a monoculture of academic language within progressive and radical media.

Stop marginalizing or subordinating radical and grassroots movement allies who do not line up as pawns to progressive strategies. Progressive media often contain a narrower breadth of opinion than mainstream corporate media. Some groups maintain an almost Soviet blackout on organizations or forms of activism that do not fit their framework. Meanwhile, progressive umbrella groups demand obedience from radicals and grassroots activists, often including larger numbers of poor activists and activists of color, in joint struggles. In the recent

election campaigns, in mass demonstrations, in the anti-globalization movement, progressives almost habitually exclude or sabotage radical perspectives and participation, even siding with the authorities against their erstwhile allies in times of conflict. Support free thinking by publishing a wider range of movement voices. Allow other activists to pursue different strategies, and don't white-out or ignore their participation in the movement. Do not take sides with the authorities—not the police at demonstrations nor politicians at press conferences—against other progressive and radical activists, even if you have ideological differences.

Recognize that a diverse movement will use diverse tactics. Progressive media have been quick to condemn differing tactics, and to silence any tactical discussion aside from an orthodox litany defending and espousing the single "correct" set of tactics, which include primarily advocacy, vigils, sit-ins, demonstrations, and other comfortable and safe forms of activism. People in Iraq, Haiti, Bolivia, the internal colonies of the U.S., and elsewhere, who are fighting for their survival using a diverse array of tactics are ignored or condemned with astonishing arrogance. This orthodoxy justifies itself as a moral or pragmatic position, but the distinction between so-called violence and non-violence is a false debate. The issue is one of recognizing the existing reality of current resistance in the world today, rather than viewing the movement through a set of ideological blinders that are very particular to a certain socio-economic context. Inclusion in the movement should not be made contingent on a North American interpretation of pacifism. Why is a vague and self-serving concept like violence, and not racism, sexism, imperialism, or capitalism, made to be the axis of our analysis? Solidarity does not mean forcing people in different contexts to adapt to your expectations. Recognize and support the diverse forms of resistance to Empire and engage allies in open and level discussion, not debate or silence.

Allow more self-criticism and criticism of the movement. Our independent media usually only criticize racism, sexism or other faults if they belong to corporations and governments. We can not grow and learn if we do not open up our media for self-criticism. Existing criticism within the movement is usually limited to bickering between different factions. Encourage and publish constructive self-criticism, and report on efforts at self-improvement within the movement.

Peter Gelderloos
Harrisonburg, VA

classifieds

The revolution won't be televised, but you can read about it. Books for a better world, by Mike Palacek, former federal prisoner, congressional candidate, newspaper reporter. Please visit: iowapeace.com.

CALL FOR PAPERS: The People's Papers Project is looking for submissions of undergraduate or graduate thesis that have been written by people who juggle both activism and academia for consideration in our series, the People's Papers Project. The People's Papers Project is the brainchild of Jason Kucsma (Clamor Magazine) and Ailecia Ruscin (Alabama Grrrl). Both Jason and Ailecia self-published their American studies master's theses so that they could share their academic labor with their activist communities. We are looking for more to publish in this continuing series. email ppp@clamormagazine.org.

SUBMIT NOW TO ROOFTOP FILMS! Rooftop Films is a non-profit film festival and production collective that supports, creates, promotes, and shows daring short films worldwide and in a weekly summer rooftop film festival. ROOFTOP FILMS is currently accepting films for the 9th annual Rooftop Films Summer Series, Summer Series 2005. For more info: www.rooftopfilms.com/submit.html.

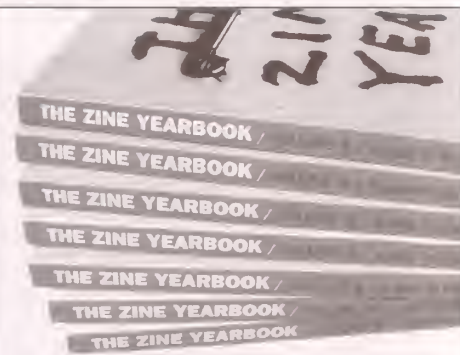
FIRE ON THE PRAIRIE: a monthly show featuring interviews with progressive writers and thinkers, brought to you by In These Times magazine. Listen to archived shows online at www.wluw.org.

SUPPORT PROMETHEUS RADIO PROJECT: Prometheus is a microradio resource center offering legal, technical, and organizational support for the non-commercial community broadcasters. For more information, visit www.prometheusradio.org.

MIDWEST BOOKS TO PRISONERS PROJECT: We are a collective that sends much needed reading materials to prisoners in many states of the midwest. We are in need of books, financial assistance (for books, postage and office needs), promotion, volunteers and any suggestions you may have. Contact us: Midwest Books to Prisoners - 1573 North Milwaukee Ave PMB #460 - Chicago, Illinois 60622 - mwbtp@riseup.net

UPSIDEDOWNCULTURE COLLECTIVE: We are a group of Detroit area people who want to use art and culture to help people connect with each other and transform the world. We believe it is far past time that we face up to problems like poverty, unhappiness, powerlessness and violence - as both systematic illnesses and issues we can do something about in our own neighborhoods. We believe we can solve these problems by taking collective creative action. Visit us at www.upsidedownculture.org

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD HERE!
Email classifieds@clamormagazine.org



The Zine Yearbook takes the underground press above-ground for just a second — long enough to share the brilliance of independently created art and media from the zine world.

NOMINATE YOUR FAVORITE ZINES FROM 2004

It's easy!

- 1) Read lots of zines — some bad, some really good.
- 2) Photocopy the pieces from the good zines that you'd like to nominate for Zine Yearbook Volume 9. Scribble contact information for the zine on your photocopies and maybe even jot a note to us to let us know how much you like the books (the former is necessary, the latter — not so much.)
- 3) Send in your nominations to:
Clamor | Zine Yearbook
PO Box 20128
Toledo, OH 43610
- 4) Repeat with every good zine you come across the rest of the year. Get your nominations in to us by February 1, 2005.

Questions?

write: yearbook@clamormagazine.org
www.clamormagazine.org/yearbook

★ ★ the assistant
this ship will sink
takaru - 3 way split CD
\$7.00 ppd

hugs - the tarpit CD
\$9.00 ppd

helen of troy
the farewell CD
\$7.00 ppd

stop it!! - demo
10"/enhanced CD
10": \$9.00 ppd
cd: \$7.00 ppd

the faeries
riot in the hive mind
\$7.00 ppd

★ ★ ★

WAKING RECORDS
www.wakingrecords.com
checks payable to
Evan Kilgore
1803 riverside dr. apt 5M
new york, ny, 10034

WE'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU AN EXAMPLE OF OUR ATTENTION TO DETAIL
IMPECCABLE BINDING, AND EMPHASIS ON AN OVERALL POSITIVE PRINTING EXPERIENCE.

BUT YOU'RE ALREADY HOLDING ONE.

Westcan Printing Group. Proud to print countless journals, books and magazines at the forefront of the literary and art worlds. Call today and change your perception of printing.

Westcan
PRINTING GROUP

84 Durand Road, Winnipeg,
Manitoba Canada R2J 3T2
WWW.WESTCANPG.COM TOLL FREE 1.866.669.9914
FAX: 204-669-9920



Guinea Pigs in the Land of Man-made Beauty

words AK photos Antrim Caskey

I opened the tinfoil wrapped package and shrieked as the head of a roasted guinea pig poked out at me. My bewilderment turned to laughter as I shook my head in wonder. Miguel's* mother had sent us the package from Ecuador, and why should I be surprised that she had so thoughtfully sent us the gift of the *cuy*, or guinea pig, that she knew we would not be able to find in this country? Little did she know that I, the *gringa* girlfriend, was a vegetarian and Miguel thought it thoroughly unnecessary to eat *cuy* in Brooklyn. I neatly wrapped the package back up and, not quite sure what to do with it, placed it in a paper bag to bring to Miguel's brother and sister who live in Long Island.

Enrique, a friend of the family, had just returned to New York from a visit to Ecuador. As is customary for those lucky enough to have a green card to enter and exit the U.S., he had brought dozens of bundles of goodies sent by families in Ecuador to their separated sons and daughters living illegally in New York. We received the awaited call, along with many others, in the morning: "The package has arrived! Come and get it." All originally from the same small mountainous community outside of Cuenca, Ecuador, they were now scattered throughout Queens, Brooklyn, and Long Island. That night, they all convened in Enrique's house to receive their parcels, a brief reunion of shared memories, and then off they went, back to their homes to rest up for the long day of work ahead.

I met Miguel six years ago in Ecuador when I was living in his community as a volunteer. I soon noticed that the Andean town was made up mostly of women, a result of a widespread wave of illegal immigration of the men to New York. To apply for a visa to the U.S. an Ecuadorian must own property, have a bank account, as well as an academic degree. As a result, an illegal entry is virtually the only way for many to come to the U.S.

As Miguel and I became friends, he told me of his secret desire to head North. I tried to convince him out of it, distressed that he would want to leave his family and the incredible beauty of his home for a life of grueling and unrewarding work. I was sure living the life of an illegal immigrant would break his spirit. Instead, he asked me why I had wanted to come to Ecuador. I told him I came because I wanted to see more of the world and learn from what I saw. He responded, "So do I. Here I have all the natural beauty I could ever want. But I have never seen man-made beauty. I have never seen the tall buildings of a big city or been below ground on a train. This is why I want to go to the U.S. — to explore the rest of the world."

Two years after I left Ecuador, I received an email from him. "I'm going to have to take a long trip; it could take up to a month, or more. I won't be able to be in communication. Please don't worry about me." Of course, it was the first thing I did. I dreaded what he was trying to

tell me. I looked at a map — the only place he could go that would take up to a month from Ecuador was if he were going to trek through the Amazon, which I doubted. I immediately called his family in Ecuador. They confirmed my fears: he had left for *Los Estados Unidos*.

I waited it out for three weeks without a word from him. I let my imagination wander. A border, which previously had been only an abstraction, became very real to me. My friend was now crossing it (or had just crossed it, or would soon cross it, or would he even make it that far?). I tried to remember different stories I had heard. The comfort I received knowing that most of the men from Miguel's community *had* made it across the

experiments in border crossing yield a thriving relationship between two young dreamers

border was only diluted by the stories I had heard of people being caught and returned to Ecuador multiple times. Three weeks later, my phone rang, and Miguel's weary voice told me that he had made it across.

His experience would only be revealed to me through the years, one layer at a time: the fear and humor of when the Mexican police stopped the border-bound group lead by the coyote and made them sing the Mexican national anthem to prove they were Mexican (lucky for Miguel who had the tune memorized and had been practicing his Mexican accent); the dash across the border highway during the 30 seconds that lapsed between when one border patrol and the next passed; the three days and two nights walking in the

* all names changed to protect privacy.

desert with only a small amount of water to allow him to run as fast as he could if necessary; the dead body he saw on the way; and the suspense of hiding in the bushes waiting for that anonymous van to pick him up and bring him to Tucson. But the important thing was that he had made it and was now in Long Island.

Through my communication with Miguel I learned of his job at Pizza Hut, cleaning offices at night, working at McDonald's, and working as a cook at a fine dining Italian restaurant. I also learned of his \$12,000 debt to the loan shark who had lent him the money he needed to pay the coyote. When I called him at his work, I learned to use his new name, "Franciseo," that had been dictated by the social security card his brother had bought on the street and shared with Miguel.

As I traveled the world pursuing an undergraduate college degree, Miguel remained in his small town in Long Island, restricted to a life of a 75-hour workweek. During a brief stop over in New York, Miguel and I dated briefly. I came to realize that despite our attraction for each other, our lifestyles were incompatible. The relationship came to an end. I continued to travel with my American passport, while Miguel's travel was limited to his daily bus ride to work and his once-a-week phone calls to his family in Ecuador.

A few years later, I returned to New York. Both a little older and more mature, Miguel and I fell in love again. I was finishing up my college career and Miguel had started taking English classes and had gotten his GED. A few months later, we moved in together. Although our cultural identities remained as strong as they had been when we first dated, we acknowledged them, learned from them, and shared them. The borders of geography (he from Ecuador, I from The States) and culture (he with nine siblings from an agricultural community, I an only child from a city) gradually faded as we created our own bubble to live in.

I was soon introduced to different branches of the Ecuadorian community in New York. I was both pleased and disheartened to see that many of the people I had known in Ecuador were now living in Queens or New Jersey. Many had left their wives and children back home in order to support them from here. The monthly trip to the local travel agency to send money home became a habitual outing.

The general sense was that it was not likely that Ecuadorians living here illegally would get caught and sent home. But since the attack on the World Trade Center, a quiet uneasiness has overcome the community. It is difficult for undocumented citizens to live in peace. The thousands of undocumented who have driver's licenses and perhaps depend on driving to earn a living are now in a nerve-racking situation. While a few years ago

it was easy to get a driver's license without proper documentation, the DMV now demands that those with licenses prove their legality in this country. Many people have received letters telling them to return to the DMV and show the documents with which they obtained their licenses. But most of these documents are non-existent or falsified. As a result of this stress, many people are considering traveling to more southern states where rumor has it that it is much easier to get a license if you lack proper documentation.

not to bump into soldiers guarding the Long Island Rail Road.

Miguel and I decided, both in response to this increasing psychological pressure and because of our personal desires, that the only way to truly be able to live freely is if he could become naturalized. I began calling legal hotlines asking how he could become legal. After dozens of demoralizing phone calls, most of which led to answering machines or people who said there was no way for him to become legal, I finally spoke to a lawyer who offered



Just a few months ago, the undocumented community was paralyzed again. The weekend of the Republican National Convention (RNC), New York was swarming with protesters, convention delegates, and, most importantly, police. Many undocumented workers had to cut short their usual daily activities because of the fear caused by the thousands of police on the streets. Both Miguel and I wanted to protest the RNC, but while I took to the streets, he stayed home. Not only could he not participate in the protest, he had to skip his usual Sunday morning guitar lesson in New Jersey to avoid having to catch the bus in Times Square. He even decided not to venture out to Long Island so as

free services. We set up an appointment for the next week.

I sat with Miguel in the lobby of a church, waiting for the meeting with the lawyer. I tried to stifle my rebellious excitement. I secretly hoped this would be a break for us — that there would be some way for things to work out. I quickly found out however, that I was wrong. The lawyer politely but bluntly told us that because Miguel had entered the U.S. clandestinely across the border, there was no way for him to become naturalized. Had he entered with a visa and overstayed the visa, things would be easier and the story would be different. On top of that, marriage to a U.S. citizen, the "easy way in," was not even an option for naturaliza-



72 RPM

revolutions per magazine

Send my subscription to:

name _____

address _____

email _____

Payment enclosed Bill me later

Your first issue will be mailed within 4-6 weeks

International subscriptions are \$25US (surface mail) or \$40US (air)

subscribe now!

and ensure **clamor**'s future as an amplifier of independent voices.

For just \$18, you'll get 6 issues of unfiltered and unapologetic new media — that's 72 life-changing pages delivered to your door every two months.



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO 25 BOWLING GREEN OH

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

BECOME THE MEDIA
PO BOX 20128
TOLEDO OH 43610-9987



tion anymore. Section 247-I, a clause that had previously protected the undocumented from being deported when declaring their illegal status here, such as when marrying a citizen or winning the green card lottery, was intended to be renewed in September 2001. But what with September 11th and Bush's anti-immigrant policies, the section was never renewed, leaving a gaping whole in what was meant to protect innocent immigrants.

Miguel and I were desperate to leave New York. We hated being stuck here, tied

to find a job in the human rights field. And I know that in Ecuador we will both be able to eat *cuy* just fine.

A few months ago, I was sitting in the Secondary Inspection room of Newark Airport, where people arriving to the U.S. go if their documents are questionable or if their name matches someone on a watch list. I saw a young woman enter the room from a flight from Ecuador. She was dressed nicely, with professional clothes and manicured fingers. But when she sat near me, I noticed that

the fake documents she had hoped would give her entry into the U.S. A while later, the Sudanese man returned. He was being sent to the detention center to await a trial with the immigration judge to determine if his fear of returning to Sudan was legitimate and if he qualified for political asylum. Despite what looked to me like gloomy days ahead, his face radiated with relief. For now at least, his life would not be under threat. And despite having to leave his family behind in danger, he had escaped alive, and I was happy for that.



down by expenses and the gritty cement horizon. But it would be impossible for Miguel to travel and reenter the U.S. because he didn't have documents. Leaving the U.S. also had much greater significance for him: while I could always come back if I were stuck for money, he did not have that safety net.

Miguel and I have decided to stay in this big city for one more year. We will save up some money. Miguel will finish off paying a debt, and then, with luck, we will travel back to Ecuador. Miguel will get to see the rest of his family whom he will not have seen for five years. Breaking the chains of being in a country illegally will be the first step to leading more liberated lives. Miguel wants to go to college to teach music to children. I want

the soles of her shoes had barely been worn and that she had a faded tattoo on her hand, a style that seemed to contrast her sleek image. She was soon called to be interviewed by an immigration officer. The person sitting next to me was an exhausted Sudanese man from the Darfur region. Fleeing the systematic genocide of his tribe, he had entered the U.S. with fake documents and was now applying for political asylum. Inside the pocket of his jacket, he had a photo of his family, most of who were now killed, and those who remained were in prison. The vivid memories of his torture remained on his body in scars. He was called into an interview room. The Ecuadorian girl came out, shackled. She would be sent back to Ecuador, owing \$10,000 for

My mind began to wander. I began to daydream about the distant day when Miguel and I might be passing through this airport, this time entering the U.S. with a visa. I still worry that once we get to Ecuador he might never be granted a visa to come back to the U.S., that he might never be able to visit my parents with me, or that he might never again see his brother or sister who are living here. I sometimes wonder if it would be better if we stayed here a little longer. But then I think, we've seen enough of this man-made beauty. It's time to return to Ecuador. ☆

AK is an activist for social justice who has worked with community health and human rights organizations in Latin America and in New York.



Raheel Raza

believes in faith without boundaries

words Joanna Hammer photo Manuel Oliveira

In times of war, interfaith councils are allowing people to cross invisible boundaries. Here, people from all religions are meeting, learning, and growing together in an effort to eliminate ignorance and promote peace. They accomplish this not only by delving into their own personal faith, but also by learning from others. At an interfaith gathering everyone is welcome. Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, atheists, and more gather. To Raheel Raza, this is the essential element needed for peace.

A devout Muslim, a wife and mother of two, Raza is also a feminist, a writer, and a leader of interfaith relations. In a world claiming to be full of weapons of mass destruction, Raza is a self-proclaimed "weapon of mass instruction." She feels that in order for the prosperity of peace to occur the individual must first find peace within him or herself. That same inner peace must then transcend to your community and then to the state, and eventually to world peace.

Raza and the many others working for interfaith relations believe the best way to promote peace is by opening up communication between all religions. They are discovering their own form of religious literacy.

"Although there are definite differences (in religions), I have found there are far more similarities than there are differences," she says.

In Pakistan, Raza was educated in a Catholic convent where she received one of the best academic educations available in the late fifties and sixties.

This school would soon become one of the first main interactions she would have with people from other faiths. The Catholic convent, although originally established for missionary work, was a home where children of all faiths learned and grew together as they experienced each other's cultures. Some of her fondest memories growing up were of her Hindu friend and how they would often share in each other's religious rituals.

Although Raza cherishes her homeland of Pakistan, a country that she often criticizes because she cares, she knew she would be able to achieve her goals in peace keeping and human rights if she moved.

"It was difficult for me to live there and do work for liberty and progression," Raza said.

After researching several options, she and her family settled on Ontario, Canada. Moving to Canada allowed her to work in what she considers to be one of the most tolerant, diverse environments for her field of work.

Raza's free spirit and her strong commitment in interfaith relations have led her to churches, schools, and synagogues to speak the

truth of Islam. Before the attacks on the twin towers, she primarily traveled to speak of her faith. Now, due to the misconceptions in the world concerning Islam, she calls her mission "damage control." Due to the negative perceptions of Muslims after the attacks, she wanted to show the world that Muslims are peaceful people.

She also speaks of Islam to clarify that the violation of women's rights in countries such as Iran and Pakistan are not succinct with the practice of Islam. Instead, these violations of humanity are deeply rooted in the country's matriarchal system. The outdated laws and defamatory acts are not an aspect of any current religion, nor have they ever been a practice of any religion. Instead, they are the results of a male-dominated society where most often political and socio-economic distress are primary factors.

Raza's message is a reminder to humanity that there are people from all communities who have frequently hijacked faith. This includes everyone from Christians to Buddhists. These people are not defending their religion, but instead they are misinterpreting their scriptures. In truth there is no faith that teaches torture or condones violence.

"All religions at the core teach good. The same goodness, a God-justice," Raza said.

Coming from a liberal, progressive point of view, she feels she has both an ethical and a moral responsibility to speak whenever and wherever she is called upon. If she does not speak, there is always the possibility that someone else will take her place and will give a fundamentalist view of faith.

She is appalled at the use of propaganda on the news. The many moderate and upstanding Muslims have been overshadowed she said by a group of extremists who are a small number in comparison with the entire Muslim population.

Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana is the Associate General Secretary for Interfaith Relations National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States. Like Raza, he feels that it is especially important to include Muslims in interfaith relations.

"It is particularly important for Muslims to be lifted up in the community," Raza said. "We must understand that they are our fellow citizens and are peaceful and loving just like us."

Raza admits to being an idealist. However, she is not naïve to the atrocities that are occurring around the world, nor are interfaith councils. At first glance, it seems simplistic to say that interfaith relations are the answer to peace, but if there is no dialogue or communication between different groups, then an understanding can never be reached.

Currently interfaith councils are growing and flourishing in the larger cities of Canada. Raza states that 44 percent of Canadians are born outside of the country. She also attributes the growth to government mandates that were created to support multiculturalism. For instance, Canada has enforced government-mandated holidays that promote an understanding of other cultures, such as a national day where Canadians celebrate the Muslim heritage. Unfortunately, smaller cities that are less diverse do not have as large of a movement.

The United States is also seeing a growth of interfaith relations, particularly in larger cities. Premawardhana and Raza both feel that more

work needs to be done to promote interfaith relations in smaller cities where prejudices often occur. This is challenging because the opportunity to meet people of other cultures in small towns is often scarce due to a lack of diversity. After all, in a predominately white neighborhood, for instance, it is highly unlikely that a Muslim or a Buddhist is going to just come knocking on one's door.

Premawardhana feels that the government could do more in the United States to promote interfaith relations. One indirect way he said that the government has increased interfaith relations, ironically enough, was the Iraq war. Religious communities have come together almost unanimously to stand for peace. On February 15th, a candlelight vigil was held as 10 million people demonstrated worldwide against the Bush administration's plans for the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Premawardhana said there are two types of tracks working for peace. Track one are political leaders negotiating peace whereas track two are religious leaders coming to offer peace.

When the prisoner abuse was revealed in Iraq, it was a Reverend, an Imam, a nun, and a Rabbi who spoke to the Arab world, condemning the inhuman acts.

Premawardhana also suggested that the United States should use our National Day of Prayer, which has typically been celebrated by predominately Christian people, in order to serve as a prayer day for people of all religions. We need to encourage people of all faiths and beliefs to participate instead of assuming that they will.

One of the biggest obstacles Premawardhana faces is helping Christians to understand that interfaith relations are theologically proper to engage in and that they do have biblical value. In fact, scriptures from all religions encourage peace and interfaith relations.

Although people working in interfaith relations must confront those who believe their work is unjust, the amount that support interfaith relations by far outnumber the fundamentalists who oppose it.

This past summer an annual event in Barcelona, Spain proved that interfaith relations have a bright future. At the Parliament of the World's Religions, 8,000 beliefs were represented at the world's largest interfaith gathering. People, including Raza and Premawardhana, traveled from across the world to promote peace, showing that all people have an interest in ending war.

"The time is right for this. All people seem to need to do is engage, get organized and have a boost," Premawardhana said.

In a world where humankind suffers from oppression, genocide, war, and violence, one cannot conscientiously deny an effort that permits peace to occur. In the absence of peace one has war, which only leaves innocent people with death and destruction.

Raza put it best when she said, "There are two choices we have. You can either have war or you can have peace. There is no in between." ☆

Joanna Hammer recently graduated from Bowling Green State University in Northwest Ohio. She can be reached care of Clamor.

[Raza] feels she has both an ethical and a moral responsibility to speak whenever and wherever she is called upon. If she does not speak, there is always the possibility that someone else will take her place and will give a fundamentalist view of faith.



The White Guy Mystique

words Courtney Becks illustration Lisa Albinger

When I was growing up my mother said: "White men don't mean black women any good." I ignored her. Before age 16, most of my crushes were on white boys.

Now that I'm nearly 30, I'm taking a hiatus from boys of all kinds, but I prefer black hair to blond and roll my eyes at blue ones. I realize now that I want a man, whatever his race or ethnicity, to be like me. To be a little nerdy, to be well-read and informed. We should like some of the same things and have a similar outlook. Though I must say the visual compatibility or harmony pleases or comforts me when the boy and I are both brown.

I won't front: the last guy I was involved with would go blond in the summer sun. He had the prettiest of steel-blue eyes, which were, I must say, rather too close-set. Another thing my mother said during my formative years: "Never trust a man whose eyes are too close together." And I shouldn't have trusted Alex because if he would lie to his — it just so happens — Indian girlfriend, he'd lie to my black ass. There was definitely some post-colonial shit going on there.

So, if my mother was right about Alex's eyes being close together and their bearing on his trustworthiness, maybe she's right about white men's romantic interest in black women, in general, which could be said to be freighted with more than a little not-so-post-colonial intent. I am thinking of a particular *Essence* cover story from 1999 that bore the somewhat wary headline: "Dating White — When Sisters Go There." The author Rachel Blakely wrote: "I've been raised with the idea that they are no damn good, that all a black woman ever got from a White man was trouble." Looks like her mama told her the same thing! It's not just tired advice from people's mamas, though. Blakely quotes cultural critic bell hooks, whose writing has saved my life at least once, in that story saying: "Every White man has two women in his life...[t]he White woman he's married to and the black woman of his dreams..." hooks continues: "White men have always pursued us [black women], [b]ut we, when given the option to choose, haven't responded." This brings us to a crucial juncture in understanding the historical nature of black women's relationship with white men. Brought from Africa by Europeans as slaves, black women usually *did not* have the option of dismissing white men's attentions; they were often raped. White men learned to see black women and their bodies as property. Adding insult to injury is the fact that white men blamed their desire to dominate, oppress, and have sex with black women on what they supposed to be the women's uncontrollable, licentious sexuality. So, if my mother *and* Sister bell are right, what do I do? Act like white guys don't exist? Don't date them? Don't express interest?

That would actually leave a vast population of non-white guys to choose from. I am not a black woman who believes she must date only black men. It isn't practical! According to United Press International, "in 73 percent of black-white couples, the husband was black." In other words, black women had better recognize. We assume black women would or should marry black men, who seem likely to marry women who are not black. There are more and more indicators that black women do recognize, it seems. When I interviewed her for a story about interracial dating a few years ago, my friend Jacinda said breezily: "I've dated everything."

When I lived in New York there were black guys I would want to date who would want to date me. I was in school. I met black women and men I had things in common with, who were nerdy enough to be in grad school or to have graduated from law school and talk about the historiography of black nationalism.

Living in Iowa was completely different. When I was there, it

was white guy or nothing. Meaning: white guys were the only ones checking for me. Other dudes — black, Indian, East Asian — didn't seem to notice I was there. Incidentally, a state like Iowa, with its Scandinavian and Slavic immigrant history, has a very large population of blonde women. Let me speak to the particular case I knew. You see, black and brown guys in Iowa City I'd want to have coffee with wanted white women. And I genuinely hesitate to say that because I wonder how much this is a "justification" for the fact that I tend to find white men attractive.

"White boys are nothing but trouble!" I commented to Jacinda one of the years we were both in grad school in the above-mentioned state.

Now, lest I unbind the wrath of the white fella *Clamor* readership, let me say that I'm sure that there's some great white guys somewhere who've decolonized their minds (as much as it's possible for anyone to do so), done their anti-racism stuff and would be great to date. In fact, I know at least one. I could only hope to scoop up a guy that great. I wish them and the black women who do the scooping the best.

In truth, though, white boys can be a lot of work. I don't have the energy or inclination to expand some guy's consciousness to understand that — of course — race matters. I don't want to be someone's education or consciousness-raising experience. I get resentful and grumpy about this. One of my pet peeves is that white folks often think of black folks' hair as exotic. Though, I think "cool" is even worse. No, to paraphrase Suheir Hammad, it's just hair. And — if nobody took the time to raise your ass, let me tell you now — *no one's* hair should be touched without asking, let alone grabbed.

I'm not interested in being the dusky validation that someone is truly "down." Eww. I will truly flip my shit the next time some blond guy from Iowa tries to sit me down and educate me about the cultural significance of Talib Kweli. Neither do I wish to be some guy's proof to himself that he's "really not racist."

One thing that's very difficult for me is this fact: according to the CDC, "AIDS is the leading cause of death among African-American men ages 25-44." Some part of me thinks, Oh, I decrease my risk of HIV infection just by dating some guy who's white. Other issues of power that haunt me about the black woman-white guy couple: your boyfriend will never get shot by the cops and you can get a cab in New York.

What to make of this?

I don't know if I'm coming around to my mother's generations-old perspective of the potential of black woman-white guy pairings. I'm not sure if this represents a limitation of my options/embrace of parochialism or a healthy way to conceptualize my life in a way that doesn't focus on whiteness. The white guy mystique may have faded for me. But now may be the best time in history for black women in general to consider their future with white men. ☆

Courtney Becks is a native Kansan living in Madison, Wisconsin. She's currently an AmeriCorps volunteer working with middle school girls. She voted for John Kerry, Russ Feingold, and Tammy Baldwin, of course.

I'm not interested in being the dusky validation that someone is truly "down." Eww. I will truly flip my shit the next time some blond guy from Iowa tries to sit me down and educate me about the cultural significance of Talib Kweli.

PLANET TROLLEYWOOD

Irene Svete has a word with photographer-turned-documentary filmmaker Madeleine Farley

In 2001, British photographer Madeleine Farley started snapping pictures around Los Angeles of abandoned and not-so-abandoned "trolleys," or shopping carts, as they are called in the U.S. Her project soon grew into a full-fledged documentary about the city's homeless, giving an invisible community at ground-zero of America's consumer culture a chance to tell their stories.

Clamor: At the beginning of your film you talked about why you were so taken with the "trolleys." For those who haven't seen it, would you mind repeating it?

Farley: I was living in Hollywood at the time and my printer for the show was downtown. So, I spent most of my time between... in my car. In that area, in particular, there are trolleys everywhere you go. I genuinely had no idea what they were doing there. As I collected pictures, I realized that not only were they beautiful to look at, but what they were being used for. Immediately, I saw the irony in it, Los Angeles being in one of the wealthiest, well supposedly one of the wealthiest, cities of the world.

Also I'm a great fan of "The Stepford Wives." [The movie] has a very famous scene where the women are floating around shopping at the supermarket with their trolleys overloaded with groceries. I saw that and linked the glamour side to the not-so-glamorous side of the trolleys.

The street community can be very self-contained. How did you end up meeting Hershey, Nick, and the others in the film?

I started getting up very early in the morning. One day I saw someone asleep under a pile of rubbish next to a trolley. I was terrified; then I started to talk to him. Once I talked to one person, I wanted to talk to all of them

Did you have any particular criteria for the people you chose to interview?

I would never ever want to film anyone who didn't want to be filmed. It was very simple. They came to me. They wanted to talk on camera and they wanted to be filmed. For example, I don't show any children or single mothers because they didn't want to be filmed. There are so many aspects of homelessness, so many different groups. I chose three: Vietnam vets, the mentally ill and the chemically dependent.

To some degree those seem to be the individuals that many people in the general community want to treat as invisible. Do you think that's part of why they talked to you?

Yes, because no one is listening to their stories. I actually think they were more fascinated with the fact that I wanted to talk to them. What on earth was some girl from England doing with a camera wanting to talk to them? It wasn't all filming. I was hanging out with them, taking their pictures, following them around and spending the day with them, being involved in their lives. I just became friends with them; then I went off and got my camera.

London and LA are approximately the same in population. Do you see a contrast in the number of homeless people?

I asked someone who does street outreach for a shelter, how many homeless people do you think there are a night in London? He said a lot. I said how many? He said 3,000. In my documentary, I could have put the statistics that they estimated in 1999 — it was 84,000 a night [in Los Angeles County] — but you can't say how many homeless there are at any given time. So, the statistics I have up there, 236,400, is the number in a year. You have to shock. So, I put that statistic. Now who knows. It might have doubled by now.

Did Los Angeles County Sheriff Leroy Baca's candor about the number of people on the

street and the lack of resources available in the city surprise you?

I was really shocked. We literally grabbed him between the car and city hall. I had nothing planned. All I knew was that he was in the process of developing a transitional housing project (it's now fallen apart). Had I known all that at the beginning my documentary would have been very different. It would have really been quite angry, but it's not.

There is a scene in the movie where you and your homeless friend Nick show up at a posh charity fundraiser and insist on valet parking for his shopping cart. What inspired that?

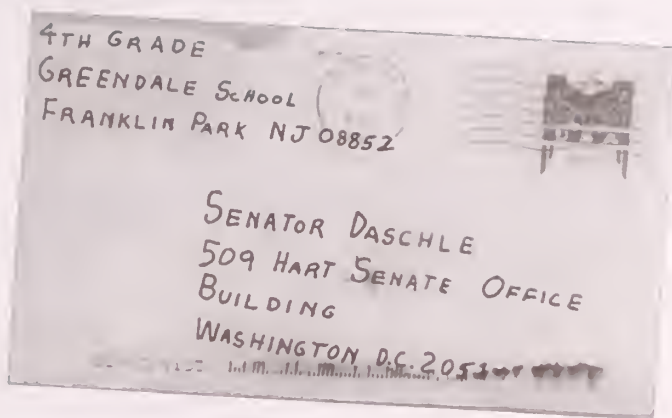
It was just so funny — the white limos turning up, then the trolley. It was fun. It wasn't nasty. You can point fingers and be cynical in a documentary. I didn't want to do that because there are a lot of people out there helping.

When I started making the film, I realized that no one actually gave a damn. You say you're making a film about homelessness and their eyes would sort of glaze over and they'd want to change the subject because they weren't really interested. When I started talking about trolleys, then people started saying, "Oh, what's this about?" It's ridiculous. It's all absurdity. The whole film is absurd; the whole situation is absurd. The valet parking scene is one of those things that shows how absurd it is.

If you can make a documentary on a social issue that you know is only going to appeal to a small market and make it entertaining, then people will watch it. They'll be so entertained that they won't realize they are actually watching something quite serious. I think that's an advantage because people are so easily bored. ☆

Trolleywood is scheduled to screen at a Los Angeles fundraiser sometime near Thanksgiving and then may open in limited release.

Irene Svete is a former newspaper reporter living in Seattle. Her stories and essays have appeared in Gargoyle, Bricolage and The Sun.



G7 WELCOMING COMMITTEE MAILORDER.

FOR WHEN IT ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY HAS TO GET THERE.



Greg MacPherson
Maintenance EP



Clann Zú
Black Coats and
Bandages CD



GFK
If Liberty Isn't Given,
It Should Be Taken CD



Submission Hold
What Holds Back the
Elephant CD/LP

Order online at g7welcomingcommittee.com

Uncooperative since 1997.



Records & Stuff We Sell:

- 146. MEDICATIONS** 5-song EP **CD ONLY** (F)
- 145. BLACK EYES 'Cough' (gatefold sleeve LP) (B)
- 144. THE WARMERS 'Wanted, More' **CD ONLY** (F)
- 143. Q AND NOT U** 'Power' (B)
- 142. ANTELOPE 'Crowns/The Flock' **CD ONLY** (A)
- 139. BEAUTY PILL 'The Unsustainable Lifestyle' **CD ONLY** (B)
- 137. LUNGFISH 'Love is Love' (B)
- 134. EL GUAPU 'Fake French' (B)
- 130. FUGAZI 'The Argument' (B)
- 125. 20th BOX SET 3 CD Set: 134-page book, 73 songs (21 unreleased) (E)
- 97. LUNGFISH 'Sound in Time' CD remaster (B)
- 27. MINOR THREAT Now on DVD - 3 Live Shows: DC Space, Buff Hall, 9:30 Club (D)
- 14. DISCHORD 1981 Teen Idles, Minor Threat, SOA, GI's Youth Brigade **CD ONLY** (B)

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

	U.S.A.	SURFACE & CANADA	Airmail
(A) 7" / C D single	4.00	5.00	7.00
(B) LP / C D	10.00	11.00	14.00
(C) Maxi CD	12.00	13.00	15.00
(D) Video / DVD	18.00	20.00	23.00
(E) Box Set	25.00	29.00	35.00
(F) EP	6.00	9.00	11.00

ORDERS: www.dischord.com (703) 351-7507 dischord@dischord.com
We accept most credit cards and, of course, real money.
Stores: Let's deal direct! direct@dischord.com or fax (703) 351-7582

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



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

MEDICATIONS

3819 BEECHER ST. N W, WASH., D.C. 20007-1802



B ooks ehind ars

Books to Prisoners Takes Down Walls Between Communities

The Portland Books to Prisoners collective has always been a proudly DIY — Do It Yourself — enterprise. And like many such projects in Portland, until very recently, it was almost exclusively a project of the white anarchist scene. Volunteers gather every Monday and Wednesday in the basement of an old house on the north side of town, which is the center of both the city's African American community and much of its anarchist/punk activity. Sorting through reams of letters from people in prisons around the nation, the Books to Prisoners volunteers examine their library of donated books to find the right ones for each prisoner.

The Portland Books to Prisoners project began several years ago as a spinoff of the Seattle Books to Prisoners/Left Bank Books program, which has been operating since 1979. Because of the high volume of mail the Seattle chapter was receiving — over 700 letters a month requesting books — Seattle Books to Prisoners needed help responding. Both Portland and Olympia chapters sprang up to fill the need.

The letters span the spectrum of humanity. Many of them are written in faulty English, some in calligraphy. Some are short and to the point, others pour out sagas of wrongful convictions and the pain of separation from friends and family. Most include some variation on the phrase, "Thank you so much for doing this."

Dictionaries and thesauruses are the most commonly requested items, but fiction, African American or Native American history, and feminist materials are also in strong demand. Along with each package of books, the Books to Prisoners volunteers ideally send copies of *Prison Legal News* and other materials relating to prisoners' rights and the prison reform movement.

words Abby Sewell photos courtesy Books to Prisoners

A State of Discrimination

In Oregon, as elsewhere, the majority of people who end up in prison come from poor or working class backgrounds. A disproportionate number of prisoners are people of color. Oregon is one of the whitest states in the nation, and the percentage of its African American population behind bars is even worse than the national average. According to a 2003 Human Rights Watch report entitled "Incarcerated America," in the year 2000, black people made up 12.3 percent of the national population and 43.7 percent of the prison population. In other words, the prison population for African Americans is 3.5 times the percentage of their general population. In Oregon, where black people account for only 1.6 percent of the state population, they make up 11.1 percent of the prison population or — 6.8 times what they should based on their general population. This means that people of color living in North and Northeast Portland are very likely to have a friend or family member in one of the state penitentiaries. But, until now, Portland Books to Prisoners was barred by bureaucratic red tape from getting materials in to prisoners who might come from their own neighborhood.

Each prison has its own rules about what type of materials prisoners can receive from the outside. In Oregon, all the state prisons forbid prisoners from receiving used books or anything that could have come in contact with the public. Books going in to the prisons must be new and come from a "recognized publisher." This rule, set up by the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) to prevent prisoners from receiving contraband, means that people on the outside can not send books to their loved ones behind bars unless they have the money to order new books for them. And Books to Prisoners, which relies on donations of used books, has been largely unable to reach prisoners in the Oregon prison system. The majority of books they send out currently go to California and Texas.

Prisoners' wages for the jobs they do while incarcerated are generally in the area of 10 or 15 cents an hour. Because they must pay market price for basic items such as toothpaste and phone cards, in addition to victim compensation and prison upkeep fees, prisoners rarely have money to buy books for themselves. And because of the ODOC ban on used books, their friends and family can not necessarily afford to send them reading materials.

Taking down Barriers

Joe Ball, one of the core organizers with Books to Prisoners, believes their inability to send books to prisoners from Portland has stopped a lot of local people from getting involved in the project.

"It's kind of difficult to bring somebody from the community into the basement of a white activist house, which could be an un-

comfortable environment, and ask them to send packages to Texas to somebody they've never met before," said Ball. "But when you bring locality into it, we see very clearly that we share a community and we share a goal."

For the last six months, the Books to Prisoners collective has been working with two local African American community leaders to set up a project that will allow them to get books to Oregon prisoners, while also opening the group to more participation from the communities in Portland where people's lives are most directly affected by the prison industrial complex. A Books to Prisoners splinter project, known as Books to Oregon Prisoners, has finally gotten "recognized publisher" status from ODOC via a local non-profit called Beloved Community Publishing and the Talking Drum bookstore.

Augustus Bell is the founder of the Beloved Community Journal, which is based on the philosophy of the "beloved community" developed by Martin Luther King, a philosophy which shares its roots with liberation theology and holds that people determine their relationship with God by their interactions with other human beings.

Bell explained, "Beloved community believes we have two alternatives: we will either come to terms with the ability for human intercourse to be peaceful or we're going to annihilate ourselves. There's not much in between. So the journal is a hopeful and optimistic diary of human activity, especially in this region, of people engaged in progressive change."

In addition to running Beloved Community, Bell works for a local organization engaged in prison reform issues. As part of the community outreach aspect of his job, Bell visited one of the Books to Prisoners mailing nights and became familiar with the work the collective was doing.

The Talking Drum bookstore and attached Reflections coffee shop is a community space that largely serves the African American population of Northeast Portland. When Talking Drum owner Gloria McMurtey was introduced to Books to Prisoners, she had been in the process of speaking to local ministers and community leaders about starting a similar project to get literature into Oregon prisons. Augustus Bell was aware of her interest in helping prisoners to educate themselves, and he was also aware that Books to Prisoners already had much of the infrastructure in place that would be necessary to carry the project out. From his point of view, bringing Books to Prisoners into the Talking Drum bookstore would be an avenue for getting the local African American community to take a more active role in supporting prisoners and working for prison reform. Aside from that, Bell saw the potential for the project to expand the perspective of both the bookstore owner and the Books to Prisoners anarchists.

"It was an opportunity for people from Books to Prisoners to meet with a black capitalist, a business person, and form a partnership, get diverse operations going and show that people can honor each other even though they have different value systems, and work together to be more humanitarian," Bell said.

In practical terms, now that Books to Oregon Prisoners has recognized publisher status under the umbrella of a non-profit organization, they can solicit tax-deductible donations of new books from various publishers. They have already received book donations from several independent publishing companies. The next step is to set up an online catalogue on the Talking Drum website and a computer in the bookstore, where people can peruse the selection of books and pick the ones they want to send. The only charge to the sender will be five dollars to cover shipping costs.

Politics and Education

According to the 2003 edition of *The Prison Index*, a yearly publication put out by the Western Prison Project and the Prison Policy Initiative, 43.1 percent of state prisoners did not have a high school diploma or GED in 1997, and only 23.4 percent of state prisoners had

participated in GED or high school programs while incarcerated. Prisoners are released without marketable job skills and usually without much political consciousness, although they are intimately familiar with many of the flaws in America's current system. For the Books to Prisoners organizers, sending literature to people who are written off by society is not merely an act of charity. It is a political act.

Joe Ball noted, "When we send a person a dictionary, they're not just going to sleep on it. You send a book into a prison, there's no telling how many people are going to read that. You send one copy of bell hooks or Malcom X or *Black Elk Speaks*, you have no idea how many times that's going to get read. And chances are good that in an environment of deprivation like that, something as rich and valuable as good literature or good non-fiction or good language materials — the value of those is not going to be lost."

All the people involved in Books to Oregon Prisoners hope the actions of the program will empower prisoners to act on their own behalf once they are freed. Perhaps some of the Oregon prisoners who receive books through the Books to Oregon Prisoners project will return to Portland and begin working on the project themselves.

But whether they become directly involved in the Books to Prisoners project, Augustus Bell hopes that seeing the work the project is doing, and having the opportunity to educate themselves while in prison, will inspire more members of the African American community to get involved in prison reform advocacy. Bell comes down hard on the African American wealthy and middle class, which he sees as having forgotten how difficult it was for them to get where they are.

"My parents were poor when I was a boy and evolved into the middle class," he said. "There's an idea that people can somehow behave themselves into success. Success takes more than behavior. It takes opportunity, breaks, people willing to empower you and help you."

The idea behind Books to Prisoners is to offer people an opportunity. From there, it is up to the prisoners what they do with it.

Bridging the Cultural Gap

When dealing with the criminal justice system, people of color are more likely than white people to be arrested for the same behaviors, and they often face harsher sentences for the same crimes. Political activists have often been targets of surveillance and harassment as well, though more so during some points in U.S. history than others. As the Bush administration used the PATRIOT Act and the War on Terror to roll back Americans' civil liberties after September 11, dissenters of all races began to see prison as a real possibility for themselves and their friends. However, joint organizing by activists from different racial and cultural groups has remained rare. White activists and people of color often live side by side without ever bridging the cultural gap that divides them.

Alix Shedd of the Books to Prisoners collective observed, "I feel like the biggest hurdle in the world, but mostly in this country, is the divisions between individuals and communities that are keeping us down. I feel like the rest of the world has really done a lot in the past ten years to bring those barriers down, but in this country we haven't."

Talking Drum owner Gloria McMurtey said she did not see the cultural differences between herself and the white Books to Prisoners activists as being a difficulty.

"Maybe I'm being real naive about it," she said, "But I don't see any of that as any type of a challenge, so to speak. You just take people where they are and let them get involved as they want to, but we know what we're doing. I think that we're working on this project and once it becomes known to other communities, whether they be African American, feminist or whatever, that if we all have a common goal, the work will get done." ☆

Abby Sewell is a freelance writer and works at a collectively owned cafe in Portland, OR. She can be reached at abbysewell@mindspring

Soft Porn and Mickey Mouse



a glimpse into Ghana's media landscape

words and photos Anja Tranovich

I was in Ghana, West Africa, when I spotted George Foreman's smiling face painted on the two by fours of a rickety fried rice stand. He was sporting a dark blue double-breasted suit, one arm and hand extended, thumb shot up in the air. Foreman's cameo appearance was to sell fufu, a favored Ghanaian dish of pounded yam and plantains. This is Kumasi, a mid-sized city in West Africa, and a place where American and Western images are co-opted and repainted with alarming regularity. Ghanaians are reinterpreting the imported imagery, integrating it into signs, advertisements, and the visual landscape of the city streets. In a place where tribal chiefs still rule, the anachronism of pervasive western imagery is juxtaposed against the reality of an impoverished African economy.

Kumasi is a dusty city. Goats and chickens saunter onto any road knowing that they trump cars for the right of way. There are probably few closets in the city holding a double-breasted suit like the one George Foreman wears in the sign. Instead, Ghanaians wear kente cloth, brightly colored hand woven fab-

ric, draped around the body—a centuries old tradition to cope with the sub-Saharan heat. Women passed the fufu stand carrying grass baskets of ripe mangos and plantains on their heads as they walked to the market.

The Kumasi streets are visually crowded, billboards of global and local images clamor on top of each other vying for the public's attention. The imported imagery is partially planted by Western corporations advertising international products in large standardized ads. But most signs are hand-painted by local Kumasi artists. The signs advertise local business, communication centers, and restaurants. Yet the subjects in the signs are overwhelmingly whiter and more Western than the Ghanaian pedestrians that pause to look at them.

And it's not just George. American models and Bill Clinton show up in signs. And Mickey Mouse is everywhere too. On a short 25-meter walk through town, at least six different depictions of Disney's rodent poster-boy filled the street: Mickey without cars, Mickey in neon colors, Mickey eating fufu.

Ghanaians are not passive recipients to the imported Western imagery. Instead they recreate and refashion the images, interpreting borrowed images in a culturally specific way. Originally western images are often repainted in a Ghanaian aesthetic: bright colors and elaborate textures are mixed with modern artistic notions of perspective, shading, and the techniques of glossy advertisements. What results is a visual reconciliation of cultural contradictions, an attempt to make local sense of an increasingly globalized world.

This refashioning can lead to a reclaiming of images. In an interview, shop owner Asi Kosu said that Mickey Mouse was a Ghanaian image, a cartoon often shown on Ghanaian TV. He saw Mickey as a particularly Ghanaian phenomenon, something foreign and unknown to Americans. Another shop owner, Charles Anwad, echoed Asi Kosu's interpretation. When asked if Mickey Mouse was created in America, he replied, "Oh no, Mickey is Ghanaian."

Mickey takes on a whole new significance in Ghana. In a survey of 148 adoles-

cents in Kumasi, 72 percent identified a picture of Mickey Mouse as "a toy." About one fifth of the students identified the image as an artist. One person identified the image as a Teletubbie. The Ghanaian adolescents overwhelmingly failed to identify Mickey Mouse as an American image. And they also failed to identify Mickey as Mickey.

Mickey Mouse imagery is prevalent in Ghana, but there is no corporate or media context mediating his image's interpretation to the public. Consequently, cultural interpretation fills the gap usually dictated by corporate mediation. Most of the Ghanaians surveyed said they related Mickey to drawing and roadside artists. Mickey was always painted by the local artists, so they believed he was their own local mascot.

Gilbert Amagatche, a Ghanaian Fulbright scholar living in Kumasi, says that Mickey's presence does not necessarily mean Americanization. Amagatche believes such clear defined boundaries of cultural ownership would reinforce the self/other distinction that bolstered colonial rule. "That Ghanaians see Mickey as Ghanaian means they accept him as part and parcel of modern Ghanaian culture," says Amagatche. "Many things, like spectacles [glasses], have been absorbed into modern Ghanaian culture." He concludes that looking at the origins of images and subsequent reformations of images in different locations aids in understanding how images get signified across cultures. But, Amagatche warns, assuming strict ownership of images negates the power of culture to reinterpret and reinvent imported imagery.

Tracing the Source

But how do other images, like George Foreman, travel across continents to surface repainted and re-appropriated in the West African street aesthetic? Why do roadside artists pick Western or global images over local images?

The term roadside artist refers to painters who paint on wood, metal, and other surfaces and sell the signs to local businesses. They create pictures of haircuts for a barbershop or a sign to advertise for restaurant. The roadside artists see artistic talent as the ability to create photo-real replications of image.

Because of this emphasis on realism, painters almost always use an image from a magazine or photo to make the signs and billboards so that detail and proportion can be exacted. So, the images that get repainted are determined by the available images in the print media. Hence the repainting of Mickey, a commonly available picture.

When the artists I interviewed shared the various images they work from, Gum-

ness ads, barbershop photos, church publications, magazines, and newspapers were brought out from the inside of desk drawers and underneath paint supplies. Stockpiles included an illustrated timeline from a Christian church in La Habra, California, several Scholastic kid's books, Nike shoe catalogs, the magazines *Pride of London*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Ebony*.

One master painter, Isaac Youach, recounted rather proudly that he gets images off of his computer. He had a version of Corel draw, in which you just type in the name of picture you want to see. When he typed in "woman," 12 images appeared in different graphic design styles. Only one of the twelve



Kumasi streetpainter using western images in signs for barbershops, restaurants, and shops

women was a person of color, and she had a Carmen Electra-like tan.

There is only one area in the city where roadside artists can buy glossy magazines that have images for their work. Fashion and entertainment magazines so prevalent in the West are hard to find in Kumasi where pricey publications are seen as superfluous to a public living on limited means. Out of 36 different choices at the magazine stand, only four were generated by African media. Eighty-nine percent of the available magazines were from Western media sources, which illustrates why the signs painted by roadside artists overwhelmingly depict Western icons and imagery.

The Mileage of Western Media

Out of all the magazines used by roadside painters to make their signs, only one is a Ghanaian magazine. However, even the images in *Akwaaba* (a pseudonym, to protect the magazine's editors) are disproportionately white and filled with the exaggerated signifiers of Western culture: suburban homes, diamond necklaces, and sports cars.

The May 2004 issue of this self-proclaimed "adults only magazine" showed a light skinned man in a Speedo with the caption "How to make love to your husband! Story Inside!!" The content of the magazine included dirty stories of the man X-Files characters and advice from a sextpert

The editor of *Akwaaba* says that the staff does not usually generate their own images. The cover image was originally in *Ebony* magazine. The images inside were from *Cosmopolitan*, the Internet, and the packaging of a condom. He said that his publication simply doesn't have enough money to produce its own images. The process of setting up a photo shoot can be very expensive, and lifting photos from other magazines and the web is very cheap.

Small local media in Ghana can't compete with the wealthy media conglomerates that print primarily for Western consumers. To stay in the market, small publications in Ghana have to do so on the Western media's terms, using Western photos and images. But these images don't cease after publication. They proliferate further into the local media, advertising, and cultural productions. The media in Ghana demonstrates the incredible mileage of Western media sources: printed in *Cosmopolitan* in New York, reprinted in a magazine in Accra, and then painted onto a sign in Kumasi.

The appropriation of Western images explains why the faces in Kumasi's street signs do not resemble people in the community. The models used in Western media are either white or African American and much lighter skinned than Ghanaians. The Diaspora comes full circle as images of African Americans are repainted in Ghana to show the latest hairstyles of a barbershop.

The practice of the Kumasi painters utilizing and reinterpreting Western images is an overt display of how distant, distinct communities are making local sense of an increasingly globalized world through visual imagery. A global image is coated with a local veneer by repainting it in their own medium. But this practice also attests to the fact that the globalized media doesn't include African imagery, and painters have little choice but to make do with the Western options at hand.

Stephen Duncombe, a media professor at New York University and editor of a recent book on cultural resistance, says it's unclear who is winning in this global semiotic exchange. "On the one hand you have local artists and merchants appropriating the power of Western consumer icons for their own use, effectively hijacking the value of hard fought copyrighted images. On the other, no matter what its use, multi-nationals benefit by having their symbolic property made the standard of desire." ★

Anja Tromovich conducted academic research with the University of Ghana in Kumasi. She can be reached in care of Clamor.



Alternative to What?

Venezuela's "alternative" media leaves something to be desired — independence.

by José Orozco

Before the 2000 Telecommunications Law, no legal framework for alternative media existed in Venezuela. What alternative media did exist operated clandestinely out of necessity. President Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution changed all that, with a platform and laws seeking to "democratize information."

While the Telecommunications Law finally made "alternative media" legal, the Code of Regulations encouraged the movement by producing a blueprint of what these media outlets would look like. The movement took off, as the National Association of Free Community Alternative Media (ANMCLA) has acknowledged, in the wake of the opposition's failed coup attempt in April, 2002, when pro-government alternative media hit the airwaves to demand Chavez's return.

Yet *New Left Review* editor Tariq Ali doesn't believe the law has been successful. On a recent trip to Caracas, Ali suggested that the alternative media movement is much too closely tied to the government to be truly independent. The law has led to a booming alternative media movement, but one so biased that, while it serves the revolution, it sets back the movement for an independent media. At the same time, an unprecedented debate about media issues in Venezuela offers hope.

Roots of the Media War

Chavez, a paratrooper turned leftist politician, has tried pitting Venezuela's poor majority against the middle class and has succeeded in aggravating those social divisions (though that shouldn't imply a simple poor-versus-rich political battle). But even the most rabid on either side of the political divide would like to see an independent media to defuse the media war that has pitted pro-government state media against corporate pro-opposition media and made fair reporting hard to come by.

The media war springs from the political war. Most alternative media — a slew of radio stations and a few TV stations — share the government's revolutionary platform, emphasizing social justice and social participation. As the Code of Regulations stipulates, community volunteers produce 70 percent of programming ranging from music programs to community news. Although the code officially prohibits promoting any political viewpoint, its very conditions pave the way for government-friendly alternative media. Just as there's a fine line between opinion and propaganda, so there's a blurry frontier between reporting on government programs and promoting the ideology behind them.

While Article 23 of the code protects everyone's access to alternative media, ANMCLA's statements demonstrate their fierce opposition to licenses being given to anyone who doesn't support Chavez's social revolution. While ANMCLA's members promote "inclusion," many practice exclusion. In response to the corporate media's bias, they respond with their own. ANMCLA doesn't speak for the government, but one could argue that the government speaks for ANMCLA. The reality of alternative media in Venezuela shows that it is as much a problem as a solution.

Community Media and the Revolution

In the impoverished Caracas neighborhood of Sarria, the walls of Negro Primero Free Radio, named after a black independence hero who died in the Battle of Carabobo, tell you just where the radio station stands. Split into a small studio whose walls are lined with egg cartons to absorb sound and a simple control room, the radio station is covered with pro-government posters. In the studio, station director Carlos Lugo is doing his morning news show with a red and white "Vote No" poster above him, referring to the pro-government choice in the Au-

gust referendum on Chavez's rule. Chavez won the referendum with 59 percent of the vote amid opposition allegations of electoral fraud.

Lugo talks with three women from Los Manolos, a local shantytown, who have come to complain about an abandoned vehicle in their neighborhood that has developed into a health hazard. Lugo wraps up the segment, saying "This complaint is for Angel Manriquez," the official allegedly responsible for neglecting the community's health hazard.

Using the airwaves to allege official irresponsibility is common practice at these alternative radio stations. As Lugo puts it, the station's purpose is precisely to support such community work. "We promote the community's values and strengthen its social movement, including [addressing] its needs and [creating a space] for these complaints." Conchita Chacon, a station contributor, adds that besides informing, the station tries to "improve the community's quality of life."

Poor people like Carmen Vielma, one of the women making the complaint, have always been able to register their dissatisfaction. But never before has a

government encouraged it, let alone given complainants access to the airwaves. Chavez's revolution has empowered many of the poor through its social programs, including alternative media.

This debt to Chavez's government expresses itself in allegiance to the revolution, although Lugo

emphasizes that the station maintains a critical stance. "Everyone has their political position, but we are not affiliated with any political party," he said. Besides Chavez's Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) party, a coalition of pro-Chavez parties make up his government. What Lugo suggests is that the station welcomes all pro-government positions, regardless of sectarian differences.

Many recent applications for broadcasting licenses have come from alternative media that lack community support, perhaps intending to milk the alternative media movement for money and influence. That's not the grassroots participatory democracy the revolution espouses, however. Negro Primero doesn't fit that profile. Lugo and company began planning Negro Primero before 1999 and took it to the air in early 2002. He and Chacon fiercely defend their independence.

"Some say that the government made us and put us here," said Chacon. "We're not government radio. We're a result of the organization efforts of people from the community."

According to Lugo, the considerable work in setting up Negro Primero took place when government support for alternative media hadn't gone much beyond words. Like the vast majority of alternative media, they started and have grown with little help from the government, although their long-term survival most likely will depend on government assistance.

Petare Community Radio (CRP), representing Venezuela's largest slum and home to about one million people, developed in similar grassroots fashion. According to General Coordinator Fermin Sandoval, CRP equipment is made up of loans and gifts. Like Negro Primero, they also hit the airwaves before the coup and managed to stay on through it to deliver the pro-government side of events.

CRP's mission reflects the revolutionary platform. Sandoval divides it into "[radio] training, [community] organization and citizen participation." As such, CRP is antithetical to everything the corporate media represents. "We aim to be an alternative to big media, which manipulate information and disinform," explained Sandoval. "It's a battle that needs to exist."

Everyone involved with the station, according to Sandoval, has a voice in CPR's programming decisions. He adds that CPR includes a few pro-opposition radio producers in keeping with Article 23 in the community media Code of Regulations.

Like Sandoval, Lugo juggles support for the revolution and claims of independence. He argues that "we defend the revolution, that's our position, and Chavez represents that process." By the same token, Sandoval claims that "Our position lies with the truth. One supports what Chavez does, but from a critical viewpoint. We don't praise him. We simply inform."

In covering community news, these stations largely deal with the

So far, alternative media have been functioning like most of the revolution's grassroots workers — for free. These stations find motivation in serving the revolution and exercising a little power. But how long can sheer revolutionary zeal carry these media outlets?



progress of government programs. On the day I visited Negro Primero, Lugo broadcast a community meeting he'd attended the day before, airing the allegations of official irresponsibility, and joined Chacon in praising the government. It was a short visit, but Lugo's position as director of the station suggests this is common practice at Negro Primero.

Alternative Media's Funding

Clearly, the alternative media's "truth" differs fundamentally from that of the corporate media. In both cases, like antagonists in a religious war, each party claims the holy truth. According to Marisol Polanco, Radio Coordinator at the nearly thirty-year-old Faith and Joy Radio-Phone Institute (IRFA), both the private media and the state media broadcast the version of the truth that promotes their interests. Rather than wedging an independent media between state and corporate media, alternative media just seem like smaller kin to the state's braced radio and TV stations.

Money plays no small part in this kinship. Last year, Chavez called for five billion bolivars, or about USD \$2.6 million, to be distributed among alternative media. The Cooperative Development Fund, administered by the National Telecommunications Commission (Conatel), unofficially rewards these alternative media for defending the revolution and consequently countering the influence of the pro-opposition corporate media.

Conatel claims that the several thousand dollars that a radio or TV station can receive for equipment represents a low-interest loan. Yet based on other government "loans" to street vendors in exchange for political support, one wonders whether these rewards aren't meant

as giveaways to pro-government alternative media and whether these media can even afford to pay back these loans.

Marilyn Quiñones, a Conatel lawyer, admitted that “generating income for [community media] is difficult.” Conatel encourages alternative media to seek advertising income, but a tiny bakery has little need to advertise when the whole neighborhood already shops there. So far, alternative media have been functioning like most of the revolution’s grassroots workers — for free. These stations find motivation in serving the revolution and exercising a little power. But how long can sheer revolutionary zeal carry these media outlets?

Curiously, the National Council on Culture (Conac) has contracted some community radio stations to produce public service announcements. The Conac contracts have helped the stations get by, while Conatel waits for the Ministry of Communication and Information (Minci) to deliver on its promise of donating broadcasting technology before evaluating how that affects what they do with the Co-operative Development Fund. Although licenses have been given at a brisk pace, financing mechanisms have been slow. By August, Conatel had only given away about 10 percent of the fund.

A True Alternative

As expected, the Democratic Coordinator (CD), the broad opposition alliance, steadfastly condemns the alternative media. Jesus Torrealba, a member of the CD’s Political Committee, says that the CD supports alternative media in principle, but that the reality clashes with their idea of what it should be.

“We support the idea, but we reject the way it has been distorted by the government,” said Torrealba. According to him, the CD considers most alternative media as government puppets more than media outlets. “They’re not community media. They simply serve as instruments of government propaganda.”

Torrealba acknowledges that the alternative media includes unbiased outlets, and that the corporate media suffers from bias. He sees the solution to the media war in making corporate media more socially responsible and making alternative media independent from their government

connections. Media expert Elizabeth Safar recommends creating a Venezuelan BBC, whose independence and quality could set an example for the rest of the polarized media.

The alternative media controversy reflects the larger clash between Chavez’s revolution and democracy itself. Although elected twice and reaffirmed by the referendum, Chavez’s military history makes him an uncomfortable democrat. His long-term goals require continuity, which democracy doesn’t allow. Democracy’s essence lies in negotiation, compromise and power sharing. Yet Chavez and his supporters have big plans that don’t allow for fundamental disagreements. As long as they keep winning elections, though, they can do whatever they want. That’s Bolivarian democracy. And as entrenchment sets in between the government and the opposition, truly independent voices are increasingly unlikely to get licensed and funded.

The grandfather of Venezuelan community radio, IRFA, grew out of the Catholic non-profit Faith and Joy’s social programs in im-

poverished areas. Its religious non-profit affiliation gave it privileged institutional status. Polanco defines IRFA as community radio in the philosophical sense, though legally they are institutional radio. But in tying social work into community radio, IRFA “is the same as the rest of community radio,” said Polanco.

Officially nonpartisan, IRFA stands alone in the field of alternative media. That position has brought them respect and credibility, according to Polanco. On an invitation by CONATEL, IRFA advised them on the Telecommunications Law, has trained and worked with alternative media providers, and has brought a new community radio station under its umbrella.

Rather than offer opinion, IRFA “generates opinion,” said Roberto Ruiz, News Coordinator at IRFA. He explains that IRFA doesn’t avoid politics, instead addressing it through discussions of social issues, always with an eye to offering all sides and letting the listener make up his own mind. By giving space to different positions, IRFA offers a “clearer idea” on issues, added Ruiz.

Like its parent, IRFA receives substantial government support as well as corporate sponsorship. Yet its long history and established nonpartisan reputation put it above the fray in Venezuela’s media war. As a result, both sides of the political debate respect this strange creature.

Ruiz believes that IRFA’s position offers a third way and a true alternative in the media war. By following their example, he thinks that alternative media can achieve the independence they claim. “Without sounding pompous, I think we can provide an example about what media is about,” said Ruiz. “We can be a model [to follow].”

Venezuela’s alternative media movement isn’t as far along as the revolution’s health and education programs, but it’s beginning to be a voice for the people. For one, the programmers better reflect their

listeners’ background since they live in the same communities. These media also make community news reporters out of everyday people whose coverage of social programs encourages community organization.

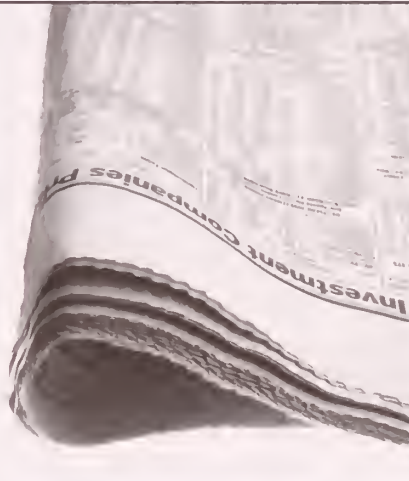
But while these media advocate for the poor, their main mission is to support the revolution. Promoting social justice in alternative media doesn’t lead directly to a better life for the poor. Until the Chavez administration overhauls cor-

rupt and inefficient bureaucracies, complaints don’t stand much of a chance of getting addressed.

Care must be taken not to confuse the poor with the revolution. The revolution serves the poor well sometimes, but it uses them, too. In exchange for giving the poor a voice, alternative media sell them propaganda. The government could turn things around, but they’re better off using the alternative media to promote the revolution. For that same reason, state media won’t go independent. As the media debate grows, however, media experts and veteran journalists could work to create an independent news outlet, which could be profitable as well. It’s not only a good idea, it’s necessary to stabilizing Venezuela’s political crisis. ☆

José Orozco is a freelance reporter in Caracas. Born to Mexican immigrant parents, he grew up in Chicago. You can reach him care of Clamor.

The alternative media controversy reflects the larger clash between Chavez’s revolution and democracy itself. Although elected twice and reaffirmed by the referendum, Chavez’s military history makes him an uncomfortable democrat.





still image adapted from *Scenes From a War in Progress*

Patrick Dillon

A Radical Filmmaker's Look At The War In Iraq

BY Robert Hirschfield

In *Scenes From a War in Progress*, Americans see what was missing from our TV screens since March of 2003: the U.S. devastating Baghdad during the first days and weeks of the war. There is a seven-year-old boy, swathed in bandages, whose leg was torn off by a cluster bomb. A ghostly man in a hospital gown holds up the stump of an arm. Contemplating a row of bombed-out buildings after the aerial attacks had stopped, HK Abbas, a Baghdad engineer, speaks to the camera. "They threw millions of bombs on us here. Children are petrified. Old people are still sick. The smell of death in the streets. The smell of burning buildings. For what? Freedom? You can keep your fucking freedom."

Independent New York filmmaker Patrick Dillon arrived in Iraq in February 2003, a month before the war began. He went "to witness the destruction of the cradle of civilization by Bush, Cheney, Powell, and Rumsfeld." No stranger to war, Dillon served as a

medic in Vietnam until the Nixon Christmas bombing of Hanoi made him quit his post in protest.

While making the film, Dillon earned the distinction of being thrown into the infamous Abu Ghraib Prison both by Saddam's police, and later, by the American occupation forces. The Iraqis arrested him in March, on the third day of the bombing of Baghdad. He had gone out to film without an Iraqi government minder, in keeping with his lone wolf style of filmmaking. After an interrogation, Dillon was slapped with an order of expulsion. En-route to Jordan, he was arrested a second time for filming without permission, and sent back to Abu Ghraib in the middle of a U.S. bombing raid.

"A missile of some kind hit the building. The anti-aircraft batteries were all around it, and they were firing up into the sky, I was scared shit. I think it was an errant Iraqi anti-aircraft trajectory that hit the building and blew out the window and the lights. It was

pitch dark. People were yelling and screaming. I climbed out the window."

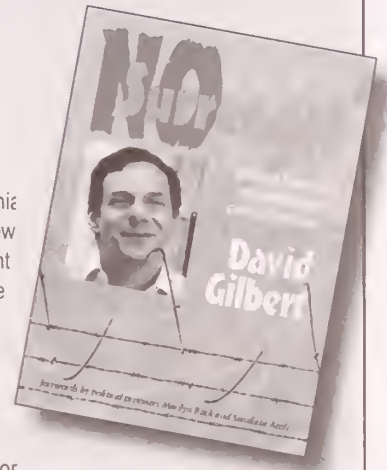
He was able, this time, to cross into Jordan with 26 hours of footage hidden in the false bottom of his backpack. Expelled for a second time by the Americans in June 2003, Dillon smuggled out an additional 30 hours of film.

New Yorker correspondent Jon Lee Anderson, to whom Dillon gave his copy of Conrad's *Heart Of Darkness* during the bombing of Baghdad, wrote in a May 31, 2003 article: "I liked Dillon, but I worried about him. I saw him quite often as I drove around the streets near the Al Fanar hotel. He would be striding purposefully along the sidewalk, and he was always alone." According to Anderson, Dillon always made a point of distancing himself from the "pack-journalist hordes, the flak-jacketed, heavily equipped media tumors."

Dillon's life and work (and their seemingly pathological involvement with danger and death) have played out in various politi-

**No Surrender:
Writings from an
Anti-Imperialist Political Prisoner**

David Gilbert
Abraham Guillen Press, 2004



I first saw David Gilbert's face in Philadelphia at a book release/panel discussion for his new book. I have done work for a number of different political prisoners, and I vaguely knew he had worked with the Weather Underground, a group of white radicals responsible for over 20 bombings in the 1970s (and the subject of a new documentary *The Weather Underground*). I later learned that he was imprisoned for supporting an expropriator armored bank truck robbery) in support of the Black Liberation Army.

At the book release, we played audio recordings of him reading his essays, including a hilarious one detailing how he got beat up by a grape, which spoke to issues of masculinity in prison, and society. I knew I liked him right away, because any white man who doesn't take himself seriously has hope.

The more I have learned about David Gilbert, the more I have grown to respect his political analysis, commitment, humility and humanity. His book *No Surrender: Writings from an Anti-Imperialist Political Prisoner* captures that energy in a collection of essays, book reviews, poems and heart-warming children's stories.

Gilbert consistently keeps the issues of the most oppressed at the center, while not appropriating the voices of people of color, as so many political white writers do. He knows he's a straight white middle class man, and so he talks to white people about white supremacy, men about sexism, Jews about Palestine. I find it sad and slightly disturbing that more young white activists don't know who Gilbert is, and aren't having the discussions of privilege that Gilbert insists on over and over again.

The book is comprised mostly of book reviews. At first I was skeptical. I had visions of school reports, but Gilbert utilizes the review format as an entry point to talk about current political issues, tease out deeper meanings and begin a dialogue. The international perspective is persistent; he truly connects Guatemala, East Timor, Rwanda and Chiapas together in a tangible way. I found myself taking notes on different books I was interested in, and paying close attention to Gilbert's critiques and criticisms.

For none of his writing is without critique. On reading his first book review (of one of black feminist scholar bell hooks' books), I thought to myself, "Where does this white man get off talking about bell's analysis of race, gender and class?" But through the course of the book, I came to realize that was just David. His mind is always searching out inconsistencies and oversights, while still respecting the positive work being done, without pretense or pomp.

He lets no one off the hook, especially not himself. He has some reflections on the political work he did against the Vietnam War, with Students for a Democratic Society and the Weather Underground. He brings the same clear mind tinged with love and understanding. He is, if anything, more strident in his criticisms of himself.

Through Gilbert's book, a picture of a man, and a world, appears. It is fractured and fragmented, because we live in global crisis. But it shines light on struggles for dignity, justice and freedom. "We face an extremely difficult period, without much prospect for exhilaration of quick successes," he writes. "But we don't have the luxury of despair and defeatism — that only hands an easy victory to the oppressors ... Principled resistance not only puts us in touch with our own humanity but also keeps hope and vision alive — like spring sunshine and rain — for when new possibilities sprout through the once-frozen ground."

No Surrender not only left me with new knowledge; it gave me some hope, and in these times, that's a precious commodity.

-Walidah Imarisha

cal theatres. In 1993, he ran a feeding center in Somalia for Concern Worldwide of Ireland. "There was a drought combined with a civil war against a dictator who was installed by the United States to guard the Gulf of Hormuz. It was about oil. The experience couldn't help but make me even more of a revolutionary."

In 1994, he went with Pastors for Peace to Cuba, on a mission that brought over 250 tons of pediatric medicine, food, and computer equipment. A year later, after the Oklahoma City bombing in April, he infiltrated The Patriot Movement, a right wing militia group, and wrote an expose for the *Village Voice*. In 1999, he was off to the Balkans to shoot a documentary on ethnic cleansing in Serbia, Croatia, and Kosovo.

Iraq was the next step along this continuum. In *Scenes From A War In Progress*, Dillon grabs the viewer with a focus on Iraqi civilian casualties. At the time he was filming, Dillon estimated five to ten thousand civilian deaths. The current count is at more than 13,000 dead, a figure the corporate media glosses over or ignores outright.

The film captures the surreal quality of normal activities grafted on to Baghdad's anarchy. Boatmen oaring their long crafts into the stillness of the Tigris. A woman hoisting a red water jug by rope up the steep façade of a housing complex. Young girls on tiptoes in a ballet glass.

Tucked away in the final third of the film is the mother of all conspiracy theories. Its author, a former officer in the Republican Guard whose identity is concealed, tells this story: On April 9, 2003, the Americans declared a two-hour cease-fire in the battle for the Baghdad Airport. On the tarmac stood a newly arrived C130 military transport plane. A flotilla of Mercedes limousines, their windows darkened, drove across the tarmac and onto the lowered tail ramp of the C130. Inside the vehicles, according to the officer, were Saddam Hussein and his entourage. The party was flown out of Baghdad by the CIA.

One is grateful for the C130 theory. It is a distraction from the rubble, from the war-numbered women, from the little children with the big wounds.

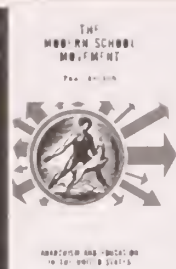
The heroes of Dillon's film are the members of the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra's home, Al Rashid Symphony Hall, was destroyed in the bombing. But we see its members rehearsing their pieces with undaunted intensity. First cellist Nabil Abd Al Salaam, presents first chair violinist Majid Al-Ghazali with the rose-colored violin he just finished making from a Stradivarius instruction manual. An auspicious birth in their city of death.

Scenes From a War in Progress has not yet been released to theaters. Parts of the film have been screened for CNN and the Cambridge Multi-Cultural Arts Center. Dillon plans to submit the film to the Sundance, Berlin, and Toronto Film Festivals. He hopes to find distributors and get the film shown soon at the growing number of movie theatres receptive to radical documentaries. ☆

Robert Hirschfield is a New York-based free-lance writer who writes frequently on human rights and foreign affairs issues.

MENTION THIS AD AND
GET 10% OFF
YOUR ENTIRE ORDER!
WWW.AKPRESS.ORG

AK PRESS



THE MODERN SCHOOL MOVEMENT ANARCHISM & EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES BY PAUL AVRICH

Modern Schools sought to abolish all forms of authority, and to usher in a new society. Between 1910 and 1960 anarchists established more than twenty schools where children might study in an atmosphere of freedom and self-reliance in contrast to the discipline of the traditional classroom. Participants included Emma Goldman, Margaret Sanger, Alexander Berkman, and Man Ray.

"Believers in anarchism, along with those willing to probe beyond the rote disciplines of the creed as a violent tumult, have a rare intellectual feast in Avrich's work." —*Washington Post*

\$21.95 | 400 p. | 1-904589-09-7

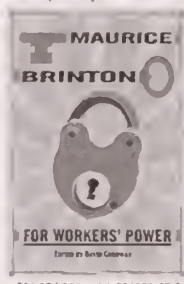


THE TROUBLE WITH MUSIC BY MAT CALLAHAN

"As a member of the Looters and one of the founders of Komotion, Mat Callahan has inspired many of us who have been both musicians and activists. *The Trouble With Music*, raises fundamental questions about the role music can play in our troubled world and the struggle each of us go through to bring about change. This book is must reading for music lovers and makers alike." —Michael Franti, *Speakhead*

"Making music is a process as old as the human species, which means that if the music's in trouble it's because humanity as a whole is in trouble. *The Trouble with Music* speaks to those troubles and it maps a way out. It's invaluable." —Dave Marsh, *Rock & Rap Confidential*

\$15 | 212 p. | 1-904859-14-3



FOR WORKERS' POWER MAURICE BRINTON

"What a great book. Maurice Brinton is one of the clearest voices of self-management activism and revolution. His work is not only historically relevant and informative—it is up to the minute, insightful and provocative. I can't recommend reading him too highly, and it is hard to conceive of anyone doing a better job than Goodway and AK Press at bringing Brinton's politics and whole milieu back into prime focus. Brinton had a big effect on me, years back, and I never saw half the materials presented here. Brinton was a major contributor to the past half-century's activism and sums many of its lessons most brilliantly. To ignore him is to practice self-denial. Don't do it." —Michael Albert

\$21.95 | 384 p. | 1-904859-07-0



FREE WOMEN OF SPAIN: ANARCHISM & THE STRUGGLE FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN BY MARTHA A. ACKELSBERG

Cowards don't make history, and the women of *Mujeres Libres* were no cowards. In the midst of the Spanish Revolution, they fought for women's rights within the left organizations of their time (CNT, FAI, and FJL), while staying off fascism and working towards liberation for all. This book contains stories of the heady possibilities of revolution and is filled with lessons that will resonate with anyone involved in the social movements of today. It is a call for community, especially amongst women; and it is a call for equality, not after the revolution—but now. The voices of *Mujeres Libres* have survived over time on the pages of Martha Ackelsberg's inspiring document of their struggle.

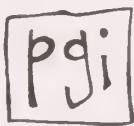
\$20 | 293 p. | 1-902593-86-0



TO ORDER
INDIVIDUALS CALL: 510.209.1700 OR VISIT WWW.AKPRESS.ORG
5740 23RD ST. OAKLAND, CA 94612 USA
WHOLESALE CALL: 800.283.3572 — DISTRIBUTED BY CONSORTIUM BOOK SALES & DISTRIBUTION
REVIEW COPIES FAX: 510.209.1701

RADICAL RESOURCES

BOOKS, T-SHIRTS,
ZINES, PAMPHLETS,
CDS, VIDEOS.. ETC



premiere
generation
ink.

poetry art revolution

"One of the most ambitious and dependable local lit zines and scenes."

—*Isthmus*, Madison, WI

#7 44 pp., handmade cover.
Featuring Naomi Klein,
alix olsen and more.

40 pp., letterpress covers
by six different artists **#6**
Feat. Martin Espada.

#5 52 pp., letterpress cover
Feat. Ruth Stone and
Guy Picciotto of fugazi.

all issues \$5 pp from:
premiere generation ink.

po box 2056 madison, wi 53701

view catalog and more online at:

www.pgink.com

Divergent Books

independent books for independent minds

INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHED
BOOKS THAT PROMOTE
ACTIVISM AND CONSCIOUS
THOUGHT



WWW.DIVERGENTBOOKS.COM

WHY ARE 500,000 SOLDIERS AFRAID OF THIS WOMAN?

If you were Burma's military regime, you would be too.

Aung San Suu Kyi is one of the world's most famous advocates of nonviolence and the world's only incarcerated Nobel Peace Prize recipient. Known to many as "Burma's Nelson Mandela," she leads an epic struggle for freedom in the Southeast Asian country of Burma. Ruled by a brutal military regime comprised of 500,000 soldiers, Burma is among the world's most repressed countries.

Called "The Lady" by the Burmese people, she is more than just an activist — she is their chosen leader. In Burma's last democratic election, her political party won 82% of the seats in parliament. The regime annulled the results, and Aung San Suu Kyi has been locked up



for most of the past 15 years.

That's why Paul McCartney, Pearl Jam, Sting, Ani DiFranco, R.E.M., Bonnie Raitt, U2, Eric Clapton, Peter Dinklage, Coldplay, Avril Lavigne, Mana, matchbox twenty, Damien Rice, Indigo Girls, Mium Aung, Travis, Better Than Ezra, Talib Kweli, Lili Havn, The Nightwatchman, Guster, Ben Harper, Hour Cast, Rebecca Faria, Bright Eyes and Natalie Merchant are joining together to demand her release, each donating a song to a new 2 CD set, *For the Lady*. Sales of *For the Lady* benefit the U.S. Campaign for Burma's international campaigns to bring pressure on the military regime. Help free "The Lady" and all 50 million people of Burma by purchasing your copy today.



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO ORDER FOR THE LADY PLEASE VISIT WWW.US.CAMPAIGNFORBURMA.ORG





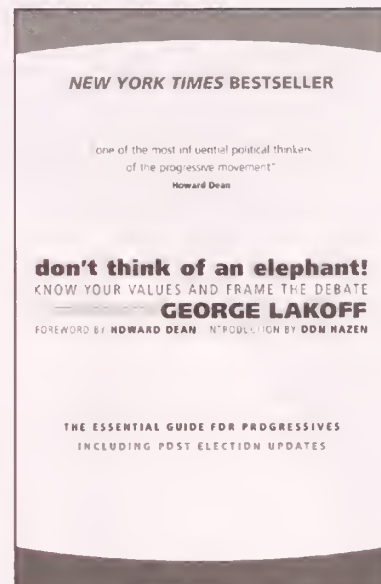
Don't Think of an Elephant
Know Your Values and Frame the Debate
 George Lakoff | \$10

"Read this book and be part of transforming our political dialogue to support our highest ideals and speak to the hearts of Americans."

Joan Blades and Wes Boyd,
 MoveOn.org

"I don't think I've ever said, 'You have to get this book.' But there's always a first time for everything. Lakoff's findings will help rescue the Democratic party from itself. If there's one book you read this year, it should be this one."

Markos Moulitsas, DailyKos.com



"Ever wonder how the radical right has been able to convince average Americans to repeatedly vote against their own interests? It's the framing, stupid! *Don't Think of an Elephant!* is a pithy and powerful primer on the language of American politics."

Arianna Huffington



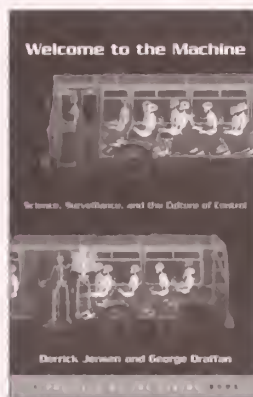
A Language Older Than Words
 Derrick Jensen | \$20

This chronicle of a young man's drive to transcend domestic abuse offers a challenging look at our worldwide sense of community and how we can make things better.



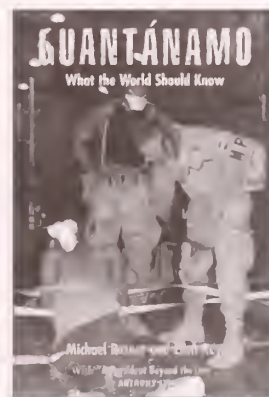
The Culture of Make Believe
 Derrick Jensen | \$25

What begins as an exploration of the lines of thought and experience that run between the massive lynchings in early twentieth-century America to today's death squads in South America soon explodes into an examination of the very heart of our civilization.



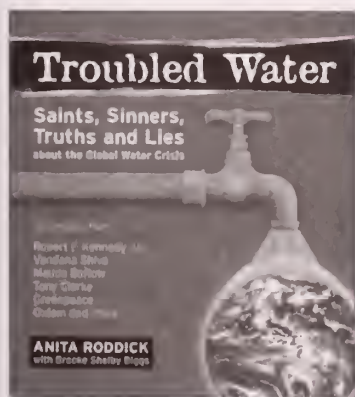
Welcome to the Machine
Science, Surveillance, and the Culture of Control
 Derrick Jensen and George Duffin | \$18

The authors reveal the modern culture of the machine, where corporate might makes technology right, government money feeds the greed for mad science, and absolute surveillance leads to absolute control.



Guantánamo
What the World Should Know
 Michael Ratner and Ellen Ray | \$15

Guantánamo teams prominent international human rights lawyer Michael Ratner with political journalist Ellen Ray to reveal the truth about the U.S. military prison camps in Cuba.



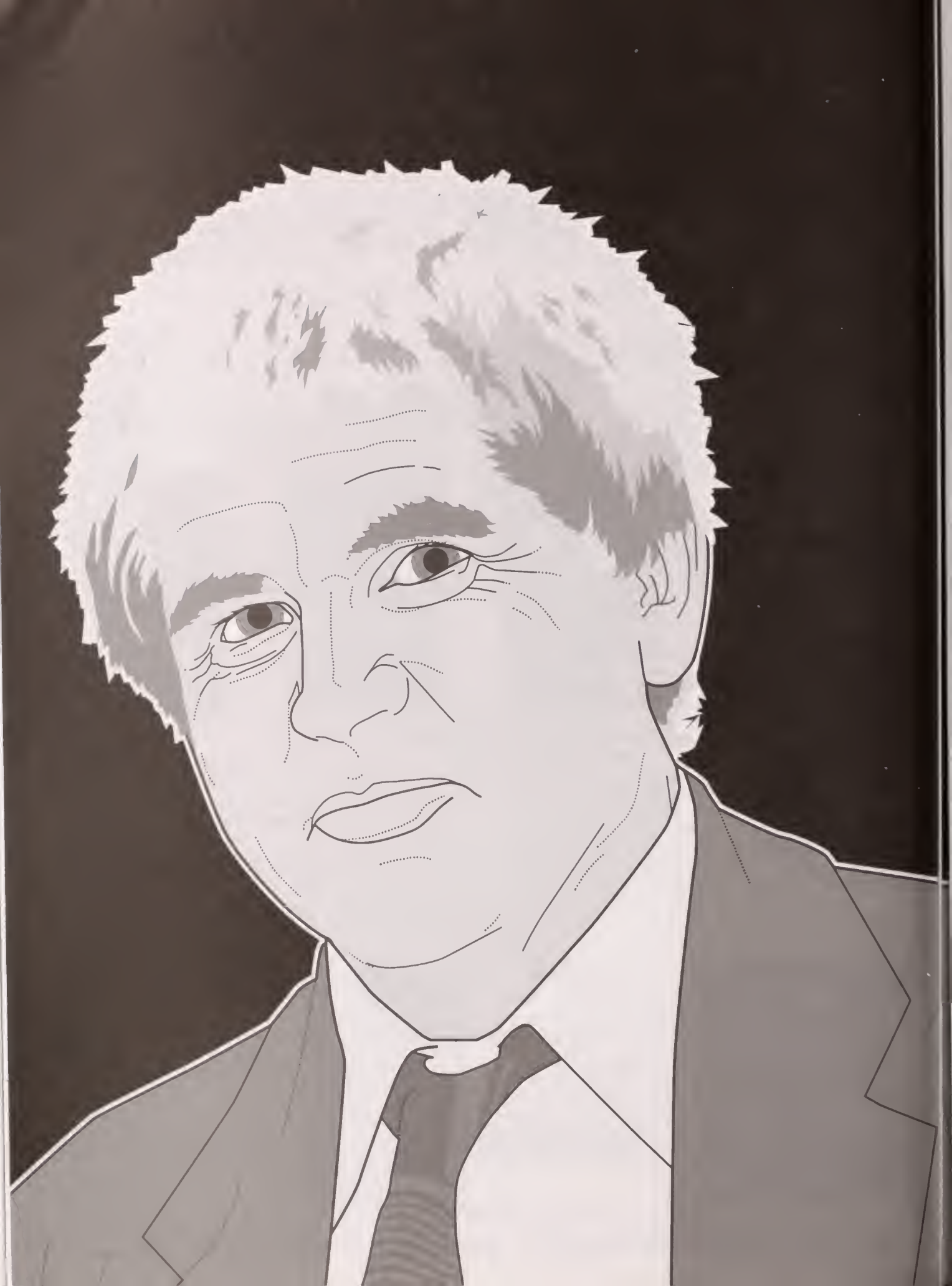
Troubled Water
Saints, Sinners, Truths and Lies About the Global Water Crisis
 Anita Roddick with Brooke Shelby Biggs | \$17.95

This book explores humanity's struggles for, against, and with water and the convoluted and potentially catastrophic nature of our relationship with this seeming innocuous, ubiquitous substance.



Biodiesel
Growing a New Energy Economy
 Greg Pahl | \$18

The world, quite simply, is running out of oil. We need a solution now, one that will pave the way to a saner, more sustainable energy future without massive reinvestments in infrastructure and technology transfer. We need Biodiesel.



Reluctant Prophet

words Jim Straub

illustration Dustin Amery Hostetler

Historian Mike Davis is one of America's best known social critics — a position he does not exactly relish. He once favorably compared his first job, as a meat cutter, to his current position as a tenured professor at the University of California-Irvine. "Being a butcher was skilled and socially useful labor — unlike so much of academia," he said. Davis first gained notoriety when his book about Los Angeles, *City of Quartz*, predicted riots and unrest in the city's near future. When the Rodney King riots broke out barely a year later, Davis became a left-wing prophet of urban American catastrophe — an image stoked by his next book (*Ecology of Fear*), a political history of disaster in Los Angeles.

Since then, Davis has broadened his range. His published work includes books about everything from San Diego and Las Vegas to famines caused by imperialism and drought in the 19th-century Third World. Recently, Davis expanded his portfolio even further, writing a trilogy of young adult books about a team of young scientists who get embroiled in political adventures — co-written with Davis' young son, and edited by peace activist Viggo Mortensen (better known as Aragorn in the *Lord of the Rings*). Next year, back in Davis' original field of radical urban studies, Verso will publish his book *Planet of Slums* — an investigation of the global rise of slum-cities in the Third World that sees Davis studying Islamic civil society in the Middle East, street gangs and religious populists in Africa and Asia, and Pentecostal Christianity and radical leftists in Latin America.

So how did a meat-cutter from San Diego come to write radical adventures about young scientists with King Aragorn as an editor? Davis attributes his life's course to being politicized by the civil rights movement in the Sixties. After that, he worked as an organizer for Students for a Democratic Society and the Communist Party, as a Teamster trucker and tour bus driver, and eventually as an editor at New Left Review and Verso books. This background, as a working-class southern Californian and committed radical, has given him the drive to study and publish so broadly — and has also fueled his critics. Davis has gained a small army of conservative fact-checkers who comb his books' thousands of footnotes searching for errors to justify their red-baiting. For his part, Davis proudly admits, "I am a socialist in the same sense that Billy Graham is a Baptist." A willingness to continue championing radical causes unfashionable in Patriot Act-era America has brought him to his current project: researching the history of left-wing terrorism in the century stretching from the 1870s to 1970s.

Mike Davis: *Heroes of Hell* is a history of revolutionary terrorism from the 1870s to the 1970s, covering groups ranging from the Peoples' Will in Russia to the Tupamaros of Uruguay in the '70s. I anticipate that the sympathies of this book (toward those who killed tyrants and exploiters, not innocents) will probably violate the Patriot Act.

Ever since the broken glass in the streets of Seattle during the 1999 protests against the WTO, there has been a series of debates about things like property destruction in the global justice movement. What were the debates about violence in radical movements of the past?

Well I don't know I'd call trashing a McDonalds "revolutionary violence," first off. But to look at the past: Setting aside the ultimate questions of insurrection and protracted armed struggle, the classical debates about revolutionary violence concerned three major issues: self-defense, retaliation and the catalytic or instigatory deed.

To take self-defense first. Except perhaps in England, strikers and protestors everywhere faced universal police and employer violence, and all factions of the Left and the working-class public routinely supported the right of self-defense in the extreme. Industrial unionism only triumphed in the 1930s because it was able to come up with a tactic that neutralized employer violence: the sit-down strike and the potential destruction of the bosses' property. Sometimes, however, as during the Minneapolis General Strike of 1934 [when a truck drivers' strike faced such employer opposition that only a general strike and serious street-fighting was able to secure the workers' union rights] the issue had to be settled militarily in the streets. It was also essential, of course, that there were pro-labor governors in the state houses in Michigan and Minnesota who, in the last instance, refused the bosses' pleas to give the National Guard the order to fire. Otherwise we would be talking today about the great Flint and Minneapolis massacres.

The second issue of an "eye for an eye," however, split the Left and the labor movement. In the United States, acts like anarchist [Alexander] Berkman's shooting of Henry Frick [in return for Frick's killing of striking steelworkers] evoked sympathy. But a moral economy of revenge was almost always impractical and suicidal. The IWW, which owed nothing to bourgeois morality, strictly eschewed terrorism, although, when pushed to the wall, like [union organizer] Wesley Everest during the [1919] siege of the Centralia, Washington IWW headquarters, they shot back (in his case with deadly accuracy).

The third case concerns the classic "propaganda of the deed": the advocacy of heroic, usually suicidal attacks on the very summits of power, in belief that either the repressive state could be broken by the decimation of its cadre, or, more commonly, that such acts would inspire the masses to insurrection. The greatest revolutionary terrorists, of course, were the Peoples' Will and their descendants, the Military

Organization of the Russian Social Revolutionary Party. Very rarely injuring innocents or bystanders, they attacked the czarist state with extraordinary courage and constant ingenuity: assassinating (if I recall correctly) a czar, a crown prince, two prime ministers and scores of generals, police chiefs and ministers. They practiced mass-production terrorism.

Their most formidable critic on the Left was Trotsky. He attacked the SRs, not on moral grounds (who could feel sorry for the butchers of the people?), but for their substitution of the individual heroic act for the self-activity of the working class. He was extremely skeptical of revolutionary strategies that envision heroic small-group actions as "motors" for uprisings, as attempts to short-circuit the arduous work of mass organization. At the same time, he considered "working class anger" to be a noble and essentially creative force.

What are your own personal feelings, on the debates about violence and protest today?

My position will undoubtedly anger all sides. Of course I believe in property destruction, theft and (counter-) violence: in some circumstances and as mass actions. The hungry have the right to loot supermarkets. Strikers and demonstrators have a right to defend themselves. If the teacher slaps you, slap him back. At times, if insufficient to protest the power, you must actually fight it. And so on.

But some of what now calls itself the "black bloc" or "anarchism" is just a selfish gentrification of working-class anger. [IWW leader] Big Bill Haywood or [legendary Spanish anarchist Buenaventura] Durruti would scoff at such minor street theatrics. I've always hated the types, whatever their politics, who like to throw rocks from the back of a crowd, then let the mass of demonstrators take the charge. Or macho actors in balaclavas who disdain any democratic discipline. It is simply impermissible to hijack other peoples' protests or make them the involuntary targets for police retaliation.

At the same time, however, I resent overly-organized demonstrations without any dimension of spontaneity or free association, the kind of actions that are more like mass safety-values (or funerals) than authentic contestations. Or a protest politics that plays simply to the mass media and the sound bite, with no regard for the on-going organization of protestors or their involvement in the actual elaboration of policy and strategic direction.

Both "black bloc" types and movement bureaucrats have a similar contempt for protests as social processes with unpredictable grassroots dynamics. One fetishizes the "deed," the other "legality." One always wants to break through the fence, the other, never. Neither pays any attention to the actual mood or the expressed opinions of the mass of demonstrators.

So, smashing McDonald's may be good fun (and in some circumstances, a good tactic) but it isn't the same as smashing the state.



Give me a break. Our internationalist duty in 1969 was to go into the plants and schools and help organize rebellion, not blow up non-coms and post offices. The Weather Underground were a narcissistic, authoritarian cult, with contempt for ordinary people and ordinary leftists, who hallucinated on comic-book politics and the usual American quest for celebrity.



Fannie Lou Hamer

And it kills me today that young sincere radicals, who have never heard of real heroes like James Forman, Dave Dellinger, Nelson Peery, Carl Boggs, Fannie Lou Hamer or Hal Draper, believe that [Weathermen leaders] Mark Rudd or Bernadine Dorhn were somehow the very conscience of the Left in 1969.

Draper, believe that [Weathermen leaders] Mark Rudd or Bernadine Dorhn were somehow the very conscience of the Left in 1969.

I understand you've had firsthand experience with difficult issues of self-defense and violence, in your earlier career as Teamster trucker and bus driver

Well, yes. After driving trucks for a long time, I wanted to get a union scholarship and go to college. I decided I needed the time, discipline and luxury of school in order to learn to write — even composing a personal letter gave me problems then. So I switched jobs and started driving a tour bus in Los Angeles, with the idea that I'd work there for awhile, build up some seniority so I could work part-time while going to UCLA. That was the plan, but after I'd been there just a couple months a strike broke out and quickly got violent. I got in trouble supposedly for beating up one of the scabs who'd driven a bus through our picket line and hurt one of us. Things were going crazy, so next thing you know my co-workers called a secret union meeting and someone proposed we each put up 400 bucks and hire a mob hit man to kill the leader of the strikebreakers. I was totally against this. So I got up and made the best speech of my life, and was out-voted 40 to 1. In the end the hit men who were hired were arrested for drunk-driving while on their way to do the deed, and so we avoided charges of criminal conspiracy and I got to go to UCLA instead of prison.

What that all taught me is that ordinary American workers may often be conservative people, but when pushed against the wall and threatened with the loss of 20, 30 years of job seniority and violence from the boss, they will not hesitate to get violent, too. And there's a place for that. The issue is it has to be a strategic thing, not some kind of crazy thing like what we almost did. ☆

Jim Straub is an apprentice organizer with a union of hospital workers in the Rust Belt. And after the revolution, will finally learn to play that accordion. Reach him at jimstraub@riseup.net

or, for that matter, of organizing a movement. On the other hand, such infantilism is far less of a problem than the tendency of some leaders and coalitions to accede to the constantly tighter circumscription of protest by police and the homeland security state. If the right to protest is to survive, it must be aggressively asserted in all circumstances.

Wasn't Heroes of Hell originally planned to end in the '30s? What inspired you to extend your narrative to the most recent wave of worldwide revolutionary terrorism in the '60s and '70s? As an organizer with SDS back then, you must have had plenty of personal experience with Weathermen and others who went underground and declared war on the U.S. government as the Vietnam War ground on.

Originally I believed that there was little connection between "classical" revolutionary terrorism in its Mediterranean and Slavic incarnations, and the new urban guerrilla or terrorist groups of the 1970s. So I decided that *Heroes of Hell* should logically end with the Spanish Civil War and the failure of the Italian anarchists to assassinate Mussolini. Then I discovered that there were, in fact, decisive human and ideological linkages between the generation of Durutti and the first New Left urban guerrilla groups in Spain and Argentina.

And, yes, I have personal recollections of the Weathermen and similar types. In 1969 there were incredible opportunities on every hand to expand and deepen the social base of the anti-war and New Left movements. Wildcat strikes were breaking out across the country, the women's movement was exploding, high-school kids and gays were rebelling, GIs were fragging their officers, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers was setting Detroit on its ear. Yet at precisely this moment of maximum popular energy and Left opportunity, the Weather cadre decided to go underground.

After a few silly attempts to cajole blue-collar kids to support the Viet Cong, the Weather leaders (mostly scions of ruling-class families) decided the white working class was a lost cause and turned instead to orgies and bombs.

Recall the plot that ended prematurely with the tragic Townhouse explosion. Who were they planning to kill? Not General Westmoreland, the butcher of Saigon, but rather some enlisted men and their wives at a dance. The rest of the Left, according to them, were punks and cowards, because we preferred to organize against the war at union meetings rather than put on clever disguises and plant bombs. Were they "frustrated radicals"? Revolutionaries in an American desert with nothing left but their own desperation and a debt of solidarity to the Vietnamese?

Give me a break. Our internationalist duty in 1969 was to go into the plants and schools and help organize rebellion, not blow up non-coms and post offices. The Weather Underground were a narcissistic, authoritarian cult, with contempt for ordinary people and ordinary leftists, who hallucinated on comic-book politics and the usual American quest for celebrity. And it kills me today that young sincere radicals, who have never heard of real heroes like James Forman, Dave Dellinger, Nelson Peery, Carl Boggs, Fannie Lou Hamer or Hal



clamor
BORDERS
they divide the population

the revolution of everyday life ... delivered to your door

subscribe online at
www.clamormagazine.org
PO Box 20128 | Toledo, OH 43610
\$18 for 6 issues

There's No José Here

the *invisibility* of Latino immigrants

words Gabriel Thompson
map J.D. Pluecker

It happened over and over again:

"Hi, is José there?"
 "Uh, there's no José here."
 "Yes there is. Can you please ask someone if he's there now?"
 "Let me see...ummm...I'm pretty sure we don't have a José."
 "Do me a favor, just ask."
 "Fine." Getting agitated now. "Hold on a second."
 "Hello?"
 "Hola José, soy yo, Gabriel."
 "Oh, hola Gabriel. ¿Cómo estás?"

I met José, who asked that his last name not be used, through my job in Brooklyn as a tenant organizer. He has worked at a Manhattan company that produces low-end jewelry for eight years. Still, I was told repeatedly when I called that he wasn't there. I'd have to insist that whoever answered the phone inquire into the existence of a José in their shop. Eventually, they'd discover that — low and behold — a José did work at their company, and had in fact put in more than 24,000 irretrievable hours of his life there.

All day long, six days a week, José puts together pieces of jewelry, stringing

beads onto bracelets and necklaces. On Sunday, his one day off, he often can be found watching Cruz Azul, his favorite Mexican soccer team, or fishing with his family and friends off Rockaway Beach in Queens. Though his 58-hour work week should give him 18 hours of overtime, it doesn't end up that way. Instead, his employer pays him a flat \$350 each week, under the table. That works out to about \$5.15 an hour, the

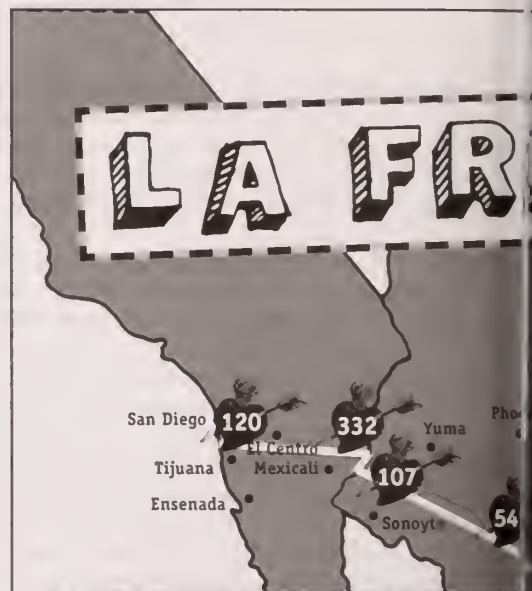


Jose at his workplace near Madison Square Garden, where he makes small pieces of low-end jewelry.

current minimum wage in New York City. His yearly income, which supports himself, his wife Esther, and his five-year-old daughter Diana, is about \$18,000. The minimum wage may be enough for a high-school student looking for some spending money — assuming a parent or two is around to cover everything else — but that's about it. Somehow, though, José and his family have learned to make it work, in one of the most expensive cities in our country. When times are good, they even send money to relatives in their hometown of Atlixco, about 90 miles southeast of Mexico City.

When José first heard about Bush's guest worker program on Spanish television, he was optimistic about the possibility of finally becoming a legal resident. But when he brought in some information about the program to his boss, the boss became angry. "He told me, of course you can't be in this program," José said. "We're not telling anyone that you're working here, so forget it. Just keep doing what you're doing." Though José has lived and worked in this country for more than a decade, he's become convinced that he'll never be able to become a legal resident.

"People seem to think that we're some sort of threat to this country," José said, reflecting on his situation. "On the contrary, every Mexican that I know is working all day, every day. We came here to work, and we're working hard. I



In the Imperial Valley of California and in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona, small groups are planting blue flags and stocking water for migrants. Led by Robin Hoover, a Tucson minister, and John Hunter, an Imperial Valley scientist, these groups are meeting basic needs by providing shade and fresh water (which is replenished regularly) to the thousands of migrants who will surely pass through the desert.

The White House website shows that the budget for border enforcement operations in 2004 was approximately \$6.3 billion, a 70 percent increase from the budget in 2001.

In 1998, the number of deaths per detentions was 1 to 5,812, according to Stopgatekeeper.org. By 2003, one person died for every 2,214 detained. As people shifted and started migrating through more dangerous areas, the number of deaths soared almost three-fold.



Number of border crossing deaths from 2000 through April 2004.

guess it's just difficult for some people to see that."

There are currently 9.3 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, with 57 percent coming from Mexico and 23 percent from Latin America, according to an Urban Institute estimate. Each morning, six million undocumented immigrants wake up and go to work, making up five percent of the total labor force.

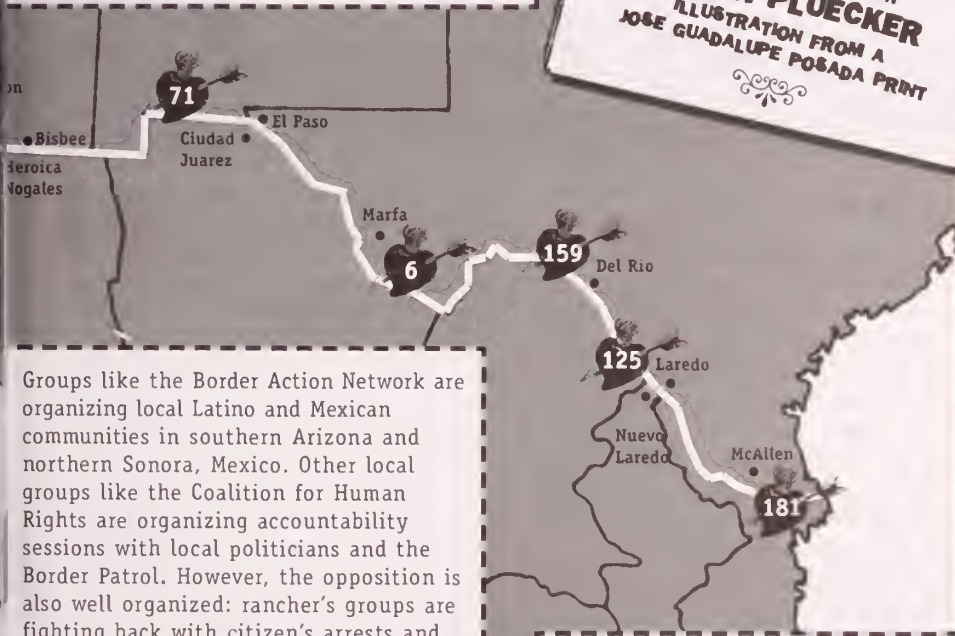
The work that they do is more dangerous, on average, than that of non-immigrants. In 2003, there were 519 Latino immigrants who died on the job, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. On average, Latinos — who tend to be concentrated in high-risk occupations like construction and agriculture — are twenty percent more likely to be killed while on the job than whites. They are also 60 percent more likely to suffer non-fatal

injuries than whites, which can include everything from back spasms and occupational illness to loss of limbs and eyesight.

Despite engaging in dangerous work, Latino immigrants receive little compensation; nearly half earn less than twice the minimum wage. At home, Latino immigrants regularly raise families in hazardous conditions. Housing and Urban Development estimates that one of three farm workers in the U.S. lives

FRONTERA

The Arizona desert around Tucson is by far the most lethal border area with 44.6 percent of deaths from the last four years in that short stretch. Arizona border deaths reached an all-time high this past fiscal year at 177, despite a drop in the national number of immigrant deaths.



Groups like the Border Action Network are organizing local Latino and Mexican communities in southern Arizona and northern Sonora, Mexico. Other local groups like the Coalition for Human Rights are organizing accountability sessions with local politicians and the Border Patrol. However, the opposition is also well organized: rancher's groups are fighting back with citizen's arrests and physical violence.

In a recent case, three women, Maria Guadalupe Gomez Patino, 37, her daughter Adriana Martinez Gomez, 16, and Carmen Bustamante Aguirre, 33, drowned recrossing the Rio Grande in September. Their two surviving companions claimed that members of the Border Patrol pelted them with rocks to force them back after spotting them hiding in the bushes. The Department of Homeland Security is investigating the claim.

For the last four years, people have rallied in a border-wide march against Operation Gatekeeper. Following the 9/11 attacks, the march, founded by the Southwest Network for Economic and Social Justice, started small. But each year it has gotten bigger, with cross-border marches this year in four locations across the line calling for an end to Gatekeeper and the economic policies that require people to leave their homes to earn a decent wage.

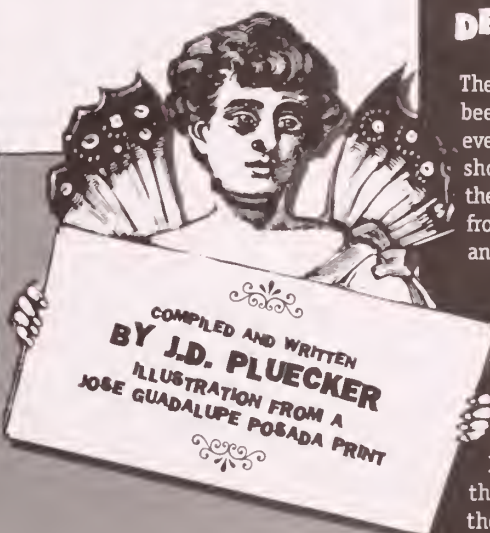
DEATH AT THE BORDER

The U.S. border with Mexico has always been a violent place, but it has gotten even deadlier as of late. Best estimates show that at least 300 people have lost their lives there every year since 1994 from exhaustion, drowning, heat, cold, and other reasons.

How did the United States get to this point? In 1994, the Clinton administration launched Operation Gatekeeper, spending billions to build barrier walls, add lighting, and beef up the Border Patrol across the entire length of the border, first around San Diego and then expanding out to other urban centers.

Gatekeeper concentrated efforts in these well-established, urban corridors to force people into the dangerous deserts, mountains, and scrubland. The rationale was that people would be so scared to cross these inhospitable areas that the numbers that decided to go north would fall dramatically. But this hasn't happened at all. Each year, about half a million cross the southern border. Since 9/11, anti-immigration groups have stepped up efforts to militarize the area.

In the last decade, Gatekeeper pushed millions of crossers (largely women and children) into days or weeks-long treks through merciless terrain like the Sonoran desert of eastern California and Arizona and the dangerous ranchlands of South Texas. Along the border, summertime temperatures regularly soar above 100 degrees. In mountainous areas, freezing temperatures can kill as well. Hundreds have drowned in canals and in the Rio Grande.



in moderate to severely substandard housing. Among farm workers, 52 percent live in overcrowded conditions — ten times the national average. One study found, not surprisingly, that immigrants are more likely to live in units with code violations, units that are unaffordable, and units that are overcrowded.

For workers like José, substandard housing is often as big an issue as low wages or poor benefits. Like José's employer, the landlord of his six-unit building in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, home to a large Mexican immigrant population, also can't seem to put any name to the family that lives in apartment 3-R. When it was discovered that José's home contained lead levels more than 400 times the federal safety threshold, I contacted the landlord and explained that he needed to take immediate action. It was slow going.

"Who is being the problem?" he asked me. "Who told this guy that he could do his own test for lead?"

"No one's being a problem," I replied.

"Who the hell are these people?" Without intention, the landlord's brusque question exhibits more enlightenment than most Americans bring to the situation of Latin American immigrants. We usually can't be bothered to wonder who these people are that fill our water glasses, clear our tables, trim our lawns, or clean our homes. They are there. They do their job. They somehow survive.

"There's lead in the apartment, and a small child. That's the problem. And our organization tested the home, which we have the right to do. Now it's your job to fix it."

"Fine, fine. I'll fix it. Which building?"

I gave him the address.

"Oh, *that* building. I don't know any of the tenants there. They're a bunch of Mexicans, right? I mean, you've seen how they live. Just very dirty. I can't control how they live in my buildings."

"Actually, you can. It's your job to make sure that there isn't any lead in there. So I'll fax you over the results, and then you need to get into José's apartment and fix it up. That's your responsibility."

"Fine, fine. I'll fix it, like I said. I don't know this José guy, but I'll fix it."

Three months later, the work still hadn't begun, and conditions were getting worse. José's sister-in-law, Lourdes, lived in the apartment below, and when she took her one-year-old daughter Stephanie in for a check up, the doctor said she was suffering from lead poisoning. Still, the landlord made no effort to fix either apartment. When I spoke to him about the two families, he still pretend-

ed to have no idea who I was talking about. "Lourdes? José? Who the hell are these people? Why do they keep bothering me?"

In 1962, Michael Harrington wrote *The Other America*, a book that exposed the widespread existence of poverty amid plenty. He wrote of slum dwellers in New York City, rural whites in Appalachia, and migrant farm workers in California. At the time, many in the United States had simply forgotten, or perhaps never known, that poverty was still a fact of life for a good portion of the country's residents — between 40 and 50 million of them. As Harrington wrote, "That the poor are invisible is one of the most important things about them."

Today, not only do we still have a growing divide between two Americas, but it seems that we also have a growing divide between "two Americans": English-speaking citizens and Spanish-speaking immigrants. And these other Americans still remain largely invisible, though we have to work hard to miss them, since they are usually right in front of us.

Whether we're eating lunch in New York, California, or Minnesota, we're interacting with them everyday.

"Who the hell are these people?" Without intention, the landlord's brusque question exhibits more enlightenment than most Americans bring to the situation of Latin American immigrants. We usually can't be bothered to wonder who these people are that fill our

water glasses, clear our tables, trim our lawns, or clean our homes. They are there. They do their job. They somehow survive.

In these daily, surface-skimming interactions, we seem to view immigrant laborers as little more than semi-skilled robots. When something needs to be done, they do it, and perhaps we nod in a brief display of gratitude. When they malfunction (usually when they can't understand our English commands), we call for a white foreman to come in and sort out the mess. When we leave the restaurant, or grocery store, or car wash, our thoughts do not linger on those that remain, day after day. Who among us can remember, on walking out the door of a restaurant, the face of the immigrant worker that brought the extra place setting for our table?

This ignorance reflects quite poorly on us non-immigrants, since people like José have become in many ways our enablers — making possible so much of what goes on in this country. When we come in to sparkling offices on Monday morning, buy produce at the grocery store, move into newly built apartments, and receive quality care for our infirm parents, we're being served up valu-

able benefits. The most conscientious might periodically pause for a moment to acknowledge this debt, but then we're off to something else.

With statistics showing that Latino immigrants are more likely to work in dangerous conditions, earn less than enough to live comfortably, and come home to hazardous housing, what might we owe them? How can we begin to repay such a debt?

I recently heard Barbara Ehrenreich speak to an audience on the Upper West Side of Manhattan about her best-selling book *Nickle & Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, which details the hardships of low-income workers. During the talk she mentioned the dramatic effect that the book had on those that read it. Readers now gave more attention and respect to the waiters, retail clerks, and cleaners that served them. Fundamentally, they had finally begun to see the workers — and not just as workers but as complex people in their own right, with dignity and dreams as real as their own. Yet, in terms of concrete changes that they had made in their lives, readers identified only one item: they now left bigger tips.

Bigger tips, of course, do not a systemic change make; for that, we need a dramatic increase in the minimum wage, universal healthcare, renewed union relevance and militancy — the longtime aspirations of the Left. Yet, to speak glibly about these goals in today's environment feels empty, and to end a brief examination on the immigrant reality with romantic calls to revolution rings hollow. We can't begin to fight for solutions until we've fully recognized the realities that exist, and for Mexican and other Spanish-speaking immigrants we've got a lot of acknowledging to do. So let me make a far more limited suggestion, one that at least can be instantly implemented:

The next time you're sitting down in a restaurant, take a moment to notice the Spanish-speaking workers that are serving you. At least once during the meal, make eye contact, and say — no matter how terrible the accent — *gracias*. Then leave a massive tip.

It's a somewhat pathetic beginning, doing nothing in terms of systemic change, but we've got to start somewhere. And if we're a country full of middle- and upper-income Americans who don't even know that José has been working for eight years at our corporation, we're pretty pathetic ourselves. Think of it as a first step in repaying a massive debt ☆

Gabriel Thompson is the Director of Organizing at the Pratt Area Community Council, located in Central Brooklyn. He has just completed his first book, Calling All Radicals: How Community Organizers Can Save Our Democracy. Reach him at gabriel.thompson@prattarea.org.

Roma REVOLT!



photo by Karin Hopfmann

“We are starving!” people shouted into the television cameras as they pulled groceries from store shelves to feed their families. In February 2004, Romani people protested for a week near the city of Kosice in the eastern part of Slovakia, one of the poorest parts of the European Union.

by Daniel Opperman

Demonstrations turned into public disturbances, lootings, and violent confrontations with the Slovakian police and military, resulting in the death of Radoslav Puky, a 28-year-old Romani man. The government sent about 1,000 soldiers and 1,600 police officers to quell the revolt, making it the biggest police and military operation in Slovakia in 15 years.

Roma, sometimes called Gypsies, a name considered a slur by some Roma, are the largest minority in Europe, numbering 12 million. With between 350,000 and 600,000 people, Slovakia has the largest percentage of Roma of any European country. Institutional and day-to-day discrimination against Roma — often stereotyped as criminal nomads, mythically using magic and stealing children — has kept the minority group separate and unequal. Joining the E.U. promised improved conditions for Roma, but has instead made life harder.

Puky was not one of the protesters, but the police response proved indiscriminate. Amnesty International reported that the government sent 250 police officers to the settlement, beating men, women, and children with electric cattle prods and truncheons. Puky was last seen fleeing the violence, but relatives later pulled his body from a lake. The *Guardian* reported that friends, on the condition of anonymity, said he had a broken ribcage, even though police maintain the drowning was an accident.

So, what sparked the revolt? The Slovakian government, desperately trying to be competitive with other E.U. members, cut social welfare in half in early March 2004, after it had already been halved in July 2000. Today, minimum wage in Slovakia is 5,570 crowns (\$168 U.S.) and welfare families can get a maximum of 4,210 crowns (\$127) a month. Prior to the reforms in March, the maximum amount was 2,900 crowns (\$87) for each adult, plus 1,000-1,600 crowns (\$30-48)

per child. Removing the additional benefits for children affects Roma in particular because their families have three times as many children as the majority population.

Slovakia joined the E.U. in May 2004 on the condition that they would improve ethnic inequalities and human rights. Slovakia passed anti-discrimination laws to comply with E.U. human rights standards, but has encountered barriers implementing change on a local level, despite the E.U. offering €10m (\$12,750,000) to develop Romani settlements. One town in eastern Slovakia has refused to improve their infrastructure because they don't want to encourage more Roma to move there.

Roma have their roots in northern India, migrating several times throughout the first half of the second millennium. Despite the nomadic stereotype, Roma have been fairly sedentary since the 15th century. Europeans reacted with a general distrust towards the strangers with dark hair and skin, and Romani history echoes with a refrain of persecution. Some were kept as slaves and many were lynched. In the last century, half a million Roma were killed in "the devouring," the Nazi holocaust.

Roma living conditions continue to be bad, even before the recent cuts in social welfare. One racist but popular Slovakian joke goes: "What are the worst words a Roma can say to you? 'Good morning, neighbor!'"

"The number of people who are unable to cover their living costs has increased greatly since amendments to the social welfare law came into effect," Tara Bedard, a researcher and editor at the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) in Budapest, said. "The number of people not paying rental and utility costs has increased and is translating into evictions." In some cases, Bedard said, municipalities have begun selling buildings containing social flats (subsidized housing), privatizing the housing, and hiking up the rent.

Roma usually live on the edge of villages or in ghettos in desperate need of infrastructure, like electricity, heating, sewage systems, garbage collecting, and roads. Segregation does not end with death; Roma are buried in separate cemeteries. Recent studies show that life expectancy for Roma is 12 or 13 years less than the majority population, and infant mortality is three times the average



Romni and her child at Holesovice station in Prague (Czech Republic), photo by Daniel Opperman

One of the worst forms of discrimination Roma have endured is the placement of Romani children in schools for the developmentally disabled. According to the *Washington Post*, in Vranav, a town east of Kosice, 20 percent of the population is Romani, but half of the students at their "special" school are Roma. A recent research study by the European Roma Rights Center concluded that "governments [in Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania, and the Czech Republic] generally admit the problems facing Roma in the field

of education" but "an explicit commitment to desegregate the school systems can be found only in a few policy documents."

Eva Sobotka, a research associate and policy advisor with the Open Society Institute, said policies may work well initially but fall to the wayside when they fail to attract the political support of the government. "The Romani parents have seen many experiments and pilot projects fail and their children have not been better off," Sobotka said. "Any project that aims at systemic change, not only an educational project, needs the political support of the government."

According to a report by the ERRC, "The history of the Roma and the state [in] what is now Slovakia is a continuous shift between policies which are openly hostile up to murderous towards the Roma and policies disguised as assistance [that] actually [degrade them]."

Not all Roma live in slums; some are assimilated into European society but live a paycheck away from poverty. Puky and his family, in fact, were evicted from his city apartment and forced into the slums only last year. Koloman Pulko, a Romani man the same age as Puky told the *Guardian* it was impossible to live in the slums, but he had little choice. "If it were possible to go somewhere else I would leave, but I have no money to go," he said. "How could I get there?" ☆



Roma houses in Belgrade (Serbia), photo by Karin Hopfmann

Daniel Oppermann is a student of political science at the Free University of Berlin in Germany. During his studies he concentrated his work on ethnopolitical conflicts in Eastern Europe with a focus on minorities concerns, especially the socioeconomic development, minority rights and human rights of the Roma. Reach him at oppermann.daniel@yahoo.de

be seen.

Clamor Magazine offers a unique opportunity for you to reach thousands of active readers who care about and support independent creative projects like yours.

For more information about our affordable advertising rates, visit www.clamormagazine.org/advertise or contact Jason at jason@clamormagazine.org.

po box 55462. atlanta, ga 30308
www.stickfiguredistro.com
all price pop in USA, overseas add \$1-7* \$2 - LP/CD
stores: Stickfigure Deals Direct

stickfigure distro

*an abattross/vbva split 7" (gs) - \$4.50
*apes, the "tapestry mastery" 10" (birdman) - \$9.00
*aounder "a canon call" 2xlp (nuclear war now!) - \$20.00
*burmese fistula split cd (crucial blast) - \$12.00
*curtains/ghost to fakos split 7" (collective jynk) - \$5.00
*demonstrations s/t cdep (strictly amateur films) - \$7.00
*electrosleep "anthology volume 1" cd (stickfigure) - \$10.00
*ex, the "tum" 2xcd (touch and go) - \$15.00
*funeral diner/rain split 7" (red cars go faster) - \$4.50
*grimble grumble "leaves leader" cd (pehr) - \$12.00
*kill, zach and the holy smokes "masculine drugs" cd - book (suicide squeeze) - \$15.50
*kiss "mosquito control" 12" (escape artist) - \$9.00
*kwi&andichop "how i left you" cd (tigerbeats) - \$14.00
*landing "sphere" cd (k) - \$12.00
*northern blade art "slow wave sleep" cd (luminal) - \$10.50
*rah bras, the "eps" cd (lovitt) - \$11.00
*shoplifting s/t 12" (kill rock stars) - \$8.50
*spirit world "soul... sold it?" (stickfigure) \$3.50
*stinking lozavetta "caught between worlds" cd (at a loss) - \$10.00
*weight, the "ten mile grace" lp (sabot) - \$8.50

Radical Talk Radio Now!

Farai Chideya on Working Assets Radio
Nate Clay on WLSam.com
Desi Cortez on KNRCRadio.com
Thom Hartmann on cableradionetwork.com
TheGuyJamesShow.com
Mike Newcomb on 1100KFNX.com
Ed Schultz on BigEddieRadio.com
TheTonyShow.com
PeterWerbe.com
Lizz Winstead on Air America Radio
And, many right-wing hosts are open to dissent.

www.radio-locator.com
Reclaim the airwaves.



BRANDON WIARD

"PAINTING A BURNING BUILDING"
OUT NOW ON
CERBERUS RECORDS



"He could have continued to grow slowly and safely, but instead he dove in head first, and came out with a fantastic album that ought to put him on the map."
Pitchfork Media (8.1 out of 10)

"...acoustic guitars, violins, piano, electronic sounds, indie-rock fuzz guitar and purely stellar songwriting to create a sound not unlike Jason Falkner or Ben Folds."
Real Detroit Weekly

"...nice production work throughout and the kind of intent that should entice fans of rendered pop that's attentive to life's most common flaws and feelings."
All Music Guide

"Top notch all the way."
Aiding & Abetting

"...a pop-music singer-songwriter of a caliber that defies both his youth and his quiet nature..."
Ann Arbor News



VISIT THE WEBSITE FOR
TOUR DATES
AND
FREE MUSIC DOWNLOADS

JOIN THE FANCLUB
AND RECEIVE AN EXCLUSIVE
DEMO CD

WATCH THE VIDEO FOR
"MISS MICHIGAN"
FEAT. ANDREW WK

For more info go to:
www.BrandonWiard.com
www.WhatWereYouHumming.com



“When I tore my ACL skateboarding, doctors told me the cause of my injury was that I am a woman. But when I showed up at the park ready to skate again, no one attributed my passion, courage, or dedication to my gender.”

Biology vs. Training

Debating the Role of Gender in ACL Knee Injuries

On March 29, 2004, 17-year-old Candace Parker of Oklahoma City became the first female to win the McDonald's High School All-American Dunk Contest. Parker said her dream is that "ten years from now this isn't a big deal," and three or four girls would enter.

Parker is also part of an injury trend that has perplexed orthopedists for over a decade. Parker won the contest while recovering from surgery for an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) rupture eight months before. The ACL is the outer of four ligaments connecting the thigh and shin bones to stabilize the knee when pivoting or landing from a jump. The ACL can rupture when the knee is sprained. Reconstructive surgery and six months of rehabilitation generally follow. For every five female athletes that sustain a sports injury, nine male athletes are injured, according to studies of high school students. However, women tear their ACLs two to four times more often than men. Males are more than twice as likely as females to hurt their head, neck, spine, shoulder and arm, but female ACL injuries are making headlines with greater frequency.

In 1995, *Sports Illustrated* called ACL tears "virtually epidemic" in women's basketball. In 2000, CNN quoted sports medicine doctor Timothy Hewett as saying, "There's a plague of ACL injuries in women's sports, and they're not limited to basketball — or to professionals." Even *Business Week* took a stab at the anomaly in 1999, asserting that, "Of all the differences emerging from gender-based sports research, ACL tear rates are one of the most dramatic — and mysterious." In 2001, *The New York Times* stated that, "Much remains perplexing about an injury that has become prevalent as women run faster, jump higher, and submit their bodies to more extreme forces." The hysteria surrounding ACL tears represents a gender-bias in sports medicine, where male injuries are considered the rule and female injuries the exception. Studies of female sports injuries are new, and like an inexperienced athlete, they are clumsy, dangerous and often painful to witness.

The Biological Explanation

Many orthopedists are searching for a gender-based anatomical explanation for high rates of female ACL injuries, and they have identified several "risk factors" they say are particular to women. These researchers say women have a larger "Q-angle" between the thigh and shin bones due to wider pelvises, and a smaller intercondylar notch (the space around the ACL), making the ligament more prone to injury. They are also studying women's supposedly lower center of gravity and weaker hamstrings than quadriceps, as well as hormonal fluctuations.

But these theories have not proven accurate, and numerous doctors are skeptical of the findings. Dr. Chris A. Arnold and Dr. Arthur Boland wrote in *The Harvard Orthopaedic Journal* that there is "no conclusive evidence" to support the Q-angle theory. Dr. Stephen J. Nicholas, former orthopaedist for the New York Jets said, "I don't think small intercondylar notch is specific to women." Moreover, Dr. James L. Moeller and Dr. Mary M. Lamb have also cast doubt on the "risk factor" theories, stating in *The Physician and Sports Medicine* that hamstring to quadriceps strength ratio has no substantial effect on knee injuries. Physical therapist Maureen Madden, who has rehabilitated patients with ACL injuries for 13 years, believes hamstring strength is gender-neutral.

Critics beyond the medical community are eyeing gender-based ACL studies with suspicion. It is curious that women are posed against men to explain an injury affecting both, and that anatomical traits are receiving more focus than the physical activity performed at the time of the injury. Researchers are studying women as variables, measuring them against men as the control group that escapes equal scrutiny, and regarding female traits as flaws. Doctors are studying male injuries differently. Achilles tendon ruptures, which predominantly affect men, also require surgery and six months of rehabilitation. Researchers for *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research* attribute this to a higher rate of male athletic activity, rather than to anatomy. The risk factors under scrutiny include bone mineral density, age, sedentary lifestyle, and mechanical factors. Gender is not the issue when it comes to men's injuries.

ACL studies are of questionable value because they fail to examine technique and coaching, psychological and physical training, diet, lifestyle, and family history, which are potentially significant factors of injury. In addition, researchers will never uncover the root causes of ACL injury because they are not looking for them. The studies ask the question, "Why are women weaker than men?" rather than asking, "Why do athletes tear their ACLs?" Thus, ACL studies succeed only in exposing the gender-bias of segments of the sports medicine community, rather than preventing injury.

The Hormonal Explanation

Studies indicating that menstruation (and attendant hormonal fluctuations) impedes activity are controversial because they imply women are biologically unfit for sport. They are reminiscent of the early 19th century ban on female athletics, based on the belief that menses depleted a woman's energy and destroyed her mood. Attributing injury and weakness to menstruation is a means of attacking one of the defining factors of being female and asserting biological male superiority. In 2001, Dr. Edward Wojtys, a leading proponent of the hormone theory, told the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine that women are three times more likely to injure their ACLs during ovulation than other menstrual phases, based on a study of only 65 women. The American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine, a self-proclaimed world leader in sports medicine education and research, quoted Wojtys in a 2001 news release titled "Ovulation May Increase Risk For Knee Injury." However, there is no consensus on this theory, and such limited sample size raises more questions than it answers.

Though these studies continue on some women, no one is testing men's hormone levels after traumatic ACL injuries. However, human reproduction specialist Dr. Gerald Lincoln found that low testosterone levels increase injury in rams, indicating a possible link between male hormones and injury that ACL studies overlook.

The Training Explanation

If doctors are successful in identifying anatomical predispositions to injury, athletes may be able to combat those susceptibilities through sport. For example, Maureen Madden says there are specific training exercises that can help in "preparing for those events in which our center of gravity is against us." However, if training and activity influ-

ence structural traits and disposition to injury, as many studies indicate, then a person's anatomy may be fluid and changeable, rather than strictly biological. Research shows these may be permeable borders.

Studies show female athletes structurally resemble the male prototype more than the female one. This indicates the existence of anatomical variation within each sex group and shows that increased activity affects several possible risk factors. Joint laxity, for example, is one possible risk factor that is greater in non-athletic than athletic females. Activity also affects overall strength and flexibility. And, *neuromuscular coordination, which may be a factor of injury in adulthood, is developed through childhood activities that more boys are encouraged to participate in than girls.* Finally, *The American Journal of Sports Medicine* reported in 1999 that 366 female high school athletes training to reduce ACL injuries were four times less likely to become injured at the end of the study.

Sports injury specialists blame ACL tears on gender-neutral factors of inadequate training, poor technique, and low skill level. They also suggest that women using shoes and equipment designed for men may contribute to these injuries.

Implications for Society

Experts are skeptical of ACL research, and the causes of injury remain a mystery. Some orthopedists are even reluctant to distribute study results in fear of sending harmful messages that women are unsuitable for sports. If women are discouraged from sports out of fear of injury, the gender gap in training could grow, exacerbating the problem. To avoid doing further harm, researchers should consider a gender-less comparison of injured versus non-injured athletes to learn about a variety of the injury's causes, rather than continuing to study men versus women and overlooking the variation within each group.

In addition, the association of injury with biological traits such as ligament laxity, joint alignment or Q-angle, and hormonal fluctuations, should be applied to injuries predominantly affecting men also. This approach would enable men to target their own weak spots and could challenge gender stereotypes, rather than reinforce them. This approach would encourage injury prevention for all athletes, rather than half. Lastly, journalists should not

succumb to the shock value of repeating the same tired ACL statistics that female athletes have heard before and focus on their accomplishments instead. Such a focus would facilitate a positive mindset, often the decisive factor between injury and achievement in sports.

Sports injuries make athletes weaker and stronger. While injured joints never seem to heal completely, athletes overcome the trauma through commitment to intense rehabilitation and through the motivation that comes from many lonesome nights spent longing for their sport. Women who recover from ACL injuries may likely come out stronger. "Anybody can fight back from an injury," says Maureen Madden. Candace Parker's slam dunks are proof. Madden says that focusing so well on her rehab "probably helped her get to a level that she may not have, had the challenge not been there." ★

Emily Keller is a freelance journalist and skateboarder living in New York City. Her writing can be found in the Brooklyn Star Queens Ledger newspapers. You can reach Emily at EKNY12345@aol.com.



The [ACL] studies ask the question, "Why are women weaker than men?" rather than asking, "Why do athletes tear their ACLs?" ... [they] succeed only in exposing the gender-bias of segments of the sports medicine community, rather than preventing injury.



Don't Call My Boyfriend "She"

words: Anna Mills (photo) Ryan Pfluger

One evening after writer's group, my friend Greg pulled up by the florist sign at my boyfriend's apartment on Telegraph. The light shone, and the cat sat in the window. "Sam must be home," I said.

Greg shut off the car. "Say hello to her for me."

Another day, I caught my roommate in the stairwell and told her, "Sam might want to move in this summer."

"Does she still work in Oakland?"

"Um, yeah, he does."

She tossed her long hair. "Oh, he, sorry."

Sam started hormones three years ago. My friends and I have only known him as a man. I know that he curled his bangs and wore a bridesmaid's dress in junior high, ran girls' track and dated a straight guy in college, and then worshipped the Indigo Girls and went to lesbian protests in Mexico City. My friends know he is transgender, but they have only seen a shy man with a black goatee. Despite this, they are the ones who make Freudian slips, hinting at a female image that I cannot conjure.

I think of Sam dancing with a few disco moves, leaving for the hospital in green scrubs or sleeping while the cat kneads his back. I think of him in a boat in Yosemite wearing swim trunks and sunglasses. I see the curve of his shoulder, the solid line of his jaw, the shadow of fur on his chest. I think of the ease with which Sam lives in his body and his masculinity. It doesn't matter whether he's talking to his dad, cooking pasta, or brushing his teeth. He looks like a man the way a cat licking its paw looks like a cat.

A few people notice his small white hands, smaller than mine. Anyone sees that he's about 5'6" with a delicate face. But nothing gives him away. As far as I know, no strangers guess.

Nurses, parents, and toddlers see him as a male pediatrician. A few months ago, a grandmother called to complain that a man had talked to her teenage granddaughter about safe sex. Sam had asked routine questions during a checkup. His supervisor reassured him: "What can you do? You can't change your sex."

Sam's mother visited recently. At dinner, she flagged down a waiter and pointed to her child. "She wants some more water if you have time." Sam was carving his crepe like any docile son in a wool sweater. If anyone seemed a bit of a freak, it was his mother. The female pronoun didn't fit the picture.

"She" never fails to surprise me. Sometimes I don't realize to whom it refers. On a hike last year, Sam's old friend Beth told me stories from college. My mind wandered as I looked into a grove of birch trees. Then I realized she was asking something. "Did she tell you? We used to impersonate our favorite bands, and she'd play guitar." About whom was Beth talking? I didn't know her circle of friends. Then I remembered — Sam.

Those who know and still say "she" must think of the body shaped by hormones and surgery as a disguise. They must tell themselves, Sam was a little girl and then a teenager with breasts and female genitals. Inside, Sam will always be a woman. The idea must seem as unquestionable as the law of gravity.

It's not simple to add transgender to the list of minorities we are supposed to accept. Sex change contradicts our basic understanding of sex. If a person is whatever a person feels, then male and female become wildcards. The woman sitting next to me on the bus with a khaki skirt and smooth legs might have fathered a child. The burly driver with the beard might have been Junior Miss. My own mother could become a guy. I always believed that I was necessarily, intrinsically female. The word "female" claimed me the way that "star" claims the sun. Now I look down and realize that the world would allow this torso and legs to be male. Nothing about maleness and femaleness or masculinity and femininity feels obvious or certain.

I have pledged allegiance to a new philosophy: the truth of gender lives in the mind and heart. I can't explain why it is that the person who used to be Alicia felt a call to change. I don't think Sam can either. Still, here he is.

What if family and friends could take in Sam's presence in the moment — his spirit, his physicality, his choices? Perhaps they could begin to let go of the rules in their heads. One of these days, "he" might fall from their lips unbidden.

I run my fingers across Sam's scratchy cheek and move my hand to his chest. He curves down, and I curve up until he warms the length of me. I like living this way — bewildered and at peace. ☆

Anna Mills lives in San Francisco and writes essays and poetry. She welcomes feedback at amills@wso.williams.edu.



The Waiting Room written by Marie Kazalia illustrated by Shawn Granton

China wasn't at all as she had expected, as she'd imagined from studying the history of Chinese art in classes. She'd spent an entire day just walking through the rather sad and dusty Imperial Palace. Ridden bicycles slow and cautious as the other bicyclists on the streets of Beijing. Submitted to the armed guards rushing her past Mao's rubberized body under glass. And been embarrassed by the balloons and banners of the Great Wall. She had thought of living and teaching English here but now felt it would be impossible, so she was resuming her pilgrimage. Tickets had to be applied for days in advance to travel. She picked them up early that morning, and now there was nothing left to do but wait.

A large sign just outside the door read "Foreigners Waiting Room" in English and several other languages. Inside the room were bare comforts to suit her immediate needs — one short vinyl couch against one wall, a clock above — just after 5 p.m. A few hours wait for the next train to Shanghai. She had taken the long train ride to Xian to see the clay army, had been traveling around China for days and this was the beginning of the end of another long eventless one looking out tram windows over colorless flat landscapes, eating bland cold food

She hoisted her bag up off the floor onto her shoulder one more time and headed toward the small couch just as someone pushed past, knocking her to one side — a short older Asian man in a dark suit. She recognized Korean characters in the headlines of the newspaper he held folded under his arm as he dropped his suitcase and collapsed into the exact center of the couch, throwing his arms out wide in a tired gesture and dropping his head back to rest. She stood in disbelief for a moment. He lifted his head back up — his dark eyes caught hers and cut at her indignantly. Her annoyance flared. But she understood that everyone here — all over Asia — expected her, a mere woman, to make-way for any man — especially an older one — to show him respect and demure to his needs, even if they were strangers.

She knew her Western customs didn't apply when it came to public transportation, where it was everyone for themselves — push and shove your way onto buses and trains — for seats anywhere, in waiting rooms. But even after three years in this part of the world, it was still difficult for her to tolerate any stranger's casual brush against her in a crowd. In the U.S. people made such efforts to avoid getting too close to one another in public places

and said "Excuse me" when they accidentally bumped into someone. But not here. Here it was different. She'd tried to imagine how all of Asia would slow to a dull inefficiency if the millions upon billions of people crammed in all the cities started respecting each other's personal space, using the same social rules as Americans. It wouldn't work, obviously.

Tokyo, Taipei, Bombay, Bangkok — in every big city — people in traffic made up their own rules — turned 4 lanes into 6 lanes to get things moving more quickly. They adjusted and assimilated their surroundings as much as they adjusted and assimilated themselves. But intellectually knowing and understanding all this didn't help her much when she had to navigate crowds of pushing and shoving and bumping 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Along with the physical contact came the constant stares. People seeing blue eyes for the first time, her light hair color, such a tall woman — she was five foot four — or one with a nose like hers, her strange clothes, the way she carried herself. But then I'm not Asian — she told herself — so I don't have to follow their customs and traditions — as she dropped her bag on the floor and jammed her ass into the small open area at the end of the slippery vinyl couch

The Korean man moved over just a bit, reluctantly, stiffening his face in annoyance. She felt too tired to fight for more room — knew some Japanese words and had studied Mandarin for one and a half semesters at the university in Hong Kong — but didn't know one word of Korean, only found the unique circles and oval shapes of the Korean characters easily identifiable compared to Japanese and Chinese writing. She didn't like sitting next to this guy, but it was better than standing, so she tolerated him.

After a minute or two, he pulled the metal floor ashtray up beside his knee and without even a gesture of hesitation as to whether his smoking might bother her, he lit a cigarette, blew smoke into the air and unfolded his newspaper. He scanned the wide pages, elbowing her in the ribs as he dragged the bottom edge of his newspaper over her thighs.

Just then a multi-lingual announcement came over the loud speaker out in the main station, telling of the next train departures. The Korean man glanced at his watch. "Great, we'll probably get stuck on the same train together and he'll do his best to try and ruin my entire trip," she thought — just becoming aware of the stiffness of a magazine under her

hip. She pulled it out — left by a foreigner in this waiting room where locals don't wait, wouldn't so recklessly leave something this valuable behind — a Japanese magazine — she recognized the writing and design. Just then the Korean man snatched the magazine from her hands! Such arrogance of authority and demeanor! Such injustice — such sexist treatment! She could only sit and rage to herself — use all her methods of self-control to keep from blowing up — shouting. How dare he!

Yelling angrily doesn't make sense here — he wouldn't understand what she was saying, why she was mad — what right she had to be furious with him — and would only attract a crowd. So she just sat, convincing herself not to snatch the magazine right back — justifying — she couldn't read it anyway; it really wasn't hers — yet on principle. Western thinking, he shouldn't have grabbed it from her like that. The thought occurred to her that she might take her suitcase over to the other side of the room, sit on it leaning against the empty wall — to get away from him — but didn't want to smash her clothes and things inside her bag.

She got up, stood looking at the clock. Only about half an hour had passed since

she'd entered this waiting room, yet it seemed much longer. Still hours before the train would arrive and boarding began. She couldn't leave her heavy bag here and felt too close to exhaustion to try to carry it around the station. She wasn't hungry, just tired. Tired of this Korean guy, tired of people swarming everywhere — inside the station, on the streets. She got to hoping he'd leave the tiny waiting room to go use the toilet or go get some snacks or something — but he stayed. Soon his head flopped forward in sleep. "Fuck him," she thought. She sat back down in her spot, this time jostling him over hard — using her hip and shoulder — taking her share of the couch. He flopped his head back up awake. ☆

Marie Kazalia was born in Toledo, Ohio but has lived her adult life primarily on the West Coast and in San Francisco, with the exception of 4 expatriate years in the Asian countries of Japan, India and China. Marie has a BFA degree from California College of Arts and Crafts. She's had a book of poems titled Erratic Sleep in a Cold Hotel published by Phony Lid Books and two mini-chapbooks published by CC Marimbo. You can reach her at redhandpress@hotmail.com

featured media

Violence and the Body: Race, Gender, and the State

Edited by Arturo Aldama
Indiana University Press, 2003
www.indiana.edu/~iupress/

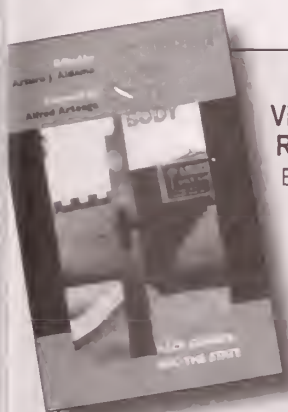
It makes sense to me to start this review with a warning about language. *Violence and the Body* is an academic book informed by cultural studies, postcolonial studies and critical theory. Each of these disciplines has its own language for describing the world, and those languages have terms that may be unfamiliar to a general reader. People who believe that academic work should be written in general language are going to be pissed off at this book, and people who are unfamiliar with academic language will probably have to look at additional work to understand what the authors are saying. For those readers who get hot at discussions of subalternity, this is a book for you.

Violence and the Body is about state violence and resistance. It draws its chapters from a broad range of disciplines to speak about specific ways that institutional violence affects a wide variety of communities who experience institutional oppression. The chapters explicitly address issues of race, gender, and nationhood as locations of state violence and the ways that communities resist that violence.

The four parts of the book address issues as varied as menstrual blood protest in women's prisons, an interpretation of Jacques Derrida's *On Grammatology* as an explicitly political anti-violence text, theorizing Asian-American transmasculinity in film, and the work of motherist groups in Juarez to protect the lives of their daughters and themselves. The huge variety of approaches and locations of the work have the interesting effect of offering a cross-disciplinary picture of a wide variety of experiences of state violence. Arturo J. Aldama, the editor of the collection, is a professor at the University of Colorado and an editor of the web magazine *Bad Subjects*. The book reflects his interest and work in theorizing the experiences of peoples on the US/Mexico border.

This book isn't a departure from much of the work in critical theory and postcolonial studies: many of the chapters rely heavily on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Judith Butler, and other prominent theorists. Readers familiar with *Gender Trouble*, *In Other Worlds*, or the work of Jacques Derrida, Edward Said, or Gloria Anzaldúa are going to find familiar ideas in *Violence and the Body*. Like most collections of essays, the quality of the chapters is uneven, so potential readers should be willing to take the insightful with the totally unsurprising. The main attraction of this book lies in seeing how the chapters' authors take prevalent academic approaches and apply them to disparate and specific circumstances. This book is useful for dorks who read theory in their free time, teachers of courses on such topics, and students looking to expand their reading lists.

-Laura Mintz



WE'RE PERSIANS!



Yasmine Mohseni discusses the rebirth of her identity as a Persian Woman

photo Antrim Caskey

“Sweetie, you’re American, but of Persian descent.” This is a phrase I’ve heard since I was a little girl growing up in California. It is a phrase I would proudly repeat to my friends and foes in the schoolyard without knowing what it meant. In fact, I would’ve had a hard time finding Iran on a map. Now, I’ve begun to think more about what it means to be Persian.

Iranians, before converting to Shi’a Islam, were Zoroastrian, one of the world’s oldest monotheist religions where fire is worshipped as the original light of God. For 5,000 years, Persia (renamed Iran in 1935) has been a basin of culture in the Middle East: nurturing poets, writers, scholars, musicians and artists. Those who know Iranians or have traveled to Iran praise the country’s refined culture and its cultivated and hospitable people. Oh, and another thing — Iranians can party.

I recently traveled to London for a Persian wedding. During the boisterous three-day celebration, we all took many tequila shots, we danced on chairs and yelped with joy. Of course, we were all there to celebrate the lovely bride and her dashing groom, but it was also an opportunity for those who traveled from the repressive Islamic Iran to let loose and for others who had been ripped apart by the 1979 Revolution to reunite.

I was born in 1977, two years before the Revolution. I have never been to Iran, I don’t know what “the good old days” were like, and I don’t speak Farsi. At this wedding, I got to dip my toe in the Iranian cultural pool. It gave me a feel for what it was like to live in Iran under the Shah. If you belonged to the elite of society, this small percentage of the population was your social circle; these were your friends and your family and you chose your husband or wife from this group. You lived in the northern part of Tehran and had a country home in the Elbrouz Mountains or by the Caspian Sea. Most of the people belonging to this cross section of Persian society that flourished under the Shah fled at the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution, settling in Western Europe, Canada and the United States. Those that had once belonged to a tightly-knit community became expatriates in countries filled with expatriates: the elite joined the masses. Those who were able to leave with some of their wealth were lucky, the rest started over. Governors are now shop keepers, renowned architects now run Persian restaurants. Their kids have assimilated to the culture in which they were brought up: I have cousins in Canada who are Canadian and others in London who are English. One of my favorite cousins is now an East Village hipster who goes to NYU, smokes Marlboro Lights and has an orange mohawk.

When this Persian community reunites for a wedding, the occasion transcends time and space. Old squabbles, while forgiven but not forgotten, are quickly put aside. Excitement replaces nostalgia as long-lost friends and distant relatives reunite. The older generation catches up on the thirty years that have passed since they last saw each other, while my generation catches up on the past three or four years. Either way, there’s a lot of talking accompanied by a lot of drinking. So much so that our thoughtful host had an Alka Seltzer placed on every pillow in every hotel room, which was much appreciated.

Among the wedding guests were the groom’s brothers, who traveled from Shiraz and Tehran with their wives. The women happily removed their veils to reveal beautiful long hair and lovely almond-shaped eyes, their long cloaks were replaced by sparkly tank tops and form-fitting jeans. One highly entertaining guest visiting from Iran was undeterred by the tequila-induced loss of his motor skills and made frequent trips to the bar to grab a couple more shots for him and his wife, exclaiming how all of this reminded him of his bachelor years abroad. Everyone let loose with such enthusiasm and spontaneity that they looked great doing it.

My parents have always tried to disassociate themselves from an expatriate community that spends too much time harping on all they’ve lost and how great life was back in Iran. However, at the end of the weekend, as we all prepared to return to our homes and jobs, they felt the warmth of belonging. And, whether they like it or not, they do belong to this community; it may not be perfect but in the company of this group, you don’t have to explain yourself. You don’t have to tell people that Iranians are not all fundamentalists. You don’t have to explain that Iranians are not Al-Qaeda sympathizers or clarify that Iranians are not of Arab extraction. I have never felt close to the Iranian community but, I’m thinking about learning the language so that, next time I go to an Iranian wedding, I don’t have to nod and smile in ignorance while the conversation continues in Farsi.

Several days after the wedding, I had the opportunity to chat with Farah Pahlavi, the deposed Empress of Iran. When she learned that I was a journalist in New York, her face lit up and she enthusiastically praised all the young Iranians around the world for making their mark in various professions. I am American, I was born here and I love this country. Nevertheless, when the Empress said this to me I felt proud: I too belong to this Iranian community. ☆

Yasmine can be reached care of Clamor.

Women, Welfare, & Work

A Talk by Randy Albelda
Z Video Productions
www.zmedia.org/newvideos.htm

Albelda, an author, economist, and activist, discusses the myths advanced to demonize and punish the working poor and the harsh realities facing low income families in the wake of welfare reform.

Welfare reform has been almost exclusively directed at single women with children, and Albelda makes a strong case for why it is at its core a feminist issue. She analyses Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, commonly known as welfare) in six themes, all of which boil down to “Get a Job or Get a Man.” Three of the six directly relate to sex and gender. Marriage as a goal (known as the Healthy Marriages Initiative and central to the Bush Administration’s plans) and stepped up reporting requirements to monitor fathers. Sanctions (loss of payments) imposed in situations of domestic violence if full documentation of abuse is not provided or for families that have other children while on assistance. Completely arbitrary lifetime limits of sixty months (Albelda notes there is no research saying this is enough time for anyone to get back on her feet, let alone a mother with small children.)

Women, Welfare, & Work is best suited as a teaching or activist tool used in full or abridged in clips. Albelda’s six themes are possibly the most compelling, along with the chapters “Why is this an opportunity?” and “What is to be done?” The DVD may be particularly useful for activists who wish to hear this analysis and share it with a larger audience to spark dialog but do not have the resources to bring in a speaker. (In addition to this title, Z Video Productions has a growing number of other offerings with well-known speakers on varied topics that may also be useful in similar circumstances.)

While multiple camera views and frequent cuts engage the viewer more than a single point of view might, general audiences may not be interested in watching a full-length lecture on video. Therefore, excerpting the most appropriate and provocative chapter or chapters might work best. In addition, there are soundtrack problems on this DVD that might bother some viewers (mostly atmospheric sound: noise from the outside hallway, listeners shuffling, and as explained by an onscreen caption, a passing ferry).

The 2004 presidential election campaign completely ignored the lives of low-income people and the working poor. Overwhelmingly the candidates embraced the continually “squeezed” middle class. As inauguration day approaches, I imagine the next four years will make a tough fight for a welfare reform that will positively transform the lives of poor and low-income women, men and families.

-Gina Olson

Dudes Against Dudeness by Andrew Willis

“A Different Kind of Dude Fest” emerged from a conversation on the multifarious concept of a “dude fest:” the ways our political punk scenes are often dominated by and geared towards gender-privileged men, and unintentionally reinforce patriarchal masculinity. We envisioned Dude Fest as a space where, as organizer and Del Cielo drummer Katy Otto wrote to anti-sexist men, “your desire to divest of gender privilege was finally allowed, normalized, and made public and whole.”



Amateur Parly performing at the Different Kind of Dude Fest. Photo by Chris Penna

We, 10 or so self-identified men and one woman, began organizing in late June 2004. Bands came aboard quickly, before we were able to discuss our internal organizing dynamics or objectives. (As a result, all of the artists who played the fest ended up being men.) We assembled a reading and discussion group geared towards addressing gender privilege that evolved into a series of exchanges on the website message board. (The fest website has links to dozens of readings related to privilege consciousness and anti-oppression organizing: differentkindofdudefest.dead-city.org.) Finally, we solicited workshops from a wide range of activists, and many attended discussions on Street Harassment Solidarity, Women’s History, and Being a Sexual Assault Survivor Ally.

Over 300 people attended both shows at Trinity Lutheran Church, contributing \$1,200 for the Real Young Men program of the Empower Program, which works to end the culture of gender violence. The fest organizers also distributed a zine of submissions from bands and local activists addressing issues related to sexism and patriarchy (which will soon hopefully be available on our website). Dozens of people also attended Saturday’s workshops, Sunday’s screening and discussion of the documentary *Tough Guise*, and engaged in various forms of dialogue throughout the weekend.

One of the most telling parts of the weekend came when two organizers facilitated a fishbowl discussion on sexism in the community. The exercise consisted of a circle of women seated in the middle of a room, facing each other, surrounded by a larger circle of men. The goal was to create a space where women felt comfortable sharing experiences and feelings with each other and where men could learn from non-gender-privileged experience. Several women, however, said they were uncomfortable with the “voyeuristic” format and were relieved when the discussion opened up to include men.

During the discussion, some women organizers spoke of their frustrations with men in the punk scene: “I’ll say ‘Who’s going to clean this room up?’ And sometimes it’s less exhausting to just do it than chase people down. I’d rather not have these conversations about how we split up our work along gender lines... I’d rather just do it and go to sleep.”

Participants also commented on men’s responsibilities: “Some guys think they should tell me every time anyone says something sexist... Why should it be my job to call guys out, it’s not the job of

the person being wounded to say something.”

Afterwards, Katy Otto said the fest was important to her because, “I began to be able to put faces to the numbers of men that actually were actively seeking this event and kind of community. I could see them making strong and meaningful connections with each other, and enjoyed that I could help facilitate that but then let it be on its own.”

Kadd Stephens, a fest organizer who also played Friday night as *Homage to Catalonia*, explained why the fest was significant to him as a local musician: “I think it raises

the bar a bit in terms of what’s expected of artists from around here. Not so much in a judgmental sense, but just that as artists, we have a responsibility to be critically examining ourselves and developing richer lives outside of just making music or whatever.” Ian of Atlanta-based *Blame Game* concurred that it was “inspiring and reassuring” to see other men committed to anti-patriarchal work.

Cary Miller, who traveled to the fest from Philadelphia, shared, “Probably the most significant thing for me didn’t even happen at the fest, it was the fact that simply mentioning the fest and trying to describe it to friends and acquaintances really kicked open a conversational door with other people who I never would have expected to be interested. I ended up engaging people who I wouldn’t have otherwise discussed sexism or feminism with.”

After the workshops on Saturday, Kateri Hunter stressed the importance of continuing critical self-analysis: “This is a time when people like to pat themselves on the back, but we still have a lot to do—not enough people desire to talk about these issues, to share what’s important.”

Although follow-up events have been slow to materialize in DC, on October 9 several Philadelphia fest organizers and participants held a discussion on masculinity in the punk/anarchist West Philly community. There, women and men discussed moshing, barriers to communication and calling each other out, and made a list of future discussion topics. Several fest participants spoke of initiating similar events in suburban Maryland and Virginia. As Kadd said, “It’s hard not to be excited by what this event could help precipitate for the punk community at-large.”

DKDF organizers in DC and Philadelphia can be reached at differentdudefest@yahoo.com.

Partners and Allies of Sexual Assault Survivors Resources are available at <http://twhj.com/allies.shtml>.

Readings on sexism, patriarchy, and privilege consciousness can be found at <http://differentkindofdudefest.dead-city.org/reading.html>

Andrew is a DC activist. Reach him at andrew@mutualaid.org



After the Kiss...

Be prepared for a night of passion with sex toys from Toys in Babeland. Choose from our holiday gift kits, vibrators, sensuals, and more. Toys in Babeland is the famously fun, women-owned sex toy shop that's been described as the "Williams-Sonoma of the well-stocked boudoir."

TOYS

in Babeland

Sex Toys for a Passionate World

NEW YORK - Soho: 43 Mercer St. 212-966-2120

NEW YORK - LES: 94 Rivington St. 212-375-1701

SEATTLE: 707 E. Pike St. 206-328-2914

www.babeland.com 1-800-658-9119

"The Art Of Porn"

**BROKEN
DOLLZ**

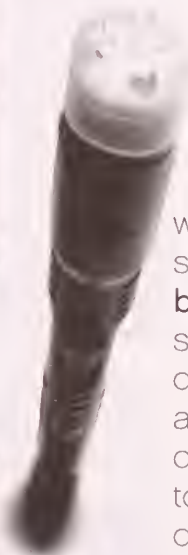
WWW.BROKENDOLLZ.COM

back by popular demand.

← available at www.clamormagazine.org

I had an
abortion.

blast off...



with sexy toys & such from **early to bed**. visit our web-site or our cute chicago shop for a great selection of high-quality toys & amazing customer service.

100% woman-owned & operated

early to bed

5232 N Sheridan Chicago, IL 60640

866 585 2BED | www.early2bed.com



**GET ON THE
BUS!**



the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride carries the torch of Freedom Rides past

In the early 1960s, the original Freedom Rides exposed the brutality of segregation in the South. More recently, nearly one thousand immigrant workers and their allies boarded buses throughout the United States to expose the unjust treatment of immigrants in this country as part of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride.

The new Freedom Riders demanded changes in public policy that would grant legal status to immigrant workers already established in the United States; clear the path for citizenship and voting rights for immigrants; restore labor protections so that everyone receives fair treatment on the job; reunite families by streamlining outdated policies; and grant everyone full civil rights and civil liberties under the law.

Their 12-day ride was made up of numerous routes that covered more than 20,000 miles and stopped for events at more than 100 locations. It culminated in a major rally in Queens, New York on October 4, 2003.

This August, Maria Elena Durazo, national chairwoman of the Freedom Ride and president of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 11 in Los Angeles, sat down with Lyn Goldfarb for an interview for the PBS film series "Beyond the Dream: California and the Rediscovery of America." The series explores the dynamics of culture, identity and civic engagement within California, the country's most multi-ethnic state.

During the interview, Durazo described one of the most meaningful experiences of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride and the overall achievements of the ride. This story is pieced together from that interview...

words **Maria Elena Durazo** interview by **Lyn Goldfarb**
photos **Peter Holderness**

We were stopped by the Border Patrol in Sierra Blanca, Texas. We felt we were prepared for it because, after all, there were a lot of activist lawyers who had asked us not to go through the border states. They said it was too dangerous and that we shouldn't put ourselves in harm's way. So we felt there was a good likelihood that we were going to be stopped, and we prepared a solidarity plan in case we were stopped: how would we conduct ourselves and what would be the message and was it responsible. It was an enormous debate, enormous fighting over whether or not we should do that.

In the end, the immigrants themselves and the leaders of the many organizations and unions felt that taking a risk and making that kind of sacrifice was part of the struggle. No one should be so paternalistic as to say, "Well, those poor immigrants. Don't let them do anything like that." They're suffering and they're going through enormous repression right now and getting deported everyday. They're willing to do that for the sake of winning something.

Well, we had tried to train ourselves and role play as much as possible for it. At the time, there were two buses with approximately ninety people, and we knew there were undocumented on those buses. It was none of our business to know who and all the details of it. But the word got out that there were undocumented. There were native born citizens, there were green card, and we all had a different level of risk. The citizens certainly had less than the undocumented, but there was a risk of taking a position that, "I'm not going to answer your questions Mr. Border Patrol Agent when you come to me. I'm not even in any way going to cooperate with your questioning because I'm here to take a position in support of immigrants and especially undocumented immigrants."

Earlier, we had to practice being quiet, completely quiet. We also had to practice singing and coming up with verses. And I remember very clearly as we were coming up to the station saying, "Okay, we're probably a mile away." There was a little hill that we were going to go over. We couldn't quite see the station, but as we were getting closer to it, there was one woman in particular — a very young Latina woman — and she just started crying and crying and crying. Tears were just rolling down here eyes. And we had also practiced that if for any one reason anyone got nervous and felt they would get scared or get angry and speak out in some way, that it was up to the other people to work with them and keep them calm and keep them focused — that we were doing this together.

left: The Rev. James Lawson, who was also active in the civil rights struggles in Nashville in the early 1960s, leads Riders through Tennessee en route to Washington DC to demand immigration reform. above: Maria Elena Durazo, the president of HERE local 11 in Los Angeles, was the major force behind the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride. Photographed during a rare moment of quiet in Dallas, Texas.

Singing was the way we were going to communicate to each other. Singing was the way we were going to let each other know we were in this together and that we were going to back each other up. [Songs included civil rights classics like "We Shall Overcome" and "This Little Light of Mine."] We had trained ourselves not to say a word to each other or to the Border Patrol agents. So it was really, really, really important not to stop singing.

And so while we were getting closer and closer, it was getting quieter and quieter and quieter. It was complete silence on the bus. As we drove up and then the agent came on, we were absolutely quiet and silent. And then the singing started. And we kept singing no matter what, on the bus and when we were taken off the bus. We were by ourselves. We were in cells. They were put in the bathrooms. There was the echo of singing everywhere. Singing by yourself in a little voice — but it was absolutely the most incredible experience that I've ever been in because we connected with each other. Now you've got to remember that most people didn't know each other. We had picked up a group in Arizona of another fifteen people. We really didn't know them and we had never practiced with them other than on the buses. It — it was just extraordinary how everybody felt. No differences in our race. No differences in our language. Even though there were fourteen different nationalities and almost as many languages — no differences. We were singing these songs in English, and that was all we knew of each other...

It used to be that the immigrant population was mostly made up of southwest Mexicans. The politicians could rationalize it in that way. But now, immigrants are all over the United States. They're in all of the southern states, Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia, Tennessee. They're in the Midwest, Ohio, Minnesota. They're in the farthest reaches, the smallest towns, the largest cities of this country and, although predominately Mexican and Latino, there are immigrants from all over the world. You have blue-eyed, white Bosnian women working in the hotels of Chicago next to African American and Latina women. You have Vietnamese sheet metal workers in Houston, Texas. You have

Guatemalans and South Americans in Durham, North Carolina.

Immigrants are all over this country and they're also in many, many more types of jobs and industries and sectors of the economy than they were back in the eighties and prior to that. You name it — construction, service work, hi-tech, healthcare — that's where immigrants are. The issue of immigrants' rights and the abuse of immigrants and the rights of immigrants as workers really deserves far more national attention...

I think, for the most part, we accomplished what we set out to do on the Immigrant Worker's Freedom Ride. We built upon the civil rights movement that had taken place throughout so many decades and hundreds of years in this country — built upon it to apply the same basic moral issue that all people are equal and that we should all have the same rights and nobody should be treated differently. These categories of you're legal, you're illegal — all that has been used to pit us against each other. It shouldn't work any more. We've set out to build a stronger, progressive movement for civil rights in this country. We set out to make sure that organizations that are involved in this in pockets throughout this country feel a part of a national movement.

And we proved that through eighteen buses traveling 20,000-plus miles; having events in over 103 cities and towns; connecting forty states to each other; going to Washington, D.C., meeting with many senators and members of Congress. It was extremely exhilarating and powerful and passionate. And all of that happened in the context of getting stopped in Sierra Blanca, Texas. ☆

For more information, visit: www.iwfr.org

Lyn Goldfarb is an award-winning documentary filmmaker specializing in history and social issue documentaries. You can reach her at lyn@documentary-films.tv

Peter Holderness is a photographer based in Los Angeles. www.peterholderness.com



Yolanda Cruz and other Freedom Riders from Los Angeles get their first look at the militarized border in Nogales Arizona

Living in a Postcard

Local Residents Feel the Consequences of Tourism-Driven Economies

My hometowns have become postcards. It's hard to live in a postcard — the dimensions are rather constricting. It's true, my hometowns are beautiful. And I don't begrudge anyone the right to experience their beauty. But when a town becomes a postcard, its life comes to a halt.

This is what I mean when I say that my hometowns have become postcards: they have become, to different degrees, places for tourists to look at rather than places for people to live.

My hometowns, Lewisburg, West Virginia and Brattleboro, Vermont, are small towns in the most rural and thoroughly mountainous states in this country. They are each situated next to a major highway that pours tourists into the picturesque heartlands of their states. They are gateway towns.

Both Lewisburg and Brattleboro are blessed with main streets lined with historic buildings, a higher-than-average density of artists and craftspeople, and multiple institutions of higher learning. Both towns have historically functioned as hubs for the surrounding rural areas and both have sold their souls for the tourist dollar.

In Lewisburg, reactions to my assessment can be sharp: "Without tourism this town would be a pit!" "Where do you want us to get our money? At least we don't have chemical plants or coal mines."

Yes, I am glad that my hometown isn't filled with chemical plants or coal mines. But at least the detrimental effects of chemical plants and coal mines are obvious to the naked eye.

Tourist towns look pretty. They are often bastions of historic preservation and environmental conservation — but all for the sake of the tourist. Heritage preservation and land conservation are couched in the language of economic development. Vermont's law against billboards is justified by the fact that our pristine landscape is a resource to sell to tourists, not by the fact that Vermonters don't want to have to look at billboards.

Our home is not our home; it is a display, an image created to sell to tourists. I was walking down Main Street in Brattleboro and I started to notice signs in the windows of several shops that said, "Brattleboro: all of Vermont, close to home." At first I was kind of confused. Brattleboro is my home, and it's only a tiny corner of southeastern Vermont. But I realized that the signs were aimed at tourists from points south, and they were saying

"Brattleboro has everything the rest of Vermont has to offer, and it's closer to where you live, so come spend your money here!"

All over downtown Brattleboro we have signs that locate

"home" in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts — but not here. Brattleboro is identified as a destination, not a home.

When you go to work in a destination it can be hard to make much money. Tourism doesn't tend to create the kind of jobs that can support families. In North Brattleboro, a new motel is going up, next to the other motels. Across the street, a paper manufacturing plant stands empty, next to a partially empty book printing plant. The jobs at the paper company and the printing company paid benefits and a livable wage. The jobs at the motel will likely be part time with low pay and no benefits.

It can even be hard to spend your money in a destination if you're not a tourist. A friend in Lewisburg recently complained, "You can't buy an apple in this town, but if you want a handcrafted bird ornament, you have your choice of stores." When I was growing up there, downtown Lewisburg had a grocery store and three drugstores. All have closed, most replaced by galleries or gift shops.

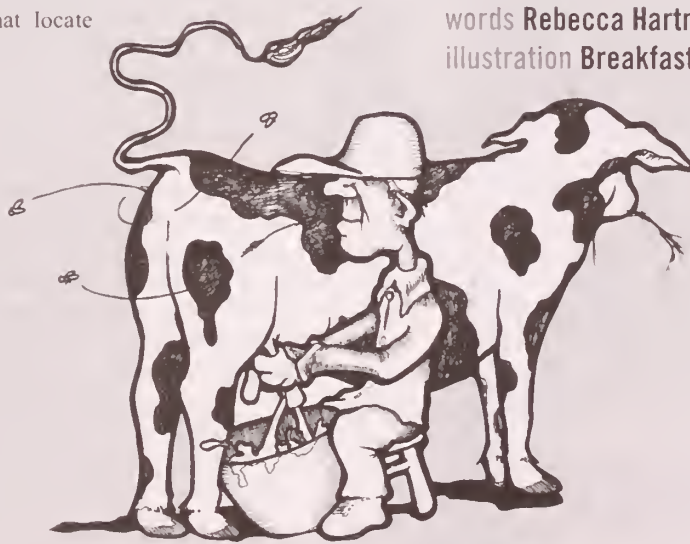
A couple of years ago, a friend of mine who grew up in Brattleboro joked that you could tell the health of a town by the number of galleries in it — the more galleries, the sicker the town. I remember bristling at the comment because, well, I like galleries! But I've come to see his point. When too many tourist-oriented businesses displace resident-oriented businesses, it's a sign that a community has chosen to remake itself in the image of the tourists' desires, often at the expense of its own needs.

I don't think communities usually make the choice consciously. It's usually a matter of economic development, a matter of tourism being promoted as a clean, consequence-free industry. By the time the people in a community realize that tourism does have very real consequences, they have already become, as Australian scholar Helen Armstrong writes, "Self-conscious parodies of themselves." They are dependent on tourist money and alienated from their own heritage and landscape, living at the edges of a museum exhibit that values them only as tour guides and actors.

How to break the addiction to tourist money? We can start by realizing that the consequences of postcard living are as real as the consequences of air pollution or water pollution. And we can consider those consequences when we make decisions about the futures of our towns. ☆

Rebecca Hartman grew up in Lewisburg, West Virginia and now lives in Brattleboro, Vermont. She can be reached at RebeccaCH@gmail.com

words Rebecca Hartman
illustration Breakfast





Infected

AIDS Rates Are Closely Tied to Socio-Economic Boundaries

by Inequality

Alison Katz is a social scientist who has worked in various positions at the United Nations (UN) and in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on issues of AIDS, poverty, and development. We corresponded via email in January 2004, shortly after publication of the UN's annual *AIDS Epidemic Update*, which found that "The global HIV/AIDS epidemic killed more than 3 million people in 2003, and an estimated 5 million acquired the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) — bringing to 40 million the number of people living with the virus around the world."

Clamor: What do recently-released AIDS data tell us about this disease?

Katz: They tell us what they have been telling us for 20 years: that AIDS is a disease of poverty. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to 75 percent of all people living with HIV/AIDS — 28.5 million out of 40 million worldwide. The other most affected region is South and South East Asia with 5.6 million people living with HIV/AIDS. These are some of the poorest regions of the planet.

When I say that AIDS is a disease of poverty, I mean that poverty, directly and indirectly, is the major determinant — it is not just a result. I stress this because we are being led to believe that poverty in these regions was invented by AIDS. This is very convenient for neoliberal fundamentalists who are always keen to find explanations other than structural causes, including the implementation of their own policies, to account for accelerating misery and inequality in the world.

A study undertaken by the UN university has partly dismantled this myth [Cornia and Court, 2001]. The researchers demonstrated that the halt in progress in life expectancy and infant and child mortality during "globalization" in many poor countries cannot be explained by the AIDS pandemic. The surging inequalities everywhere are due to "new causes linked to the excessively liberal economic policy regimes and the way economic reforms have been carried out."

The data also tell us in the starkest terms that feel-good phrases like "We are all in this together" or "AIDS doesn't respect borders" are as fatuous as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS' cute slogan "Live and Let Live." It would be more honest to admit that "We Live and We Let Them Die" — as we always have. In Europe and most of the industrialized world, HIV prevalence rates are still below 0.1 percent — often below 0.01 percent. In many Sub-Saharan countries, the figure is 25 percent.

What accounts for such high HIV prevalence rates in Africa?

The international health community, which includes UNAIDS and WHO and unfortunately many NGOs who take their cue from them, would have us believe that individual behaviour accounts for the high prevalence rates in Africa. Given the enormous differences between regions in prevalence, one might expect that this would be met with disbelief or at least puzzlement. Mostly, however, people don't question the racist notion that black people are "promiscuous." It is so deeply ingrained, and at the same time sex and death are such taboo subjects, that it is rarely scrutinized. Few people stop to think, "Now is that reasonable as an explanation?"

Let us remember that African women face a risk of HIV infection which is 500 to 1000 times greater than European women. That is rather a large difference

to explain in terms of African and European male sexual behaviour respectively.

If individual sexual behavior is not responsible, what is the explanation?

No one is denying that HIV is transmitted sexually, among other modes of transmission. At an individual level, the only protection is safe sex, condom use, or abstinence. But public health has to address larger questions of vulnerability at the level of populations. Individual behaviour cannot account for the enormous variation between countries. What has to be explained is the very high population transmission rates, the extreme susceptibility to infection, and then extreme infectiousness to others once infected. We need to look at biological vulnerability in terms of weakened immune systems as a result of miserable living conditions — as we would for any infectious disease. The neglect of this factor is extraordinary and may not be all that innocent either.

This notion that certain living conditions make people more susceptible to infection seems like a pretty basic public health lesson.

Yes, “the bacteria is nothing; the terrain is all.” Louis Pasteur’s dictum remains the best summary of public health wisdom today.

Take the example of tuberculosis (TB) — still a major cause of death among poor people today. One third of the world’s population is infected with TB, but most of these will never develop active TB. Those whose immune systems are poorly functioning because of malnutrition or chronic co-infection with other diseases of poverty are likely to develop TB and diseases like it. Death rates from TB in Europe and the USA were brought down well before the advent of antibiotics by improvements in nutrition, water, sanitation and housing. People were not accused of breathing too much on each other!

Breathing and having unprotected, penetrative vaginal sex — which is responsible for the overwhelming majority of HIV infections, particularly in poor countries — are perhaps not quite in the same category, but both can reasonably be seen as everyday human behaviours. The commonsense interpretation of the actual risk attached to these behaviours is that they occur in environments which range from highly dangerous to more or less safe.

So what is a highly dangerous environment for HIV infection?

We know that resistance to infection — whether bacterial, viral or parasitical — is determined by immune function. Why should

HIV/AIDS be different from all other infections? Lack of food, decent housing, proper sanitation, and clean water, and chronic infections such as intestinal worms, malaria, TB, all weaken or interfere with immune function. Some researchers have suggested that unless we deal with all the diseases of poverty — in particular parasitic infections, which are endemic in poor countries and create havoc with people’s immune system — we haven’t a hope of controlling the AIDS epidemic.

Other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as syphilis or gonorrhoea also play a role because they significantly increase risk of transmission. People mostly cannot get treatment for common STIs in poor countries as health services are poorly functioning or nonexistent — often thanks to policies imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

To be fair, hasn’t some attention been paid to dangerous environments in terms of sex work or migrant labor?

Yes, that is true and these are social and economic dangers. However, there is never any suggestion that these life-threatening, socially-constructed arrangements should be socially deconstructed!

A good example of this is provision of condoms at the pithead of privately owned mines in Carltonville, South Africa. The men working in these mines are migrant workers thousands of miles from home. Local women are reduced to servicing men’s sexual needs for their own survival and their children’s survival. And the best solution to this problem is handing out condoms? One can’t help feeling that the priority is to make sure those miners keep bringing up the gold for Anglo-American and Goldfield.

To go back to racist assumptions, is there any evidence that sexual behavior is different between peoples, nations, population groups?

This is the critical evidence required to support their strategy. But strangely, WHO’s and UNAIDS’ own studies show that sexual behaviour varies very little between countries. The only fact which emerges consistently is that men everywhere tend to have more partners than women everywhere. Furthermore, a study conducted in four African cities found no correlation between different sexual practices and HIV prevalence. These facts appear to have no impact whatsoever on strategy which remains obstinately focused on individuals. Blaming the victim is part of the neoliberal approach to health. It nicely avoids any discussion of structural violence, which would be deeply threatening to the status quo of current international economic arrangements.

So what should activists be promoting?

Health activists should be promoting sound public health policy and strategy that addresses the root causes of poverty and consequent ill health. This is a social justice approach to health, as opposed to a neoliberal approach. As the People’s Health Movement say, “Poverty is the disease.” It is a choice between Band-Aid, cosmetic, unsustainable solutions or “once and for all” solutions.

Unfortunately, it is not poor people themselves who are making the choice. It is the rich and powerful through their international financial institutions like the IMF, World Bank and WTO. They have a strong preference for magic medical bullets — drugs that bring in profits for multinational pharmaceutical companies. They have an equally strong aversion to threats to current international arrangements which are fantastically advantageous to them.

Primary prevention is not condoms or sex education, but meeting basic material needs for health with the explicit aim of increasing population resistance to disease of all kinds. Condoms and other interventions directed towards individual protection will always be essential, but it must be recognized that, at the level of populations, this is only damage limitation rather than removal of root causes.

Meeting basic needs requires a set of simple macroeconomic measures to create a fair international economic order. Cancelling debt; making trade fair; supporting national self sufficiency and self determination; stopping pillage of natural resources, destabilizing financial flows and interference in matters of national sovereignty. People have said it over and over, they don’t want charity or international aid; they want social and economic justice. Health and health services will flow from this, like all public services, to meet basic needs. ☆

For more information, see the article by Alison Katz in the African Journal of AIDS Research, 2002, 1:125-142.



SAVE THE DATE!
June 17-19, 2005
Allied Media
Conference
Bowling Green, Ohio
alliedmediaconference.com

THE SHRINKING MAP

ROADBLOCKS, BARRIERS, AND THE DETERIORATION OF MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL/ PALESTINE

words Liv Leader

Late on an August afternoon I climb out of a taxi at Qalandia Checkpoint, the Israeli military installation between Ramallah and Jerusalem. It's the checkpoint I most frequently cross as I travel from my apartment in Ramallah to meetings in Jerusalem. A mere ten miles separate these two cities, but traveling from the Palestinian West Bank to Israeli-controlled Jerusalem now entails a series of short taxi rides interrupted by checkpoints and Israel's newly constructed separation barrier.

The weather has cooled since June, but the sun allows no mercy to the group of Palestinians waiting to cross the checkpoint. For me, with my blue passport in hand, the checkpoints are a tolerable nuisance. Since a Palestinian bomb was detonated here earlier this month, the queues have grown longer and Israeli security more stringent.

The line is slow, I'm sweating as usual as we inch forward toward the metal detector. We are contained between concrete blocks that separate us from the men, and coils of razor wire separating us from Palestinians heading back towards Ramallah. The woman in front of me steps forward, catching the hem of her Muslim overcoat on the razor wire by our feet. Its soft fabric tugs gently against the unmoving barb of the wire as she tries to inch ahead. It's this moment that reminds me that waiting at a checkpoint in the hot sun to pass from one Palestinian town to the next is not normal. This clean, beautifully dressed woman should not have her long, flowing *jilbab* ripped on razor wire. She is dressed to ride in a car, not to wait, sweating at the dusty checkpoint at Qalandia. As I reach down to unhook her hem from the wire, I have the urge to brush off the dirt that clings to the edge of her coat.



Abu Mohammad stands at Israeli gate that his village dismantled in a non-violent demonstration against the separation barrier. The village's efforts succeeded in having the barrier slightly re-routed, thus saving the olive grove behind Abu Mohammad. photo by Liv Leader

The Barrier's Shadow

A barrier built to keep out the enemy, historically, seems to have the odds stacked against its success. As the old adage goes, "If there's a will, there's a way." But in the interim, Israeli society has almost unanimously accepted the barrier as a necessary means of their protection. It's a hasty security solution for a post-peace process society that feels it has no Palestinian partner to negotiate with. The barrier is a temporary structure, quickly being built to make the Israeli public feel safer, while giving politicians an excuse not to address the substantive issues that comprise the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, namely: Israeli settlements, Jerusalem, water resources, borders, Palestinian refugees, security, and the very nature of Jewish and Palestinian nationalisms. Now entering the fifth year of the Intifada, the political process — to say nothing of Palestinian resistance — has ceased. Today the reality of the



A mayor of a small Palestinian village is pointing at the fence that the Israeli military has built through the town's farmland. photo by Shuruq Harb

separation barrier is easy to understand: it makes Israelis feel safer and throws another obstacle in the daily lives of the Palestinians.

From the West Bank, the barrier's significance is clear. There's nothing subtle about a 25-foot cement wall or a chain link fence blocking your daily route. In Israel, however, the barrier's presence is not as visceral, though there are plenty of mental and physical roadblocks with which to contend. Jerusalem, the disputed capital city, is on high alert. Most of the buses in the central part of the city are equipped with security guards, and stress from the death-defying ride easily reconciles itself into profiling fellow passengers in a solitary game of "guess who's carrying a bomb." The street malls and outside cafes are filled with suspecting eyes, and while I run errands or stop for an occasional ice cream in central Jerusalem, I have to remind myself that this normalcy exists in the shadow of the ever-present threat of suicide bombings and random attacks.

Israeli Roulette

In the last days of August I arrive at Café Hillel in West Jerusalem for a meeting with Amy, an Israeli who commutes by bus. As I wait, an old man at the table next to me asks me to pass the artificial sweetener. We begin talking and when he learns that I am writing an article on transportation in Israel/Palestine, he tells me I should interview him. Sam, a 50-year resident of Jerusalem owns a car, but chooses to ride the bus because finding parking is a hassle. When I ask him what he thinks of his government's separation barrier, he gives me the same puzzled look I've seen from many Israelis. He tells me that wherever the government builds the barrier, the influx of terrorists goes down to zero. "Its effectiveness is proven," he says, and seems to wonder why I would ask a question with such an obvious answer.

When Amy arrives, she tells me about her religious studies, her new wedding gown business, and her loyalty to Café Hillel following an attack last year that left seven people dead. She can't afford a car and has anxiety about riding buses — her sister-in-law survived a bombing. She tells me she gets off buses if another passenger seems to be acting suspiciously, and she feels nervous if someone who doesn't look Jewish boards the bus. It's an awful situation. She tells me, "to judge people by the way they look. [It] has programmed us to be very careful and look at people around us." Like Sam, the barrier, the security guards, and her own quiet prayers make Amy feel safer; she prefers to live with Jews and let the Arabs live with Arabs.

"I'm not a political person," says Amy. "I don't like talking about politics. I want to live in a peaceful country, but I don't know when this will happen."

Within the Wall

When the barrier is complete, West Bank Palestinians will be fenced in on three sides, and with more than 50 percent of the barrier now finished, crossing into Israel has become extremely difficult. Mahmoud is too concerned about the Israeli secret service to let me use

it also separates Palestinians from each other. Nadine lives in Beit Jala, a suburb of Bethlehem, and commutes 15 miles to her job in Ramallah. Having completed her undergraduate work in economics in the U.S. and her Masters in Development Studies from the London School of Economics, she secured a prized research position with the United Nations.

"In many towns such as Beit Jala, one cannot use their cars to access all parts of the city. Areas of Beit Jala are now isolated from the rest of the town with earth mounds. This is why I take a [taxi] from my house to this earth mound, cross the earth mound [on foot] and take a car to Damascus gate in Jerusalem. [Because] I have a Jerusalem ID, I am allowed on that route, but Palestinians with a West Bank ID have to [use] another road. At Damascus gate, I take a car to Qalandia checkpoint, cross on foot, passing through revolving doors and metal detectors, to take another car that takes me to the center of Ramallah. Then I take another car to my work place." Around two hours later Nadine arrives at work, a commute that she used to be able to drive in thirty minutes.

Accompanying Nadine one morning on her marathon commute to Ramallah, we drove through West Jerusalem in a Palestinian taxi with Israeli plates. Looking out at Jewish Israel, I asked Nadine if she had friends in Israel. She said she didn't. Earlier, when I asked Amy if she knew any Palestinians, she said she might have met one once.

Their experiences are by no means unique, but strike me as surreal as I move across the separation barrier, across the green line, into the separate and unequal worlds of Palestinians and Israelis. The end of the Oslo peace process has left both peoples embittered, racist, depressed, and somewhat resigned to their perpetual state of war.

The concept of separating Jew from Arab in this land of ultra-nationalisms is nothing new. But the barrier gives a new meaning to the notion of separation. The Israeli or Palestinian 'other' becomes a menacing abstraction, as the populations have virtually no contact, though they live within minutes of one another. In the absence of communication, the peace process can be set aside indefinitely.

Palestinian unemployment rises, Israel continues to import workers to replace Palestinians, and the separation barrier makes it harder for terrorists to bomb Israeli cities. In the meantime, Palestinian women and men like those at the Qalandia checkpoint, in a process that grows ever longer and less humane, are forced to wait.

More Info:

Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign: www.stophewall.org

B'Tselem: www.btselem.org

Israel's Security Fence: www.securityfence.mod.gov.il

Museum on the Seam: www.coexistence.art.museum/eng/main.htm

Taayush: www.taayush.org

Liv Leader has previously written for MotherJones.com and LIP magazine. She lives in San Francisco, and periodically gets up the nerve to venture back to Israel-Palestine. She can be reached at livleader@yahoo.com.



The invisible "green line" separating the West Bank from Israel. photo by Liv Leader

his real name. He's one of Israel's 200,000 illegal workers, already in his fourth year crossing illegally over the border. Mahmoud works construction in Taibeh, an Arab city in Israel only a few miles from his hometown, Tulkarem. Since sneaking around the barrier can take him six hours, he prefers to stay with relatives in Taibeh, venturing home every few weeks.

Mahmoud, 27, graduated five years ago from a leading Palestinian university with a degree in mathematics and a minor in computer science. "I learned ... not to be a construction worker, but to be a teacher. I like teaching and I left ... because in the West Bank the teachers gain nothing if we compare their salaries with the workers who work inside Israel," he says. Despite the fact that illegal workers are often arrested (and sometimes beaten) in Israel, the 300 extra dollars his construction gig pays is worth the risk.

Those who cross the barrier illegally into Israel keep their commutes to a minimum, but the barrier not only separates Jew from Arab,

the Making of a Mule

Debunking the Myths Surrounding Women Traffickers in America

When a male acquaintance offered Priscilla Arciniega an all-expense paid trip to South America, the twenty-two-year-old Queens native didn't spend too much time thinking about the motivations for his generosity. "That's what the lawyers and the judges and everyone didn't understand — I never get to go anywhere. So when he offered to pay for me, I jumped at the chance. Of course, now I realize that it was a stupid thing to do, but at the time all I was thinking about was a free vacation."

Priscilla wouldn't realize just how much this impromptu trip would cost her until she was nearly ready to head back to New York. That's when her host pulled her into a back room of his apartment and asked her to smuggle heroin back to the United States. When she refused, the man pulled out a gun. "He said that he knew where I lived, that he knew where my family lived. If I didn't do it, he would kill me and them too," Priscilla recalls. As the sole guardian of a six-year-old daughter, it was a chance she felt she just couldn't take.

And so Priscilla became, in the jargon of customs officials, a "stuffer and a swallower." She was forced to ingest several condoms full of heroin — the drug was also inserted into her vagina via a hollow dildo — and was instructed to deliver the cargo to an associate in the United States. When she was pulled aside at New York's John F. Kennedy airport, Priscilla confessed immediately. "I was so afraid that one of the bags would start leaking in my stomach and kill me." She was arrested and eventually sentenced to thirty months in prison.

Priscilla's story is far from unusual. Each year, thousands of young women are lured into the international drug trade by dealers looking to circumvent tighter borders and air traffic regulations. This demographic is particularly attractive because of their physical and economic vulnerability, a scenario that was recently dramatized by the film *Maria Full of Grace*. The plot revolves around its spirited title character, Maria Alvarez, a young pregnant woman who makes a living by stripping thorns under slave-like conditions in a Colombian rose plantation. When she is offered a position as a courier, smug-

gling drugs into the United States, Maria quickly accepts, believing it to be the only way she could provide a better life for herself and her child.

In her research on drug trafficking, criminologist Tracy Huling found that the majority of American 'mules' are poor women of color. Most are mothers of young children. Ninety-six percent have no prior criminal record. Yet mandatory minimum sentencing — enacted in 1986 and epitomized by New York's oppressive Rockefeller Drug Laws — direct judges to deliver fixed sentences to individuals convicted of a crime, regardless of culpability or other factors such as motive or prior criminal history. The laws disproportionately affect Hispanic women — 83% of those charged receive prison sentences, compared with 50% of whites and 52% of African Americans.

Possession of four or more ounces of a narcotic drug is a class A-1 felony, a crime that carries an automatic sentence of fifteen years to life in prison — a penalty harsher than if one were convicted of rape, armed robbery, or sexual abuse of a minor. In the first ten years since the mandatory minimum laws were passed, the number of women incarcerated in U.S. prisons for drug-related violations increased by 421%, according to Huling. Today women are the fastest growing segment of the prison population.

Priscilla was carrying 3.75 ounces of heroin when she was arrested, thereby narrowly avoiding a sentence that would have kept her in prison until at least her fortieth birthday. She surrendered to authorities in July, with the understanding that she would be immediately transferred to a SHOCK incarceration facility in Texas — a boot camp-style program for first-time offenders that could potentially shorten her prison sentence. However, two and a half months later, she's still waiting in a detention center in Brooklyn. Her hopes of coming home early have all but vanished.

The decision to become a drug mule almost always stems from a desire for a better



Words: Kristen Kidder

Illustration: Amy deVoogd

life. A life full of adventure and travel, one in which children and family members are cared and provided for. A life that is, most importantly, free from violence. In many ways, that desire is the equivalent of the American Dream. At the conclusion of *Maria Full of Grace*, the audience watches as Maria walks down the streets of New York, having narrowly eluded authorities and the drug warlords who were poised to kill her. The city is benevolence personified — the stuff of immigrant fantasies. The risks she took and sacrifices she made have been rewarded, and she is free to make a life for herself in America. It's a surprisingly uplifting conclusion. If only the same could be said for the thousands of women currently being held in U.S. prisons. ★

Kristen Kidder is a freelance writer living in Brooklyn, NY. She can be reached at knkidder@yahoo.com.



Weapon designers dream of creating machines that can perfectly mimic millions of years of evolutionary design — think insect eyes, a hummingbird's hover, a dolphin's sonar. Animals and the human militaries have shared a bond for centuries — enforced, of course, by humans. Originally used for combat, today animals are also used by the U.S. military as test subjects, to train soldiers in surgical procedures, and to design weaponry that resembles a cyberpunk's Frankensteinian fantasy. As this research progresses, it seems the military is increasingly interested in using technologically-altered animals in combat as well. It's an ethical cauldron that pits animal welfare activists and some bioethicists against a military that has yet to establish

Of Dolphin

how far they will — or won't — take these costly, often secretive projects, and asks us to consider just where the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable use of animals lies.

WORDS Irene Tejaratchi
Illustration Zack Giallongo

The United States Department of Defense (DOD) and National Institute of Health (NIH) spend billions of dollars each year in research, a considerable amount of which goes to animal study and experimentation. Unlike hospitals, universities, and private labs, the DOD is not subject to inspection by the United States Department of Agriculture/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service — a notion that's all the more striking considering that the DOD tests particularly caustic and lethal substances on animals, such as radiation and biological weapons.

In 1992, responding to public concern, the U.S. House Armed Services Committee held a hearing on this matter. Testimonies from former military researchers, scientists, and animal welfare proponents, led U.S Representative Ron Dellums, on behalf of the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, to state, "The committee has heard testimony that raises disturbing questions about the necessity, ethical propriety, oversight, and quality of the military's experiments on animals." Following the hear-

"The events of September 11 have made it more difficult for anyone to blow the whistle on questionable research — which makes what is going on within the military in regards to animal research even more secretive," says Dr. Michael Stephens, Vice President of Animal Research Issues of the Humane Society. Published research reveals that armed forces facilities test Soviet AK-47 rifles, nuclear materials, and biological and chemical agents on animals. Other military experiments subject animals to decompression sickness, total body radiation, and electric shock. Since 1957, the DOD has operated "wound labs" where military surgical personnel can practice their skills on the injuries of animals that have been shot at with high-powered weapons. In response to public opposition, Congress limited the use of dogs in these labs in 1983. Apparently the fuzz factor rallied the masses. The military responded by quickly switching their animal of choice. The Humane Society recently launched a campaign to fight the DOD's current use of goats in wound labs, stating that the differences between goat and

interface which guides and tracks student progress in dissection and experimentation.

Taking Things Further: DARPA

The DOD's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) also studies animals in a megabucks frenzy to create state-of-the-art weaponry. DARPA is a fascinating, sometimes revolutionary contingent of the DOD. They're the folks that brought us the Internet and the computer mouse. They're also the troupe that proposed FutureMAP — a somewhat half-baked plan to create online markets where traders could speculate on likely terrorist attacks. Just a peek at some of DARPA's project titles reveal their fascination with animals in the plausible sci-fi dimension: Swarmbots, Wolfpack, the Canard Rotor/Wing, and the Hummingbird Warrior. And then there's what's affectionately called by some the "Roborat."

In 1996, Dr. John Chapin and his colleagues began work on technology that could solve neurological problems, such as a com-

n Spies and RoboRats

The Military's Secret Exploitation of Animals in a Time of War

ing, the Armed Services Committee established measures to increase oversight of the military's animal research program, such as annual reporting requirements and an investigation of the DOD animal use program by the U.S. General Accounting Office. Regardless, military testing often remains classified, and in our current political milieu, this secrecy has become all the greater.

human anatomy makes the practice largely irrelevant. As an alternative, the Humane Society proposes the use of the TraumaMan System, an anatomical mannequin approved by the American College of Surgeons that "replicates human skin, fat and muscle tissue, and can simulate human breathing and blood flow," and the VIRGIL system, a realistic human mannequin that connects to a computer

puter interface that would enable a paralyzed individual to regain control of his limbs. Using rats, the researchers stepped into a new realm. Taking the concept of operant conditioning a step beyond the sit-and-get-a-biscuit model, researchers began rewarding rats by directly stimulating their brains. In 2002, news broke that Dr. Chapin and his colleagues at Downstate Medical Center in New

continued next page

York could successfully direct a rat's movements by implanting three electrodes into its brain: one to arouse the medial forebrain bundle (the pleasure center), the other two to stimulate the whisker bundles. Stimulation of the left-side whiskers might prompt the rat to turn left; if she did, she'd be rewarded with a zap of pleasure. Like heroin addicts jonesing for their next fix, the rats really went for it. Prompts of their whiskers sent them climbing up walls, jumping across wide gaps, and across chain-link fences. The research, commissioned by DARPA, spread beyond the realm of paralysis into considerably more diverse arenas. Perhaps, they mused, we could

and respect for the animals. "In the lab we leave the cage tops open, and the rats sit there. When we press the button, they look up to us with what looks like a smile. I realize I'm anthropomorphizing, but I guarantee you — they love doing this," he says. Proponents of this research agree, and many state that it's no different than training an animal using external rewards. At least, in this case, they argue, animals don't experience the suffering of factory-bred chickens or cattle, which humans seem to have no problem consuming.

"Our approach is not to oppose entire areas or fields of research," says Dr. Stephens of the Humane Society. "We are, however,



"In the lab we leave the cage tops open, and the rats sit there. When we press the button, they look up to us with what looks like a smile. I realize I'm anthropomorphizing, but I guarantee you — they love doing this."

highly skeptical of the military's use of animals, given the nature of this research and our experience with military animal use. We believe that the use of animals for military purposes warrants a higher level of scrutiny of its aims, potential alternative methods, and potential 'costs' to the animals." Regarding aims and potential, some ethicists worry about how "roborat" research might extend into human experimentation. Perhaps they're

send these rats into combat zones, on landmine-clearing missions, around disaster sites....

The research sparked considerable bioethical debate. "This could be just the beginning of a trend to use technology to turn animals into little more than animated robots," said Dr. Martin Stephens of the Humane Society. "If that happens on a wide enough scale, it could debase our view of animals and change the nature of our relationships with them."

The idea of directly entering an animal's brain and manipulating his actions also carried a heavy repulsion factor. Even Dr. Chapin, one of the lead researchers in the 'remotely guided sniffing rat project', conceded. "There is something inherently grotesque about wires coming out of the brain, so I can understand. But in the 1970s, people went beyond their dreams and did what at the time what was considered a grotesque thing — going directly into the heart to place pacemaker wires.... Today, there are millions of people wearing pacemakers. We're now at the next stage."

Professor Chapin states that the rats he researches on are treated well not only because the government subjects his lab to strenuous standards but because he holds a high regard

onto something. DARPA's "Brain Interface Program," which is being funded to the tune of several million dollars, aims to wire soldiers' minds to computers in planes, tanks, and elsewhere.

Militarizing Mammals

While the debate over the 'roborats' continues, the fact remains that the military has used animals for their own benefit for decades. Since 1939, dogs have served in the U.S. military as scouts, sentries, messengers, and more. After the events of 9/11, U.S. security forces doubled the intake of dogs trained and deployed for explosive-detection. Dogs' incredible sense of smell — the olfactory portion of a dog's brain is four times larger than a human's, and dogs possess millions more smell receptors — make them particularly suited for this type of work. Since the 1960s, military scientists have researched dolphins and trained them to perform such tasks as attaching explosive and electronic eavesdropping devices on enemy ships and submarines and helping Navy divers recover lost weapons from the ocean floor.

In the mid-1980s, the Navy developed a method for dolphins to locate mines. Possessing sonar that humans have not been able

to reproduce technologically, a dolphin can distinguish between a ping-pong ball and golf ball in the water based solely on density. The Iraq War marked the first time dolphins were deployed in a real war situation to locate mines, at the port of Umm Qasr. But dolphins' exceptional intelligence, obvious sentience, and the stress that they manifest in captivity (i.e. ulcers, inability to procreate, etc.) make their use in combat, as well as the military's methods of training them, cause for considerable controversy.

Also controversial is the cost. According to the Humane Society, "President Bush's proposed fiscal year 2004 budget includes an 8.2% increase for the National Institute of Health's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which expects to fund more than \$1.7 billion in contracts and grants for biodefense and bioterrorism research in 2004. It's likely that tens of thousands of animals (such as guinea pigs, rabbits, non-human primates, and mice) will be used in these research projects, which will focus heavily on what NIAID has labeled "Category A" pathogens such as anthrax, botulism, tularemia, smallpox, plague and four types of viral hemorrhagic fevers."

"This will be the largest single increase of any discipline, in any institute, for any disease in the history of NIH, including the escalation of HIV resources and the war on cancer," said NIAID Director Anthony S. Fauci at a December 2002 conference on federal bioterrorism research.

In a country overshadowed by fear, plunking down billions for this type of research might be seen as a necessary evil in sustaining an advanced military. To others, its extreme cost, both in dollars and in animal lives, seems extravagant and ethically bankrupt. Either way, projects like the 'roborat' and the use of animals in combat situations continue to gain momentum and legitimacy, leaving a critical question in their wake: "how far will the military go?" ★

Further reading:

- The Humane Society of the United States: www.hsus.org
- International Marine Mammal Association: www.imma.org
- Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency: www.darpa.mil
- Department of Defense's (DOD) annual reports regarding animal use: www.dtic.mil/biosys/org/au.html

Irene Tejaratchi is an Associate Producer at the PBS series "Nature," and a Writer who's contributed to publications as varied as New York Newsday, PBS online, and 3AM Magazine. A native New Yorker, Irene presently resides in the East Village. Email her at Kittenclawed@yahoo.com



Between the first world and the third world there lies a shadow world called the border. It is a physical place that includes such paired towns as Bisbee, Arizona, USA and Naco, Sonora, Mexico. It is a place in the minds of people, built of fear and misunderstanding.

It was in the spirit of trust that I came to the steel wall that marks the US-Mexico border one day. "Hop in the back of the truck," a woman offered, and I climbed into the metal bed with four strangers. We left the parking lot and drove through town. Pavement turned to dust as the truck navigated the Border Patrol road that parallels the wall.

by Laurel Luddite

"Do you know where we're going?" I asked the other passengers. No idea, they replied.

About a mile west of town the steel fence stopped. Replacing it was a low rail. On each side — north and south — the desert shrubland stretched out to distant hills. Fifty people stood out in the desert evenly divided by the rail.

Folding tables were loaded with beans, spaghetti, salsa, potato salad, chips, and chichirrones. The people on each side smiled at each other and shook hands. Words of English and Spanish were passed back and forth. The fiesta began.

A volleyball net was set up over the rail and crowds of people gathered on either side to send the ball spinning into the other country. No regard for numbers of players, rules or any of that official stuff. We laughed and clapped at the misses and good shots regardless of who made them, and soon the division of language dissolved into the monosyllabic expressions of the game. "Oo oo oo! Ayi!" No one kept score.

The stretch of desert once used only as a battlefield became a park and a theatre and a volleyball court. The hated fence became part of our game, and the railing became a place to set down your drink and lean across to talk to a neighbor. The division of the border became an ironic joke as the ball flew from one side to the other.

Some people played music and read poems while others listened, sitting on the rail, half an ass cheek into *el otro lado*. Food was shared. Kids and dogs ducked under the fence to play with each other, oblivious to the Border Patrol trucks that kept driving through the picnic. When we confronted them about this disruption, they replied that they

feared our volleyball might be filled with cocaine.

Hours into the party, I looked towards the setting sun and saw a small army come over the crest of a hill. They walked determinedly towards us down the dirt road running along the Mexican side of the border. As they got closer, I saw they were a group of nine men and women dressed in many ragged layers of clothing. One of the men carried a little boy on his shoulders. The rest carried little daypacks or nothing at all.

Their tired faces showed no surprise at coming upon this strange gathering in the desert. As they rested a moment in the crowd, we handed over all the water bottles we had with us and as much food as they could carry. They had the dark features of southern Mexico and the look of a long hard journey in their eyes. Before long they started walking again, waiting for night and a chance to cross. Meanwhile we packed up the sound system, got back in the trucks, and drove home.

Desert Dream

I must have fallen asleep at the wheel that night as my truck continued rolling north through the Anza-Borrego desert. Suddenly a crowd of people stood by the side of the road. No mistaking the oversized jackets, blankets, baseball caps — *migrantes*. They waved me down but I was already stopping, calling, “¿Nesicitan agna?”

“Si,” they replied as they gathered around the truck. I lifted two gallons and handed them around. I could get more water from the state park campground; their options were more limited. One man who was acting as leader/spokesman spoke rapidly in Spanish, to which I could only reply, “Um, tengo un poco español. Losientos, no entiendo.” But I understood well enough; they needed a ride.

Time to put my truck where my heart is, not to mention my big mouth. It’s a two-year minimum sentence for helping these people in any way. Giving them water was somewhere on the grey edge of a felony. Giving them a ride... that would be fairly black and white. Two years and confiscation of my truck. I opened the tailgate.

They climbed in swiftly. Five, seven, eight people? “No es posible todos.” But the man reassured me. “¿Si, Si!” The last woman was trying to squeeze in. “OK,” I sighed. “Two can ride up front. Dos, a el frente.” Why not — if I was seen, I was caught, no matter where people were sitting. He called to the woman and both of them climbed into the cab.

Through slow, repeated Spanish and much grabbing of wrists — handcuff style — they finally made me understand that they

wanted to get caught. “*Queremos regresar a Guatemala. Estoy perdido.*” the woman said very slowly. They were lost. They hadn’t eaten in four days. They were going to turn themselves in to Border Patrol or police, and get a free ticket home to Guatemala.

Oh! Thrilled to finally comprehend, I turned around back towards the lights of town. “*Vamos a el pueblo — la policia esta aqui. Pero, NO es posible que la Migra o policia lea yo.*” “Si,” the woman nodded, agreeing that it would be very bad if I was seen with them. I gave them all the food I could find in the dark truck — just snacks for the road — and tried not to see the desperate way the two people ate.

I knew the woman was younger than she looked. The kind of life where you spend four days lost in a foreign desert ages you fast. The man, disregarding his leathery skin, was somewhere under thirty. Our age. My friends and I seem to lead eventful, sometimes “rough” lives, at least when seen against the background of American society. I tried to imagine our little groups taking on this adventure — for survival, not just for a story to tell.

We drove to the outlying houses of Ocotillo and I pulled onto a side street. With my horrible Spanish I tried to tell the woman to walk towards the gas station’s lit-up sign and they would find *policia* quick, no problem. For a second I contemplated driving right up to the sheriff’s station I’d seen downtown, just to see what would happen. Maybe I’d get to make some righteous speech about the inhumanity of the border... as they slapped the cuffs on and towed my truck away. Not tonight.

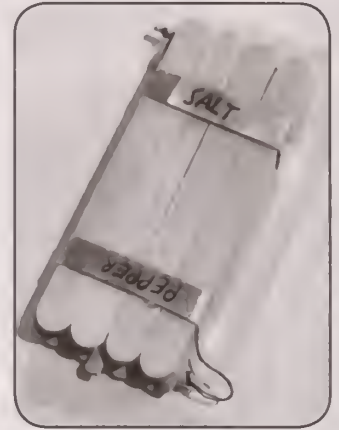
“¿Bien?” I asked, and they began to get out there. One by one faces appeared in the sideglow of my headlights to say “thank you” or “*gracias.*” Before the whole situation could really sink in, I was standing by the side of a dark desert highway being blessed by a tiny Guatemalan woman in a east-off starter jacket.

I drove off calling goodbyes and all the traditional Spanish parting phrases I could sneak past the atheistic censor in my head. May everything go well. That night I slept in the desert still feeling the warmth of the woman’s fingers circling my wrist. ☆

Lawel Luddite is a freelance writer based in the Siskiyou Mountains but is constantly in motion along borders of all types. Her first book, Fire And Ice, is out on Apeshit Press — www.apeshitpress.org.



tattoo gun



salt and pepper shaker



battery cigarette lighter



mini lathe



candle

The Way Things Could Work

Prisoners' Inventions Project Finds Inspiration in Prisoners' Everyday Designs

by Marisa Jahn

What began as an informal correspondence between Angelo, an inmate in an (unknown) federal institution, and Marc Fischer of Temporary Services, a Chicago-based art collaborative, two years later became a zine of anecdotes, drawings, and explanations documenting tactics and inventions used by Angelo and his cell mates (cellies) to assert certain rights, maintain dignity, and improve their quality of life while in prison. Selections from their exhaustive correspondence were later chosen and recreated by Temporary Services for the project's exhibition at the MassMoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) in 2003, and thereafter in Germany (Leipzig, Munich), the UK, Hamilton (NY), and Philadelphia's art-activist gallery, *Basekamp*. As an exhibition, *Prisoners' Inventions* consists of illustrations of Angelo's work and their recreation by Temporary Services and, at Angelo's request, an exact replica of his cell, giving visitors a strong psychological context for the design and manufacture of the inventions. A companion book containing how-to diagrams and illustrations of the inventions was published in 2003. The ingenuity of Angelo and his cellies is evident, and both the book and the exhibition have garnered enormous success and warm reception in the U.S. and Europe.

Angelo's illustrations demonstrate a range of incredibly resourceful inventions. Each is a detailed analysis of the various parts, pieces, and uses of the daily homemade instruments of prison life, in a way that almost mocks the how-to repair books of the mainstream world. Some of the tools and instructions Angelo documents are seemingly innocuous: how to curdle souring milk into cottage cheese, the manifold ways to harness electricity to light a cigarette, how to convert your locker into a grill, and how to heat food using a fluorescent cell light. Other inventions, and the pathos-laden anecdotes that accompany them, communicate the human desire for personal dignity, bodily and physical territory, and emotional/sexual intimacy. For instance, we learn how to transform bed sheets and paperclips into a curtain and regain privacy, how to turn your roll of toilet paper into a stove/heat bomb, how to turn plastic baggies and thread into a prophylactic (as a gift for an inmate you've had your eye on). Perhaps one of Angelo's most

evocative stories recounts the tale of co-ed inmates who communicated with each other via the sewer pipe. By tethering fishing line on either end, they could then tie on notes, drawings, portraits, etc. According to Angelo, "the massive exchange of data between the sexes blossomed in time into some actual love affairs, though of course only on paper."

Certain of Angelo's drawings are reminiscent of the work of David Macaulay, whose book *How Things Work* demystifies the workings of everyday machines such as refrigerators and car engines. Like Angelo, Macaulay illustrates the hard mechanics of everyday tools and appliances, flanking the illustrations with text, examples, and anecdotes. For example, in deconstructing the mechanics of an electric kettle, Macaulay schools us on the concepts of electric heat through the transference of electrons. By contrast, in *Prisoners' Inventions*, Angelo illustrates how to take advantage of an electric kettle's property as an electrical resistor, refashioning it into a cigarette lighter. While Macaulay illustrates an air conditioner, explaining the complex concepts and mechanics of refrigeration in *How Things Work*, Angelo describes a tactic used by cellies in older prisons where the air conditioning is poor or non-existent: damming the cell door, toilet, and sink with clothes or plastic, then running the sink and toilet in continuous overflow until the desired depth of water in the cell is reached. The technique can be used solely for personal pleasure ('pooling') or as an individual or collective tactic to make a political statement.

In his writings on space and power, Michel de Certeau's definition of "tactic" articulates the way Angelo and his cellies' inventions work within, around, and between prison regulations. For de Certeau, a *tactic* is a "calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. The space of a tactic is the space of the other [that plays] on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power... What it wins it cannot keep... it must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary owners. It poaches them...." While Macaulay's illustrations describe strategies of the theoretical, the hypothetical, the normative, Angelo's illustrations offer tactics on how to mine, divert, or poach

these resources. In other words, Macaulay illuminates the way things work; Angelo's drawings counteroffer with the way things can *alternately* work.

The production of the book and exhibition themselves comments on the limits and paradoxes of intellectual property for the incarcerated. As the illustrations are considered illicit, those in prison cannot receive the book, see the exhibition, nor read reviews about the project. Despite the fact that he is the author, Angelo himself cannot read the very book he wrote. Temporary Services tells us this anonymity is not necessarily a bad thing: "Angelo insists that he's just trying to stay sane during the course of his sentence and he does not want the attention that he might receive if knowledge of his full name, his conviction, or his exact location were made public. He does not want the hassle of becoming a celebrity prisoner. So some distance was created in order to protect Angelo's privacy. This strategy has helped keep viewers more focused on the major themes of this work: the inventions and the social context that forced their creation." In addition, not knowing the true identity of its author allows us to appreciate the collaborative nature of the prisoners' ingenuity.

In an age in which we witness the commodification of resistance movements almost at their inception, it would be easy to view *Prisoners' Inventions* as an uncritical glamorization and exploitation of prison life. Because most of the inventions presented have little use in the outside world, it would be easy to dismissively aestheticize them, viewing them as primitive tools of a distant, alien culture. *Prisoners' Inventions*, however, is a project that successfully avoids the trap of romanticizing the "other." In the end, it is Angelo's self-reflexive humor and unpretentious honesty, the charm and grittiness of his anecdotes and drawings that make for a genuine and enlightening experience. ☆

Marisa Jahn is a San Francisco-based artist, educator, and curator. In 2001, she co-founded Pond, an art-activist space dedicated to showcasing experimental public art. Reach her at hello@marisajahn.com or www.marisajahn.com

SPLIT LIP RAYFIELD



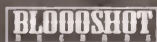
Should Have Seen It Coming

SPLIT LIP RAYFIELD 'Should Have Seen It Coming'

Their aggro-string band explosiveness has been honed to a fine edge. Headbangers, bluegrass hounds and tie-dyed jam banders will all find something to love here. Bridges the gap between between "American Chopper," The Carter Family and Motorhead. A rollicking, relevant, and remarkably tuneful dust up. BS 113

'HARD HEADED WOMAN: A Celebration of Wanda Jackson'

A tribute to one of rock and roll's original badasses. Includes tracks from KELLY HOGAN, NEKO CASE, WAYNE "THE TRAIN" HANCOCK, ROBBIE FULKS, ROSIE FLORES, BOTTLE ROCKETS, JESSE SYKES and more. BS 077



BLOODSHOT RECORDS 3039 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60618 www.bloodshotrecords.com

leftturn

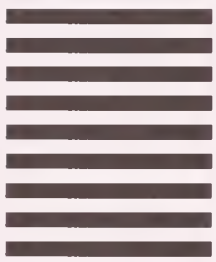
notes from the global intifada



LEFT TURN MAGAZINE AVAILABLE AT BETTER BOOK STORES
WWW.LEFTTURN.ORG



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO 25 BOWLING GREEN OH

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

BECOME THE MEDIA
PO BOX 20128
TOLEDO OH 43610-9987





72 RPM
revolutions per magazine

subscribe now!

and ensure **clamor**'s future as an amplifier of independent voices. For just \$18, you'll get 6 issues of unfiltered and unapologetic new media — that's 72 life-changing pages delivered to your door every two months.

Send my subscription to:

name _____

address _____

email _____

Payment enclosed Bill me later

Your first issue will be mailed within 4-6 weeks

International subscriptions are \$25US (surface mail) or \$40US (air)



murmurs

what we're talking about

[PRINT]

Boxcutter

c/o Tomas
1636 Fairview St.
Berkeley, CA 94703

Published quarterly, pocket-sized *Boxcutter* is an introspective zine with a West Coast punk sensibility. The contributors are socially conscious, randomly hip, and self-deprecating and at times - unpretentious voices bristling with nuanced instability. *Boxcutter* calls us to escape conventional polemics on just about anything, to trust desire (it's inescapable), and to act in ways that nurture the authentic in life. Admittedly, that's a lot. But one discovers such possibilities here: the writing is prodigiously confessional, yet accessible; existential, yet summarily conversational.

Reviewing the Spring and anniversary Summer 2004 issues, I was struck most by the writers' zeal in putting into words what can only be described as the "slippery zeitgeist" of our times, tensions between our apparent McCarthy-era anxiety and neo-liberalist aversion to repression on the other. There is angst, considering *Boxcutter* members' own bleak assessments of the empire, but there's also hope in the young voices showcased here.

I appreciated the honesty and attention paid to such subjects as monogamy, gender, and social marginalization and the use of probing self-reflection as a means of circumnavigating the irrational and contradictory in everyday life. The Spring issue weighed in on the rituals, conundrums, and joys of sexuality — mostly, hetero — and alternative relationships, namely polyamory or non-monogamy in order to expose ways in which we exert control over others through sexual practices and cultural assumptions. The Summer 2004 issue included think pieces on the hazards of self-righteousness, nationalist head banging, and the realization that revolution arises from humanity's discontent with itself. Included is an engaging Thai-American's reflection on a trip to Nakom Praterm Province in Thailand, and a swan song on one writer's reading of pornography. Call me an optimist. But after reading *Boxcutter*, I was left with the sense that reclaiming renewal is sustainable.

Boxcutter has a winning strategy. The prose is spare, but it connects. Collective member Mike writes, "Our language, our words, our weapons, our fight, create just as they destroy and nurture. . . Our tools have infinite possibilities and it is up to us to decide how to use them." *Boxcutter* is an assiduous assembly such positive rallying cries.
—Renoir Gaither

Information War: American Propaganda, Free Speech and Opinion Control since 9-11

Nancy Snow
Seven Stories Press, 2003
www.sevenstories.com

The United States may be "home to the largest, longest, deepest river of burbling B.S. known to man..." declares Greg Palast in his foreword to *Information War: American Propaganda, Free Speech and Opinion Control since 9-11*. Former United States Information Agency employee Nancy Snow attempts to wade through that river in her latest book, a follow-up to *Propaganda, Inc.: Selling America's Culture to the World*.

Snow traces the history of information control and language manipulation by the United States government from Truman's post-war "Campaign of Truth" to George W. Bush's "War on Terror." While many Americans would deny that their government uses propaganda, Snow argues that the hidden nature of American propaganda is what makes it so effective.

In contrast, Snow is blunt about her own aims. She frankly states that she does not intend the book to be objective, but a call for critical thinking about the information distributed by the American government at home and abroad. Snow argues

the mainstream American media cannot be relied upon to perform this watchdog function and points out the "long American tradition" of shared personnel between the media and national security communities "leads to collusion and group think." She cites the Tyndall Report analysis which found that of 414 stories on Iraq aired by the major networks between September 2002 and November 2003, 380 originated with government agencies. Press objectivity is difficult to argue when Snow reminds us of Dan Rather's declaration to David Letterman in 2001 of "his willingness to do whatever President Bush ask[ed] him to do in the war effort" — the war on terror.

Snow finds the language and images used by the Bush administration to improve America's image overseas equally problematic. According to Snow, the government's overseas propaganda efforts after 9/11 resembled Madison Ave. too much to be effective and only reinforced foreign stereotypes of the United States as more concerned with money than people. Ads such as the "Shared Values" campaign showed only empty platitudes about how wonderful the life is for Muslim-Americans and did nothing to address legitimate concerns of Muslims in other countries. Snow further argues that the language used to discuss the Arab region in the United States is often paternalistic, if not downright racist. Although Snow may be oversimplifying the complexities of foreign policy, it's difficult to argue with her recommendation that the U.S. engage in genuine dialogues with other countries about values and culture, rather than simply lecturing them about ours.

Snow argues the general public must use the weapons available to fight against the armies of misinformation and propaganda. Global citizens need to hold mainstream media providers accountable, and seek, create and disseminate their own alternative and independent sources of opinions and information. In exposing government and media collusion and concealment, Snow issues a persuasive call to arms.

-Beth Rodriguez

Don't Think of an Elephant

George Lakoff

Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004
www.chelseagreen.com

Some time ago I called into a radio talk show on media issues to ask the guest how right-wing talk radio had managed to turn the "L" word into a dreaded epithet that leftist politicians were constantly fleeing from. "Because they didn't fight back" was the response I got. Unfortunately merely fighting back may not be enough. In his new book *Don't Think of an Elephant*, University of California Berkeley linguistics professor George Lakoff argues that the language war in American politics is a serious business and a nuanced science. It is also an area where the right has been consistently winning for many years.

One of Lakoff's key insights is that language evokes "frames." The book's title refers to an

exercise that Lakoff uses with his students where he tells them to "not think of an elephant." Of course the exercise proves impossible because the frame of "an elephant" has been evoked. Conservatives have been very successful with creating political frames such as "tax relief" which implies that taxes are an affliction. These frames often spread through our culture when the media picks them up and starts using them. And Lakoff notes that arguing against an idea using your opponent's language just reinforces the existing frame.

Another significant point made Lakoff's book is that having the facts on your side is not enough to win people over in politics. Many people will vote against their own self-interest if they identify with the values presented by the other side. And Lakoff argues that the left has made a mistake by focusing on polling, issues, and appearing moderate while the right has focused unapologetically on values.

The right's strategic focus on values and identity may help explain how they've managed to convince so many Americans to seemingly vote against their economic interests. Lakoff says "They needed therefore to identify conservative ideas as populist and liberal/progressive ideas as elitist—even though the reverse was true." And he concludes that "Their positions on wedge issues—guns, babies, taxes, same-sex marriage, the flag, school prayer are not important in themselves, but are vital in what they represent: a strict father attitude to the world."

Lakoff makes a very convincing argument that the left needs to pay attention to language and the way that the right has been able to successfully articulate their ideas and values in politics. In some ways his arguments echo writers like Patrick Reinsborough who have argued that progressives need to move beyond single issue politics to engage in the "battle of the story", a fight that involves culture, values and ideas.

Don't Think of an Elephant focuses a lot on how the left might use language in electoral politics to "activate" swing voters with their values. That focus may be somewhat at odds with "new left" social movements which have focused more on horizontal organizing, direct democracy and bottom up decision making. But what is abundantly clear is that the left is ignoring language at its own peril. Picking up a copy of this short concise book would be an excellent start for anyone who wants to understand the role that language plays in politics. Fighting back may not be enough, but Lakoff gives us a useful insight into where the fight could begin.

-Brad Johnson

Oakenthrone #1

John Mincemoyer and Ben West – Editors
www.benwestdesign.com/oakenthrone

Independent media should cover the whole spectrum of ideas and *Oakenthrone* holds down the 'black' end of the spectrum – black metal, that is. They do a HELL of a job.

John Mincemoyer writes every word and does a fine job of balancing two divergent concepts. First, that black metal is "the modern day Grand Guignol — shock theatre to the nth degree," and secondly that it's about HIM, y'know, Satan. Mincemoyer is no lunkhead, however. His criticism is consistently thoughtful (for example, recognizing references to buildings and a sense of space and wondering if "AnteuS was playing with a loosely-based architectural albeit Satanic concept") and his interview approach elicits interesting answers. These include insights from Destroyer 666 ranging from the differences in taxation between their native Australia and adopted Holland and their, uh, view that "(i)n short it would appear to be a meeting of the snake's tail, in the sense of Ouroboros – the initial stage of turning oneself towards the beast...." The record reviews prove informative and informed and 'graphics hammer' Ben West frames Mincemoyer's writing beautifully, showing a great sense of line, and using the weird size (17"x5") to great effect. You might not dig death metal, but "(d)arkness, hate, and disgust are worldwide," AnteuS "vokillist" Mkm reminds. With four more years of Bush, that won't end soon. All evil and no reactionary politics, you should buy *Oakenthrone* now and get a head start on your mid-decade nihilism.

-Keith McCrea

The Divine Husband

Francisco Goldman

Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004
www.groveatlantic.com

On the first page of Francisco Goldman's new novel *The Divine Husband*, the narrator asks, "What if we read history the way we read love poems? ... What if love, earthly or divine, is to history as air is to a rubber balloon?" Well, without a doubt, history would be much more engaging if treated — not as some dry and inhuman dead thing, but the continuing story of encounters and loves, lost and found.

The novel, set at the end of the 19th century in an unnamed country that strikingly resembles Guatemala, swirls across borders and taunts their capricious ability to separate and divide. For over 10 years, Goldman researched the historical background of the book in visits to archives in Guatemala City and other locales, digging deep into the happenings of the time period and then filling in the inevitable gaps in the record with his love-filled, imagined story lines.

The multitude of stones and personalities in the book revolve around the central star of *Mana de las Nieves Morán*, a fictional ex-nun of Mayan and Irish parents. The characters of the novel are often, like Nieves, all about crossed boundaries — three Sephardic Jews from Morocco who emigrate to sell mules, a Mexican *muchacho* set up by British Colonial agents as a puppet king on the Mosquito Coast in Nicaragua, and, the spiritual and intellectual soul of the novel, the nineteenth century Cuban revolutionary leader Jose Marti.

The book actually began for Goldman as a preoccupation after reading a love poem written

by Marti — an organizer for Cuban liberation and a poet, journalist, and world traveler, who lived at different times in Mexico, Central America, and New York. Marti's poem "La Niña de Guatemala" recounts the story of a girl who he fell in love with while living there. Because he was engaged to a Cuban exile in Mexico City, he spurned his girl lover who afterwards tragically died of his rejection. Goldman's novel has imagined a fictional backdrop for the poem, recounting the lives of the hybrid cast that might have crossed paths with Marti around the time when he wrote "La Niña."

A half-Guatemalan, half-Jewish kid who grew up in Massachusetts, Goldman has, in all his novels, rejected the traditional American versus Latin American divide. He gained fame with *The Long Night of White Chickens* (1992) and *The Ordinary Seaman* (1997) traversing effortlessly between Guatemala and Boston and Nicaragua and Brooklyn and, in the process, winning tons of prizes for his fictional acrobatics. His stories jump across the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo as if the border were not there, describing an America that is, first, a continent and, only as a distant second, a nation. In *The Divine Husband*, these themes reach a narrative climax as he dramatically rewrites the story of what it means to be American, pushing readers to recognize our Spanish American traditions and not spurn them, not to close our own mental borders down.

Goldman has said he hears his characters speaking in Spanish and then writes their words in English. His use of language makes rich use of their Spanish influences and derivations. His style is an American Baroque, using long sentences that teachers in any US suburb would angrily mark "run-on" with a red pen. But in Spanish, long, drawn out sentences are common in literature and he brings this tradition, as well as a penchant for diminutives (and double diminutives like little-little and ahorita) with him into English. English is all the better for it.

The Divine Husband is, in the end, a novel written as if history were a love poem, something fluid and to be constantly, passionately argued over.

-J.D. Pluecker

The Yonilizer

CalArts
MM-19
24700 McBean Pkwy.
Valencia, CA 91355
www.yonilizer.com

The brainchild of Jonathan (Yoni) Leyser, a 19-year-old film student from Illinois, *The Yonilizer* is definitely the kind of raw, edgy zine one would expect from a young college student. Chock full of black and white clip art, photographs, and comics, the reviewed issue titled "Almost Expelled" is a mixture of hometown news and political lampoons, with our own commander-in-chief from Crawford, Texas receiving ample barbs. A sample of other features includes a piece on labor struggles against grocery store behemoths, a common sense guide

to police harassment, and a few observations on life as a struggling student artist. Some of the content is excerpted from other sources, and the material is not integrated well with original material. The *Yonilizer's* strength lies in its creative graphics — that's to be expected from a corps of contributing artists from the California Institute of the Arts. Much of the line art is very appealing, and the comics are witty. Two major weaknesses haunt this zine: I wasn't too keen on reading about the pedestrian habits of small town Midwesterners, and I don't think a national audience would be either, or for that matter, a campus crew a few time zones removed. Also, this zine's layout left much to be desired. Consistent font style and size would greatly improve the overall look and feel. One isn't invited to follow page after page of visual trap doors. Persistent margin spacing and balanced text wrapping around graphics would create a more even, attractive layout. *The Yonilizer* is open to submissions from readers, including film critiques, drawings, photographs and creative writing.

-Renoir Gaither

[AUDIO]

Bloodthirsty Lovers

The Delicate Seam
French Kiss Records, 2004
www.frenchkissrecords.com

The Bloodthirsty Lovers is the new project of Memphis scene veteran David Shouse, late of Those Bastard Souls and The Grifters. It shows him moving away from the lo-fi sound of his earlier bands and falling in love with synthesizers, which are all over this record. The Bloodthirsty Lovers are sort of a mix of electronica, psychedelica, Brit-pop, indie-pop, and glam rock. If Radiohead, Ladytron, Oasis, and Built To Spill had a kid, it might resemble this band. The diverse influences and elements of the band keep you guessing, and will either make you love them or confuse you. "The Mods Go Mad" is a blast of swirling psychedelic guitar with electronic blurbs and bleeps; "A Postcard from the Sea" is a pretty ballad; the synth-heavy "Now You Know" reminded me of the Sweet meets David Bowie; and "El Shocko" could be a *Pet Sounds* outtake.

On the final track on this 8-song EP, quest vocalist Katie Eastburn tells us "Don't grow jaded/ Stay medicated." That's good advice, one the 40-year-old Shouse is clearly taking to heart.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Brandon Butler

Killer on the Road
Gern Blandsten Records, 2004
www.gernblandsten.com

It's safe to say that the debut solo release from Brandon Butler is one of the best albums to come out this year. By mixing country/folk sounds with world weary lyrics, Butler has won his place

alongside such grassroots notables as Neil Young, John Mellencamp, and Steve Earle.

Songs like "Killer on the Road" and "Sixty Stitches" display Butler's sense for self, politically, and socially conscious lyrics, tacked onto hauntingly beautiful melodies and simple, straightforward rhythm guitar work.

The final track "True Believer" is just as good as any song on the album, but what makes it especially different is the fact that it was recorded while people were talking in the background, things were being moved in the room, stuff was being knocked over. The track proves that a good album sometimes doesn't always boil down to excellent production; it comes down to the songs. "True Believer" makes the entire essence of the album apparent: it's just a guy with a guitar singing his songs, and if you can shut off the chaotic hustle and bustle around you for a minute or two and listen you might learn a few things — kinda like everything worth listening to. Hear what he's saying and the chords being plucked out on the six string and he might go so far as to break your heart or make you smile. That, like any collection of songs in any genre, past, present, or future, is the ultimate point of music.

Brandon Butler has made that point, and thankfully we have a chance to hear it being made.
-Mike McHone

Brandon Wiard

Painting a Burning Building
Cerberus, 2004
www.whatwereyouhumming.com

Ypsilanti, Michigan native Brandon Wiard (pronounced "wired") began his musical career singing Hall & Oates' "Maneater" in his stroller at J.C. Penney. Since then, he learned how to write songs, play guitar, piano, and other various instruments, and, apparently, how to make an extremely good album.

Painting a Burning Building reminds one of Elvis Costello's early days, with some Wilco and They Might Be Giants thrown in for good measure. The songs can be lighthearted, mournful, sad, funny, and ponderous — usually all within the same song. Not many people can pull off that sort of emotional diversity, but Wiard makes it seem effortless. He does however give credit in the liner notes of the album to the Michigan weather for making him bi-polar, and as a native of the same county that Wiard is from, I'm inclined to agree.

The strongest track on this offering, and hands-down one of the most creative and enthralling songs to recently come along, is "Old Heartless Sun." Its four movements encompass highlight Wiard's knowledge of musical structure, his odd sense of humor, and almost acrobatic rotation of melody and sound. The entire album is worth its price just for this song alone. In short, Frank Zappa would've been impressed by it. And "Miss Michigan" and "Caroline" show that Wiard can write catchy pop tunes with the best of them without sounding like flavor-of-the-day, top 40

Great guitar and organ work just oozes from this record with danceable and relaxing grooves that just make you say ooooooooooooo.

music. People who like good music will benefit from picking up this album. Not much more can be said. It's time to listen.

-Mike McHone

Che: Chapter 127

Martyrs for Monuments

G7 Welcoming Committee, 2004

www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Well-informed activist rock will always have a place in my heart and on my CD shelf, and *Martyrs for Monuments* is certainly that. The musicianship is high quality, and the lyrics could not be more heartfelt if they were freshly pulled out of Meegan Maultsайд's chest cavity. If you are unwilling to sacrifice a little bass in your vocals, there may be no hope for you with this album. There's a fraction of the population not ready or willing to accept angry shouting frontwomen in rock, but that fraction is more often than not a Bush voter, and should therefore be summarily ignored.

If strong feminism is something you value and thought-provoking lyrics are a must, this is worth a spin. If I had to give it a certain-amount-of-stars rating, I would have to show you the bar graphs and bell curves that came with it.

-Jacob Whiteman

Chicks On Speed

99¢

Chicks On Speed Records, 2004

www.chicksonspeed-records.com

Who says that feminists don't have a sense of humor? Who says that dance music has to be vapid? Who says that Germans don't rock? The third stateside release by Chicks On Speed sees them continuing their slightly abrasive techno-pop-punk music with lyrics that attack consumerism, fashion, stereotypes of female musicians, and, uh, shaving. While the Chicks have always been about concept first and realization second (having formed, after all, as a fake band), this album conjures up some very listenable tunes. The opener, "Shooting from the Hip", is tech-pop in the vein of Ladytron; "Coventry" has an acoustic guitar-based two-step that could have come off of Madonna's last album, only it doesn't suck; "Universal Pussy" is an abrasive techno-rock number that almost sounds like Marilyn Manson.

The album also features a ton of collaborations with like-minded ladies, including Nicola from Adult., Ms Kittin, Peaches, and Tina Weymouth, who accompanies them on a cover of her song "Wordy Rappinghood." It also includes a second disc of remixes that's pretty booty-shaking. Listening to this record, I almost forgot that Christina Aguilera is what's passing for feminism in the mainstream these days. The Chicks are

making sure we can all dance at the revolution, and are making us think while we dance. So pick this up and *viva la revolucion!*

-Patrick Sean Taylor

DJ Krush

Jaku

Red Dist.

Jaku means "peace and calm" in Japanese, but this record is far from your standard down-tempo, ambient, coming-off-the-drugs chillout room record. It's dark, introspective, and cinematic, and combines traditional Japanese instruments with hip-hop, trip-hop, and jungle beats. While the record wouldn't be totally out of place on James Lavelle's Mo Wax label, Krush's former home, Jaku's very analog exploration of Japan's spiritual and musical past sets it apart from other records out there. The way he fuses the old with the new shows his genius - Jaku never deteriorates into drippy world music, and the koto and shakuhachi never sound out of place among the electronically generated beats and scratches.

The highlights of this record are the appearances by Aesop Rock and Mr. Lif. Their skilled rhyming helps bring the ethereal, ambient elements of Krush's music together, creating something fresh and original. Jaku may take a few listens to really get into, but it's a good record and worthy addition to DJ Krush's impressive body of work.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Gravenhurst

Flashlight Seasons

Warp Records, 2004

www.warprecords.com

This is the second full-length by Gravenhurst, aka Nick Talbot, which began in 1997 as a side project of Assembly Communications, and then continued after that band broke up in 2000. Talbot plays incredibly beautiful, delicate, and haunting pop music that's like a mix between Nick Drake and Elliot Smith. The instrumentation is sparse, the recording subdued, and the overall effect is one of fragility, as if the songs could blow off of the disc if you're not careful.

The lyrics deal with heartbreak, depression, and failing to connect with other people. "Emily says the things in my head/are keeping me from sleeping/if I don't go to them/They'll come for me instead", Talbot sings on "Damage II." *Flashlight Seasons* is gorgeously sad. Talbot has a beautiful voice, and the songs are well-written and produced. It's a good record for cold autumn evenings and freezing winter nights.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Greetings from Urbania

s/t cassette, 2004

P.O Box 13392, Philadelphia PA 19101

10/21/04 - Live at the Collingwood Art Center in Toledo, Ohio

Taking their name from a song by the Ex gives a good indication where these cats are coming from and going to. Guitar, bass, and drums range around in post-Sonic Youth/Thinking Fellers territory and support out jamming from clarinet, violin, trombone, and bugle. Male and female vox negotiate this topography with lyrics whose insight more than make up for the sometimes tuneless crooning (a word I use advisedly). Bands working this style generally evolve into a more structured songwriting as time passes and Greetings from Urbania are just getting going so these eight tracks are pretty diffuse. But the politics are there, a sense of noise arranged as music is there, and the overall vibe is rad - serious, but not pretentious and self-aware without being self-absorbed. Their show in Toledo (free, all-ages) was a refreshing reminder of how much space punk rock allows for bands who are willing to work to express the noise in their heads to an audience. Fans of the weirder end of the recent Dischord catalog (Black Eyes, for example) should skip the next Northern Liberties release, send these cats five bucks, and get ahead of the curve.

-Keith McCrea

Lesser Birds of Paradise

String of Bees

Contraphonic, 2004

www.contraphonic.com

String of Bees is an offbeat blend of contemporary folk and dreamy indie-pop. The album is expertly crafted. Lesser Birds of Paradise utilize Mark Janka's childlike, seemingly naive vocals, placing them against a backdrop of banjo, poppy synth, and the occasional brass or strings section. The eclectic instrumental accompaniment creates a fairly unique sound: the album is a melting pot of bluegrass, folk, synth-pop, string ensemble, and antiquated country.

Many of the lyrics on *String of Bees* are simplistic, often silly. Behind the lyrics, however, are complex issues which are portrayed effectively, if not majestically. On "Assorted Aphrodisiacs," Janka sings, "You watch the world from behind your glasses/ Why is he the one who makes the passes?/ You watch the girls from behind your glasses/ Shake her ass is all she wants to do/ But never with you." Is Janka speaking of the classic passive-observer type who takes the back seat in his own life, never active in living? The lyrics are oversimplified, occasionally ridiculous, but the band is clever enough to pull them off.

String of Bees is a shimmering folksy pop album with stark vocals underscored by diverse instrumental accompaniment. It's worth a listen, or two, or three.

-Victoria Schacht

The Mighty Imperials

Thunder Chicken

Daptone Records, 2004

www.daptonerecords.com

Mmmmm... Nostalgia, taste like grandma. The Mighty Imperials are retro psychedelic funk band, doesn't it feel good to do the time warp. Well this is a release that was actually created many years ago, but due to the nature of business has not been able to see a legitimate release until now from Daptone Records. The first tracks are funky and just makes you want to grab your loved and do some horizontal dance moves. The lead singer has a soulful voice that just brings back fond memories of James Brown and B.B. King, and with the nice raw sound quality the retro vibe is purely their. Great guitar and organ work just oozes from this record with danceable and relaxing grooves that just make you say oooooooooo. If you just need to remember why funk is so cool, or your just ready to move on to something more retro than the Mooney Suzuki, then pick this up quick.

-Alex Merced

Ponies in the Surf

A Demonstration

Self-produced

www.camilleandalexander.com

Ponies in the Surf are Camille and Alexander McGregor, a pair of siblings who have spent times in Bogata, Paris, New York, and Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. Their metropolitan upbringing shows in their sound, which shifts between sixties folky, to forties continental. The recording is stripped-down and basic, just voices and sparse instrumentation. This gives an intimate feel to the record, like they were in your living room playing for you. Camille has a breathy, whispery voice that made me think of Sunday mornings and being in love.

The tracks include a cover of Linda Rich's 1966 "More to Living," a song written about Sweet and Low, and a song in French written by their 10-year-old Parisian niece. The songs are all incredibly sweet and dear, including lines like "I love how you go to sleep/ with the pillows on the right/ahh ahh," complete with dreamy sighs. If I had to make comparisons, I would say they sound like a less dark Belle and Sebastian. My only problem with *A Demonstration* is that, being a demo, it was too short. Here's hoping that a label picks them up and lets them record a proper album.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Reeve Oliver

S/T

The Militia Group, 2004

www.themilitiagroup.com

The Militia Group can do no wrong in my eyes. Once again one of the greatest labels of today puts out another amazing release. This album is the debut album from Reeve Oliver, who plays

power pop ala Weezer mixed with the Beach Boys. This is a just a great pop album if their ever was one, every song you can sing along with, and it just makes you feel good inside. The production on this album is perfect — this is an album that will be seeing buzz going everywhere from the office to the high school girls locker room — there's something for everyone on this record. There is also cool use of other instruments on some tracks like organs and violins, which adds more to the beauty of this album. This is honestly the best pop record to come out this year; you should be ashamed of yourself should you pass this one up.

-Alex Merced

Amanda Rogers

Daily News

Immigrant Sun Records

www.immigrantsun.com

Amanda Rogers's newest offering makes you want to be a depressed 16 year-old girl. It makes you want to smoke in your room and walk in figure-eights while talking to yourself about the confrontations you would have if only you could have the chance again. And if you're smoking while you're listening to Amanda Rogers, hopefully it is raining and you're not sure if the reason you feel the way you do is because you're heartbroken or if it's because of politicians or maybe it's your parents. Rogers' album makes you think about what it meant to get pierced or tattooed when you were 16. *Daily News* is a sad romantic record. To put my points a little more concretely: tracks 5, 6, and 7 are named respectively: "To Whom it May Concern," "Everyday Decay," "The End."

Daily News was released by punk label Immigrant Sun Records. However, the circumstances by which they released Rogers' album are not all that mysterious: she was the beautiful woman who was tough enough to open punk shows by being vulnerable. She's the girl who lets punk rock kids show their big hearts, which we all know they have in spades. She's the woman who lets punk rockers know that their actions have emotional consequences and that's not at all a bad thing.

-Francis Raven

Saint Vitus

V

Southern Lord Records, 2004

www.southernlord.com

This reissue of St. Vitus' 1989 release does everything you want a solid metal record to do: Move huge slabs of sound around, explore the mood between pissed and resigned, and kick fucking ass. As SST's in-house metal gods, St. Vitus recorded a body of work that expanded the Black Sabbath canon with tools wrought by the almighty Black Flag and their first generation American hardcore peers. The production here takes a different tack than their SST releases — where the SST releases use a sonic palette that works the narrow terrain between '72-'76 Sabbath

and My War-era Flag, this record brings a more modern, stoner-rock sound to bear. I assume that this was reissued to cash-in on vocalist Wino Weinrich's appearance on Dave Grohl's Probot deal and "I Bleed Black" should be about Vitus' love of Flag and Sabbath (but is not), it is silly to quibble about details. Both Vitus and Southern Lord deserve praise for belching this out again in 2004 and the bonus video clip of Wino's first show with Vitus (6 songs taped, apparently, one afternoon in the rec room at your grandparents' condo complex) makes this worth twice the price. Buy it and SST's Vitus classic *Born Too Late*, raid someone's medicine cabinet, hit the recliner, and enjoy the finest bumper this year will likely produce.

-Keith McCrea

Shoplifting

Shoplifting EP

Kill Rock Stars, 2004

www.killrockstars.com

Not only does Seattle's Shoplifting have one of the best band names ever, they are one of the best new bands coming out of the Pacific Northwest right now. Made up of three ex-members of the Chromatics (GSL Records), it's understandable that their music is of the same ilk. Musically and lyrically they are discordant, engaging, chaotic, sexual, political. Jagged rhythms and noisy, edgy guitar augment male/female vocals. Their press release reads like a manifesto, urgent and honest like their music. The first line: NO FUCKING AROUND.

Shoplifting is a force to be reckoned with live. I saw them play about a year ago in Portland and I could barely keep it together. They operate in that narrow space between structure and chaos, threatening to break apart at any moment, conjuring up a certain energy that bands like The Ex and Fugazi do so well. They don't let me down on this recording.

This EP follows up a 7" for Kill Rock Stars and a self-released cassette and was recorded by Justin Trosper, of Unwound fame, in Olympia, Washington. It's a great record of a great band, the only thing I can wish for is that it was longer than four songs in 15 minutes. I have yet to hear the other two releases, but I can't wait for more. Apparently they're working on a full length this fall. Bring it on.

-j powers

Stephan Smith

Slash and Burn

Universal Hobo/Artemis Records, 2004

www.artemisrecords.com

Slash and Burn is the latest offering from singer, songwriter, musician, and activist Stephan Smith. Smith is being hailed by many as the heir apparent to the likes of Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan. Give it a listen and you'll see why.

The album is a multi-dimensional disc that

crosses paths nicely with country and rap, creating this strange subcategory that speaks to political discord and the enlightening of a global mind. Smith, on his website (stephansmith.com), says of himself: "I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on Earth, near the close of the 2nd millennium with a fiddle in my hand and a fat head singing tunes in 12 different languages." He has performed with the likes of The Roots, Patti Smith, and various bluegrass bands in the south, and it's safe to say that fans of the aforementioned groups will find Slash and Burn a delight.

Smith, whose father is Iraqi, does not mince words when it comes to his dislike of George W. Bush. On the track "You Ain't a Cowboy," he tells the commander-in-chief that just because you put on a Stetson (or a flight suit) and speak in a drawl and claim that your favorite actor is Chuck Norris does not, by any stretch of the imagination, entitle you to the roll of a badass. In his lyrics, Smith says:

When being a ranger became your wet dream, the closest you could come was buy a baseball team? Then they bought you your way in the old Whitewash House . . . The first cowboy ever that was afraid of a mouse.

Every so often, an artist comes along to speak what's on the minds of many people. Stephan Smith is one such artist.

- Mike McHone

The Assistant - The Ship Will Sink - Takaru

Split EP

Waking Records, 2004

This is a great hardcore split EP. Not only is it a great EP, but also the money goes to charity. Good music for a good cause always rocks. The first track, "I Have a Name" from the Assistant brings to mind memories of Alexisonfire with more melodic guitar riffage, but with much more of an hardcore edge. This song was very danceable and somewhat upbeat without sacrificing its edge and all of its 7 minutes were interesting and fun to listen to, especially with the sprinkles of piano in it. Afterwards, we have This Ship Will Sink with a more straight-up hardcore track, nothing out of ordinary. Takaru tops this off with three real short bursts of fast hardcore aggression that is sure to get you thrashing around your room. Overall this is a solid hardcore release, which is worth getting, especially for the epic track from the Assistant.

-Alex Merced

Turing Machine

Zwei

Frenchkiss Records 2004

www.frenchkissrecords.com

It's been a long time since the brilliant *New Machine For Living* album but, hopefully you still remember this hard driving instrumental rock trio. These seven new tracks of repetitive guitarwork, thunderous bass and metronome precise

drumming are almost as abstract and complex as Alan Turing's machine to compute theory, (thus the name Turing Machine). Some of the longer tracks "Bleach it Black" and "Bitte, Baby, Bitte" push the 13 minute mark, and the results are so trance-like and awe inspiring that you might find yourself staring at your stereo or computer screen completely dumbfounded. This album is that good. Starring at Zwei's album cover art could also make your eyes hurt, its very reminiscent of classic 60's and 70's psych rock album covers. "Don't Mind if I Don't" is as close to a pop composition Turing Machine will probably ever get. It's got melody, hooks and almost imaginary chorus lines. I'm not sure what's up with "Synchronicity 3," not an obvious Police homage, but a funny title nonetheless. In conclusion, Zwei brings Turing Machine up a notch in the music world, in production, in structure, in sound. All things considered, hopefully more people will see this. A must have album.

-Jason Verhagen

Visionaries

Pangaea

Up Above Records

www.upabove.com

The Visionaries are a LA-based independent hip-hop crew consisting of LMNO, 2Mex, Zen, Dannu, KeyKool, and DJ Rhettmatic; four MCs and two producers, respectively. Pangaea is their third release on innovative Up Above Records and the title track of the album sums up the collective consciousness of this crew. A "group of the people, for the people" is what the Visionaries are here to champion and they accomplish that with elevated tact and real sincerity. From start to finish, per usual Visionaries style, the lyricism is intelligently well crafted with production tracks that are impressive and provocative of the movement. The first few tracks ("Intro," "Pangaea," and "Strike") are a proper warm-up for the initial mover produced by KeyKool, "DoMakeSayThink," where the beat and vocal tracks work themselves out as hot complements. J Rocc produces a smooth favorite in, "If You Can't Say Love," which is followed up by two more smart KeyKool produced joints, "Nine Eleven" and "Broken Silence". "Lacerations" is a worthy showcase of Beat Junkie-style tumtubism, followed by the dope Evidence produced cut, "Momentum." "Meeting of the Minds," features mass guest lyrics by infamous crew, The Living Legends, and "Sight for Sore Eyes" is a nice closer for this 17-track release that knows no boundaries. The Visionaries in-house production team of KeyKool and DJ Rhettmatic is enriched by mass guest producers Life Rexall (Shape Shifters), DJ Babu (the Dilated Junkie), J Rocc (Beat Junkies), DJ Melo D (Beat Junkies), Vinroc (Tnple Threat/5th Platoon), Evidence (Dilated Peoples), OHNO the Disruptor, and Kan Kick. For future releases, it'd be nice to hear additional production tracks by KeyKool, since DJ Rhettmatic kind of dominates on this record. Overall, this is a solid representation of grassroots Westcoast hip-hop created with a positive message

that we all can appreciate. Visionaries come correct and recommended.

-vigilance

Voice in the Wire

Signals in Transmission

Eyeball Records, 2004

www.eyeballrecords.com

Tabula Rasa was a freaking awesome band, so you'd think a band featuring their ex-drummer would be also freaking great. While this is not near the greatness of Tabula Rasa, Voice in the Wires debut release is actually quite a good album with some tight guitar playing and catchy hooks. For some reason a lot of the hooks on the album seem they'd be a lot catchier than they actually are and I'm not sure why they aren't getting me to sing along, but the release does show an immense potential, and it would be a safe bet that their next release could be something beyond what is here. One of my favorite highlights of the album is the guest vocals from Chris of Anti-Flag; Jason of None More Black also provides guest vocals. This is a good album for any punk fan, while there are better releases these days, this shows a lot of potential and is still worth the purchase.

-Alex Merced

Wrangler Brutes

Zulu

Kill Rock Stars, 2004

www.killrockstars.com

Punk rock luminary Sam McPheeters (Born Against, Men's Recovery Project) is joined by Brooks Headley (Born Against, Universal Order of Armageddon, Skull Kontrol), Andy Coronado (Monorchid, Skull Kontrol, Nazi Skins, Glass Candy) and Cundo Si Murad (Nazi Skins, Death Drug) in this hardcore/punk/thrash onslaught. Zulu is the band's second album, and their first for Kill Rock Stars.

Ten years ago when I was still getting into new straightforward punk bands I would have liked this record, but now, although mildly amusing, it is pretty uninteresting to me. It's no longer the mid '90s and I'm no longer 18. Although the recording quality and style, Steve Albini's engineering at Electrical Audio, does the band justice, musically there's nothing new, challenging, interesting or groundbreaking happening. There are so many great records that recycle ideas over and over again (the history of rock and roll), but that element coupled with personally hearing so many punk bands that sound similar for years makes it a mediocre listen. I can see why people would like this band, why they would find them exciting, but it's pretty far from my taste now.

For me, the highlight and saving grace of this band is definitely Sam's outlandish lyrics, reminiscent of Men's Recovery Project. Clever, silly, sometimes political, McPheeters' words set Wrangler Brutes apart from simply being rehashed punk drudgery. Some of my favorites include

"Shank'd", "Homosexual President", "\$45" (about the price of oil), "Garbage Can" ("Ariel Sharon is a fucking cock, I'd like to sock him in the crotch with a pointy rock, garbage can for a garbage man") and "Slam Dunk" ("Friday night's a prime time to write mad bad checks, you got the whole weekend to sort of sort out the mess...")

-j powers

Zolar X

Timeless

Alternative Tentacles, 2004

www.alternativetentacles.com

Zolar X are a bunch of weirdoes. But that's a good thing. In fact, it's a great thing. Thanks to Alternative Tentacles Records, we have a chance to hear the band that could have been one of the biggest groups of the '70s.

Complete with wigs, space suits, make-up, antennas, Vulcan ears, ray guns, and light shows, Zolar X sang songs about space and Mars and love. The band was the perfect bridge between glam and punk, a mix of Peter Gabriel-era Genesis and Bowie with sounds reminiscent of the Stooges and New York Dolls. They even showed elements of Pink Floyd in their show when the curtain would be drawn and, on stage, a clip of Logan's Run would be playing while the speakers were blasting out a Beethoven concerto.

People steeped in the New York underground at that time loved the band. Ace Frehley (guitarist of KISS) also adored them. Considering Ace is a sci-fi freak that has an odd sense of humor, it's easy to see why.

Unfortunately, they never hit with the mainstream and disbanded in the early '80s, playing some of the final gigs with Van Halen. Although a limited press EP was released in 1982, this is the first full fledged compilation of the band.

Compiled and re-mastered by Jello Biafra, *Timeless* is . . . well, kind of timeless. Glam fans will love the style and quirky sense of humor, and '70s punk fans will love the sped up, chugging rhythms. Earthlings, beware. Zolar X have landed. Resistance is futile.

-Mike McHone

[VIDEO/DVD]

Peepshow III: A Compilation of Videos, Interviews, and Idiocy! DVD

Fat Wreck Chords, 2004

www.fatwreck.com

About the music: Fat Mike has made his mark on the anti-MTV generation, and has gathered a record label full of disciples. Some of the bands in the collection might find themselves labeled anti-MTV in some circles, and pop-punk in others. Since I already used both trite titles in the same review, I'm off the hook. Nerf Herder, The Lawrence Arms, Lagwagon, and Sick Of It All are among the most familiar names, but every

Ten years ago when I was still getting into new straightforward punk bands I would have liked this record, but now, although mildly amusing, it is pretty uninteresting to me. It's no longer the mid '90s and I'm no longer 18.

band was represented by a solid musical effort. That is to say, even if these bands sucked, you wouldn't know it from this compilation. Basically, if you already trust Fat Mike, you won't be let down. If I had the computer smarts, I'd copy the music from the DVD and listen to it more often. But if I had that sort of smarts...

About the videos: This is where I suppose punk rock divides itself into purists and progressives. Some bands took it upon themselves to ride the long-held punk ideal of just fucking around. Naturally, NOFX's track was decidedly more message-driven, but Fat Mike was smart enough to find the happy medium between being in a public service announcement and being drunk in public. In both cases, bands took advantage of great video concepts. The budgets definitely varied, and not every group was blessed with a big one. But punk has mostly always been about not being blessed with a big something or other, and the pursuit of not giving a shit. I've always heard from friends that everyone is at least a little punk rock, whether they'd like to admit it or not. I tend to believe that, if only because I think that music is the Great Uniter, and a music collector without punk rock is a tree without roots. At ten bucks, this is a pretty cost-effective way of probably finding a few new bands to go see in person. But if you got to the end of this review, you are almost definitely punk rock, and will probably be trying to steal it from a major corporate chain. Good luck, and damn the man.

-Jacob Whiteman

Kicking the Coal Habit DVD

Elizabeth Dickinson and Ken Friberg, 2004

www.friberg.com

Kicking the Coal Habit mixes high-speed graphics with a powerful narrative of movement success. This carefully produced fifteen-minute film documents a strong coalition of community activists in the Twin Cities who forced a corporation to clean up a series of coal plants. With a focus on the grassroots citizen movements organizing, this film gives a self-documented example of a community defeating a large corporation.

Highlighting environmental justice concerns and health justifications, this film showcases the successful community intervention into the system of politics. The Clean Energy Now coalition organized citizens to document the impact of air pollution on their daily lives and used that testimony to pressure the corporation to accept a substantial clean up. Perhaps most persuasive is the voice of Seitu Jones, who connects the organizing among the communities of color who eat fish from the river

near the polluting plants and the terrible health effects of mercury. Also potent is Paula Maccabee, an Environmental Health Consultant who articulates a movement strategy that highlighted health impacts, created alliances across traditional boundaries, and forced accountability of public leaders to build a rare environmental victory in the Bush epoch.

This film is an essential teaching tool for every activist who can use the Clean Energy Now campaign as a model of alliance building and leader accountability to help clean their community. It also provides a useful teaching tool (I've used it twice in classes already). It is also provides an important rejoinder to the corporate media who have spun the successful clean up as a corporate driven initiative. Perhaps most powerfully, it offers wearied progressives a rare victory.

-Maxwell Schnurer

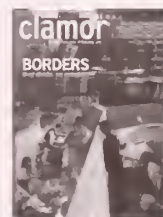
Building the Peace Movement: Water for People, not Profits; and the Vermont Manifesto DVDs

Roger Leisner, 2004

www.radiofreemaine.com

Roger Leisner, the brain behind Radio Free Maine, has a dvd recorder and knows how to use it. An indefatigable documenter, Roger Leisner records the countless meetings, symposia, and panel discussions he attends so that you don't have to. Whether it's Dennis Kucinich, Tom Hayden, and Medea Benjamin discussing the future of the Peace movement, Prof. Tom Naylor laying out his trenchant social criticism under the guise of advocacy for an independent Vermont, or Barbara Garson's opening remarks to a socialist scholars' conference, Leisner documents the heavy intellectual lifting of socialists right in his Maine/Beantown backyard. Every town should have a Roger Leisner, but since yours probably doesn't, check his work out at the website and make some room in your dvd player for something other than *The Office*.

-Keith McCrea



the revolution of
everyday life ...
delivered to
your door

subscribe online at
www.clamormagazine.org
PO Box 20128
Toledo, OH 43610
\$18 for 6 issues



Scaring the Crap Out of the Company

Stockton Truck Drivers Strategize at the Temple

I never thought fighting for workers' rights would lead me here — sitting in a Sikh Temple, meeting with a group of 45 Indian truck drivers.

This past summer they had organized Stockton's 250 truck drivers to go on strike in protest of the low wages due to the increasing gas costs they had to pay out of their own pockets. Now they wanted to talk to us about joining a union.

As fans blew overhead, we sat in a circle — bare-foot, with scarves covering our heads. The room had an altar in the middle, and the walls were covered with pictures of Sikh religious figures and martyrs who had fought for freedom in India. The drivers wanted to know what joining a union would mean, and how they would pick the issues to organize around. One of the other organizers and myself answered their questions in English and then another organizer translated them into their native language of Punjabi.

The room erupted in intense debate as each of the drivers went back and forth on where to start. At one point a driver in a sports jersey, jeans and a turban stood up. I later learned that he is a Sikh priest and one of the key leaders of the drivers. He said, in Punjabi, "We need to be strong and join the union, if anything it will scare the crap out of the company owners." His words had a powerful effect. A few chaotic moments later, one of the drivers, Gill, announced, "OK, we voted. We want to join the union," and every driver joined on the spot.

Later that afternoon I left Stockton with the meeting running through my mind. I couldn't help but think about what an amazing moment I had just been a part of. Mostly, though, just kept thinking about the drivers holding up their union membership cards — smiling, and hopeful.



words Adam Welch
photos Charisse Domingo

Adam and Charisse work with Silicon Valley De-Bug (www.siliconvalleydebug.com) A version of this story originally appeared online at www.samarmagazine.org

"I had an abortion" t-shirt
\$15



Ya Basta! Ten Years of
Zapatista Uprising
\$26.95



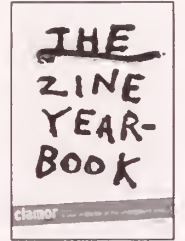
We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible
Rise of Global Anticapitalism
\$17



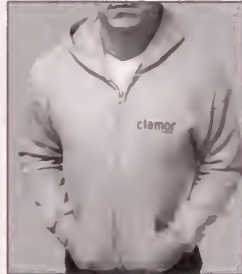
Make Art Not War!
12-Poster Set
\$12



The Zine Yearbook Vol. 8
\$12



Clamor Gift Subscription
\$18



Clamor "Revolution" Hoodie
\$25



Rooftop Films: Films for a
New Democracy DVD
\$15




Stencil Pirates
\$20



Infiltration zine
\$2.50

just a few of the quality
items available at:

clamor
infoSHOP
www.clamormagazine.org/infoSHOP



Sick of cleaning up after other people's parties?

Join the party that won't make a mess of things.

Election fraud, job loss, low wages, the war in Iraq, expensive healthcare, air pollution, unsafe drinking water, poisonous chemicals in our food... Aren't you tired of their mess?

In communities across the country, elected Greens are working hard for electoral reforms, living wages, health-care for everyone and safe living environments for all.

The Green Party is working toward an end to the war in Iraq and the unconstitutional PATRIOT Act. We have sensible solutions and we are implementing them locally every day, not just talking about them during election season. Join the global party that has practical solutions to the mess made by the other parties. Register Green. Vote Green. Give Green.

Party Green! Come home to the Green Party!

You're invited to party with us. Find a Green House Party near you, and give Green!

Visit our website to join the solution.



www.gp.org/houseparty
www.gp.org/donate