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LiP takes creative aim at a culture
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and sells them back as product and
mass mediocracy. Brazen, audacious,
and presumptuous, **LiP** combines a
biting aesthetic consciousness with
a structural understanding of power.
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cynicism, or apathy, **LiP** gives voice
to those working for a sustainable
society rooted in cooperation and
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ASK AN ARTIST Words with Hugh D'Andrade



WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS SHADY CHARACTER YOU DREW FOR THE COVER OF THIS ISSUE?

The shady character is a snake-oil salesman, one of the unsavory types
who used to travel the US peddling highly suspect "cure-all" potions
to gullible consumers. He's a true American icon! This particular
gentleman is loosely based on a modern-day snake-oil salesman,
Edward Bernays, originator of the practice of "public relations."

JUDGING BY YOUR COVER ILLUSTRATION, YOU HAVE SOME ISSUES WITH GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS. MAYBE EVEN AUTHORITY ITSELF. I SUPPOSE YOU THINK THE WORLD WOULD JUST RUN ITSELF WITHOUT LEADERS GUIDING THE WAY?

"Guiding the way"? In my experience, so-called "leaders" are really just
opportunists. The only power they have is the power we give them.
It's true that there is a sort of crude parody of the twin powers of state
and capital hidden in this drawing. It's the least I can do, considering
the many thousands of dollars I've given both Unnecessary Evils in the
form of taxes and consumerism.

WHAT'S THE WORST SNAKE OIL YOU'VE PERSONALLY EVER PURCHASED?

I once bought a can of soda pop with the understanding that it would
increase my sex appeal, make me less of a dork, and generally turn my
life into a technicolor orgasm. Boy, was I wrong!

HOW MANY PICTURES WOULD YOU SAY YOU'VE DRAWN IN YOUR LIFE?

Not as many as I would have liked! The oppression of Workaday Life
has compelled me to spend far too much time away from my beloved
drawing table. And I have been distracted by a fascinating Life of
Adventure. My calculator says that if I drew 200 drawings a year I would
only have created a mere 11,100 pieces of collectible art! (You do the
math.)

WHAT DO YOU LIKE LEAST ABOUT LiP?

The fact that it has so far *utterly failed* to spark a mass revolutionary
movement with the aim of transforming the whole of modern life into
an ongoing collaborative art project.

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Editor's Letter

“Making the world safe for democracy,’ that was the big slogan.”

—Edward Bernays, on his work for the first US government propaganda ministry, the 1917 Committee on Public Information

“In really hard times the rules of the game are altered.”

—Journalist and social theorist Walter Lippmann, speaking of both elite manipulations of society and history’s mass cataclysms

Before I plunge into the astoundingly far-reaching implications of those words, I’d like to ask you to permit me the privilege of drawing you in, gently. Would you like something to drink, are you hungry, wouldn’t you feel better without those shoes? Wiggle your toes, here, on this grass. Let’s speak of things creature, of amazement, and of the Marvelous. As if, as we perch here on the skin of this planet, both moving faster than the speed of sound, we are merely two among a wondrous infinity, unconcerned with war, or with the peculiar detritus of civilized societies.

It’s easy, especially for those of us who live largely in squares and mark clock-time, to forget this luminous place, or to reduce it to nothing more than a glimmer. Sit with me here while I introduce the story that animates this issue. Like most good stories, this one has an ample share of villainy and heroism. And, like most true and truly good stories, the villains are scarier and more complicated than mere evil, while heroics are measured in struggle, not victory....

Make no mistake about this: Consumer democracy is rule by the few—oligarchy—with a mannequin of democracy still on display in the window.

Edward Bernays is often called the “father of public relations.” He coined the actual term, taught the first class on the topic, bragged extensively of his accomplishments, and lived to be 103. He is largely responsible for women smoking; bogus third-party “citizen’s groups” and consumer-study “focus groups”; bacon as a breakfast accompaniment for eggs; and popularizing the psychoanalytic theories of his uncle, Sigmund Freud, in the United States. He also advised five presidents, from Coolidge to Eisenhower, and helped bring down a popular leftist Guatemalan government at the behest of the United Fruit Company in the 1950s.

Yet for all of his nefarious accomplishments, Bernays was merely one of several public relations pioneers—confidence men, really—who in the early part of the last century articulated the modern strategy of using a specialized class of intellectuals, the “intelligent few,” to manage what they considered to be the “bewildered herd.” At a time when many powerful people in US government and business were fearful of both the rising tide of immigration and the profound ruptures caused by World War I, social psychologists of the day found fertile ground for—and much influence with—their theories on engineering the public’s consent. No longer would the Enlightenment-era ideal of a democracy of informed citizens hold sway; rather, the key to a stable democracy was to develop a “consumer democracy,” to learn how to “sell” political ideas, and to erect a facsimile of democracy where participation, freedom, and dissent were all expressed within the relatively safe confines of consumerism.

More specifically, the architects of this plan laid the clear groundwork for today’s numbing mass mediocracy, neoconservatism, the “Global War on Terrorism,” and a carefully inculcated cynicism that enables many people to knowingly decry the obvious bankruptcy of the political process while participating in the consumer feast that fattens only the foreclosing bank. Make no mistake about this: Consumer democracy is oligarchy, with a mannequin of democracy still on display in the window. The long-term legacy of this bait-and-switch game is a deep cynicism about the political process, and about so-called “human nature.” On one level, this cynicism is a commonsense response to the apparent gap between democratic rhetoric and actual democracy. But perhaps, at a deeper level, it merely represents a psychological victory for the presumptive “intelligent few,” who want us to believe that image matters as much, or more, than substance. But just because the bulk of mass media now gives most weight to the spinning, packaging, and probable impact of personalities and events doesn’t mean we have to.

As the cover of this issue might indicate, I choose to view PR pioneers like Edward Bernays, Walter Lippmann, and “Poison” Ivy Lee as hucksters cut from the same cloth as American showman and Ringling Brothers Circus founder P.T. Barnum. Like Barnum, these mouthpieces for hire draw attention away from our oh-so-ordinary lives to the wondrous spectacle they’ve prepared for us; they invite us

to take a walk down a hall of funhouse mirrors, where our curious natures compel us to check out the freak show in which we're cast. Barnum, who famously observed, "There's a sucker born every minute," could hardly have known his words would describe not only the willing throngs of overcredulous gapers who made his fortune, but the defining credo of consumer democracy.

The greatest trick of the confidence men who laid claim to our era was to replace wildness and the chaos of humanity with a domesticated idea of what it means to be alive, and to convince us that cynicism and resignation are proper responses to dreams that fall beyond the pale of immediate possibility. In essence, the enduring achievement of these men was the civilizing of our collective imagination.

The greatest trick of the confidence men who laid claim to our era was to replace wildness and the chaos of humanity with a domesticated idea of what it means to be alive.

Knowing the tools and strategy of our enemy is important. I wish it were as simple as taking a knife to the throats of the miserable architects of our current quandary. Spilling such blood would be a simple pleasure. Unfortunately, we live in a mediated age, where symbols, theories, and representations serve as polymorphic proxies for our enemies. Thus, we are left with the gauzy battle of savage ideas.


In this issue, we present our weapons of choice: Vandana Shiva's far-reaching analysis of the forces threatening to turn the natural world into a marketplace of patents, Stephen Bender's studious-yet-lively examination of the origins of consumer democracy, and Jeff Conant's more positive meditations on the poetic revolt of Zapatismo in Mexico and beyond—the intent is to throw darkness into light, and to expose our enemies as the creatures of small imagination they most certainly are. If you elect to turn the pages of this issue and absorb the words emblazoned on its 96 pages, you'll learn of quite a few other things, too. We aim to provide well-constructed arms for your mental and political self-defense.

And that, dear reader, is the reason for this issue. Stock up, wiggle your toes, and perch intentfully with us here. It's long past time, in the words of the long-dead muckraker H.L. Mencken, "to spit on our hands, hoist the black flag, and begin to slit throats."


(Nicely, of course.)

—Brian Awehali

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Letters



GMO Risks Unproved?

I enjoyed Ariane Conrad Hyde and Erin Wiegand's article about organic foods and labeling very much: the dispelling of myths, the explication of who owns what organic brand ["Organics: Meaningful or Market Niche?" Summer 2005]. However, I noticed that while the "organic food is better for you" section begins by telling us that there is no scientific conclusion about whether organic food is actually healthier for you, the bulk of this section is about genetically modified organism contamination in organic foods—based on an entirely unstated assumption that GMOs are bad for you, without addressing the presence or absence of any scientific conclusion to that end.

There are probably some good reasons for people to be cautious about or outright opposed to GMOs—reasons, to me, more about ecology than personal health, more about GMO's place in capitalist economy than the ethics of genetic engineering. **But the hysteria over "Frankenfoods" as obviously and necessarily dangerous to personal health, as outright evil, seems to me just as much of a myth, unbacked by any science and based on irrational fear, as any of the myths dispelled in the article.** The authors are entitled to disagree with me about GMOs. But in an article meaning to critically evaluate received wisdom about food, the authors would have been better served by addressing their basis for implying that GMO food is bad for you, instead of basing nearly their entire section about assumptions that organic food must certainly be healthier on their own unstated assumption that genetic modification must certainly be unhealthy.

Jonathan Rochkind
Seattle, WA

The authors respond:

Thanks for your careful reading. We agree that our section on the myth of the benefits to physical health from organics was lacking. Given consumers' stated reliance on organics as a healthful alternative (usually cited as their top reason for the purchase of organic foods), we felt it was important to note the lack of conclusive research within the scientific community on this issue. However, other than the discoveries of pesticide residues in organics, and contradictory results from studies on the amount of nutrients in "conventionally farmed" vs. "organically farmed" foods, we weren't able to find much in the way of hard evidence on health detractors, aside from the issue of GMO contamination. A few more years of testing and we should have more ground to stand on.

Regarding our assertion that GMOs can present human health hazards: There are many studies that indicated they do, in fact, have the potential to be toxic to humans. Highly publicized GMO mistakes—like the brazil nut gene, rBGH in cows' milk, and Starlink corn—point to the dangers of the proliferation of GM foods without sufficient testing and labeling. Earlier this year, the British press reported on Monsanto's suppressed findings that rats fed genetically modified corn developed smaller kidneys and abnormalities in their blood. Seven years prior, one of the first independent (not biotech-sponsored) studies on the effects of transgenic food on animals indicated that transgenic potatoes were also harmful to test rats, potentially causing damaged immune systems, stunted growth, organ damage, and poor brain development.

But you are entirely correct in drawing attention to the other dangers involved with the genetic engineering of foods: in particular,

the place GMOs have in the consolidation of agriculture into the hands of a few corporations. We also agree that simplistic cries of "Frankenfood!" are more often reactionary and alarmist than at all useful. But while it's true that GM foods have yet to be explicitly proven hazardous to human health, we feel that the lack of conclusive evidence that such food engineering is safe warrants attention and caution on the part of consumers who favor organic foods. And really, that's what we were hoping to spur with this article: more conscious and attentive consumption.

The Joy of Soy?

While I appreciated the article on organic food, and agree with some of the points—I buy conventional produce from growers in my area in preference to organic food from thousands of miles off—I need to take issue with some statements in the article.

Soybeans are grown on land often needed for food crops by locals in LDCs [Least Developed Countries], true. However, subsistence agriculture cannot compete with mechanized agriculture, organic or conventional, in terms of how much food it produces. This is what led to the use of tractors and chemicals in the first place, and there is no way to feed the human species without them at present.

TVP [Texturized Vegetable Protein] is machine-made, but so is the meat that is sold in stores, and the majority

of Americans have no way to raise and slaughter meat economically for ourselves. Soy protein is a reasonable alternative to meat for both vegetarians and omnivores (I am an omnivore) and undeniably helps lower cholesterol if you eat it instead of meat (which I do, regularly). Soybeans are not fermented to make tofu: Here, Ms. Conrad Hyde, your sidebar author, seems to be confusing tofu and tempeh, which is fermented with the mold *Rhizopus oligosporus*. Tofu is made either by soaking and crushing beans, then curdling the resulting milk and pressing the curd, or by cooking soy flour in water; both methods are outlined in Shurtleff and Aoyagi's excellent *Book of Tofu*. Tempeh is cooked, inoculated with the cheese-like mold culture, and allowed to ferment for a short time. Soy cheeses also ferment, but use a different bacterial culture. Much soy available in the US, contrary to Ms. Conrad Hyde's statements, is non-GMO and organic; such tofu is available [even] in my local supermarket. Soy is a common allergen: so are wheat, dairy, and eggs. [It] shouldn't be a motivation for anyone to avoid pets, wheat or dairy simply because someone else is allergic to them.

All in all, a worthwhile article and magazine. Please check your facts carefully.

Tim Comer
Victorville, CA

The authors respond:

Thanks for your letter, Tim. We have to disagree with your suggestion that the kind of large-scale, pesticide-ridden farming we've become so used to is necessary for the feeding of the planet. In fact, we would argue that there's no way to feed the human species (or any other animal, for that matter) with it. It's been pointed out again and again that the lack of adequate supplies of food for people has less to do with production than distribution; that is, the consolidation of control over food that is part and parcel of the rise of huge farms and big agribusiness is the real culprit behind food shortages in the US and around the world.

"Meat sold in stores," perhaps with the exception of Spam, is certainly not "machine-

made" in the same way that TVP is. TVP is also not the same as soy, or tofu, or tempeh, and we did make a distinction between those. (And thank you for your correction; most tofu is not, in fact, fermented, as tempeh is.) Further, it is true that eating soy instead of meat will undoubtedly reduce your cholesterol intake—but replacing meat in your diet with any kind of cholesterol-free food (say, beans and whole grains) will have the same effect. The claim of the soy industry is that soy isoflavones have a special property that actively reduces cholesterol, and it is this claim we take issue with for the dubious, industry-backed, inconclusive studies that prop it up.

It is also true that organic, GMO-free tofu is readily available in the US. We never

There are probably some good reasons for people to be cautious about or outright opposed to GMOs—reasons more about ecology than personal health, more about GMOs place in capitalist economy than the ethics of genetic engineering.

claimed otherwise. However, the majority of soybeans produced in this and other countries are, in fact, non-organic, and it is one of the top genetically-engineered crops at present. These GE soybeans, in addition to being widely used for animal feed, make up a great deal of all that soy protein isolate and TVP that gets mixed with a staggering amount of processed foods—the soy we don't usually know we're eating.

Whither Indymedia?

IN OUR SUMMER 2005 ISSUE, JENNIFER WHITNEY'S ARTICLE, "MAKE MEDIA, MAKE REAL TROUBLE," DISCUSSED THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE INDYMEDIA CENTERS (IMCs), AND GENERATED A LOT OF DISCUSSION ON VARIOUS INDYMEDIA SITES. THE FOLLOWING LETTER IS A PORTION OF WHAT WAS POSTED ON THE URBANA-CHAMPAIGN INDYMEDIA SITE IN RESPONSE TO THIS ARTICLE.

I agree that Indymedia is not making as much trouble as it could, but Indymedia's irrelevance is not caused by shoddy editing and writing.

Fact-checking is obviously important. Participatory media is also important. I don't believe the two are exclusive concepts. Putting up imperfect and sloppy articles on the front page is not an effective strategy on its own. But showing people that yes, what they have to say is important, and yes, they can tell their own stories, and yes, they can have access to a news portal that reaches a lot of people, is an effective means for change. It's called empowering people. And it is a vital part of Indymedia's mission. Information does not have to be mediated by experts or even by well-meaning leftie reporters.

I also believe that people want to communicate effectively. People want to make good videos, write excellent articles, and learn how to produce kickass audio. Providing a space for imperfect work to be read, seen, or listened to, combined with offering skill-building workshops, is part of the participatory media process. Indymedia could be more relevant if it could better facilitate this process.

Providing a place for honing skills builds confidence. I've seen people transform their lives through journalism. I've seen homeless people regain self-worth by writing investigative reports and young women literally find their voice on the pirate airwaves. Participatory media is powerful, and to lessen the importance of giving space for its expression is misguided.

Indymedia has many problems that Jen doesn't touch upon. **Indymedia's problems are the same ones infecting the**



rest of the “movement” in the US: a lack of organizers, unclear politics, unclear purpose, and bad process.

Indymedia needs a better understanding of consensus, and to realize consensus isn't the best way to make decisions in all circumstances. Indymedia needs to not allow abusive, controlling, patriarchal, and racist behavior that causes people to flee collectives and causes new people to not feel welcome. Indymedia needs to curtail the technical hierarchy that has always permeated it. Indymedia needs to figure out how to keep people involved. All of these problems (except for maybe the technical hierarchy) are not unique to Indymedia, but are endemic to organization on the left in general.

Too many IMCistas are more interested in being independent reporters themselves and using it as a career stepping-stone, or want to push Indymedia towards professionalization. But Indymedia does not need to move into the more professional realm. Accurate spelling and professional journalistic standards without process, a participatory vision, and organization will not make real trouble either. Solving Indymedia's real problems is the only way to move towards relevance, and that will take a lot more than a spell-check.

Just Another IMCista
Urbana-Champaign Indymedia

Too Concerned with “Effectiveness”?

I'm writing in response to Andy Cornell's article published in your previous issue [Summer 2005], titled “Who Needs Ends When We've Got Such Bitchin' Means?” In his article, Andy sets forth a criticism of a kind of activism that he feels is concerned with “means” at the expense of “ends.”

No doubt, it is true that activist groups can become so disillusioned with society and the challenges of political change that they retreat into inter-group life and activities, and become satisfied with the moral righteousness of their practice, even believing that such practice is enough to change the larger world. Or, that activist groups focus on perfecting their inter-

group practices to such an extent that they become blinded to their goals of broader social change. But rather than offering suggestions for the obstacles we face, Andy opts for a trade-off of democratic and mutualistic practices, in favor of lobbying-type activism with the aim of influencing politicians.

We find this form of street lobbying an insult. We shall not create new ways to expand and entrench the hierarchy of the state, which reduces us to mere voters or constituency of a politician, a party, or an interest group. We shall not make these institutionalized practices also the practices of our social movements. Protest means much more than that for us. **Unlike Andy, for us protests are reconstructive spaces for experimentation in liberatory practices, which strive to simultaneously externalize internal values. The question**

**Solving
Indymedia's real
problems is the only
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of how to externalize these values is an essential question, one which radicals have been discussing since radicals have been radicals. But it is not one that Andy asks. Instead, he is concerned with a vague “effectiveness,” which is reduced to recruiting members, getting good media coverage, and influencing politicians.

But the issue remains: How do we democratize society in the broadest sense, and transform capitalist relations into mutualistic and cooperative ones? Andy does not consider these experiments, nor does he constructively consider what we

can do to push our efforts forward. Nor does he express anticapitalist nor anti-authoritarian values. Instead, Andy comes off like the disillusioned parent waving his finger at the rebellious child, saying “I was like you when I was young, but then I grew up.”

I'd like to end this letter with a question in response to Andy's attempt to “common-sense” his readers out of any anti-authoritarian leanings or convictions they may have. In his article, he remarks, “You can't eat democracy,” and that “Good process doesn't cure AIDS.” I would like to ask, if it is *not* the centralization of power into the hands of a few—the absence of the real freedom of people to decide on policies of agriculture, distribution, and the like—which *actually makes poverty and starvation real in the first place*—then what is it that makes this awful reality? If it is not the lack of democracy which commodifies, regulates, restricts, and often destroys food and other material necessities to people who need them, then what is it? If it is not bad “process”—that is, the privatization of medical industries, and the criminalization of generic drugs—which perpetuates the AIDS epidemic, then what is it? The struggle against starvation, disease, and a million other “issues” are structured into the very systems of power that create them. To ignore this reality is to only *play* at social change. The internal practices of social movements are not enough to transform society at large. That is why we must still ask the question, “How do we externalize these internal values?” This is the question to be asked.

Rob Augman

The author responds:

I want to thank Rob for responding on behalf of everyone I took issue with in my article. I'm sure they engaged in a taxing, yet scrupulously transparent, process to arrive at such a unanimous position. There is not space here to respond adequately to each of the distortions and misrepresentations of the points I made, but a few words are in order.

After conceding my primary argument, Rob states that I want jettison democracy and mutualism in favor of lobbying. This is absurd on two accounts. In fact, I argue that

practices common among mostly white and middle-class sectors of the movement are not democratic and mutualistic enough, because such groups have often not adequately engaged in movement building and dialogue across race and class divisions, leaving the people who are usually most effected by the system we oppose outside of their groups' process. Rob ignores this point completely, as has happened all too often when radical folks of color have made similar arguments. Secondly, it is intellectually dishonest for Rob to equate the process of organizing grassroots movements to confront the state, or other power holders (such as bosses or landlords) with corporate lobbying. While it is certainly true that participating in marches or other actions can and should be inspiring and empowering to those involved, it seems axiomatic that the purpose is also to influence people—those who currently have the power to make policy changes, and everyone else watching, who we want to have participating next time.

I, too, want to reconstruct power relations in the broadest sense, but I believe this has to happen through organizing. Radical values and practices are spread (externalized, in Rob's lingo) through the difficult process of building organizations and movements to oppose concrete instances of oppression and exploitation. Victories and a supportive movement culture help to attract and retain participants. Internal processes don't simply take wind, and spread like a munificent plague. For these reasons, in regards to Rob's charge that I am concerned with effectiveness, I have to plead guilty.

Femme vs. Femmenism

Right on, Lisa Jervis. I'm so glad someone is finally willing to wake up the feminist movement and inform it that inherent femininity, whatever the hell that is, isn't actually the beacon of light and purity some may pass off as political morality. ["If Women Ruled The World, Nothing Would Be Different, Summer 2005] It takes some serious balls (to borrow a phrase) to call out organizations like CodePink and The White House Project.

I do, however, have a minimal semantic complaint. The use of "femmenism" as a term to describe ladies who buy into gender stereotypes and "sugar and spice" patterns

of behavior is pretty opposite of my experience of what a "femme" identity is.

"Femmenism" and "femme" are two completely different terms as I would define them. "Femmenism," if I may be so bold as to try to interpret your brilliant article and summarize it into my own hasty rambling, is a misguided belief that simply being female gives one a natural ability to communicate, be nurturing, and protect

**"Femme" is
about fucking with
perceptions of feminity
and those perceptions'
direct relationship
to sexism and
homophobia.**

future generations through peace and love and flowers and puppies and rainbows and lots of little kids running around your bare feet in the kitchen.

Femme is about not taking any crap from anyone, and fucking with perceptions of femininity and those perceptions' direct relationship to sexism and homophobia. Incidentally, femmes aren't always little white queer girls who look good with a little butch sidekick and some ho boots—femme is a complicated identity that reaches beyond rigid and socially enforced gender roles, and since the movement toward racial justice and the smashing of the gender binary aren't exactly married right now, it's impossible to describe the numerous manifestations of "femmes" across cultural boundaries. Watch a Prince video or rent an Almodovar film, for starters.

In your article, you write "acknowledgement and discussion of culturally produced gender differences is

essential to dismantling sexism." I think that femme is one of many alternative interpretations to culturally constructed roles of gender, not a reinforcement of those roles. While you name "femmenism" as something that takes feminism backward, I believe femmes are some of your closest allies in supporting a feminism that is socially just.

I do see the silliness of being attached to identity politics, which we all need to move past if we're ever going to change the divisive system of labeling and hierarchy that so pervades our culture. But a simple slip of the tongue could mistake me for a femmenist instead of a femme, and sometimes I'm just totally wearing the wrong outfit to kick the shit out of whoever makes that mistake. I'm sad that in your effort to coin a new phrase for an idea that obviously needs naming, you may have stepped on the dainty little toes of some of your favorite shit-kicking sisters.

Nicole Makris
Oakland, CA

Incendiary and Boring

You are ungrateful jagoffs and represent the prototypical "lefty" martyrs that alienate people. You are a clone that sinks our efforts. **You may as well work for the Young Republicans.** *LiP* is so incendiary and unreadable and boring and for people who already have outlets for the same predictable progressive response to the news of the day.

Don't let your frustrations at doing a publication be a reason to insult people. What kind of solidarity can we build if you continue the stupid bashing of your supposed allies.

You will forever be flamed by me, and remain unmentioned and unnoticed. Good luck with your delusions.

Anna O. Moss
Chicago, IL

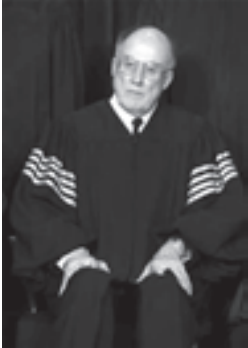
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Good-Bye!

HONEST OBITUARIES FOR A DISHONEST WORLD

William H. Rehnquist

October 1, 1924 – September 3, 2005



Supreme Court Chief Justice
Finally Leaves

William Hubbs Rehnquist, a fan of amateur theater, liked to lead singalongs with his clerks, and added gold stripes to the sleeves of his official robes out of affection for the Lord Chancellor, a character in Gilbert & Sullivan's *Iolanthe*, who is called on in the operetta to resolve

disputes among a colony of fairies. But when he wasn't singing or altering his robes, Rehnquist stayed busy, in the words of Professor J.B. Raskin of the American University Law School, constructing "a thick jurisprudence hostile to popular democracy and protective of race privilege and corporate power."

Rehnquist's tenure with the nation's highest court reached its most historic point on December 12, 2000, when he voted to end the presidential election recount under way in Florida and to bar a new recount with uniform standards, handing the US presidency to George W. Bush, loser of the popular vote.

After growing up middle-class in Shorewood, Wisconsin, Rehnquist spent four years in the Army Air Corps during World War II, serving mostly as a weather observer in North Africa. He then used the GI Bill to get a political science BS and an MS in only two years' time; he got a second masters before attending Stanford law school, where he graduated first in his class in 1952. A year later, he married CIA employee Natalie Cornell. They had three children and moved to Arizona, where Rehnquist campaigned for Ronald Reagan's ideological forerunner, Barry Goldwater, in his failed 1964 bid for the presidency. The future chief justice spoke out passionately against integration during this time.

First appointed to the Supreme Court in 1971, Rehnquist wasted no time establishing himself as the most conservative of Richard Nixon's appointees. Using what the *New York Times* described as "a steady hand, a focus and commitment that never wavered, and the muscular use of the power of judicial review,"

Rehnquist "managed to translate many of his long-held views into binding national precedent." While broadly advancing the cause of "states' rights," he opposed the ongoing desegregation of public schools; dissented in 1973's landmark *Roe v Wade*, which effectively legalized abortion; helped erode federal minimum wage laws in 1976 (with a ruling that was overturned just nine years later); ardently supported the death penalty; applied his influence to removing many of the procedural obstacles to executions; and advocated for prayer in schools.

After President Reagan selected him to head the court in 1986, Rehnquist picked up the pace. He dissented from the 1989 *Texas v Johnson* case that affirmed flag burning as a First Amendment right. In 1991, in the majority opinion in *Arizona v Fulminante*, Rehnquist argued that coerced confessions were "harmless errors" if other evidence led to the conviction of a defendant. He came within one vote of overturning *Roe* in 1992's *Planned Parenthood v Casey*; fought for more government accommodations for religion; expanded police officers' immunity from lawsuits; and was the court's lone voice arguing to protect the tax-exempt status of Bob Jones University, the largest private liberal arts college in South Carolina, where a ban on interracial dating was enforced until 2000.

At no time during his 33-year tenure did Rehnquist employ a black clerk, but given his documented hostility to desegregation, his opposition to race-based public policies like affirmative action, and his one-time ownership of a Vermont vacation property with a racially restrictive covenant on its deed, this is hardly surprising.

In an article published in the *University of Texas Law Review* in 1976, he wrote: "There is no conceivable way in which I can logically demonstrate to you that the judgments of my conscience are superior to the judgments of your conscience, and vice versa. Many of us necessarily feel strongly and deeply about our own moral judgments, but they remain only personal moral judgments until in some way given the sanction of law."

Yet Rehnquist was surely intelligent enough to understand, as he wrote those words, that the personal moral judgments of Supreme Court judges are, in fact, often given the sanction of law. And, at a time when American jurisprudence so clearly reserves its most attentive ear for the wealthy, white, and well-connected, William Hubbs Rehnquist's beloved "sanction of law" looks a lot like the garish tyranny of influence dressed up in some respectable black robes. Conservatives across the nation mourn his passing with fulsome statements, while the rest of us cringe at the knowledge that his replacement will likely be some silver-tongued lickspittle even further to the right.

—Brian Awehali

Rehnquist stayed busy constructing "a thick jurisprudence hostile to popular democracy and protective of race privilege and corporate power."

Constructing the Candidate

Over the next 18 months, a relatively small percentage of the US population will cast their votes for 38 state governors, 33 senators, and all 435 members of the House of Representatives. Add to that state legislative elections, various referenda, and races for city government—in 2005, 18 major cities, including Atlanta, Detroit, Houston, Minneapolis and New York, will have mayoral elections—and you'll end up with a lot of campaign yard signs and baby-kissing. At least, that's what you'll see. But behind these smiling candidates lurks a phalanx of campaign consultants, each of them an expert in shaping public opinion.

Text by Laura Miller • Illustration by Colin Sagan

Political consultants are experts at creating and refining a select few messages for their candidate to repeat over and over again. Take, for example, consultant Frank Luntz, who provided the Republican Party with such helpful suggestions as, "A compelling story, even if factually incorrect, can be more emotionally compelling than a dry recitation of the truth," and "No speech about homeland security or Iraq should begin without a reference to 9/11."

In a 1998 poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, almost a third of consultants surveyed said that "competition" was their primary motivator, outweighing both "political beliefs" and "money."



To smear their opponents, political candidates will often hire consultants who specialize in "oppo research." Such consultants provide their clients with a heaping pile of dirt on rivals, culled from press clips, databases, and word of mouth (aka the rumor mill). As recent elections demonstrate, such information need not be true for it to effectively turn public opinion against the opponent in question.

Each campaign cycle sees more money spent than the last. The research group Center for Responsive Politics (www.opensecrets.org) estimated that total spending on the 2004 election was close to \$4 billion. The presidential election alone topped \$1.2 billion.

Direct mail has played a key role in political campaigns since the 1960s. Jeff Gumbinner, a direct mail specialist selected as a rising star by political-consulting trade journal *Campaigns and Elections*, says a successful direct mail campaign must focus on a message that “is so obvious, the reader does not have to stop and think.”

When consultants aren’t working on electoral campaigns, chances are they’re busy with corporate clients. One of the top recipients of money from the Republican 527 group Progress for America is the DCI Group, a Washington-based PR and lobby shop. While pocketing \$672,827 from George W. Bush’s reelection effort, DCI counted as clients AT&T, GTECH, and the trade association Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

Political consultants excel at packaging and selling themselves to clients as indispensable agents for winning a campaign. In 1990, the book *Political Communications in America* reported that about 20% of a candidate’s campaign spending went to consultant fees, commissions, and expenses.

The US system for choosing political leaders is being exported. Enterprising consultants can also pick up work around the world; Latin America and Eastern Europe are frequent destinations. “The international market for American campaigning expertise is a profitable one for those adventurous enough to compete in it,” notes *Campaigns and Elections*.



When Bad PR Stunts Go...Worse

The PR industry often seems to be an evil, manipulative monolith. But sometimes, they fuck up, too. And when they do, it's often very funny...

On a beautiful, warm day in June 2005, Snapple created a 35,000-pound mess when they installed a giant kiwi-strawberry popsicle in New York's Union Square, in an attempt to promote a new line of ice pops by breaking the world record for frozen-treat size. The event planners apparently had never spent a summer in the city: Before the popsicle was fully raised off the truck that had brought it from its New Jersey-based, 46-below dressing room, its runoff flooded the neighborhood with sticky pink sweetness. Several streets had to be closed while the fire department cleaned up.

The company did get some press out of it, though. Headlines ranged from the pedestrian "Publicity Stunt Melts Down" to the sublime "Oh, the Humanity! 17 1/2-Ton Ice Pop Hemorrhages Goo." As industry trade journal *PR Week* noted, "The spectacular failure of the ice pop generated hundreds of news stories across America, but most pointed to the ineptitude of the idea's execution rather than the quality of Snapple's new ice pops."

Snapple officials said that the company was unlikely to make a second attempt at breaking the record.



When the *Financial Times* celebrated the launch of its Australian edition in October 2004, it chartered the sailboat *Spirit of America*, the 1992 winner of the America's Cup. Bearing the newspaper's name, the ship set sail from a harbor in Sydney.

Then it hit rocks and smashed into the side of the Sydney Opera House.

Some of the crew and passengers, including senior staff from the *Times*, were thrown into the water as the boat smashed a light on the Opera House's walkway and capsized.

Since positive spin is PR rule number one, John Ridding, editor and publisher of *Financial Times Asia*, commented, "Once we realized no one on board was hurt, we could relax and get the extra publicity."



In 1993, an Australian activist group calling itself "Mothers Opposing Pollution" (MOP) popped up, claiming to be "the largest women's environmental group in Australia with thousands of supporters across the country." MOP's sole campaign was against the use of plastic milk bottles; they focused on the carcinogenic risks associated with food in plastic containers, plastic's landfill-stuffing nature, and nutrient depletion through the exposure of milk to light. The spokesperson for the group, Alana Maloney, articulated MOP's position on the matter quite clearly: "The message to the consumer is never buy milk in plastic containers."

They didn't, however, support the fully recyclable, nonhazardous glass milk bottle, nor did they warn consumers of the fact that cardboard milk cartons—the MOP-recommended packaging—are lined with plastic.

Furthermore, "Alana Maloney," didn't exist. Her real name was Janet Rundle, as a journalist from the Brisbane, Queensland, *Courier-Mail* discovered in 1995—and she also happened to be the head of the PR company JR & Associates. Further digging revealed that Rundle's partner in another company, Vita-Snax, ran a PR firm of his own: Unlimited Public Relations, which counted as a client the Association of Liquidpaperboard Carton Manufacturers.

The Assoc. of Liquidpaperboard Carton Manufacturers, it should be noted, is in the business of making cardboard milk cartons.

Following these revelations (and the subsequent staunch denials they elicited), MOP disappeared from the community-activist scene.

In an embarrassing case of overconfidence, computer security firm Argus Systems suffered a severe PR backfire in April 2001 when it challenged hackers to break into a web server protected by its new software, PitBull. The contest, the fifth (and last) the company ever ran, started a week before that year's London's Infosecurity Europe conference so that the impressive results could then be touted at the show.

A Polish group going by the name of Last Stage of Delirium (LSD) took three days to break into the server; they laid claim to the \$50,000 prize even before the start of the exhibition. Argus quickly attempted to spin the disaster, claiming that the hack actually had nothing to do with the software they were marketing, but instead was the result of a heretofore unmentioned vulnerability in the operating system running the servers—even using the hack to demonstrate the necessity of the product: “This successful exploit is concrete and dramatic validation of the message we have been trying to deliver to the market, namely: operating system security is absolutely mandatory in today's environment,” they said in a statement.

But, as a reporter for the snarky IT-news website www.theregister.com noted, PitBull was conspicuously absent from the aforementioned Infosecurity exhibition. LSD says on their website: “Contrary to common opinion, it was not sufficient to use an unpublished security vulnerability in [the] Solaris operating system, as PitBull had been especially created to protect the system against such weaknesses.... What we needed...was a vulnerability at the level of [the] operating system kernel. We did manage to find such a vulnerability and additionally to find a bug in PitBull itself.” LSD reported that as of June 2003, no more than \$5,000 of the promised prize money had materialized.

In late September 1996, an email warning about an extremely destructive virus named Irina was traveling the web. The virus itself, though, was not. It was concocted by folks at the UK division of Penguin Books, which was about to publish a web-based novel called, yup, *Irina*.

When angry hordes of panicked internet users discovered the truth through a researcher who traced the original email to its source, Penguin tried to cover its ass with more email: “You may have received a letter from a Professor Edward Prideaux recently falsely warning of a virus called ‘Irina.’ Please note that ‘Irina’ is not a virus, and the views of Prof. Prideaux are not those of Penguin Books. *Irina* is the title of Penguin Books’ ground-breaking interactive novel.”

Guy Gadney, the company's former head of electronic publishing and the man behind the project, elaborated further, as quoted on sci-fi fan site Ansible: “Of course, we were keen that the information should be kept by the journalists and not

sent out electronically.” The, um, implausibility of this is clear from the way the original email urged, “Please be careful and forward this mail to anyone you care about.” He later stepped up his disingenuousness to all-out lies: “There is an Interactive Novel which you can access from the Penguin Books homepage at www.penguin.co.uk called *Irina* after the main character Irina Zotova. This has conflicted with reports of a virus called Irina.... The virus rumour has been checked by experts in the UK and it has been confirmed that there is currently no ‘Irina’ virus to guard against and that an email erroneously circulated to a mailing list was at the root of this rumour.”

Stockholm ad company Cole, Russell & Pryce (CR&P) caused quite a stir with a 2004 campaign, described on www.ad-rag.com, promoting the launch of its new website. In the effort's first phase, an email about the new site was sent to 500 friends, clients, and fellow ad professionals. About one-fifth of these folks got a follow-up message with a photo of a lamb; readers, CR&P pleaded, should visit their homepage “for the sake of the lamb.” Then, a select group of the recipients were sent a “reminder” email, which included another photo of the lamb—missing a front hoof.

The same day, 12 “carefully selected” people were sent a package containing a real, bloody lamb's hoof.

As complaints mounted, the company fired founder, partner, and creative director Olle Sjöden, and characterized the campaign as “Olle's thing.” The damage control appeased outraged clients, including animal rights organization Djurens Rätt, which at least one internet wag suggested might have gained members from the stunt through sympathy for the cute li'l lamb. Not so the agency, though; despite protestations that the hooves were merely butcher's waste, as of press time the much-touted website was occupied with a generic search engine and a “Buy This Domain!” banner.





I Love to Burn the Flag

by
Neal Pollack

One beautiful summer day when I was ten years old, my father called me outside. He was barbecuing ribs in the backyard.

“Son,” he said, “there’s something I want to give you.”

Dad handed me a long cardboard box. I opened it to find a full-sized handmade American flag inside. I pressed it against my face. It felt soft and fresh.

“Dad,” I gasped. “This is...*incredible!*”

“Read the note,” he said.

Attached to the box was a little card. “Throw the flag on the grill,” it read.

“Very funny, Dad,” I said.

“I’m serious, son,” he said. “I want you to put the flag on the barbecue.”

“But...” I said. “The flag will burn!”

“That’s the point,” he said.

“I can’t burn the flag! It’s the symbol of everything our country stands for! My ancestors fought and died for this flag! It represents the hopes and dreams of—”

“Save the grade-school propaganda for later,” Dad said. “And do what I say...”

Tears in my eyes, I placed the Star Spangled Banner over the burning coals. Soon, it was completely aflame, red-white-and-blue consumed in a blistering blaze of orange.

Dad had his hand over his heart. He was softly humming “God Bless America.”

“That’s what this country is all about,” he said. “That flag is worth nothing if a man can’t burn it in his own backyard. It is a sacred American right.”

I stared at the wisps of smoke coming off the grill in wonder, and in my heart, knew my dad was right.

After that, my family barbecued at least one flag every year, and I grew to love the ritual. Sometimes the stars would ignite first, sometimes the stripes. Sometimes, the whole thing would go up in a blaze of Old Glory. When it was all done, we’d have a picnic


of burgers, fresh corn and cole slaw and laugh well into the night. One summer, all our neighbors came over with their own flags and we had a big community flag bonfire, melting marshmallows over the flames and making s’mores while “Disco Inferno” played on the hi-fi.

When I left home and went to college, I started burning my own flags. My friends and I would spend hours listening to jazz, talking about Russian novels, and burning flags in our dorm rooms. We developed an affectation of wearing tri-cornered hats colored like the flag, and lighting them on fire in the cafeteria.

I became politically active and joined several radical organizations. But when these groups to which I belonged would burn a flag in protest of some U.S. foreign policy or another, my stomach would churn. To me, flag-burning was a private, family affair. It was about friendship and trust. I didn’t want it sullied by vitriol, however justified, about the actions of the US government.

Now I hear Republicans in Congress are again threatening to deny Americans one of their most cherished freedoms—burning the flag. I think about my father, older now but still dedicated to crisping a flag in the backyard at least once a year. I think about

how I want to raise a family of my own, how I want my sons and daughters to know the pleasure of burning a flag along with their dad. Most of all, I think about the millions of Americans, young and old, rich and poor, black and white, who love burning the flag as much as I do. I urge our senators and congressmen to think about my story before they vote yes for a Constitutional amendment to ban flag-burning. Please don’t hurt America’s families. Please don’t take away our sacred right.

I’ll always remember what my father said to me that summer afternoon so many years ago. “Son,” he said, his voice constricting into a sob, “there’s only one thing more American than burning a flag...and that’s choking a bald eagle with your bare hands.” 

I urge our senators and congressmen to think about my story before they vote yes for a Constitutional amendment to ban flag-burning. Please don't hurt America's families.



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VERSO

The River vs.





Water, Inc.

an interview with
Vandana Shiva
by
Antonia Juhasz

Dr. Vandana Shiva is a physicist, ecologist, activist, and author of hundreds of papers and articles and more than 15 books (even she's not sure of the total number, given the reprints and translations into dozens of languages around the world). She is the founder and director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy in India. Her work runs the gamut from establishing community seed banks to defending farmers and everyone else who eats food from the dire socioeconomic, environmental, and health consequences of genetically modified crops; from writing and agitating about water privatization to writing and agitating about corporate thievery of natural knowledge. In 2001 she was named one of the top five most important people in Asia by *Asia Week* magazine. Her work continues with *Earth Democracy*, out from South End Press in November.

LiP: I'd like to ask you about the relationship between research and activism, and how you think people will incorporate the ideas from your books into their own activism.

Vandana Shiva: Well, I came from science and academia; I was part of the "normal" culture, where you write to publish, you write for yourself. Then I gave up academia, and since I founded the Research Foundation in 1982, everything I write is about my engagement. My engagement has always been twofold: the research I can do, and the knowledge people have, joining into a major force for transformation. My books are about a deep synthesis of the knowledge that comes out of action. Every book of mine is about issues that I see as needing a response—for example, genetic engineering and intellectual property rights, which I started to write about in 1987. One of the most touching moments in my life was walking the streets of Seattle during those amazing protests against the World Trade Organization, when a youngster came and held my hand and said, "I'm here because of [your book] *Biopiracy*." That's what my hope is, and that's why I write—otherwise, I wouldn't try.

In your latest book, *Earth Democracy*, you provide some beautiful examples of local models of living democracy taking place. Can you talk about your favorites?

What happened in villages as we spread the word about the practice of genetic engineering and corporate monopolies on seed. Extremely naturally, people started to create these village defense committees—the local name was Jaiv Panchayat, which also translates into “living democracy.” It was something that multiplied and spread so fast, partly because that part of India—that 70% of India that still lives in what I call a biodiversity economy—that’s their ethics! They don’t have to “learn” that activism, or learn that the cow, the tree, and the earthworm are all part of one extended family.

[This kind of activism] spread. In the state of Orissa, communities were so strong that when the Department for International Development tried to privatize the local water tanks and ponds, people said, “No, this is our resource! It’s collective common property!” From the source of the Ganges down to the Bay of Bengal, people organized and said, sorry, the River Ganga* is sacred, it is our mother, and she is not for sale! In fact, right now, one of the pilgrimages of the Ganges is happening. It used to be 20,000 [people] a decade ago—last year’s was 10 million people, and this year there will be 20 million people walking. Walking to just take one little pot of water, a glass of water, and walking with that Ganges water back to their village, as a tribute to the sacred river. And this whole living democracy Jaiv Panchayat movement was able to take that ethics, that culture, and put that culture into political mobilization. So that’s something that touched me deeply and continues to inspire me. They’ve now used the history of that to declare their opposition to a new seed law, which would make it illegal for India’s farmers to save their own seed—not just Monsanto’s seed, but their own seed—5 million people have signed a pledge saying, sorry, saving seed is a duty to the earth. So I see this as a huge movement that will continue to grow, continue to give hope in a period in which 70% or 80% of India has been written off under the globalization project.

What do you mean, written off?

In the sense that they’re not supposed to exist—their ecological space is being stolen. Their water’s being taken, their seeds are being taken, their land’s being taken, their livelihoods are being taken. That’s what globalization is.

The other wonderful, very inspiring movement was the one that tribal women started against Coca-Cola’s appropriation of local water supplies in Plachimada, Kerala. It has spawned a whole new movement of communities around every Coke and Pepsi plant. We’re now organized nationwide, and the local elected village bodies are serving notices in place after place and saying, sorry, we don’t give you permission, Coca-Cola: In this democracy we have the right to decide how our water will be used, and we definitely don’t want it to be used for you to make superprofits. Yesterday, I was having a meeting with schools for a campaign on junk food, and it was so touching—the kids were saying, “And we have to ban Coke and Pepsi...”

These are not singular things; they’re not limited. They are unleashing a new energy of transformation that is within the people’s own self-organizing.

The 70% of India that still lives in what I call a biodiversity economy doesn’t have to “learn” that the cow, the tree, and the earthworm are all part of one extended family.

Can you talk about how living democracy relates to other terms that we use, like direct or participatory democracy?

In terms of the political participation of people, living democracy would include direct democracy and participatory democracy. But it is broader in that it includes the democracy of all life.

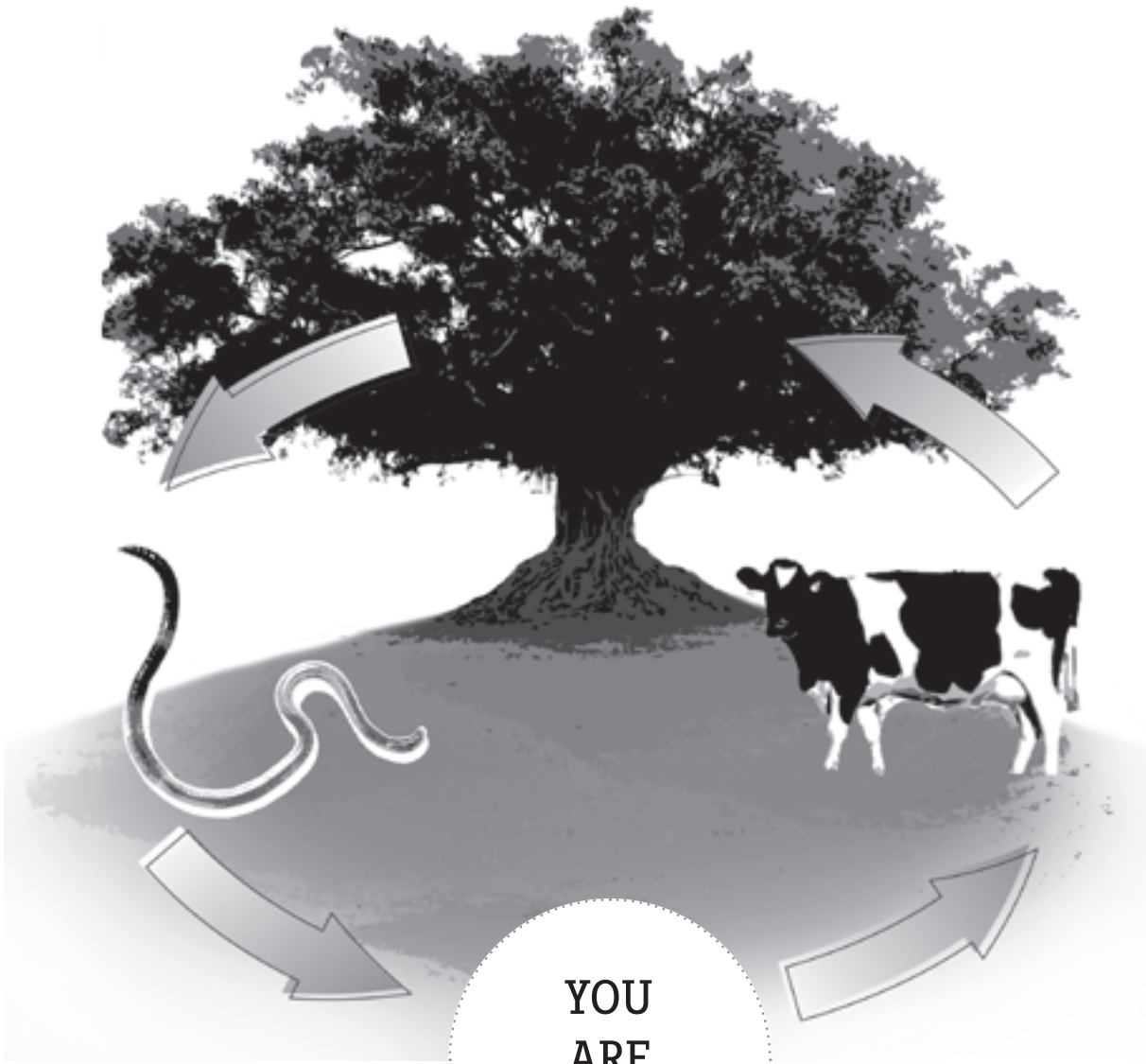
It therefore has a very deep ecological basis.

I think that we need that, because there’s too much conflict between those who want to work for nature, and those who want to work for human beings. We are so polarized as movements between the human rights movements and the animal rights movements. In India, our government is passing a law—and I’m part of the drafting team—to recognize the rights of tribals, the indigenous communities in the forests, that have never been recognized. And yet, because the tigers are dying, you’ve got a tiger lobby that says the tribals can’t have rights because the tiger will die, and then the tribal community says, we can’t have conservation because we need our rights. I really hope that living democracy, articulated as the broader democracy of all life, will help us transcend these polarizations and work to protect all species while defending every human right of every excluded community.

I’m interested in how you see living democracy translating into a model that could eventually replace representative democracy.

Representative democracy has always had deficiencies, but its deficiencies have increased hugely under globalization, where there’s two total blocks that make representative democracy not function at all. The first block is the fact that most decisions aren’t even made at the national level, where representative democracy is supposed to function. You elect people to parliament, but parliament has no role in deciding WTO rules—it’s totally bypassed. So it’s already made impotent by globalization and rule-making at the global level under corporate influence. But the second reason it’s being rendered totally impotent is because there’s no gap between





YOU
ARE
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those who are in business and those who are professional politicians—especially in India. Increasingly, we are seeing business directly entering into the Indian parliament; they now don't even have to bribe the parliamentarian or the minister—they *are* the minister! Just like in the White House. In a way, the White House has become the model, where corporations rule and run for office; they have the money to finance their own elections at every level. And the situation is so insular that no popular mobilization can break through it, because it's being driven by money power.

And these people who hijacked representative democracy and what thin levels of protection it gives people are not going to give up power on their own. The contest has disappeared, it's all become unipolar in every society. You might have two parties, but it's like musical chairs for the same ideology—the music is the same, it's just a rotation between people of the same class and the same corporate leaning. I think the biggest thing we need to do today is to start, through our actions, to reclaim the spaces in which we want to be able to make our decisions, and build another political

framework by shifting power out of the hands of those who turned representative democracy into corporate rule.

And we would maintain an elected government, and maintain the power of the government to regulate?

Yes, absolutely. And that's why the issue of subsidiarity—devolving power down to the most local level possible on any given issue—is so important. Living democracy basically works like a tree: It grows from the roots upwards, from the people and their organizing capacity. But you do need the canopy, in a storm—and you get storms, including Monsanto, wars, militarization. And therefore you need a thin layer, a very thin layer, of regulatory structures protecting people on the bottom. But that national regulatory system can only be pro-people if it is getting its life blood from a base of self-organized communities, taking care of their water, their food, their farming, their health—and making demands on the system for the appropriate share.

So, you imagine an electoral system, in which officials are elected by the public, that would be essentially cleansed through a living democracy process?

In my experience, the community as a whole, as an integral, organic body of equal human beings, is the only way to create real democracy. The moment you start to get into electoral processes, you start excluding the women, you start excluding the tribals, you start excluding the landless, et cetera. And that is why in the Indian decentralized democracy system, we do have laws that say the village as a whole has rights. Now, it doesn't have to be a village. It could be a street in San Francisco. And of course functions will get delegated, just as they are in any structure in any organization—some people will be too busy, someone's good at keeping the books, someone else is good at calling meetings—but that works in an organic system. Elections at all other levels would work, but the elections would be around highly defined power, where the power that can be exercised by people directly stays in their hands. And that is not negotiated.

Let me bring this to the issue of propaganda, then: how corporations in particular, in partnership with the media, change the dialogue within which we're able to function—how they have made it palatable that water should be considered a commodity, that air and rain and land, things that should be considered communal, are now considered private property.

The main way in which propaganda has been used to try and dull people's thinking about what water is, what food is, what the land is, is by first and foremost redefining everything that we get from the earth as purely raw materials and commodities. In the case of biodiversity, life forms are transformed into information, and that information in the genetic code is treated as property by the company that can read the genetic code with a silly little machine. They didn't even use their minds, but it becomes their intellectual property. And it is by taking living organisms out of their life context and turning them into a fragment of expression, only genetic information, that they're able to change the discourse from thinking about life as a cow, as a pig, as a neem tree, as a basmati plant, into a transfer of information—and commodification of information should not really trouble anybody. In this way, society, through propaganda, is cut off from the consequences of their actions.

I can give you a very clear example of how this would work, in the case of the privatization of Delhi's water supply, which was going to be based on the commodification of the Ganges. They were starting to call the water that comes from the Ganga

“raw water.” And the water at the other end of the pipe, where they would be selling that water, would be a product. It's by this mutation that they change the status of what you're dealing with, so water as a living resource, plants as a living resource, disappear. And with them disappear the relationships of people with living plants and living rivers. One of the big changes in perception, and

I think it was so obvious in the whole G8 summit, is to make people appear like pathetic creatures who can't do anything for themselves.

“Third World” societies, helpless little beings: just waiting for that dollar to drop, the food aid to drop into their land. It's this denial of the capacity of human beings, of living resources, of equal systems, which is at the heart of the corporate propaganda that enables privatization, that enables takeover and the creation of property in that which should never be private property, that which should always belong to the commons.

The contest has become unipolar in every society. You might have two parties, but it's like musical chairs for the same ideology—the music is the same, it's just a rotation between people of the same class and the same corporate leaning.

Who's the “they” who started using the term “raw water”? And how did the use of “raw water” translate to the public mind?

Well, the chain is the World Bank and its contracts, and the language is already defined in those contracts. The contracts enforced by the Bank are then between the company and the public utility. So then the public utility starts talking that language. And if we weren't able to challenge it and bring the language back to the people's right to water, we would not have had the kind of discourse we've had over the last two or three years in this city. We've managed to block the privatization—they should have privatized two years ago, they haven't managed it yet—but the Bank also doesn't give up. This language gets crafted by the corporations working with the Bank during their annual meetings, and then they come in and pour this ready-made jargon on countries. And [they] turn countries which have water into water-poverty situations, countries that know how to grow rice into places where you need a huge loan to be taught how to grow rice. People who know how to plant a tree need to borrow 300 million bloody dollars to continue to do what they did and now be in debt for 20 years.

So, for example, the World Bank requires that a country that grows rice using small-scale practices for local consumption must instead grow corn using industrial agriculture practices to export to the global market. People who grew rice lose their ability to provide for themselves and their communities, while land once used for rice is now used for corn and the nation, in turn, must import its rice. However, prices for corn—as with all food commodities—are volatile, while the country competes with dozens of others for its share of the market. The money it receives for its corn does not offset the price for imported rice and the needs of the increasing number of landless and hungry former

farmers. The country is unable to repay its loans and the cycle of dependence rolls on and on.

And it's extremely clever. I believe the public relations companies work with all of them; [it's] the work of Burson-Marsteller behind the scene. The [biggest] advertising is the genetic engineering propaganda, and there we know Burson-Marsteller played a very big role directly. They were hired by Monsanto to constantly say it was all about feeding the hungry; they used to put out huge full-page ads. The other day, an Indian newspaper did a whole-page story on me, and about what I've done for the environment, and then the last two paragraphs, in good "balanced" reporting, were a quotation from the website of the Hudson Institute, a right-wing think tank in the US. And they basically are saying, "Vandana Shiva will starve the people because she is fighting GMOs [genetically modified organisms], which is the only way to feed the people." And you can tell a lie 5,000 times, when you have the money to say it 5,000 times. A movement can do actions for one year, two years, three years. Eventually, you can't sustain it—meetings, conferences, public hearings, citizen mobilization. And corporations just hope that by lying and lying and lying, and continuing their propaganda, they can make false words become real, and make reality disappear.

That would bring us back to where we started, which is the importance of our continued action and our continued research and writing to counter their propaganda.

Absolutely. Because it's about a fight for the planet's resources, but the fight is taking place through a capture of the mind. We can only liberate our rivers and our seeds and our food, and our educational systems, and our political systems, and redefine and deepen democracy, by first liberating our minds and decolonizing our minds. And that's why resisting propaganda through every intellectual means available to every human being becomes an absolutely important part of freedom in today's world.

What are the other modes of taking the important research and essentially decolonizing material and spreading it more widely?

I think that for the West, of course, the internet is a very accessible means; it's not for countries like India, where a tiny, tiny percentage have access to the web. We're always stuck with this since we work at both levels—very local, also very global—we have to have, always, two levels of communication. One is through the internet with our friends internationally, and the other is through street theater, through pamphlets, through wall writing—which is very popular in India; it is not yet illegal. If you go to the villages, you will see huts painted with "Monsanto go home!" or "Coca-Cola go home!" One wall painting has no cost; it's merely the commitment of an

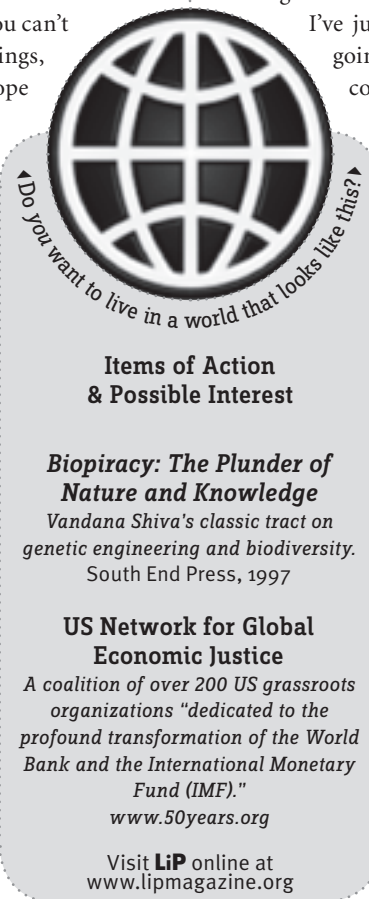
individual to put a slogan on his or her wall. And then thousands see it. Millions will see it. So those are some of the means that are available and accessible. And I think we need to use every communication available, in every country.

The other thing that we are doing for this decolonizing of the mind is creating alternative learning systems. After all, let's recognize that our universities came out of dealing with scholasticism and the power of the church. They came out of dealing with the domination of that time. But now they have become the dominant forces of our time, and they are being used to service corporate power. They are not being allowed to function as public institutions. They're being privatized. It means that for younger generations, there will be no place that we can know what's really going on. So we have created on our farm in Dehra Dun a school called *Bija Vidyapeeth*, which literally means the School of the Seed. We do short courses; next week we are going to be doing a course on intellectual property rights and biopiracy and biodiversity. At the national level,

I've just been appointed to a new university, which is going to function like an open university and it'll be complementary to Bija Vidyapeeth. Activists will be there and they will learn everything about the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights agreement at the WTO, about patent laws and all of these piracies and thefts, and they'll go back more informed.

How would you define personal freedom, within the context of living democracy and earth democracy?

I see living society the way I see living systems. I don't see society as an aggregation of atomized, fragmented individuals. That's why I don't go down the Hobbesian path.* I see society as organic, in which every level has an autonomous existence, and a self-organizing capacity, but in relationship with other self-organizing systems. Which means that your freedom, your personal freedom, is then in the context of total consciousness and awareness of other people's personal freedom. It is that awareness which I call compassion, I call solidarity. And it's through compassion and solidarity that you do not have the irresponsibility built into personal freedom the way it has in Western philosophy and political science, with the terrorizing by these guys who exaggerate certain human tendencies. Personal freedom is real. A person is a full subject. But a person is not a subject in isolation: We are in family, we are in friendships, we are in community, we are in working contexts, we are in certain towns, we are living in certain lands—all that does define levels of who we are and our identities and therefore, also, our searching for our freedoms. Because all those freedoms have to be carried together. **LIP**



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Q. Are these rewards as good as those of times past?

A. Yes! While some rewards have changed—for example, the “person in charge” at a store, restaurant, or government office no longer automatically shares your background—we guarantee that each reward you receive will be every bit as good as those your parents used and loved.

Q. How will I be notified about my application status?

A. Next time you're promoted at your job and everyone assumes you got it based on merit, or the next time you swear or walk around in shabby clothes without people thinking it has anything to do with your race—you'll know you're “in”!

Q. What are my options if my application is rejected?

A. We encourage all ethnic/racial groups not currently covered under the White Club agreement to continue to forget your history, purge your uniqueness, and forego all notions of equality. Scapegoating is welcome. Check back with us for membership-requirements updates.

Entertainment Role Models: We are pleased to offer our club members exclusive access to movie characters who look like you! We can provide complex fictional role models who have emotionally rich relationships and struggle through all life's quandaries, big and small. And, as a special bonus, they won't get killed off in the first 15 minutes! Enjoy the entire Woody Allen, Ron Howard, and Rob Reiner catalogs, filled with white people. Or how about the best selection of deliciously ironic indie films? We've got 'em all.

Health Benefits: Enjoy medications and procedures developed and tested with people like you in mind. Rest assured your doctors haven't performed risky experiments on your ancestors without their knowledge or consent. (So if you've got syphilis, take heart in the fact that you got it the good ol' fashioned way!) And there's more! Just flash your card to any licensed physician and a full array of procedures and treatments will be made available. No more condescending remarks about how you “probably won't be able to follow the instructions” for your meds, or how you'd be healthier if you'd just stop eating all those fried foods. The White Club Power Rewards Card™ melts away physician cynicism faster than you can open your mouth and say “aaah.”

Neighborhood Beautification Programs: Everybody loves power plants, but do you really want one in your backyard? Just show your card at the next city council meeting and ensure that you get all the benefits of cheap power, but none of the disastrous environmental or health effects. Also, ask about our panhandler-eradication and anti-loitering programs.

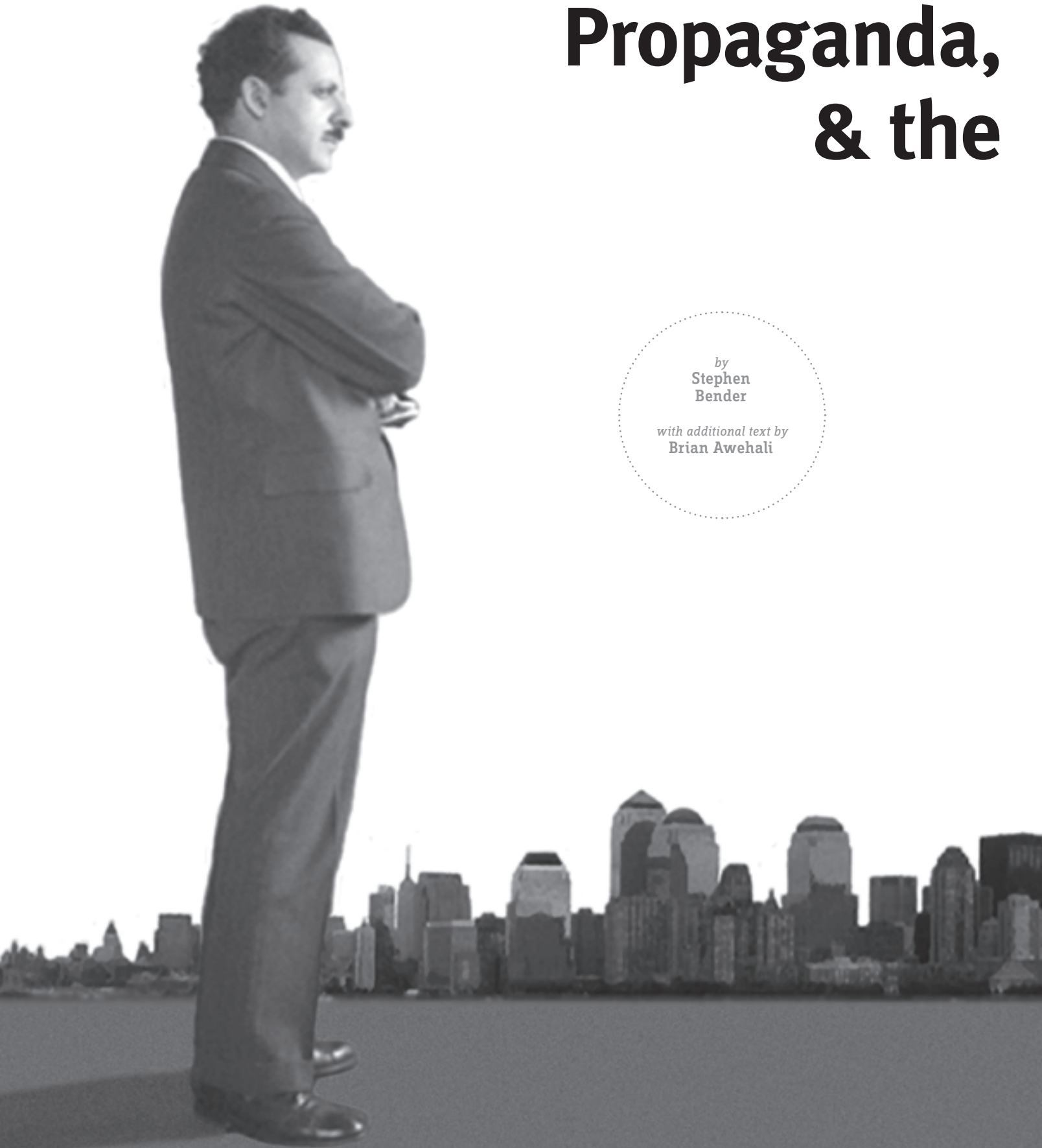
³ While we foresee no expiration date for the offer at this time, continued rewards depend on your participation in the program. Act now to protect your benefits!

⁴ Property tax compliance form and Support School Vouchers activist guide attached.

Propaganda, & the

by
Stephen
Bender

with additional text by
Brian Awehali



Public Relations, Not-So-New Dark Age

“The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.”

—Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (1928)

This is certainly one of the most sinisterly frank introductions in the annals of “democratic” social science. The opening passage continues in the same vein:

We are governed, our minds molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized.... Whatever attitude one chooses toward this condition, it remains a fact that in almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons—a trifling fraction of our hundred and twenty million—who understand the mental process and social patterns of the masses.



A Smattering of PR Events of Note

1914 On April 20, 1914, in Ludlow, Colorado, the state militia massacre 53 striking miners and their family members, sparking broad public sympathy for the strike and igniting outrage against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company and its owners, the Rockefeller family. In response, the Rockefellers hire a former newspaper reporter, Ivy Lee, to change the public perception of their mining operations. In the process, “Poison” Ivy Lee, whose career declined after his pro-Nazi work became politically unpopular, transforms the Rockefeller persona from that of a heartless, violent dynasty to the philanthropic political family of today.

1917 The Committee on Public Information, the first propaganda ministry in US history, is formed, and brings together many public relations pioneers, including George Creel, Edward Bernays, Ivy Lee, and Carl Byoir. They work to manufacture public support for US intervention in World War I, employing a team of more than 75,000 “Four-Minute Men” to deliver an estimated 7.5 million speeches and presentations in support of the war.

1920s The concept of “corporate social responsibility” emerges alongside the public relations field.

Chosen by *Life* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century, Edward L. Bernays—the nephew of Sigmund Freud—essentially birthed the public relations industry in the United States. He was also pivotal in popularizing Freud’s thought in the US, by brokering the English translations of Freud’s work by Boni & Liverlight. His clients included General Motors; United Fruit; Thomas Edison; Henry Ford; the US Departments of State, Health, and Commerce; Samuel Goldwyn; Eleanor Roosevelt; the American Tobacco Company; and Procter & Gamble. He directed public relations programs for every US president from Calvin Coolidge, in 1925, to Dwight Eisenhower in the late 1950s. He was, in the estimation of cultural historian Ann Douglas, the man “who orchestrated the commercialization of a culture.”

Bernays was born in Vienna in 1891, and the family moved to the US in the following year, settling in New York. Young Edward went to Cornell, where he earned his BS at the College of Agriculture. After working his way up the press agent food chain, Bernays parleyed his experience promoting Broadway productions, the opera singer Caruso, and the ballet impresario Diaghileff into a job with the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in 1917.

Bernays relates the impact of this war propaganda bureau in *Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel Edward L. Bernays*.

The U.S. Committee on Public Information had no precedent in this country.... [It] marked

the first organized use of propaganda by our Government, and its work was the forerunner of modern psychological warfare.... Years later, the Nazis and Communists adapted and enlarged upon the Committee’s methods.

The earliest use of the term “propaganda” can be traced to the Catholic Church in the year 1622. Alarmed at the spread of Protestantism,

Pope Gregory XV established the *Congregatio de propaganda fide*—

the Office for the Propagation of the Faith—with the intent

of supervising and strengthening missionary endeavors in the New World. The term retained a more or less neutral meaning into the 19th century.

This changed with the onset of World War I and the marshalling of propaganda orchestrated to push American public opinion toward intervention.

The aforementioned CPI was established for the homeland. It was head-

ed up by the progressive journalist George Creel, who was ably assisted by another then-progressive journalist named Walter Lippmann, along with Bernays. One of Creel’s *bon mots* was, “People do not live by bread alone; they live mostly by catch phrases.” All three men would accompany President Wilson to the Paris peace talks.

“‘Making the world safe for democracy,’ that was the big slogan,” said Bernays of his work there. “It was, of course, the astounding success of propaganda during the war that opened the eyes of the intelligent few in all departments of life to the possibilities of regimenting the public mind,” writes Bernays in his 1928 manifesto *Propaganda* (now back in print from IG Publishing):

“It was only natural, after the war ended, that intelligent persons should ask themselves whether it was possible to apply a similar technique to the problems of peace.”



Edward Bernays’ work for Procter & Gamble in 1923 was masterful. He invented a bogus survey showing a public preference for “unperfumed white soap.” Ivory, made by the company, was the only such soap on the market.

The American government and numerous patriotic agencies developed a technique which, to most persons accustomed to bidding for public acceptance, was new. They not only appealed to the individual by means of every approach—visual, graphic, and auditory—to support the national endeavor, but they also secured the cooperation of the key men in every group—persons whose mere word carried authority to hundreds or thousands or hundreds of thousands of followers. They thus automatically gained the support of fraternal, religious, commercial, patriotic, social and local groups whose members took their opinions from the accustomed leaders and spokesmen, or from the periodical publications which they were accustomed to read and believe. At the same time, the manipulators of patriotic opinion made use of the mental clichés and the emotional habits of the public to produce mass reactions against the alleged atrocities, the terror, and the tyranny of the enemy. It was only natural, after the war ended, that intelligent persons should ask themselves whether it was possible to apply a similar technique to the problems of peace.

Here's Adolf Hitler writing, just several years prior to the publication of *Propaganda*, in *Mein Kampf*:

But it was not until [World War I] that it became evident what immense results could be obtained by a correct application of propaganda. Here again, unfortunately, all our studying had to be done on the enemy side.

The Social Psychological Aftermath of War

Stuart Ewen, in his 1996 book *PR! A Social History of Spin*, recounts the role of the emergent technology of visual stimulation just prior to the Great War:

Nowhere was the propagandistic potential of film more evident than in D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, which had appeared in 1914. With enormous power, the film—which had war as its central theme—incited audiences into a frenzy of identification with racist Southern myths and contributed to the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. The film's ability to rally people to a cause provided a model for World War I propaganda.

Bernays blandly remarked on the amazing rise of the Klan during the early 1920s in *Propaganda*:

When an Imperial Wizard, sensing what is perhaps hunger for an ideal, offers a picture of a nation all Nordic and nationalistic, the common man of the older American stock, feeling himself elbowed out of his rightful position and prosperity by the new immigrant stocks, grasps the picture which fits in so neatly with his prejudices, and makes it his own. He buys the sheet and pillowcase costume, and bands with his fellows by the thousand into a huge group powerful enough to swing state elections and to throw a ponderous monkey wrench into a national convention.

Bernays surmised that the voting masses were too irrational and hence dangerous to be unsupervised with the expanding right to vote.

Practitioners note that “what is good for public relations is good for business.”

1930s In California, two ex-reporters, the husband and wife team of Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter, come together to fight and win a local referendum. They then form Campaigns Inc. and become the first professional campaign consultants—a breed that has dominated every US election campaign since. In Whitaker's own words, they transformed campaign management from “a hit or miss business, directed by broken-down politicians” to “a mature, well-managed business founded on sound public relations principles, and using every technique of modern advertising.” —Ian Hargreaves, *History Today* (2003)

“After the Great Depression, the primary challenge for the public relations industry was to persuade a confused public that things were about to change for the better. This focus can be summed up by the campaign slogan of the National Association of Manufacturers and the US Chamber of Commerce, “What helps business helps you.” In other words, the needs of business and society were synonymous.—Cynthia E. Clark, *Public Relations Review* (2000)

1940s Public relations practitioners begin using opinion research techniques like the newly established Gallup Poll. The first



Bernays then launched the National Soap Sculpture Competition in White Soap. The competition would last for 25 years. Pictured are prize winners and honorable mentions from Ivory's third annual event.

school of public relations is established at Boston University.

1950s Edward Bernays argues to President Eisenhower that **fear of Communists should be induced and encouraged**, because it will make Americans loyal to the state and to capitalism. In the wake of Soviet atomic tests in 1958, Eisenhower for the first time makes conspicuous consumption (of automobiles, in this case) the first duty of the free: "You Auto Buy," he slogans. A similar exhortation is made by politicians after September 11, 2001. Your democratic duty in the light of global terror is to indulge your Self: Go shopping and save the world. The interests of the free market and the pursuit of personal freedom are made indistinguishable. —Tim Adams, *The Guardian* (2002)

1960s The Public Relations Society of America is founded. Many popular aspects of what comes to be known as "the counterculture" are, in fact, constructed by the marketing and public relations industries.

1970s Corporate social responsibility and public relations fully fuse. Harold Burson, one of the founders of PR agency Burson-Marsteller, begins arguing that the role of a public relations executive is to provide qualitative evaluation of social trends, which will help the practitioner develop policies leading to a formal corporate response. At the 1980 meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism at Boston University, Bernays says simply, "Public relations is the practice of social responsibility."

1980 Former GE pitchman and B-movie actor **Ronald Reagan is cast in the role of US president.**

In Bernays' defense, he did employ his techniques on occasion in the public interest. In 1922, when Bernays married ardent feminist Doris Fleischman, Fleischman retained her maiden name, and sparked news headlines when she was the first married American woman to use it on a passport. Bernays also helped raise the profile of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's first Southern convention, and the courageous group of white Southerners who backed equality for African Americans. So too did Bernays orchestrate the Broadway showing of a racy French play, *Damaged Goods*, which straightforwardly discussed the ravages of syphilis. He set up a panel of leading physicians to endorse the play before its release, thereby neutralizing expected public outrage.

In the conservative ideological landscape of early 1920s America, it would fall to the ex-socialist Walter Lippmann to elucidate to elites the vistas opened by the new social psychology. Lippmann, who would go on to become the mid-20th-century dean of American journalism, introduced the concept of "manufacturing consent" in his highly influential—above all to Edward Bernays—1922 tome *Public Opinion*. While Lippmann provided the high-minded theory behind the new propaganda, Bernays was far more interested in its practical application. "Lippmann," Bernays averred, "treated public opinion on a purely theoretical basis. He never got down to matters of changing it. He talked of it as if he were a sociologist discussing a social caste system." So, in the following year, Bernays wrote the far more accessible *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, as a guide for enterprising business figures interested in winning over the new consumer.

But Bernays concerned himself with more than just selling product. He surmised—thanks to Uncle Sigmund's theories of the unconscious and the id—that the voting masses were too irrational and hence dangerous to be unsupervised with the expanding right to vote. He wrote:

The times have changed. The people actually gained a power which the king lost. For economic power tends to draw after it political power; and the history of the industrial revolution shows how

that power passed from the king and the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie. Universal suffrage and universal schooling reinforced this tendency, and at last even the bourgeoisie stood in fear of the common people. For the masses promised to become king. Today, however, a reaction has set in. The minority has discovered a powerful help in influencing majorities. It has been found possible so to mold the mind of the masses that they will throw their newly gained strength in the desired direction. In the present structure of society, this practice is inevitable.

In short, as Bernays' daughter Anne put it in the epic four-hour BBC documentary *Century of the Self*, in which director Adam Curtis chronicled the rise and contemporary dominance of public relations in American life, "my father believed the people were too stupid to meaningfully participate in democracy. He used that word a lot."

President Hoover, in remarking upon the rise of mass consumption spectacles, dubbed the American people "happiness machines."

"Torches of Freedom" & "Commies" in Guatemala

By 1929, Bernays was already an old hand at influencing public opinion for business, most notably in his "Torches of Freedom" coup for the American Tobacco Company.

At the time, public smoking for women was still taboo, indicative of dicey moral fiber and all the rest of it. So Bernays started by consulting the eminent psychoanalyst A. A. Brill, who related the following (as recorded in in Bernays' memoir):

Some women regard cigarettes as symbols of freedom. Smoking is a sublimation of oral eroticism; holding a cigarette in the mouth excites the oral zone. It is perfectly normal for women to want to smoke cigarettes.... But today the emancipation of women has suppressed many of their feminine desires. More women now do the same work as men do.... Cigarettes, which are equated with men, become torches of freedom.

In turn, Bernays' secretary sent the following communiqué to 30 *Vogue* debutantes. "In the interests of equality of the sexes and to fight another sex taboo I and other young women will light

another torch of freedom by smoking cigarettes while strolling on Fifth Avenue Easter Sunday.” He also recruited Ruth Hale, a leading feminist, to sign advertisements in New York newspapers to this end. Ten responded and marched; it caused a national sensation. As Bernays relates. “Front-page stories in newspapers reported the freedom march in words and pictures. For weeks after the event editorials praised or condemned the young women who had paraded against the smoking taboo.” (The massive press coverage the stunt received didn’t mention that the march was led by Bernays’ secretary.)

Bernays also helped develop slogans like “Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet,” as cigarettes had been found to suppress appetite and hence were marketed as a diet aid. He also helped organized the Tobacco Society for Voice Culture, whose letterhead featured the slogan “So to improve the *corde* of the *throat* through cigarette smoking that the public will be able to express itself in *songs of praise* or more easily to swallow anything.” At the bottom it read: “*Our Ultimate Goal: a smoking teacher for every singer.*”

When it became clear in the mid-1950s, thanks in part to the muckraking of George Seldes, that smoking was harmful to one’s health, Bernays did make a real effort to make amends, as Mark Crispin Miller points out in his extensive introduction to the new edition of *Propaganda*:

Once the toxic side effects of smoking had become impossible to talk away, Bernays not only gave up working for tobacco companies, but became a vocal critic of tobacco, lobbying staunchly (and unsuccessfully) to get the Public Relations Society of America to enjoin its members not to work in any way to spread the habit.

That same year, on the cusp of the Great Depression, President Herbert Hoover declared that the American people were “happiness machines.” Americans’ understanding of themselves as citizens first and consumers second was already in the process of being reversed.

A quarter of a century later, in the early 1950s, Bernays was involved in another infamous bit of public relations, an episode for which he

never expressed any contrition. He was an architect of the United Fruit Company’s publicity campaign against the elected New Deal-style Arbenz government in Guatemala—the original banana republic—after it nationalized some of the American company’s holdings. The subsequent CIA-backed coup that overthrew Arbenz paved the way for a series of military dictators whose murderous wrath killed over 100,000 largely Mayan peasants in the 1980s.

Bernays admirably related this anecdote of Samuel Zemurray, the Chairman of United Fruit’s board, from one of their many conversations: “A man who could concentrate on his conversation while reports were brought to him of three disasters at sea involving loss of lives, cargoes and money, was fitted by temperament to direct an American industrial and agricultural complex in the Middle American jungles.” Zemurray would “glance at each” disastrous report handed him then offhandedly “toss it into the trash.” Now that’s leadership!

The preeminent consensus: Truth does not exist in public life per se; instead, it is to be manipulated and engineered

The Universality of “Organizing Chaos” in the “Mass Mind”

Bernays fundamentally believed that truth was determined by what Mark Crispin Miller termed “the preeminent consensus.” In short, truth does not exist in public life per se; instead, truth is to be manipulated and engineered. As Bernays himself recognized, there were perils in this approach.

Some of the phenomena of this process are criticized—the manipulation of news, the inflation of personality, and the general ballyhoo by which politicians and commercial products and social ideas are brought to the consciousness of the masses. The instruments by which public opinion is organized and focused may be misused. But such organization and focusing are necessary to orderly life.

In the end though, the “intelligent minorities” have no recourse but to

make use of propaganda continuously and systematically.... Only through the active energy of the intelligent few can the public at large

1990s PR firm Hill & Knowlton attracts odium for misleading video news releases it produced for the government of Kuwait in 1990. Employed by the Kuwaiti monarchy at a fee of \$ 12 million to promote its interests inside the United States, the firm established a front organization called Citizens for a Free Kuwait. This, in turn, proceeded to manufacture stories about Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait, very much along the lines followed by British government propaganda in the World Wars I and II. Nayriah, a sobbing 15-year-old girl, testified to a public hearing of Congress’s Human Rights Caucus, on October 10, 1990, that she had seen Iraqi soldiers taking babies out of hospital incubators and leaving them “to die on the cold floor.” Shortly afterwards, she was unmasked as the Washington-based daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador. —Ian Hargreaves, *History Today* (2003)

1994 In their bid to win back power, the Democrats in the US and New Labour in the UK turn to marketing men. Clinton strategist Dick Morris claims in an interview to have simply applied to politics the same consumer philosophy that business uses—to be responsive to the whims and desires of the consumer. In came the focus groups, where those whims could be ascertained. Philip Gould, New Labour strategist, imported the ideas from the US, celebrating it as “continuous democracy.” —Madeleine Bunting, *The Guardian* (2002)

2000s Sweeping consolidation defines the public relations industry. Publicly traded global communications giants such as Omnicom, the WPP Group, the Interpublic Group, and Publicis Groupe acquire many of the large, formerly independent firms,

such as Ketchum, Fleishman-Hillard, Hill & Knowlton, Weber Shandwick, and Burson-Marsteller, placing them inside holding companies that also operate advertising, strategic consulting and marketing businesses.

In 2002, the country's top 10 public relations firms billed clients about \$2.5 billion, compared with top-10 billings of just \$192 million in 1968, according to inflation-adjusted data compiled by the Council of Public Relations Firms, an industry trade group. Because communications conglomerates have stopped breaking out public relations billings, 2002 was the last year for which reliable industry-wide data is available.

Ketchum and three other public relations agencies owned by Omnicom appear to have delivered the bulk of the White House's messages from 2001 through 2004. According to a study prepared by Congressional Democrats, those four agencies snared about \$223 million of the \$250 million that the federal government spent on public relations contracts during that period. The report also noted a sharp increase in public relations contracts awarded by the government on a noncompetitive basis.

—Timothy L. O'Brien, *New York Times* (2005)

2001 Charlotte Beers, former chairwoman of J. Walter Thompson and Ogilvy & Mather—two of the world's largest advertising agencies—is sworn in as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy on October 2, 2001,

Federal law actually prohibits covert government publicity or propaganda campaigns.

become aware of and act upon new ideas.... Universal literacy was supposed to educate the common man to control his environment. Once he could read and write he would have a mind fit to rule. So ran the democratic doctrine. But instead of a mind, universal literacy has given him rubber stamps, rubber stamps inked with advertising slogans, with editorials, with published scientific data, with the trivialities of the tabloids and the platitudes of history, but quite innocent of original thought.

This is another point on which Hitler, writing in *Mein Kampf*, agreed heartily:

The second really decisive question was this: to whom should propaganda be addressed? To the scientifically trained intelligentsia or to the less educated masses? It must be addressed always and exclusively to the masses.... All propaganda must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to. Consequently, the greater the mass it is intended to reach, the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be...and too much caution cannot be exerted in this direction.

Apart from the philosophical parallels, Bernays pioneered media manipulation techniques that would be adopted by many heads of state. At the advice of Bernays, the president of the new state of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Masaryk, delayed the announcement of his country's post-World War I breakaway from the defunct Austro-Hungarian empire until a Sunday in order maximize public attention.

Subsequently, Hitler made sure to announce violations of the Versailles treaty on Friday afternoons, so that his military buildup would be met with as little media attention as possible. Under Johnson and Nixon, deceptive briefings on the state of the war in Vietnam were cynically referred to by reporters as the "Friday afternoon follies." Every US president since that time has released bad news on Friday afternoons.

Propaganda does indicate, however, that Bernays himself was at least somewhat uncomfortable with the elitist implications of his work. In this passage he attempts to imply that propaganda is a consensual matter:

It might be better to have, instead of propaganda and special pleading, committees of wise men

who would choose our rulers, dictate our conduct, private and public, and decide upon the best types of clothes for us to wear and the best kinds of food for us to eat. But we have *chosen* the opposite method, that of open competition. We must find a way to make free competition function with reasonable smoothness. To achieve this society has *consented* to permit free competition to be organized by leadership and propaganda. [Emphases added.]

In a far-reaching 2000 paper exploring the commercializing of US schools and culture in general, education professor Alex Molnar describes Bernays' view of democratic civic life as

a marketplace every bit as much as economic life. He took it as axiomatic that competing political interests would seek to put their views before the public just as competing economic interests would seek to promote their products and services. Bernays did not consider this an evil process nor did he regard propaganda as a dirty word.... Propaganda was, as he saw it, essential to keep the wheels of politics and commerce turning while preserving social stability.... Bernays would have us believe that public relations and advertising are progressive tools of democratic governance and the market economy. The conflation of market choice and the democratic political process is, however, problematic. Although the advertising industry is very good at promoting the consumption of goods and services, at its heart it is profoundly anti-democratic.... A powerful, privately controlled institution that systematically sets out to undermine the ability of people to make rational judgements is inherently anti-democratic because it subverts the intellectual qualities and debases the civic relationships that make democratic life imaginable. What is, therefore, promoted to the detriment of genuine democratic civic culture is mass consumerism in commerce and politics. As Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen argue in *Channels of Desire*, which was published during the military build-up of the Reagan administration's early years, "The goal of the advertising industry is to link the isolated experience of the spectator with the collectivized impulses and priorities of the corporation.... If economic consumerism tends to organize disconnected individuals into coherent and predictable markets, it is political consumerism that defines the current state of western democracy seeking to create a vast patriotic unity...a unity without solidarity." In other words, a unity defined by consumption rather than creation and participation.

A key objective for rulers everywhere and during every time, no matter what the political system, is “stability.” In terms of contemporary politics, Bernays’ counsel remains quite familiar.

When the example of the leader is not at hand and the herd must think for itself, it does so by means of clichés, pat words or images which stand for a whole group of ideas or experiences. Not many years ago, it was only necessary to tag a political candidate with the word “interests” to stampede millions of people into voting against him, because anything associated with “the interests” seemed necessarily corrupt. Recently the word *Bolshevik* has performed a similar service for persons who wished to frighten the public away from a line of action.

Hear that, you liberal, commie, unpatriotic could-be terrorist?


Who will keep America safe? W!

As for contemporary liberals, Bernays with some bemusement noted that

good government can be sold to a community just as any other commodity can be sold. I often wonder whether the politicians of the future, who are responsible for the maintaining the prestige and effectiveness of their party, will not endeavor to train politicians who are at the same time propagandists. It will be objected, of course, that propaganda will tend to defeat itself as its mechanism becomes obvious to the public. My opinion is that it will not. The only propaganda which will ever tend to weaken itself as the world becomes more sophisticated and intelligent is propaganda that is untrue or unsocial.

For once, Bernays was not cynical enough, as the propaganda run up to the Iraq war clearly demonstrated. He went on to add:

This invisible, intertwining structure of groupings and associations is the mechanism by which democracy has organized its group mind and simplified its mass thinking. To deplore the existence of such a mechanism is to ask for a society such as never was and never will be. To admit that it exists, but expect that it shall not be used, is unreasonable.

In the American political system today, the words that come out of the mouths of the political class are all calculated, analyzed for psychological effectiveness and then repeated ad nauseum. For that, we can thank in large measure Sigmund Freud’s devious nephew. 

For those interested in examining the roots of social psychology, have a look at the writings of a pair of French sociologists. Gustav Le Bon wrote *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895), while his friend and colleague Gabriel Tarde wrote *Laws of Imitation* (1903). In the Anglo-American tradition, we have the British political theorist Graham Wallas, who taught Walter Lippmann at Harvard, and wrote *Human Nature in Politics* (1908), along with the American sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross, author of *Social Psychology* (also 1908). Finally, there is Wilfred Trotter, a British social psychologist who wrote the suggestively titled *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916). And who could forget George Creel’s delightful *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (1920). Beyond that, the bibliography in Stuart Ewen’s *PR!*, from whence the above citations were culled, is sure to delight the most devoted social psychology spelunker!

and reportedly develops plans for a campaign to “sell” the war effort. It is announced that a committee of movie studio heads and TV executives, coordinated by Motion Picture Association of America president Jack Valenti, is formed after a meeting between industry bigwigs and White House adviser Karl Rove. The committee discusses the development of wartime trailers, distribution of movies to troops and public service announcements aimed at both domestic and international audiences.
— John Hanc, *Newsday* (2001)

2001 With assistance from Washington, DC-based PR firm the Rendon Group, the **Pentagon’s Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) is formed**, with a mandate to propagandize throughout the Middle East, Asia, and Western Europe. The Rendon Group played a large role in creating the Iraqi National Congress, and is alleged to have provided advance PR support “selling” the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld closes down the OSI after public outcry results from news coverage of the organization, although the Office of Global Communications, a White House organization charged with essentially the same tasks, is formed shortly thereafter.

2005 Leading African American conservative Armstrong Williams, cofounder of Graham Williams Group, a public relations agency in Washington, and frequent advocate of individual accountability and ethical rectitude, acknowledges in January that the Department of Education had paid him \$240,000 to promote its “No Child Left Behind” initiative during radio and television appearances. Federal law actually prohibits covert government publicity or propaganda campaigns.



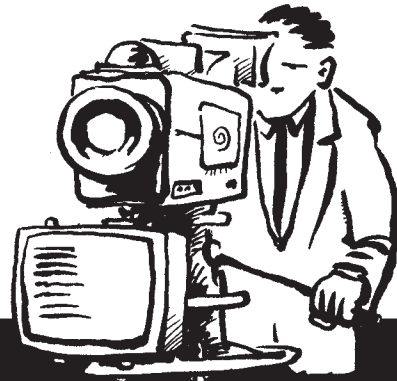
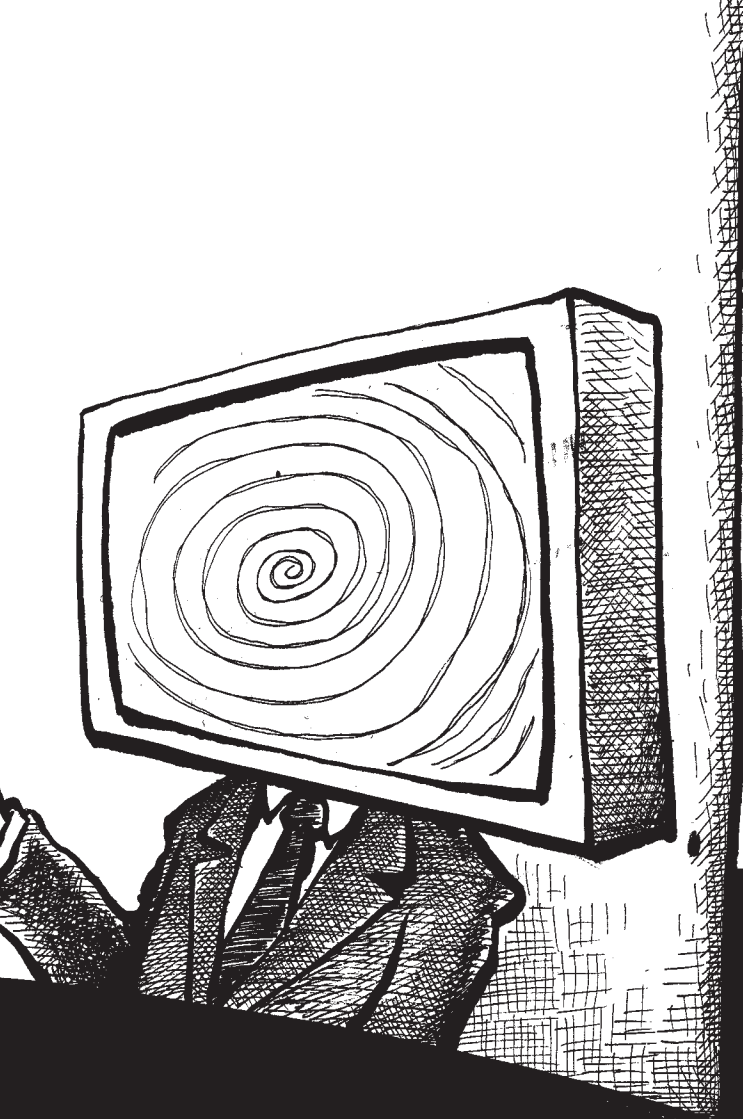
Public relations pitchmen of note (left to right): George Creel, Walter Lippmann, and Ivy Lee



And Now for

Manufacturing the Nightly News

an interview with
Daniel Price
by
Erin Wiegand
illustrations by
Shannon Wheeler



Something Completely Biased

When Daniel Price set out to write a screenplay about journalism, he never thought he'd end up writing about public relations—let alone writing a novel about it. After reading the famous exposé of the PR industry, *Toxic Sludge Is Good For You*, though, his writing took a major shift. In 2004, Price published his first novel, *Slick*, with the hopes that it would appeal to those hankering for a good story, but also provide them with some solid information on how the PR industry works. As he says, “They put fiction in the news; I’m putting news in my fiction.”

Price also works with the Center for Media and Democracy, where he focuses on the issue of video news releases. Video news releases, or VNRs, are video clips that appear within news broadcasts, but have in fact been produced by PR or advertising firms for a particular client. Distributed to television stations, they are often aired without any attribution or identification of their source.

LiP had the chance to speak with Price about VNRs, their staggeringly widespread use, and the decline of broadcast journalism. ■

"I don't see why people are so upset about cloning sheep. American television networks have been doing that to their audiences for years." —Jello Biafra

LiP: How does a video news release differ from, say, real news?

Daniel Price: In terms of appearance, very little. Video news releases are designed to look exactly like television news. They are anywhere from 90 to 120 seconds, and they are seamless—they're meant to look as journalistic as possible. In fact, most of the people who are producing VNRs now are former news professionals. What they do is, they know that you can't just do a VNR about how great Verizon is; you have to tie it in to a news angle, something about how more and more preschoolers are now getting cell phones, and then have some person from Verizon talk about this new trend of preschoolers, because the news loves trends. This has been going on now for about 20 to 30 years now, in teevee* news.

How did the phenomenon start?

The first company to produce video news releases was MediaLink, which is still the biggest company. It started out as more or less a consortium of veteran journalists and publicists, who got together and said, "Hey, we could really help each other." And that's basically what they did. There are so many amateur publicists out there who waste a lot of journalists' time. One of the reasons MediaLink was formed was to weed out those bad publicists. It was almost like a covenant, saying, "We guarantee the stuff that we give you, although it'll be promotional, will also be newsworthy."

the product. Same with the client, they just want the product promoted. And the veteran journalists who became publicists knew that the only way to be effective is to bury the promotion within a news hook, because no news producer is going to run a VNR if it's blatantly promotional; if it shows its true colors too much, it's just not going to air.

What kind of information is available about how often VNRs are used?

According to Doug Simon, the head of D S Simon Productions, probably the second-biggest VNR company out there, 90% or 95% of the things that are aired, no matter what the source, are aired without any disclaimer to the viewer indicating who produced the piece. VNRs are getting aired as if the news station actually did it themselves. I know that two of these VNR companies have said, from their own surveys, that 100% of newsrooms use VNRs on at least some occasions. And that's not hard to believe, because a) it's still a huge secret, so it's not the kind of thing anyone really gets busted for, and b) every single newsroom has suffered budget cuts in the last 10 or 15 years, without exception. When you have your budget cut, you get less staff and more airtime, so of course you have to rely on outside content to fill that hole. So it doesn't surprise me, but, of course, at the same time, it wouldn't surprise me if VNR producers pumped up their numbers for sales purposes.

The teevee news is very sycophantic, they don't do a lot of hardcore investigations, and they don't mind doing things that are slightly promotional, so I've watched things that I could have sworn were VNRs, until I saw the reporter in the frame talking to the subject.

It's surprising that journalists were such key players in starting this.

The people who started the company, I'm sure, were just sick of working in the news business for little pay, and just wanted a good way to make money. But they also knew from their time in the teevee news business that they didn't have enough people to fill an hour or two of news, and the stuff they were getting from publicists was just unusable. So they realized there was a need for something like this.

And they would know best how to tie it into a particular angle, like you said, so that it would get picked up by a station.

Publicists usually think in terms of one goal, and that's promoting

It's really hard to tell. The Project for Excellence in Journalism tried to do a study, and they determined that 30% of newsrooms use VNRs. But that's a completely flawed study, because, I'm sorry, if you're a news producer, and you get a call from the Project for Excellence in Journalism asking if you do shitty journalism—I'd say a lot of people would be inclined to lie. It's like a nun asking if you masturbate. So I don't trust those numbers either.

I'm working with John Stauber from the Center for Media and Democracy—he's been researching this for far longer than I have—and every single time he tries to talk to a news professional about VNRs, he might as well have asked them if they cheat on their spouses. They clam up. So it's really hard to get accurate information about widespread usage of it.

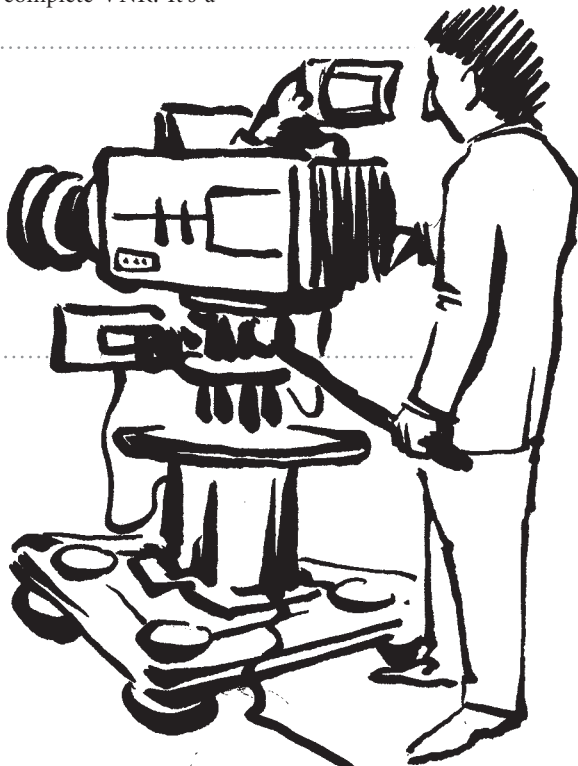
PR companies describe the video news release as the logical extension of the printed news release to a video format, and print journalists have been using those for a long time. Is there a significant difference between video and print news releases, or how they're being used by news professionals?

There's some validity to it when they say it's no different from a press release, because print journalists—at least, the bad



ones—have been cutting and pasting from press releases for 70 years, if not more. However, my argument is that press releases are not designed to *replace* news, they're designed to *spark* news. They're designed to get the attention of a journalist, who will then write her or his own story. But very few journalists will just take an entire press release, scratch out the publicist's name on the byline, and write their own in—and that's exactly what VNRs are. They're designed to actually replace a journalist, not to work with a journalist.

And [VNR producers] give news producers everything they could possibly want, everything you could hope to get in a news report. An actual VNR itself comes with a big custom kit of disguises you can use. They come with split audio tracks, so you don't need to use the publicist's voice; you can use the exact same script with your own reporter, which happens in most cases. They come with a B-roll, [which is] basically just extra clips—you can get a 90-second segment that's perfectly produced, and then an extra two to three minutes of soundless clips you can edit into the story however you want. It's a way for news stations to customize their version, so it doesn't look exactly like any competing versions that happen to run in the same market. A lot of the time, they can just use B-roll and build their own story from that, rather than using the script provided by the publicist. I think that happens more often than running a complete VNR. It's a



little more honest than just using the VNR, but it's still completely un sourced. There are some services that specialize just in B-rolls, rather than actual voiced reports, and a lot of people say that's the way of the future, that VNRs are eventually going to die.

You can put it together however you want—no press release comes with suggested jokes or suggested lead sentences, or “Here’s some extra paragraphs you can work into your article!”

Is it a scandal for a producer when it comes out that a station has used a VNR?

It depends on the situation. There have been two recent mini-brouhahas around VNRs, one in March 2004 and one in March 2005. The one in 2004, of course, is the whole Karen Ryan incident. The excuses were very funny—a lot of these news producers basically said they played it by accident. As if they'd just happened to find pornography in their VCR—“Who put that there?” They were indignant about this, and some of them were not entirely disingenuous about it, because they got the VNR off the CNN news feed. And it may not have been clearly marked as a VNR, for all I know. I mean, more than one news producer said that they thought that it was CNN news that they were seeing.

Can you talk a little about the Karen Ryan incident and why it was important?

Sure. The Karen Ryan VNR was certainly not the first government VNR to be produced, it was just the first one to be really “caught.” The Department of Health and Human Services had paid Ketchum, one of the biggest ad agencies in the world, to come up with an ad campaign to help “sell” the Medicare Prescription Drug Act. This was a \$22 million campaign. Ketchum used some of that money to contract a company called Homefront Communications, which specializes in mass media communications. They, in turn, contracted Karen Ryan, who has her own company. She's a former news professional, she worked for ABC News, and she left a long time ago to get into the PR game, because it's more lucrative and the deadlines are less obscene. When Ketchum hired her, she'd already done a number of these—she was pretty much a staple of VNRs. She'd been in so many that they didn't even bother to edit out her voice any more, because she sounds like a reporter and she has enough credibility. They did a 90-second piece on the Medicare Prescription Drug Act, and what a great thing it was. It was completely one-sided, there was absolutely no balance to it whatsoever. It was sent out, and from what they gathered, about 50 stations used it in its entirety, without even editing out Karen Ryan's voice.

The big [issue] was that this was funded by taxpayer dollars. Based on the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act, it is technically illegal to use taxpayer-funded propaganda inside the United States. So Robert Pear of

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) ruled that the administration's use of "prepackaged news stories" was illegal "covert propaganda."

the *New York Times* wrote an article about it, and print journalists went crazy, because they hate the teevee news anyway. It became a real scandal—in the PR industry as well, because suddenly everyone was shying away from using VNRs. I think the freeze-out lasted about six weeks. Then the heat died off, people moved on to other stories, and it was back to business as usual.

In 2005, two other reporters for the *New York Times* did a three-month investigation, and found out that at least 20 other government agencies have put out VNRs in the past year, and they've been picked up in a whole bunch of places. John Kerry got in on that game; he and Senator Lautenberg introduced a bill to prohibit government agencies from using VNRs.

But didn't you say earlier that government-funded VNRs would already be illegal?

Well, that's the thing. [Their] point is this: It's not propaganda if it's all true. And that's so beside the point, whether something's true or not—it's still one-sided journalism, which is propaganda. But again, this is all a matter of splitting hairs. Even if [the bill] passes, it's not going to do anything—first, because government VNRs are such a tiny portion of the overall pie, and second, because even if they make disclosure mandatory, publicists will still find a way around it.

When there was a public comment period, during the time that the Kerry-Lautenberg bill was in play, more than the PR people it was the broadcast people who were aggressively fighting against it. Because it really does adversely affect them more—most of these PR companies can move onto other forms, but without external content like this, a lot of these small news stations would be running shadow puppets. They'd have no way to fill all their airtime. So they need this kind of stuff. They're claiming, "No, we don't need the government stepping in, we can police ourselves," but they obviously can't.

Is there any regulation of how VNRs are made and distributed?

The only thing that comes close is for pharmaceutical and healthcare VNRs. Back in 1991 the FDA—keep in mind, this is 14 years ago that the FDA realized VNRs were out of control, this is how far back it goes—they announced that they need to see all medical and pharmaceutical VNRs before they air, because they considered it to be advertising, so they'd have to check it for accuracy and things like that. So far, they've never enforced that. They enforce [the rules on other] ads a lot, they send cease and desist letters if they find an ad to be misleading.

But after the fact.

Way after the fact, long after the ad's out of rotation. And VNRs have an even shorter shelf life, so even if the FDA did object to something, by the time they wrote their little politely worded letter, the VNR would already be there and gone. So it's a very, very silly system. And unfortunately, it is getting worse, especially in healthcare. The demand for healthcare news is going up; people are very concerned about their health, and they love stuff like this. And pharmaceutical

companies love the news, because the median age of a teevee news viewer is 60. For the cable news it's a little younger.

Really? 60 is the median age?

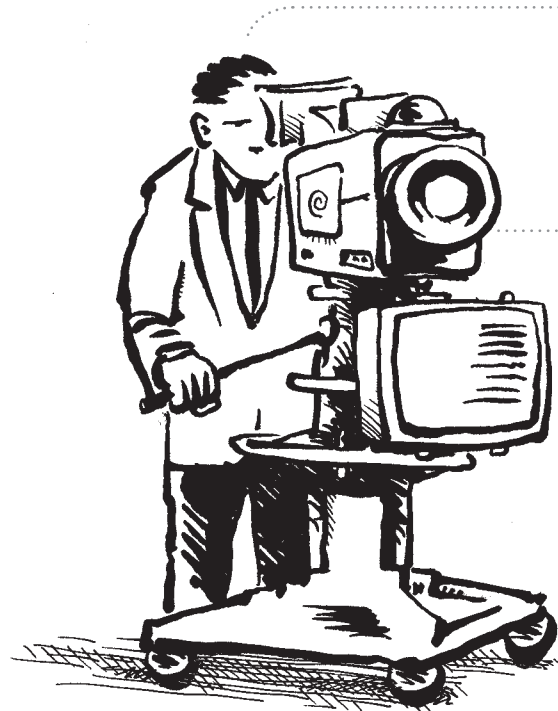
Sure, younger people either read the newspaper or get it off the web; they just don't tune in as much. So advertisers hate it and pharmaceutical companies love it because it's the perfect audience. But they can't stand it that in a commercial, they're required by law to disclose what they call fair balance—that's when the soothing voice tells you, "May cause bleeding from the eyes and diarrhea." They hate that. So that's the great thing about VNRs—they can pitch a wonder drug and they're not required by law [to disclose side effects]. Or even if they do talk about some side effects, it's up to the newscast whether or not they want to use it—and usually they edit these things down so much that they don't talk about fair balance.

Theoretically, the FDA would be regulating that.

Theoretically, yeah. But they have to oversee 25% of the US gross domestic product. They don't have eyes or the attention span to monitor VNRs.

So among corporate producers of VNRs, is the pharmaceutical industry the big player?

They are the undisputed kings, from everyone I've spoken to. Healthcare in general is by and large the biggest beneficiary of VNRs. The most VNRs that are produced and the most that are aired are health-related.



And every time I track a health VNR, I always get the same reporter in Indianapolis. There's this one woman who's just a clearinghouse of VNRs. It's pretty much all she does. She has her own show on Sunday mornings called "Staying Healthy with Stacia Matthews," and it's just a half hour of America's top health VNRs. It's unbelievable. They call her the Channel 6 health reporter—but she's not, she's a ventriloquist dummy.

With the voice of Big Pharma.

Yeah, the voice of all healthcare. And they all do this, to some extent. Health journalists are very expensive to train. They have to have a certain kind of background, and of course [stations] don't look for that anymore, they just want somebody who is telegenic and can narrate a good story. So a lot of these guys, when then get a VNR, they don't have the time or the energy to really investigate the claims. Abraxene put out a VNR on the very same day that the FDA gave approval to their breast cancer drug. They all have these in the can, they're pretty much ready to go live as soon as the FDA approves the drug—and that's usually, for pharmaceuticals, the best pretext for a VNR, because that's officially news, when the FDA approves something. It's pretty much given that you'll release a VNR when the FDA approves your drug.

I only managed to track six stations that used [the Abraxene VNR], though I'm sure there were more. It would have taken them five minutes to go onto Google and look up the name of this company, and find out that they were being sued by their own investors for making bad claims about the very drug they were talking about. It's obvious that nobody even researched this—that's what journalism is supposed to be, balancing it with your own investigation. This is living proof that journalists are pretty much just running what they're given, without fact checking or

VNR as saw the actual ad itself. The ad cost \$500,000 to produce, and the VNR cost \$20,000. When you score big, you score big.

Are there any VNRs put out by noncorporate agencies?

UNICEF, actually, puts out VNRs constantly. The American Association of Retired Persons releases one once a week. It's not all corporations. I think news producers who have even a smidgen of guilt about what they're doing—and I hope they do—will tend to pick one from a nonprofit, because they feel like less of a corporate skill. And honestly, it seems like mixed blessings to me, because all of UNICEF's VNRs have to do with relief efforts in Africa, and I'm thinking, wow, how else are you going to see Africa in the local news? So they're not entirely bad. Same thing when there's product recalls—the government will often put out a video news release showing that this product is now being recalled. We keep this in perspective.

Because VNRs aren't labeled as ads, and there's no disclosure of the source, how can we tell if what we're watching is a VNR or real news?

This is really tricky, because there's so much news out there that I call "legitimate crap." The teevee news is very sycophantic, they don't do a lot of hardcore investigations, and they don't mind doing things that are slightly promotional, so I've watched things that I could have sworn were VNRs, until I saw the reporter in the frame talking to the subject. That's one thing that will tell you that it's not a VNR. There are more clues to tell you when you're *not* watching a VNR than there are clues telling you that you are. The only real giveaway I can think of is if there's a really fancy computer animation in the newscast—news producers love it, it's

At some point, you're not going to have producers and directors anymore—you're going to have DJs, spinning other peoples' news.

anything. And that is dangerous, especially when so many people are so susceptible to actual advertisements—as cheesy as they are and despite the soothing voice-over that says, "May cause early death," people will go to their doctor and ask about this drug they saw in a commercial. Imagine how effective a news report that they think is an investigation could be.

[On the other hand,] it's a little bit of a gamble—if you buy an advertisement, you're guaranteed that ad's going to run; you buy a VNR and you're rolling the dice.

It could run on 50 different stations or it could not run at all.

Right. *PR Week* tracked one back in 1996: Qantas did a Superbowl ad with their koala bear, and then they did a VNR about the making of the Superbowl ad. I think twice as many people saw the

like *Star Wars* to them, according to one publicist. If you do a nice little health VNR, and you put in a 3-D computer animation of what this new drug does, newsrooms will love it. If you see one of those, you know they didn't do it themselves, because people in the newsroom barely have time to use the bathroom, much less come up with a *Tron*-style video to supplement their own report. But even then, they could have done their own reporting and just used that little chunk from a VNR. A lot of times, a VNR can be edited in with station footage. I don't think there's a way for people to know, surefire, whether or not something's a VNR.

We've been hesitant about [this], because some of the people in our organization want to do more of a citizen media-watch, have people watch teevee and point out what they think are VNRs, and I think it's just going to be a witch hunt. If we start making accusations and we're wrong, it's crying wolf. I'd rather go the

other way and find things we know are VNRs and then track it through the news, see where it shows up. We use the same media-monitoring companies that publicists use when they want to track their own work. But [the PR companies] purge their archives, and you just can't get to [older VNRs]. I would have loved to find a VNR for Vioxx, as soon as they got FDA approval—you know that they released a VNR. Merck, they're one of the kings of the VNR market. It would have been so telling to find the original VNR for Vioxx, and see if they include any warnings about heart attacks and other adverse issues that ended up killing 30,000 people. And that's why, hopefully, we can build our own archive of historical VNRs, so if something like this comes up in retrospect, you can see how journalists failed, how they basically just recited the corporate spin.

Why is it that these news agencies are so eager to accept VNRs and run them as straight-up news, without any disclosure?

Well, if I was writing a term paper I wouldn't say, "Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*," because that would pretty much out me that I wasn't doing my own work. As for relying on VNRs, it's like I was saying, local stations just don't have enough people. Local news is really profitable—it's cheap to produce, and a lot of people watch it—so these stations, which are increasingly owned by bigger and bigger companies that demand bigger and bigger profit margins, say, "Okay, more news." Fewer people; more news. So you could have, especially with these small stations, a staff of 20 putting out four hours of news a day. You can just imagine the deadlines these people live under, it'd be enough to make you go fetal—it's absolutely crazy. So when someone comes along and says, Here's a really interesting story about a new wonder drug—or, even better, a story that completely hides the selling angle and just obliquely mentions the client—of course they'll run it. It only takes about 45 minutes to take a VNR and make it perfectly ready for news. You can mix it around a bit, re-edit things; they're so customizable. It's instant news, and every minute that they don't have to produce themselves is a couple thousand dollars saved. And it's completely safe, because the public at large still doesn't know about it—nobody raises a stink. I talk to people all the time and mention video news releases, and they say, "Wha-a-at?" It's pretty amazing.

Given the fact that they've been around for 20 or 30 years...


It's stunning. I only learned about it four years ago, and I thought, This cannot be, this has to be a conspiracy theory. But it's unbelievably common. It's one of the dirtiest secrets of the news business you could possibly imagine. It's been exposed before, but on small scales—I'm hoping that if we keep the heat on, we can embarrass these stations directly, catch them with hard proof.

Is there any indication of how much airtime is being used for VNRs in an average news hour?

I wish. It all depends. The smaller the news staff and the smaller the budget, the higher the chance that they're relying on VNRs. But that's changing also, because there are digital news services like Pathfire, which is more or less like AOL for newsrooms, a server you can log onto and download all this useable content that's mostly free. If you're a small station, even if you're a CBS affiliate, you can log onto the CNN newsfeed and get access to CNN content, and you don't even have to give them credit. And this is legitimate news!

So now people have more access to non-VNR filler, and I imagine that more and more, they would gravitate toward that over VNRs. At some point, with these small stations, you're not going to have producers and directors anymore—you're going to have DJs, spinning other people's news. Sinclair Broadcasting is trying to move to that model, where all the news is done centrally and sent out to the local stations, which pretty much just hit "play." And unfortunately, that's the future of news; it's all going to be farmed out. Because of that, because of shifting trends in that, we just have no idea how much of a newscast is VNRs. From what I'm gathering, I would say a small part, usually in the fluffy tail end of a newscast—if they have an extra 30 or 45 seconds left over, they'll have a VNR standing by to run. It's just a cushion. But with [a] Fox one that we caught, [which was sent out by Fox headquarters to 130 affiliates], they led with it—it wasn't an end-of-newscast type of story.

This is not going to go away unless there's actual outrage from the public. There are so many other things to be outraged about, but even if 12 people call their station and say, "I know you use VNRs, and it's very dishonest if you don't cite the source," it could scare them away from using VNRs. Because nobody wants to get caught faking the news; it's basically sanctioned plagiarism. And no self-respecting news professional wants to get caught doing that. So as long as we can let people know that there's a higher public awareness of this I think we can change the system. And of course, they'll just move on to new forms of non-journalism, but if we can get them away from this, it would be a great thing.



Items of Action & Possible Interest

The Center for Media and Democracy
CMD is one of the foremost sources for information on the PR industry and propaganda in the news. Among their projects are the investigative journal PR Watch and SourceWatch, a wiki-based directory of the people and organizations shaping public opinion.
www.prwatch.org
www.sourcewatch.org

Stop Fake News
Sign up with Free Press, a media policy organization working in partnership with the CMD in a campaign to stop the airing of government- and corporate-sponsored VNRs.
www.freepress.net/action/fakenews

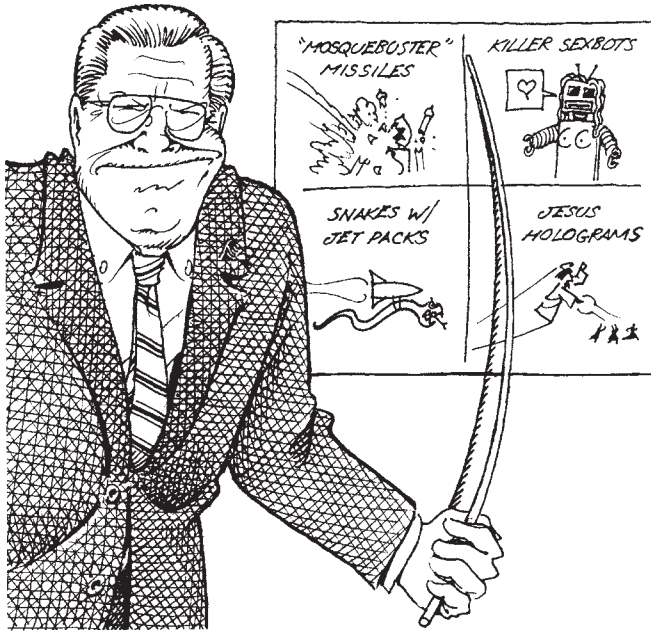
Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting
FAIR is a national media watchdog group that covers, among other things, the staggeringly widespread use of the PR industry in the production of news.
www.fair.org

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Propagating Popular Resistance

The Poetics, Public Relations, and Fetish of Zapatismo



by
Jeff Conant
 photography by
Gustavo Gilabert

The caravan of buses is miles long, draped with banners, painted with political slogans, filled with people from the poorest and most distant corners of Mexico—people the color of the earth, as they say—but also filled with people from dozens of other countries who find common cause here. The roads are lined with crowds, cheering, waving shirts and white flags of sheets and toilet paper, flashing victory signs and shouting: *Zapata Vive! La lucha sigue!* Zapata lives, the struggle continues! Police accompany the caravan, helicopters circle above, news teams and film crews race from the front of the caravan to the back, and in every town the newspapers shout their arrival: “The Zapatistas are coming!” In the lead bus, faces peer out at the crowds—but the faces are covered, hidden from view behind black ski masks. Not long ago, these masked figures were barred from leaving their villages; even now they represent a real threat, though they bear no arms and have committed no crime.

The caravan will follow a circuitous route through the country’s indigenous heartland, etching a snail-shell spiral on the map of Mexico, beginning in Chiapas to the far south; proceeding west through Oaxaca; north through Puebla, Tlaxcala, and Hidalgo; west again through Queretaro, Guanajuato, and Michoacan; south to Guerrero; east and north to Morelos; and then, finally, triumphantly over the Sierra de Chichinutzín and down into the urban heart of the country in the Valley of Mexico. In every city and many smaller towns, the caravan of motley vehicles stops and empties its cargo of ski-masked Zapatistas, Italians uniformed in white overalls, and sympathizers of all descriptions—young, old, brown, white, yellow, and red; university professors and union organizers; punks and hippies; grandmothers and young children. The *encapuchados*—the men and women without faces—speak to the crowds about democracy, liberty, justice; they tell jokes and offer metaphors about a wind from below, about an unstoppable force the color of the earth. They say: We are not here with answers, but with questions; we are not a spectacle to be gazed at but a window to be gazed through; we are you and you are us—tell us, where do we go from here?

This is the March for Indigenous Dignity, otherwise known as the March the Color of the Earth, otherwise known as the Zapatour. It is early 2001, and a new president has just been elected in Mexico—ousting a 60-year-old ruling party—making it necessary for the Zapatistas to descend on Mexico City to ensure their place at the center stage of Mexican politics. For almost two years, the Zapatistas have been nearly silent (as Subcomandante Marcos, the movement’s spokesman and military strategist later quipped, “Silence, too, is a weapon.”) The caravan marked such a

watershed in civil rights for Mexico's *indigenas* that it was likened to the US's 1963 March on Washington where Martin Luther King gave his "I have a dream" speech. Others called it a ridiculous bid for relevancy at a time when the popular movement in Chiapas was effectively over due to the universal success of neoliberalism (not to mention neoliberalism's effects in Chiapas, such as hunger, disease, poverty, fatigue).

This particular mass mobilization was neither the first nor the last time that the Zapatistas would take to the public stage, with thousands of their supporters, to demand recognition, rights, dignity, and justice. Nearly every year since August 1994—when they invited thousands of people to attend their National Democratic Convention deep inside rebel territory in the Lacandón Jungle—mass meetings and mobilizations have expanded the Zapatista support base and refined their political operation. Some of these *encuentros* have been organized by the Zapatistas themselves. Many more have arisen spontaneously through the efforts of solidarity networks and supporters worldwide.

These are not random gatherings, planned in reaction to world events, like antiwar rallies or protests to shut down the WTO. Each mobilization signifies a strategic leap, a reaching outward, and a question: "Where do we go from here?" In 1995 the Zapatistas organized a national popular vote, or *consulta*, in which they asked a series of questions regarding the basic goals of the movement; more than a million Mexicans voted. In 1996 they organized another mass meeting in the Lacandón Jungle, known as the Intergalactic Forum for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. The *intergalactica* represented a deep bow to the diversity the movement needed to stay alive; as Subcomandante Marcos put it, it was a celebration of "all the worlds the world needs to really be the world." In 1997, rather than inviting outsiders into the jungle, the Zapatistas sent representatives out to meet with people in *pueblos* and cities across the country. The first of these pilgrimages was the march of 1,111: this many individual Zapatistas traveled to Mexico City wrapped in Mexican flags, "to show this country that we are Mexicans." Their buses were named after revolutionary heroes, and the head of the caravan flew a banner celebrating a hero more ancient still: the Mayan god of the wind, Ik.

These mass mobilizations, national and international gatherings, marches, caravans, and pilgrimages have been crucial to Zapatista strategy and the proliferation of the movement. And they have shaped other social movements. Renegade history tells us that a Zapatista solidarity *encuentro* in Spain in 1997 gave birth to a group called People's Global Action, which issued a call to expand the scope of *encuentros* to include social movements worldwide. Out of this call came the World Social Forum, which began in 2001 and is the largest annual gathering of progressive social movements in history. These gatherings do not in themselves solve the problems of hunger, poverty, and abandonment; but by collectively developing a political vocabulary that reveals the

unity of diverse struggles, and by forging creative alliances, the Zapatistas have helped to challenge the always-looming party line that There Is No Alternative.

Branding popular resistance

Aside from countless converging historical factors, what has drawn people in such numbers to a movement beginning in the most obscure corner of Mexico has been a web of propaganda, stories, songs, murals, communiqués, symbols, and grand historical gestures: a ski-masked face and a rebel cry. A man on horseback, serenely smoking a pipe, with bullet belts marking a wide X across his chest. Crowds of miniscule women in flower-embroidered dresses shoving and screaming at a ragged platoon of worried soldiers. Since the mid-1990s, these images, seen worldwide, here evoked a global uprising against state and corporate capitalism, corrupt bureaucracy, and power wielded by the few against the interests of the many. *Zapatismo*, aside from creating a new kind of social movement that seeks to build local alternatives to power rather than to take the power of the state, has created an image and a mythic space—a poetics—that is unique among liberation movements, and which has allowed it to survive in the popular imagination, and therefore on the ground, for a dozen years now.

By taking early and strategic advantage of the internet and the news media, the Zapatistas have kept their story in the headlines. By using folktales, myths, jokes, and other ways of engaging an audience, they have filled what might best be described as a psycho-emotional need for stories of resistance among the international left. By framing themselves as sympathetic characters—Subcomandante Marcos the charismatic and self-effacing clown, Comandante Ramona the diminutive but strong female presence who overcame illiteracy to speak before millions, and the rest of the Zapatistas, the unbending will of popular resistance—they have created a living history that wins them press, solidarity, and the attention of international human rights organizations. And it prevents the Mexican government from attacking them outright.

To refer to the Zapatistas' careful image management as "branding" is cynical, but it is fair to say that just as the Nike swoosh calls to mind not only athletic equipment but also the fundamental ideology of predatory capitalism, just as Starbucks represents not only gourmet coffee but yuppie comfort and conformity, the ski mask and the other symbols of *Zapatismo* serve to deliver a dense package of information wrapped up in a single visual icon—and create name recognition for it. It is precisely this careful image management, along with a clear and consistent message, that prevented the Zapatistas from suffering the same fate as the slaughtered multitudes in neighboring Guatemala in the 1980s, and that has led them, instead, to inspire and represent global popular resistance.

It is careful image management, along with a clear and consistent message, that has led the Zapatistas to inspire and represent global popular resistance.



A century after his assassination, Emiliano Zapata lives on in indigenous Mexico.

In military terms, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) has never had the upper hand. Although local popular support is estimated in the tens of thousands, the number of *insurgentes*—the guerillas with guns living in the mountains—has been estimated at between 300 and 1,500. They are poorly equipped, poorly fed, and forced constantly to adapt their strategy to changing conditions. In contrast, the opposition—60,000 federal troops (fully a third of the Mexican army)—is regularly rotated through Chiapas. And yet, after 11 days of armed struggle in early 1994, the EZLN managed, in the words of border artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña:

to determine the terms of the cease-fire, to force the government to sit and negotiate in their own territory, to introduce into the spectrum of Mexican political forces a new vision of the future of the country, and above all, to create a new political mythology in a time when most political mythologies are bankrupt.

It is precisely the Zapatistas' political mythology, their framing of their own image and their use of "public relations," that has underpinned their survival and the propagation of their ideas, in one form or another, throughout much of the world.

Little dolls bearing little guns

In the wide doorways along Real de Guadalupe and Avenida Insurgentes in San Cristóbal de las Casas, the colonial capital of highland Chiapas, small armies are gathered. They are dolls of the rebel forces dressed in wool coats and ski masks, carrying little wooden rifles, each with the trademark red bandana of the EZLN around its neck. Some sit astride horses, others are gathered in trucks as if heading into battle, still others hang delicately from key chains and hair ribbons.

As you pass by these doorways, women and girls sitting among the armies call out "*Comprame un Zapatista!*"—Buy a Zapatista! At the slightest sign of interest a woman stands, flattening out her black wool skirt, and holds forth a handful of the dolls: "Buy one! This is Marcos," presenting one on a horse. "This is Tacho," presenting one with a hat. "This is Ramona," presenting one with a white blouse and skirt. "Buy one," she continues, "Anna Maria, David, Marcos," intoning the names of the Zapatista command. These are the real thing, her voice demands, these are the people you read about in the papers, these are the heroes of the revolution. Ask her if she knows the Zapatistas and she might giggle and turn shy, looking away, but she will continue in her insistence—she works hard making these dolls from the scraps of clothes she weaves—"Buy one! Buy one!"

San Cristóbal is home to countless battalions of dolls, a monument to that New Year's Day when the Zapatistas flooded the city and tore apart the town hall. The Zapatista combatants have long since disappeared into their villages to tend their fields, to resume life under the threat of siege. But the dolls remain vigilant. To the owners of the town—the bankers, the businesspeople, and the military—these diminutive figures are hobgoblin terrorists threatening the security of their landholdings and investments. But like the dolls, the Zapatistas are everywhere. There are more of them than can be counted, and they blend in with the fields they tend, working with a bent back over a hoe or sitting on the ground in a stall in the artisans' market, weaving. Of course, the huge army presence, Humvees, troop transports, and soldiers walking the streets with their guns cause the rebels to blend in that much more. They are invisible because they are everywhere.

Masks are generally associated with bank robbers and other “common” criminals, as well as with “terrorists” or freedom fighters, all of whom have something to hide because they are breaking the moral, ethical, and legal codes of their societies. But the ski mask initially served a pragmatic function: On New Year's Eve in the high mountain town of San Cristóbal de las Casas, the wind burrows into your bone marrow, whips your face, and freezes your eyebrows. In winter in the *altiplano* of Chiapas, late at night and in the early morning hours, it is common to see people wearing ski masks to protect their faces from frostbite.

What's not so common is to see people wearing ski masks, brown shirts, black pants, and brown caps with little red five-pointed stars, and carrying assault weapons, rifles, and hand-carved wooden imitation guns. The practical aspects of the masks—for covering a warrior's face, protecting her from recognition and

Just as the Nike swoosh calls to mind not only athletic equipment but also the fundamental ideology of predatory capitalism, just as Starbucks represents not only gourmet coffee but yuppie comfort and conformity, the ski mask and the other symbols of Zapatismo serve to deliver a dense package of information wrapped up in a single visual icon—and create name recognition for it.

But it is not only the Zapatistas who sell these dolls; they quickly became the most sought-after souvenir in the markets of San Cristóbal, and even women from villages that do not support the EZLN have been found earning their profit from them. In this sense, the dolls' mythology is so effective that even the enemy has been bedeviled into propagating it; and yet, in outlying towns less protected by international witnesses and more penetrated by military and paramilitary forces, the dolls are virtually absent. What makes these dolls any different from the sold-out image of Che Guevara or other revolutionary icons? Perhaps it is the fact that, in Mexico, at least, the Zapatistas still present a threat, while *el Che* is long gone; perhaps the fact that this is not merely a cult of personality (Marcos aside) but a generalized symbol of resistance. These dolls illuminate the shadows to reveal an invisible mass movement. Their very presence signals the historical inevitability of revolution.

“We cover our faces in order to be seen”

Immediately after the appearance of the EZLN in 1994, the ski mask bloomed like a dark flower across the cultural landscape. In December 2000, when the Zapatistas declared that they would march to the capital of Mexico to speak before congress, the chief concern among opposition leaders was not that the rebels would bear arms, but that they would wear masks. An almost pathological terror of the masks has been evident among the ruling class, mirroring, in its way, the fetish that surrounds the masks among youth and the left.

from the cold—do not belie their more profound, ritual functions. Commenting on the use of masks in the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, Salman Rushdie wrote, “The true purpose of masks, as any actor will tell you, is not concealment, but transformation. A culture of masks is one that understands a good deal about the processes of metamorphosis.”

Masked processions and carnivals are used in Catholic ceremonies throughout the Americas. But when masks and dramatic theater come out into the streets in marches, vigils, blockades, and acts of civil disobedience, this process of metamorphosis takes on a political significance—open resistance pointing towards revolution.

In a letter to Adolfo Gilly, Subcomandante Marcos wrote, “The case is that the ski mask is a symbol of rebellion. Just yesterday it was a symbol of criminality or terrorism. Why? Certainly not because we intended it to be.”

The masks have the perhaps unintended effect of conjuring a sort of “radical otherness.” Like Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, indigenous people have long remained almost unseen in modern Mexico. As Octavio Paz poignantly described, “The Indian blends into the landscape until he is an indistinguishable part of the white wall against which he leans at twilight, of the dark earth on which he stretches out to rest at midday, of the silence that surrounds him.”

So the mask became the symbol of all those whose identities are dismissed by the dominant culture. Anonymity—facelessness—was claimed with a ferocity that turned it from a handicap into a source of power and a threat. Overnight it came to represent not

only the indigenous people of Chiapas in their struggle for justice, but all peoples rejected by corporate globalization. For the Mexican neoliberal establishment and the international powers supporting it, the mask invokes a terrifying vision, a sort of Frankenstein's monster confronting his creator: "You made me what I am. Now look at me!"

After January 1, 1994, any one of the millions of dispossessed could simply don a ski mask and step out into the public square of her town or village and her political intentions, her story, her struggle would be made known. By establishing a collective identity, the wearer of the ski mask achieves, perhaps, one of the main symbolic victories of the underdog rebel: She disdains and dismisses the class which had previously disdained and dismissed her.

By donning the ski mask along with the bandoliers and horse evocative of Emiliano Zapata, Marcos made himself into a modern

their movement. Chief among these historical figures is Emiliano Zapata. The primary people's leader who propelled the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1919 to overthrow the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz and establish the founding constitution of modern Mexico, Zapata's presence is everywhere in the country; his name is attached to everything from barbershops and taco stands to agricultural unions and, of course, rebel armies. By evoking Zapata, a claim is laid for the "true" meaning of the Mexican Revolution: a struggle for a united peasantry and for the practical ideals of land and liberty. Historians Enrique S. Rajchenberg, and Catherine Héau-Lambert have noted that, of all of the Latin American leaders of the 20th century, perhaps the only ones who remain popular across classes are Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, and possibly Che Guevara:

Marcos' ski-masked image appeared, and continues to appear, on balloons and t-shirts, cigarette lighters and buttons, bumper stickers, clocks, pencils, condoms, and anything else that can be sold for 10 pesos at a street-side post or a rock concert. The Marcos fetish—*Marcotrafficking*—has managed to keep the Zapatista struggle in the public arena.

Mexican superhero, a cross between Zapata, Che Guevara, and Superman; the *New York Times* called him "the first postmodern guerilla leader." (Marcos wears crossed bandoliers of shotgun shells; yet his weapon of choice, for battle and for public posturing, is an automatic rifle, which uses entirely different ammunition. This could not have gone unnoticed by the press, and yet the theatrical effect is absolute.) The effect on Mexican youth was also immediate, identifying the Zapatistas as "cool" and earning Marcos respect as part of the *banda*, the gang. Marcos' machismo is tempered, in appearance, at least, by his righteousness, and as his presence proliferated a sort of revolutionary chic overtook Mexico.

Marcos' status as fetish ensured him a safe haven among civil society. The Mexican government quickly sought to unmask him, but once this myth took hold, Mexican civil society had no desire to know who he really was; even when his identity was revealed, the myth held its power. His ski-masked image appeared, and continues to appear, on balloons and t-shirts, cigarette lighters and buttons, bumper stickers, clocks, pencils, condoms, and anything else that can be sold for 10 pesos at a street-side post or a rock concert. The Marcos fetish—*Marcotrafficking*—has managed to keep the Zapatista struggle in the public arena.

The uses of history: Zapata lives, the struggle continues

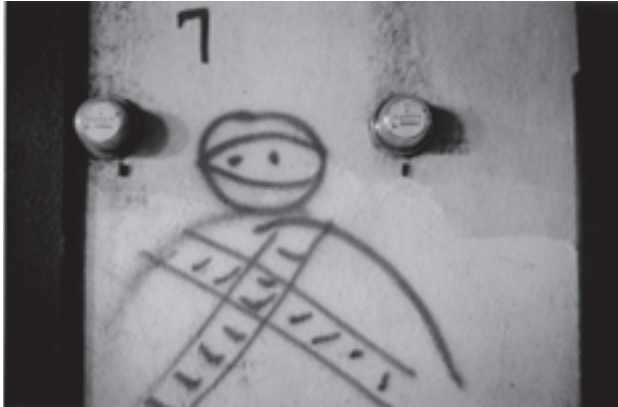
Another way in which the Zapatistas have captured the popular imagination is by invoking historical figures, names, and dates to give context to their actions and historical drama to

Lenin, Mao and Tito have been knocked from their pedestals in recent years, while [Villa and Zapata] have not only conserved their positions, their power has multiplied. The reason for their continued relevance, and also that of Che Guevara, springs from, among other things, the fact that they were foreign to power. In other words, it is not enough for an individual to embrace popular causes, but it is crucial that they maintain distance from that which contaminates whoever touches it: power and its symbols.

The power of Zapata as a symbol of ongoing revolution is particularly potent in Chiapas, because, as has been noted extensively, the Mexican revolution and the reforms it gained never quite arrived in Chiapas. Neither the rebel army nor the agricultural reforms carried out in the 1930s under President Lazaro Cardenas ever arrived in the villages of the Chiapan altiplano or the Selva Lacandona, where *caciquismo* (local rule by armed strongmen who generally serve the state party) and the system of *encomenderos* (large plots of land owned by *Ladinos*, or whites) have persisted virtually to the present day.

Mexican historian Carlos Montemayor has shown how the figure of Zapata belongs not only to Mexican historical reality, but to the indigenous oral tradition that does not distinguish between myth and history. In 1997's *Chiapas: La Rebelion indigena de Mexico*, he writes:

For the occident the calendar of history is obvious: we believe that what happened once happened only in this moment, and that it has nothing to do with the subsequent moment. For indigenous



Graffiti in San Cristóbal evokes the iconic Zapatista with ski mask and bandoliers.

culture time has another nature, another speed, and is one of the secrets of the cultural resistance and combative capacity of these people. For them the past is found in another dimension which continues coexisting with the present. The indigenous memory is a process of revitalization of the past. The festivals, dances, prayers, the oral tradition, are the force of a memory that communicates with this other dimension in which things remain alive. This is why, when they speak of Emiliano Zapata (or of heroes from the remote conquest, from the independence or from the nineteenth century) they are speaking of a living force.

When described as “neo-zapatistas,” Marcos has replied, to paraphrase, “We are not ‘neo,’ we are the continuation of the revolution of 1910.” *Zapata vive, la lucha sigue*—Zapata lives, the struggle continues.

Armed diplomacy

The Zapatistas have said time and again that their goal is not to take state power but to “open a space for democracy.” Many times they have extended an invitation to “global civil society” to meet, debate, and generate visions of “a world in which many worlds fit.” They talk repeatedly of “walking by asking questions.” Yet amidst the question marks is a single exclamation point that demands that the questions be taken seriously: the fact that the Zapatistas carry guns, and do not put them down lightly.

In Mexico, as in much of Latin America, seeing peasants with guns is not unusual. When things get especially bad for *el pueblo*, when the balance of power and the land base shifts too much into the hands of the few, people speak of “going to the mountains,” meaning taking up arms to defend their collective rights. Thus, the Zapatistas’ use of weapons is certainly not a new phenomenon in Mexico, though their reasons for carrying them are.

The EZLN has made many public statements explaining why they bear arms. Among the clearest (and most sensible) is Marcos’ statement that they would rather be killed in public battle than die unseen and unheard of diarrhea, dysentery, malaria or other preventable diseases of poverty.

Yet the EZLN, in reality if not in theory, are largely nonviolent, strategically maintaining what they call an “offensive ceasefire” even in the midst of constant low-intensity conflict.

They have not fired their weapons offensively since the 11-day war in January 1994, when they first declared war on the Mexican state. In those few days, there was a good deal of gunfire exchanged—when the EZLN attacked the Rancho Nuevo Military Base outside of San Cristóbal to eliminate the military threat and liberate a cache of weapons; when soldiers bore down on EZLN insurgents in the Ocosingo marketplace for two days; and at scattered ranches throughout Chiapas when ranchers fought to defend their lands against Zapatista occupancy. But even in these battles, most of the blood that ran was Zapatista blood, and if anything was proven it was that armed struggle could not be sustained. Only one incident—a firefight in which EZLN troops allegedly returned government fire in the village of El Bosque in 1998—calls into question the EZLN’s track record of “offensive ceasefire.”

The “symbolic” nature of violence is, of course, not entirely unique to the Zapatista movement; it may be seen as no more than a manifestation of a kind of propaganda that is all too common in global politics. When the US State Department uses this tactic in seeking to establish “meaningful dialogue” with its enemies, it calls this aggressive display “armed diplomacy.” The Zapatistas simply engage in armed diplomacy on a much smaller scale—and for self-defense. For the Zapatistas, the bearing of arms is largely about survival, but also carries with it a powerful message of defiance of state authority. By carrying weapons, the Zapatistas present themselves as subject to no laws but their own.

Without doubt the red soil of Chiapas has seen many deaths, tens of thousands of internal refugees, numerous massacres, several political assassinations, and countless disappeared, tortured, arrested, and expelled; there have been uncounted confrontations between Zapatista communities and military and paramilitary troops—and, in almost every case, the casualties are Zapatistas. This strategic nonviolence is not so much evidence of a pacifist ideology as it is a recognition that if they fire a single shot back at the Mexican military, they will be massacred with impunity. They have said, “We are soldiers so that after us no one will have to be soldiers.” Even as they stand silent, the guns have served them well in attracting media attention and bringing about opportunities for meaningful dialogue with the government.

A jovial image: the revolutionary ethics of good humor and good sportsmanship

Firearms aside, the chief weapon of the Zapatistas remains the word, and, more precisely, the wisecrack. From the beginning the Zapatistas have been tricksters, ridiculing everyone, even themselves. When it was noted that their takeover of San Cristóbal on the day NAFTA went into effect began “a few minutes after midnight,” Marcos commented, “We were late as usual.” Many of the stories Marcos has written take the form of comic fables, and many of their gestures serve to turn revolution into a battle of wits. A typical Marcos joke looks like this:

Once upon a time there were two feet. The two feet were together but not united. One was cold and the other was hot. So the cold foot said to the hot foot, “You are very hot.” And the hot foot said to the cold foot, “You are very cold.” And there they were, fighting like this, when Hernán Cortes showed up and burned them both alive.

Get it?

Some of the most beloved early communiqués centered around a little beetle named Durito—Little Tough Guy. Durito takes offense at Marcos' big clumsy boots and his simplistic analysis of globalization, and takes it upon himself to lecture about neoliberalism and war, ultimately suggesting that the Zapatistas are fighting for nothing because the capitalists are so stupid they will run themselves into the ground. Durito takes on the persona of Sherlock Holmes to Marcos' Watson and of Don Quixote to Marcos' Sancho Panza, injecting a shock of profound literary humor, and giving historical context and intellectual weight to the Zapatista cause. At the same time, the use of humor disarms and delights, further reinforcing the sense of these ski-masked, gun-toting rebels as sympathetic characters.

In December 2002, Fernando Baltasar Garzón Real—the Spanish judge responsible, on the one hand, for arresting Augusto Pinochet of Chile on charges of murder and human rights abuses and on the other for issuing indictments against members of the Basque separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)—challenged Subcomandante Marcos to a debate. Marcos accepted, but demanded that he set the terms:

Señor Baltasar Garzón...

I am informing you that I accept the challenge and (as mandated by the laws of knight-errantry), given that I am the man challenged, it is up to me to set the conditions of the meeting....

FIRST. The debate will be held in the Canary Islands, more specifically on Lanzarote, from April 3 to 10, 2003.

SECOND. Señor Fernando Baltasar Garzón Real shall secure the necessary and sufficient guarantees and safe-conduct, from the Spanish government as well as from the Mexican, so that the knight who has been challenged and six of his gallants can attend the duel and return home safely. The expenses for the trip and accommodations for Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos and his delegation will be borne by the EZLN, which are *coyucos*, tostadas, beans and pozol. In addition, insofar as spending the night, the knight-errant (or seafaring-knight) will need no roof other than the dignified Canary sky.

THIRD. In the same place as the debate, parallel to but not simultaneously, a meeting will be held between all the political, social and cultural actors in the Basque problem who so desire. The theme of the meeting will be "The Basque Country: Paths."

Following these opening shots across the bow, Marcos lays out a series of demands that amount to calling for a truce between the Spanish government and the Basque separatists. Marcos does not reserve his strong words for Garzón and the Mexican government, but takes ETA to task for having recently engaged in violent acts that resulted in the deaths of several innocent civilians: "Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos shall, in addition, address the ETA, asking them for a unilateral truce for 177 days, during which time the ETA shall not carry out any offensive military actions."

After asking ETA for a truce—a bold move for an armed revolutionary actor on the global stage—Marcos sets the terms of victory and defeat:

If Señor Fernando Baltasar Garzón Real defeats Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos fairly and squarely, he will have the right to

unmask him once, in front of whomever he wishes. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos shall, in addition, publicly apologize and will be subjected to the actions of Spanish justice so that they may torture him (just like they torture the Basques when they are detained)....

If, on the other hand, Señor Fernando Baltasar Garzón Real is fairly defeated, he will commit himself to legally advising the EZLN on the charges which—as perhaps the last peaceful Zapatista recourse, and in front of international legal bodies—will be presented in order to demand the recognition of indigenous rights and culture, which, in violation of international laws and common sense, have not been recognized by the three branches of the Mexican government.

Charges will also be presented for crimes against humanity by Señor Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon, responsible for the Acteal killing (perpetrated in the mountains of the Mexican southeast in December of 1997), where 45 indigenous children, women, men and old ones were executed....

Charges will similarly be presented against the heads of state of the Spanish government who, during Señor Zedillo's administration in Mexico, were his accomplices in that, and other, attacks against the Mexican Indian peoples.

Of course, the debate never happened. But by publicly engaging the well-known and controversial judge with his barbed wit, Marcos reveals the hypocrisy of a human rights discourse that allows the state to perpetrate violence (as in Acteal and Basque Country) while condemning the violence of "extremists" such as ETA and the EZLN. And by turning the debate into a duel and the discourse of human rights into a question of honor between knights errant (invoking again Spanish literature's great dreamer, fool, and madman, Don Quixote), Marcos turns revolution into postmodern slapstick comedy. Using humor, literary reference, and a well-calibrated ethical compass, Marcos saw in the challenge a grand public relations opportunity—and came off looking like a good-natured half-time clown, and a good sport to boot.

In a more recent bout of such global sportsmanship, the EZLN accepted a challenge to play a match against an Italian soccer team. In a letter to Massimo Moratti, President of the Milan International Football Club, dated May 25, 2005, Marcos writes:

Don Massimo,

I am letting you know that, in addition to being spokesperson for the EZLN, I have been unanimously designated Head Coach and put in charge of Intergalactic Relations for the Zapatista football team (well, in truth no one else wanted to accept the job)....

Perhaps...I might suggest that, instead of the football game being limited to one match, there could be 2. One in Mexico and another in Italy. Or one going and one on return. And the trophy known the world over as "The Pozol of Mud" would be fought for.

And perhaps I might propose to you that the [revenue from the] game in Mexico...would be for the indigenous displaced by paramilitaries in Los Altos of Chiapas.

Rushing headlong now, we might play another game in Los Angeles, in California, the US, where their governor (who substitutes steroids for his lack of neurons) is carrying out a criminal policy against Latin migrants. All the receipts from that match would be earmarked for legal advice for the undocumented in the USA and to jail the thugs from the "Minuteman Project." In addition, the

Zapatista “dream team” would carry a large banner saying “Freedom for Mumia Abu Jamal and Leonard Peltier.”

It is quite likely that Bush would not allow our spring-summer model ski masks to create a sensation in Hollywood, so the meeting could be moved to the dignified Cuban soil, in front of the military base which the US government maintains, illegally and illegitimately, in Guantánamo. In this case each delegation (from the Inter and from the Ezeta) would commit themselves to taking at least one kilo of food and medicines for each of their members, as a symbol of protest against the blockade the Cuban people are suffering.

As in the letter to Judge Garzón, Marcos uses the terms of sport to describe the playing field of global justice. By avoiding the kind of rhetoric normally associated with “vanguard revolution,” “popular uprising,” or “anticapitalist resistance,” Marcos gets beyond narrow ideologies to appeal to a universal sense of ethics that bespeaks not only anarchist revolutionaries, but *futbol* fans (who no doubt represent a far larger constituency than the aforementioned anarchist revolutionaries). Ever the strategic populist, Marcos goes to great lengths to show that he is not just an elite literary scholar and student of revolution, but an all-around sporting kind of guy whose struggle is broad enough to include immigrants’ rights, illegal detentions, and political prisoners.

One no and many yeses: The struggle continues

In June 2005, the Zapatistas issued a red alert in Chiapas, asking foreigners to leave the villages for an indefinite time, and called all of their communities together to consult on a question whose outcome, as Marcos put it, “would risk the little that we have gained.” No one knows exactly what the question was, but the outcome of the consulta was the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle, which promises a “new political direction” for the movement. It begins with a lengthy history of 12 years of struggle, an analysis of global capitalism, a description of the Zapatistas’ goals, and then, toward the end of its many pages, offers the diligent reader the longed-for new direction:

In the world, we are going to join together more with the resistance struggles against neoliberalism and for humanity.

And we are going to support, even if it’s but little, those struggles. As far as we are able, we will send material aid such as food and handicrafts for those brothers and sisters who are struggling all over the world.

And we are going to exchange, with mutual respect, experiences, histories, ideas, dreams.... We are going to seek, from La Realidad to Tijuana, those who want to organize, struggle and build what may perhaps be the last hope this Nation—which has been going on at

least since the time when an eagle alighted on a nopal in order to devour a snake—has of not dying.

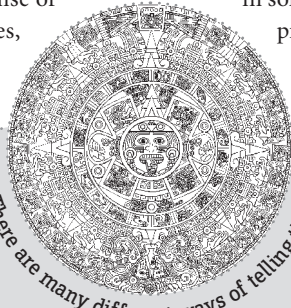
We are going for democracy, liberty and justice for those of us who have been denied it.... We are inviting all indigenous, workers, campesinos, teachers, students, housewives, neighbors, small businesspersons, small shop owners, micro-businesspersons, pensioners, handicapped persons, religious men and women, scientists, artists, intellectuals, young persons, women, old persons, homosexuals and lesbians, boys and girls to participate, whether individually or collectively, directly with the Zapatistas in this NATIONAL CAMPAIGN for building another way of doing politics, for a program of national struggle of the left, and for a new Constitution.

Despite the pronouncements, there is much about this new initiative that is not new at all. The Zapatistas have always struggled in solidarity with other movements, and the nature of their program has been, if anything, shockingly inclusive for a revolutionary armed movement: If you dream of a just world for your community and everyone else, there is space for you within the movement.

This inclusivity allows people from all corners of civil society to project their ideals and aspirations onto Zapatismo. This, of course, is the genius of their strategy, though these projections do not always fit: A movement that attracts both hardened proponents of armed struggle and enlightened philosophers of nonviolence is bound to ruffle some feathers. Feminists, anarchists, progressives, environmentalists, even libertarians all project ideals onto the movement, and yet, amidst the rhetoric, the movement and those within it may at times be sexist, be not terribly ecological, slip into drinking, insult the wrong people—may even provoke, permit, or foment violence. Disillusion, disappointment, and loss of faith can ensue. But somehow the jokes, the fables, the talk of dignity and hope, the masks, the dolls, the songs and murals serve to reinforce the values that drive the insurrection, and leave behind the occasional betrayal or frustration.

After 12 years of shifting struggle and what is arguably the international left’s most innovative and effective public relations campaign, the Zapatista movement—and the global anticapitalist movement of which it forms

a part—has more adherents than ever before. And despite the divisions that may exist and the near-hopeless task at hand, one tiny lesson comes through that has changed progressive politics forever. In the absence of a strict ideology—and in the interest of creating a world in which many words fit—the road to democracy, liberty, and justice is made by walking. **LiP**



Items of Action & Possible Interest

Chiapas Indymedia

The latest news from Chiapas. Mostly in Spanish; some English translation. chiapas.mediosindependientes.org

Our Word is Our Weapon

A collection of writings from Subcomandante Marcos. [Seven Stories Press, 2002]

The War Against Oblivion

John Ross’ excellent history of the Zapatista movement covers the struggle from 1994-2000.. [Common Courage Press, 2000]

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Author’s note: Excerpts from scholarship published in Spanish were translated by the author. All excerpts from the communiqués, including the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle, were translated by



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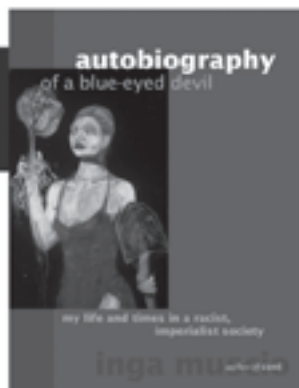
-KATHA POLITT, *THE NATION*

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BLUE-EYED DEVIL
MY LIFE AND TIMES IN A RACIST, IMPERIALIST SOCIETY

By Inga Muscio

The author of the best-selling *Cunt* is back, this time tackling race in America.

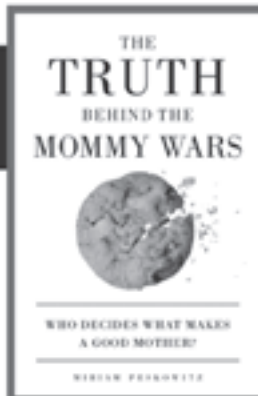
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Hello,
my race is...

white

**The
first step
is admitting
you have
a race.**

“But I’m white. What can I do about racism?”

The 12 White Steps helps white people answer this nagging question.

It works if you work it. The 12 White Steps is a life-long endeavor. Any life-changing program is a daily process. It requires diligent awareness to launch a true awakening. Your program inhabits every corner of your life, even when you are not around people of color. In fact, it’s the little moments that you have been taking for granted that will add up to huge successes.

Sponsorship. Find a sponsor. It is much easier to find success in the program if you have advice and support. No one expects you to do this alone. It’s perfectly normal to feel scared, nervous, unsure, angry, and confused. Don’t give up. Call your sponsor. Have a good long talk and get back on track. The road might feel hard, but it has rewards. After you complete your program, you will be a part of a growing white community with a fresh new approach to life!

The 12 White Steps

Step 1. Admit that you have a race.

Whiteness comes with advantages. You know it. So why not admit it? If you have a jar full of cookies, you can spend your whole life denying you have them, you can hoard them or you can share them. The thing is, everyone already knows you have the cookies. We can smell the sugar and see the crumbs on your chin. Yep, the secret is out, so maybe it’s time to offer some of the sweet dessert to others.

Step 2. Accept that there is a higher understanding that can restore you to sanity.

It has been said that insanity is defined as “repeating the same behavior and expecting different results” and “a relatively permanent disorder of the mind.” This means there is hope on two accounts. First, realize that your actions so far have resulted in the same ol’ same ol’. It’s time for a change. Second, racism may be only “relatively permanent.” That’s great news! This means that with your effort, it can be changed. Once you embrace a higher understanding of race, you’ll breathe easier, have less stress, and find effective ways to create a healthy, productive, enjoyable society for all.

Step 3. Realize you don’t know it all.

People of color know a whole lot about racism. Listening to them is a great idea. But hold on cowboy, they aren’t a library or your elementary school teacher. Your tax dollars don’t pay for their expertise. Refrain from interrogating, contesting, and demanding explanations. Turn off the part of your brain that wants to prove how smart you are and fire up the part that is hungry for learning. Say “thank you.” Seek out further information by going to the library, bookstore, or internet. Take notes. Next time you have a question about race you’ll have several places to find answers.

Step 4. 'Fess up.

Open the cookie jar and take inventory of its many fun-flavored cookies. Can't find any? Try, try again. When you get caught with cookie crumbs on your fingers, it's natural to wipe them off and deny their existence even when the delicious aftertaste remains. Keep a tally of the many times a day that jar is opened and you benefit from your whiteness. Inventory is a hard step in the program. Try keeping a photo of a favorite friend, hero, or personality of color. When you can't do it for yourself, do it for them.

Step 5. Own your legacy.

"But I didn't own slaves." That may be true, but was the black person who was passed over for your promotion a slave? Probably not. Like any family recipe, this one has been passed down for generations. It might have changed some through the years, but it's still based on the original formula.

**Grant me
the courage
to change the
things I can.**

Step 6. Move beyond your ABCs.

Would you allow your children to grow up with only a first grade level of reading? Of course not. You want to see them become happy functioning members of society. Many white people are "functioning" with the same racial language and ideas they had as a child. Don't accept skating by with a grade-school understanding of racism. Strive to challenge yourself and your peers on ever maturing levels.

Step 7. Make racism a white issue.

Truth be told, if white people really wanted to end racism, they would. White people are very smart. You've come up with some of the world's most notable inventions. Racism is only one of these. No one is better qualified to dismantle it. Unless, of course, you decide you'd rather keep it.

Step 8. Bite the bullet.

Make a list of all the ways white people have harmed, slighted, oppressed and repressed others. This will take a while. Stick with it. You've come this far. Become willing to make prompt amends for it all.

Step 9. Share the cookies.

Making amends is more than stating an apology. It means concrete offerings that will compensate or correct everything you listed in step 8. Amends can take many forms including governmental policies, sharing access, labor, behavioral changes, even good old American cash. Bolster individual amends with systemic amends by combining your efforts with other white people. Remember, the more people who have the recipe, the more cookies we'll all get to eat.

Step 10. Go the distance.

The program is a life-long commitment, not a fad, fashion, or temporary experiment. Many white people find themselves enamored of the 12 White Steps for a day, week, month or year. This is as ineffective as never starting the program at all. Truly working this program means working the twelve steps every day for the rest of your life.

Step 11. Teach your children well.

"Now I know my ABCs, next time won't you sing with me?" Think of all the basic life skills you teach your children without a second thought. Children need to learn how to eat, walk, talk, play...and eliminate racism. Be creative. You find ways to make eating vegetables fun, right? Start early. Teach your kids about ending racism so kids of color don't have to teach them for you.

Step 12. Recruit, recruit, recruit!

Take the pledge: "Having gained a higher understanding of race as a result of these 12 White Steps, I carry this message to other white people to help them practice these principles daily, in all aspects of our lives."

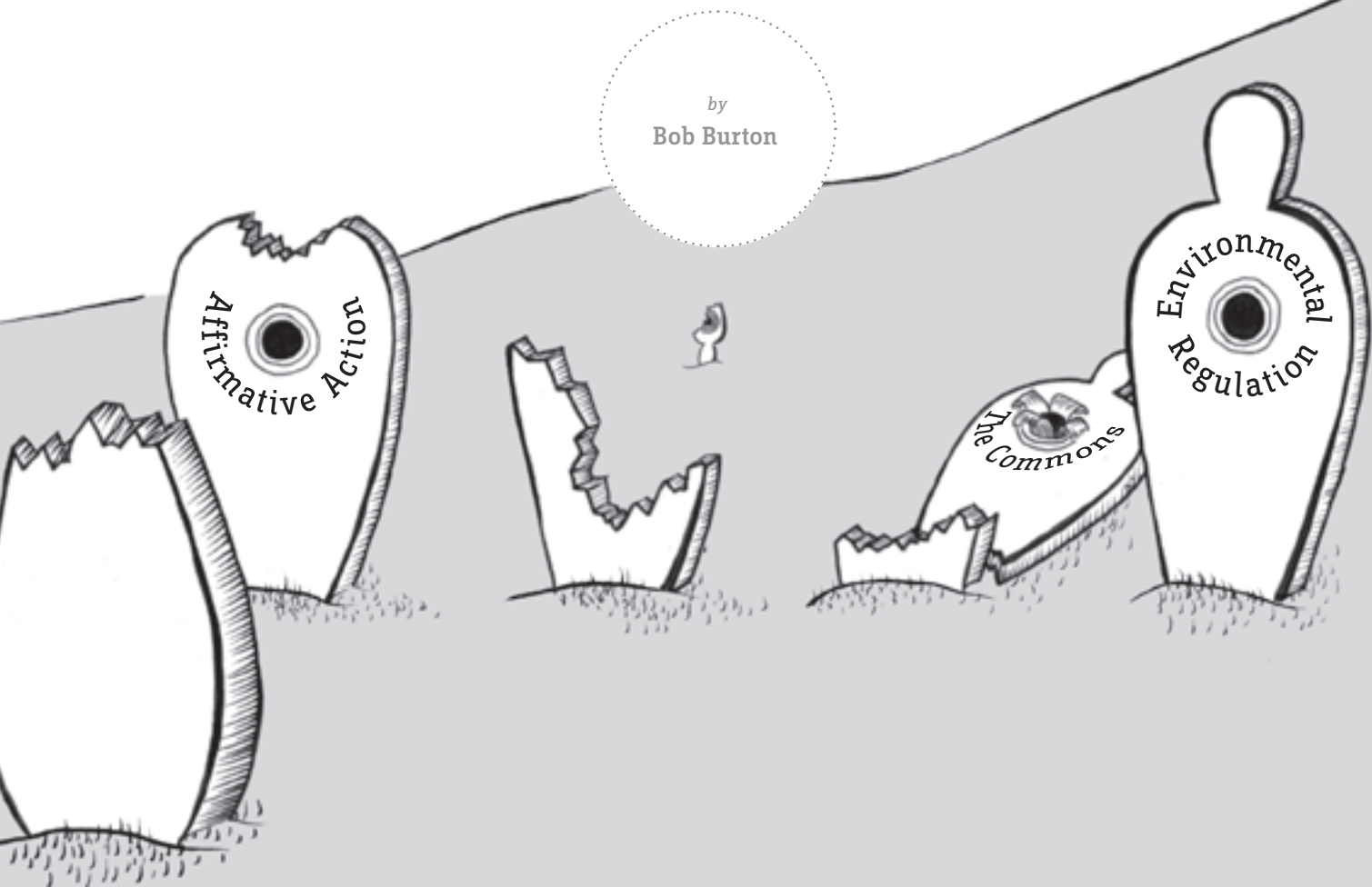
You can do it. Start now.

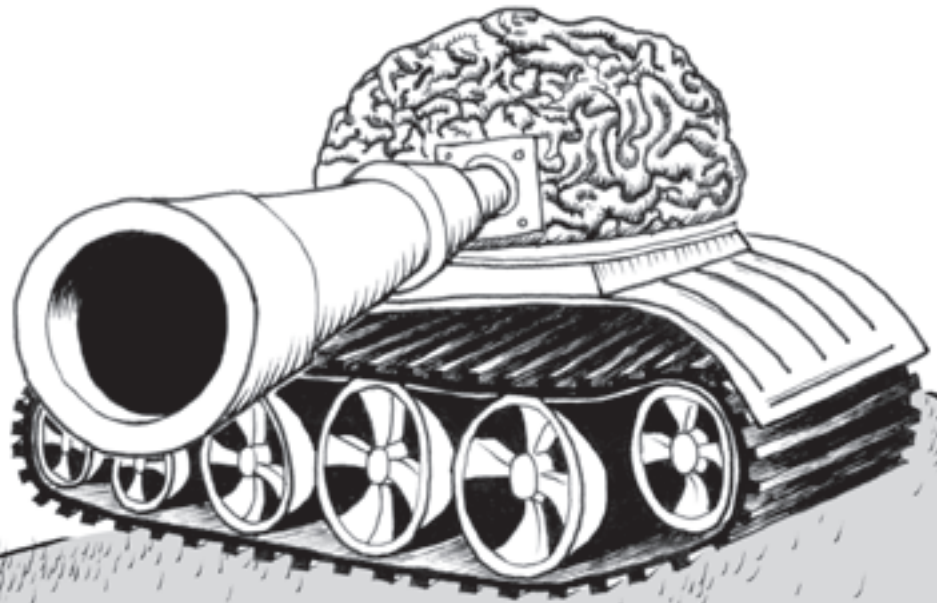
This public service brought to you by damali ayo, author of *How to Rent a Negro*

Battle Tanks

How Think Tanks Shape the Public Agenda

by
Bob Burton





If you were the least bit nervous about all the worrying reports—from leading scientists, insurance companies and even the Pentagon —about human-induced climate change, don't worry: Frontiers of Freedom Institute is here to reassure you.

FF has established the Center for Science and Public Policy (CSPP) to alert “policy makers, the media, and the public to unreliable scientific claims and unjustified alarmism which often lead to public harm.” If you are so inclined, you can subscribe to the “non-profit, non-partisan” *Climate & Environment Weekly* email bulletin to keep track of why climate change is not the problem many make it out to be. But if you want to know who funds FF's climate change program, you won't find out by checking their website or annual report. However, over at ExxonMobil's website you'll discover that CSPP was established in 2002 with a \$100,000 grant from the world's biggest oil company. ExxonMobil loves FF so much that in the last five years it has invested another \$617,000 of shareholders' cash to promote “informed discussion” on climate change issues.

Establishing the impact of an organization like FF is anything but straightforward. However, it is beyond dispute that ExxonMobil's largesse toward a network of think tanks, skeptics, and advocacy groups has had a substantial role in stalling, and may yet fatally wound, the Kyoto treaty. In 2004 alone, ExxonMobil invested \$6.4 million from its "public information and policy research" program in a range of institutions with a focus on climate change, including many think tanks like FF. With a budget of just over \$790,000 in 2003, FF is a minnow among the more than 1,000 US think tanks in the US beaver away to influence what we think. FF and its ilk are keen to ensure that the Kyoto treaty, which came into force earlier this year, doesn't get extended beyond 2012, when it is currently set to expire.

In late July, President George W. Bush announced a deal with the governments of Australia, China, India, Japan, and South Korea to emphasize certain technical policies that the energy industry loves: "clean" coal, nukes, and the holy grail of them all, pumping captured greenhouse gases underground. "We are taking action on climate change in a broad, pro-growth context," Bush said reassuringly. The unstated hope of this sic-country bloc is that by 2012 their voluntary, corporate-friendly measures will supercede mandatory reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

While oil companies were discreetly quiet, other longtime opponents of Kyoto were ecstatic. It was, James K. Glassman wrote in a column for Tech Central Station, "a refreshing and effective alternative route to tackling the problem of climate change." TCS is "supported by sponsoring corporations that share [its] faith in technology and free markets," such as AT&T, McDonald's, General Motors, Merck, Microsoft, and yes, ExxonMobil, which sluiced \$95,000 their way in 2003 but contributed nothing in 2004. The site is published by DCI Group, an international "strategic public affairs services" firm. Glassman is the site's founder and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a conservative think tank that employs, among others, Second Lady Lynne Cheney, Contract with America architect Newt Gingrich, Reagan cabinet member Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and *Bell Curve* author Charles Murray.

The enthusiasm of corporations and conservative philanthropists for funding think tanks is based on what is known in the PR trade as the third-party principle—finding a more credible organization to articulate what might otherwise be seen as a self-interested policy.

While FF concentrates primarily on countering the environmental movement, the largest conservative think tanks—such as AEI—extol the virtues of everything from privatizing Social Security to the desirability of school vouchers and a muscular foreign policy.

Too Noisy to Think

While the term "think tanks" conjures up an image of quiet, studied reflection on weighty topics, the reality could hardly be further from the truth.

Think tanks are the intellectual equivalent of battle tanks, which rely on a combination of speed, defensive armor, and offensive firepower to overwhelm opposition forces. The goal of conservative think tanks, in combination with air cover provided by right-wing commentators, is to clear the way for politicians and government officials to implement policies once deemed too toxic to touch. In 1993, the former senior vice president of the Heritage Foundation, Burton Yale Pines, himself adopted the military analogy describing think tanks as "the shock troops of the conservative revolution."

Battle tanks are noisy beasts, too. The media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) trawled the Nexis database of media stories and calculated that think tanks defined as "conservative" or "center-right" received over 15,000 media citations in 2004, representing 50% of all think tank references in US news. Including "centrist" groups brings that total up to 83%. The top 10 outfits scored more than 1,000 mentions each, with the top five accounting for just over half of the total. Leading the charge were the Brookings Institution, the conservative Heritage Foundation, AEI, the centrist Council on Foreign Relations, and the conservative/libertarian Cato Institute.

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To be effective, think tanks don't need to appear in peer-reviewed academic publications. Indeed, much of their effectiveness comes from their willingness to eschew the caution of traditional academic work. Instead of balancing pros and cons and recommending further research like academic enterprises often do, a think tanker will deliver a snappy policy prescription. Certainty sells.

For politicians, think tanks provide access to a pool of researchers capable of reducing a complex policy area to a set of conservative proposals and a sound bite. For the media, the allure of think tankers is their accessibility, sound-bite savvy, and a level of specialist knowledge greater than that of the reporter. So much the better if these sources are former administration officials or have expansive publications lists enabling them to be packaged as experts.

In short, think tanks are a way in which media outlets and politicians can outsource the messy and time-consuming business of research and independent thinking.

And lots of arms-length noise is just what the deep-pocketed funders of the tanks are looking for. Major conservative donor Roger Hertog told a 2002 Philanthropy Roundtable conference that

by funding think tanks “you get huge leverage for your dollars.” Much of the big money behind the conservative and libertarian think tanks can be traced back to foundations created by a handful of very wealthy individuals: Charles G. Koch and his brother David H. Koch, Richard Mellon Scaife, Adolph Coors, Lynde and Harry Bradley, and John M. Olin.

While individual philanthropists would be unlikely to attract a receptive audience if they stood on a street corner with a megaphone, think tanks enable their funders to project their preferred political views to a much broader audience. Critical to their success has been a willingness to provide large unrestricted grants over the long haul to popularize what were initially seen as radical ideas and policies. Corporations, on the other hand, tend to send shareholder funds to conservative think tanks to fund campaigns that match their more immediate needs.

For instance, internal tobacco industry documents reveal that on one occasion in 1996 Malcolm Wallop, the chairman and founder of FF, contacted Phillip Morris and railed against a Food and Drug Administration rule aimed at restricting youth-targeted tobacco marketing as “an assault on the First Amendment.” He noted his upcoming gig as guest host of *The Right Side*, Armstrong Williams’ syndicated radio program. Accompanying his letter was a funding pitch. Wallop spent one hour of the three-hour show attacking the FDA rule. The following year he sent a funding request for \$15,000 to Loews Corporation, the parent company of Lorillard Tobacco, citing his work with Armstrong Williams as one of his group’s successes. “Like any professional public policy group, we try to match up our contributors with specific issue areas,” he explained.

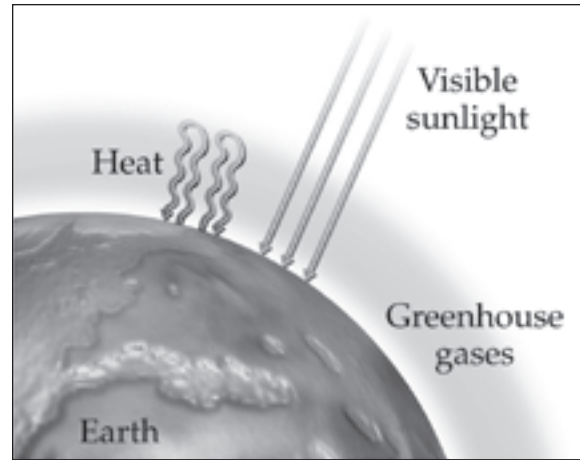
Mixing It with the Media

The effectiveness of many think tanks owes much to a simple set of principles: obscure the funding source behind a campaign; court journalists with impressive-looking, easy-to-use masticated research and ready-to-roll talking heads; and dovetail advocacy in with allies to develop an “echo chamber” effect.

The Heritage Foundation, founded in 1973 by conservative activist Paul Weyrich, had a budget of \$37 million by 2004—which is larger than that of the combined funding of the largest “progressive” think tanks. It also arguably has the best media massaging operation.

For those hunting for story leads, Heritage offers an email bulletin on the “hottest topics” with contact details of approved experts. “Broadcast live from Capitol Hill? To reserve a fully-equipped Heritage studio, call the Media Hotline,” announces its website, which also provides a wealth of backgrounders, talking points, and charts to assist journalists. On its separate Policy Experts site, a reporter can find hundreds of Heritage-approved sources classified into 160 areas of expertise. For editors looking for free content to fill opinion pages, many of Heritage’s 200 staff are ready to help. Heritage boasts that in 2004 it provided over 900 free op-eds and commentary pieces to newspapers and online services with “more than 90 of them in Top 10 papers.”

Heritage’s Center for Media and Public Policy has also forged a role for itself in training reporters. In 2004 alone, its director, Mark Tapscott, conducted 13 special sessions in “computer-



Artist's fanciful rendering of the alleged “global warming” phenomenon.

assisted research and reporting” (CARR) that “trained 186 editors, producers and reporters.” Heritage’s work on CARR projects even goes as far as “partner[ing] with journalists,” with a preference for “healthcare, homeland security, defense, Social Security, and federal spending issues.” The foundation not only provides access to its economic modeling capacity but also offers to “build computer models for specific news projects, as we did for Cox Newspapers’ Washington Bureau.”

The Heritage strategy is seductively simple: They provide a service that media companies are unwilling to pay for themselves, thereby building a relationship with reporters and establishing the organization as a source of information for future stories. And once on the think tanks’ free drip-feed, most journalists are unlikely to leave it.

The foundation is also a player in the online media world, founding the conservative news portal *Townhall.com* and providing a weekly internet radio program, *The Insider*. (Based on March 2004 data, the conservative direct-mail pioneer Richard A. Viguerie dubbed *Townhall.com*

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the fifth-highest-ranking conservative news site, higher than the more mainstream Time.com.)

It also caters to up-and-coming conservatives by running a training program to “instruct” junior congressional staffers in “the key ideas...necessary for them to address current legislative issues and grapple with contemporary politics and policy.”

How does this media work actually play out? While corporations contribute only a small percentage of Heritage’s income, nonetheless some of these sponsors have significant interests in the foundation’s policy output: There’s defense contractor Lockheed Martin, finance companies Mortgage Insurance Companies of America and Merrill Lynch, auto companies Honda and Ford, drug and medical companies Johnson & Johnson, GlaxoSmithKline, America’s Health Insurance Plans, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Pfizer, and PhRMA, the oil company ChevronTexaco, UPS, and Microsoft. Between 1998 and 2003, ExxonMobil was a generous funder of the Heritage Foundation, shoveling \$528,000 into its trough (though it got nothing from the company in 2004.) Not surprisingly, the



◀ Someday this will all be beachfront property ▶

Items of Action & Possible Interest

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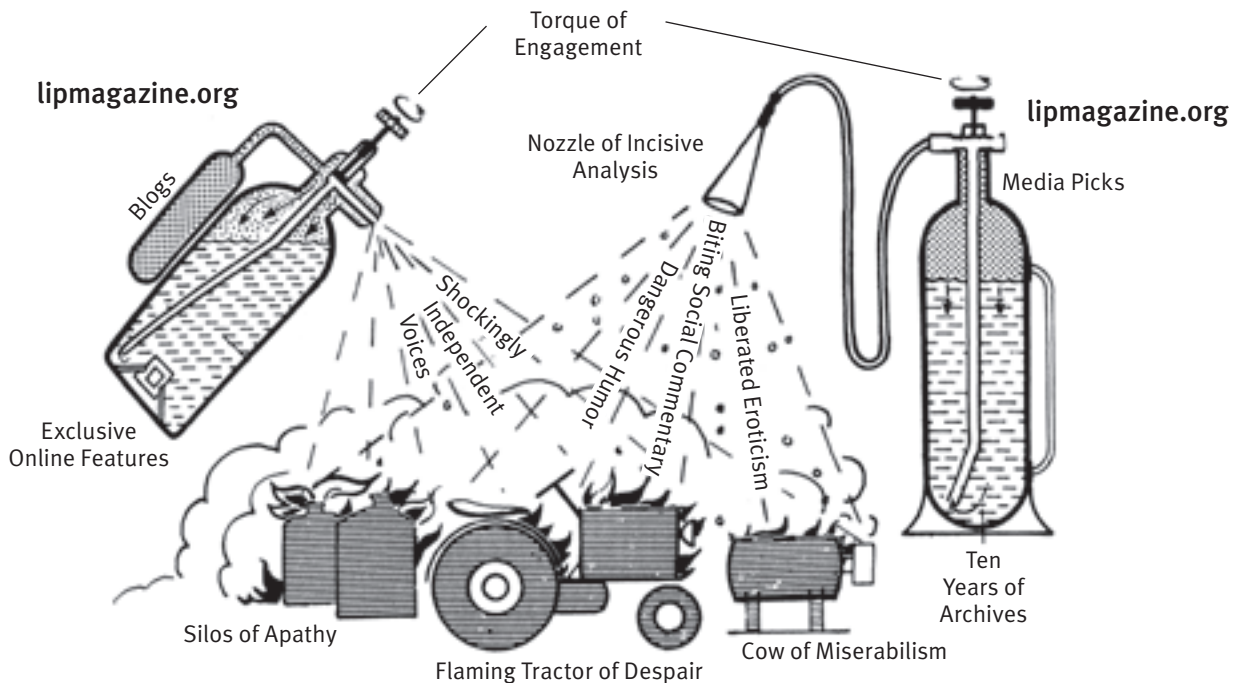
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Heritage website lambasts the Kyoto treaty as “fatally flawed.” Policy Experts lists the foundation’s Vice President of External Relations, Becky Norton Dunlop, as one possible climate change contact. Dunlop’s biographical information notes that “her responsibilities include the departments engaged in strategic outreach and communication to...business leaders.”

In 2002—a year in which ExxonMobil gave the foundation \$75,000—Dunlop was interviewed by reporters from the *Houston Chronicle* and Cox News Service, which syndicated the resulting article to the *Palm Beach Post* and the *Austin American-Statesman*. While Dunlop expressed her scorn for the idea that human-induced climate change was underway, neither article mentioned ExxonMobil’s funding or indicated that she had even been asked about who funded her organization.

As with any serious modern attempt to understand power, critical inquiries should start with that old journalistic maxim, “Follow the money.” Tanks, after all, aren’t much use without heavy armor for sponsors to hide behind. **LiP**

in case of emergency:



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Conveying Correctness

The Prefabrication of Political Speech



an
interview with
Chip Berlet
by
Brian Awehali

Chip Berlet has spent over three decades researching the right wing, political repression, apocalyptic thinking and millennialism, authoritarianism, and “how populist rhetoric is used by the right to build a kind of anti-elite movement that really serves the elite.” Berlet is the editor of *Eyes Right! Challenging the Right-Wing Backlash*, and the coauthor of *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*. He is also a senior analyst at Political Research Associates (PRA), which, in the words of its mission statement, “works to facilitate public understanding of the threat posed to human rights by oppressive and authoritarian right-wing movements in the United States.” Berlet describes PRA as “a think tank, a library archive, and a publishing house [that] take[s] scholarly research and translate[s] it into a much more accessible form for activists who are trying to find effective ways to counter the programs of the political right that undermine democracy and diversity.”

LiP recently spoke with Berlet about think tanks, framing, and the creation of the term “political correctness.”

LiP: You describe PRA as a progressive think tank. What makes it progressive? What makes it a think tank?

Chip Berlet: Well, there are two kinds of think tanks. There are think tanks that are basically not really concerned about scholarship. They crank out studies; there’s no serious attempt to do research. It’s just restating ideas in a scholarly way, and that’s bad whether it’s on the left or the right. When you look around, you don’t see many progressive think tanks. And I’ll define a distinction between progressive think tanks that want to build a social movement that is outside, although perhaps also interacts with, the Democratic Party, vs. liberal think tanks, which are essentially arms of the Democratic Party. Political Research Associates sees itself as a think tank that’s devoted to helping build a diverse, multicultural, progressive social change movement

that may interact with the Democratic Party, but is not beholden to it, on the theory that social movements pull political movements, not the other way around.

I want to ask you about the origins and the construction of “political correctness” as a term and as a framing device.

Well, there are people who have spent forever trying to pin down who came up with it, and there are different claims. I think it actually developed in an organic way, in which a number of groups started to use the term almost simultaneously, and I don’t want to go there because people have written their whole doctoral dissertations trying to defend a position on this. But what I can say is that somewhere between 1985, with the development of Accuracy in Academia [a right-wing organization that documents “political bias in education”] and the 1991 Dinesh D’Souza book, *Illiberal Education*, “political correctness” became a term of art within the conservative movement. And then shortly after that, it blew up, and was used by everybody in the conservative movement; then it started to be used by people across the culture who simply wanted to be hip, and not to be Orwell’s bad guy.

In 1988, you would have been hard-pressed to find a dozen citations of the term or any of its versions. By 1992, there were 10,000 articles in the English language on political correctness. Now, even a dullard could figure out that something had happened between 1988 and 1992. So you look for the period between 1988 to 1992 to determine what happened to suddenly make this such a hot term. And really, it starts out with a series of critiques on multicultural projects in higher education. A series of books come out, like Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind*, Roger Kimball’s *Tenured Radicals*, and [D’Souza’s] *Illiberal Education*, criticizing higher education and implying that a liberal authoritarian orthodoxy had taken over college campuses. We’re talking here about a reframing of the idea of multicultural

education and diversity. And it percolated. All of a sudden these books were prompting newspaper and magazine articles, and there was a series of [conservative] think tanks, such as the Madison Center for Educational Affairs, and groups like the National Association of Scholars, and Accuracy in Academia, who suddenly pick this up, and it becomes a bandwagon. Eventually, it escapes the confines of a critique of multiculturalism and diversity in higher education, and turns into a general critique that liberals and the left are engaging in an Orwellian project of thought control to force people to accept certain language, to re-educate them.

But what's being criticized here? Attempts to redress inequalities of power on campus, to look at issues of race and gender, power and privilege, and what belongs in the canon—all of these are absolutely appropriate for discussion on a college campus!

Now, were you to just attack that, you would be seen as attacking people in a way that privileges certain gender and racial hierarchies. But what's a great way to get around that problem, so you don't appear to be racist or sexist or homophobic? You reframe it to say that these people are coercing you into a form of thought that is a hand-wringing kind of liberalism. And then you talk about the changing language and how silly it is that a manhole cover becomes an access cover, or a firefighter replaces a fireman. By focusing on this language issue, you transfer discussion away from the discussion about who has power and privilege in America and if it is fairly distributed. From my point of view, no, it's not fairly distributed, and it's worth talking about that.

But the term "political correctness" takes that away from the context, and turns it into a mocking kind of silliness. It takes a serious issue and gives it an edge of parody. So then you end up with progressives who say, "We want political correctness," which is idiotic, and then you have progressives who say they're against political correctness. Either way, it's idiotic.

You lose.

Yeah, you've bought into the frame. As George Lakoff talks about, via Irving Goffman—who really came up with the term "framing"—once you buy into a frame, you've lost the argument.

How would you reframe the conversation?

If people accuse me of being PC, I say, "If, by 'PC,' you mean I seek to be courteous and not offend people intentionally, then of course I'm PC." The only way to really deal with that kind of charge is to say: "If you mean by that, I'm concerned about unfairness in American society based on race and gender and other factors, absolutely true. Guilty as charged. If you mean by that, I wring my hands and whine a lot, no, I don't think that's a fair criticism." So you basically hand it back to them and say, "You know, I'm not accepting that frame. Let's debate the definition, and in the course of that I'm going to reveal that really what you're saying is that you're tired of hearing

about race and gender, and you don't want to have a conversation about what's fair." Then they usually complain, "That's not what I'm saying at all!" and then you tease it out and say, "Well, what are you saying?" And they don't have an answer, because 99% of the people who use the term don't understand how they're using it.

What's being criticized here? Attempts to redress inequalities of power on campus, to look at issues of race and gender, of power and privilege, and issues of what belongs in the canon.

Where can people go for more information about the PC debate?

Well, there's Valerie Scatamburlo's excellent study, *Soldiers of Misfortune*. The National Council for Research on Women put out a study called "To Reclaim a Legacy of Diversity: Analyzing the Political Correctness Debates in Higher Education." Ellen Messer-Davidow wrote two wonderful articles. One was in the hideous journal of the Midwestern Modern Language Association, but it's worth wading through the rhetoric to read it; then in *Social Text*, in 1993, she wrote an essay called "Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education," which was brilliant. From almost

the beginning, people understood that this was a frame crafted by conservatives to attack race and gender equity, and it's really important for people to understand that and look up some of these primary sources and read them, because this is something we need to be aware of. We should avoid the frames of the right. **LiP**

AS SEEN IN THE PAGES OF LiP...

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AN INTRODUCTION BY FRANK COVINO-MILLER

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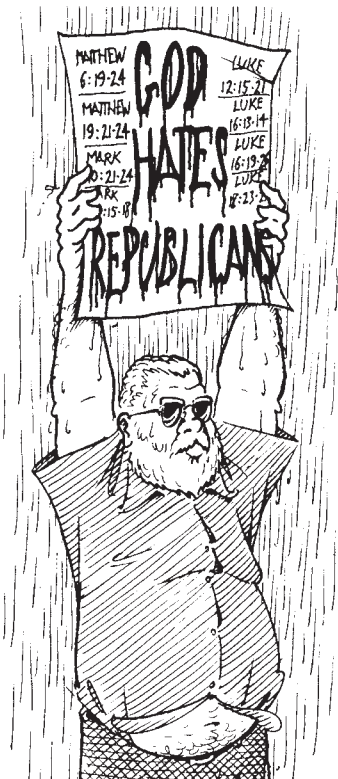
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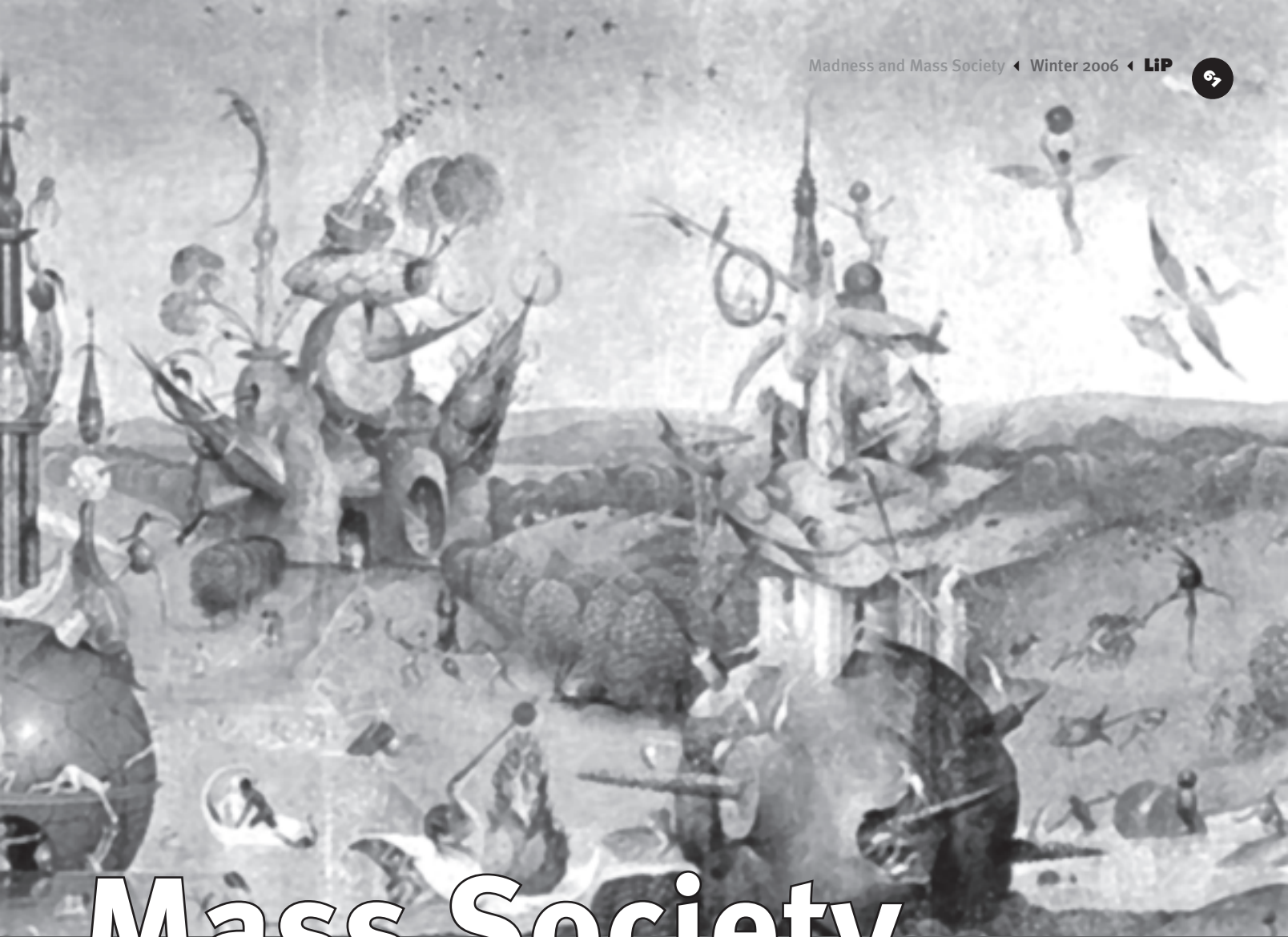
Pharmaceuticals, Psychiatry, &

an
interview with
Bruce Levine
by
Brian Awehali

Author and clinical psychologist Bruce E. Levine, PhD, wants to tell you that depression, discontent, and a whole raft of diagnosed mental illnesses are nothing more than natural responses to the oppression of “institutional society.” In his book, *Commonsense Rebellion: Taking Back Your Life from Drugs, Shrinks, Corporations, and a World Gone Crazy*, Levine contends that the vast majority of mental disorders are, to put it simply, profit-driven fabrications with no established biochemical or genetic causes. In this day and age, a psychologist arguing forcefully against the entire concept of medication seems odd. Hearing him argue that anger, depression, and dissent are not only normal, but deeply healthy, borders on the bizarre. We interviewed Levine for our web site back in 2001, but now more than ever we thought we could use a strong dose of his crazy talk.

LIP: Bruce, you’re a critic of both psychiatry—the medical science of identifying and treating mental illness with drugs—and psychology—the study of human behavior, thought, and development. Are there substantial differences between the two?

Bruce Levine: When I first started out as a psychologist in the late 70s and early 80s, it was fairly commonplace to dissent from psychiatry—that’s why people became psychologists. They saw the pseudo-science of not only the treatments but of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)* itself. Unfortunately, over the years, psychology itself has slowly aped psychiatry, and there isn’t that sharp a distinction between the two anymore. The American Psychological Association (APA)—the professional group for psychologists—now fights for prescription rights for psychologists.



Mass Society

the Rebellion of True Community

So I guess any psychologist who maintains a position that depression *isn't* primarily an innate biochemical disease, and that the *DSM* is a nonscientific instrument of diagnosis, is a dissident!

I should say that back in the 1970s and 1980s, before psychiatrists had the backing of the drug companies, they had very little power. In fact, they were falling apart, as evidenced by so many movies that were making fun of them, like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*—which could never come out today. But back in those days, when [psychiatrists] weren't in bed with the drug companies and didn't have much political power, you saw movies like that come out. Now, psychiatrists have the media power; they're able to describe the playing field of the controversy.

Let me ask you a blunt question, first: Do you think there's ever any basis for diagnosing someone as mentally ill?

Well, certainly there are things that can happen in your brain to make you feel crazy. If you go on an acid trip and fill your brain with a bunch of foreign chemicals, and you act crazy—there's something going on there. But when we're talking about things like, for example, attention deficit disorder [ADD], or depression, most of these behaviors are problematic to society. And they're too easily being classified in the same category as cancer and diabetes. It becomes a complicated semantic discussion of what an illness *is*.

Let's just take one of the more obviously comical diagnoses, something fairly recent, like oppositional defiance disorder [ODD]*—that one really makes a whole lot of things really clear.

[Interviewer convulses with knowing laughter.]



Why Do They Write It Like That?

For illumination, see the glossary on page 94.

"Drapetomania" was a psychiatric diagnosis developed in 1851 by a Southern doctor for slaves who attempted to escape their captors; it was "treated" with whipping and amputation of the toes.

I mean, oppositional defiance disorder is a "disease" in the *DSM*, and it's not something that's arcane; it's something that's being used frequently. It's a diagnosis given to kids whose symptoms are often arguing with adults, refusing to comply with adults, and basically being a pain in the ass with adults. And once you declare it a disease, of course, you move into chemical treatments or behavioral manipulations. I think for the majority of folks out there, not just anti-authoritarian types, they have the same reaction you did: You've got to be kidding. Don't [they] realize that kids rebel against authority? So there you have an obvious example.

And then you move over to something like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD] or ADD, for which there are no biochemical markers, of any kind. None. If you have any doubts about that, just go to your doctor and say you think your kid has ADD, and ask her about the biochemical markers—she'll say that there are none. It's all behavioral symptoms that are used to diagnose it.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, a lot of people were looking for other explanations for why people were having problems, or creating problems for others. And in that era, prior to the drug company takeover, there were a lot more intelligent ideas. ADD/ADHD didn't exist in the first *DSM* that came out in 1952, but I'm sure if it had been around, folks like Eric Fromm would have been talking about it as a form of passive rebellion. Oppositional defiance disorder is an obvious *active* rebellion, but most kids don't have the courage, or they're in situations where for them to actively rebel means they'll get crushed—so they rebel passively. They go to a classroom and they stop paying attention; they just blow things off. Is it because they have no capacity to pay attention? No. And the research even shows that when you put these same kids in a situation where they're either interested in the material or they've chosen the material, or it's novel to them, all of a sudden these so-called ADHD kids can pay attention!

And that's what I try to explain to folks: If you have diabetes or cancer, and all of a sudden you're having a good time, the disease doesn't go away. How can something be a disease when you put somebody in a different situation, and the "disease" goes away? That should tell you something.

But it's in the interest, obviously, of drug companies—and psychiatry, because all they do is prescribe drugs pretty much nowadays—to view everything as a disease that needs drugs. It's also in the interest of a society that doesn't want to spend much money or resources on populations that aren't fitting into the standardized order of things. One interesting aspect of this is that, more and more, it's not just kids of color, but even suburban white Anglo-Saxon Protestant kids who can't fit into the standardized order.

I was going to ask you if you think the net for mental illness has gotten wider.

Absolutely. There's a certain karma in this for the dominant culture. For years they've tried to make all kinds of people in non-dominant cultures fit into a rigged, standardized system, and all kinds of rebellion went on. Rebellion through truancy, or substance abuse—and they pathologized this, criminalized that. But once that net was cast, it eventually started catching lots of *their* kids.

They narrowed and narrowed the standards, and made it more and more impossible for certain kinds of kids to fit into society.

If you have diabetes or cancer, and all of a sudden you're having a good time, the disease doesn't go away. How can something be a disease when you put somebody in a different situation, and the "disease" goes away?

It's interesting. It's like, you built the machine, and then the machine has to feed itself. It seems like it's sort of a runaway institutional process—

Yeah, that's a good metaphor. A lot of folks like Louis Mulford and Patrick Sayles have talked a lot about our machine-worshipping culture, and once you understand that our society *does* worship the machine and technology more than it does life and diversity, then you understand that the goal of that society is to become more machine-like, more standardized.

Which means you're trying to create a society in which everyone fits into the same box. And once you do that, you're going to find more people not fitting in, and then you have—and this is a real problem of psychiatry, as far as I'm concerned—then you have these psychiatrists who come along and, instead of saying there's a problem with this kind of machine-worshipping society, they say that there's a problem with all these people not fitting in. They've got this disease, or this disorder.

In your book, *Commonsense Rebellion*, you have a whole chapter devoted to mass society and mass living. I wonder if you could talk a little about that.

Well, it's important for folks to have a historical perspective on the way human beings have lived for the vast majority of our history, and to think of how differently we've been living since the Industrial Revolution. For 99% of human history, people were living in non-mass societies—we were living in small groups. We were living in situations where, for the most part, we knew everybody around us. We had bands within tribes, less than 500 or 1,000 folks, and people had a greater sense of autonomy, because what they said and what they cared about actually had some political impact.

Whereas, today—here in the US, for example—what the hell does your average person do? Every four years they get to vote between two people they have no respect for? At some level, you may want to wave the flag and convince yourself you're living in a democracy because you get to vote, but on a more core psychological level, you're one of 300 million who are voting for [one of] two people who are decided for you by corporate society! So on some level, you know you have no impact; you know you have no power. It's just common sense that in a more humanly scaled society [Patrick

Sayles' term, from his book *On a Human Scale*] you're going to have a sense of greater potency, of greater power. And a sense of empowerment is a huge antidote to almost any emotional problem. That's common sense!

Another huge antidote to emotional difficulty is community. People who have a genuine community have fewer emotional difficulties. And "genuine community" is an important term. Oakland, for example, is not a community—it's a location. Real community means face-to-face emotional and economic interdependence. In a real community, people decide for themselves what their problems are, and they themselves implement solutions, as opposed to handing them over to distant authorities.

A mass society like ours is good for producing more material goods. A standardized, commercialized, industrialized society certainly has more teevees, more washing machines—and this is very attractive to a lot of people. And there are certain advantages to standardized society in terms of, you know, physical health. But mass society destroys things like autonomy and community.

In realistic terms, what do you think people might do to try and build real community?

Well, a lot of people are isolated, and they have all kinds of emotional difficulties, whether it's depression or substance abuse. They obsess on their disconnectedness, or they don't even get that far, they're just getting drunk all the time. In the face of this mass society, people feel powerless. What's the point of trying to get this guy you think is innocent out of jail; what's the point of doing *anything*? You're dealing with such a power that it feels impossible to accomplish anything. And under that rationale, [people] just say, the heck with it—I'm just going to get drunk and have a good time. One of the things I try to tell folks is that even if you don't succeed, when you have a cause you believe in, and you act on it, and you try to connect with other folks, at least that cause itself becomes a fuel for people to meet one another and have friendships. That happened in the 1960s and 70s to some extent, and it certainly happened in the 1880s and 1890s when you saw these idealistic people who maybe didn't ultimately accomplish a lot, but at least they kept themselves out of having emotional difficulties by acting on their cause and meeting some people.

When you have a cause, you get obsessed with what you're trying to accomplish—and even if you don't succeed, you're mutually supporting each other emotionally, possibly even economically. And you keep yourself sane.

Earlier you mentioned psychiatry's merger with Big Pharma. Can you say more about that?

The merger continues between psychiatry and big pharmaceutical: Big Pharma contributes money to their journals; they contribute money to the continuing education of psychiatrists.

There was a story recently in the *Boston Globe* about how Big Pharma—not just psychiatric drug companies, but all pharmaceutical companies—was contributing a significant amount of money to Harvard Medical School. If

you go around medical schools, these drug rep people are hovering around mailboxes there.

Now, if you were in marketing and sales, you would ask: Who do we want to feel great about us and our product? You want the general public, but you definitely want all these doctors to feel really great about you. You're going to do everything you can possibly get away with legally—and sometimes they do things that are actually illegal.

They're very aggressive. Every once in a while they go over the top, like Prozac maker Eli Lilly did in Florida, where they actually mailed out free samples of their products, including to one 16-year old boy who had never been on any kind of a drug or antidepressant.

All of that said, I think it would be a mistake for folks to view pharmaceutical companies as being any different from any other companies. They're all boringly the same: Their goal is to do whatever they can to increase market share, and make money. Right now, Big Pharma is contributing about 80% to Republicans and about 20% to Democrats—they're just sort of covering their bets. They're basically seeking control over government agencies that are critical of their goals, like the FDA or the National Institute of Mental Health.

For example, the Bush family has a long connection to one drug company in particular, Eli Lilly, but they're actually connected to a lot of drug companies. Down there in Texas, they started this program for mental health screening, and you're going to hear more and more about that as a national issue.

It's schools screening for mental illness the same way they do for vision or hearing, right?

Yeah. Once you buy the idea that mental illness is an illness like any other, then it makes a certain sense—it's just like a kid with bad eyesight who can't see the blackboard, or a kid with bad hearing. The next step is, why don't we have this in all the schools? At a very early age, we could get that ADD or ODD or depressive kid, before it gets out of hand. For a lot of the general public, that sounds reasonable, because they don't know that unlike problems with vision or hearing, which are very reliably scientifically diagnosed, these things are very subjective—and they lead to treatments that are ineffective and dangerous.

Of course, the pharmaceutical companies are throwing money at mental health screening. This would be a dream come true for them, if everybody was being screened for it, because the more

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sane.**

you're getting screened for it, the more folks are getting diagnosed with diseases, and they're going to be put on drugs. So it's more money for Big Pharma. They want the whole world to get screened. And if the world gets crazier, there are going to be more and more people with problematic behaviors. There will be more and more depressed kids, kids who aren't paying attention, et cetera, and that's a larger and larger consumer base for Big Pharma.

You've written about some World Health Organization findings comparing the treatment and prognoses for recovery in so-called underdeveloped nations to those in the US and other "first world" countries.

Yes, this is a hugely important story. In two different studies, the WHO decided to take a look at psychoses and recovery rates in "underdeveloped" societies—India, Colombia, and Nigeria were three of the countries classified as underdeveloped—and compared them to "developed" societies. What they discovered was that the recovery rates in "underdeveloped" countries were twice as high as in the US.

The obvious areas of speculation for me are in the two big differences between the countries studied. One: They're not drugging everybody there on a long-term basis. In the US, when somebody is classified with a psychosis like schizophrenia, for example, that's considered an incurable disease. You have to be on medication for life. At least, that's more or less the party line of the American Psychiatric Association. And that's not true in the other countries the WHO studied.

But the other huge factor that seems obvious to me is that in those other societies, there's much more direct community support, and there's more family involvement. One person from Colombia was telling me this story about a relative who "flipped out." When this relative came out of the hospital, instead of going back to their family, with whom they had flipped out, they went to another relative's home.

For organizations like the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, that solution would be heresy, because a lot of what they're all about is: It's not the family's or parents' fault. And that helps them team with the drug companies. They'd have you believe it's all a biochemical imbalance.

You've also written about "psychiatric survivors." What does that term mean?

"Psychiatric survivors" is a term used by a lot of people who have received psychiatric treatment—especially drug and electroshock treatment, [that was] often forced upon them—who are angry

about it, and who want to inform the public about the dangers of such treatment. One of their major organizations is called Coalition Support International, which is an umbrella group of perhaps 100 smaller organizations. They have their own journal called *MindFreedom*.

So is the logical endpoint of your positions that society is bad for people's mental health?


Our current atomized society is definitely bad for quite a lot of people. There are many pro-depression, and pro-psychosis aspects of our culture, but the breakdown of extended families and the relative lack of community are probably the two greatest factors.

What are you working on now?

With a lot of talks I gave about *Commonsense Rebellion*, I felt myself needing to cheerlead more than to inform. So over the last year or two I've been working on a book about depression. And the specific components of how you can get your act together: generally, issues of how you build up morale and heal your wounds so you don't engage in compulsive behaviors. That's what I've been doing: trying to give an alternative to depressed and anti-authoritarian people who don't believe in the mumbo-jumbo of psychiatry, but who also realize that [psychology's] cognitive-behavior therapy is a generally weak alternative.

So what are the solutions? You've talked about people increasing their participation in "real" community, but what does that look like?

Part of what you're trying to do, on as many levels as possible, is reconnect yourself to yourself and to life around you. That's what mass industrial society has disintegrated. It's hugely important for folks to recognize that there's some degree of autonomy that they need to have in their lives, some kind of control.

I think a lot of what gets people really down are economics. The jobs that they work. The struggle to make money in this culture—let's face it, most of American society is working meaningless, crap jobs. I think part of what people have to do is forgive themselves for being in jobs that are meaningless, and not making much money, and think slowly about how they can move towards finding some meaning, finding some community, and doing something they really care about. As they move into that process, they might be surprised that, along with some other folks, they might be able to make enough money to survive. Then you've really beaten the system. Not many pull it off, but it's something to aspire to. 



Don't let this happen to you.

Items of Action & Possible Interest

MindFreedom Support Coalition International

With over 100 organizations and 1000 members, MindFreedom is one of the foremost groups fighting for the rights of those diagnosed as mentally ill.
www.mindfreedom.org

Eli Lilly, Zyprexa & the Bush Family

Bruce Levine's article on, among other things, how Eli Lilly influenced the Homeland Security Act of 2002.
<http://zmagazine.zmag.org/May2004/levine0504.html>

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lead image: Heironymous Bosch painted "Garden of Earthly Delights" around 1504. In it, he presented three panels—the first depicts innocence of a very specific Christian variety, wherein God is "presenting" Eve to Adam; the third depicts a hell in which, among other things, people shit coins and get eaten by giant birds. The center panel (p.60-61), was Bosch's conception of humanity's descent into sin. He believed things like abundant fruit, happiness, and nude frolicking were part of a downward spiral. We have no comment.

Sanctuary Tips: ALTERNATE IMMERSION IN MEDIA
AND ACTIVE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
WITH PERIODS OF RETREAT, SOLITUDE, AND CONTEMPLATION.

1.)

IN SPITE OF THE NEW
UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES,
REPUBLICANS INSIST THAT
TAX CUTS FOR THOSE WITH
CAPITAL WILL CREATE JOBS

OH
JEEZUS—
CHRIST—
SCREAMING
IN
HELL—



2.)

I'LL BE SATISFIED
WHEN THE LAST ATREIDES DOG
IS CRUSHED BENEATH THE JACKBOOTS
OF THE CORRINO SARDAUKAR!

WOW,
SHE'S
TOUGH.



FAILURE

PRISONS, INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY,



BY DESIGN

AND THE MYTH OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

by
Vanessa Huang
and
Alice do Valle

Today, we are living in an era of prisons, prisons, and more prisons. It's no coincidence that the US imprisons more people than any other country in the world, both in absolute numbers and rate of incarceration, while indulging in a self-congratulatory nationalism and patriotism. This mass nationalism is intimately tied to a deep cultural investment in the idea of individual responsibility—a driving force behind this country's ever-increasing reliance on imprisonment as a solution to our social crises.

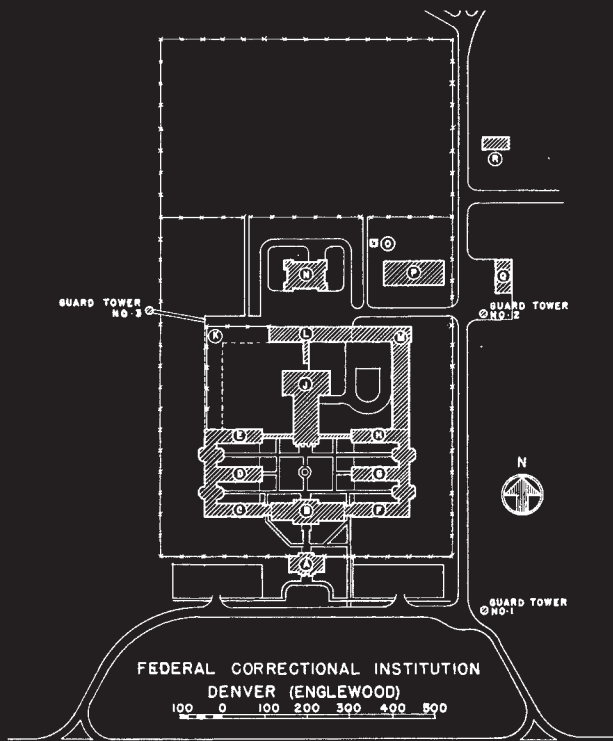
Let's start with the American Dream: the steadfast belief that if you work hard enough, regardless of economic status, race, education, gender, or religion, you can "make it." From Horatio Alger, whose widely read 19th-century novels told stories of destitute boys achieving wealth through hard work, honesty, determination, and courage, to Condoleezza Rice—the granddaughter of a cotton farmer, who some have called "the most powerful

woman in the world"—the ideas of meritocracy, level playing fields, and the land of opportunity are ingrained in the American psyche. They are embedded in our national rhetoric, policies, and educational systems.

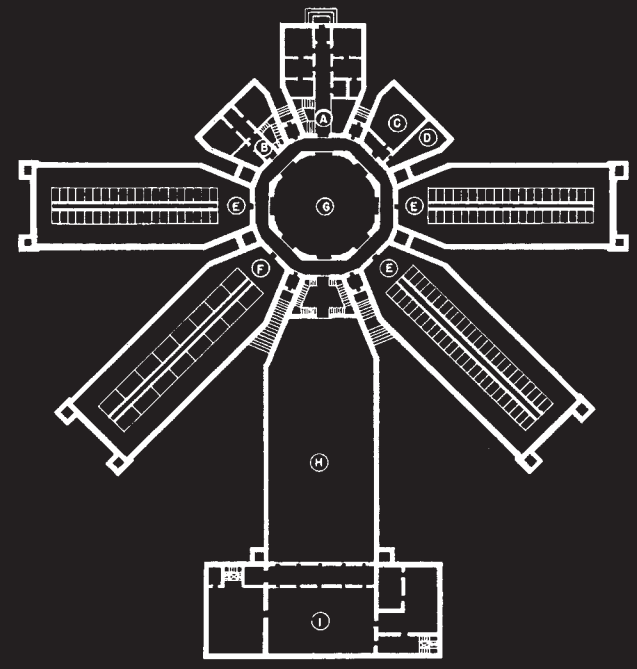
The elusive Dream has attracted scores of immigrants to the US throughout the past few centuries. It perpetuates the myth that the gates guarding access to a life of leisure and wealth are unmarked by racism,

misogyny, queerphobia, and xenophobia. The dream thus buries the "dirty little secrets" of genocide and slavery.

The framework of individual responsibility is central to perpetuating our continuing cultural investment in the American Dream. Both this framework and the notion of the American Dream are rooted in and have bolstered US capitalism itself. These concepts, while giving infinite agency to individual people, ensure that the crises we face—such as poverty, homelessness, and imprisonment—will be widely understood as the fault of individual people experiencing these problems, rather than as symptoms of the systemic oppression inherent in capitalism. For instance, mass homelessness becomes a widespread plague of laziness, rather than a manifestation of the fundamental lack of safety nets our state provides for the poor and working-class; police brutality and medical neglect in prison are not understood as strategic and purposeful



- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| A ADMINISTRATION | K FUTURE SHOP BUILDING |
| B HOSPITAL & RECEIVING BUILDING | L WAREHOUSE |
| C HONOR ROOMS | M LAUNDRY & SHOPS |
| D DORMITORY | N BOILER HOUSE |
| E HONOR ROOMS & DORMITORY | O FIREPROOF STORAGE BUILDING |
| F CELL BLOCK | P TEMPORARY SHOPS & VOCATIONAL TRAINING BUILDING |
| G DORMITORY | Q GARAGE |
| H HONOR ROOMS | R IMPLEMENT SHED |
| J DINING HALL, KITCHEN & SCHOOL | |



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
U.S. DISCIPLINARY BARRACKS
FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS

- | | |
|--|---|
| A ADMINISTRATION | F CELL BLOCK (6 MAN CELLS-6 TIERS HIGH) |
| B OFFICES | G ROTUNDA |
| C COMMISSARY | H MESS HALL |
| D PROPERTY STORAGE | I KITCHEN |
| E CELL BLOCK (SINGLE CELLS-6 TIERS HIGH) | |

state violence, but instead as the product of a few bad apples in the barrel of an otherwise benevolent and legitimate state.

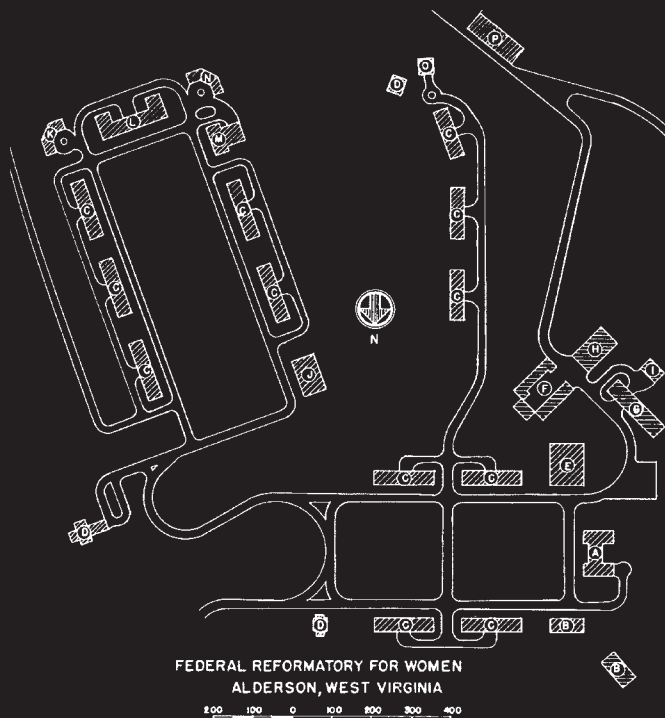
But the social and political crises we face have clear race- and class-based dimensions that contradict the myth of meritocracy. Because the framework of individual responsibility does not allow for a more complex understanding of how these crises came to be, our cultural narratives translate them into an array of mainstream myths that demonize entire groups of people for the oppression they face. From billboards and movies to headlines and the 6 o'clock news, single black mothers are cast as welfare queens, the unemployed are cast as lazy and incompetent, and queers become sexual predators or deviants. Black men become dangerous criminals, dark immigrants are cast as illegals and terrorists, and youth of color are stereotyped as gang members and super-predators.

Such demonization has a lot to do with our cultural notions of criminality, which legitimize the mass brutality and state violence in which our culture participates. Through the overreporting of crime and simplistic portrayals of good

By challenging the simplistic framework of individual responsibility through which prisons and "tough on crime" policies are sold, we are taking a first step.

vs. evil—as with denotation of “victims” and “perpetrators”—mainstream media helps to further our reliance on prisons to protect us from these “criminals,” “terrorists,” and other usual suspects. For instance, while homicide rates dropped 33% between 1990 and 1998, news coverage of homicides increased by 473% on ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news programs, according to the bipartisan children’s advocacy organization Children Now. In another example, crime occupied 30% of the airtime in local news coverage, as compared to 11% for government, 7% for health, 4% for education, and 2% for poverty, according to Katherine Beckett and Theodore Sasson’s *The Politics of Injustice: Crime and Punishment in America*.

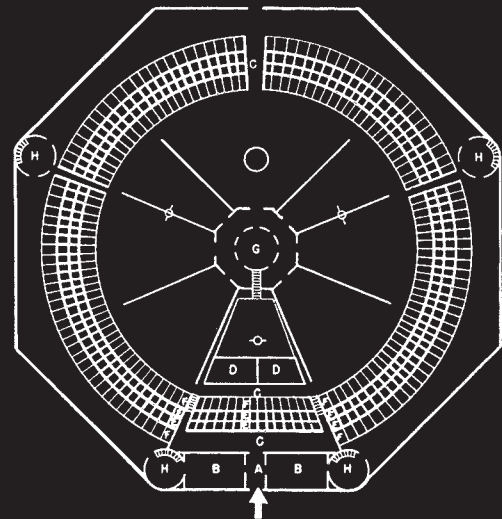
While the general public is thus encouraged to fear crime and “criminals,” its attention is easily deflected away from the underlying issues at hand—capitalism, poverty,



FEDERAL REFORMATORY FOR WOMEN
ALDERSON, WEST VIRGINIA

A ADMINISTRATION
B STAFF HOUSE
C COTTAGE
D RESIDENCE
E SHOP
F GARAGE
G STOREHOUSE
H LAUNDRY

I CANNERY
J AUDITORIUM, CHAPEL AND SCHOOL
K DECREASED PRIVILEGE COTTAGE
L RECEIVING BUILDING
M HOSPITAL
N ADMISSIONS BUILDING
O HOT HOUSE
P BOILER HOUSE



ORIGINAL GROUND PLAN
WESTERN PENITENTIARY AT PITTSBURGH, PA.
ERECTED 1826

100 75 50 25 0 100 200

LEGEND

A ENTRANCE
B KEEPER'S APARTMENTS
C PASSAGE TO INNER YARDS
D COOKING APARTMENTS

E CELLS
F EXERCISING YARDS
G OBSERVATORY
H TOWERS

misogyny, and racism. To an audience that is continually fed images encouraging a culture of fear and insecurity, government officials' "tough on crime" rhetoric and policies are easy to push—especially when government officials are perceived as legitimate news sources and thus overused in comparison with other sources.

One of the best ways to contest our cultural investment in blaming individuals for the problems we face—which sanctions the general public's "lock 'em up and throw away the key" mentality—is to insert other narratives that honor both the personal and the political, and that allow for understandings of both individual agency and structural oppression, into our media and cultural landscapes.

Through the Oakland-based human rights organization Justice Now, we work in collaboration with people incarcerated in women's prisons to help them inject their experiences

of captivity—as well as their ideas for building a safe, compassionate world without prisons—into public discourse. We feel it is especially important to put our political energies into sharing the stories of people facing unrelenting state violence and oppression, with a particular emphasis on those behind prison walls.

Most recently, we partnered with a woman named Hakim to interrogate US imaginings of freedom and nationalism through an op-ed entitled "What to the Prisoner Is the Fourth of July?" Evoking Frederick Douglass' 1852 speech, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?," Hakim wrote from her perspective as a young African American lesbian in prison, questioning the hypocrisies behind so-called American liberties. Her article explores the historical connections between the slavery of people of African descent in this land and today's mass imprisonment of people of color and poor people of all races. She highlights a "most obvious link":

the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery except for people convicted of crime. She explains that

while the institution of slavery as we knew it was abolished, the institutionalized racism behind that system was able to evolve through that loophole. Once paired with the Black Codes criminalizing African Americans for actions only they could be convicted of, like vagrancy and possession of firearms, prison populations that provided cheap labor through convict-leasing programs transformed from nearly all-white to overwhelmingly black.

She notes that the prison system

reproduces many of the dehumanizing conditions of slavery, breaks up our families by taking us far away from our communities and loved ones, making it hard for them to come and visit. Like slavery, prisons create conditions where

abuse and rape are commonplace. We are denied human affection, proper clothing, nutritional food, proper medical care—sometimes to the point of medical abuse—and education, despite a high demand and need for it. We're deprived of laughter, love, and kindness. There are few programs that prepare us to re-enter our communities, which contribute to high recidivism rates. And while under the law, our bodies count for more than 3/5 of a person in terms of electoral votes, those votes go to the communities we are locked up in, not the communities we came from. And, as with under slavery, most of us are still denied the right to vote at all, under felon disenfranchisement laws.... Being in prison is a form of modernized slavery, new millennium style.

Hakim's op-ed was ultimately published on WireTap, the youth-oriented section of AlterNet, an independent online news and opinion site, but the process of getting her piece published showed the depth of the media's complicity in propping up the framework of individual responsibility.

When we contacted the editor at the mainstream paper in Hakim's hometown, he seemed interested after one read but eventually passed. He said the piece was "shrill." This was not particularly surprising: We live in a white supremacist, capitalist culture where the voices of oppressed people—particularly in rage, and as Hakim expressed when we shared this feedback with her, particularly when it's real—are considered illegitimate and inappropriate.

When we offered Hakim's piece to an ethnic newswire service, the editor solicited a second opinion before declining to publish it. He explained that he liked "the idea of a woman in prison writing on what the 4th of July means to her," but that "these pieces tend to work best when a writer sticks closely to her personal experience." He acknowledged that "an intellectual, politicized prison writer looking at history" could "potentially work," but asserted that in this case, it did not, labeling it "impersonal, abstract, and even didactic."

These responses illustrate our mainstream culture's fixation with

palatable individual narratives that ignore the way history can deeply influence individuals' life circumstances. Hakim understands this history as an integral part of her personal story as an African American living in the US, which directly contradicts



Unlike most prisoners, this one seems to be white.

**Items of Action
& Possible Interest**

Hear prisoners' voices
*From the Voices Project and the CD
The We That Sets Us Free: Building a
World Without Prisons.*
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**End the prison industrial
complex**
Join these organizations in the fight.
www.criticalresistance.org
www.prisonactivist.org

Visit **LiP** online at
www.lipmagazine.org

the ahistorical and apolitical framework of individual responsibility that pervades our media and cultural landscapes.

Both editors also asked questions about Hakim's crime. One editor insisted on knowing her crime before making a decision about whether or not to publish the piece, as if the severity of the charges against her should determine whether or not she should be heard.

This preoccupation with Hakim's conviction also was not particularly surprising. If anything, these editors' responses illustrate the intense stigma and political power that the notion of crime carries in this society. We also saw it as a resistance to the fundamental arguments driving Hakim's narrative, which offers insight into the social and historical construction of the notion of crime itself.

Liberal voices, however, which lack such a critique and fall short of a substantive challenge to the notion of crime, are able to enter mainstream debate over incarceration much more easily than a radical analysis such as Hakim's. Many liberal advocates have called for improved conditions of confinement, and an increased emphasis on rehabilitation inside US prisons and jails. These voices have been particularly audible in California over the past year, as the abhorrent conditions in our abounding correctional facilities have surfaced. For example, in August of 2004, State Assemblywoman Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) was quoted in the *Sacramento Bee* as supporting vocational training in prisons. Jackson asked, "Isn't it better that they have a skill, so they can at least attempt to lead a positive, productive life—earn a living and regain entry into society when they have done their time and paid their debt?"

While challenging the idea that punishment alone will "work," this liberal, reformist logic of rehabilitation remains dependent on the framework of individual responsibility—it fails to interrogate the root causes driving our culture to incarcerate. Here, it is still the individual, not the system, who needs to be "fixed."

By challenging the simplistic framework of individual responsibility through which prisons and "tough on crime" policies are sold, we are taking a first step in opening up spaces in the cultural imagination to begin understanding why we are doing what we are doing; we can begin fathoming ways of living beyond relationships based on fear and domination, and where both individual people and whole communities no longer harm each other.

Hakim articulates this liberating vision best, demanding that we

re-define our cultural values and begin building a world we could all celebrate. This world would no longer rely on domination, prisons, and war as a way to hide our social problems. Everyone would be able to access quality education, healthcare, housing, and jobs, regardless of their color, but also their gender, sexuality, religion, or class. Now that would be something to celebrate. **LiP**



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DATE: Written in 1995. Revised in 2005.

TO: LIP Readers

FROM: Written for video by Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Tricia Snell
 In the video version, the censored parts are beeped. In the live version they are subvocalized.

SUBJECT: A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW COMMISSIONER ON GLOBAL MEDIA

REC'D READING ROOM
 FBI
 JAN 23 1 31 PM '02

Dear viewer/listener/reader:

Please stop, turn off your cell phone, and for a moment, imagine a far away corporate nation controlled by technocrats and freemarketeers. They are obsessed with "product" and "capital." Imagine 14-hour workdays and plastic, neon, and computers everywhere.

In this "imaginary" society, children know music as a product of machines; adults get all the art they need from advertisements; and artists, scientists, thinkers, and visionary citizens have been relegated to the rarified realms of academia and the art world. Just imagine.

Strangely, production in this country is down, and the ruling executive board notices a curious dissatisfaction among the people. Fearing a decline in profits, their unique democratic logic leads them to conclude, I quote from a memo: "The people are bored and wish to escape, and be entertained - Let's give them precisely what they want!" Forthwith, the board decrees that all communication networks and media, pop culture, and populist art practices shall be embedded with high-definition entertainment, cultura-in-extremis and advertisements.

A focus group survey revealed that these forms of citizen control are more effective than law enforcement and the military. But as we all know, things can slip through the cracks, and this is why the mastersingers carefully scrutinize all TV, radio, printed journalism, and internet sites, including this very [redacted]. So, from [redacted] to sitcoms; and from news [redacted] to [redacted] programming, their digital lexicon censors detect important ideas, complex concepts, and key words that trigger ideological or cultural difference.

To ensure that tendentious information does not pollute the minds of the consumers, they [redacted] forbidding the use of terminology like [redacted] or [redacted] or even an innocent term like [redacted] so the syntactic coherence of a thought is [redacted]. Even institutions are swept clean: A kind of sanitized creativity replaces real creativity which is now the bogey man, the great taboo, and our [redacted] places that invite genuine curiosity, [redacted], irreverence, [redacted], and surprising connections [redacted] are suddenly [redacted].

In a world such as this, content would be restricted to [redacted] and our reduced ability to make intelligent civic choices would affect our funds [redacted] to [redacted].

Imagine - what kind of a world this would be?

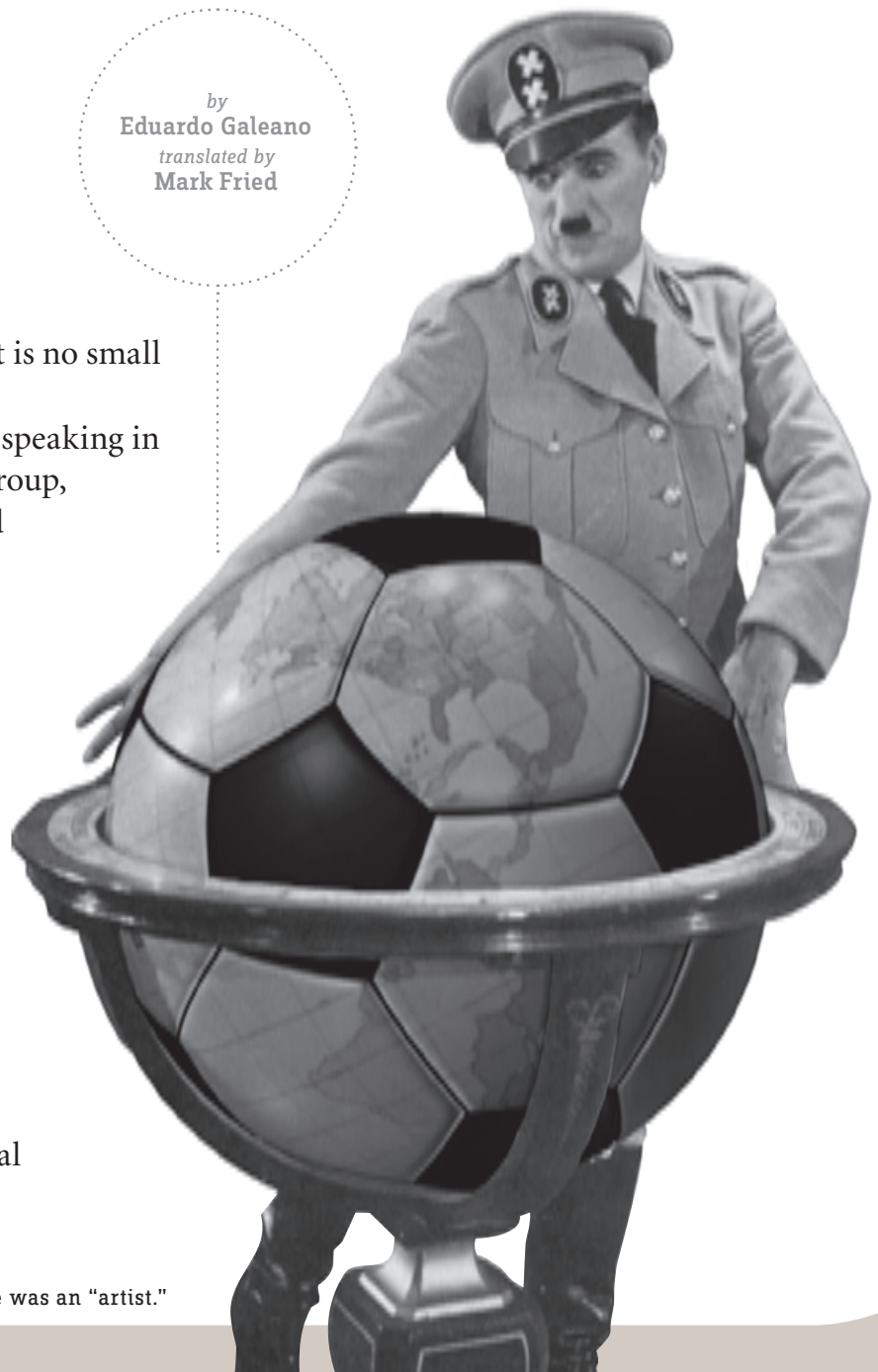
What Is True for Products Is Also True for Countries

Soccer, Propaganda, and the 1978 World Cup

by
Eduardo Galeano
translated by
Mark Fried

Control over world sport is no small potatoes.

At the end of 1994, speaking in New York to a businessmen's group, Jean-Marie Faustin Goedefroid de Havelange [the head of Fédération Internationale de Football Association, or FIFA, the governing body for international soccer] confessed a few numbers, something he rarely does: "I can confirm that soccer generates a total of \$225 billion worldwide every year." He boasted that such a fortune compared favorably to the \$136 billion in sales at General Motors, the world's largest multinational corporation, recorded in 1993.



Hitler did not play soccer. He was an "artist."

In the same speech, Havelange warned: “Soccer is a commercial product that must be sold as wisely as possible.” And he cited the first law of wisdom in today’s world: “You have to pay a lot of attention to the packaging.”

With fin-de-siècle soccer so wrapped up in marketing and sponsors, it’s no surprise that some of Europe’s biggest clubs are actually companies that belong to other companies. Milan belongs to the constellation of three hundred companies of the Berlusconi Group. Sampdoria, to the oil conglomerate Mantovani. Olympique of Marseilles moved to the forefront of European soccer when it became one of Bernard Tapie’s companies, until a bribery scandal ruined his successful career. Paris Saint-Germain belongs to the television firm Canal Plus. Bayer is the name of the two German first-division clubs the company finances: Bayer Leverkusen and Bayer Uerdingen.

The 1978 World Cup

In Germany, the popular Volkswagen Beetle was dying; in England, the first test tube baby was being born; in Italy, abortion was being made legal. The first victims of AIDS, a disease not yet called that, were succumbing. The Red Brigades were killing Aldo Moro; the United States was promising to give Panama back the canal it stole at the beginning of the century. Well-informed sources in Miami announced the imminent fall of Fidel Castro; it was only a matter of hours. In Nicaragua the Somoza dynasty was teetering, in Iran the Shah’s dynasty was teetering, the Guatemalan military were machine-gunning a crowd of peasants in the town of Panzós. Domitila Barrios and four other women from tin-mining communities were launching a hunger strike against Bolivia’s military dictatorship, and soon all Bolivia was on a hunger strike:

The cost was a state secret. Many millions of dollars were spent and lost—how many, it was never known—so that the smiles of a happy country under military tutelage would be broadcast to the four corners of the earth. Meanwhile, the top brass who organized the World Cup carried on with the plan of extermination, for reasons of war or just to be sure.

These teams can lose money, but that doesn’t matter as long as they project a good image for the corporate proprietors. That’s why their ownership is no secret: soccer helps advertise the companies and in all the world there is no greater public-relations tool. When Silvio Berlusconi bought Milan, which was in bankruptcy, he launched the new chapter in its life with all the choreography of a major advertising campaign. That afternoon in 1987, Milan’s eleven players descended slowly from a helicopter hovering above the center of the field, while loudspeakers blared Wagner’s “Valkyrie.” Bernard Tapie, another specialist in his own protagonism, liked to celebrate Olympique’s victories with huge parties, glowing with fireworks and laser beams, where top rock groups performed.

Soccer, the fountain of so much passion, also generates fame and power.

the dictatorship was falling. The Argentine military dictatorship, in contrast, remained in good health, and to prove it played host to the eleventh World Cup.

Ten European countries, four from the Americas, plus Iran and Tunisia, took part. The Pope sent his blessings from Rome. To the strains of a military march, General Videla pinned a medal on Havelange during the opening ceremonies in Buenos Aires’s Monumental Stadium. A few steps away, Argentina’s Auschwitz, the torture and extermination camp at the Navy School of Mechanics, was operating at full speed. A few miles beyond that, prisoners were being thrown alive from airplanes into the sea.

“At last the world can see the true face of Argentina,” crowed the president of FIFA to the TV cameras. Special guest Henry Kissinger predicted: “This country has a great future in all ways.” And the captain of the German team, Berti Vogts, who made the first kick-off, declared a few days later: “Argentina is a country where order reigns. I

haven't seen any political prisoners.”

The home team won a few games, but lost to Italy and drew with Brazil. To reach the final against Holland, they had to drown Peru in a flood of goals. Argentina got more than they needed, but the massacre, 6-0, sowed doubt among skeptical fans and magnanimous ones, too. The Peruvians were stoned on their return to Lima.

The final between Argentina and Holland was decided in extra time. The Argentines won 3-1 and in a way their victory came thanks to the patriotism of the post that saved the Argentine net in the last minute of regular play. That post, which stopped a resounding blast by Rensenbrink, was never given military honors only because of the nature of human ingratitude. In any case, more important than the post, as it turned out, were the goals of Mario Kempes, an unstoppable colt who liked to gallop over the grass covered with a snowfall of confetti, his hair flying in the wind.

When they handed out the trophies, the Dutch players refused to salute the leaders of the Argentine dictatorship. Third place went to Brazil, fourth to Italy.

Kempes was voted best player in the Cup and was also the leading scorer with six goals. Behind him came the Peruvian Cubillas and Rensenbrink of Holland with five apiece.

Five thousand journalists from all over the world, a sumptuous media center, impeccable stadiums, new airports: a model of efficiency. A veteran German reporter confessed that the '78 World Cup reminded them of the '36 Olympics in Berlin for which Hitler had pulled out all the stops.

The cost was a state secret. Many millions of dollars were spent and lost—how many, it was never known—so that the smiles of a happy country under military tutelage would be broadcast to the four corners of the earth. Meanwhile, the top brass who organized the World Cup carried on with the plan of extermination, for reasons of war or just to be sure. “The final solution,” as they called it, murdered thousands of Argentinians without leaving a trace—how many, it was never known: anyone who tried to find out was swallowed up by the earth. Curiosity was, like dissent, like any question, absolute proof of subversion. The president of the Argentine Rural Society, Celedonio Pereda, declared that thanks to soccer, “There will be no more of the defamation that certain well-known Argentinians have spread through the Western media with the profits from their robberies and kidnappings.” You couldn't even criticize the players, not even the coach. The Argentine team stumbled a few times in the championship, but local commentators were obliged to do nothing but applaud.

To make over its international image, the dictatorship paid an American public relations firm half-a-million dollars. The report from the experts at Burson-Marsteller was titled: “What Is True for Products, Is Also True for Countries.” Admiral Carlos Alberto Lacoste, the strongman of the World Cup, explained in an interview: “If I go to Europe or to the United States, what will impress me most? Large buildings, big airports, terrific cars, fancy candies.”

The Admiral, an illusionist skilled at making dollars evaporate and sudden fortunes appear, took the reins of the World Cup after the previous officer in charge was mysteriously assassinated. Lacoste managed immense sums of money without any oversight and it seems, because he wasn't paying close attention, he ended up keeping some of the change. Even the dictatorship's Treasury Secretary, Juan Alemann, took note of the squandering of public funds and asked a few inconvenient questions. The Admiral had the habit of warning: “Later on, don't complain if somebody plants a bomb...”

A bomb did explode in Alemann's house at the very moment when Argentinians were celebrating their fourth goal against Peru.

When the Cup was over, out of gratitude for his hard work, Admiral Lacoste was named vice-president of FIFA.

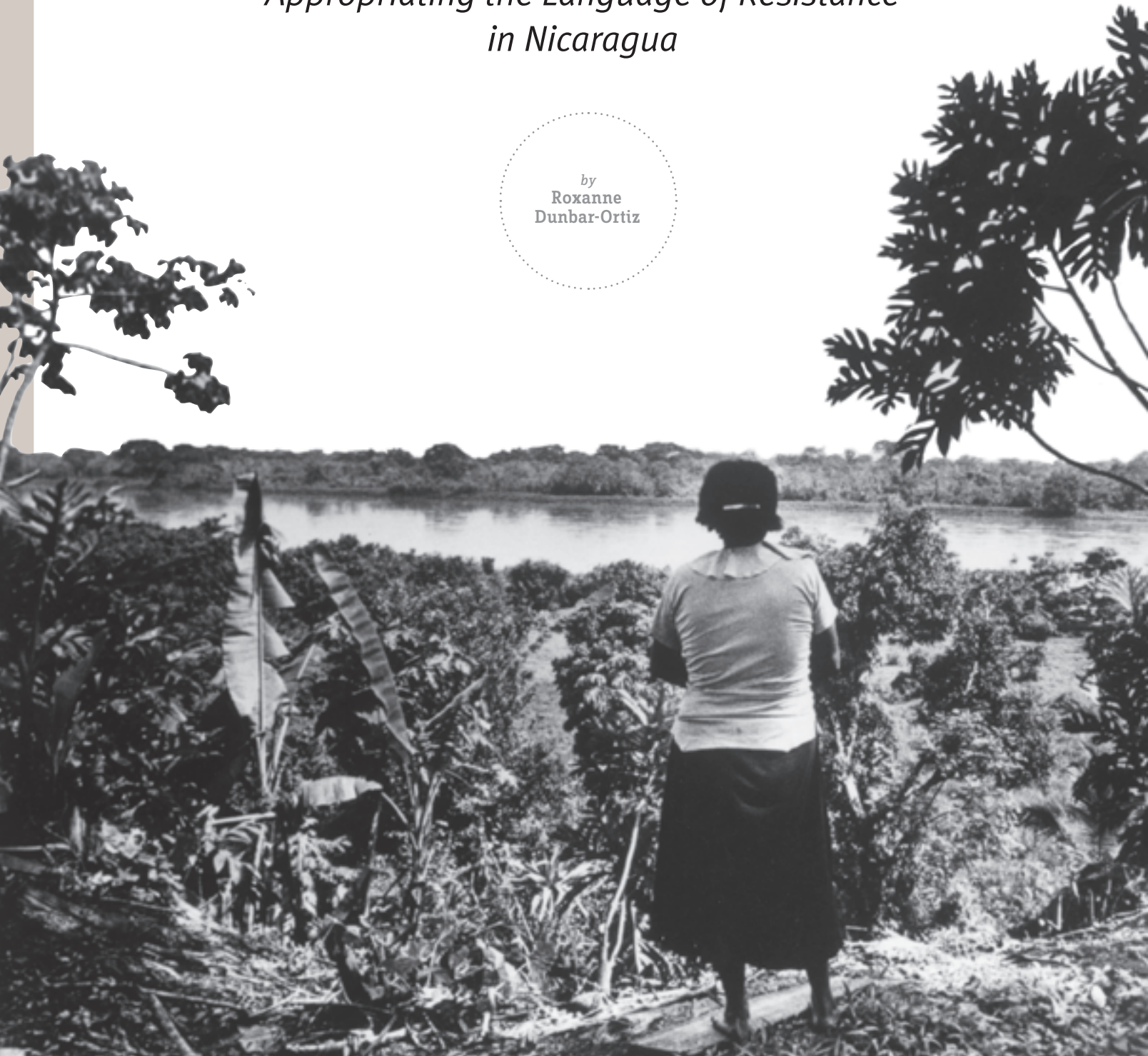
LIP



Reinventing Truth

*Appropriating the Language of Resistance
in Nicaragua*

by
Roxanne
Dunbar-Ortiz



**The
Mayans were
slaughtered by the
thousands, their fields
and homes torched, half
the population driven
into Mexico as refugees,
and thousands more
moved into internal
relocation camps.**

Anyone with an eye on Central American politics in 1983 could have deduced that the US government was not supporting the Contras out of its love for indigenous peoples.

In the same years it began sponsoring the counterinsurgency against the leftist Sandinista government, which had taken power in Nicaragua in 1979, the United States was busy buttressing the Spanish-speaking military oligarchy in nearby Guatemala against a rebellion by the majority of the population—the Maya indigenous peoples. The Mayans were slaughtered by the thousands, their fields and homes torched, half the population driven into Mexico as refugees, and thousands more moved into internal relocation camps under a military general, Rios-Montt, who was a raving Christian Protestant evangelical.

While the US had helped to suppress the Mayan resistance in Guatemala, the newly created Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean used the language of that same resistance movement in its propaganda for the Contra counterinsurgency, in an attempt to overthrow the Sandinistas. This disinformation campaign effectively hooked not only the media, but also many leftists, anarchists, libertarians, anthropologists, Vietnam vets, missionaries, assorted anticommunists, and, most tragically, some indigenous leaders and organizations in North America—splitting the American Indian Movement, already weakened by the 1970s FBI counterinsurgency program COINTELPRO.

Most people think of the US-sponsored battle against the Sandinistas (which came to be called, simply, the “Contra war”)

as having taken place on the northwestern border of Nicaragua and Honduras and on the southern border with Costa Rica. But there was a third front in that war, in the mostly indigenous region of northeastern Nicaragua, arrayed against the Sandinistas in the northeast region were indigenous people (mostly Miskitu* Indians) waging a “war of liberation.” Reagan’s National Security Council backed the Contras—with the CIA flitting in and out depending on the whims of Congress—along with a swarm of United States mercenaries and Christian fundamentalist missionaries. The point man for the Contras’ war against the Sandinistas was the Vietnam-era Marine vet Colonel Oliver North. The United States ambassador to Honduras, John Negroponte, an old hand from the Vietnam genocide and now George W. Bush’s head of intelligence, oversaw the project. Elliot Abrams, who would become George W. Bush’s State Department envoy on the Middle East, was the project’s overall architect as Reagan’s State Department Undersecretary for Hemispheric Affairs. Otto Reich, an anti-Castro Cuban exile, was propaganda chief for the Contras and the head of the Orwellian-titled Office of Public Diplomacy; later, he was also drafted into the George W. Bush administration.

The first operation conceived by these architects of propaganda began on December 19, 1983. Instead of launching a new military



Why Do They Write It Like That?

For illumination, see the glossary on page 94.

initiative, the Miskitus (who were allied with the Contras, and made up about half their total numbers) were able to convince the entire population of the Miskitu town of Francia Sirpe, over 1,200 people, to flee to the Honduran side of the border. I spent a day at Francia Sirpe in 1981, and the Miskitus told me the story of that brutal forced relocation. The elders still longed to return to their ancestral land. No wonder they listened eagerly to Contra tales of taking back their homeland in what is now Honduras. No wonder they left Nicaragua so quickly and so joyfully.

The Francia Sirpe “Christmas exodus” was a propaganda coup for the US administration: Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel trumpeted it as analogous to the Jewish exodus from Egypt. A filmmaker, Lee Shapiro, had contracted with the US Information Agency (USIA) to film the well-staged event, and his footage was all over television news programs. (Shapiro was an official of Causa International, a part of Reverend Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church, which financed and distributed the film.) From the footage, Shapiro created a one-hour documentary, *Nicaragua Was*

On December 19, 1983, the residents of the resettlement town of Francia Sirpe in northeastern Nicaragua attended Mass in a festive mood, knowing that plans had been made to depart to Honduras on the following day. According to the Indians, the Sandinistas were preparing to transplant the Indian population of Francia Sirpe to the mountainous region north of Managua.

The use of the term “resettlement town” to describe Francia Sirpe was interesting, implying that it was one of the settlements created two years earlier by the Sandinistas to house the Miskitu refugees from the fighting on the border. But Francia Sirpe had not been created by the Sandinistas: It was built under the dictator Somoza, when he forcibly resettled Miskitus from north of the Rio Coco to the south of the new border in 1960. Before handing over the area to Honduras, Somoza had sent his national guard into the disputed zone to force Miskitus south—after all, they were cheap labor in the mines. Francia Sirpe was in fact distant from the border, and the Sandinistas had no plans to relocate its population.

Obviously, the Office of Public Diplomacy was bent on reinventing truth by relating big lies. The office still exists, no longer limited to Latin America and the Caribbean, and is now being employed to sell the war against Iraq to the US public.

Our Home, which was finished within two months, and premiered at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. A declassified State Department telegram from the US Mission in Geneva stated: “To illustrate as vividly as possible actual living conditions for Miskitus, members of the Commission saw a film showing refugee camp conditions and whole Miskitu communities fleeing for their lives with their few basic household effects on their backs.”

Although USIA-produced materials, according to its own charter, may not be distributed domestically in the US, the film turned up in the 1985 Telluride film festival; at Causa-organized meetings throughout the United States, often with speeches by Russell Means, a high-profile American Indian Movement leader who had hooked up with the Contra project; and on PBS stations nationwide.

The State Department also quickly produced a six-page internal draft paper to develop its official interpretation of the mass exodus. The classified document, dated February 1984, was titled “Nicaraguan Repression of Miskito Indians: The Christmas Exodus.” Much of the paper’s wording later appeared as opinion columns and in newspaper coverage of the event. The draft makes clear that manipulation of refugees was the central strategy of the Reagan administration’s attempts to discredit the Sandinistas: “Since the forced internal deportations began and other Sandinista violations of human rights intensified, thousands of Miskitu Indians have sought a better way of life. They have ‘voted with their feet,’ with most of them going to Honduras.” Regarding the staged “Christmas exodus,” the draft paper tellingly states:

A confidential State Department memorandum revealed to what ends the Office of Public Diplomacy would go to infiltrate the media. Dated March 13, 1985, from Otto Reich’s assistant, Jonathan Miller, to White House Director of Communications Pat Buchanan, the memo presents “five illustrative examples of the Reich ‘White Propaganda’ operation.” It reports that an attached *Wall Street Journal* editorial detailing the alleged Nicaraguan arms buildup had been written by a consultant in Reich’s office, which “officially had no role in its preparation.” Another illustrative example was a favorable report on the Contras from correspondent Fred Francis on *NBC News with Tom Brokaw* on March 12, 1985:

This piece was prepared by Francis after he consulted two of our contractors who recently had made a clandestine trip to the freedom fighter camp along the Nicaragua/Honduras border. The purpose of this trip was to serve as a pre-advance for many selected journalists to visit the area and get a true flavor of what the freedom fighters are doing. Reich’s assistant ended his memo by writing, “I will not attempt in the future to keep you posted on all activities since we have too many balls in the air at any one time and since the work of our operation is ensured by our office’s keeping a low profile.”

Obviously, the Office of Public Diplomacy was bent on reinventing truth by relating big lies. The office still exists, no longer limited to Latin America and the Caribbean, and is now being employed to sell the war against Iraq to the US public.

And so, it all comes down to history, and whose history; to truth, and whose truth; and to values, and whose values. **LiP**

This Typeface Is Changing Your Life

by
Leslie
Savan

Since 1976, when this essay first appeared in the *Village Voice*, quite a few things have changed: A dozen teevée channels have given way to 500 plus, most computers no longer take up entire rooms, and typefaces are now called fonts. But other things, like automobile fuel efficiency, the wage gap, and attempts by business and government to control our minds and attitudes haven't changed at all. What follows is an adapted version of the original essay. Though a few specific references are dated (corporate nomenclature and client base chief among them), *LiP* has made selective updates (usually within brackets) with the intent of showing just how damn relevant the evil properties of Helvetica still are. Any tense disagreements or transition errors found in this adaptation are purely the responsibility and fault of the editor.

The quest for a clean public restroom is usually in vain. We assume a restroom to be dirty and disease-ridden, and settle for what we have to. Occasionally, though, I've found a restroom that, before I'd even entered, I've assumed with relief was not dirty but clean. I realize that it was a restroom sign, with its modern, Teflon-smooth letters spelling "WOMEN," that led me to expect a clean toilet. Although it was surely no different from any other toilet, I thought it had to be more sanitary. It was similar to the way an attractively packaged cleansing cream, like Helena Rubinstein's "Deep Cleanser," would convince me that what was inside was the best of all possible creams. It was those same clean, modern letters on the package.

These letters seem to be everywhere. They tell us this box is for "U.S. Mail," and to "Enjoy" Coke.

This lettering style, or typeface, is graphically renovating or coordinating everything from newspapers to "new towns" to multinational corporations.

The typeface is called Helvetica. From more than 9,000 widely varying typefaces, a few "modern" ones have become designers' favorites. It comes in a variety of widths, weights, and spacing arrangements. The basic form is Helvetica Medium, and it seems "most itself" in lowercase letters.

The "signs of the times" can be found on the literal signs of the times. The use of Helvetica on so many of them expresses our need for security, for visual proof—if nothing else—that the world's machinery still runs. Subliminally, the perfect balance of push and pull in Helvetica characters reassures us that the problems threatening to spill over are being contained.

Helvetica was designed by a Swiss, Max Meidenger, and first produced by Haas Typefoundry in 1957. Haas says it was designed specifically for the Swiss market ("Helvetica" means "Swiss" in Latin), and was intended to be a "perfectly neutral typeface without any overly individual forms and without personal idiosyncracies."

Helvetica is a "sans serif," as it lacks the little extra strokes, called serifs, at the end of its letters' main strokes. Since serifs lead the eye from one letter to the next, they are supposedly more legible, particularly for small print. But the difference is minimal for most sign-size letters, and many designers say they use Helvetica precisely because it's so easy to read. As Ed Benquiat, a leading typeface designer and the art director of Photo Lettering, Inc., says, "You don't read the word, you read power.... For that one- or two-word display message, for buckeye and force, you use sans serif."

But why is Helvetica the most popular of the sans serif? "It's beautiful," said Benquiat. "It's a pure letter."

It's not surprising, then, that when Walter Kacik redesigned New York City's garbage trucks in 1968 he used Helvetica. The trucks are all white except for one word, which is in black, lowercase Helvetica: "sanitation." Photographs of them were exhibited at the



Untitled #1, 2002, by Matt Siber.

Louvre and at the Museum of Modern Art. Kacik chose Helvetica, he said, “because it was the best of the sans serifs and it didn’t detract from the kind of purity we wanted.” The result was that “people trusted these trucks.”

Indeed, cleanliness implies trust. We’ve been brought up to associate the two (“I’m clean, officer.”) and their opposites (“You dirty, rotten, two-timing dame!”).

Monsanto, JP Morgan, Disney, Time Warner, and Hummer.

Only a few of these companies, such as Amtrak or Con Ed, use Helvetica for the logo itself—a logo is almost obliged to be unique and most are specially designed. But as a supporting typeface (and, in most cases, *the* supporting typeface) on everything from annual reports to cardboard boxes, nearly every one of the companies listed above uses some form of Helvetica.

Helvetica is part of a psychological enslavement. It's a subconscious It assumes you accept some system. It means it's predetermined that

Cleaning up images is the main business of some marketing and design firms. One of the most influential of them is Lippincott & Margulies [which became Lippincott Mercer in 2003]. It is not an advertising agency—it is a brand agency, “finding” a corporation’s identity [so that, according to LM’s website, a brand “speaks to people. It cuts through the noise, the email, the myriad of marketing messages and says: experience me. It flies high and makes people want to grab the tail of the kite and come along for the ride.”]

In its own brochures (in Helvetica), LM denies that it offers “face-lifts” or “standardized solutions.” It claims to work from the inside out. Considering the expense to its clients (“Coca-Cola spent over a million dollars for the little squiggle,” a former LM executive said), its soundproof-room confidentiality, and its scientific bent, LM might be regarded as a corporate shrink.

LM’s list of more than 500 identity-seeking clients includes or has included: General Motors, Chrysler, Exxon, Amtrak, American Express, NBC, MGM, Coca-Cola, Con Ed, Citigroup, Microsoft,

For instance, “Coca-Cola” is distinctive, but Helvetica said “It’s the real thing.” The American Express logo is specially drawn, but everything else is in Helvetica.

LM’s [former] vice-president in charge of design, Ray Poelvoorde, said Helvetica “already has sort of become an unofficial standard.” Asked if using such a pervasive typeface wouldn’t undermine the costly corporate identity, he said, “You’re offering a very nice courtesy to the general public who is bombarded with many messages and symbols every day. And for a company not well-known, to ask the public to memorize symbols...is fantasy.”

But if he is right, then the companies that are remembered, that are finding their identities, are doing so by looking more and more alike—almost like one big corporation. A unilook for Unicorn.

Some designers do think Helvetica is overused. Some are even bored with it. But few believe that it is a mere fad. Most companies choose Helvetica in the first place because they expect it to remain



Untitled #16, 2003. See other type-related art by Matt Siber at www.siberart.com.

contemporary for quite a while. And most companies cannot afford more than one identity change. This is especially true for New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority.

Since 1967, under the guidance of designer Massimo Vignelli, the MTA has been gradually standardizing its graphics from about a dozen typefaces to a combination of Helvetica and Standard Medium.

Helvetica signs ease us not only through building corridors, but through mental corridors. Ready for any mistaken move a sign greets us at the point of decision, a mental bell rings in recognition, and down we go through the right chute! A slick-looking sign lubricates our grooves of thought and taste, making the product whose name it bears easier to accept. After transforming ugly garbage trucks into slick sanitation vehicles, Walter Kacik should know when he says,

plot: getting people to do, think, and say what you want them to... you're on their route, that it's not casually happening to you."

In contrast to the subway's filth and potential for violence, the cleanly and crisply lettered signs lend a sense of authority. They assure us that the train will come and diminish the chaos created by the graffiti-scrawled walls. (It's no accident that the designer of Norman Mailer's *The Faith of Graffiti* branded the book's covers with Helvetica.)


Governments and corporations rely on Helvetica partly because it makes them appear neutral and efficient, partly because its smoothness makes them seem human. This chic, friendly aspect of the typeface bothers one designer. James Wines, a Pulitzer Prize winner for graphics (the category has since been discontinued), said about Helvetica, "It represents an update authority. Not old government, but new government." He goes further: "Helvetica is part of a psychological enslavement. It's a subconscious plot: getting people to do, think, say what you want them to... It *assumes* you accept some system. It means it's predetermined that you're on their route, that it's not casually happening to you."

"Helvetica enhances things that normally wouldn't work."

It serves to tone down potentially offensive images: "Littering is filthy and selfish so don't do it!" And Lenny Bruce's autobiography is packaged in Helvetica.

Helvetica skims across all categories of products and places to stamp them "sanitized," "neutralized," and "authorized." Cleanly trimmed of all excess until only an instant modern classic remains, its labels seem to say, "To look further is in vain." As Vignelli said, "What you see is different from what you perceive. You see Helvetica and you perceive order." With more unusual lettering, "you perceive fantasy."

Fantasy and a well-ordered society have always been at odds. And, as James Wines says, by designing fantasy out of our society, we are headed in a dangerous direction. "Our world is a designed extension of service," he said. "Other worlds are an aesthetic extension of spirit."

The writing's on the wall. 

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Books in Review

Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader

Chaz Bufe and
Mitchell Cowen Verter, editors
[AK PRESS]

The amount of work that obviously went into the 421-page *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* is humbling. The collection, most of it newly translated by one of the editors, is the largest English-language compilation of the essays and letters of Flores Magón, the Mexican anarchist whose ideas were instrumental in the Mexican Revolution and extremely influential on the better-known revolutionary leader, Emiliano Zapata. The essays, which are arranged thematically into sections such as “Class War” and “Philosophical,” are largely taken from *Regeneración*, the newspaper Flores Magón founded and edited with his brother Jesús.

Flores Magón was a self-admitted dreamer, and his writings are often utopian—after all, as he wrote in 1910, “One would abandon all hope for justice and human betterment if in the span of even one century the human family could no longer count dreamers, utopians, and visionaries among its members.” But in addition to his more poetic essays and parables, the reader offers a wide variety of Flores Magón’s specific critiques of the society he wished to be rid of, including writings against private property, capitalism, racism, and sexism, as well as criticisms of moderates’ faith in reform, socialism, and leader-worship.

Unfortunately, what is otherwise a superb collection of Flores Magón’s writings—and a long-overdue set of translations—is marred by an 84-page biographical sketch by editor Mitchell Cowen Verter. While crucial as an introduction to readers unfamiliar with the life of Flores Magón, the biography obviously has an agenda of its own.

In what is otherwise written as a simple, straightforward history of Flores Magón’s life, Verter makes serious criticisms—few of which are given any sort of proper explanation or context—of his and others’ political views and decisions. Radical priest Miguel Hidalgo, for example, is criticized for holding back from attacking Mexico City with his several-thousand-strong army in 1810: “Hidalgo’s elitist distrust of the popular will caused many brave Indians to abandon his struggle.” A prominent leader in the Reform Movement of the 1850s, Melchor Ocampo, is mentioned only because of his interest in French anarchist Proudhon, and his translation and publishing of Proudhon’s works—but his other work is dismissed for “not seriously question[ing] the fundamental basis of government as a true anarchist would.

Whether or not Flores Magón and other important figures of Mexican revolutionary history were, in fact, *anarchists* seems to be of great importance to Verter. Of Magón’s arrival in St. Louis, MO, after he and his brother fled Mexico in 1904, Verter writes:



Ricardo Flores Magón (left) and his brother Enrique in the Los Angeles County Jail, 1917.

Although the influence of the Saint Louis anarchists upon Ricardo Flores Magón’s political opinions is uncertain, scholars believe that they might have reinforced ideas that were already fermenting in Flores Magón’s mind. However, when he first adopted the radical anarchist ideals that superseded his reformist liberal views remains an open question. Many scholars believe that Flores Magón embraced anarchism as early as 1901, if not even earlier. Indeed, fellow activist Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama later proclaimed that, at that time, “We were all completely anarchists.”

Verter goes on for a full two paragraphs, rattling off a list of anarchist thinkers that undoubtedly influenced Flores Magón, and taking him to task for not acknowledging his own anarchist views earlier than he did: “Because he was so reluctant to espouse publicly his commitment to anarchism, scholars can not be entirely sure of when he finally embraced the philosophy.”

Though Verter repeatedly references the issue of whether

or not Flores Magón was a “real” anarchist in 1901, or 1905, or whenever, he never articulates its relevance. Instead, he clings to a rather elitist view of anarchism—the anarchism of a select few thinkers—in his attempt to create a canon, and to include Flores Magón in it as a “great anarchist prophet.” But in that attempt, he avoids addressing Flores Magón’s reasons for his aversion to the label—which were tactical, not philosophical—for much of his life. As he wrote from jail in 1908:

If from the start we had called ourselves anarchists, no one, not even a few, would have listened. Without calling ourselves anarchists we’ve been placing in men’s minds thoughts of hate against the possessing class and against the government caste. No other liberal party in the world has the anti-capitalist tendencies from which a revolution is about to break out in Mexico, and this has been achieved without our saying we are anarchists... everything, then, is a question of tactics.

This is not to say that a critique of Flores Magón for his reluctance to describe himself as an anarchist is invalid; Verter has a point when he argues that because Flores Magón didn't make his radicalism clear enough, it was easy for a moderate-liberal government to appropriate his figure and ideas for their own ends—as they did after his death in 1922. It is also an issue that was obviously important to Flores Magón himself, and the topic appears several times in the essays and letters included in *Dreams of Freedom*. But such a critique is misplaced in a biographical sketch intended to provide some simple background for readers unfamiliar with Flores Magón's life. Further, his preoccupation with establishing Flores Magón's anarchist cred smacks of snobbery.

This single-mindedness aside, Bufe and Verter have certainly done an excellent job of compiling and translating a huge selection of Flores Magón's writings. Considering that the vast majority of anarchist thinkers deemed "important" enough to merit English-language translations of their work are white Europeans, the significance of this collection cannot be overstated. With *Dreams of Freedom*, Flores Magón can continue to enlighten and inspire ever-wider populations of radicals and anti-authoritarians for generations to come.

—Erin Wiegand

Fledgling
Octavia Butler
[SEVEN STORIES]

Octavia Butler fans have spent the last seven years eagerly awaiting her next creation. Her latest novel, *Fledgling*, will not disappoint them. With typical ingenuity and grace, Butler has woven



a unique story of loss, redemption and identity—familiar fare for this highly awarded author who has received, among many others, a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and the Hugo and Nebula Awards.

Fledgling is a story that sheds light on human interactions, and questions our ideas of nurturing life-long partnerships as well as self-reliance and non-monogamy. What better way to dissect our assumptions than to read about them through the eyes of a stereotype-busting vampire? The protagonist, Shori, is a young (by vampire standards, as she is only 53), Black blood drinker who suffers from amnesia due to a mysterious and brutal attempt on her life. With almost no family to reconnect with and no past to move forward from, Shori spends much of the book on the run from relentless attacks, while attempting to discover both herself and those who hunt her. As is the case in previous novels of Butler's, her characters and their lives are rich inventions. Beautifully detailed descriptions of Shori's kind—their habits, needs and matriarchal social system—provide the reader with an interesting foil for human relationships. More specifically, Shori's continuing self-discovery illuminates our own struggles with selfhood and its connection to larger issues of race, politics and morality.

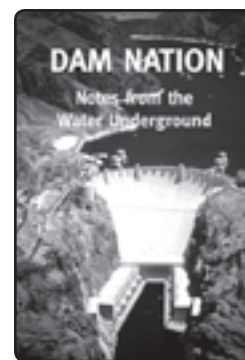
While the "traditional" vampire is evil, murders his victims for sustenance and hangs from his toenails in a lonely cave, Shori seeks loving family connections and symbiotic relations with the humans who "feed" her. Despite her memory loss, she is imbued with an almost inherent sense of justice. The venom of her bite heals and eventually binds the bitten to her in a mutually satisfying way. Even more exceptionally, she is the only known vampire of color. Her race provides her with special capabilities that are unattainable for typically pale vampires: Unlike others of her kind, Shori does not need to sleep during the day, nor fear the sun, making her a powerful and unique vampire. She inevitably learns that she is a genetic experiment, and it is her melanin that allows her to function in the waking world. It also makes her a target.

Initially, she does not perceive the significance of race, noting only the color of her skin and others' as an aesthetic detail. All too quickly, she learns of the all-too-common dangers that can accompany color. Being Black—even for a vampire—means being hunted and reviled.

Like any of us, Shori is a jumble of contradictions—prescient amnesiac, compassionate vampire, and a vengeful soul seeking peace, individuality and home. Through her adventures, Butler champions our paradoxical human nature. Though this work lacks the depth of socio-political commentary that Butler usually plumbs, the author compensates by diving deep into the psyche through her character, Shori. According to folklore, vampires do not cast a reflection; yet Shori provides an honest and imperfect one, in which we can also see ourselves.

With the elegance readers have come to expect of her, Butler has offered us an engaging, sometimes terrifying, and certainly beautiful story about increasing our odds to do better than just survive.

—Shelana deSilva



Dam Nation:
Dispatches from
the Water Underground
Laura Allen and
Cleo Woelfe-Erskine

[SOFT SKULL, FORTHCOMING IN 2006]

Laura Allen and Cleo Woelfe-Erskine spin water into gold in their latest book, *Dam Nation: Dispatches from the Water Underground*. This gem covers everything from indigenous people's relationships with rivers to DIY plumbing; from the false promises of hydropower to the problems with modern factory farming and urban sewage systems. It's a hydrological adventure, from the Yangtze River to the bottom of your bathroom sink.

Allen and Woelfe-Erskine's first book was the zine/pamphlet *The Guerrilla Greywater Girls* (2000), which focused on DIY greywater technology—how to reuse water from your shower for gardening, for example. That spirit of teaching folks how to reclaim a small measure of self-sufficiency and environmental responsibility remains alive in *Dam Nation*.

For example: *Dam Nation* teaches the basics of safely diverting urine to compost, and even how to build a composting toilet. Feces are finally given their rich due as a powerful and

safe fertilizer—and the authors aren't shy about addressing issues like stinkiness. Laura Allen explains how to use local plants to filter your greywater; Cleo Woelfe-Erskine explains how to build loose-rock dams to trap silt and slow erosion.

The authors focus on presenting alternatives (in the form of DIY solutions as well as other forms of resistance) to help counter the looming water crisis. The book shows the amazing diversity of successful tactics against the global abuse of water—for example, the struggles against the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River, which is displacing close to two million formerly self-sufficient people. Contributor John Morton writes a gripping first-person narrative of seeing community resistance against a dam in Thailand, in his essay "Return to Pak Mun and Rasi Salai Dams." There, local communities organized encampments and small-scale takeovers of parts of the dam to stop and even reverse its progress.

What *Dam Nation* doesn't deliver is the same hope of accomplishing in the US what people around the world seem to already have done. To be fair, the authors never promise this. Nevertheless, between the ecstatic passages about greywater ("The bog and pond where we stored extra greywater created a magical oasis in our garden, and in the sterile, suburban Oakland neighborhood.") and the descriptions of American Indian tribes reclaiming the rivers, I hoped to find a better-defined path to a sustainable future.

Nevertheless, *Dam Nation* is a beautiful, inspiring book. This book was written to be pored over immediately, and then thumbed through over the years as you become more ambitious in your own greywater projects. It won't collect dust on your bookshelf for long.

—Dan Spalding

New and Noteworthy



**Why I Hate
Abercrombie &
Fitch**
Dwight A. McBride
[NYU PRESS]

This collection of essays by Dwight A. McBride—hailed as one of the foremost contemporary theorists in the fields of African-American studies and queer studies—covers such topics as homophobia, racism in gay porn, and, yes, why everyone should be concerned with a particular clothing retailer.



**We Are All
Suspects Now**
Tram Nguyen
[BEACON PRESS]

Tram Nguyen uses personal narratives to demonstrate the consequences of the US domestic "war on terror," covering everything from police round-ups immediately after September 11, 2001, to the horrific consequences for many who voluntarily reported to immigration services for registration in 2003, to the ongoing racial profiling, abuse, and deportation of immigrants.

Includes a forward by Haitian author Edwige Danticat.



**What Every Radical
Should Know About
State Repression: A
Guide For Activists**
Victor Serge
[OCEAN PRESS]

A fascinating and timely reprint of the 1926 by antifascist activist Victor Serge; as civil liberties attorney Dalia Hashad writes in her preface to the book, "Serge's broad discussion on oft-recycled tools of state repression is as relevant today as it was yesterday."

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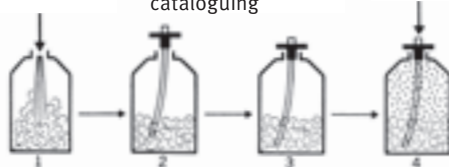
by Tim Kreider

Media Picks: The Best of the Rest of the Web

1. Internets become engorged with useful and provocative information

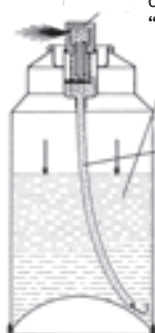
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4. Mixes with misinformation and lies



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Audio in Review

Grrls Gone Wild

Ladyfest Olympia, 2005

by
Abby Sewell
photos by
Alix Shedd

Since the first Ladyfest took place in Olympia, WA, in August 2000, the idea has spread like wildfire. Ladyfests are cropping up all around the United States, and around the world, from Spain to South Africa. This summer, from July 28 to 31, the festival finally returned to its birthplace.

The original mission statement, which remains a rough guide for Ladyfests everywhere, reads, “Ladyfest is a non-profit, community-based event designed by and for women to showcase, celebrate and encourage the artistic, organizational and political work and talents of women. It will feature performances by bands, spoken word artists, authors, visual artists and more!!! It will include workshops, panels, and dance parties. This is a woman-run event but all are welcome to attend.”

The idea of an all-women’s music festival is not an entirely new one. The Michigan Womyn’s Festival, for instance, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, and Sarah McLaughlin’s Lilith Fair, which ran from 1997 to 1999, predated the Ladyfests. But the 2000 Ladyfest, which was partially organized by members of riot grrl bands like Sleater Kinney and Bratmobile, was sexier and hipper than the others; it was less corporate than Lilith Fair and more inclusive than Michfest, which bars men, transgendered women, intersex folk, and other genderqueers from attending.

The six-day festival was attended by thousands, and featured not only music but performance art, dancing, crafts, and workshops on everything from guitar playing to skateboarding to car maintenance to making your own menstrual pads. In the end, it raised \$30,000, all of which was donated to Safeplace, Olympia’s domestic violence shelter.

From the beginning, the Ladyfest Olympia organizers actively encouraged people from other towns to organize their own Ladyfests. Rebecca Percy, one of the original organizers and performers (and a performer in this year’s festival as well), said, “I think those of us who were organizing it really wanted to encourage other people to do the same [event] in their own town, to not rely on other places to make these things happen. If you’re into it, make it happen in your own town.”

Marianne Kozlowski, another of this year’s organizers, said the point of Ladyfest is “encouraging women to make art and to make music and not be intimidated by a field that is normally dominated by men—giving them a safe space to be goofy and mess up without feeling this overhang of criticism that kind of comes with men running things.”

Another organizer, who asked to be identified simply as Brook, added, “I think guys have a sense of entitlement sometimes that they’re right in [making art or music], they’re allowed to do it. Girls are very often like ‘Oh well, maybe I shouldn’t show my work’ and guys are like ‘Yep, I’m gonna put it up here, that’s what I’m gonna do, and I’m entitled to it’... I think one thing the festival does is give women that space: This is what you’re entitled to, too, to have this space and not feel guilty about it or competitive in any way.”

The riot grrl movement that spawned Ladyfest arose for much the same reasons. Women who made punk music and were involved in political activism wanted a space to do these things without constantly vying for attention against men. The riot grrl signature sound was fast and loud, but also fun and catchy—and the girls in the bands could dress and act feminine, too, if they wanted, and still be taken seriously as musicians. Of course, by the time the first Ladyfest rolled around, riot grrl was already a 10-year-old phenomenon, and these ideas had become somewhat absorbed into mainstream society. That fact made it easy to find women to play the festival, contribute their art, lead workshops—and to attend it.

This year’s Ladyfest Olympia had an almost entirely new crew of organizers. They didn’t have the celebrity status or the large-



◀ Jillian Iva of the band Von Iva, doing what she does best. ▶



scale organizing experience of some of the original organizers, but they did have 15 to 20 core people—and a host of volunteers and well wishers—working for seven months to make the event happen. While the basic philosophy and even many of the events remain the same, fresh blood brought its own twist: The 2005 festival branched out into a more diverse assortment of musical styles and a wider range of ages and backgrounds among the performers. Where the lineup in 2000 consisted mostly of women in their 20s and early 30s playing some variation on punk rock, the 2005 festival featured Olympia band Heartbeat, a duo of 11-year-olds, on

Ladyfest inevitably is as much about the organizing process as it is about the outcome. The idea is not just to showcase female artists and musicians but for women to work together within their own community.

the same bill as rockabilly queen Wanda Jackson, who first began performing as a teenager in 1954. In addition to many of the same punky, danceable acts that appeared in 2000, this year's festival included soul, noise, metal, folk, and everything in between.

One of the most incongruous yet charming acts was by 1960s soul and blues legend Barbara Lynn. When Lynn began performing, she was notable for writing many of her own songs, playing her own guitar, and for the feminist undertones of many of her lyrics. Although songs like "You'll Lose a Good Thing" and "I'm a Good Woman," with their theme of honest women chastising their straying men, might be a far cry from the riot grrl version of feminism, the audience in the Capitol Theater responded with warm reverence to Lynn's performance.

"Y'all are such a good audience. You make me feel like I'm playing to fifteen thousand people," Lynn told the approximately 200 people present.

Other musical highlights of the festival included a group of young teenagers fresh from the Rock 'N'Roll Camp for Girls in Portland, OR; all-girl noise band Metalux; and the sexy soul/dance/punk fusion of San Francisco's Von Iva. There were plenty of acoustic acts as well, from the quirky and cynical "anti-folk" of Kimya Dawson to the lovely, melodic indie pop of Mirah. There

were also a number of returning acts from the first Ladyfest, including the Gossip and Tracy and the Plastics.

The weekend's workshops ranged from hands-on (self-defense, drumming, sewing) to philosophical (a radical feminist panel, an anti-oppression workshop addressing homophobia and transphobia, a fat-positive workshop, a panel on reproductive rights).

The 2000 Ladyfest had been organized partly in response to sexual assaults that occurred at the Woodstock 1999 music festival. Organizers wanted to create a safer space for women to perform and see each other perform. While there was never a ban on their attendance or participation, men were expected to keep a low profile. Kozlowski said that this time around, more men were involved in volunteering, and even in performing, although the focus was still on the women.

Many of the weekend's performers prefaced their songs with commentary on the war in Iraq or on the Bush administration's push to criminalize abortion. "[It's important], especially right now, just to have a community and be educated and be active," Kozlowski said, "because George Bush is really taking away women's rights very slyly—and he's not doing it outright, so I think a lot of people don't really know what's happening." One of the points of Ladyfest, as Kozlowski sees it, is to encourage women to organize and take action in whatever way they can, whether through community organizing, starting a book club, or joining a band.

Another of the festival's missions is to donate all proceeds to organizations that work for social change or provide a service to women. This year, there were four organizations chosen as benefi-

ciaries: the aforementioned Safeplace; Birth Attendants, a group of women who assist incarcerated women who are bearing children; GRuB, which helps supply low-income families with raised garden beds to grow vegetables; and the Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition.

A major event like Ladyfest inevitably is as much about the organizing process as it is about the outcome. The idea is not just to showcase female artists and musicians but for women to work together within their own community and make a major event happen. And no one will say that's an easy thing to do.

Brook said, "None of [this year's organizers] had really organized anything on this scale. I don't think we knew how much we were getting into and how much it would consume our lives, but it's been amazing and I've met a lot of really amazing women I wouldn't have met otherwise."

Now that the festival is over, she and the other Olympia organizers can return to their regularly scheduled social lives, art, and activism, satisfied with the success of their efforts. Meanwhile, like-minded women around the world will begin meeting to organize the next round of Ladyfests in their own hometowns, and a new generation of girls will start plotting ways to steal the spotlight for women's talents. **LiP**



Say Bok Gwai
Say Bok Gwai

[MONKEY KING RECORDS, 2004]

This first album by San Francisco band Say Bok Gwai was released in July of 2004—a little old at this point, yes, but the amazingness factor remains high enough to merit a mention here. Say Bok Gwai (Cantonese for “Die White Devil”) is a Chinese-American hardcore duo who thrash out 30 tracks with titles like “Chinese Racism,” “Why Are Your People So Crazy,” “White Demon Bag of Tricks,” and the four second-long “Chili Relleno Why You Buggin’.”

Alex Yeung (vocals and guitar) and Andre Custodio (drums) have described their sound as “Cantocore,” and are likely the only band currently in existence to fit into the genre. Both members have played in more experimental and instrumental bands, and it definitely shows; Say Bok Gwai isn’t a straightforward hardcore band, incorporating everything from classic punk/rock n’roll beats to metal and math rock influences, and even incorporates the opening riff from Blue Öyster Cult’s “Don’t Fear the Reaper” on their track “Don’t Fear the White Demon.”

Unfortunately, the Cantonese lyrics aren’t translated; though it’s clear

that main songwriter Yeung has addressed some serious political and social issues in his lyrics that go far beyond the primarily comedic English titles, the nuances are undoubtedly lost on non-Cantonese speakers.

For an extra-special treat, check out the band’s website at www.monkeykingrecords.com for live videos.

—Victor Kobach



Endangered Species

Nickodemus

[WONDERWHEEL RECORDINGS, 2005]

The first solo album from New York DJ Nickodemus, *Endangered Species* features a dizzying array of supporting artists on 12 tracks, bringing together elements of jazz, hip hop, funk, West African highlife, and a handful of other musical genres from around the world—a tribute to the diversity of Nickodemus’ hometown.

A Bronx native, Nickodemus began an ongoing series of dance parties known as “Turntables on the Hudson” in 1998; they’ve featured such artists as Brazilian Girls, Quantic, and Antibalas, among many others. He’s also worked with, among other notables, jazz percussionist and songwriter Mino Cinelu, who played with Miles Davis on many occasions.

Highlights include “Back From Africa,” with Mitch Stein’s guitar jamming on a riff that could brighten the darkest day; “Cleopatra in New York,” featuring beautiful vocals from Carol C of Si*Se; and “The Global Village,” a fantastic hip hop track featuring MC Polo.

—Lucy Daylights



The Punk Terrorist Anthology

Volume 2: '86-'88

Nausea

[ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES, 2005]

Following on the heels of *Nausea: The Punk Terrorist Anthology Volume 1*, this new release features 30 tracks (including live and demo recordings) by New York City punk band Nausea. Considered to be one of the first (and most influential) crust punk bands of the 80s, Nausea burst out of the DIY/squatting scene with songs like “Smash Racism” and “Johnny Got His Gun,” combining alternating male/female vocals with politically radical lyrics on racism, war, feminism, animal rights, and religion. And while those lyrics may tend toward oversimplification and predictability (open your eyes and look around/at the racism and the hate/open your mind and understand/the oppression by the state) they remain just as relevant today as they were in 1988.

—Mary Beth Connelly



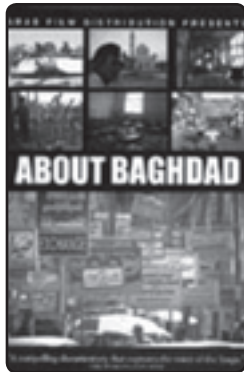
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Film in Review



About Baghdad Sinan Antoon

[INCOUNTER PRODUCTIONS, 2004]

They say, ‘Baghdad fell,’ but Baghdad did not fall; Baghdad was occupied.” This terse analysis of the situation in Iraq was given not by a resistance leader or anti-war activist, but by an Iraqi schoolgirl, one of many nameless individuals given a voice in Sinan Antoon’s documentary *About Baghdad*.

Antoon, a poet, novelist, and professor of Arabic and Arab Literature at Dartmouth College, returned to his native Iraq for three weeks in July 2003, only a few months after the US invasion. In that short period of time, he and his crew—including International Solidarity Movement veteran Adam Shapiro—interviewed Iraqis from all walks of life, trying to assemble a collage of pictures and voices that truly represent Iraqi opinions and positions on the Saddam, the war, and the US. When the overwhelming majority of information coming out of Iraq paints those living there as being either “pro-US” or “pro-Saddam,” (or more frequently, now, “pro-terrorism,”) *About Baghdad* demonstrates the complexity of Iraqi political life and

opinion by simply allowing Iraqis to speak for themselves. As the filmmakers explain in the opening sequence, “Our narrative seeks to move beyond media sound bites and privilege the complexity of Iraqi voices and perspectives that are usually marginalized and simplified in mainstream (mis)representations.”

Not that this hasn’t been attempted elsewhere. Around the same time *About Baghdad* was being released, another documentary was being filmed in Iraq, supposedly with the same aim as Antoon’s: *Voices of Iraq*, made

by US director-producers Eric Manes, Martin Kunert, and former Marine (and Gulf War vet) Archie Drury. To make the film, Manes, Kunert, and Drury distributed 150 video cameras to “average Iraqis” and then edited the footage. While both films hinge on the concept of allowing Iraqis to speak for themselves—in the case of *Voices of Iraq*, to film themselves as well—the latter film was criticized widely for being one-sided and propagandistic (it was intentionally released just weeks before the 2004 election), presenting only those Iraqis willing to repeat, one after the other, that Saddam was a ruthless dictator, and that Iraq is better off because of US intervention.

It would have been all too easy for Antoon and his crew to edit *About Baghdad* down into a similar propaganda piece with an opposing viewpoint. But the film isn’t just a string of Iraqis denouncing US occupation and arguing that while Saddam was bad, Bush is worse. We get some of that; but we also see US soldiers who sincerely believe they are liberating Iraqis, and others who are very aware (and, to all appearances, a little ashamed) of their true role as an occupying force. We hear from Iraqis arguing that UN

wrought by three wars.

The film’s one major limitation is due to its collage-like style, which provides space for dozens of individual voices, but offers scant background—in most cases, not even a name—for those interviewed, much less any kind of broader analysis of why certain individuals might feel differently than others. Antoon speaks with shopkeepers, government officials, lawyers, activists, children, doctors, cabdrivers, laborers, and poets, but makes no attempt to show how their perception is shaped

How does exile impede your ability to accurately assess the situation in your home country—and is it possible to return without being marked as an “outsider?”

sanctions are to blame for the current state of disarray, and others blaming Arab and Muslim governments for remaining silent about Saddam’s atrocities for decades. We hear from a lawyer who was tortured under Saddam, who describes the atrocities she witnessed and endured herself—as well as the demonstration against the US occupation she recently attended. There are Iraqis who are wholeheartedly in support of the US ousting of Saddam, and those who simply shrug, and say that nothing’s really changed at all. The one thread found throughout the movie is a very non-partisan one: an overall sense of humiliation and frustration at over forty years of oppression, economic sanctions, and the poverty

by their class, religious, or ethnic background. At times, such complexity is hinted at, but nothing is explored substantively.

An exception comes with an interesting juxtaposition of two clips, both from political demonstrations: the first, a celebration by the Iraqi Communist Party, marking the anniversary of the 1958 revolution that ousted the pro-British government; the second, an Islamist party rally, where supporters chant “Yes to liberation, no to occupation!” The anti-occupation struggle, as a poet points out during a series of interviews in a popular “literati” café, includes people from a wide variety of backgrounds and points on the political spectrum.

That same poet, however, felt torn when asked about his position on the occupation: “We’ve been knocked off balance, so we’ll take anything, even if it’s from the devil.” He tells of the anguish he feels when his child says hello to a US soldier, and the soldier returns the greeting. He can’t bring himself to tell his child not to speak to them. “I feel that there is a human bond between him and them, and yet they are colonizers.”

He wasn’t the only person interviewed to refer to the US as a colonizing force. In one of the most interesting (and impromptu) interactions in the documentary, Antoon talks politics with his cabdriver. When Antoon refers to the occupation, the driver responds, “This isn’t really an occupation. Colonialism has changed its methods. Don’t ever think the Americans will keep their army here. The government will change, and it will be kind of pro-American, and three-quarters of Iraqis will be content.” In the same scene, we see the political stance of the filmmakers most clearly, as Antoon argues with the driver that the US is, in fact, responsible for Saddam’s atrocities because they funded him during the Iraq-Iran war—the driver retorts that if Antoon had stayed in Iraq for the last 12 years (Antoon fled Iraq in 1991, after the first Gulf War), he would be happy to see anyone ruling in Saddam’s stead.

Which raises one of the most important, though understated, questions of the film: How does exile impede your ability to accurately assess the situation in your home country—and is it possible to return without being marked as an “outsider?” In discussions of Ahmed Chalabi, the then-interim-president-to-be, those interviewed were unanimous

in their scepticism of his ability to rule; after all, how could someone who’d lived in the US and UK for the past 47 years really know what his fellow Iraqis had suffered through? Does exile make Chalabi—or Antoon, for that matter—less of an Iraqi?

The self-awareness evident in the inclusion of such questioning is what makes this film remarkable. While Antoon does not remove himself and his opinions from the documentary entirely (and rightly so), he is humble enough to allow those opinions—and in the above-mentioned scene, his very presence in Iraq as an opponent of US intervention—to be critiqued on screen.

Outsider or not, Antoon has certainly succeeded in presenting a truly diverse collection of views on the situation in Iraq. The schoolgirl who argued that Baghdad did not “fall” also expressed a hope that future history textbooks will show the US occupation of Iraq as just that; that they will show the history of Iraq as she is living it. While it’s (sadly) more likely than not that those textbooks—at least, the ones written in English—will espouse a simplistic, pro-US version of history, it’s comforting to know that films like *About Baghdad* exist to fill in the gaps, and provide a few glimpses of reality between the bars of propaganda.
—Erin Wiegand

Argentina:
Hope in Hard Times
Melissa Young and
Mark Dworkin

[2005]

Throughout the nation of Argentina, tens of thousands of unemployed people search the streets and garbage dumps for recyclable products. Called *Cartoneros*,



Argentinian filmmaker Mark Dworkin

many of them are young, some of them barely teenagers. Each Saturday, a truck drives by their neighborhood to buy some of what they have collected. This is their means of survival in the new Argentina.

Illustrating this day-to-day struggle of unemployed and poverty-stricken Argentines is an inspiring new documentary by Seattle-based independent filmmakers Melissa Young and Mark Dworkin. Named *Argentina: Hope in Hard Times*, the film reveals how ordinary people in dire circumstances can overcome incredible challenges by working together for common goals.

The story of Argentina over the past decade has been a sad one: Due to financial pressures from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government privatized state assets, fired tens of thousands of civil servants, deregulated financial markets, slashed social program spending, rose interest rates, and cut public sector wages and benefits. Not surprisingly, the incomes of the wealthy and powerful increased almost exponentially, while unemployment and poverty skyrocketed for the poor and working class. In 2001, a financial collapse only added to this, causing hundreds of thousands of middle-class Argentines to lose their jobs

and savings.

When this crisis hit, Young and Dworkin were actually on vacation in South America. But with millions of Argentines taking to the streets shouting “Que se vayan todos!” (“throw them all out!”) and thousands of desperate workers taking over abandoned factories to protect their jobs, the filmmakers went back to the United States to get their film equipment.

While Naomi Klein’s popular documentary on Argentina, *The Take*, focused on democratically-controlled businesses, *Hope In Hard Times* embraces a much broader perspective on the Argentine free market tragedy. The documentary not only examines how Argentines have adapted their lifestyles to a crumbling economic system, but asks larger questions about human nature and the possibilities people have of building a different kind of economy and a new society.

Some of the more memorable scenes from the film include its dire illustrations of shantytowns that look remarkably similar to those of apartheid-era South Africa, demonstrating the widening divide between the rich and the poor in Argentina. Young and Dworkin also take viewers into the street corners of Buenos Aires, where organized groups of activists—many of them unemployed—gather on

a regular basis to discuss ideas and proposals for future actions, including street demonstrations, tax revolts, land occupations, and more ambitiously, lobbying government officials to refuse additional IMF loans. Every suggestion is voted on democratically by the group.

This egalitarian form of organization mirrors many of the factories throughout the country recently taken over by workers. With the economic collapse came the abandonment of hundreds of businesses by their owners—but instead of joining the ranks of the unemployed, some workers decided to not-so-legally take control of their companies and manage them democratically, without bosses. The film examines the worker-controlled Ghelco company, *Industrias Metalurgicas Y Argentina* (IMPA), and the celebrated Brukman clothing factory of Buenos Aires.

Related to these industries are the newly-developed cooperatives that have sprung up throughout the countryside, all of which integrate significant levels of democratic decision-making. The Light of Hope Community Centre, which was created on the site of a former garbage dump, includes 340 families. Just a few miles down the road is another cooperative, where more than 130 people farm on nine hectares of land. Child-care cooperatives, barter fairs (where people freely exchange goods and services), and a growing array of charitable organizations further symbolize the new forms of collaboration growing in the country.

It is this collective outlook of the Argentine people that reveals their true character. One would think that desperate people would turn inwards and concern themselves with their own well-being—but in Argentina, as *Hope in Hard Times* illustrates, millions of people decided instead to work together for the common good to improve their conditions.

Hope in Hard Times should be required viewing for economics professors and government leaders who still have faith in the neo-liberal policies of the IMF and the World Bank. Shown recently at several film festivals throughout North America, it paints a very hopeful picture and reveals the huge potential for billions of people throughout the Global South to overcome even the most spectacular failures of free market capitalism.

—Sean Cain



**Jericho's Echo:
Punk Rock in the Holy Land**
Liz Nord

[SELF-RELEASED]

Jericho's Echo, the title of filmmaker Liz Nord's new documentary about the Israeli punk scene, refers to chapter 6 of the Book of Joshua, when the sound of priests' trumpets and the shouts of the Israelites caused the walls of the city of Jericho to fall down flat, and after which the Israelite army invaded Jericho and killed almost everyone inside.

While the implications of linking Israeli punk rock—the topic of Nord's documentary—to an act of genocide is a little unclear, it's unlikely that she intended to draw connections between the slaughter of the Caananites and the ethnic cleansing currently being carried out

in Palestine. Her point, obviously, is that the young punks profiled in *Jericho's Echo* are simply breaking down walls of their own—with amplified three-chord rawk instead of trumpets.

The film opens with a series of punks explaining why they feel drawn to the music and the scene—Nord very clearly shows how common and strong the belief is that punk rock is, simply put, “freedom.” For these kids, growing up in an increasingly chaotic and bleak environment, struggling with religious identity in a place where religion seems to be inseparable from nationalism and political struggle, the ability to express frustration and anger through punk becomes incredibly significant. As Nord says on her website for *Jericho's Echo*, “The punk rock ethos gains new relevance in Israel when band members' choices are often between picking up a guitar or picking up a gun.”

What Nord doesn't show in the film, however, is just how the rebellious nature of punk rock translates into political struggle; the documentary, like the scene itself, isn't so much about political transformation as it is about youthful frustration and dissension.

But then again, *Jericho's Echo* was probably never meant to be a political documentary. According to a *Tikkun* article on Nord and her filmmaking, she originally set out to focus on the pop punk band Useless ID, one of the oldest and most internationally-popular bands whose songs consist mainly of painfully bad emo odes to girls and unrequited love.

This isn't to say that Israeli punks are apolitical, as a group; Nord does show some evidence of activism within the scene, as well as a broader acknowledgement of social injustice and corruption.

Unfortunately, the few scenes of political demonstrations aren't given any context beyond several bands' vague comments on the fucked-up state of the world; the connection between punk rock and on-the-ground activism is never made clear. Interestingly enough, those few demonstrations shown are against globalization and biotech—not about the Palestinian conflict, as one might expect. Undoubtedly, many in the punk scene are connected to local activist groups like the International Solidarity Movement or Anarchists Against the Wall, both of which have organized marches, direct actions, and civil disobedience against Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the construction of the “security fence” between Israel and Palestine. It's never made clear how involved Nord's subjects—or any members of the scene, for that matter—are involved in such political organizing around the Palestinian issue.

Indeed, with the exception of a few clichéd still shots of smiling and crying Palestinian children, and a few women in *hijab* in the marketplace, Palestinians are conspicuously absent from the film, as is any discussion of what Palestinian youth might find valuable in punk rock as a form of rebellion. According to Nord, a year of research led her to the conclusion that there is currently no Palestinian or Arab punk scene (though some members of the Israeli scene are Jewish, but ethnically Arab).

Of course, Nord does touch upon the issue of Palestine with many of the bands interviewed. Most of them express hope for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and a vague support of Palestinians' human rights; few of them think the “road map” will have any chance of success; several argue for more interaction between Israelis and Palestinians, and favor integration over the creation of

two separate states. More than one person cited “religion”—on both sides—as one of the major hindrances in the peace process.

As one might expect, the overwhelming majority of the punks in the Israeli scene were born Jewish, but very few consider themselves to be religious. Most important, it seems, is the rejection of religious orthodoxy and hierarchy. As one member of Punkache says, “If there is some kind of god, I don’t believe that it expects you to not eat pork.” The band Chaos Rabak sings, “I am a Jew, deep in my soul; who are you to tell me what to do?” Lo Kasher (Not Kosher) has a song that includes the line, “I’m a Jew, but not a Jew like you.” And Lital (no last name given), one of the few women featured prominently in the film, argues that “Judaism is a culture; being religious is another thing.”

Aside from Lital, there are a handful of other women present in *Jericho’s Echo*, but only a few actually interviewed—most significant among them the mostly female hardcore band Va’adat Kishut. The gender politics of punk and hardcore in Israel, unsurprisingly, appear to be little different than punk scenes—or music scenes in general, for that matter—elsewhere, with the boys dominating and the girls few and far between. Typically, the female punks are largely relegated to the gender issues ghetto; with the exception of Lital, their screen time is largely limited to explaining that being accepted as a serious musician is difficult when you’re a girl.

Although probably unintentional, Nord totally skips over the question of Israeli queers in the scene, with the topic not even given so much as a passing mention.

By far the most pressing issue for most kids in the scene, it seems, is the impending two- or three-year military service when they reach age 18, and it’s here that the first stark difference can be seen in the Israeli punk

scene and punk elsewhere. As one band points out, there are no youth between the age of 18-21 on the streets during the week; a whole sector of the population is missing. With increasing frequency, however, kids are looking for ways out of the service—particularly those within the punk scene. The most common route, the film suggests, is to fake insanity; if a military psychiatrist deems a person to be not mentally fit for military service, they become fully exempt. And apparently, it’s not all that difficult. As David Katzin, from the band Nikmat Olalim, put it: “If you’re not interested in going into the army, you’re already an outcast.” There are consequences, however—being relieved from duty on grounds of insanity goes on your permanent record (and ID card), and can restrict your ability to get a job or drive.

Members of Retribution, the only right-wing band interviewed, argue that most of the kids in the predominantly left-wing punk scene are too young to know what they’re talking about—more specifically, that everything changes once you’ve been in the army. Disturbingly, one member said, “By the time I joined the army, I’d already buried one friend.... I was already right wing, but this made my views even stronger. I wouldn’t want all my friends to have died for nothing; you can’t let blood go to waste like that.”

Political differences within the scene don’t seem to be as divisive as one might expect. The band Retribution sings about “ISHC—Israeli State Hardcore” and espouses nationalist views in their lyrics, but features links to more left-leaning bands on their website; the more radical of the left-wing bands still play shows with their apolitical pop punk brethren. Nor are there discernible splits

in the scene based on musical style: One show features bands playing pop punk, ska, and hardcore on the same bill. Perhaps splitting hairs over genre is less likely in country with only a few dozen punk bands.

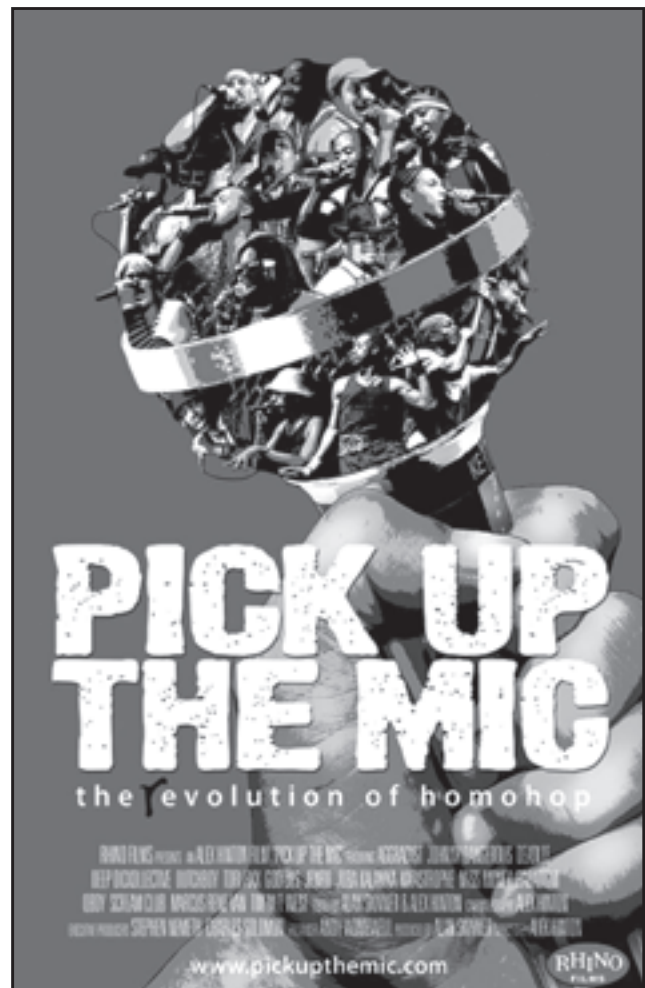
But left or right, radical or moderate, the punks here—like most everywhere else—see their life, their music, their style, and their attitude as one big act of rebellion. The fact that they choose to stand out, they believe, is an act of political rebellion, even if their songs are about hating being told what to do rather than something more substantial.

And maybe, for most of them, that’s enough. There’s nothing that says punk rock is, by default, political. After all, punk resistance to military service may be for reasons

more personal than political, but the end effect is a decline in the number of young people taking up weapons in the service of a government they don’t support.

But it is important to keep in mind, as Nikmat Olalim argues in their song “Selective Blindness,” that for most of those in the Israeli punk scene—and punk scenes everywhere—the rebellious core of punk rock isn’t as much about truly rebelling against something specific as it is about being punk rock: “We can chant about how ‘punk is resistance,’ but we forget the resistance if it’s not about punk.”

Or in other words: “Rebellion” and “freedom” do not necessarily equal a political statement—nor do they alone have the power to topple walls.
—Erin Wiegand



Why Do They Write It Like That?

A Glossary

for the Confused & Curious

assfact

verb [intrans.]

To assert with an air of authority that which one doesn't really know; to talk out of one's ass. : *You are so <~>ing right now!*

dependent media

noun

forms of media primarily supported by advertisers, i.e., those newspapers, magazines, teevee shows, and radio programs that could not survive primarily on the support of their reader- and viewerships. *Antonyms:* independent media; high-quality reading.

ESR

noun

abbreviation for "earth's sacred resources." Generally used to indicate a serious concern for the speedy consumption of non-renewable energy and the general wastefulness of modern consumer culture while still retaining a sense of humor about the often hopeless-seeming state of the world. : *Should I turn my computer off for the night? Nah, it's just <~>.*

Ganga

noun

in several Indian languages, the word for the Ganges River. "Ganga" also often refers to a personification of the Ganges River as a goddess or mother.

Hobbesian path

noun

philosophy decreeing that life is nasty, brutish, and short.

iPodic

adjective

of, denoting, or suffering from a severe consumer-induced mental disorder in which social interaction is eclipsed by the wearing of an iPod. Also used to describe a state of excessive iPod accessorization. : *You wouldn't believe how <~> the bus was this morning. Or : After she actually made the iPod cubby featured in the last issue of ReadyMade, I think it's safe to say that Betty has gone completely <~>.*

Miskitu

noun, adjective

an indigenous people of what is today Honduras and Nicaragua, or their language. Often spelled Miskito or Miskita, using the Spanish o or a, depending on whether the subject is feminine or masculine; in Spanish pronunciation it is accented on the first syllable. The Miskitu language itself does not have accents.

mistakeholder

noun

a person with an interest or concern in a socially harmful enterprise, esp. a business.

adjective

denoting a socially harmful organization or system in which all the members or participants are culpable : *a <~> economy.*

ofay

noun, adjective

derogatory slang term for a white person. Possible derivations from West African languages, including the Ibibio word “afia,” which means “light-colored,” or the Yoruba word “ofe,” a word uttered to protect oneself from danger. *Synonyms:* cracker; honky; whitey.

Oppositional Defiance Disorder

noun

often abbreviated ODD. One of many diagnoses found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) used to repress dissent among outspoken youth; diagnosis may be made, according to the DSM-IV, following six months of behavior marked by arguing with adults, expressing anger or annoyance, openly defying adults, rules, and losing one’s temper.

60-cycle hum

noun

the most common source of audio hum and electronic interference in North America, usually caused by 60 Hz alternating current, ungrounded electrical connections, and low quality, unshielded audio cabling. The 60-cycle hum sounds a touch flat of Bb, and may also include other harmonics of 60 Hz. (120 Hz, 180 Hz, 240 Hz, etc.) Also known as “the musician’s worst enemy.” Also present in all *LiP* phone interviews to date. : *Oh yeah, that’s just the <-> that’s all around us all the time.*

teevee

noun

alternative spelling for “TV,” the commonly used abbreviation for “television.” Indicates a general contempt for the content of most television programming, including news, advertising, sit-coms, reality shows, etc. : *You can’t believe anything you see on the <-> news.*

A brief guide to Zapatista terminology

The Zapatistas’ chief advantage is not military but in the realm of ideas; their slogans and phrases skillfully reinforce clear values and an evolving, inclusive vision. As in any PR campaign, the resonance of these phrases for the general public—and the degree to which they reflect the lived values of Zapatista communities—shifts with the winds of history. Following are some of those phrases and their meanings for the movement. [And if these definitions don’t do it for you, kind reader, please replace them with definitions that suit you better.—JC]

Ya basta! Enough already!: After 500 years of conquest, genocide, slavery, and humiliation, we will tolerate no more!

Mandar obediciendo To lead by obeying: Leadership from below, collective decision making, personal humility, and action for the good of the community.

Nunca jamas un mundo sin nosotros Never more a world without us: We demand and declare that the indigenous people and the underclass will have a voice in constructing the future.

Todo para todos, nada para nosotros Everything for everyone, nothing for us: The Zapatista struggle is not only for Zapatistas, but for all oppressed peoples; every gain will be shared with justice and equanimity, and nothing will be hoarded.

Caminamos preguntando We walk asking questions: We value questioning, dialogue, and “an open space for democracy”; the only clear goal is to build citizen participation and invite the historic changes it brings about.

Dignidad y esperanza Dignity and hope: By acting with dignity—shared humanity, reciprocal relations, cultural pride and personal empowerment—dignity will be won, and by struggling collectively for justice, a just world will emerge.

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