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September/October 2005 • Issue 34

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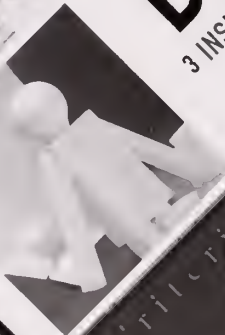
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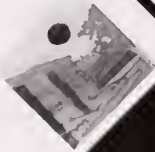
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**PRINTING**

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

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

**BACK ISSUES**

Available at [www.infoshopnow.com](http://www.infoshopnow.com)

**DISTRIBUTION**

**Clamor** is distributed to stores and distributors by IPA/Big Top Newsstand Services, 65 Battery St. 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94111  
[bigtop@indypress.org](mailto:bigtop@indypress.org)

**Clamor** is also available through these fine distribution outlets: AK Press, Armadillo, Doormouse, Gordon & Gotch, Ingram, IPD, Kent News, Last Gasp, Media Solutions, Milligan, One Source, Small Changes, Stickfigure, Tower, and Ubiquity

**Clamor** (ISSN 15-34-9489) is published six times a year (Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/Jun, Jul/Aug, Sept/Oct, Nov/Dec) ©2005 in the US by Become The Media Incorporated | PO Box 2D128 Toledo, OH 43610 | Phone: 419.243.4688

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

Periodicals postage paid at Toledo, OH

# from your editors

At this time four years ago, we released the tenth issue of **Clamor**. It was loosely focused around issues of education inside and outside the classroom, and it sold out almost as soon as we released it. Since then, we've received numerous requests each year to repeat the "Back to School" issue, so here you are.

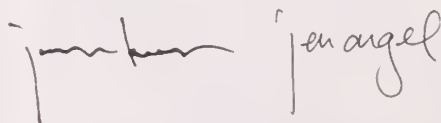
Frankly, we could have released an entire issue of **Clamor** covering the things we've learned about the magazine publishing business that we were clueless about before we started. Things like:

- Your magazine is considered "successful" on the newsstand if you sell 40% of the copies you put out there. And yes, the rest are simply thrown away.
- There are tens of thousands of young people out there who are hungry for a progressive/radical political magazine that doesn't eschew the importance of culture and a radical culture magazine that doesn't eschew politics.
- No matter how many times you stress how important it is for people to subscribe to the independent magazines they love, many would still rather pick up their copy at the local big box newsstand.
- Doing a bi-monthly magazine with a staff of two people is straight-up bananas — no matter how you slice it. Even now with an editorial staff of almost ten people and a team of volunteers, there just isn't enough time in the day.
- Regardless of how great the articles are, if you put sports on the cover of a magazine like **Clamor**, it'll be doomed (see **Clamor** #19, March/April 2003).
- Doing a magazine that acknowledges that people have a million different interests that they want to read about (rather than creating a niche magazine appealing to one of those interests), while noble and necessary in our opinion, is marketing suicide.

We could go on, but we'll save more for our 10th anniversary issue. In the meantime, we're pleased to revisit the education theme with articles that shake the foundation of traditional learning environments and encourage us all to think about education in ways we hadn't before. Jennifer Utz and her sister Lindsay travel to India to teach young women about how they can use new media tools to tell their stories (p. 22). Kaci Elder shares the inspiring success story of Olympia Community Free School (p. 50), and Ida Lake visits a stencil-making workshop hosted by NYC's Visual Resistance on the back page.

Of course many of us are still connected to conventional learning institutions in some way or another, which is why we're extremely excited to present a feature investigating organized attacks by right-wing groups on higher learning (p. 8). Expect more of this sort of work in future issues of **Clamor**, and you'll probably be seeing another "education" issue from us in a few years. Even with all this great content, we didn't have room to talk about the Toledo School for the Arts ([www.ts4arts.org](http://www.ts4arts.org)), the Highlander Center ([www.highlandercenter.org](http://www.highlandercenter.org)), or the School of Unity and Liberation ([www.youthec.org/soul](http://www.youthec.org/soul)) — all projects worthy of stories. Please visit our website, under the heading "Participate," to find out how you can send in stories on your favorite projects, too.

Thanks for reading,



PS: If you haven't already, please consider making a small donation to **Clamor Magazine** to help sustain one of your favorite independent media projects. **Clamor's** innovative model works because its readers are much more pro-active and aware of the importance of independent media compared to more passive consumers of mainstream media. Please do your part and pledge what you can. Please visit: [www.clamormagazine.org/support.shtml](http://www.clamormagazine.org/support.shtml) for more information.

## our mission

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

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## DEALING WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT

First of all I'd like to commend the organizers of the Born In Flames conference (Born in Flames; May/June 2005). Such a gathering of radicals dealing with issues of sexual assault is a long time coming. I wish I could be there, and I wish everyone a good conference!

However, I am troubled by something that was said in the article. In it Lauren Hartley is quoted as saying "I feel like in the community there's a lack of knowledge of basic survivor support — basic things like you always believe the survivor — which in the world of social services you would learn on day one."

While I understand and sympathize with where this belief comes from (I myself am a survivor of multiple rapes), the simple, sad fact is that sometimes accusers lie.

We saw it a number of times in the Riot Grrrl movement in the mid-90s. A Young punk would come to us with a story of how someone in the scene had raped them. We would spring into action, launching various kinds of attacks on the accused, akin to what the article notes that the Hysteria Collective does. Later, however, the accuser would recant. In nearly every case, they would turn out to have made the accusation for one of two reasons:

- 1) They felt that in order to be a good feminist, to be taken seriously, they had to be a victim of sexual assault or abuse. That without being a victim they could not be accepted as a feminist.
- 2) They did not know what rape actually is. They would more-or-less feel they were coerced into sex, but without at any time having said "no" or "stop" or anything of the sort (hence, the accused would not know they were doing anything wrong). Because of the feeling of coercion, they would justifiably feel violated, and cry rape. But since they did not make their current wishes (regardless of what they may have said a day, week, or whatever before) known, this of course was not rape. And more stemmed from a misunderstanding, and miscommunication of both parties.

They did not understand what basically constitutes rape: at the very least, verbalization by the accuser at the time of the act making it clear that this the act is against their wishes, followed by the accused's refusal to stop. If they do stop, and especially if they stop and apologize, then there is no rape.

All together, this means that "always believing] the survivor" is tantamount to saying that anyone accused of sexual assault or abuse is guilty, period. Not even "guilty until proven innocent", which is the legal norm in totalitarian systems, but just guilty. This is compounded by the fact that as a community we tend to pass judgment without having yet to come up with

viable, radical means of proving the guilt or innocence of someone. This is a large step backward from even the current system we reject, which purports to promote the notion of "innocent until proven guilty".

What Lauren Hartley says is, of course, good for exactly where she says: social services dealing with basic survivor support. However, as a community, and particularly as a community which wishes to help move the world forward, we have to find a better way. And at the very least this must start with most of us being able to maintain an unbiased opinion about the guilt or innocence of the accused until both stories can be heard. Anything less than that only recreates the failings albeit, in an inverse form) of the current system, or worse, opens up the possibility of a slide into fascistic legalism.

So, alternatively, we must come up with a radical, progressive means of determining the guilt or innocence of someone accused of rape, as well as community-based means of supporting rape survivors. It's hard to say what these forms may look like, but the following points may provide some starting points:

- 1) *The creation of community-oriented social services to perform exactly the function Lauren Hartley describes. These should include phone numbers, safe spaces, counseling, etc. All the things necessary to make the survivor feel comfortable and accepted, and begin to come to terms with what has happened to them.*
- 2) *On the determining innocence or guilt side of things: the willingness of everyone outside of a given situation (which includes the accuser, the accused, their friends, the social services, etc.) to maintain unbiased opinions toward the accused or accuser. We should never assume automatically that guilt or innocence of the accused, nor whether or not the accuser is telling the truth or lying.*
- 3) *Education on what exactly constitutes rape, self-defense classes, and counseling services for those folks who aren't victims or perpetrators of sexual assault, but who none-the-less are making serious mistakes sexually causing harm to others and themselves.*

Now, if there is to be a trial-like intervention (which have taken place numerous times in numerous cities over the years), the only people who should be able to make any determinations should come from outside the given scene, know neither the accused or the accuser (or any of their friends), not have heard either side of the story until the meeting itself, and be willing to be unbiased until the stories are heard.

At this trial-esque meeting, both the accuser and the accused should give their sides of the story in person. This should be followed with as many practical and character witnesses (for lack of a better term)

as possible from both sides, as well as any practical evidence. From these things the folks from outside the scene should make their judgment about the guilt or innocence of the accused.

The tricky part, of course, is what to do with the accused if they are determined to be guilty. Most of us disagree with prisons, we don't yet have the resources to create radical mental hospitals, and most of activists and punks can't afford mainstream counseling. There is always the possibility of ejecting them from the scene. However, not do they then not have to deal with their actions, but what if they are otherwise a good person and an effective and passionate activist who is just sexually a mess and needs help?

There is no easy answer. And the unfortunate thing is that in recent years we seem to have been trying to make this issue simple, with generally horrible results. Perhaps the Born In Flames conference can be the first step in dealing with the complicated nature of this problem, and in finding ways to begin to move forward. I'm crossing my fingers!

Eliza — Philadelphia, PA

## REASON #2, 156 WHY YOU SHOULD SUBSCRIBE TO CLAMOR

I stumbled across Clamor Mag at a Whole Foods here in Orlando. I can't find it anywhere but there. The magazine is so amazing, and so important. Please pass this along to everyone you see fit. I absolutely love that there is a magazine of your caliber out there. I am definitely going to subscribe. Right after I frame my amazing posters and cook something yummy and vegan from my new punk rock cookbook (also utterly amazing — and, no matter what it seems like, I don't use that word freely!).

Clamor is all about the people, and that's how it should be.

Kim — Orlando, FL

## SQUINTING IN KENTUCKY

I am a subscriber and love your magazine. However, I wonder if you would consider raising the font (print size) that you use for most of your articles. For us baby boomers, it is becoming increasingly hard to read small print — even with glasses! Your magazine is particularly hard on the eyes. The content is great, but it is a strain to read an entire article in one sitting.

Just a suggestion. Keep up the great work.

Vicki Pettus — an aging subscriber in Kentucky

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A stencilmaking workshop in NYC. See p. 72 for more. photo by Ida Lake

## What have you learned the hard way that you wish someone would have told you long ago?

*I learned* that condoms do not protect you from all sexually transmitted infections. Be selective and be safe!

-Elizabeth, Athens, Ohio

*What I learned the hard way* is how damaging a bad credit score can really be, and how easy it is to fall into that trap.

Back in high school, there were no special classes, no lectures or seminars about the dangers and benefits of credit. I was never told by anyone about how easy it is to get into the kind of situation where you end up having to struggle so hard for so long.

My generation was given a pat on the back, a kick in the butt, and sent right off to college, where hoards of credit card companies were waiting, drooling and licking their chops in anticipation of our ill-fated coming. It was lambs to the slaughter. I'm not the only one I know who got suckered into the scam and knocked to the mat. I have a lot of friends who are in the same boat, still paying off debts they racked up in college from all the "free" credit cards they signed up for just to get a "free" t-shirt

Some racket. I DEFINITELY wish I had had more warning about that disaster. These people are just as bad as the big tobacco companies, except there's no nicotine kick that comes with debt.

-Brandon, Cleveland, Ohio

*I have learned* that no matter who people say they are they usually leave out what is most important to them to try to appeal to the person they are talking to. I learned this after a few years of first dates. It is true. I wish I had known sooner then I could have actually gotten to know the real people instead of the perfect person they were trying to be.

-Morgan, Parkersburg, West Virginia

*I suspect I knew this all along*, but relationships are the most important thing in our lives - personal (romantic or friendship) or professional, the network we can draw on (our friends and our friends' friends) is what really gets things done.

-Puckett, Bloomington, Illinois

*Growing up as a first generation Indian American*, I was under the impression that I wasn't a minority and I didn't share in the struggles of people of color. Minorities to me only meant Blacks and Latinos. How could my skin have color? I always had the same opportunities as my white classmates and found myself just as successful as they were.

In my early 20's this path led to me a B.S. in computer science and a cushy job on Wall Street. When I read the stories in the newspaper about people of color not having the chance to succeed in America, it enraged me. I could only point my fingers at people who didn't work hard and take advantage of the American dream.

My pre-paved road to the easy life started to hit some snags when I started to question the political and social structures that surrounded and ultimately came crashing down with the cliché that dominates the political discourse of our generation - the fall of the twin towers.

Now the most hated and feared minorities in America were no longer Blacks and



Latinos, brown skinned people now had that distinction.

As time progressed and I became more involved in grassroots politics, I felt the harassment at my job increasing. I was reading The Progressive magazine and wearing an anti-war pin and my cube mate started screaming for the whole office to hear that we should "Kill All Arabs". His punishment - they waited four weeks for another desk to open and then they moved me and told me to take my anti-war pin off. His punishment - nothing.

Next, election 2004, the manager of my consulting company starts spouting off about Kerry being a disgrace for saying that Cheney's daughter was a lesbian. He then proceeded to draw a Cross on my chest with his extended finger as he said "God help America, if Kerry wins."

The harassment continued until finally I forget a legal pad in a conference room and a manager finds it, reads through it and finds my poem at the end "You Corporate Nazi Fuckers". The next morning, I find my manager, the owner of my consulting company and a box waiting for me to be escorted from the building.

The lesson I learned was that my skin has color too and the struggle of one for social justice is the struggle for all. I have since started to do independent consulting for our local radical cooperative bookstore

and plan to devote my life to the political beliefs that made me a target.

-Yogesh Chawla, Madison WI

*Me, I learned the hard way a lot of things* being a concert promoter: 1) you don't charge a 75 cover at howards; 2) don't book big shows at 21+ venues when you're next to a college.

I also wish people advised me to go into college undecided instead of jumping right into my major. Oh, and how much work is needed to just pass Japanese class I would've liked to have known as well, that's about it.

-H. Alexander, Bowling Green, Ohio

*Here's something I have learned*, Love Sucks! I wish someone would have told me that the movies are full of crap and that all those people don't exist. You can love someone with all your heart, do anything and everything for them, but at the end of the day if they don't love you back, then what? Love is supposed to be the epitome of happiness, what life's all about. If this is true, then why is it you hear more bad things than good things when people talk about love? This isn't me, being jaded; it's just a harsh reality that many people don't realize. It's like the book, He's Just Not That Into You, love sucks, I've done the merry-go-round and it's not all it's cracked

up to be. This is my harsh reality that I wish I knew before going into.

-Jon, Toledo, OH

*I've learned that* child abuse was wrong. I just thought that my father did it to make me into a better person... you know, tough love? but through years of therapy, I've learned that it [the child abuse] was a very wrong thing, indeed. If only someone told me when I was younger that daddy was doing something wrong, then I wouldn't be ridiculed by the emotional scars left behind.

-anonymous

*Having kids before going to college*. I'm in college now and it's very hard to balance home life and school. With two kids you can't really study as much as you need to. But I'm making it work.

-Nikki, Milford Ohio.

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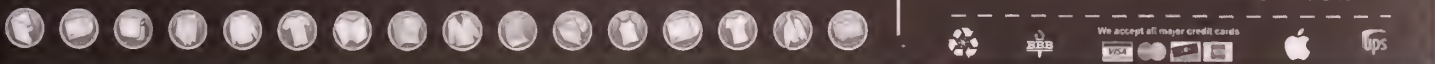
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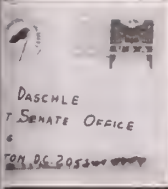
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# Under Attack

## Free Speech on Campus

words Justin M. Park

illustration Peter Karpick | [karpickdesign.com](http://karpickdesign.com)

sidebars Boone Shear &  
Eric Zassenhaus

Can anyone explain the sudden free speech frenzy at America's colleges and universities? At the University of Colorado at Boulder, a radical professor's scholarship and ethnicity is the subject of an official review. Yale fired an anarchist professor and refuses to explain why. Some conservatives are calling for an end to tenure and others want to use the legislature to write codes of conduct for professors and their students. Are these items part of a conservative thrust to squelch dissent on campus? Answer and explain your reasoning in 500 words or less.

A question like that could get a professor chalked up on a conservative campus watch list like the one maintained by Students for Academic Freedom for being politically charged and trying to inculcate students with a singular point of view. After appearing on the web, the professor's transgression might be picked up by a local newspaper, then local television and radio, maybe even make its way to Fox News or CNN. Given the right amount of media attention, the pressure on the university could result in a committee review by the school and possibly termination, despite the fact that she has tenure. As ludicrous as that chain of events sounds, a similar timeline recently brought UC-Boulder ethnic studies professor Ward Churchill into the national spotlight and under review by his school.

Also a very real possibility is the idea that conservatives are out to remake campuses in their image — one professor or one piece of legislation at a time. Charges from fascism to neo-McCarthyism have been levied against the perceived campaign. Conservatives make the countercharge that McCarthyist liberals are keeping them out of the Ivory Tower. Would the real neo-McCarthyists please stand up?

## The New McCarthyism

Yeshiva University history professor Ellen Schrecker, author of numerous books on the McCarthy Era including *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*, puts things in perspective. "The current climate and the McCarthy Era are of course both similar and different," she explained about the post-9/11 United States. "We never see history repeat itself exactly. There's no Congressional investigating committee now, but we see the same process of demonizing enemies and seeing some kind of threat to security that has whipped up a furor with connections to partisan politics."

Ward Churchill thinks the comparison to the Red Scare days is insufficient to describe the current witch-hunt on campus. "There are parallels to McCarthy's days, but the techniques have advanced," said Churchill in an interview with *Clamor*. "What that era didn't have is an articulated plan to convert the institutions of higher learning to the dominant ideology."

Schrecker sees an evolution as well, saying, "What's different between now and the McCarthy Era is that then attacks were on individual professors for extracurricular activities with communist groups or whatever. At no time was anybody's teaching or research brought into question. What's different today, and I think more scary, are things directed against curriculum and classroom and attempts by outside political forces to dictate the syllabus."

Middle East Studies professor Joseph Massad endured an investigation into his teaching by his employer, Columbia University, stemming from anti-Israel charges brought on by the pro-Israel group the David Project. And cases such as that of University of Florida computer science professor Sami Al-Arian, whose extracurricular activities

with Muslim organizations have him awaiting trial for terrorism charges, illustrate that not all the attacks on professors have shifted to their lecture materials.

McCarthyism was a complex social and cultural phenomenon, not just an organized effort headed by one maverick Senator. Likewise, it would not be wise to casually brand the current campus inquisition as a clandestine plan organized by neoconservatives in a back room of the White House. But it's important to seriously look at cases like those of professors Churchill, Al-Arian, and others in order to determine what kind of Cold War is currently being waged on campus, who the combatants are, and what can be done to stop it.

### Big Man on Campus

The Churchill saga has become a cause celebre for all sides of the controversy. Late last January, Churchill was preparing to leave for Hamilton College, in upstate New York. But the weekend before his scheduled appearance, remarks he made in an essay titled "Some People Push Back," written the day after September 11, more than three years earlier, became the topic of national conversation. On January 26, 2005 the story was covered by the Associated Press and released on the statewide wire service. At 3:46 A.M. the next morning, Colorado Republican Congress member Bob Beauprez, an alumnus of UC-Boulder, issued a press release calling for Churchill's resignation. Within days, the story was national news, most feverishly embraced by Bill O'Reilly on his conservative talk show, "The O'Reilly Factor." At the end of June, O'Reilly had taken up the Churchill "controversy" on more than 50 programs.

Churchill started to receive death threats, Hamilton heard about anonymous threats of violence, and the event was can-

celled. "I don't know how they selected Hamilton," said Churchill, "I guess someone at Hamilton found a copy of my essay, forwarded it to O'Reilly and the Denver media and suddenly it was the hottest thing since hot pants."

His version of the story isn't far off but omits part of a pattern. A few months earlier, Hamilton hired former Weather Underground activist Susan Rosenberg to teach a memoir-writing course. Much like Churchill, however, Rosenberg never made it to campus, thanks to protests at college fundraisers and immense pressure from alumni to rescind the offer to teach.

After the high-profile Rosenberg dispute, a small group of Hamilton faculty members was suspicious of the Churchill invitation and did some digging, finding Churchill's essay about September 11. Though more than 5,000 words long, detractors focused on key phrases to ignite the controversy, including this now well-worn and largely misunderstood line: "As to those in the World Trade Center . . . Well, really. Let's get a grip here, shall we? True enough, they were civilians of a sort. But innocent? Gimme a break." (You can read the full essay at [www.darknightpress.org](http://www.darknightpress.org), or see [www.akpress.org](http://www.akpress.org) for info on Churchill's book inspired by the essay, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens*.)

AP wire stories quoted other juicy words from the essay, like "gallant sacrifices" of kamikaze "combat teams" on 9/11 and Churchill's labeling of World Trade Center dead as "little Eichmanns" working for the "mighty engine of profit." The few who bothered to read more than sound bites from the essay might have understood these remarks in their context, but corporate media coverage echoed the same cherry-picked and inflammatory phrases. Headlines read "9/11 Victims Had It Coming," "Professor's Future Hinges on Conduct," "Coverage of Professor's 9/11 Essay Feeds his Ego, Terrorism," and "9/11 'Nazi' Prof Quits College Post."

Churchill later publicly clarified his remarks, saying "It should be emphasized that I applied the 'little Eichmanns' characterization only to those [World Trade Center workers] described as 'technicians.' Thus, it was obviously not directed to the children, janitors, food service workers, firemen, and random passers-by killed in the 9/11 attack."

But O'Reilly, Limbaugh, and even politicians such as New York Governor George Pataki proceeded to hammer the issue into the national discourse, with O'Reilly covering it for nine consecutive nights. Despite an eventual consensus defending Churchill's right to voice his opinion, even from O'Reilly, the university formed a committee to investigate claims made during the media maelstrom that he plagiarized work and falsely

### SUSPECT #1

#### The Center for the Study of Popular Culture / FrontPageMag.com

The Center for the Study of Popular Culture (CSPC) was founded in 1989 by arch-conservative David Horowitz, author of many ignominious publications including *Hating Whitey and Other Progressive Causes* and *Guns Don't Kill Black People, Other Blacks Do*. The CSPC asserts that it is "dedicated to defending the cultural foundations of a free society" and, through various media, presents a narrative in which a beleaguered right is under attack by a powerful, Left-wing cabal.

Since its inception, the CSPC has received over \$13 million in private grants, according to [Medialtransparency.org](http://Medialtransparency.org). Between 2001 and 2003, the organization received more than \$3 million in funding from the Bradley, Scaife, and Olin foundations alone, according to the American Association of University Professors (University of Cincinnati chapter).

One of the CSPC's primary initiatives is FrontPage magazine, a collection of conservative propaganda and Horowitz's own rants (such as arguments claiming African Americans have benefited from slavery).

identified himself as an American Indian to further his career. Suddenly the inquisition into the professor's public remarks morphed into an ad hominem attack, legitimized by the official Board of Regents investigation and resolution passed by the Colorado house and senate condemning Churchill's remarks, and urging university officials to fire him.

Churchill calls the allegations "spurious," especially those that he used his race to advance his career saying, "I look white enough. The advantage is to look white. Look at a standard bibliography in American Indian studies and it's overwhelmingly white and male. At worst, this is flagrantly racist."

The ordeal has been rough on Churchill and his wife, Natsu Taylor Saito, but he admits, "With the work I do and the positions I take, there's always a possibility of an organized neutralization campaign." He added that he has considered just retiring and avoiding the controversy but said, "There's an extraordinarily dangerous precedent in my case. I didn't elect to be in this position, but since I'm in it I can't concede its legitimacy."

### War of the Words

The Churchill case gave groups like the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) and David Horowitz's Students for Academic Freedom (SAF), groups that see the academy as one of the last bastions of leftist power, a taste of victory in this battle on campuses. Using the crowbar of a few phrases taken out of context, they were able to justify opening two committee investigations into Churchill, force his resignation as Chair of the Ethnic Studies department, and may yet succeed in ousting him entirely, despite the often ground-breaking research and numerous books on Native American history and genocide to Churchill's credit.

Whether these groups succeed in ousting Churchill matters little. They've already established a blueprint for other administrators, politicians, and media with an agenda to remove any professor they deem unfit. In a recent treatise on the conservative agenda, Newt Gingrich states that the threat of the leftist professoriat is equal to that of terrorists. "The flow of immigrants combined with the anti-American civilization bias of our academic left ... threatens to undermine and eliminate the history, language, and cultural patterns of American civilization in a secular, multicultural, politically correct, ethnic politician-defined new model," wrote Gingrich.

Those statements ring eerily similar to the desire for "consensus history," described by author and professor Schrecker. The Consensus History movement, which peaked in the 1950s, overlooks internal conflicts and the non-white population. "There is a certain pressure in American history to write consensus histo-

ry," said Schrecker. "Not among historians but from outside, from people like Lynne Cheney. More celebratory history that says 'We're the greatest country in world' type stuff." Ethnic and gender studies programs, won in the reforms of the 1960s, greatly trouble the very notion of "consensus history" by pointing out and examining histories, like those of Native Americans, that have been whitewashed or overlooked in order to present a cohesive ideal of American progress.

The Vice President's wife founded ACTA, a lobby group that has shunned introspection à la Bush to suggest America was "attacked [on 9-11] not for our vices, but for our virtues." The group also established the brazenly ethnocentric Defense of Civilization Fund to "support the study of American civics and history and of Western civilization."

Colorado Governor Bill Owens, who called Churchill's essay "treasonous," works hand-in-hand with ACTA as part of their Governors' Project and was at the frontlines in calling for Churchill's dismissal. The publicly available "Action Plan" for the Governors' Project ([www.goacta.org/programs/govproject.html](http://www.goacta.org/programs/govproject.html)) reads like Karl Rove could've been holding the pen:

*If we can get 20 key states moving in the right direction, it will start a national trend. Those states will be prioritized on*

"There is a certain pressure in American history to write consensus history," said Schrecker, "Not among historians but from outside, from people like Lynne Cheney. More celebratory history that says 'We're the greatest country in world' type stuff."

## SUSPECT #2

### Students for Academic Freedom

An offshoot of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, Students for Academic Freedom (SAF) now has chapters on 150 campuses. Also funded in part by the Bradley, Scaife, and Olin foundations, SAF contends that a far-Left political bias dominates higher education and is interested in "ending the political abuse of the university." SAF efforts include collecting complaints against Left-leaning professors and, most saliently, pushing the "Academic Bill of Rights." Appropriating the language of the Civil Rights movement, the document demands diversity and tolerance for (often intolerant) conservative and extreme Right views, in an effort aimed at "depoliticizing" university classrooms. Horowitz's doctrine serves as a template for Academic Bill of Rights legislation introduced in at least nine different states so far.

## SUSPECT #3

### Young America's Foundation

According to The Boston Globe, conservative organizations spend more than \$38 million annually on college campuses. One of the more influential groups, Young America's Foundation (YAF), spent nearly \$10 million in 2003 alone, according to the American Progress Action Fund. YAF states it is "the principal outreach organization of the Conservative Movement," advocating "individual freedom, a strong national defense, free enterprise, and traditional values."

Students are induced to participate with the organization through a point system that rewards conservative activism. (One of the top prizes is an all expense paid trip to the Reagan Ranch for mentoring and training.)

The YAF also sponsored 200 speakers in 2003, featuring high-profile, conservative icons including Ann Coulter, Dinesh D'Souza, and Ward Connerly. Most sinister was a March 31, 2005 talk by well-known xenophobe Pat Buchanan at Western Michigan University on Cesar Chavez Day. Ubiquitous campus flyers announcing Buchanan's visit read, "Come Celebrate the Former Cesar Chavez Day: America First Day."

## SUSPECT #4

Campus Watch—campuswatch.org

Campus Watch emerged in fall 2002 from Right-wing think tank The Middle East Forum (MEF). Like the MEF, Campus Watch draws upon and foments post 9/11 jingoism to undermine university faculty who attempt to provide context for "terrorism" or critique U.S. policy.

Campus Watch claims that Middle East faculty are "almost monolithically leftist" and that the "systematic exclusion" of conservative viewpoints leads to a proliferation of political extremism. Campus Watch is directed by the MEF's Daniel Pipes, who, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, has "advocated the unrestricted profiling of Muslims and Arabs" and said, "10 to 15 percent of all Muslims are 'potential killers.'" Similar to David Horowitz's Students for Academic Freedom, Campus Watch invites students to send in complaints about alleged faculty "abuses," investigates their claims, and publicizes the most promising cases. The group also uses newspaper op-eds, and radio and TV interviews to spread these attacks.

Campus Watch states that one of its goals is to encourage government to "address existing problems" (in academia). Pipes himself has called for government intervention in academic affairs. This philosophy helped to support House Bill 3077, The International Studies in Higher Education Act, which passed through the U.S. House in 2003 but later collapsed in the Senate. The legislation would have created government monitoring of international studies programs that receive federal funding, according to the *LA Times*, and a board to "ensure that academic programs better reflect the national needs related to homeland security." A new version of the legislation (H.R. 509) would, according to the House Education & the Workforce Committee website, "evaluate the degree to which activities of programs, centers, and fellowships at institutes of higher education advance American interests."

Uncovering funding sources for Campus Watch is difficult but, according to Sourcewatch, the Middle East Forum provides Daniel Pipes with \$20 million a decade, on which he

"They say with me, 'Not on taxpayer dollars!' The reason you can't speak in the university is that taxpayers shouldn't be obligated to fund anti-state rhetoric. At private institutions like Hamilton, reactionary Wall Street alumni will punish you. There's no scholarly setting in the country in which views from this orbit are entitled access - public, private, or indifferent. The emails I get say, 'Get your goddamned soapbox.' You're entitled to starve on your soapbox if you have the wrong thoughts."

## SUSPECT #5

American Council of Trustees & Alumni

Created in 1995, The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) boasts Senator Joe Lieberman and University of Colorado President Hank Brown among its founding members. Its Chairman Emeritus is Lynne Cheney.

ACTA states that it is "committed to academic freedom, excellence, and accountability," and claims to "safeguard the free exchange of ideas on campus." Similar to other organizations waging war on academia, it interpolates a conservative agenda into the trope of academic free inquiry. Indeed, Roberto Gonzales argues in an article for the *San Jose Mercury News* that an infamous 2001 ACTA report "affirms the right of professors to speak out, yet condemns those who have attempted to give context to Sept 11th." The ACTA report, titled "Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America" also asserts that "when a nation's intellectuals are unwilling to defend its civilization, they give comfort to adversaries," equating dissent with a lack of patriotism. ACTA's economic support comes from the usual suspects, including the Scaife, Olin, and Bradley foundations.

*the basis of (a) the size and prestige of their systems of higher education, (b) likelihood that the governors will be open to our message, and (c) governance arrangements conducive to reform efforts (e.g., a single statewide system appointed by the governor is easier to influence than multiple boards, some of which are elected).*

Churchill, for one, isn't scared to cry conspiracy, saying, "It's organized and coordinated. It evolves. This has been a consistent pattern for the past 25 years." Churchill went on to recount the ousting of Emory historian Michael Bellesiles in 2001 as a recent precursor to the tactics being used in his case. Bellesiles was fired after a right-wing blitz started by the National Rifle Association over his book on gun culture, *Arming America*, prompted a university investigation into his research methods. The investigation concluded that he omitted some inconvenient data.

David Graeber, a Yale anthropology professor, avowed anarchist, and anti-globalization organizer, also got his pink slip and with no explanation. He isn't as quick to see a neo-con cabal behind his sacking, but adds that he recently defended a grad student attempting to organize a union, a move that pitted him squarely against many of the same faculty that fired him.

Graeber also says that after he was quoted in the *New York Times* for a story about protesting the World Economic Forum in which he was associated with an anarchist group, there were "suddenly all these conservatives saying to Yale, 'How could you have an anarchist there?'"

While Graeber sees his own dismissal chiefly as the result of power-tripping senior faculty, he does agree there's a larger, national assault on academics. "Someone probably did orchestrate Churchill or Massoud's cases, though. Situations like theirs create this climate where people feel like they can go after 'the anarchist professor.' You can get away with things you wouldn't normally consider."

That anarchists are a rare species that some think should be extinct on college campuses corresponds to the popular conservative view that higher education is one-sidedly leftist and desperately needs righting. An editorial by Mike Rosen in the March 4 edition of the *Rocky Mountain News* offers a typical right-wing view of the academy. Rosen declares academia as the "power base of the Left" and adds, "The left has taken over academe. We want it back." He goes on to quote a professor worried about the chilling effect the Ward Churchill case might have on other professors and answers, "Good. It's about time. I'd prefer to call it a remedial, correcting effect."

Conservatives such as Horowitz have relied heavily on the studies done by Santa



## SUSPECT #6

### The National Association of Scholars

Founded in 1985 by a group of conservative college professors, graduate students and trustees, the National Association of Scholars' (NAS's) original mandate was to work to block affirmative action programs in universities, and to fight "political correctness" and many ethnic and women's studies programs, which it sees as anachronistic holdouts of 1960s radicalism. To this end, NAS organizes local affiliates of like-minded individuals and publishes a journal, *Academic Questions*, which seeks to further its views and legitimate its positions on higher education. The Association receives funding from the ultraconservative Olin, Bradley, Sarah Scaife, Coors, and Smith Richardson foundations, among others, to the tune of several hundred thousand dollars a year, according to People of the American Way's Right Wing Watch.

Clara economics professor Daniel Klein, which alleged that anthropology departments have 30 democrats for every republican, and an average of seven to one in the social sciences and humanities generally. What most who cite the study, including a recent, beefy *New York Times* article, fail to note is that the study appeared in *Academic Questions*, a publication of the National Association of Scholars, a right-wing group devoted to eliminating "liberal bias" in America's hallowed halls. Even if Klein's work were accurate, despite the taint of its origins, to say those numbers indicate a bias that needs correcting is merely aping the flawed logic that has cowed the corporate media into searching for the nonexistent "balance" between left and right.

Horowitz's response to the perceived bias is his Academic Bill of Rights, a specious document brought to the floor of several state legislatures and designed to remove political "indoctrination" from classes. He hasn't been very successful in getting passage for the inherently political bill but he may not care. His tactics, often successful, are usually devised simply to win attention for his views. In his book *Political War*, he describes why he considered filing a libel suit against *Time* magazine for an article claiming he was a racist, saying, "My main objective... was to get my response — or pieces of it — before as large an audience as possible."

While the Academic Bill of Rights may not be winning much credible support, Horowitz has claimed victory on another piece of state legislation in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. In early July, lawmakers approved HR 177 by a vote of 111 to 87. The measure creates a committee that will investigate claims by students that professors are doling out low grades because they don't agree with their political opinions. On his web site, Horowitz states the legisla-

tion is "squarely based on the Academic Bill of Rights."

Robert Jensen, a University of Texas at Austin journalism professor who often appears on Horowitz's SAF site, calls the bias charge bunk. "The way this discussion [about academia] is proceeding is ridiculous. Everyone agrees education shouldn't be indoctrination and a lot goes on, but it's not towards the left, it's towards the existing system."

Jensen has pointed out that they don't teach alternatives to capitalism in business schools and wonders how people miss the bias towards the status quo inherent in most courses of study. "These people love to argue on the basis of individual behavior because they can avoid any real analysis of the system. And any major bias you can find in looking at it is going to be towards the existing system."

Jensen shrugs off the hate mail and personal threats he has received after he critiqued the likely American response to Sept. 11 in the *Houston Chronicle* saying, "It's not like the government is dragging me away in the night. Every once in a while I'm on the [Students for Academic Freedom] website. One guy wanted a Bob Jensen deportation site. I'm tenured and I don't care what they think, but often this stuff scares people who want to speak out."

Churchill, too, sees little free space for those who want to express radical ideas. "They say with me, 'Not on taxpayer dollars!' The reason you can't speak in the university is that taxpayers shouldn't be obligated to fund anti-state rhetoric. At private institutions like Hamilton, reactionary Wall Street alumni will punish you. There's no scholarly setting in the country in which views from this orbit are entitled access — public, private, or indifferent. The emails I get say, 'Get your goddamned soapbox.' You're entitled to starve on your soapbox if you have the wrong thoughts."

If Jensen or Churchill's case doesn't have a chilling effect on faculty, Al-Arian's ought

The way this discussion [about academia] is proceeding is ridiculous. Everyone agrees education shouldn't be indoctrination and a lot goes on, but it's not towards the left, it's towards the existing system."

## SUSPECT #7

### The David Project

Begun ostensibly as a watchdog group intending to promote "a fair and honest understanding of the conflict" in Israel/ Palestine on college campuses, The David Project sponsors speakers and hosts workshops on anti-Semitism and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in order to influence the make-up of Middle East Studies departments in U.S. universities. The group gained notoriety with a documentary it produced, *Columbia Unbecoming*, which attacked Columbia University's Middle East Studies Department and, in particular, Assistant Professor Joseph Massad. According to a recent article in the *London Review of Books*, this prompted New York Congressman Anthony Weiner to call on Columbia's president to fire Massad, who was eventually pressured not to teach his course on Palestinian and Israeli Politics and Societies this semester.

Digging out the funding for the project is difficult. The David Project is the sole "affiliate member" of the Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC), whose website states its aims to become "the central coordinating and strategic body" to "impact a pro-active pro-Israel agenda on campus." According to a recent article in *The Nation*, the group recently received a grant of \$1.05 million from the Schusterman Foundation.

to. In addition to being a tenured professor, he was very active in the Muslim-American community and had been accused by local Tampa media for being involved with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In May of 1996, the University of South Florida put Al-Arian on paid leave while waiting for the outcome of a federal investigation into his fundraising and organizing for Palestinian causes. He was reinstated two years later when no legal action had been taken and the charges were seemingly forgotten until he made an appearance on, you guessed it, "The O'Reilly Factor" less than three weeks after Sept. 11.

O'Reilly, ostensibly not aware the investigation was over, revived the charges about Al-Arian's connections to terrorism and began berating his guest over them. Other national and local media jumped on the story,

## SUSPECT #8

### The Bayh-Dole Act & Other Political-Economic Conditions

In addition to the coordinated rhetorical, political, and legal assault threatening academic freedom at universities, the academic Left is reeling from the material impact of nearly three decades of neo-liberal governance. Public funding has decreased, forcing universities to compensate by securing additional corporate investment and partnerships. Industry funding at universities has increased nearly eight-fold since 1980, according to Jennifer Washburn's recent book, *University Inc.: The Corruption of Higher Education*. Washburn says that concomitant legislation, like the 1980 Bayh-Dole Act, which provides financial incentives for university-industry collaboration, has further facilitated a market-based model of education.

Dovetailing with the broad conservative assault on college campuses, the current political-economic conditions of public universities endanger true academic freedom as faculty are more likely to censor themselves and stay away from issues that could be deemed controversial or "biased."

generating enough hysteria to get Al-Arian fired, eventually indicted on terrorism charges and jailed for years awaiting trial. As of press time, the trial was underway in Tampa.

### Defending the Thesis

Clearly many of the problems that limit speech at universities are systemic. The American Association of University Professors reports that 65 percent of all university faculty are in non-tenure track positions and 46 percent of professors are part-time, leav-

ing this demographic ill-equipped to espouse controversial positions that might drop them out of favor with university brass.

Additionally, each year average college tuition hikes accelerate and schools turn more to corporations and government for subsidies, scholarships and grants. Firmly indebted, those schools put more dollars into departments that are able to secure money from research and innovations that can be sold to corporate America or the government. In fact, politicians and economic development gurus such as Richard Florida, author of *The Creative Class*, enthusiastically encourage these sorts of partnerships as essential to keeping American cities competitive in the global marketplace.

When asked what might be done to build and maintain spaces for truly radical scholarship, Graeber could only respond, "I'm not really sure. Rather than give you some glib answer I'm going to say I have to think about that one." He added, "Yale, for example, is a corporation. It's a business that's so far about the reproduction of the ruling class. They're producing people to rule the world. Where does an anarchist fit into that?"

Despite a bleak outlook, the witch-hunting of radical professors need not be taken lying down. Both Graeber and Churchill said that letters from fellow academics to their respective institutions are helpful and there are petitions on the Internet supporting several professors.

Churchill said the support he's received from everyday people has been immense: "Baggage men, people on the street. They understand the resonance of 'fuck you.' They have a sense that I said 'fuck you' to these people and that's alright by them." But he warned against activists focusing too much on any one professor's cause saying, "Writing letters for me and such is all good but we got a national problem here. People need to stand on their rights and understand this isn't just about me." Indeed, there are probably many less visible professors who are disappearing from campuses with little more than a squeak, for example Churchill's colleague and environmental activist Adrienne Ander-

son, let go due to "curriculum changes" only days after Churchill made headlines.

Moreover, focusing activism too much on individual professors and defending their every move could backfire and play into the hands of people like Horowitz, who would rather debate personal minutiae such as Churchill's footnoting abilities and genetic makeup than the real issues. Activism aiming to counter the 21st Century wave of political and academic repression should expose and fervently oppose the illegitimate processes and weak arguments by which these professors are being challenged in addition to showing solidarity with the victims.

Currently, a number of organizations are working to expose how conservative foundations and think tanks are influencing academia, and several progressive organizations are tracking the attacks on academics (see sidebar). But beyond these necessary but reactive measures, others are proactively working to strengthen the alliances between academics and activism, including the International Organization of Scholars and Activists, profiled by Rebecca Hyman in the Economics Section of this issue.

Graeber agrees that awareness and reasoned opposition is the key to deflecting attempts to squelch radical scholarship. "Sadistic bullies are a small percentage of the population but people often find it inconvenient to fight them. Enough public pressure in the right places can make it inconvenient to not fight them. Exposing them is the most useful thing to do." ☆

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## Discussion & Resistance to the Conservative Assault

Many progressive listservs and websites publish, reprint, and collect stories and articles critiquing the assault on academic freedom including Common Dreams ([www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)), portside ([www.portside.org](http://www.portside.org)), and Truthout ([www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org)).

SourceWatch (<http://www.sourcewatch.org>), Media Transparency ([www.mediatransparency.org](http://www.mediatransparency.org)), and People For the American Way's Right Wing Watch (<http://www.pfaw.org>) attempt to untangle the web of connections between think tanks, foundations, and corporate interests involved in the conservative machine.

Of particular interest to students and academics may be Campus Progress (<http://www.campusprogress.org>), an offshoot of the Center for America Progress (<http://www.americanprogress.org>), "a brand-new effort to strengthen progressive voices on college and university campuses nationwide; counter the growing influence of Right-wing groups on campus; and empower new generations of progressive leaders."

# The Foyer Maurice Sixto & Haiti's Restavèks



words Doris Charollais photos Leslie Spurlock

It was a hot and damp day as it usually is in Haiti. We had just arrived in front of the Foyer Maurice Sixto when Father Miguel said, "I have to go to the police station. They've found three little girls who are lost after escaping from the families where they are working. Do you want to come with us?"

We pulled off the dusty road and up to the police station in Carrefour, a southern suburb of Port-Au-Prince, three miles from the Foyer. The police officer welcomed us cheerfully; Father Miguel is well-known in the country. Three little girls, Marlene, Lili, and Roselène, all somewhere between 6 and 12 years old, were brought to his dark office. Like most *restavèks* (from the French "tu resteras avec cette famille" – "you will stay with this family") the girls were sent by their mothers living in the mountains to an aunt or a cousin in the city. Their family was too poor to take care of them and there was no school in the village. Attempting to run away, they had become lost in the market and could not find their house any longer.

After signing a stack of papers, Father Miguel was permitted to take custody of the children. We drove with them to the Foyer where housemother Maman Georges took them to her house so that they could shower, dress, and eat.

Placing children into domestic service is an ancient custom in Haiti. Poor families from Haiti's rural areas often entrusted their children to families living in Port Au Prince, Haiti's capital, in the

hopes that this would provide them with a higher standard of living, perhaps allowing them to attend school. In most cases the child-domestic becomes a *restavèk*. Traditionally, the host family would be responsible for the well-being of the child, providing her with food, shelter and an education.

But as the political and economic situation has become dire in Haiti, the practice of sending *restavèks* to school or providing them with a better living standard in exchange for their labor hardly exists anymore. These children are mostly entrusted to families which themselves are plagued with serious financial difficulties, and what was once informal work-exchange has devolved into a kind of legal slavery. Often as young as five years old, these children may work up to 18 hours a day without salary. They are often under-nourished and do not go to school. *Restavèks* are typically girls, as boys are



often needed in the fields in rural Haiti, and girls are preferred to do the domestic work at their adoptive households. They are frequently abused—physically, emotionally, and sexually—and are cut off from their parents by both distance and illiteracy. Restavèks are treated as pariahs. They struggle against a lack of education, social taboos, fatigue and poor health. They are estimated to be 10 percent of Haiti's child population, between 200,000 and 300,000 in all, according to the National Coalition for Haitian Rights.

Founded in the late 1980s, the Foyer Maurice Sixto gives educational, psychological and emotional support to about 300 child-domestics in Haiti. In addition to teaching these kids how to read and write, the Foyer offers various other courses including handierarts, cooking and sewing. Leisure days are organized during the summer, with theatre classes, singing and games.

The Foyer also aims to educate the public and alert the Haitian Government to the problems associated with the *restavèk* system, and to persuade their "employing" families to improve living and working conditions. It is the Foyer's hope that measures can be taken in the not-too-distant future to ensure that these children are no longer treated as slaves, and to fight for their most basic rights: the right to attend school, free time for rest and leisure, and the right to be treated with dignity and respect. As part of this objective, the Foyer aims to trace the parents of those children who are particularly mistreated or who are truly too young to do the work required, so that they may be returned to their village, local conditions permitting. It is therefore necessary to find where they come from—an often difficult task, as many children have forgotten the location of their original homes. Identifying the family and informing them of the conditions their child is suffering poses more problems, as most rural denizens in Haiti have no telephone or modern means of communication.

After a few weeks we received news of Marlene, Lili and Roselène. Lili's aunt had been found and she was returned to her, with the promise that Lili would be permitted to attend school every day at the Foyer. Marlene wanted to go back to her mother and was able to remember the name of the village where she came from. She was taken back to her mother, who received some help from the Foyer to start a little business at the local market. Roselene did not remember where she came from. She was only four years old when she was taken to the capital. For her, the Foyer found an adoptive family who would send her to school, if she would help a little with their children. ☆

Contact the Foyer Maurice Sixto at [foyermsixto@yahoo.fr](mailto:foyermsixto@yahoo.fr)

For more photos visit [www.lesliescottphotography.com](http://www.lesliescottphotography.com)

Terre des Hommes Switzerland, the organization that finds much of the Foyer's work, can be found at [www.tdh-geneve.ch](http://www.tdh-geneve.ch)

The National Coalition for Haitian Rights' "Restavèk No More" Campaign [www.nchr.org/hrp/restavek/report\\_es.htm](http://www.nchr.org/hrp/restavek/report_es.htm)



# LIBERATION

## LEARNING

words: Kat Shiffler &  
Patrick W. Quirk  
photos: Kat Shiffler



a young student attends class in a roadside encampment in the state of Rio Grande do Sur.

“Land for those who live and work on it,” goes the original battle cry of Brazil’s Landless Rural Workers’ Movement, the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST). In a country like Brazil, where three percent of the population owns two-thirds of arable land, land redistribution is the name of the game; but ask anybody from the MST and they will tell you land is only the beginning. With the inauguration of the movement’s own autonomous University on January 23, La Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandez, the groundwork for a larger transformation is now in place.

After 20 years of struggle in Brazil, the MST and its members (*sem terra*) have emerged as one of Latin America’s largest and most formidable social movements. The MST boasts over one million members, is active in all but two of Brazil’s 28 states. It has won more than 50,000 square kilometers of land, about the size of half the state of Ohio. More than 250,000 families have participated in the process of first occupying and then camping on tracts of land; then negotiating with the government to win a title to their own parcel. The MST is pragmatic in their approach to land distribution, but visionary in their outlook on social justice. They see a new society where everyone has access to the same opportunities and lives in comparable conditions. “My vision is that all people are the same, our lives worth the same amount,” said Marcos Alves dos Santos, a 29-year-old MST *militeante* and agricultural technical specialist from the Northeast state of Sergipe. “I live this reality on a daily basis.”

Long before the idea of a University developed landless families in roadside encampments and in the first settlements made clear their commitment to an alternative, worker-centered education. In their camps, where hundreds or thousands of children live together, schools provide a necessary infrastructure for their communities, as they do in any other community.

Hundreds of thousands of families participate in autonomous MST schools, ranging in level from elementary education to adult literacy programs. The landless see a new pedagogy, or principles of teaching and learning, as fundamental to the transformation of society. “Education is crucial to our movement,” said Maria Gorete, one of ENFF’s directors in charge of the political branch, “the only way for us to move forward is through this process.”

The MST created a sector within the movement dedicated solely to formulating educational programs and curriculums to meet this demand. The National Education Collective is its decision-making body. The Collective draws heavily on the work of Paulo Freire, and Brazilian social scientists such as Josué de Castro and Florestan Fernandez as well as Russian educational theorist Anton Makarenko and other academies aligned with the practical education of working people and their struggle to transform society. The movement’s early roots in Liberation Theology and the Catholic Church also contribute to this discourse.

The aim is a national program of radical personal transformation engaged through democratic and participatory education. At the same time, classes such as the “pedagogy of the land,” developed by Míriã Medeiros Silva of Piauí state, also teaches concrete, appli-

cable skills. At the heart of the education system of the MST is the idea of work. At many institutions, young activists trade their labor — making fruit jams or working in large urban gardens — for an education in agriculture — for an education. This sort of vocational training, and work-exchange system is essential to the survival of the MST's base: the network of small farmers that struggles within a global capitalist economy to survive.

Borrowing pieces from many other traditions of struggle and popular education, the MST has created a pedagogy specific to the Brazilian landless experience, in which schools are autonomous spaces of learning, where pupils read, write and assess reality critically. Although each school is very different, and their applications of these principals vary greatly, wherever the MST is, in camp or settlement, march or occupation, there is a school — sometimes cramped under a black poly-thene tent, — but a school nonetheless. While other school children learn subservience through stories of dead presidents and a history as told by the dominant class, MST schools emphasize community, music, culture and a connection to nature; all seen as a mental liberation from centuries of oppression under the land-owning class.



An MST classroom in an encampment in the state of Rio Grande do Sul

## The University of the Land

After years of planning and fundraising, the dream of a full-scale University for the MST has finally materialized with the inauguration of E.N.F.F. The campus, an hour outside of Sao Paulo, is the first plot of land the MST has ever purchased. Construction began in 2000, with international financial support for the building materials coming from Catholic Churches in Europe and in grants from the European Union.

True to their emphasis on participation, the MST communities themselves provided the labor for the buildings' construction, with cycles of volunteer work brigades. In all, over 1,000 people have contributed to the University's construction so far, including a handful of *companheiros* from other countries. Work remains on the construction of four more dormitories, an administration building, a day-care center, and a theater. The two-story library, large auditorium, and computer lab are already in use, as are the kitchen and cafeteria. The design consists of many common spaces, open areas, and is characterized by the meeting of brick archways, patios, and many beautiful green acres of land. "This place is a dream come true," says 21 year-old Aparecido Domizeti from the Josue de Castro encampment in São Paulo state. "Not only the campus, but the coursework as well."

## School's in session

The University emphasizes the training of present and future activists, with the goal of developing sociologists, anthropologists, agronomists, economists, writers and artists; all rooted in the tradition of the land, and all committed to a transformation of society. The University structure itself is organized as a living experiment of societal transformation, in which participants learn as a community, always including a dimension of work, or participating directly in what they are creating. Organized in *nucleos*, the University functions as a collective, as students and staff share the responsibilities by taking turns in groups to do the necessary cooking, clean-up and maintenance. The administrative structure too, operates as a collective, with a group of people assigned specific tasks in which the positions are fluid and rotate to eliminate bureaucracy or hierarchy.

The first class of students at E.N.F.F., a revolutionary bunch of 17 men and women from all over Brazil, arrived as pioneers of this long fermenting vision. The majority are from poor rural areas where many were born into the movement; raised, educated, housed and now sent to college by the MST. The development of the University at every stage has taken place within large discussions where the



"A Dream in Construction," from a mural at the University

Their curriculum continually challenges the established truths of the state educational system. Students learn the history of the slave revolts against the Portuguese; the story of Zumbi and Quilombo dos Palmares, the group of runaway slaves who formed an autonomous republic in Brazil in the late 1600s. In this way, an MST education has the power to create new heroes and new histories of Brazil. Their pedagogy continually challenges the established 'truths' of the state educational system. The movement has created its own curriculum, with hundreds of publications — lessons of the struggles relayed through songs, group activities, workers history, lessons in organic agriculture, community health, etc. — distributed across the country and used to advance consciousness and ultimately the future of the landless.

students themselves are sorting out the kind of education they want the movement to promote. In this setting, students are decision-makers, both genders are represented equally and all regions of Brazil are part of the process. As the class will round out their semester with a trip to Cuba, they've been taking classes in biology, anatomy, Cuban history and politics and Spanish language. In their dorm rooms they can be caught reading many of the classics, works from Cuba, the Green Revolution, all things Che, Marx's *Capital*, Plekhanov's *The Role of the Individual in History*, Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

More important than the content of the books is what this model provides individuals from Brazil's marginalized classes. Students aren't geared to recite dogmatic ideology, they are taught to challenge capitalism in practice — in the fields, the cooperatives, and in social relations. "We apply what we learn here in the classroom to our daily lives," said Alves dos Santos.

## Only the beginning

The educational programming the MST provides, like as the movement itself, began as a response to very local struggles, initiated by poor rural mothers and fathers concerned about education for their

children. But like the greater movement, there are signs that the schools' curriculum is expanding in scope from local to national to international. With time, the movement has expanded to include not only the peasant community in Brazil, but anybody who struggles for land reform. The educational projects of the MST have inspired other movements attempting to create their own autonomous schools and alternative pedagogy through their international outreach, such as several of the schools within the Movimientos de Trabajadores Desocupados (MTDs) of Argentina, who use much of the MST's curriculum translated into Spanish. As La Escuela Nacional develops there is a good possibility of further programming for international students and activists.

What kind of leaders, organizers, revolutionaries emerge from this grand project only time will tell. ☆

*Kat lives in D.C. She was traveling in Brazil this winter where she taught an English course at E.N.F.F. — but mostly she spent her time listening and learning about individual struggles for land and what the revolution might look like. For more information see the Friends of the MST at [www.ustbrazil.org/](http://www.ustbrazil.org/).*

## The Professor and the Photocopy by Josh Medsker

"I've lost my place," Stephanie McKim announces on the first page of her zine, *Velvet Rut*, which chronicles the changed landscape and rapidly gentrifying culture of Austin, Texas. The second page lists Austin landmarks that have disappeared, like the tiny punk record store, Sound Exchange — which was replaced recently with a chain Mexican restaurant. Stephanie's in her mid-30's and works as a massage therapist in Austin. "When the place you grew to love has grown into something you don't like very much, what do you do?" she asks. "Problem is that it's been my only real home, so where do I go now?"

It's sad to watch this happen on one of the most colorful streets of a city renowned for its artistic communities and dedication to alternative ideas. Along with the record stores, the vintage clothing stores and local restaurants are being replaced by soulless corporate franchises. Most importantly, in the last few years, Austin's creative community has been losing its meeting spaces — spaces where like-minded people could once go and sit, stew, and meet. There are still bohemian haunts in Austin, but you wouldn't know it from walking down The Drag. The city's creative culture has taken some serious blows recently.

One day, walking down Guadalupe St, on my way to work, I got to thinking — frustrated with the faltering state of zinedom and indy culture in Austin — "what if I taught a class on how to make zines?" It was more of a joke than anything else, at first. Making a zine seems straightforward and obvious. But as I thought about it, it started to make more and more sense. What better way to fight Austin's gentrification problem than to help foster a community that isn't entirely reliant on a central, physical space? I also thought a class on zine-making might attract a group of like-minded

people who could introduce a few more zines into the Austin zine pool.

After asking around where I work, a friend of mine directed me to the offices of the University of Texas' Informal Classes Program. I sent them a letter saying I was interested in teaching a class on zine-making, and they mailed me the paperwork. They accepted my proposal, and I was over the moon. In two five-hour bursts of inspiration, I wrote up the outline then continued on to write the course materials. At first, I was a little unsure of how the hell someone could teach a class on making and distributing zines. There were books like the RE/Search zine books, and the Zine Yearbooks, but those were interviews with zinesters, and anthologies, not "how-to" books. I decided to create my own model, pouring all of my knowledge of zine history, theories, and tips into a pamphlet for the class. I'd concentrate on teaching the history of zines, how to make them, and then how to distribute them once they were are finished.

I was on fire. I had my chalk, I had my classroom, and I had my students. All I was missing was a tweed blazer with leather patches on the elbows. By the time the classes had finished, most of my students had produced zines—including *Velvet Rut*—copies of which were donated to the Austin Zine Library.

"I feel like I've finally found a niche," said Jessica Champion, a student from the class. I'd met her a few months before when she began volunteering at the Austin Zine Library. "I've been reading zines since high school. I showed them to my friends, but none of [them] really cared. But when I came to Austin... I started doing [Arcade Zine Distro], and its total happiness, just to finally find that niche. I think Austin's a good place for this. I grew up in the suburbs of Hous-

ton, and none of [this stuff] was going on." All the more reason to keep the Austin Zine Library and Arcade Zine Distro up and running

All of this sort of begs the question — How can any creative community exist in the face of gentrification and a transient population? "I wonder if the Portland zine scene works so well because they have the IPRC [The Independent Publishing Resource Center]," Jessica said. "I wonder — if the city didn't have that — if it would function as well. It's kind of a meeting place." Greig Means, from the IPRC, confirmed something I've thought for a long time. "The zine world is so transient," he said. "I think that makes it hard to document a real history." I think having a zine library, or some physical place for people to hang out and talk about artistic ideas is crucial to keeping creative people satisfied with their community.

The second half of *Velvet Rut* offers a little more hope, detailing the kitschy places still left in Austin, and asks, "are you here for the love, or the money?" It ends with a call to arms, asking people to take an active part in Austin's culture now, or "lose it forever to the moneygrubbers and posers with no sense of place or history." There have been plenty of articles in the weekly and daily Austin newspapers decrying the gentrification problem, but none of them have the raw energy and enthusiasm that Stephanie's zine has. "Zines are communication in its purest form," Stephanie says. "[And] community is nothing without communication." ☆

*Josh Medsker is a writer living and working in NYC. He can be reached at: [twentyfourhourszine@yahoo.com](mailto:twentyfourhourszine@yahoo.com)*

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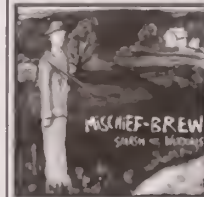
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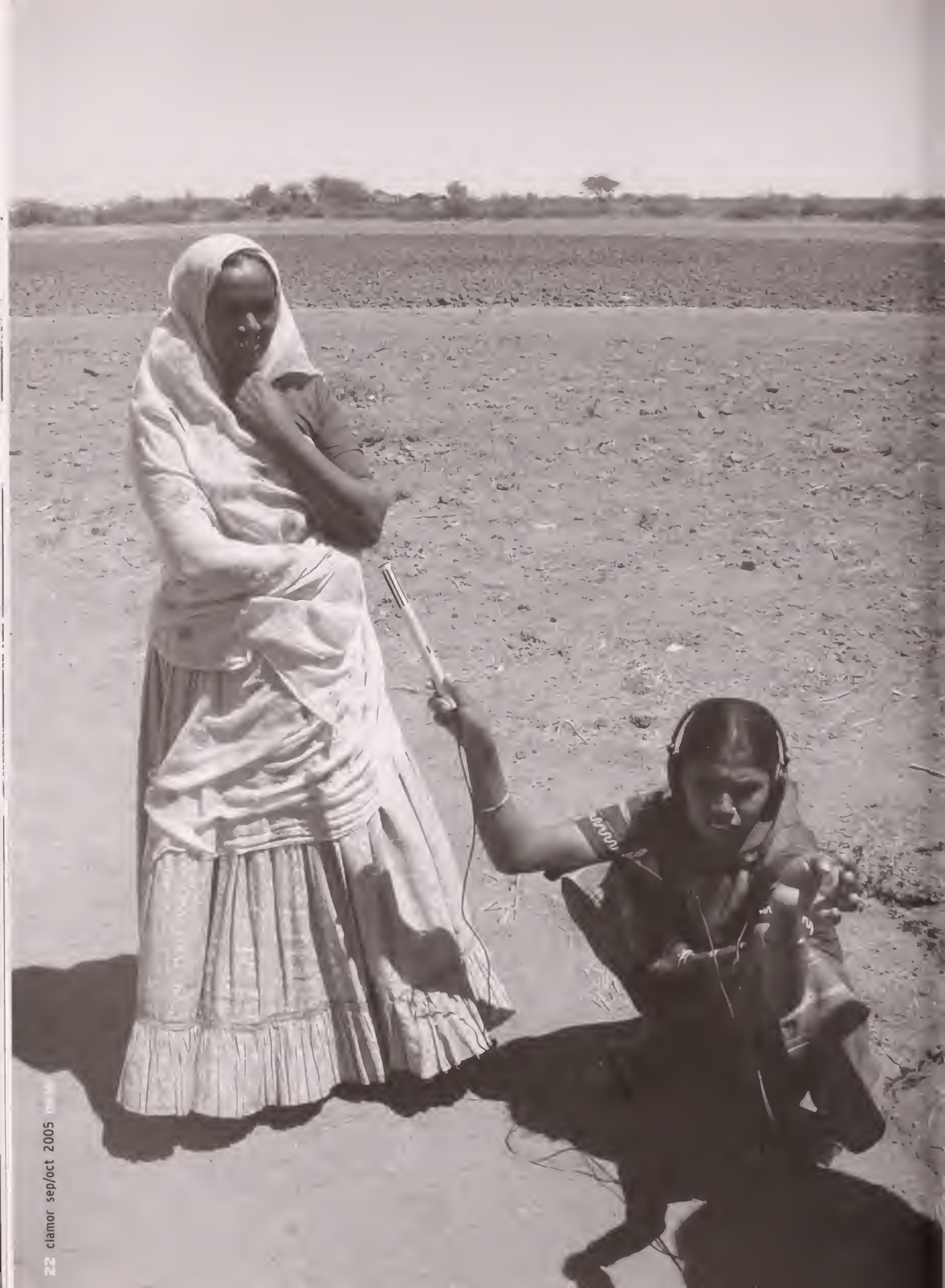
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# Ready. Aim. Shoot!

Learning Video for Social Change in Gujarat, India

words: Jennifer Utz

photos: Lindsay and Jennifer Utz

It's 7:00 a.m. in India. The temperature is approaching 113 degrees. I'm the only Westerner in a tightly-packed jeep, swerving in and out of every one of the four lanes of this frantic highway — dodging buses, trucks, cars, rickshaws, cyclists, pedestrians, shepherds, cows, goats, and the occasional camel-drawn goods carriage. Apart from the heat, I would normally find this type of situation exhilarating. But, right now, I'm disturbed by the awkward quiet of my fellow passengers.

After about 20 minutes, I finally break the silence. "So, what did he say?"

Our four-person video crew had just left a small village located in the north Indian state of Gujarat, where we had interviewed a 70-year-old man named Darshibai. From what I had seen — a sparse home without functioning electricity, an empty kitchen, and an emaciated man with a look of hopelessness in his eyes — I was aware that we had just gotten some powerful visual material for our story on food security. But since the interview had been conducted entirely in Gujarati, I hadn't heard the full story.

Over the next hour, Sabana, the video's director, gave me a rough translation. Eleven years ago, when Darshibai's wife died, he went to the local government office to have her name removed from their joint food-rationing card. He was told to leave the card behind and come back the next day to retrieve a new one. When he returned, his card had disappeared. Most likely it was stolen by a corrupt low-level government official and sold on the black market.

Darshibai, who is no longer able to work and has to rely on meager handouts from neighbors, has been slowly starving to death ever since.

"It's just me and my God now," he told Sabana.

This is one of the many scenes that plays out in my head as I lay awake late at night in the cramped upper bunk of an Indian sleeper train speeding away from Gujarat. I want to sleep, but can't. I've just come from the most challenging and yet rewarding experience of my lifetime.

## Video as a Tool for Social Change

Three months ago, my sister Lindsay and I arrived in the town of Rajkot, Gujarat as representatives of Video Volunteers, an organization that matches filmmakers with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world for two to four month stays. During this time, training in video production occurs either for the NGO's staff or for members of their local community.

Lindsay and I were paired up with an NGO called ANANDI (Area Networking and Development Initiatives), a progressive women's organization that uses an empowerment approach to improve the lives of rural and tribal women in some of the region's most impoverished areas. Our mission was to turn four ANANDI staff members into filmmakers.

After first demystifying the medium, we were to impart the skills of video shooting and editing, from concept to completion. Along the way, we were required to balance the technical with the social change aspects of video, which would involve extensive research into the region's various social issues. At the conclusion of this comprehensive training, we would focus on helping our students to create a final product — in this case, a "video magazine" designed to educate and motivate a rural and, primarily, non-literate audience.

The magazine would be distributed through many channels: it would be used by ANANDI field workers at village training sessions; broadcast on local cable television networks; and distributed to smaller, partner NGOs as a networking and knowledge-sharing tool. Finally, Lindsay and I were tasked with creating a sustainable video production unit within the NGO, with the goal that they will continue to produce videos years down the road.

## Lessons with the Non-Violent Weapon

Upon arrival in Rajkot, we were given an empty room in the ANANDI office. This was to become our new home for the next three months. The following day, we met the class, which was comprised of four students and an English translator. Kirti and Rishi had very limited English skills. Kailash and Sabana spoke no English at all, and had only been educated to the 7th and 10th grade levels.

"When I came in, there was this basic fear that I was not well-educated. I thought, 'This is only for educated people.'" Sabana, 22, recalls of the first day of class.

Likewise, Kailash, 19, had her own set of doubts, "Questions in my mind were, 'Rishi and Sabana are better educated than me.' So I felt insecure. At one point, I wanted to run away from here and go home."

Our first class began with cutting out photos and discussing the technical and conceptual meanings behind them. Within hours, we had a sense of our students' differing personalities, simply by observing.

Sabana comes from Godhra and was personally affected by the 2002 communal riots that left over 1,000 dead. Her photos had an escapist feel to them. She chose snow-capped mountains, soaring birds, and glowing sunrises.

Kailash hails from a tribal background, where entire families are often forced to migrate to find work if they do not have a successful harvest. Her photos of large rivers, green grass, and lush crops were clear signs of a young woman with strong ties to her region.

Kirti was slow and deliberate in the choices she made, revealing her role as a senior member of ANANDI.

Rishi, ANANDI's computer administrator, was silent and thoughtful as he hung his photos

on the wall in a very methodical manner.

Our classes continued on a daily basis, and we often worked more than 12 hours each day, trying to stay on top of our ambitious schedule. A digital still camera served as an excellent way to accustom the students to looking at the world around them in terms of a series of images. We assigned various still photography exercises, one of which was to simply take a series of shots that would tell a story of the students' choice. We ended each day with a screening and critique of the class's work.

By week three, we had moved onto the video camera. After we emphasized the delicate nature of their "non-violent weapon," we allowed the students to record one another with it. We took turns interviewing each other and screened what we had shot. What followed was a discussion about how it felt to be on camera versus behind the camera.

Oftentimes, the language barrier forced us to resort to some rather improvisational training techniques. To illustrate auto-exposure, we compared the camera to the eye — both need sufficient light to register an image. We had our students look into our eyes and explain what happened to our pupils when the room went from dark to bright. This drew a direct comparison with the pupil of the eye and the iris of the camera.

## Fighting for Food Security, One Frame at a Time

At the halfway point of our term in Gujarat, it was time to begin our final product — the video magazine. The class named it "Umag," the Gujarati word for "joy," and chose food security as the topic. The goal would be to raise awareness amongst our rural audience that freedom from hunger is a right, not a privilege, and thus result in greater numbers of people demanding access to government programs.

Each student would shoot and edit their own segment, with the help of the others as a crew. After scouting locations and scheduling interviews, we set out to a number of nearby villages to begin shooting. This is where we encountered people like Darshibai, who were living (and dying) proof of a failing and corrupt public food distribution system for the poor. We also met women who must resort to feeding their children tobacco or beating them to sleep to put an end to their hunger cries.

Having grown up in upper-middle class suburban America, I had never seen anything like this. But, surprisingly, I was not alone. Rishi, 28, was also shaken; this was his first time working in the field.

"It was very difficult," says Rishi. "People were speaking about their extreme poverty and about being hungry, and other people were just crying. And I wanted to cry too, but



Kailash and Sabana become acquainted with the camera



Sabana records the sunrise.

I knew I had to be strong.”

Rishi’s strength proved quite valuable when we encountered problems with an elderly woman named Rudiben. During scouting, she had agreed to be interviewed about her situation (her son had been illegally using her food-rationing card). But when we arrived with our equipment, she refused to speak on camera out of fear that her son would beat her. Rishi took time to explain how the importance of this interview and, moreover, the video magazine in its entirety, could help everyone in the community. The son finally gave his blessing, and Rudiben gave us our interview.

Not everyone the students interviewed was a silent victim of a flawed system. We also met very strong women, like Jashiben, the leader of her village women’s self-help group. After the 2001 Gujarat earthquake devastated Jashiben’s village, she led her assembly to the local council where they demanded new food-rationing cards.

Kailash told another success story. She went back to her own village to shoot a segment about two failing government plans to feed and educate children.

“My project was about the government’s responsibility for a healthy child. When this

wasn’t working efficiently, my community took it upon themselves to make sure that it worked. It can be an inspiration — that even if the government isn’t doing what it should, you can still make things happen.”

Kailash said she wanted to do something about the school because it was her own and she feels close to issues of children. “What I was not allowed, I want other children to have,” said Kailash.

### The Impact of Umang

After a grueling three weeks of production, Umang, Issue #1 was ready to be screened.

The first screening was for family, friends, and a number of partner NGOs. After the screening, those willing could stand and share their thoughts on what they had seen. The overwhelming response was positive, although we did receive some constructive criticism, which the team took well.

Most surprising was the feedback from Kirti’s brother. Kirti, 38, is a woman who chose an unconventional role in Indian society — first by refusing an arranged marriage, and also by following a path that led her into a low-paying and “low-status” career: non-

profit work. In a sense, she had “shamed” her family, and there have been domestic rifts for years. But her brother stood up after the screening and said, “I have always thought that Kirti was wasting her time with this line of work. Now, tonight, I realize how important it really is.”

Other students also underwent their own unique personal transformations. Kailash has seen a change in the way her fellow villagers treat her. “I’m getting support and respect from everyone, even from the village council leader. This is because of my work in the past as an activist, but the video makes it even stronger.”

“I threw a challenge to my people and myself,” says Sabana. “I am 22. I have a four-year-old daughter. I’ve been divorced, and have had to return to my mother’s house. I said that I would prove myself and support my daughter. This was hard because I come from a place where I must wear a full burkah after seven o’clock.”

Sabana said that even though videography is a job usually done by men, her uncles eventually came to support her. But the biggest change she sees is in her daughter. “She used to be quiet in school and now she speaks

with confidence," said Sabana. "She talks in class about the work I'm doing."

Our second public screening occurred in a remote shepherd's village. About half of the town's 200 villagers attended. The screening was followed by a heated discussion.

Umang had informed the audience that the government's food-rationing shops were required by law to stay open for 26 days per month. Our audience was outraged. It turns out that the shop closest to their village is usually open only five days per month. If times are tough, and one doesn't have money during that small time frame, they will likely find themselves surviving on what they can scrape together. Most commonly, this diet will consist of nothing but boiled water with onions.

The post-screening discussion went on for nearly two hours. Some people had too much pride to admit they were hungry. "This is not our situation," some said. According to ANANDI's statistics, this is simply not true. Nearly everyone in this community is poor and malnourished. It's just too difficult for some people to admit that they need help. Other villagers seemed inspired to action, particularly those women who were a part of the village women's collective.

The village screening took place on our final night in Gujarat. In a sense, to see our work screened and discussed with such passion was the final payoff for everyone involved in this project. This first episode of Umang will be shown in numerous villages across the region, and will undoubtedly spark many more discussions like the one we witnessed.

ANANDI is already planning the second issue of Umang, which will focus on domestic violence. In addition, there is a long-term plan for the four students to transfer their skills to more people within ANANDI, as well as others. And a number of partner NGOs have already expressed interest in learning videography from our trainees.

"ANANDI is definitely going to continue to use video. It's not going to collapse -- that's clear," says Kirti. "We've done surveys in the villages to find out who has electricity and a television, and if so, would they be willing to screen Umang. We're waiting for feedback. We're also speaking with cable networks to find out if they'd be willing to screen it. Eventually, we will have a strategy to reach out to a wider audience."

### Postscript

I still haven't slept. I can see through the train's window that the sun is beginning to rise over the rural land that comprises 75 percent of this country. We will soon be approaching Bombay, our final destination.

Reflecting on my experiences in Gujarat, a quote by Jawaharlal Nehru (the first Prime Minister of independent India) comes to mind. It seems to encompass an overarching theme that I noticed time and again during our work as video volunteers with ANANDI, with citizens of diverse ages, religions, cultures, and backgrounds—all overcoming fear:

"The greatest gift for an individual, or for a nation, we had been told in our ancient

books, was ... fearlessness, not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind ... But the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear; pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear: fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service; fear of the official class; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison; fear of the landlord's agent; fear of the money-lender; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold. It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised. Be not afraid....

So suddenly as it were, the black pall of fear was lifted from the people's shoulders, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree. As fear is a close companion to falsehood, so truth follows fearlessness."

*Jennifer Utz is a filmmaker living in Portland, Oregon. She's always looking for an excuse to travel, and over the past few years, her work and studies have taken her to over 30 countries. She just returned from eight months living in India and is currently editing a film about the present political situation in Zimbabwe. Contact her at [jen@jemmyjo.com](mailto:jen@jemmyjo.com).*

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[www.jemmyjo.com](http://www.jemmyjo.com)

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Kailash interviews a woman living in a Rajkot slum.





## an interview with James Loewen on Sundown towns and segregation in the U.S.



left: Historian James Loewen, above: A street barrier marks the border between North Brentwood, a black community, and Brentwood, Maryland, a sundown suburb into the 1960s.

# Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me

Historian James Loewen is perhaps best known for his ground-breaking best-seller, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: What American History Textbooks Get Wrong* [New Press, 1995] in which he examines several of the most common textbooks used in U.S. classrooms and details the myriad ways that important elements of our history are distorted, omitted, or just plain left out. In his following book, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* [New Press, 1999], Loewen applies this same technique to the examination of public history as it is written upon the landscape, using historical markers across the 50 states as his primary texts. This fall, New Press is issuing a tenth anniversary edition of *Lies My Teacher Told Me* as well as Loewen's brand new book, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of Segregation in America* [New Press 2005]. Prepared through extensive research and oral histories, *Sundown Towns* is an examination of the processes of exclusion that are still very much with us to this day and, like his earlier works, begs the question of why we have not learned about many of these histories before — histories that are tremendously revealing about social inequities and the place of many people in this world today. James Loewen took a few moments to speak with *Clamor* about his new book and the all but ignored history of sundown towns.

Interview by Edward Burch  
photos courtesy of James Loewen  
& The New Press

*For those folks who aren't familiar, we should probably define a couple of terms. What are "sundown towns" and what is the period you define as the "Nadir of race relations?"*

Sundown towns are towns that are all white, on purpose — or that were for many decades. Now, I have to qualify that immediately and say that they aren't always quite all white. Of course, non-household blacks don't count. That is, for instance, Anna, Illinois, is known to this day as "Ain't No Niggers Allowed," but Anna, in the year 2000, had some 85 African Americans, of whom virtually all lived at the Illinois State Mental Hospital. Well, obviously Anna was still a sundown town (with that nickname) and, in fact, people in Anna told me that it still had the policy. Similarly, many towns across the United States that are sundown towns (or were for decades) seem to have prisons; we seem to have a penchant for locating prisons in sundown towns. So some of these sundown towns may have a thousand black folks, of whom a thousand are inmates. You also have to not count live-in servants, because in a sundown town, they could not live independently in their own household.

Many, even most, sundown towns did allow races other than African Americans to live in them. Granted, out in the West there were towns that kept Chinese out for decades, and a few towns that kept out Native Americans and a few that kept out Mexican Americans. And all across the United States, there are all kinds of “sundown suburbs,” you might call them, that kept out Jews. But the primary target seems to have been African Americans.

Now, you asked me about the Nadir. Let me pick up on that and say that people need to realize that these towns weren’t always this way. Most of them went sundown during the Nadir period — which I think is best defined as the period of 1890 to 1940. This period is an unfortunate period; it is called the “Nadir of race relations” in the U.S. because race relations clearly worsened as you lead into it and then stayed bad, or even got worse, during it. It definitely begins at 1890 because three occurrences in that year give it a clear beginning. One is the failure of the Republicans, who were then the good guys on race, to pass the Federal Elections Bill by one vote in the U.S. Senate. The second was the Mississippi Constitution of 1890, which removes blacks from citizenship by “legal” means, and the United States does nothing about it even though it is clearly in defiance of the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. So every other Southern state, and states as far away as Oklahoma, passed similar

constitutions by 1907, and blacks slip into a state of non-citizenship in the South. And the third thing that happens in 1890 is the Massacre at Wounded Knee, which effectively ended the last fragments of independence for Indian people.

*Your book focuses a lot on Illinois and, like you, I grew up in Illinois, so it wasn't too much of a shock to me to learn that there are a lot of sundown towns there. But the numbers are pretty amazing when you find that there are so many more sundown towns here than in the traditional South.*

It was actually pretty amazing to me. I grew up in Illinois, but I never had any idea what a sundown town was as I was growing up. The town I grew up in, Decatur, was (and is) an interracial city, and I knew that all the little towns around Decatur were overwhelmingly white. But these are towns of 900 and 1500 and 3000 and it never really occurred to me that blacks had tried to move into them. I kind of went by the cliché that blacks seemed to like to live in the big cities. It turns out that this is completely false. As of 1890, in Illinois and most other places blacks were more rural than whites; the percentage of whites living in Chicago was greater than the percentage of blacks living in Chicago. But then between 1890 and 1940, as we’ve noted, town after town — including all these little towns around Decatur and all over the place — threw out their black populations, or passed laws or ordinances, or put into place informal practices that guaranteed they wouldn’t have any. And this just amazed me. I subsequently believe that I’ve done research that proves that 472 towns in Illinois were sundown towns, that is, had this policy. Well, Illinois only has about 700 towns so this means 67 percent of them kept out blacks. And I think a similar ratio exists in Indiana, in Missouri, in Oregon, and probably in many other non-Southern states.

*Various structural elements, such as ordinances or covenants, can function to keep in place racial (and racist) hierarchies. You make an interesting point in the book that zoning provisions might be designed to keep out polluting industries but then end up functioning to keep out “the wrong kind of people.” Can you talk a bit about how ordinances and covenants were used to maintain segregation, either by law or by custom?*

In *Sundown Towns* I have a picture of a playground in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, just northeast of Detroit; in fact, the picture could have been taken from the city limits of Detroit if I’d had a telephoto lens (it was about a hundred yards away). It is a picture of a playground with bars in front of it and a sign that reads: “Playground Use Restricted to Grosse Pointe Residents,” or something like that. Of course, that’s not really quite true. Any white kid can play in it and won’t get challenged, but any black kid, to this day, is likely to get challenged and have to prove that they are a resident. And for many years, you could not be a resident of Grosse Pointe and be black. So the power of the ordinances and the zoning is shown right at the edge there, and the same thing is true on the western edge of Philadelphia and many other cities.

The use of restrictive covenants only gets covered by me in the book when it is citywide, but it often is in entire suburbs. That is, many, many neighborhoods were developments that had restrictive covenants that were tied to the deed. In fact, I once bought a house from an interracial couple in Tacoma Park, Maryland, that had a restrictive covenant. They typically said, “No portion of this property shall ever be leased, sold, or lived in by any member of the...” and then they named various races. These remained in force for twenty years after it became flatly illegal to just keep out blacks. You could still put these things on your deeds; in fact the Federal Housing Authority for many years required them in deeds. This was a principle of good city design. Many suburbs required them of all the residential housing in their suburb, and if they did, then that gets on my radar



Will James — who had been arrested for the murder of Anna Pelley, was hanged under this brilliantly illuminated double arch that was the pride of downtown Cairo, Illinois, on November 11, 1909. Among the thousands of spectators were some from Anna, 30 miles north, where Pelley had grown up. Afterward they returned home and drove all African Americans out of Anna. Public subscription then paid for this striking granite tombstone commemorating Pelley. Adolescents in Anna still pay their respects at this site — a rite that helps maintain Anna as a sundown town.



as a sundown town.

*Did you find much upon the landscape, in terms of historical markers or otherwise, discussing the history — or at least the existence — of sundown towns?*

This subject is completely covered up. There is no mention of sundown town policies on any historical marker that I am aware of. But worse than that, consider this fact: my book, *Sundown Towns*, is the first book ever published on this subject. We have hundreds of books on lynchings — individual lynchings, or the practice in general. We've had scores of books on the sequestering of West Coast Japanese Americans into concentration camps during World War II. This practice of sundown towns was far more widespread. We had probably as many sundown towns as we had lynchings in the United States — and it was national.

*What is happening in sundown towns (or suburbs today)?*

I'm encouraged. I think in many parts of the country over half of

them have caved in — some as early as the 1970s. There are very few towns in the South or West that still maintain sundown practices. Now the upland South, or the non-traditional South, such as Appalachia, the Ozarks (if you call that the South), the Cumberlands, they still have lots of sundown towns. So does the Midwest. And there are still others across the country — and not just Anna, Illinois.

For instance, there's a town in southwestern Iowa called New Market that in about 1984 or 1985 re-passed its sundown ordinance. We know this because an interracial band (a swing band, I think it was) was engaged to play a street fair that they have. A member of the city council engaged them (he was also the Chevy dealer, I think it was). They included a black player. They played a set in the evening and then they took a break. The car dealer who had engaged them comes over and says, "Hey, we almost had a racial incident here." The band looks at him blankly and says, "Oh?" He says, "Yeah, the sheriff reminded me that it was against city ordinance for a colored person to be in town after dark and we were about to break the law. But we fixed it." The band looks up and says, "Oh?" And he continues, "A majority of the city council is here, so we held a special

*continued next page*

# VITAL NEW MEDIA

## War News Radio

If you find yourself feeling disappointed or frustrated by the quality of the news coverage about the war in Iraq, there's a new program produced by students at Swarthmore College that's filling an important void. War News Radio presents programs exploring the broad range of grays in issues and debates — aspects that are too often presented in pure black and white. By airing new voices and perspectives, both personal and historical, War News Radio speaks to people who feel that the current coverage doesn't go deep enough and who want more context and background on these critical issues of our time. Producers hope to both expand the understanding of the war in Iraq and promote civic participation in the debate around US foreign policy.

Though only a few months old, War News Radio has already produced more than 35 public affairs-style programs, most of them 30 minutes long.

Coverage on War News Radio includes:

- An investigative report on Custer Battles, a contracting firm, which allegedly repainted old forklifts found at an Iraq airport and billed the Pentagon for new ones. The lawsuit against the

company alleges that Custer Battles eventually defrauded the Government out of 50 million dollars.

- A conversation with poets both for and against the war, demonstrating the emotional responses and ideological differences of both sides.

- An interview with an Iraqi doctor who recently lost a child when American soldiers fired on his car, as well as a soldier, Sgt. Jason Hartley who spoke about the difficulties of checkpoint duty, following orders, and staying alive.

- A profile of Birdlife International and Richard Porter, who worked to save Iraqi wetlands and endangered birds.

- And features on Arab media, music, and art.

WNR has anywhere between 6 and 30 student producers working with Swarthmore faculty and a professional journalist to create a weekly show. While some students work on the program for credit, the passion for the project, and learning how to be journalists, has been the driving force.

War News Radio is available via Internet Webcast at [www.warnews-radio.org](http://www.warnews-radio.org). Producers welcome comments, suggestions, and contacts at [warnewsradio@sccs.swarthmore.edu](mailto:warnewsradio@sccs.swarthmore.edu)  
-Alan Smith

## Indy Kids

Kids are exposed to an average of 8 hours and 33 minutes of media content daily. How much of this media is progressive? Close to none.

Existing children's magazines such as National Geographic Kids and Kid City of the Sesame Workshop include ads for cereal, gum, and movies. The better publications such as New Moon and Footsteps Magazine encourage self-esteem in girls and knowledge of African-American heritage respectively, but there is no progressive current events news publication for children.

Enter Indy Kids. The new project, with a pilot issue to be released this September, will produce a monthly current events newspaper for children ages 9 to 11. The paper aims to inspire a passion for justice and learning in children, and to help parents and teachers assist children in interpreting world events from a pro-people perspective and a way that is exciting and appealing to youth.

Indy Kids is a collective grassroots effort and is starting out with the support of the NYC Independent Media Center. The project's organizers want the Indy Kids paper to serve as a tool for kids to learn that what happens in the world affects them, they can understand it, and they can have a say. They hope it will serve as a tool for adults to stimulate discussion with their kids about what's going on in the world.

While Indy Kids is produced by adults, kids may contribute art, photos, letters, and articles. The newspaper will include local, national and international news, arts and culture, science, and a puzzle section. It will be distributed through progressive teachers, school librarians and administrators, and parents. Indy Kids will initially reach a New York City audience with the potential to expand later on. For more information, write to [indykidsinfo@yahoo.com](mailto:indykidsinfo@yahoo.com).

-Amanda Vender

meeting of the city council here at the party and we voted to suspend the law for the night." The law went back into effect the next day, and if you look at the current census, there's not an African American household in New Market to this day, so I take it that the policy is probably still in effect.

*There's a wonderful line you have in the book that feels to me almost like a unifying thread or theme for all of your work — especially Lies My Teacher Told Me and Lies Across America — and that is: "Omitted events usually signify hidden fault lines in our culture." Do you think that statement is an accurate assessment of how and why you approach history the way that you do?*

Yeah, I really think that if we can't talk about it, then there's still something going on there. I'll give you an example of why I think this is clearly the case. Textbooks in the last ten years have been talking about — and giving some treatment to — the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Well, we fixed it. That is, they're not still incarcerated and, not only that, about 15 or 20 years ago we passed an act that paid them reparations . . . and we apologized as a nation. So, it's a success story now, in a sense; we shouldn't have done it, but we did do something to make it right. But on the other hand, with sundown towns, we haven't done anything to make it right. There are a number of towns that no longer have the policy, but not many towns have actually admitted that they had the policy and apologized. And of course, if they don't state openly that they are now open to all races, how in the heck would black folks know it? They certainly know that they weren't welcomed previously and they certainly know that people have tried in the past and have been firebombed or their children have been beaten up at school or they've been followed by the police. So I really do think it's incumbent upon every ex-sundown town in America to make a public statement saying, "We were one, we are sorry we were one, and now we are open to all." But so far, that's hardly happened anywhere.

*You comment in the book that there are likely historical events that we'll never know about where an individual took an action in a particular situation that kept a town from going sundown, and many of these stories are likely lost to us. But following on that idea for a moment, what are steps that any of us can do today — now — to work toward undoing these racial caste divisions that still persist in the United States?*

Interracial towns are so rare — or were so rare between 1890 and 1940 — that it's worthwhile sometimes for people who live in one to do a little study to see why it stayed interracial, or see what happened when the first black family came in. Somebody must have stuck up for them. I think it would be a great story to recover, if we still can, and sometimes we still can by doing oral history with really old folks.

Today, I think there are still a lot of things that people can do and, in fact, the last chapter of *Sundown Towns* is focused on remedies — and I have remedies all the way from things we should try to get the federal government to do to things that an individual family can do. Just to mention one thing that any individual family can do, if you live

in an all-white neighborhood — move. And I mean that completely seriously. It's a bad place to live. You don't want to raise children in an all-white neighborhood. Among the things they learn is that it's correct to live in an all-white neighborhood, that the parents think it's right, that other people think it's right, that to have an all-white (or almost all-white) grade school and high school is right. This is sending a terrible message to them. They can maybe overcome it, but why give them such a hurdle? Move. And, of course, when you sell your house, sell it to somebody who isn't white. Another thing that, I think, is even easier is that if friends of yours are thinking of moving to an all-white neighborhood or an overwhelmingly white suburb — and they are white friends — question them and ask them. Tell them, "You don't wanna do that." What tends to happen instead is that people get looked up to: "Oh, you're moving to Darien," let's say. "Can you afford it? Oh, that's really amazing!" and it's considered a feather in their cap. But we ought to look at it as just the opposite: "Why would you do that? Why would you do that to your children? That's a terrible thing!" and then people will maybe stop doing it. We hope. ☆

*Loewen is currently working on a follow-up to Lies Across America, which looks at what historic sites get right. Readers with information on sundown towns, or markers, museums, and monuments that tell interesting and accurate stories about US history, can email him at [jloewen@zoo.uvm.edu](mailto:jloewen@zoo.uvm.edu).*

*Edward Burch is freelance writer living in Urbana, Illinois. He is one of the founding editors of the online magazine Pamphlet ([www.pamphletpress.org](http://www.pamphletpress.org)). When not actively lamenting the hypocrisies of the corporate war state, he bides his time inflicting rock 'n' roll upon the unsuspecting public ear. He also loves kitties.*



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# SCHOOL OF PUNK ROCK

Antonio Lopez on Punk Pedagogy

photos by Ida Lake

Whenever beginning a media education project with teenagers, I always start by saying that everything I learned about media I learned in the school of punk rock. Usually I have to explain a bit about how in the early days of punk, corporate media had little interest in youth culture or the movement (i.e. they hadn't figured out how to make money off it), and it was up to us kids to produce our own media. I often repeat the mantra: do-it-yourself, do-it-yourself. It's not long before they get the DIY ethic and quickly harness communication tools that did not exist in my teen punk days: personal computers, the Internet, web sites, blogs, etc. My harping on the past gets a little tired, but they humor me because to them I'm a bit exotic: I teach them to be rebels, which is contrary to what the education system encourages.

My path to punk rock teaching methods starts with the personal. I always was a bad test taker. I bombed the SAT, and my GRE score left more than a black hole on my official academic profile. It didn't stop me from getting into top schools, or being a straight-A student. I like to believe that one can actually achieve academically while sucking at tests. What's key is that it's all in the individual's learning style.

Which brings me to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), or as some have come to call it, All Children Left Behind or No Child Left Behind for the Military.

I'm not a policy wonk, and I don't know the ins and outs of the actual law that was signed into existence by Congress (a key point, since we tend to blame only Bush for the whole sad affair). I've never read the damn thing, and I hope that I never do. And please don't test me on it. What I have seen, and have suffered through since the law's inception, is a rapid decline in the education being offered to our children, and I am not exaggerating when I say this law is a conspiracy to destroy public education so that schools will be sold off to political cronies who pick off privatized government institutions like vultures munching on road kill.

For the past four years I was a media arts teacher at a federally funded Native American boarding school in the Southwest, which

will remain nameless to protect the innocent. My particular task was to work with the "gifted" students, immediately pointing to a fault within the overall education paradigm. Our superintendent often stated that Natives see gifted differently, that it's not a matter of academic aptitude. What we had was an interesting mix of extremely bright, creative kids and also so-called "special ed" students, who were academically challenged but also fit the school's alternative concept of gifted. Because these kids had special needs, i.e. to not bore them to death, we gave them creative projects, such as video production, and used as our measure (or "rubric" in academes) a portfolio for assessment. As you can imagine, evaluating a student's work through this method is very subjective and impossible to standardize; hence the beauty of it.

Being a product of alternative education in my youth, which was the opposite extreme of NCLB, I was not required to do anything in school. My school's philosophy (and this was a public one, mind you) was that if I wanted to learn, I would make the effort on my own. Up to eighth grade I never went to class or did any work if I didn't want to, failing everything while I spent my time playing baseball or learning the "hustle" (I grew up in LA during the seventies). But... and this is a big but ... I learned to be a very creative, independent

thinker. I learned to critically engage democracy. Yes, I can't spell worth crap (that's what word processors and copy editors are for) and, did I say I suck at tests? It didn't stop me from becoming (a) professional journalist or educator. And this is the lesson I share with my students, often. For as creative projects were whittled away from their regular classes, and innovative programs were slashed to teach standardized testing, I would have to console these fine, bright children and convince them their futures weren't fucked because they bombed tests that only measured linear thought processes. I understood them well since, as an insecure teen, I actually believed I was retarded because I didn't get algebra. Really. And I'm sure many of you reading this had a similar experience.

What concerns me is the traumatic effect these policy changes are having on the youth, which are producing a number of chilling results. Administrators are running around like despondent chickens with their heads lasered off because they fear for their jobs, funding and failure, in that order. The government acts like a domestic abuser, and the schools behave like battered spouses. Because administrators feel clueless about how to proceed with NCLB, they take the most damaging, conservative route possible. For exam-



**I've been able to support myself as a kind of media lit mercenary, going to schools and giving talks on the negative health impacts of media, but also demonstrating positive uses of media ...**

a goddamn helicopter to wow the kids and lure them into their little bogus videogame war rap. So now, not only did I have to fight the feds

ple, our school had this really great program for eighth-graders that had them build a PC from scratch over the course of a year, and if they kept their grades up, they got to keep the computer. This was a fantastic curriculum that taught the kids practical and academic skills, and also enabled their families, who are traditionally in the lower income bracket, access to the one thing that empowers people in our technologically dependent society: a computer. Guess what? Science scores were below average, so the program was eliminated in order to teach for the test, because without certain achievement levels, federal funding was perpetually threatened to be cut off.

Remember that conspiracy I was telling you about? What happens when you demoralize youth and give them every reason to fail? What options are left for a class of people who are already disenfranchised and marginalized from the general society? Marshal drums please... bring in the military. I used to have the sad job of staffing the journalism and media table on career day. Queries were few, and who could blame the kids. Outside the National Guard hauled in tanks, Humvees and even

# KATY OTTO



How do people pursue their passions, the things that keep us going, while simultaneously surviving in a capitalist society? Katy Otto is one of those modern day superheroes who is truly following her dreams and getting by pretty well in this crazy world. Not only does she run an independent record label and play drums in the fantastic rock band Del Cielo. She is also the Director of Grants and Community Outreach for the DC-area Empower Program. She's helped organize, among many other things, the annual Visions in Feminism Conference and LadyFest. Katy is an inspiration to all of us, and a living example of what a better society could look like. I had the chance to speak to her at this year's National Conference on Organized Resistance (NCOR) at American University.

*When people ask you, "What do you do?" how do you usually respond to them?*

Well, professionally I work as a grant writer at a non-profit that's a gender violence prevention program that works with youth. But, I have a lot of other projects that take up a lot of time, too. I play drums in a band, Del Cielo, that I love a lot, and I run a little record label with my friend Sara called Exotic Fever. I like to do projects and organizing. I think who I am as a person has been shaped by the community I grew up in — the punk community in DC. It has been very important to my organizing and has been my source of energy. And I like writing

**Matt Dineen interviews a D.C. Superhero**

on their education policy, I had to spend valuable teaching time trying to deprogram the kids from enlisting. My efforts rarely paid off, for in addition to all the other noise, the school was required by NCLB to turn over the names and phone numbers of my students to military recruiters. Now I have former students, beautiful young people full of life, off fighting that nasty bullshit of a war in Iraq; it breaks my heart every time I think of it.

So here's my punk rock response to the situation: fuck the school system. In the near future that is. Believe me, as schools become more militarized and begin to simulate virtual police states and prisons, school administrators are so bogged down dealing with the failed system, it's impossible to innovate anymore. I found that there is an easier way to offer inventive educational tools without the hassles of standards, bureaucracy and scared school boards. Both art and media literacy have become powerful tools that are universally accepted as desirable and effective. Schools especially love anything that has to do with media or technology, and will support guest speakers and after school programs that engage students in media education. I've been able to support myself as a kind of media lit mercenary, going to schools and giving talks on the negative health impacts of media, but also demonstrating positive uses of media, i.e. DIY. Under the pretext of educating on tobacco, alcohol, violence, and/or body image, I'm able to communicate critical thinking skills very quickly using a medium that most kids are engaged in much more actively than regular school curriculum.

A case in point: I was invited to Phoenix to give a keynote at a youth conference centered on drinking and driving. With my laptop, I showed a series of commercials that reflect a pattern of subterfuge, using alcohol ads as my primary focus, but also showing fast food, car and cereal commercials to demonstrate the consistency of persuasion techniques. During the last breakout sessions, a young Latina raised her hand and asked a pointed question: "If you are saying that all ads are deceptive, is that true of military ads?" Bingo! Now, before I answered her honestly, I had to consider a few things: A) I was in the heart of Republican Phoenix and B) this was a law and order conference. What were my chances of escaping the room alive?

I quickly saw that all the cops, firemen and other mettlesome adults had magically disappeared to prepare lunch, so I decided that as the "expert" from New York, I might get through to a few kids with the truth. Sure enough, after my swift debunking of military marketing and the war, the room exploded. We're talking over 400 teens yelling and screaming, mostly wanting to kill me, but several actually taking an antiwar stance. It was wild and exciting – an energy I had never felt before, as if the war genie was finally allowed to escape. Clearly these kids had not had the opportunity to discuss the issue publicly before. Regardless of the personal attacks ("If our troops weren't in Iraq, you wouldn't have the freedom to stand there and say what you want." blah, blah, blah), it felt productive to at least release the frustration of ideological suppression, i.e. denial.

I conclude with two anecdotes. First, after being invited to speak at a high school in East LA, I was astonished to learn that all the punk kids at that school were in the ROTC. From my old school roots, this seemed utterly implausible, but as a like-minded teacher explained, punk now is just a sign, a fashion statement that means aggression. Perhaps. On the other hand, I still see a lot of politically active youth who call themselves punk. Ultimately, labels are totally not punk rock. Anyhow, the second point I want to mention is that most kids I work with are into hip-hop, but lack exposure to its activist roots. In a recent workshop in Brooklyn I asked a group of African American youth if they knew of any artists that had politically or socially conscious lyrics. None had. Then I showed them Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" video shot by Spike Lee; they were speechless. It was as if aliens had entered the room and seized their brains. But I'd seen this look before; I knew it meant they were truly absorbing something. Rebellion had gotten under their skin. And in the school of punk rock, that's what it's all about. ☆

*Antonio Lopez is a retired punk who teaches nationally and writes media criticism. He also participates in the Dharma Pnix community in lower Manhattan, which practices meditation and social service.*

*Tell me more about this grant-writing job. Do you enjoy that work? Is it a full time thing?*

Mhm. I've been there for 6-1/2 years, two as an intern in college. I like it because I was a journalism major and it's a way to combine some of my writing skills with interest I have in social justice work and particularly work around youth development, violence prevention, and gender socialization. So, I like it.

It can be stressful. Being a fundraiser isn't always a laugh riot. Especially in the current economy, and because we are not an abstinence-only organization. And under the Bush Administration those kinds of organizations are experiencing a much better situation [than us] in terms of funding available and tax cushions because of certain laws. So, that sucks.

*Yeah. Well, do you think you would continue to do this kind of work even if you weren't getting paid for it? It obviously incorporates some of your interests, but is the main function just the income that it provides, so you can support yourself?*

Well, no. I don't think that's the main function. Although I certainly wouldn't be able to devote the same amount of time to it if I wasn't getting paid, because I have to pay rent and bills. But part of my work is helping to co-facilitate a teen girls group and help mentor them, and that's the most rewarding part of the job. They organize a teen girl conference. They do public speaking, and community organizing and education. They're just 10 amazing young women. That's such a rewarding piece of the work. For the amount of money that people in non-profits get paid, it's usually other things fueling you to be there. But grant writing is not a stroll in the park.

*Can you talk about living in the DC area and how that affects your lifestyle? How did you choose to live here and make this your community?*

I really love living in DC for a number of reasons. Because we're in such a politically volatile world climate, it's very energizing to live in a place where a lot of really atrocious policies and decisions are being made. It makes it so that you do

not escape. Politics and international relations are very much at the forefront of people's minds here. And I think that's important for people who are interested in social justice because it keeps you alert and active and responsive as long as that's where your heart is. There's also a really large resistance community here and a pretty diverse one. So, that's nice, because growing up it was easy for me to learn about these kinds of issues. Also, there's a lot of non-profits that do youth development work. There are hundreds in DC. And the punk and independent music community is really thriving, and there are people who are older than me who helped mentor me when I wanted to do things like start a label. There's just a lot of infrastructure for projects. It's also interesting to live in a place that's essentially a colony, with DC not being a state. It's a very embattled place in a lot of ways. There's a lot of spirit here.

*Can you talk more about the dilemmas you've faced trying to work on all these projects that you're passionate about while being able to pay rent and get by?*

# Kitchen of Distinction

## The Bicycle Kitchen Cooperative Serves Up the Power of the Velo



An annual survey conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute reported that the average Los Angeles commuter offers up an estimated 90 hours per year fuming through traffic jams. Why the addiction? One explanation is that the car is viewed as a necessity. But in a city bridged by freeways glittering with shows of wealth, the car is also idolized as a lifestyle accessory — one that has come to stereotype race, class, gender, and sexuality. Categorizing people based on what they drive is such an ingrained norm of car culture that oppressive car-related euphemisms form a genre of LA hipster slang. “Rice Rocket,” for example, identifies tricked-out Japanese imports, while a “Fagster” — a take on the Roadster — identifies a well-kept brand-name convertible. And although these are destructive labels, there is no identifier for the bicycle within this rhetoric. Car culture — that is dominant culture, notices the street cyclists as a temporary obstacle, not as a site for a defining Other. This allows bicyclists the freedom to create their own rhetoric. The Bicycle Kitchen/Bici Cocina, a Los Angeles nonprofit bicycling co-op, locates this glitch. Through educational programs, organized rides, and community outreach, the Bicycle Kitchen not only supplies the know-how to move about car-free in Los Angeles, its mission focuses on the health and growth of a large, inclusive commuter bicycling community.

words **Tess. Lotta**

photos **Ben Guzman**

*Katy Otto interview continued*

Well, the nice thing about the label is that it's successful enough now that a lot of the expenses of running a label are covered, because we have a catalog of releases that does fairly well. I think I still lose some money each year on it, but it is able to be an active project because of the exciting attention people have paid to the releases. So, that's helpful. And also having the label in partnership with my best friend Sara. That's helpful because we share the burden of the work, the financial burden, and we also share the excitement and the interest. With the band it's been cool because we're a very, very intentional DIY band. But we're also very active and we work really hard on our band and have been a band for four years. So, when we travel we don't lose money because we work really hard. When we're on tour we try not to have days off. We go to the record stores in town and try to sell our CDs. We're very diligent about it. We plan things very far in advance to try to make sure they're done really solidly and really well. So, that's nice, because it's definitely not making money or anything, but it's not costing us money

to do. ... Although I'd love some equipment. I've got the same drum set I've had since I was a very little lady. (laughs)

I don't know. Coffee is a really good fuel for your projects. I drink a little too much of it. And I live in a group house with three very supportive men. I think living in a group house can be really awesome, especially when people share interests. It just makes it a lot easier to do things like shows in DC because there is a network of people. I did a show for NCOR Friday night and literally an hour before I was like, “Man, this is gonna be a tiring night.” But then people called and were like, “How can I help? Can I do the door?” I don't think that happens everywhere. A lot of times if I'm organizing something like a show I'll be in a pretty visible role, but I'm not the only person that's worked on it. So, I try to make sure people get credit where credit's due.

*Does the group house arrangement cut down on your cost of living?*

Greatly. Especially for this area, because we live

in a house that's cheaper than most houses and we've also converted a three bedroom into a four bedroom. Otherwise, this area is brutal. But my rent is \$300 a month, which in this area is pretty unheard of. That's really the only way to live that cheaply here. Oh, and we eat together a lot, too. Not all the time, but we just share things in general. It cuts down on bills. We're able to get things like cable that if we lived on our own none of us would be able to get. That's kind of cool. At first I was like, “No! No cable.” But it's kind of nice because then we don't go to Blockbuster anymore. We can just watch DirectTV movies.

*It seems like that's part of this lifestyle where you can be able to have more time to pursue projects if you don't have to work as much.*

Yeah. My work has been really supportive of my touring, too. The summer before last, because I had been at my job so long, I was able to take a sabbatical. So, I had a six-week tour and I was paid for all six weeks of work even though I wasn't there. But that's only a once every five years thing.



The Bicycle Kitchen/Bici Cocina started in early 2002 in the actual kitchen of a donated studio apartment nestled in the Los Angeles Eco-Village. What began as a bicycle repair space for co-founders Ben Guzman, Jimmy Lizama, Aaron Salinger, and their friends soon became a hub for commuter cyclists.

"There wasn't a place anywhere in the city to work on your own bike," says Guzman. "Once word got out that there were tools and people who knew what they were doing, everyone wanted to come hang out."

During the first year, riders solicited help with bike repair from more knowledgeable folks in exchange for a donation and beer. Guzman, Lizama, and Salinger used the money to invest in more tools and parts, and soon it became necessary to hang bikes, organize hardware, and rip out the kitchen cabinets. This growth reflected need, and after a year of running as an informal drop-in space, the three friends began scheduling mechanic volunteers for open hours three days a week. This first act of formal organization started a dialogue between regulars, and the Bicycle Kitchen transformed from a hang-out spot to a teaching community center.

"Bike culture spans race, class, and gender," says Guzman. "It is not one group resisting; it is many different people opting out of car culture because they want to or because they have to. Either way, if you don't drive a car, you've opted out of materialism and pollution, among other things. Our goal supports this. We don't repair or build bikes, we teach anyone how to repair and build their own bike."

This sentiment fueled the bustling apartment community center for two more years, during which time a collective,

mission, and nonprofit status were established. In January 2005, serious about growth as well as accessibility, the five-member collective and 20 volunteers moved into a roomy storefront located in Hollywood's diverse working-poor core. Anyone dropping by the Bicycle Kitchen during business hours enjoys access to a mechanic mentor, tools, and parts for a sliding-scale fee that starts at \$7 per hour. Since over half of the Bicycle Kitchen collective and volunteer staff is bilingual, Guzman reports a steady increase in interest from neighborhood immigrant families who rely on bicycles for transportation.

"These folks are riding in LA like they rode in rural Mexico," says Guzman, "and they are getting injured out there because of dilapidated thrift store or garage sale bikes." To welcome this population, Bicycle Kitchen is publishing a Spanish-language comic book that articulates bicycle safety and highlights California traffic laws. "The next plan," says Guzman, "is to implement a Spanish-language work-trade program."

New programs are possible because of the success of Bicycle Bitchen and Earn-A-Bike, two flagship programs that originated in the apartment space. Bicycle Bitchen is the all-female doppelganger of the regular Bicycle Kitchen, and the Earn-A-Bike program focuses on catching potential cyclists just before they come of age as drivers. While Earn-A-Bike is open to boys and girls, Bicycle Bitchen restricts access to the Kitchen to women mechanics and customers for two nights a month. Guzman insists that Bicycle Bitchen resists notions of gender difference, though for Bitchen mechanic Emily Ramsey, it privileges gendered experience.



I think at non-profits, because you're working so many long hours, there are things people will do to make sure that the morale is high.

*If you had the opportunity to live off your label and*

*your band would you do that? Would you quit the job you have now?*

I do have a dream of one day [being] able to just do the label. The band is a little harder to think about. It would be amazing if we could do that, but what's most important for me about our band is that all three people in the band always feel that they're in positions they're totally comfortable with. To me, that's a pretty radical thing as a band of all women — that the most valuable thing about the band is all three members' opinions, and nobody outside of that has any more say in what that looks like. So, that makes it really hard because you think about some of the things that need to happen in order to

get to that point. I know some people don't believe that it's possible for anyone to ever survive off their band without booking agents or really high profile, somewhat corporate-influenced record labels and things like that. Or people say, "Only if you're Fugazi." Well, I think there are other ways of people making that a reality. But it's not a part of my ambition with my band, because I feel like the process and the things that I gain from it are so much richer than that could ever be. I mean, if it just happened — sure. (laughs) I'm a very process-oriented person. ☆

*For more information about The Provisions Library, visit [www.provisionslibrary.org](http://www.provisionslibrary.org)*

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"Bicycle Bitchen is a safe space for women to enter cycling culture with who we are," explains Ramsey, "and women ask me about cycling all the time. When I ride up to my job or a dance club, and I'm sassed out in my salsa shoes or my heels and work clothes, I see a light go on in the faces of women. It's like, 'Wow, I can do that.'" Ramsey views Bicycle Bitchen not as separate space, but as a way for the community to address issues that come up for female cyclists, like feeling intimidated in what is a male dominated subculture, as well as physical and verbal assault. "With Bitchen we offer that community," stresses Ramsey, "while showing women that it is not hard or scary to build and repair a bike."

"Men are already welcomed into bike culture on so many levels," adds Jimmy Lizama. "If the homegirls have a space to exchange knowledge their own way, that means a bunch of women are riding through the city feeling safe and confident supported by a community. Imagine what that says to the rest of society."

Like Bicycle Bitchen, the Earn-A-Bike program widens the commuter cycling community by offering experiential learning opportunities to a specific audience. Youths between the ages of ten and 18 enter



frustrated drivers, traffic problems, and gas guzzling vehicles. After a few rides they begin to talk about the freedom that a bike offers, rather than be impressed about the size or cost of a car. That is a change of mind for them."

The Earn-A-Bike program and Bicycle Bitchen may pluck potential cyclists from behind the wheel of a car, but the delicate relationship between new convert and bicycle must be nurtured. Bicycle Kitchen invests riders with a sense of community and identity by organizing outreach events through traditional community resources, like the YMCA, as well as respected advocacy groups like the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition. This year, in conjunction with the internationally organized Bike Summer 2005, Bicycle Kitchen volunteers planned events for a month long festival. And while these annual events cultivate community networks and provide visibility for the Bicycle Kitchen, organized rides create what Guzman calls "bike life."

Bicycle Kitchen volunteers launch rides throughout LA with titles like Midnight Ridazz and Pasadena Pub Tour. The social nature of these rides is what makes them popular. March 2005 marked the one-year anniversary of Midnight Ridazz, which began with seven riders.

An encouraging 180 riders showed up at the launching site to celebrate, and by the next month over 300 riders participated. And although the Bicycle Kitchen supports politicized rides like Critical Mass, velo-powered social opportunities encourage a relationship between cycling and lifestyle, as well as ease the tension between riders and drivers. For Guzman, the rides are a perfect expression of what it means to live as a cyclist in Los Angeles.

"The only thing that sucks about LA," offers Guzman, "is the traffic. Culturally the city kicks ass. There are people of all nationalities, various subcultures, and lifestyles. Food-wise, art-wise, music, it is just rad. But once you throw having to live by a car into it, all you see is your job, the freeway, your house, the freeway. On a bike, you see this neighborhood, that place, this guy selling flowers, that cool mural or café. It opens your eyes to whom and what is around you."

The mission of the Bicycle Kitchen certainly politicizes the bike, but because the organization is using it as the locus of power for a community, they are creating a rhetoric that resists the need for a vilified Other. Just a sample of this dialogue causes one to believe that Sunset Boulevard



from top to bottom: Ben Guzman, Emily Ramsey, and Jimmy Lizama

the program as mechanic interns and learn beginner skills, such as patching tubes and identifying parts. Once an internship is completed, an adult mechanic coaches the participant while he or she builds a bicycle from the Kitchen's collection of frames and parts. As part of their training, Earn-A-Bike kids enjoy weekly rides through Los Angeles. Somerset Waters, the founder and coordinator of the Earn-A-Bike program, explains how the rides familiarize participants with commuter cycling.

"The riding aspect of the program models bicycle safety as well as bicycle lifestyle," says Waters. "We talk with them about the options they have to get where they are going. During the rides they point out

— a thick slab of pavement luxuriously gaudy on the Beverly Hills end and decidedly less privileged as it slides into downtown—could one day accessorize with more bike lanes than car lanes.

Contact Bicycle Kitchen at [www.bicyclekitchen.com](http://www.bicyclekitchen.com) or (323) NO-CARRO

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# Jets to Brazil

reflections on cultural imperialism and studying abroad

October 10, 2004. My flight for Salvador, Bahia, in Brazil was 20 days away. The entire year was dedicated to planning this three-month trip. This included purchasing plane tickets, registering for one month of Portuguese classes, and performing another month of volunteer work, among other travel plans. One of the final major tasks was to obtain my tourist visa. Carefully following both the instructions of my *Lonely Planet* Guide and the Brazilian Consulate website, I took a BART train to the Brazilian Consulate in San Francisco less than 30 days prior to my departure to apply for my tourist visa. I had casually filled out the application two days prior. However, I anxiously questioned the care I put into the application while waiting for two hours and watching applicants get grilled by consulate representatives at the three window stations.

"Bom Dia!" With a smile, I greeted the beautiful 40-something woman behind the window to only be greeted back with a cold stare.

"Let me see your application."

As she looked over my application, she stopped three-quarters of the way down where the departure and return dates were indicated.

"What do you plan on doing in Brazil for three months, Mr. Ganding? That's a long time to be in the country."

I specifically recalled an instruction in the volunteer work handbook that I had received from the organization. In bold print, the instruction read: **Request a tourist visa. Do not mention anything about volunteer work.**

Unrattled, I responded, "I am going there as a tourist."

She continued through the remainder of the application, and arrived at the "Personal Contact in Brazil" box.

"So, how do you know this person?"

Again, the volunteer handbook instructed to use this name in the personal contact box.

Determined, I replied, "She is a friend of one of my Portuguese teachers in Berkeley."

Now with a bit of suspicion in her eye, she again glared at me. "I'll be right back."

I waited for five minutes thinking that there was no way I could be denied a visa being this close to my flight. Yet, she returned looking even meaner, told me that she called my contact, and could not approve my application for a tourist visa. To pour salt on my

wound, she warned me not to attempt to apply for a visa at any other consulate or embassy in the U.S. because she would be releasing my name to them.

I didn't understand. I wanted to go into Brazil and provide a free helping hand to a grammar school, orphanage, or clinic in desperate need of volunteers. Admittedly, I was not completely honest on my application. Yet, to be blacklisted by every Brazilian Embassy in the U.S. was quite extreme.

Prior to this experience, the principle of diplomatic reciprocity was foreign to me. However, over the next three months, the values that define the principle would constantly be in my face. During two additional trips to the consulate, it became obvious that my failed attempt to obtain a visa was not rare, and that every consulate representative was working under a general rule of thumb. I watched one 30-something woman get denied for not having the address of the hotel she was staying at. Another lady was instructed to fetch a bank statement before being given approval. One consulate representative brought out a full-size map of the country to explain to an applicant how strange her flight route was, and would not issue a visa until the applicant explained the route. Another 50-year-old lady nearly spoiled the opportunity for a dozen teenagers traveling on a church mission. Like myself, she wasn't completely honest with the consulate representatives, and I watched her tearfully plead for nearly an hour.

As I watched these individual dramas unfold, and endured my own gut-wrenching

**“You send these poor kids to war for what? You deceive them about the great opportunities the military has to offer only to go get killed. You claim to be this amazingly powerful country, but all you do is work. And I don’t think there is anybody happy there like they are here ... You don’t have our beaches, our forests. You don’t have the soil to grow the fruits that we do. What’s so great there that you think you can dominate people?”**

drama, I couldn’t help to think how unreasonable and ridiculous the consulate representatives were being. However, I also realized that foreigners trying to enter the U.S. to reunite with family members, receive an education at a major university, or work to support families abroad were likely going through the same, and more than likely worse, nonsense. I thought of my aunts, uncles, and cousins from the Philippines who spent years raising money to pay for plane tickets and fees to consultants to ensure that the proper documentation and contacts were established for entry into the U.S. Now that the Philippines has been identified by the U.S. government as a country with terrorist relations, I wondered just how more difficult that process has become in the past several years.

I finally decided to cancel my volunteer work program, return to the San Francisco Consulate, and essentially beg to save my trip. Not only did I return with a letter indicating my cancellation of the volunteer work program, but I also employed symbols of the opportunities that first-generation Filipinos provided for me to take advantage of. My “presentation” included a copy of my college diploma, a letter from my employer indicating that I would have a job upon my return, a copy of my California Civil Engineering License, and, for good measure, a copy of my police record from the City of Oakland. After nearly 45 minutes of softening-up another consulate representative, I would eventually obtain my tourist visa and fly into Brazil as originally scheduled.

From the moment that I entered the country, the sentiment toward Americans was evident. U.S. citizens were exclusively directed toward a line for finger printing and photos. In Salvador, there were few Bahians that spoke English, but had no trouble saying “Fuck Bush” when I told them I was from the U.S. Equally, most Bahians found it very difficult to believe that I was an American, and had no idea of a Filipino presence in the U.S. At the beginning of the trip, I often found myself flustered by having to explain that Filipinos were the second largest Asian group in the U.S. and have made immense contributions as business-owning professionals, musicians, activists, and actors throughout their hundred-plus year struggle in the country. And, despite becoming less

and less appreciated, first-generation Filipinos provided significant manpower for the U.S. military during World War II.

Renting a room overlooking Bahia de Todos Santos (Bay of all Saints) from two Bahians, a friend of theirs, Gilbert, often stopped by after finishing work at a nearby tattoo shop. Surprised that I was American, I overheard Gilbert act appalled at the opportunity I had to come into his country to specifically study *capoeira*, the Afro-Brazilian dance/martial art originated by runaway slaves as an expression of their spiritual freedom.

“So, an American is able to just come in here to do that ... we can’t go into their country and do shit.”

Several evenings later, Gilbert made it clear to me that he hated Americans.

“You send these poor kids to war for what? You deceive them about the great opportunities the military has to offer only to go get killed. You claim to be this amazingly powerful country, but all you do is work. And I don’t think there is anybody happy there like they are here.” He continued, “You don’t have our beaches, our forests. You don’t have the soil to grow the fruits that we do. What’s so great there that you think you can dominate people?”

Leaning up from the hammock to ash his cigarette, he finished, “Shit, do you even have hammocks there?”

The other four individuals quietly listened with expressions of agreement on their face, yet were afraid that I might be offended. Although still a novice in the native language, every word spoken by Gilbert was crystal clear. For several weeks prior, I identified with my father who remains conscious of his accent when speaking English. Yet, no longer embarrassed by my American accent, I humbly responded that more than half the population agreed with Gilbert’s views, and that it was only to our benefit to better understand the logic of the anger.

The last four days of my trip was spent in Belo Horizonte, where a 20-something-year-old renaissance man by the name of Lucas served as my tour guide. Contrary to Gilbert, Lucas was quite fond of the U.S. and some Americans, having lived here for almost three years. On my last night in Brazil, Lucas showed me photos of his trip to Mexico, and

shared dreams of places he wanted to visit and the knowledge that traveling has given him. Thankful for his guidance while staying in Belo Horizonte, I invited him to come visit me in the Bay Area.

“Well, I need you to write a letter to George W. for that to happen.”

Lucas was living in New Jersey when the Twin Towers were hit. From that day forward, he lived with a sense of fear from living in the States with expired documents. Having overstayed his visa, Lucas feels he will never be able to re-enter the U.S. under the current conditions. And the only way I will be able to reconnect with Lucas is when I return to Belo Horizonte. That is, of course, if I am able to.

Stepping off the plane in Miami, a blue-clad female with a southern drawl diverted all American citizens to a comfortable exit, while travelers from Brazil were directed in line to have prints and photos taken at immigration. Having four hours before my connecting flight back to San Francisco, I sat at the airport gate reading about how the Bush Administration’s agenda over the next four years would be geared toward defining their legacy as the champions of the War on Terror and the fortifiers of Homeland Security. As the big screen TV flashed CNN’s coverage of the Presidential Inauguration, I could only reflect on how the work done to date in those two areas has been done at expense of international relations. While the reckless invasion and occupation of Iraq have burned bridges with other countries around the world, the maliciousness and unproductive busy-work of the Patriot Act and other Homeland Security measures have discouraged would-be travelers from attempting to enter the U.S.

Although conditions are clearly unfavorable for a foreigner in pursuit of an “American dream,” the colleges and universities of the U.S. have and will continue to suffer immensely due to such measures. As a result of striving to strengthen our borders, registration of foreign students in colleges and universities in the U.S. has declined steadily. If our universities are going to continue to be among the most advanced institutions of social, racial, and ethnic consciousness in the world, perspectives from abroad must be present in our classrooms, lecture halls, and campuses. With the continuing loss of an international presence, not only are the potentials of our future decision makers, educators, and activists impeded, but the potential for intercultural exchanges on the personal level, such as my discussion overlooking Baia de Todos os Santos, will become more unlikely as well. As a result, the opportunities for young Americans to travel abroad on a more intimate level during such critical stages of their maturity will also dwindle. Although insignificant at face value, a beer with Lucas or a study session with my cousin who never

saw a garage door open automatically before entering this country, could be life changing for a young adult from the suburbs.

And now, with Donald Rumsfeld given the green light to do just about anything he wants. I can already imagine myself struggling to translate the terms "covert operations," "unconstitutional," and "without the authority of the senate" into Spanish, Portuguese, or Tagalog. As the Administration continues to refuse to join European nations in negotiations with Iran, I can already imagine a young American graduate student trying to explain how he or she believed that military action could have been prevented. However, it is my deepest fear that I, or any adventurous young American, will never be able to get that far. Adhering to the principle of diplomatic reciprocity, Brazil along with several other Latin American countries invoked the visa process for U.S. citizens long before the War on Terror, as an act of rebellion. As injustices of Homeland Security continue to pile up, the potential for acts to strengthen application of the principle of diplomatic reciprocity increases immeasurably. Thirty-four other countries have been identified as having terrorist activity. If these countries follow suit and employ this principle, the doors to these countries will no longer be as open as they once were.

Although our government continues to misrepresent the diverse cultures and perspectives that exist internationally, we as

Americans have the opportunity and must take the responsibility to represent the struggles of those cultures and perspectives. As facts about the mistakes of 9/11 and the miscalculations of invasion of Iraq continue to surface, the powerful contributions made by a youth group leader in East Oakland, a ground-breaking Filipino-American Studies professor, and a gay rights activist, as well as the information provided by non-mainstream media publications, are overshadowed internationally by the incompetence of a few, yet powerful individuals. Therefore, as we have the opportunity to develop the movements here on U.S. soil, it is equally important that we individually educate about these movements abroad. By going abroad, we have the opportunity to understand the logic behind the anger toward our country, and to become vulnerable to the realizations that will help us strengthen our movements. It is urgent now because the potential of the government worsening international relations is extremely high. Also, two to three years from now, we may not be able to get the visa to make that happen. ☆

*Mr. Ganding is a freelance writer who currently resides in Oakland, California.*

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# Getting in Bed with the Bad Guys

words Jackie Regales

illustration Mklane | mklane.com

In November of 2004, Dell Inc. decided to build a new computer manufacturing facility in North Carolina, a project that promised to bring at least 1,500 new jobs to the Piedmont Triad region and have a \$24.5 billion impact on the state's economy over a 20-year period. The decision was the result of an extraordinary effort by North Carolina to lure the facility to the state, a courtship that included a \$242 million incentive package of land, property tax relief, and inclusion in the state's New and Expanding Industry Training Program (NEIT). As the oldest customized job training program in the country, NEIT offers free training to companies newly arrived in North Carolina or those that are expanding.

While clearly a sweet deal for Dell, the state government trumpeted the deal nationally as an example of how to keep lucrative manufacturing stateside. The Republican administration touted the training of laid-off workers as the answer to unemployment, and the Dell-Piedmont agreement seemingly promises it.

In fact, the Dell-Piedmont deal is a model of what President Bush hopes community colleges and corporate partners will accomplish under his Community-Based Job Training Program (CBJTP), a \$250 million grants program. CBJTP encourages such partnerships to provide specialized vocational training, designed according to corporate needs. In fact, when selling the program from coast to coast during the 2004 presidential campaign, Bush promoted this "free-market system of education," with community colleges at the vanguard, as one that trains people for "jobs that actually exist." Like other Bush educational initiatives, the CBJTP also includes public accountability and pits colleges against each other by competing for funds.

As is usual with political rhetoric, Bush's message is more than it seems. Free-market education implies that students, especially in community colleges, are more interested in vocational training instead

of studying the humanities or less "practical" fields of study. Essentially, if unable to afford a four-year school, the Bush administration believes that students only merit vocational training.

What's wrong with job training? On the face of it, nothing at all. Just ask Polly Katauskas, a former Navy-enlisted weather forecaster who retired after 22 years of service and is now enrolled at Anne Arundel Community College, in Arnold, Maryland, where I am an instructor. As an enlisted forecaster, Polly received the kind of training that CBJTP hopes for, explaining, "My particular school was six months of extremely intensive training in atmospheric physics, satellite interpretation, basic oceanography, forecasting methods, and on and on. If I didn't need to know it to do my job as a forecaster I didn't learn it. This method of instruction saves the taxpayer (you and me) a boatload of money and has produced good forecasters."

However, Polly is insistent on describing herself as an enlisted forecaster, because this specific training, while preparing her for her job, never resulted in a degree in meteorology or oceanography, as her officer counterparts held. She believes that vocational job training is both practical and effective but is an entirely different arena from her current education as a college student.

"I'm not here for job training," she says, "I hope to never need that again. Getting a degree is a personal goal for me, and I worry that an emphasis on job training would overshadow the value of learning."

Community colleges have always struggled to maintain a balance between their three primary functions: helping under-prepared students become more prepared for higher education, offering affordable university-level courses, and providing vocational training. These origins date back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the first community colleges were established as two-year liberal arts colleges. They shifted in 1948, when the Truman Commission declared that post-World-War II America, particularly veterans financing their studies with the GI Bill, would benefit from increased vocational training at community colleges. The aggregation, termed the comprehensive college model, has long been a delicate juggling act for many schools.

Jose Ortiz, Vice President of Instruction at Laney College in Oakland, California believes that community colleges are already overtaxed and under-funded, and that "target" funding is often ineffective because colleges lack the resources to properly manage the new, narrowly designed programs. "In the state of California, for example, community colleges receive a little over \$4,000 per student," Ortiz notes, "while the University of California receives over \$16,000 per student and the California State college system receives a little over \$10,000 per student." Much of the money allocated in the Community-Based Job Training Grants programs will disappear into developing the bureaucracy needed to handle an entirely new program in addition to the heavy load community colleges already carry.

The California community college system handles more students than either of the other branches of higher education in the state yet receives less money. In Florida, one million students enroll in the state's 28 community colleges every year. In the year 2000, 42% of all undergraduates nationwide were enrolled at public two-year institutions, according to the Department of Education, forecasting that 2005 enrollment will exceed 6 million. Including branch campuses, there are over a thousand community colleges in the United States, and yet are consistently ignored in discussions of higher education and funding. Disturbingly, the students at these colleges would most benefit from higher education and are unable to afford pursuing at more expensive or demanding venues.

Of the 8,000 students at South Seattle Community College in Washington, the average student age is 30, and 48% are first generation college students. Thirty-three percent are non-native English speakers, 9% are single mothers, and 15% are immigrants to the United States. The student body is 33% Caucasian, 24% Asian or Pacific Islander, 10% Hispanic, and 13% African-American.

As an instructor, I am continually amazed at what my students endure in order to obtain their education. I have had students who are nurse's aids and attend my evening course from 6-9:30 p.m., work a twelve-hour shift beginning at 10 p.m., then wake up and take another class in the afternoon, semester after semester. Many of my students are mothers attending college for the first time only after their oldest child begins to attend college, often at exclusive institutions very dissimilar to mine. The occupations of my students have included police

officers, dispatchers, computer programmers, nannies, receptionists, retail workers, classroom aides, social work aides, and full-time mothers, but rarely do I have student who is not carrying several classes in addition to a full-time job.

While a great number of my students are working towards degrees that will aid them in their current careers, many hope to transfer to four-year institutions. I hear ambitions ranging from legal work to mechanical engineering to secondary education, from students of all ages and skill levels. I hear these students talking about occupations, but just as often I hear that a college degree is a personal goal, or that they will be the first in their family to receive a "real degree." I hear parents, male and female, saying that they want to model lifelong learning for their children. And, I hear students mention anthropology, foreign languages, and astronomy as just a few of the courses they want to take when they transfer to larger institutions.

An anonymous instructor at a Western community college raises concerns about the benefits of these training grants to the kinds of students she and I teach every semester. She fears that programs like these benefit the employer, but "can easily be used by employers to just get around having to pay to train their own existing or potential employees, bringing their profit margin higher at the public's expense." After all, neither North Carolina's program nor the federal programs ensure that trained students will be guaranteed jobs, or that these jobs will last. Neither program assists workers in paying for the training. The instructor goes on to add, "Tying the grant to specific employers is problematic, as well. This opens the door (wider) for businesses to shape curriculum to meet their specific short-term needs rather than the long-term needs of a community, which is what should shape the curriculum." In an era when manufacturing moves in and out of states, and indeed, the country, at a company's whim, a degree may offer workers more job opportunities than a training targeted solely for the needs of a corporate employer.

President Bush spoke at my college in last year's campaign and mentioned the job training programs. I took this opportunity to discuss the program with my classes, to see how they felt about the proposed changes to their educations. One of my students, an avowed and vocal conservative, spoke up immediately. "Well, it's all about outsourcing, isn't it?" he said. "Aren't we losing all these jobs to outsourcing? Shouldn't we be training people better so that Americans can be more competitive and keep those jobs here in the U.S.?" It was an argument Bush himself has made in favor of the training programs, but as I told my student, I find that to be a faulty argument. I don't believe outsourcing is caused by a lack of skilled American workers, and I don't believe job training will slow the tide, as a closer look at struggling communities across the country indicates.

Owens Community College, in Toledo, Ohio, is one of the fastest-growing community colleges in the nation, a success story often cited by Bush when speaking of the future of community colleges. Owens, founded 40 years ago as a technical college, today is a comprehensive community college serving over 44,000 students. Some of its most distinctive and well-known programs include the Skilled Trades Technologies and Open Exit programs, designed to be "directly targeted to the requirements of a modern manufacturing environment," built with input from community business leaders, with customized courses often offered on-site at participating corporations. Owens works with over 400 companies in industry annually and has served over 18,000 people in their Workforce Development programs.

If job training were the silver bullet, than Ohio's economy should be booming, particularly in the northwest area where Owens is thriving.

**I don't believe outsourcing is caused by a lack of skilled American workers, and I don't believe job training will slow the tide, as a closer look at struggling communities across the country indicates.**



ing. Yet, it is not. Federal economists are mystified by the abundance of woes. Analysts point to state tax policies, business development practices, quality of life questions, and the higher cost of benefits-per-employee in the eastern Midwest region, but no one seems to think the workers are unskilled. Area economists talk of the Southern United States being much less expensive for employers because their benefits and pay are cheaper, and attribute the differential to the prevalence of unions in the Midwestern states. Ohio is still waiting for the solution to a lagging economy, but job training is not the savior.

While job training is difficult to turn down, it should not supplant the other vital functions that community colleges offer student bodies. More importantly, we should not be engaged in telling students who

cannot afford higher education that their only other option is to train for jobs that may or may not last, that they may or may not enjoy or feel an aptitude for. We should ask ourselves: should our higher educational institutions function in response to the free market? And, if students that would benefit most from university education should be the experimental guinea pigs impacted by such free market forces? ☆

*Jackie Regales teaches courses on activism, popular culture, and fine arts, and writes, hangs out with her kids, and loves her partner in Baltimore.*

# Me Abrio los Ojos

## Occupational hazards for farmworkers affect us all.

It's a warm summer evening as the farmworkers leave the fields after a long hard day of work. As they walk back to the camp, they wait their turn to shower and sleep. They are tired but still need to cook dinner only to return to the fields early the next morning to begin their routine again. While workers still sit around the dinner table, Manuel arrives with a duffel bag full of interesting props and big colorful flipcharts. The workers become animated as he captures their attention by pretending to be a game show host for *Las Tres Botellas* (The Three Bottles). This activity sets the stage for an in-depth discussion with farmworkers about pesticides as they receive important information as well as share their personal experiences. Workers also make the connection between occupational exposures and their own well-being. As one describes, "We feel alright now, but there are long-term effects... and now with this discussion, it is good because we are [learning] to prevent it." Amidst the conversation, even those workers who are hesitant to participate are attentively watching and listening to Manuel Guzmán, an organizer with the Farmworker Health and Safety Institute (FHSI or Institute) in Glassboro, New Jersey.

The FHSI training was developed along with its member organization CATA — El Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (The Farmworker Support Committee). The Institute is a unique consortium of three community-based farmworker organizations whose members include CATA, the Farmworker Association of Florida and the Border Agricultural Workers Project based in Texas. Our mission is to develop the capacity and leadership of our grassroots member organizations so that they in turn can do the same with their respective farmworker constituencies. When asked about the training's content, one farmworker replied, "I think that it is good information for all farmworkers. We arrive here and we don't know nothing about pesticides, absolutely nothing." According to Manuel, a worker takes action when they first understand his/her rights. Our training encourages collective action to address workplace violations, but ultimately, the workers decide.

The Institute has created a series of trainings on pesticides, organic farming and leadership development utilizing Popular Education Methodology involving the community in the learning process. After a long, hard day at work, many of us could find it challenging to stay awake at a lecture. But we capture the workers' attention through role-playing, theater skits, vignettes, and flipcharts. The trainings go beyond fun and games as workers develop critical thinking skills by analyzing their reality and brainstorming possible solutions during a lively discussion. Information from the training has an impact on the workers, whose conduct in the fields has changed. As one CATA member explained, "There could be residues of the pesticide. We did not have any knowledge about this. We should not be eating over there in the middle of the fields."

What is different about our educational programs is that they come from the bottom up,

**"I believe that the farmers ignore us more, I believe that they do not understand the effects one is able to have. They are only interested in their product and their profit, it doesn't interest them if we get sick."**

from the community. There exists a continual flow of information and ideas between farmworkers, our member groups, and the Institute. Farmworkers provide the direction for our training programs through their experiences. They identify areas of concern to the member groups. Employing mapping exercises, focus groups, and individual interviews, farmworkers provide input into the curriculum development and we work with our member groups to develop a manual. We then train our members to develop their skills, increase their organizing capacity, and then develop the organizing skills of farmworkers.

The connection between capacity building and this constant flow of information is best reflected through the personal experience of Manuel, whose history as a farmworker from Mexico has given him authenticity within the community. Manuel first conducted pesticide trainings as a CATA organizer. And now, with experience and as a Master trainer, he others through a Train-the-Trainer program.


During pesticide trainings, he is constantly confronted with grim realities that employers do not comply with the laws and cause workers to be subjected to numerous health violations. As one training participant commented, "I believe that the farmers ignore us more, I believe that they do not understand the effects one is able to have. They are only interested in their product and their profit, it doesn't interest them if we get sick."

Manuel eloquently explains that you are not only there to give out information, but also to receive it. Involving farmworkers in the process is important because they are the ones doing the work, suffering worksite and environmental injustices. Therefore, it is only natural that they should be the ones that give us direction and work with us to develop new trainings in order to collectively work for better conditions.

The farmworkers also have a message for all of us. We, the consumers, have such an intimate connection with farmworkers at each meal but are either unaware or not interested in the conditions under which they labor. We are more interested that our food is fresh, affordable and looks good. One farmworker wished that "consumers had more awareness about farmwork, the conditions, the extreme temperatures. If only they would support us if there was some investigation or movement. That they would support us in order to better understand the reality of farmwork and in this way would have more awareness." ☆

-Teresa Niedda and Jose Manuel Guzman

To learn more about the Institute and its programs, contact Teresa Niedda at [fhinj@aol.com](mailto:fhinj@aol.com) or 856-881-2507.



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# BLING KONG

trends in urban development  
connect your zip code to your life expectancy

In the nation with the highest income inequalities in the industrialized world, New York has the greatest discrepancies in wealth of any U.S. city. A May 2005 *New York Times* series on class in America describes the social divisions as “shadowy.” This description may come as a surprise to many of us here in the city, where neighborhoods are transformed by high rise luxury accommodations, and all the while we cross our fingers and hope that our own apartment building — as it hovers between its low-income tenement past and its future as a reinvented pre-war co-op — will not be the next to fall just beyond our economic reach. Rumor has it that a section of the recently closed Domino sugar factory in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn has been bought by a corporation known for urban residential development.

In the context of urban crowding and rapid gentrification, everyone is an informal researcher. Following this tradition, my article draws on the view from my north Brooklyn fire escape, and asks what material wealth and a claim on life — its quality and its length — have to do with one another. For better or worse, wealth discrepancies surpass the absurd architectural aesthetic that accompanies urban renewal. A digit change in your zip code could mean a double-digit shift in your life expectancy. A 2005 statement by the New York City Department of Health reports that while great strides are being made in overcoming social inequalities in health, those living in low-income and minority communities can still expect to live around eight fewer years than the “haves” living a few blocks away.

To say that the poor die younger is only half of the truth. The rich live longer, and since this gritty reality reflects income disparities rather than absolute dollars, the growing gap between the rich and the poor shall exacerbate the divisions. The *New York Times* series acknowledged that: “Some colleges, worried about the trends [of multiplying barriers to higher education], are adopting programs to enroll more lower-income students. One is Amherst, whose president, Anthony W. Marx, explained: “If economic mobility continues to shut down, not only will we be losing the talent and leadership we need, but

words Sarah Picard Bradley

illustration Keith Shore | [kasprojects.com](http://kasprojects.com)

we will face a risk of a society of alienation and unhappiness. Even the most privileged among us will suffer.”

Rather than accept these patterns, one should analyze what is happening within university walls and consider what can be done about such trends. There has been an upsurge in academic studies about social inequalities and health over the last 15 years. A search of an academic database bears this out, revealing over 180 journal articles in the past decade containing the key words “social inequality” and “health.” These writings vary from the relationship between cardiac failure and racism, to the impact of involvement in the criminal justice system on adolescent suicide. Despite the breadth of such research, the findings are inadequately shared with impacted communities. Meanwhile, the resistance to unjust urban conditions depends upon community-based organizers, activists and youth protest movements — groups that rarely come into contact with allies in research. When and where do activism, community building and progressive research meet?

Some claim that these movements come together in the form of participatory action research (PAR), defined as “research practice with a social change agenda” by long-time action researchers David Greenwood and Morton Levin. Their work originates from a range of intellectual traditions, including liberationist Paolo Freire and social psychologist Kurt Lewin, while providing detailed illustrations of how these traditions can be applied to social justice: from the reinvention of corporate and organizational dynamics to increasing global primary health-care access for poor communities. According to Levin & Morton, action research concludes with an unavoidable caveat: “Because it is research practice with a social change agenda, [P]AR involves a critique of conventional academic practices and organizations that study social problems *without trying to resolve them.*” In an increasingly conservative intellectual climate, there has recently been a surprising surge of interest from funding agencies, including federal funders, in the concepts under-girding participatory action research.

Significant action research has taken place in the environmental justice movement. Not to be confused with traditional environmental activism, the EJ movement encompasses environmental racism, public health, and resistance to gentrification. For example, imagine a campaign in Anycity, USA to clean

up brownfields. The effort can lead to a new usable open space, a long-term reduction in cancer incidence among community residents and the empowerment of these residents to resist further intrusion and creeping gentrification. Therefore, environmental justice redresses a mix of social issues too often segregated as “medical,” “economic,” or “environmental.”

Sustainable social justice requires more than a one-time clean up or even long term public education and advocacy. Rather, it requires policy and enforcement changes protecting communities from industrial pollution and environmental disease, and the push of gentrification distancing traditionally urban communities from public resources like hospitals and transportation. Partnerships between environmental activists, affected community members, and research scientists have recently created this kind of success regionally in California.

A 2003 collaboration between Communities for a Better Environment (a community based EJ group), the Liberty Hill Foundation, and a loose knit group of progressive social and health science researchers managed to achieve a series of policy changes and concessions both from government and polluting industries across several neighborhoods in South and South Central Los Angeles. The crux of the collaboration, and of PAR collaborations in general, is the coordination between community activists and scientists. In non-participatory contexts, the potential allies work from similar agendas yet are unaware of one another.

Manuel Pastor, a professor at the University of California-Santa Cruz, is a research consultant to numerous regional California environmental justice projects. Pastor explains how critical the researcher-activist link is for structural social change to occur, “real policy change is community driven...but it’s one thing to speak to industrial pollution as a deeply affected community member, and another to produce maps or figures documenting this. In the case of Los Angeles, the leaders of polluting industries felt they could beat back the environmental justice movement pretty easily using science... [yet] our researchers dispensed with that [idea] pretty quickly.”

Scientific support lent to community-driven campaigns should not be perceived as a charitable endeavor by elite policymakers to poor communities. In fact, community involvement pushes science to new standards

and transforms community members from research objects to research agenda setters who continually force scientists to rethink priorities. As Dr. Pastor points out, “academics are worried about losing scientific objectivity. But the research we do with communities is actually more rigorous because of community involvement. Think about it this way, when you’re trying to produce policy change through community-based organizations, you don’t want your research [facts or methods] to be in question. This kind of pressure is much heavier than even that of academic peers.” Action research potentially challenges the division between layman and expert, while creating a unified voice for structural change.

So where does this leave New York City’s floundering environmental justice movement? New York has a vibrant history of alliances between science and activism, most notably around HIV/AIDS, where the collaboration of academics and organizers has changed the disease’s course nationally with the founding of groups like ACT UP and Housing Works and legitimizing needle exchange programs.

Social justice research also crops up locally in less predictable ways. For example, recent research in Harlem between a social psychologist based at the City University of New York and the male children of African immigrants illuminates the nature of life on the streets, including the interaction between structurally enforced unemployment, cultural points of resiliency, and participation in informal economies. The findings challenge concepts about the drug war and related labor and criminal justice policies. And such action research has the ability to reinvent the unjust habits of community based research, as Dr. Yasser Payne, author of *Street Life*, discusses: “Most community research is exceptionally exploitive in that the work and benefits of it never come back to the community. And most scientists who conduct “community” research rarely — if ever — develop a relationship with the community they profit off of. PAR research forces this very normal and common kind of exploitation to be turned on its head.”

Finally, by studying New York’s trash, one gets a look at where social inequality and health, urban gentrification, and participatory action research meld. As low-income neighborhoods are pushed from the urban core, political pressures force the disease-borne industry to follow by the export of solid waste

**“real policy change is community driven ... but it’s one thing to speak to industrial pollution as a deeply affected community member, and another to produce maps or figures documenting this. In the case of Los Angeles, the leaders of polluting industries felt they could beat back the environmental justice movement pretty easily using science ... [yet] our researchers dispensed with that [idea] pretty quickly.”**

to outlying working class suburbs and townships. As a blogger from Elizabeth, New Jersey noted, "of course, what we really want is to close the transfer station, but the NJ regs do not apparently allow that to happen. We have taken in half a million tons of NYC garbage annually since November 2000.....Waste Management buys off our city administration with lucrative contracts ... I think the city receives \$400,000 annually...[meanwhile] property values have declined in the houses surrounding the site probably fifty times that amount. And that neighborhood now has a 20 percent adult asthma rate, about four times the national average."

While it should be disheartening enough to know that insatiable hunger of gentrification may well destroy the unique cultural tone of our city center, the goal of linking urban renewal with health inequality is to illustrate the immediacy of the issue. Those of us affected by the social class infused geography and epidemiology of AIDS, asthma, and cancer do not have time to wait for convenient political opportunities to begin researching, analyzing and trying to slow this process.

Participatory action research projects can have significant impact. Extending beyond narrow outcomes, such research challenges social science traditions that observe

a social problem without trying to change it. Participatory action research requires that progressive researchers and community activists keep their focus on long term objectives. Many action research projects began as "bucket brigades" where members of communities measured water and air pollution in their neighborhoods with the purpose of changing environmental policies and preserving their homes. ☆

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## Teamsters Teaching Teamsters

Inside my union — Atlanta's Local 728 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) — member-to-member education networks have been critical in vast changes over the past year. In this time, rank-and-file reform activists have worked to elect a new, activist leadership of the 6,000 member statewide and local. With Randy Brown at the head of the Members First Slate, we had to face two elections — and, against the odds, won both times.

"I have been a job steward for nine years and have seen more unity as a union member in the last three months than in all the prior years," explained Joe Owens, a shop steward at a UPS workplace in Tifton, Georgia. "I support 'Members First' because I believe that they have the backbone and capability to handle the job."

The key element of our strategy is Teamsters educating Teamsters — both in terms of getting a change in leadership, and over the long-haul by building a stronger union capable of fighting multi-national companies, like UPS, which employs nearly half of Local 728's members.

During both union elections, we were successful in building a network of activists who could bring information around key issues — like pensions and healthcare — to members throughout the local. We were threatened with 50% cuts in our benefits, and were not getting solid information from the old guard local leadership or the IBT. In response, we developed our own information networks and did our own research about the imminent changes.

Educational meetings on pension issues attracted hundreds of Teamsters and their families — whose distribution of flyers and newspapers informed thousands more by drawing the links between our problems and the broader healthcare crisis pounding working people nationwide. I watched my union go from apathetic to active. Teamsters hungry for information soon became galvanized for change. The networks created to address pension concerns became a network with a plan for taking power through the local's election. We were up against entrenched incumbents backed by the international union's power; yet our army of ground-level activists

spreading the word was greater than those with resources who were out of touch.

With the transformation in my local's leadership, we have only continued with our Teamsters educating Teamsters strategy. I have attended recent trainings that are great examples of how our membership education efforts can grow with access to resources and momentum. We brought Teamsters with experience in reclaiming their locals to Atlanta. They taught shop stewards, organizers, and other activists strategies and techniques for keeping things moving forward.

Six months into office, we have just begun. Our union is already stronger from the engagement of more members. New organizing campaigns reach new members and we have seen that, even in a Right to Work state, we can win decent contracts when members are involved and prepared to struggle with companies. "No one's going to fix it for us," summarized Randy Brown, the new president, "We've got to do this together"

-Ben Speight

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MINNESOTA



# Olympia Community Free School

**M**y shoulder bag is stuffed with fliers, seducing me with their pricey promises. Wrap your leg around your neck at the Iyengar yoga retreat (\$280). Learn how worm poop converts food scraps into compost (\$30). Bounce around in a capoeira class (\$12).

The carrot dangles, but I, with an average of \$2 waded in my pocket, plod by the slickly decorated studios, scowling into the windows and feeling more than a little pissed off at the gargantuan wall that stands between me and my education. I'm likely to feel sorry for myself, lamely cram more hopeless fliers into my bag, and walk on. But others are far less lazy in their indignation.

When 50 diverse folks from Olympia, Wash., got together in the late '90s to discuss problems with the educational system, they turned talk into action. After two public meetings, they drafted a few skill-share lists to circulate around town: one list of skills people wanted to learn and another specifying the skills they were willing to share.

The skill-share lists evolved into the Olympia Community Free School, a decentralized learning center where anyone can teach, anyone can learn, and no one is charged a dime. Scrolling through their online catalog, I am enticed by the offerings: beekeeping, non-violent communication, understanding policing, personal astrology, computer building — even something called “Dutch Conversation Coffee House.”

Students meet in cafes, homes, parks, or at the free school's latest digs, a 1,200 square-foot office.

“The idea was that by having a centralized space and location, we would attract more people here and attract more resources to us, and that's exactly what happened,” said Beth Heard, the program director. “It was a little scary at first, but I think it's really been a good step for us.”

with Kaci Elder  
photos courtesy Olympia Community Free School

## Learning is really happening all the time. It doesn't happen in a particular building or on a particular day. The Free School draws attention to this lifelong learning process. There are people with amazing resources in our community. We believe that we can learn from one another.

The Free School depends on local support, which is lesson No. 1 — the community backs the school, or it tanks. Likewise, the school must support the community. Heard was at an Olympia Food Coop meeting when members worried they didn't have the time to implement an educational program. She saw an opportunity and spoke up.

"That's where the Free School stepped in and said, 'That's what we're good at. Let us run this program for you,'" she recalled.

The food coop provides a stipend, and the school has also been buoyed financially by a few grants, local advertisers, the Friends of the Free School donor program, and sliding-scale meeting-room rentals to eight progressive partner organizations.

One grant made possible the Activist Tool Kit in 2002, a three-month-long series of classes broken into themes: effective communication, information awareness, and art & social change. More than 350 Northwesterners convened to learn to build successful movements from the ground up. The series returned the following year as the Citizen's Tool Kit, and more grant opportunities will surface after the school incorporates into a nonprofit.

The Free School also rents part of its space to two local groups: the Olympia Ecology Center and Free Geek. The local chapter of the Portland-based Free Geek rebuilds computers and donates them to non-profit organizations and, because of their proximity to the school, Free Geek staff members teach computer classes.

Ah, but freeloaders beware — there is a catch. Though organizers are idealistic, they don't expect freebies from the phone company. An average 200 people join the Free School each quarter as teachers or students. When participants register for a class, they're asked to volunteer at the school, donate an item from the school's wish list, give a little dinero, or teach. It isn't compulsory, but if teachers and organizers are donating their skills, time and passions, then it's only fair not to suck them dry.

This isn't adult-only fare. One class is taught by a 10-year-old, teens teach hip hop, and this fall a survey of local youth will help shape the curriculum to appeal to their tastes.

All this is to make education accessible to all. Sound too lofty? Well, free schools have taught thousands since the counter-cultural '60s, ebbing and flowing with the political tide over the decades until their latest reemergence through anarchist channels in the '90s. A handful of examples include the Santa Cruz Free Skool (Calif.), Jamaica Plain Community Education Project (Mass.), Barrington Collective Freeskool (Berkeley, Calif.) and Ashland Freeskool (Ore.), according to a list compiled by the Santa Cruz Free Skool.

For a closer macro/micro look at the Olympia Community Free School, I phoned two of the seven core volunteers for a little Q & A session, Beth the program director and Paul Rathgeb, who publishes the school's quarterly journal, *Natural Learning*.

*Community colleges are relatively cheap and offer credits that lead to a degree. Why study at a Free School instead?*

Beth: People come to us having all kinds of experience with institutionalized education and more often than not being disillusioned. Some people are literally scared of being in that kind of classroom setting, facing forward with the expert at the front and being in a setting where they are pitted against one another.

Here, it's a very safe and open environment. We have conversations with facilitators at the beginning of each quarter to really

draw upon and have a forum with the participants and to incorporate their knowledge. Oftentimes, participants lead a component of the class.

Paul: Community colleges really can't compete because our classes are free, number one, and we're a whole different autonomous being. Someone can come in with an idea and it can blossom from there — and you're going to have the general support you need to get you through. I came from a liberal college with the idea to start a project in the community, and that inspired me to link up with the Free School. I was able to come in here and not have any certain credentials or prerequisites. I was self-driven and I could find a support team to work with and build that vision.

*What's the value of educating each other for free?*

Paul: The value of learning is not confused by commodity. There's a tendency that money becomes this obstacle ... a lot of times money sort of blurs the importance of your natural, intrinsic instinct to want to learn.

Beth: We believe in learning across boundaries, the boundaries that people might come up against in institutionalized education, like discriminating based on economics, race, age. We want to provide and support a free, open, non-hierarchical environment where people can celebrate lifelong learning.

I'm impressed with this community. This is a community of amazing resources and people with so many different skills and talents to share, and so we're really pooling these together and supporting that age-old tradition of really learning from each other.

*Free Schools are designed to educate people from all backgrounds, but in reality, is it accessible to people who can't afford school?*

Beth: One of our core staff, Kendra, offered a sign language class and she was really filling a direct community need. Some participants who couldn't afford to take sign language classes were relying on sign language to communicate with their family members.

Though we have only just recently begun to collect statistics on race and income levels, we know from conversations with our participants that many people choose Free School because money is not an obstacle to participation.

Over the next year we will continue to develop our relationships with other groups who work specifically with people who are low income, to support their work, and create more opportunities at Free School.

*Paul, you were just out "pounding the streets," you said, finding advertisers for Natural Learning. Have the organizers debated whether to accept advertising?*

Paul: I was sort of dwelling on that the other day. I teeter-totter back and forth on the fence. I haven't found a better way, so I go to local businesses. Really, for the most part, it's the only effective way I've discovered to cover the cost of printing.

I found in my experience that local businesses are open to the idea of supporting organizations that are grassroots.

*What's the difference between "getting a degree" and learning?*





Beth: Getting a degree happens in a very structured environment. There are rules about how to participate and how much money to pay. After a certain point of passing enough tests and writing enough papers, you have "learned" enough to be worthy of a degree.

Learning is really happening all the time. It doesn't happen in a particular building or on a particular day. The Free School draws attention to this lifelong learning process. There are people with amazing resources in our community. We believe that we can learn from one another. The Free School opens the opportunity for this dialogue and provides a forum for skill sharing. We encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to get involved with Free School, and you don't have to have a degree to have something worth sharing.

*Can the free school model spread, and have you been in touch with other free schools?*

Beth: We're working on building a good working model so we can share it with other people. We had someone from Bellingham who wants to get a free school going and someone from Minneapolis. Portland's free school is trying to get going again, and we're in contact with Santa Cruz. We just want to continue to build a strong school here so that we can share and discuss the model with other people in other communities. We know it will constantly be an evolving process.

We've been discussing the idea of organizing a free school conference in the summer of 2006 to share ideas with other free schools.

*Any advice to get one started with little or no money?*

Paul: There's no secret recipe or formula. For those starting a free school or something similar, you want to build up a supportive base of individuals who are like-minded and have a core philosophy they want to share and then more or less taking that to the streets and reaching people through one-on-one discussion, and by hosting a meeting, posting flyers, and using local media outlets.

Beth: Relationship-building is the most important. What we tried to do in the beginning was reach tons of people and really get it out there, but I think what's been most effective is to hone in on



a few organizations, so they understand us and we understand them. That's what developed with our relationship with the Olympia Food Coop and others. It's that relational work that's going to provide those people that will sustain you for a long time. ☆

*The Olympia Community Free School can be found online at [www.olympiafreeschool.org](http://www.olympiafreeschool.org). To learn more about starting a Free School, email [beth@olympiafreeschool.org](mailto:beth@olympiafreeschool.org) or [paul@olympiafreeschool.org](mailto:paul@olympiafreeschool.org).*

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Why the Academy is Part of the  
Anti-Globalization Struggle

# Energizing the Eggheads

Jackie Smith and Scott Byrd have long been frustrated by the fact that many activists and academics see the academy as a place that is cordoned off from the struggles of the anti-globalization movement. Those who work for universities, they believe, should participate in social justice movements, and those who define themselves as activists should see the academy as a site of political struggle. Smith is on the faculty at Notre Dame, and Byrd is a sociology graduate student at the University of California - Irvine. Both consider themselves to be activists.

Concerned about the significant barriers between academics and traditional grassroots activists, Smith and Byrd facilitated a number of workshops at various social forums throughout the world in order to break the impasse between the two communities.

"We'd break into focus groups, discussing the relationship between activists and academics," Byrd explains, "and over and over again, people brought up the issue of trust."

One of several issues to come up was that of "armchair activists," progressive intellectuals who are willing to talk about important issues but will not actually get their hands dirty with actual organizing—or even coming into the streets for a demonstration. There seemed to be a deep skepticism among those who worked for social justice organizations about the claim that teaching

with Rebecca Hyman  
and Nicole J. Georges  
nicolejgeorges.com

can itself be a form of activism. Many academics, on the other hand, do not see activism as something they do as separate from their research, but rather as an essential component of their work — they consider themselves scholar-activists, not scholars who also engage in activism.

Added to this dynamic was the suspicion with which many view the esoteric language of much theoretical writing — “if you can’t say it so the ‘people’ can read it, don’t say it at all.” Progressive intellectuals may be producing some fine scholarship on a range of important issues, but that work has not often been communicated in a way that organizers outside of the academy can use very effectively.

Seeking to overcome these and other obstacles, Smith and Byrd have recently created the International Organization of Scholars and Activists (INOSA). They are optimistic that their fledgling organization will serve as a useful bridge between the two groups — a way to enable those in each community to read each other’s writing, support each other’s struggles, and discover allies in universities across the nation.

## New Battlegrounds

A work in progress, Byrd says, INOSA will develop organically, creating its structure and vision in response to the needs of its members. But one aspect of the mission is certain: the organization will work to increase the number of scholar-activists at universities throughout the world. Though creating a hyphen between the two terms is hardly revolutionary, it represents a conceptual shift the organization hopes to foster: the academy should be thought of not as a secluded space, an arena whose political issues are different from those of the “real world,” but rather as a front in the struggle against neo-liberalism. And by extension, a site that activists should penetrate, rather than a secluded tower available only to the faculty and graduate students who work there.

“Why is it that the President of Oklahoma State University is now referred to as the President/CEO of the Oklahoma State System?” Byrd asks. He points out that although a university is not a corporation, administrators increasingly speak of creating university “brands” and rely on business models to analyze their effectiveness, transforming the academy into an odd hybrid, part business and part non-profit institution.

Yet, as *Clamor* reported in the Nov/Dec 2004 issue (“A Right Not Yet Secure”), when graduate students who work inside the academy have sought to take advantage of regulations that serve to protect workers in the business world, they have been rebuffed. In July 2005, for example, the National Labor Relations Board ruled in favor of Brown University, which argued that Brown graduate students are not university employees and do not have the right to unionize. This ruling influenced graduate student strikes at both Columbia and Brown and set an important precedent against unionizing at private universities. INOSA has already called for the recognition of graduate student labor and supports living wage campaigns for all university employees.

The academy has been penetrated not only by corporate ideology, Byrd notes, but also by the military. Reeruiters are given access to students’ information and can pursue them while they are in attendance. Last January, students at Seattle Central Community College protested against this policy, ejecting a number of military reeruiters from their campus. But the permeability of college campuses to the military is still the norm.

## Knowledge-As-Commodity

“The control of knowledge has been a hallmark of the Bush administration,” Byrd says, “and we can see the same limitations in the ways that universities control access to the knowledge they produce.” Tuition hikes make it increasingly difficult for people to attend universities. Academic

journals are now produced in electronic formats, and the subscriber fees are so high that some members of the University of California system are seeking redress. Because the costs are prohibitive, often when members of the public visit university libraries, they are denied access to these electronic resources. And the production of knowledge itself can limit the scope of academic research and writing. Because journals are on a slow publishing schedule, it can take several years for an article to be reviewed, edited and finally printed. Clearly, such a schedule makes it difficult to produce a politically topical piece in a timely manner.

If activists see the university as an arena of struggle, their participation in union drives, their investigation of administrative policies, their work to overcome the increasing commodification of knowledge could result in significant changes in university policies. Most importantly, when those from non-profits begin to see the academy as a space in which they can operate, regardless of whether they are affiliated with an institution, they will have broken the ideology of the ivory tower that protects universities from external scrutiny.

In turn, academics need to support activists. They can do this not only by participating in actions outside universities, but also by making their research accessible to those who cannot afford university tuition or who live in other countries. INOSA supports the “copy-left” movement, the creation of alternative forms of copyright that protect creative work yet make it available to others for non-commercial purposes. Organizations like Creative Commons allow artists and writers to post their work on its website, making it available to other users, and offer a number of copyright forms that individuals can use to protect their work.

INOSA supports this format and wants to encourage academics and activists alike to post information and research on the site. They hope to make work available in a number of languages, reinforcing the international aspect of their mission. Byrd also expects to attend the next social forum in Venezuela. Because many Latin American academics view themselves as activists, Byrd plans to use the forum to highlight the fact that the network he hopes to build here is already an aspect of the academic tradition in other countries. If American academics became aware of this history, they might be more likely to see “non-academic” struggles as part of their work.


“People today are feeling hopeless,” Byrd says. “We need a place where we can fight, where we can see that change is possible.”

If INOSA succeeds in creating trust between academics and grassroots activists, it will have made an important beginning in creating the change it seeks. ☆

For further information:

[www.INOSA.org](http://www.INOSA.org) & [www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org)

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# Bosses?

## Lessons from Argentina's Occupied Factories

words & photo: Marie Trigona

# No, Thank You!

"What do we know as workers? That we aren't going to save ourselves alone. We need to fight together," said Jorge Benítez, an Argentinean worker at the ceramics factory Zanon, occupied and managed by its workers since 2001. Benítez and another Zanon employee recently visited workers occupying a meat-packing plant to share what the 460 workers at the ceramics factory have accomplished. "It's important that we become conscious of our necessity to unite and build common objectives as workers who are defending our job posts," he said.

La Foresta, the newly occupied meat-packing plant in a barrio called La Matanza on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, was built in 1957. La Matanza, which means "The Slaughter" in English, was built to house workers working in the industrial belt's meat market. In the past decade, many of the factories in the district have been abandoned or have severely cut back their personnel.

Nationwide in Argentina, thousands of factories have closed and millions of jobs

have been lost in recent years. Today, unemployment stands at 19.5 percent and under-employment at nearly 16 percent, meaning that over a third of workers (approximately 5.2 million) cannot find adequate employment. Half of the population lives in poverty. But many *compañeros* have stood up to resist against this destiny.

For nearly 50 years meat-processing has been the lifeblood of La Matanza, with generations of families working inside the La Foresta plant. Most of the factory's employees have worked there for decades, through the good times and bad times. In 1999, the plant went bankrupt, and a series of businessmen rented the facilities, making quick profits and then abandoning the factory for greener pastures. In January 2005, the last such renter, MEYPACAR, told the remaining 186 workers that the plant would be closing temporarily for renovations. MEYPACAR never reopened the plant.

"A lot of *compañeros* have left part of their lives inside this factory, some working here for over 30 years. We're tired of the bosses who come here to make money and then they leave. They don't care about anyone," said one La Foresta worker, unnamed in this article due to the extralegal nature of the plant occupation.

La Foresta workers decided to stay inside the plant waiting for past months' salaries that MEYPACAR had indebted, but management never showed up and there is little likelihood that bankruptcy laws will ever force them to pay back salaries to the workers. Faced with little other option, the workers decided to organize in order to restart production as a worker cooperative. Since March, 70 workers have been occupying the plant to prevent the machinery and equipment from being ransacked. They are in a firm political and legal fight to keep their factory and start up production without a boss or owner, under worker-self management.

Argentina's occupied factories and enterprises are an advanced strategy in defense of the working class and in resistance against capitalism. The experiences of worker self-management organization have directly challenged capitalism's structures by questioning private property, taking back workers' knowledge, and organizing production for objectives other than profits.

One of the biggest worries that the workers at La Foresta have is how to self-manage their factory. In the midst of the legal fight to form a cooperative, they must also plan how they are going to organize the cooperative and the plant's production. "We need to prove that

we're capable of successfully running this meatpacking plant," said the cooperative's president, during an assembly.

Luckily, they have other experiences of recuperated enterprises to look to. In Argentina, there are some 180 recuperated enterprises employing 10,000 workers. Workers from Zanon visited and shared their experience of worker control in a vital moment in the legal fight..

On a Saturday afternoon after the weekly assembly at La Foresta, workers sit in a cooler that once held racks of beef for the screening of *Zanon: Building Resistance*, a documentary by Grupo Alavío. Two workers from Zanon in their 50s visited La Foresta to express the ceramic factory's support and willingness to collaborate with them. After the talk, workers expressed a number of their concerns, asking questions about organization and how the ceramists took on their struggle.

In another assembly, workers at La Foresta were visited by representatives from the BAUEN Hotel, a 20-story facility that reopened under worker control in 2003. Like Zanon, BAUEN Hotel doesn't hold any legal status. The current president of the BAUEN cooperative spoke during the assembly, saying, "We don't need a boss. We are capable of creating more jobs and better salaries. Another thing we know is that the boss always benefits from the state, giving loans that busi-

nesses never paid back. Although we don't have legality, we have legitimacy."

Questions from La Foresta employees included things like, "Did the workers become conscious right away, from being a simple worker to carrying out tasks that the bosses took care of before?" "How did you organize to become skilled in all of the decision making and technical planning for production?" These assemblies have helped assuage fears, demonstrating that worker-controlled enterprises can help defend people's jobs and successfully run a business with the support of the community.

In one meeting, Benítez explained, "Under worker control, no professional stayed at our factory. Only the workers stayed. Our current treasurer is from the glazing line. We had to learn everything about sales and marketing. We work with lawyers and accountants who we trust, but they don't make the decisions. The workers' assembly decides what we are going to do. However, we have relations with professionals to facilitate specific skills training."

The meatpackers' assembly decided to begin formal skills training workshops and to participate in solidarity actions in the community. There has been interest in literacy training, particularly for older workers who were unable to attend school. Recently, workers have suggested building a library in one of the abandoned offices for compañeros to read while on night

security duty. Workers have also organized solidarity festivals, participated in marches, presented a documentary film about La Foresta, and given talks in local schools.

"This struggle has forced us to go out and knock on doors. Before this fight I never participated in a demonstration. Thanks to our struggle, I've been to places I've never been to before, government buildings and getting to know other compañeros from different social organizations," said a La Foresta administrative worker.

Along with the expectation of starting up production in the meatpacking factory, workers hope to begin internships with youths in the barrio. As working culture has been lost with increasing factory closure and joblessness, workers at La Foresta want to take back their culture and their dignity—to teach the community that workers can run a factory even better without a boss or owner. ☆

*Marie Trigona forms part of Grupo Alavío. The group is participating in the workshops at La Foresta. They recently premiered a documentary "La Foresta belongs to the workers" about the meatpackers' struggle. The group can be reached at alaviocine@yahoo.com.ar or www.alavio.org.*

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# Getting Off ... on Campus

words Rebecca Gottlieb

photos Christopher Anderson at

Boink Magazine | [get-boinked.com](http://get-boinked.com)

While sex education has long been a topic of debate in American high schools, students on campuses across the nation are taking the subject to a new level. At schools such as Harvard and Boston University, young men and women are turning up the volume on sexually charged issues, producing media ranging from student magazines featuring nudity and sex-related articles to showing explicit films on campus. While some face denouncement by school administrators, faculty, parents, and a number of their peers, others receive praise and even subsidies from their universities.

The need to further a dialogue about sex clearly exists, and students are loudly voicing their opinions. Critics argue that this new form of alternative media is indicative of a decline in American values, dismissing students' efforts as rebellious nonsense. However, supporters see it as an issue of free speech, a particularly salient topic, considering the conservative tone of the nation in recent years, aptly reflected in traditional university media. Students on staff at university papers, and those participating in college television and radio, face censure at the hands of faculty advisors and school administrators who are under increasing pressure from funders and regulators. Rather than fighting the system for more control in university-sanctioned media organizations, students are protesting conservative constraints by producing their own innovative publications and projects.

In collaboration with a local photographer, Boston University (BU) journalism student, Alceia Oleyourryk, created *Boink*, a self-described "pornographic" magazine. According to Oleyourryk, *Boink* imbues pornography with a social conscience. Heralding the magazine as "the student's guide to carnal knowledge," she points out articles

designed to educate fellow students about sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, and sexual identity. In the premier issue of *Boink*, Oleyourryk also features explicit photographs of herself on the cover and throughout the magazine, much to the dismay of some at BU.

Conservative BU president John Silber denounced the efforts of the *Boink* staff, prohibiting campus stores from selling the magazine. Despite protests from BU higher-ups, though *Boink* is already launching their second issue, sold through their website and at several commercial venues.

At another famous New England university, students embarking on a similar project received approval and even assistance from their school. Although thematically similar to *Boink*, the Harvard *H-Bomb* resists the "porn" label.

*H-Bomb*, which predates *Boink*, features glossy layouts of erotically themed pictures and articles that address issues of sexuality outside of the mainstream. Although Harvard's official school paper, *The Crimson*, denounced it as purely pornographic, in an interview with *The Washington Post*, *H-Bomb* editor in chief and co-founder

Katharina Cieplak-von Baldegg defended the magazine, commenting, "There is something to be said for a positive appreciation of sexuality." So far, Harvard school administrators are showing more appreciation for this type of expression than those at BU.

While reviews of *H-Bomb* remain mixed among the Harvard elite, staffers managed to garner ample support for their efforts in the form of a \$2,000 grant. Dean Judith H. Kid told the *Associated Press* that the university's decision to award the grant is an "issue of free speech." Even members of the faculty got on board, as Harvard psychology professor, Mare D. Houser, acted in an advisory capacity to Cieplak-von Baldegg and staff. Harvard has since chosen to recognize the *H-Bomb* crew as an official student organization. They continue to manufacture and distribute their "omnisexual" approach to publishing through their website, at the student co-op, and at select stores.

Despite certainly causing a stir, *Boink* and *H-Bomb* seem tame compared to the on-camera expressions of one student at the University of California San Diego. Steven York, a 21-year-old student, appeared smug during an interview on MSNBC's *Connected*. York enthusiastically defended his amateur porn film, a 10-minute broadcast featuring explicit sexual acts performed with an unidentified

woman. According to York, students provided the funds for the steamy film, viewable only on campus. School officials threatened to investigate York's activities to determine whether the student had violated a campus charter, defining what constitutes an appropriate "artistic medium." York maintains that Koala TV, as an exclusively university-run media outlet, is not subject to FCC regulations.

Regardless of whether York will face disciplinary action, a poll taken at the school's official newspaper, the UC San Diego *Guardian*, illustrates a sharp divide in opinion concerning the broadcast. More than half of those polled (51.3 percent) thought the broadcast was "harmless, fun, stimulating campus life." The opposition voiced concerns about minors on campus viewing the film, and lobbied for strict monitoring of future Koala TV broadcasts. York's first student film may very well be his last.

While the UC San Diego debates York's actions, at one East Coast school, students and school officials organized a festival with sex as the guest of honor. At George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, the Pro-Choice Patriots student group encouraged the campus community to explore the offerings of its annual aptly named *Sextravaganza*. The group received ample school funding for

the festival aimed at raising awareness about date rape, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual health. Promising numbers of students and faculty members turned out in a welcome endorsement of the innovative event.

While *Sextravaganza* achieved an encouraging level of success, some Virginians displayed far less enthusiasm. Virginia Senator Ken Cuccinelli lambasted *Sextravaganza* as promoting "every kind of sexual promiscuity you can imagine," and went on to claim that such events are responsible for what he describes as the level of "moral depravity" rampant throughout the country. Responding to critics in an interview with WRC-TV in Washington, D.C., student organizer Amanda Agan argued that the group was "really just trying to educate students and arm them with all the tools so they can make an informed decision about sex."

The need to educate college students about sex-related issues is clearly a topic of concern both on and off campus. A 2002 *CollegeClub.com* poll disturbingly revealed that half of all American students have unprotected sex. In an age of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, silence about sexuality remains an irresponsible answer. However, efforts at truly addressing the issues have begun to evolve into the form of sexually-themed courses, an increase in sex-





ual health programs, and student organized events that openly celebrate sexuality.

At the University of Iowa, graduate student Jay Clarkson's one-time fall course in pornography, offered through the university's communications program, intends to "get people to think about how porn has moved from the adult bookstore to everyday advertising." Despite protests by Iowa House Speaker Chris Rants, who refers to the course as "tax dollars wasted," Clarkson is going forward with plans to lead students through a critical review of the genre, ironically pointing toward an examination of its political and moral aspects.

Aside from studying sexual genres in and out of the mainstream, a dire need remains for basic contraception and sexual health education. At Columbia University and the University of Colorado (UC), a pro-active approach offers help for students seeking answers to these common sexual concerns.

At UC Boulder, peer educators spend their Saturday evenings passing out "sex kits" complete with condoms and contraception information. Students at the school praise the volunteers for picking up where campus health facilities leave off. In the Internet age, Columbia University remains a pioneer in sex education, with their 1993 creation of the popular website *Go Ask Alice*. Initially a campus-based health education program, the site has since expanded its access worldwide, receiving thousands of questions weekly. A team of university health educators, along with assorted health care professionals and providers, supply the answers to questions about sexual health for college students and members of the general population. With so much positive student feedback aimed at these progressive initiatives, we can hope more universities will join in the effort.

Is this new sexual revolution a response to staunch conservatism, or perhaps a necessary lesson for the youth of America? Critics will label these sexually charged endeavors as immoral, encouraging promiscuity, and promoting pornography. As they once did with [Alfred] Kinsey, critics will argue that encouraging a sexual dialogue furthers the decline of American morals. While detractors scramble to enforce a code of silence, freedom of speech prevails, as this is one revolution not likely to dissipate anytime soon. ☆

*Rebecca Gottlieb is a thirty-one year old freelance writer, living in the Philadelphia area, and plans to attend graduate school next year. Contact her at beccag1973@yahoo.com*

*Over the next several issues we will be featuring profiles of nationally and internationally recognized sex and gender resources. We begin with two of the most prestigious: The Gerber/Hart Library in Chicago and the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City.*

#### **Gerber/Hart Library**

1127 West Granville Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60660  
(773) 381-8030 • info@gerberhart.org  
www.gerberhart.org

Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 6:-9:00 p.m.  
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday noon-4:00 p.m.

Founded in 1981, the Gerber/Hart Library (GH) began primarily as an LGBTQ library and archive, but even mainstream bookstores now have their obligatory "Gay/Lesbian Literature" sections. GH has therefore evolved into a vibrant institution that promotes queer scholarship and community and is a major repository of LGBTQ history. In addition to the lending library, it maintains a Special Collections area that includes posters, political rally flyers, and other paraphernalia dating from the pre-Stonewall era.

Given that sexual identities are necessarily fluid and call normative categories into question, preserving queer histories might seem like a contradiction in terms, but as Wil Brant, a former President of the Board of Directors points out, it's precisely the complexity and contradictions that need to be documented if we are to understand how social movements and identities come into play.

My own association with GH began when I moved to Chicago in 1997. I found a place to meet queers in a neutral environment while slowly edging into Chicago life, and I had access to a priceless set of materials that provides a glimpse into the sexual and culture wars of the United States.

GH today caters to a wide range of budding and established scholars, some as young as fifth-graders sent by schools to do research on gay issues. The staff bend over backwards to help people find materials, and are able to refer them to experts in various fields of queer scholarship. GH also organizes displays and exhibits that link Chicago history to queer history, such as the recent "Corner in Edgewater." This exhibition featured images by local artists of the neighborhood surrounding the library.

The Gerber/Hart is an important and untapped resource, and it has quietly and effectively become a major community center while maintaining its identity as an invaluable queer archive.

-Yasmin Nair

#### **Lesbian Herstory Archives**

www.Lesbianherstoryarchives.org  
718-768-DYKE

For a few years running, I marched in the NYC Gay Pride parade with the Lesbian Herstory Archives. Each year, I overcame shyness and a sense of awe to chat and stroll with Deborah

Edel, who, along with Joan Nestle, founded LHA in 1976. In the early 70s, Edel and Nestle, along with other women in a CR group, were struck by the indifference of mainstream libraries, publishers, and research institutions to lesbians – their lives, culture, and history. That concern gave rise to the largest collection of materials by and about lesbians on the planet: both a vibrant, ever-growing manifestation of women's lives and history and an astounding community resource. The archive, born in their Upper West Side pantry, now consumes much of a brownstone in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

LHA's mission is to collect and preserve multimedia records of lesbian existence for the benefit of future generations. LHA seeks to pass down knowledge, as well as archival skills, through generations of women, and to ensure the collection's access to all women - since academic and other research institutions are membership-based, LHA intentionally houses the collection on neutral ground. Ten years ago I might have called it a "community," but Park Slope has undergone such gentrification, and NYC's queers are so dispersed, that LHA's 11215 address is as much a symbol of lesbian history as the materials it protects.

The archives are vast, and consist of every imaginable media: photographs (12,000), newspaper clippings, art, periodicals, journals, clothing, manuscripts, books (10,000), films, newsletters, pamphlets, flyers, "ephemera." Mabel Hampton's extensive collection of 50's lesbian paperbacks was one of the first significant contributions; LHA has grown exponentially through such donations.

"You can find real treasures of lesbian culture and writing and history," said Adrienne Ammerman, 23, who referred to the Archives while researching her undergraduate thesis for New School. "I also feel like I could bring them a copy of my senior thesis and they'd stick it in a filing cabinet for someone to discover and use down the road."

While only open to the public a few hours a month, any lesbian may make an appointment to peruse the archives or do research, and long-distance requests are welcome: teachers, students, and researchers may contact LHA with specific requests, which archive volunteers address. Volunteers can photocopy and mail articles, locate books, and assess available information on more general requests so that a woman can plan a visit.

-Kate Crane

*If you would like to profile a sex and gender resource, library, or museum in your area, please email Brian Bergen-Aurand, Sex and Gender editor, at brian@clamormagazine.org.*

# Shake (off) What Yer Parents Gave Ya!

## Brooklyn Schoolchildren Learn Gender Respect

words: Mandy Van Deven  
Illustration: Corey Pierce

The first question people ask me when I tell them I teach Gender Respect Workshops in New York City public schools is, "They let you do that?" It's shocking to many that we're not run out of the schools or burned at the stake — okay, maybe not that extreme — for talking to kids about the difference between sex and gender, gender myths and stereotypes, male privilege, and sexual harassment. The reality is that teachers and school administrators see how boys and girls interact with each other and recognize that negative interactions between the sexes need to change. That's where Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) comes in. GGE is a nonprofit organization in Brooklyn, NY, working to provide equitable opportunities for girls and boys inside the classroom, on the playing field, and in their communities.

GGE is creating a model of community organizing and education that, after we publish our curriculum, can be reproduced in schools and community-based organizations elsewhere. GGE's Gender Respect Workshops are a four-part series with each workshop building off the content of the last session. The series is run in 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms and creates a discussion among the students. The teacher's role is to assist the facilitator to any degree that she or he sees fit (contributor, disciplinarian, observer, etc). The students are given pre- and post-tests to measure how much information they internalize throughout the series, and, not surprisingly, most of the students learn a lot during the sessions and take that knowledge with them when it's through. So, what's a typical Gender Respect Workshop like? I'm glad you asked.

The students look at the facilitator with a mixture of curiosity and apprehension. Then she asks the big question, "What is your sex?" Eyes widen and giggles run rampant through the room as a few brave souls tentatively raise their hands. She calls on a small, timid girl in the back of the room.

"Female," the girl almost whispers.

"Exactly. Our sex is how our body is when we are born: male and female," the facilitator responds as everyone breathes a collective sigh of relief. The tension is gone, for now, and a new word arises: gender. This is very confusing for most students because "gender" is often used in place of the more controversial "sex." The facilitator skillfully wields her definition using the words "masculine, feminine, or both" in order to make the information as accessible as possible to the young audience. Now it's time for an activity.

Think of five words that you would use to describe yourself: funny, smart, athletic, strong, plays with dolls. The facilitator gives them a minute to think as she writes "Only Boys," "Both," and "Only Girls" on the board. Now comes the fun part. The students decide what category each descriptive word goes in. Typically, most of the words end up in the "Both" category, which prompts the questions: 1) Are boys and girls more similar or more different? 2) If boys and girls have more in common, then what is different about them, and 3) Why do we focus so much on what is different rather than what is the same?

Their little brains search furiously for an answer, and usually there is none, so the facilitator provides an outlet: "Has anyone ever heard the word *stereotype*?" Some raise their hands and try to guess



what it means: "It's something you use to listen to music?" The facilitator praises the valiant attempt, but explains that a stereotype is a belief about an entire group of people that isn't always true. Another confusing definition... why do all of these definitions have to be so complicated?

The activity clarifies the definition a bit. Why did you say that only boys play football and only girls like to cook? Are there girls in this class who play football and boys who like to cook? Why didn't we think of these girls and boys when we were deciding what category to put "likes to cook" and "plays football" in? Ding Ding Ding. The light bulb goes on. Stereotypes. Stereotypes tell us how it is "right" and "wrong" for boys and girls to behave. And those who don't act as the stereotypes tell them are subjected to discrimination. And discrimination forces boys and girls to conform to stereotypes because they don't want to be treated badly or unfairly. And on and on with cyclical actions and reactions that affirm one another.

The facilitator leaves the boys and girls with a lot to think about and a homework assignment, of course, to write about a time they were discriminated against because of their sex. She leaves them with a door that has now been opened and the tools to begin to analyze themselves and the world around them. There are three more workshops in the series and much more will be discussed and discovered next time: sexism, sexual harassment, hip-hop and media, applying the knowledge. Sometimes revolutionaries come in small packages.

*Mandy Van Deven is the Director of Community Organizing at Girls for Gender Equity. She developed the curriculum for the Gender Respect Workshop Series and facilitates it in 25 classrooms with over 600 students each year. In her spare time, Mandy publishes Altar Magazine, a publication focused on critical thought, artistic creativity, coalition building, and activism. You can read more about her work at [www.gges.info](http://www.gges.info) and [www.AltarMagazine.com](http://www.AltarMagazine.com). For more information about the upcoming curriculum, email [mandy@agges.info](mailto:mandy@agges.info)*

# A Dirty Learning Curve

Dirty Ink is a San Francisco area dyke erotica writers' group where all the members are survivors of early traumas. Everyone in Dirty Ink has grown in profound ways because we have taught ourselves who we are by crafting our libidinous tales. And, we have learned that writing and performing together is a lot of fun.

Begun three years ago, Dirty Ink evolved out of one member's, Jen Collins, thesis project in Transformative Language Arts. Jen says about the initial group: "my studies delved into the uses of erotic writing as a means to break societal silences, and reclaim power and voice around sexuality for bisexual/lesbian/queer incest survivors. I sought to learn whether participants who'd been struggling to articulate their sexual selves would feel more comfortable doing so after eight consecutive weeks of writing openly and creatively about sex. I wondered if they would feel more satisfied in their lives and more self-confident. My particular study had to do with the idea that we who have experienced sexual abuse do not have to be defined by that violence. We can stop experiencing ourselves as broken or silenced. Through the writing of fiction and fantasy, we can write ourselves into the who and what we know ourselves to be."

In Jen's workshop, we met to write erotica. We could share it with the group or not in a nurturing, non-judgmental environment. Some of us had never composed dirty stories before, myself included. For all of us, despite the warm atmosphere and safe boundaries, it was difficult. Personally, this wasn't stuff I'd ever read to a lover and these gals seemed kind, but they were strangers. Thankfully, bravery won out. It was exciting to learn to use our imaginations to concoct naughty scenarios, then share them aloud.

One of our members, FireCatcher, has a lot to say about the early stage of our group. "The act of going set off a two year bout of intense PTSD. Each week I went shaking and covered with sweat, dizzy, flashing in and out and yet here was this amazing safe space. They accepted me in whatever space I was in. The experience transformed my life. Survivors writing sex is more than healing; it cracks open the wounds and lets us breathe as the strong women we are.

I'm proud to work with women of integrity as well as talent. We trust each other and have each other's backs. It is inspiring to watch each other learn, flourish, and grow mightier for having come together. I work hard on our projects because I want to make my cohorts proud and give their work the respect it deserves. We were only supposed to meet for eight weeks. But, three years later, we are still working together.

Another member, Naomi, believes "as a survivor it's always such a big risk to have sex let alone talk about it, write or share it with others. Here I am encouraged to take those risks personally through my writing and performing. This has significantly empowered my relationship with my body, my sexuality and my writing."

Being in Dirty Ink has enriched my creative life and made me a more verbal lay. I have been a fine artist for a long time but had no experience writing smutty fiction. Now I crave smut writing and many of my drawings illustrate my stories. Before our first performance, I considered reading aloud akin to taking one's medicine—something unpleasant that simply had to be done. Life is full of surprises though. There is no better feeling than having all eyes on me while an audience hangs on my every word or I pause for their laughter. Yes, this does appeal to my strong exhibitionistic inclinations. And it is an unexpected gift.

-Dorian Katz

To learn more about Dirty Ink, email [dirtydirtyink@yahoo.com](mailto:dirtydirtyink@yahoo.com). We can advise people on starting their own group, but we aren't touring any time soon—unless we find a patron.

# Passing in the Classroom



By Anne Balay

I teach freshman composition at a large state school. Towards the end of each semester, I announce that I will give extra credit to any student who comes to class in drag. Whatever "theme" I'm teaching about, we spend plenty of time each semester discussing gender, and how we learn both to play by the rules of our gender, and to pretend that these are our choices, rather than rules.

Last spring, I walked into class early one day, and was sitting at the table looking through paperwork, when someone walked in and got my attention. Turning around, I initially didn't recognize the person, but then realized it was my student Eric, in *very good drag*. He would easily have passed for a woman, yet have left the viewer with the unsettling sense that something was wrong. That sense you get that you are being set up when you see good art. Something has shifted, and the codes and tricks that make us feel grounded and competent and smart—these codes are something we learned, and don't want to remember. Eric had that insider smile that made me and the other students feel shaken—unmanned.

Eric described to the class the processes, both physical and mental, by which he had transformed himself. He had borrowed clothes (a dark tank top, a bra, and a leather jacket) from friends, and bought make-up and a simple bob-style wig at a discount store. He had rented various porn films and watched each several times. Eric chose porn, believing that the exaggerated femininity of porn divas would give him models of make-up, gestures, and attitudes to imitate. They perform raw femininity.

Next, he shaved everything. Twice. He even shaved his hands.

He crafted breasts out of Kleenex and nipples out of wet Kleenex. Each could be manipulated for various moods and effects. He practiced making himself up and practiced the diva gestures in front of a mirror.

What worked so well was that he took this gender play so seriously as play—as a game. He described panicking when the doorbell rang and he peered through the window and identified the UPS man. He wanted the package, but how could he sign for it dressed as a woman? His very identity was suddenly up for grabs. Further, he worried about driving. As a black man in the city, driving is a perilous passage. But what if, pulled over for DWB, he showed the driver's license of a man, presenting as a woman? Even if he talked his way out of that one, what horrors would the jail cell yield? From this scenario, his panic spread to imagining airport searches. But even more horribly mundane was the everyday—how long everything took—how every interaction was affected—how his own gendered behavior suddenly seemed foreign—like something he did, rather than something he was.

As a teacher, I relish moments when students make the course their own, literally living it, rather than passively absorbing it. I can stop "playing" teacher, and start "being" learner, thinker. All our identities can be transformed, and we can laugh about how fluid and fun it all is. Though I'm female, I feel unmanned, disturbingly attracted, and always implicated. I feel alive. ☆

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# murmurs

## what we're talking about

### [PRINT]

#### City: Urbanism and Its End

Douglas W. Rae

Yale University Press: 2003 Paperback: 2005

In this rich tome, Douglas W. Rae draws from economics, sociology, politics, religion and history to narrate the story of American cities in the last 150 years. But don't let that make you think this is just some book by and for academics: Rae's text offers the pleasure of trivia and novels along with a level of depth I challenge you to match with any other current urbanism text.

What does urban renewal mean? Does a city have to look like a suburb to make "Top 10 Most Livable" lists? Rae is a fellow who hasn't forgotten the best a city can offer. While he's no starry-eyed nostalgic (cough... Woody Allen... cough), he seems to have a profound love for cities. He has spent his professional life in the thick of it as a political science professor at Yale University and a year as chief administration officer under New Haven's first black mayor, John Daniels. While Rae's book is something of a requiem for what has been lost, there is hope.

*City* lays out what we're dealing with and how it got to be this way. While Rae chooses New Haven as his lens, he's clear in drawing connections between that city and others. Packed with stats ("...an average American living in the year 2002 is eight to ten times as well off as she would have been in 1880."), Rae's tale is nonetheless anchored in people. Joseph Peretto, for example, has spent seven decades at the helm of New Haven's New England Type-writer & Stationary. Peretto, 88 when Rae interviewed him and reluctantly looking for someone to purchase his shop's assets, tells how he got into the business. It's a tale that seems incredibly unlikely for today's small business own-

ers. Why has the city that Peretto's store was designed to serve vanished? Simple answers such as 'chain stores' and 'computers' don't cover half of it as Rae's mind-numbingly detailed text makes clear.

Rae proposes that in a city's development, the usual suspects at city hall are but minor players. Rather, it's the persistent, but unruly outside forces — airlines, bankers, public housing, popular culture, gangs, developers, insurers, etc. — that shape whether or not a city seems safe or dangerous, lively or dull, industrial or sophisticated. He remembers the tactics of his job with the city: "Do you have cops walk beats which will maximize their visibility to citizens and potential criminals, or do you have them walk beats where they are most likely to detect and intervene in actual crimes?" On reflection, that is a harder question than it at first seems... given that more than anything else, it's the decisions of thousands of others that will bring about the best or worst or somewhere-in-between result. In fact, Rae cites the high level of civic activity and residential life at urbanism's peak that significantly diminished the need for government to intervene in the everyday life of citizens.

Anyway. Enough summary. *City: Urbanism and Its End* is now out in paperback. No excuses — it's time for you to go straight to the source.

-Anna Clark

#### Courtroom 302

Steve Bogira

Knopf, 2005

[www.randomhouse.com/knopf/home.pperl](http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/home.pperl)

Steve Bogira writes for the *Chicago Reader* as an investigative journalist, the good kind who writes stories about ordinary people you never hear about. *Courtroom 302* is first and foremost a story — part longitudinal study, part ethnography,

part novel — the product of ten years of research after receiving a fellowship in 1993 to write a book on the urban criminal courts. He is also an excellent teacher, having to have listened in order to learn all he needed to know to be able to write this book. He introduces characters, sometimes three in the same chapter, and provides a profound sense of perspective in introducing the reader to every player in the field — defendant, prosecutor, judge, court reporter, public defender, family member — and engages his readers, like a suspense novel, because of it. Much like a social worker would take into account multiple situational and often systemic factors in analyzing or assessing a problem in an individual's life, Bogira paints a full-color, panoramic view of not only his characters, but the day-to-day goings inside the busiest and biggest U.S. felony courthouse located in Chicago's southwest side.

The book leaps out of the gate for the first third, as we enter on the police wagon on our way to the courthouse cellar, riding by I-800-NOTGLTY billboards with the prisoners who have been arrested for burglaries, car theft, drug possession, drug trafficking, then it steadies itself for the second third explaining how I-bonds, plea bargaining, retaining street files, coercing confessions, and jury polling help "move cases quickly" through the system. It slows for the last third concentrating solely on a controversial case that occurred in Bridgeport in 1991 where three white young men, one a son of a reputable mobster, were charged with the racially-motivated beating of a thirteen-year old black boy. Bogira tries to illustrate that what happens in the courthouse on Chicago's southwest side is no easy task. Fifteen hundred prisoners circulate through the courts weekly, three fourths of who will be convicted of their crimes; fifty percent will be sentenced to prison and most of the remaining will get probation. Having to attend to each and every case is taxing on everyone involved in the system, and even in the rare instances when

rehabilitation services or job training programs are assigned for offenders, balls get dropped, sentences reassigned, appeals can take years. Where the public is supposed to believe there is no time to reform the system, Bogira spends it in Courtroom 302 illustrating why and how the inefficiencies in our criminal court system happen, and persist. And to no surprise, Bogira argues that the real underlying root problem of our criminal justice system is poverty. Not since reading *Sidewalk* (1999) by Michael Duneier about street vendors and how their survival selling secondhand books and pan-handling on New York City's Greenwich Village sidewalks was so reliant on the underground black market, have I witnessed such an honest account of people trying to live on the extreme margins of our urban, capitalist society. Our criminal justice system is fraught with injustice. *Courtroom 302* will help you understand why and might even excite you enough to buy it and send it to your congressman/woman.

-kristencox

**God's Brothel:  
The Extortion of Sex for Salvation in  
Contemporary Mormon and Christian  
Fundamentalist Polygamy and the  
Stories of 18 Women Who Escaped**

Andrea Moore-Emmett  
Pince-Nez Press, 2004

As one survivor puts it, "Polygamy is one big eternal fuck. You can tell a man dreamed this all up." Male or female, if you aren't disturbed by these accounts of rape, incest, violence, abuse, and mind control—all in the name of God—perhaps you should be excommunicated...from humanity.

-Stephen Ryan

**H.P. Lovecraft: Tales**

The Library of America, 2005  
www.loa.org

While Howard Phillips Lovecraft's work may seem out of the usual run of stuff we handle here at *Clamor*, affinities do exist. He was an avid "amateur journalist" (as zine types were called in the '20's and '30's), self-publishing magazines (using gelatin-based hectography) like *the Scientific Gazette*, *the Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy*, *the Monthly Almanack*, and *the Conservative*, a magazine on matters political. He was a media activist, serving as vice-president, president, and editor of the United Amateur Press Association. Those of us around here who've read Foucault or Chomsky can empathize with his words from *The Call of Cthulu* — "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents." And, like

many of us here at *Clamor*, he was a crackpot.

But he was most of all a writer of out-there fiction. His work, published in pulps, featured a fully formed worldview that alien creatures had populated the earth in pre-human times and will return with cataclysmic violence. The stories inevitably follow a predictable arc — protagonist begins travel for the purpose of research (genealogical, scientific, archeological), finds either troubling evidence of this pre-history or depraved followers of these past "gods," shattering realization about these facts occur, and narrow escape follows.

The formulaic nature of these stories, however, takes little away from the power of the writing. While it is dense and at times rococo in its detail, the obsessive nature of the work is well served by the scrupulousness. Lovecraft creates a very specific sense of dread in settings with which he is comfortable — the declining towns of coastal New England, rural areas throughout the Atlantic states — and with which he has no particular experience, like islands in the South Pacific and the Antarctic. By sticking to the meta-narrative of antediluvian evil and the decadent people who worship it, Lovecraft maintains a consistent level of creepiness throughout his writing. It is often pretty powerful stuff and kept this bachelor up with the creeps a couple of times throughout the reading. And that fact that the protagonist in his creepiest work (*A Shadow Over Innsmouth*) comes from and returns to sweet home Toledo still fucks with me, just like when I read it in high school.

Some sketchy politics, however, intrude in this work, both *sub rosa* and in the foreground. Lovecraft's distaste for immigrants, African-Americans, and the rural poor is misanthropic and foolish and rears its ugly head in specific ways, but that is the least of it. Behind much of his fiction lies a horror of miscegenation and a class-based fear of inbreeding filtered through a eugenic lens.

And 800 pages is a LOT of Lovecraft, by any standard. But it is a tribute to the Library of America that they've put out this edition and recognized the work of Lovecraft. American literature isn't a monolithic parade of heavy novels, it's also a mosaic of niche works. I applaud the decision to publish this scholarly and comprehensive introduction to his work

-Keith McCrea

**Iraq, Inc.**

Pratap Chatterjee  
Seven Stones Press, 2004  
www.sevenstones.com

A friend of mine recently explained his decision to apply for a new job. I asked where he was applying. "Halliburton," he responded. I knew the refrain. "Dude, they pay up to \$7,000 a month. I can use that kind of cash." Arguing with someone

about the political and ethical dilemmas of such a decision is akin to convincing a carnivore that tofu is better. Hopefully such people will read Pratap Chatterjee's analysis of the corporate reign of "reconstruction" in Iraq

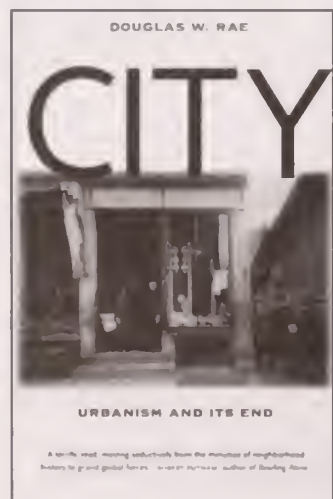
True, the world has been inundated with Bush-bashing books of all types and sizes. With all of the criticism and exposes, one would think Dubya'd be sent packing back to Crawford. Yet the phrase "Teflon President" doesn't begin to describe a president who makes an art form out of dodging every criticism volleyed his way. There have been scores of poison-pen twiddling scribblers exconating the U.S. presence in Iraq. Yet the Bush policy remains unchanged. We need to ask ourselves, do we need another tome taking on the Bush administration? The answer is a resounding yes if they measure up to Chatterjee's *Iraq, Inc.*

The book examines the role and actions of various corporations on the ground in Iraq. Chatterjee goes beyond the basics to ponder the bigger questions of the rampant privatization and outsourcing of most realms of military and "nation building" activities. Consider the current reality of U.S.-run Iraq the manifestation of total capitalism, of a country completely led by the hidden (or not so hidden) hand of the market. Many services that once remained under the direction of the government have been farmed out through a complex system of contracting and subcontracting. It's a system wracked with fraud, corruption and waste.

We see this clearly in the author's examination of Halliburton and Bechtel. Overcharging is normal procedure while whistle-blowers are denied a voice even on the floor of Congress. The author notes, "The total bill to the taxpayer for 61 million gallons of fuel from Kuwait and about 179 million gallons from Turkey, between May and late October, was \$383 million, over \$100 million more than what local providers ... would have charged."

Chatterjee also demonstrates the dizzying web of revolving doors and crony politics between the colossal companies and the government. There's the obviously questionable ethics involved with Dick Cheney still receiving paychecks from Halliburton. Or Riley Bechtel serving on the board of Bush's Export Council. Then we have Jack Sheehan, senior vice president of Bechtel, moonlighting on the Defense Policy Board. The DPB advises the Pentagon on issues of war. Former Bechtel president George Schultz argued loudly for an attack on Iraq. In addition to the routine corporate corruption, Chatterjee suggests that doling out the dirty work makes it much easier for the government to get its war on.

More disturbing than the bankrupt business practices of Bush-buddy corporations in Iraq is the prevalence of privately owned and operated armies. Such businesses as Dyncorp, Ennys, Vinnell and Blackwater hire ex-police officers and military personnel to serve in Iraq as the





bodyguards and personal militias of other employees and officials. Chatterjee asks whether or not such forces are legal and what consequences they could have in Iraq and elsewhere in wars to come. He says, "Dyncorp attracted a mixture of ordinary policemen from the United States who jumped at the opportunity to double their salaries, as well as quite a few Soldier of Fortune magazine readers- macho, swaggering types who walked around Iraq wearing Oakley sunglasses, Kevlar helmets, and flak jackets thinking that they owned the place." Chatterjee also points out that private companies were used in interrogations (such as those at Abu Ghraib) and to train the Iraqi military.

Further undercutting the administration's argument that the U.S. is only interested in helping Iraqis is the penchant of occupation authorities of hiring foreign workers as opposed to Iraqis. They include workers from nations such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka. This might make sense to some uber-capitalist minded individuals if the foreign workers were paid less. As Chatterjee explains, the inverse is true. Foreign workers make up to seven times what their Iraqi counterparts make. U.S. workers often times make \$7,000 to \$8,000 per month. Compare this to the \$100 per month an Iraqi earns, or \$300 in the case of Indian worker.

Taken as a whole, Chatterjee's examples illustrate a U.S.-reconstructed Iraq erected on unstable grounds. Private companies with a profit motive are responsible for rebuilding Iraq. It should be noted that the book appeared prior to the election held in January. The outcome of which would likely not alter anything about Iraq, Inc. Chatterjee's observations remain poignant and his arguments cogent. If Iraq is to recover, grow and prosper, he contends, it must do so under the direction and by the hands of Iraqis.

-Casey Boland

### **Nabat: Journal of the Damned Proletariat (Issue #3)**

Jason Inferno  
Self-published, Winter 2004/2005  
jonny@mail333.com

*Nabat* is a shoddily constructed example of the DIY punk publishing ethic, but it is clear that Jonathan Inferno (creator of *Nabat*), believes in what he is doing. This "Journal" reminds me of the 'zine scene before blogs, when people would pay a dollar or two in order to experience the world through another person's words. However, the cover art is abysmal and this magazine is greatly in need of proofreading.

The body of this 'zine is an article ambitiously titled "The Anarchist Black Cross, Ideology & Prison Abolition," but it primarily addresses the factionalism between Anarchist Black Cross organizations. Both the Anarchist Black Cross Network and the Anarchist Black Cross Federation advocate sweeping prison reform, but have different stances concerning the prisoners they are willing to assist. The name Black Cross is presumably an anarchist take on the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, apparently failing to see that "Red" in this context is associated with blood (and therefore medical care) rather than a politics.

The closing article addresses "The School of the Americas" (which now is opaquely called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) and is an informative exercise in sarcasm that pleads for the reader "to join us to shut down the school of the assassins." Unfortunately, *Nabat* doesn't give the reader information on how to go about doing this. After reading this article I may have been moved to write a congress person, plan a protest or buy a t-shirt, but the lack of follow up placed the onus of action solely on the reader. Also, the writing is a didactic stream of consciousness and the analytical sophistication of *Nabat* is minimal, but its information and intent are good. Overall, a lack of editing seems to be the problem with *Nabat* and it

is my belief that over time *Nabat* could reach the potential to which it aspires.

-Agent Automatic

### **Masculine/Feminine: Practices of Difference(s)**

Nelly Richard - Silvia R. Tandeciarz and Alice A. Nelson,  
Translators  
Duke University Press, 2004  
www.dukeupress.edu

Nelly Richard closes this collection of five essays on two words: Seduction and Sedition. They are the two ends of her analysis, and she spends most of her time demonstrating how closely related they are for women and feminists struggling against gender oppression in Latin America. Although surprisingly brief at only sixty-seven pages (plus abundant notes), Richard's dense, oblique writing is not for everyone. It is, however, an important document of the clandestine work that emerged during the Pinochet dictatorship, and it is a valuable glimpse into the thoughts and actions of one of Chile's most radical cultural critics.

-Brian Bergen-Aurand

### **Sweet Action: #3 The Gaming Issue**

editors-in-chief Robin Adams and Nicole Taggart  
www.sweetactionmag.com

If a magazine sucks, I cut out pictures to use in collages and zines, and recycle it immediately. If it doesn't, it goes into my magazine rack. This smut mag is a keeper, even with its one flaw: there is not much ethnic diversity in the models. But the magazine is off to a good start, and this absence of color can be improved on.

To get right to the point, these guys are hot. Not in the Playgirl/mainstream hetero-normative porn sense, thankfully. One model, Winston, has tattoos, messy hair, and is shown in one shot to be wearing nothing but his glasses and wristwatch. Another, Izzy, has long hair. Other models have unwaxed chests. These guys don't look like they just left the tanning booth or the gym.

It's not all about the nudity though. This magazine is fun. Two pages are devoted to readers' confessions about female ejaculation. There is a feature review of motel rooms that can be rented by the hour. The centerfold is a poster with a Sweet Action gameboard on the reverse side. The game is like a twisted version of every makeout game known to humankind, with instructions like "Too broke to jack off to subscription pornsite. Must settle for public ac-

cess wank! Go to Horny, Broke, and Lazy!" and "Fuck Spin the Bottle, Everyone make out!" There are instructions showing how to make your own merkin, with photos public wigs made from gherkin pickles ("gherkin merkin") and rainbow-colored feathers and pom-poms.

The layout is impressive, mixing photos with articles. There is a noticeable absence of alcohol advertisement, and all ads are kept to the back of the magazine.

Sexy is subjective, so if your idea of good porn is pouting, sulking goths or vapid, complacent airbrush-jobs, pass on this one.

-Kerri Provost

## **[AUDIO]**

### **Against All Authority/Common Rider**

Split CD  
Hopeless Records, 2005  
www.hopelessrecords.com

This is a split CD from these two amazing bands. Hopeless Records is undeniably one of the greatest punk rock label of the past decade. The punk rock crowd should be familiar with these two band's sound, but if you're just curious about these two acts, they sound a lot more like underground punk rock than mainstream. A little Rancid feel in Against All Authority's sound though. The vocals and the overall music has a little Bad Religion feel to it as well. This split CD will definitely appeal to fans of hardcore music. Common Rider on the other hand, is quite the exact opposite. They are more slow to mid-paced punk rock with acoustic elements ala Everclear. Common Rider is more like "happy punk rock" music than pissed off. It's not that quite far off from Common Rider vocalist's former legendary band Operation Ivy, which was more in the ska/punk vein. This is great stuff.

-Adhab Al-Farhan

### **Ana Egge**

*Out Past the Lights*  
Grace/Parkinsons, 2004  
www.anaegge.net

Ana Egge's *Out Past the Lights* is a lovely sleeper of an album. Neither brash nor overly busy, it rolls along like a late-night drive through the back roads and small towns its songs detail.



Fela Kuti

Egge's lyrics are uncomplicated, but never trite. Like Lucinda Williams and Gillian Welch, she uses words economically, saying only what she needs to tell the story at hand. Take these lines from "The Flood":

*Down my block, there's a vacant lot  
we race across to get to the climbing tree  
hurry up, get your stuff and follow me  
you're the King and I'm the Queen  
in our bare feet*

Egge's voice, equal parts world-weary and little girl, is unconventional, but after a couple listens, it becomes as much a part of the songs as the lyrics and melodies.

Standout tracks include "The Flood", with gorgeous harmony by Ron Sexsmith, and the gritty old-time rocker "Stone Bone."

-Shelley Miller

## Bang! Bang!

Electric Sex

Morphius Records, 2005

www.morphius.com

Bang! Bang! is very retro sounding, even their image is sort of retro, very 80's and sort of cheesy in a good way. We all like that 80's look and sound, so there's no denying it. The first song "Candystop" is very upbeat and very reminiscent of The Knack's "My Sharona." The rest of the songs are pretty much like it and maybe add a little "Hey Mickey" jam to it — it's all good. The choruses are definitely cheesy, yet highly enjoyable. I guess we all need cheese in our music once in a while. Bang! Bang! does it very well than any other current band going for that retro sound. I'm sure Bang! Bang! is a great live act as well since their music is made to rock. Their music is very simple sounding yet it's full of great melodies so as to not bore the listeners. Their songs are short as well so there is not much room for non-sense here and there. I like this a lot and you should, indeed, look out for this band.

-Adhab Al-Farhan

## Bloc Party

Tulips

Dim Mak Records, 2005

www.dimmak.com

What is it with the British press? Their constant clamoring for the Next Hot British Band, otherwise known as the most recent NME cover, leads to the sort of hyper-exposure that few bands are prepared for. Remember Gay Dad? Neither do I. Bloc Party is in the unique position of holding the coveted title and enjoying (being subjected to?) all the attendant buzz even though most of their fans have never seen them live, and the average Pitchfork reader has perhaps heard pieces of their music being played at the end of a party. Their

lefty politics and their singular boast (in indie-land anyway) of having a black, gay lead singer are perhaps better known than their songs. Which is a shame, because some of their melodies are lovely, albeit nowhere near the top of the heap to which they have been assigned.

The breakbeats that start off *Tulips*, the most recent single released in anticipation of Bloc Party's first full-length album *Silent Alarm*, are promising, imperfect rejects from the Britney Spears "Toxic" sessions. Rather abruptly, the beats blend into a swelling of violins, and frontman Kele Okereke's voice, a pitch-perfect imitation of Coldplay, Travis, et al. accompanies the somewhat schizophrenic transitions between dance party and a break-up mix tape. Rather than a cheeky nod to two of the most popular fads to come out of England recently — electroclash and whiny crescendos — it is evident by the generic heartache lyrics that Bloc Party takes itself, and it's hype, a tad too seriously. Still, the beats are hot (when they remember to put them in), the melodies are lovely, and the earnestness refreshing. Like Okereke sings at the end of "Tulips": "this could be an opportunity, if you promise to let it grow."

-Charlotte Loftus

## Crystal Skulls

Blocked Numbers

Suicide Squeeze Records, 2005

www.suicidesqueeze.net

This is the band's debut, and for a debut, it is quite magnificent. After all, first impressions should always be the rule of the game. *Blocked Numbers* is full of great songs that are very catchy, and with a lot of humor as well such as on the second track "Hussy" and others. There are a lot of indie rock elements here as well as some jazzy moments. This Seattle-based band does not leave out the art-rock elements of the indie rock movement. In fact, this album has a heavy amount of art-rock ala Clinic and so on, only Crystal Skulls make it sound so exciting. Listening to this disc's entirety is very refreshing, reminding me of how good some music really is. As this band's record label, Suicide Squeeze Records have released albums by hard hitters Modest Mouse, who are currently enjoying superstardom, Crystal Skulls could be the next in line. I am hoping so as this band is a must hear.

-Adhab Al-Farhan

## The Deadly

*The Wolves Are Here Again*

Pluto Records, 2005

www.plutorecords.com

There's enough bad metalcore these days to send the staunchest scene stalwart screaming towards Emoville. And with labels floundering from the influx of "new jack" capital, it seems like new, hot bands are coming out every week. How's a hardcore kid supposed to stay on top?

Maybe, to some extent, we're not. The over-saturation of heavy music right now might not be a bad thing—because as much as it reeks of being the new fad, it also places that much more responsibility on the bands to turn listeners' heads.

The Deadly turned my head. There's an instant similarity to the Blood Brothers: both bands place screamy vocals and plucky bass riffs in the forefront of their sound. But where the latter are raucous and spastic to a degree that alienates most listeners who, uh, don't have rabies, The Deadly have enough heft and chunk to their riffs for the sane toglom onto. What's more, they're fucking catchy. Right from the opening riff of the CD, it's clear that bouncy, catchy rhythms à la Coheed and Camba dominate *The Wolves Are Here Again*.

The lyrics may be a bit hashed-over by this point. I mean, is the sexual sarcasm of "Make Me Rich" — "so you want to make out again well we're stealing every heart we can" — really going to send any ex-lovers to the emergency room? But then, who really listens to hardcore for the lyrics anyway? The nitpicky downsides are a disappointing read-along and a lyric booklet full of typos; but even these are more than balanced out by the unconventional, beautifully executed design work. Every hardcore band, including your mom's, seems to have a logo with blood drips and splatter marks; The Deadly opt for disturbingly clean design, and photographs that reek of too much order. Sometimes spitting in the face of the trend can be good for one's dignity.

-Dan Barry

## Fela Kuti

*Music is the Weapon: The Best of Fela Kuti*

Universal, 2004

www.universallrecords.com

For the uninitiated, Fela Kuti was the James Brown of Lagos, Nigeria and more. He was a potent political figure, campaigning for a new government and able to really crank out the funk. This box set consists of two cds and a DVD containing a documentary with interviews and live performance footage. Surprisingly enough you can probably pick it up at your local independent record store for about \$30. Not too bad. The music of Fela is not one of an evolving figure. On each record, from early on in a live setting or with Ginger Baker in the 80's, the music maintains the same organic feel that seemingly can only come from the most populated nation in Africa. So perhaps this box set, musically can serve as a general overview of Fela's Afro-beat. What is more remarkable though about this set is the documentary entitled,



*Music is the Weapon.* "Billed as 'The Definitive Film on Fela,'" the documentary delves into the compound that Fela constructed to house his band, friends, countrymen, and harem. There are a number of interviews with a very relaxed, but intense man; barley clothed showing visible scars from recent beatings handed out by his government. With all of this, Fela remains rather calm. Though at sometimes indignant, he's sure of his goal to take over his countries' government aided by the support of the dispossessed masses of Nigeria.

The way in which he goes about this, in part, at least, is to own his own club, The Shrine, and perform there nightly for hours. Amidst his well-rehearsed, gargantuan band, Fela performs religious ceremonies, based not on any Judeo-Christian beliefs, but on African rituals. The appeal of Fela, apart from being an overly accomplished musician and plainly sexy man, was that he wanted something from the heart that all of his countrymen could relate to. He's gone now, being taken away by AIDS in the late 90's, but there seems to be a rebirth of his music and ideology of late in this country. Perhaps, Americans are beginning to feel more and more detached from the government that was constructed to represent them. It almost seems like time to scream "No Agreement" as loud as we can collectively to change what we see our nation becoming.

-Dave Cantor

### From Monuments To Masses

*Schools Of Thought Contend*

Dim Mak, 2005

www.dimmak.com

Some might consider it odd the amount of power instrumental music, or "post-rock" actually has. Bands like Sigur Ros and Explosions In The Sky have the power to say more without words than a good amount of bands can ever hope to with them. The long, epic instrumental passages have a way of playing on emotion in a way that most bands could never truly understand, or hope to present in their own music.

This puts *From Monuments To Masses Schools Of Thought Contend* at a crossroads of sort, out of the 15 tracks only two of them are actually new studio tracks, leaving the other 13 as reworked and redone renditions and remixes of previous efforts. The studio tracks are the standouts here, with "Deafening" offering up some soaring guitars, and swirling rhythms and spoken samples in the backdrop of things. It's a gorgeous, if not accessible way to open the album, before things take a turn towards the electronic. Remixes of "Sharpshooter" and "Old Robes" take on decidedly new faces, while retaining some of the solid structures that allowed the songs to succeed in their original incarnations.

In places where the recordings start to grow monotonous, there's some added elements to keep things from growing entirely stale. Some nice loops and melodies are juxtaposed to be somewhat opposite each other, but they still mesh well. The rising and falling action is enough to warrant repeats on quite a few of these tracks, but the band is still their most challenging and rewarding in a traditional setting. That said, this is still more than worthy of your time, as they are not simply remixes, but new and invigorating interpretations that should certainly catch your ear.

-Jordan Rogowski

### The Kills

*No Wow*

(RCA/Rough Trade)

If you took away PJ Harvey's antidepressants, she might make an album like *No Wow*. It's the darkest, evilest non-metal album I've heard in a long time. Thing is, it's sexy.

Doubly so when you count the fact that it's made by a boy-girl duo that's more Jolie-and-Pitt than Jack and Meg White. Chalk it up to VV's feline vocals (which may be too Harvey-esque for some, but hey, it's not like she has much of a choice). Undemeath, Hotel's gritty guitar sounds like an overdriven bluesman. They use a drum machine for their rhythms, but they know how to make it sound driving and organic. Head-nodding, slanky electro-pop.

-Dan Barry

### Neon Blonde

*Chandeliers In The Savannah*

Dim Mak, 2005

www.dimmak.com

Unfair as it may be, side projects are without fail, always judged by the previous musical ventures of their members. Neon Blonde is no exception. The band boasts current members of The Blood Brothers, falsetto singing Johnny Whitney and drummer Mark Gajadhar Whitney, s trademark wail is very apparent in *Chandeliers In The Savannah*, though far less frenzied and chaotic.

Opening track "Black Cactus Killers" is the strongest indication of Whitney's trademark voice, and if his Blood Brothers cohort Jordan Billie was singing, the song could easily pass for a Blood Brothers tune. Don't get comfortable, however, because the rest of this album sounds like more of an homage to David Bowie than a collection of spastic vocal assaults. Found throughout are moments of eerie piano inclusion, jagged guitar, and odd synth parts. The melting pot of sorts doesn't always provide the most cohesive results, but every song to be found is sure to keep you on your toes.

Dangerous and danceable, the band cascades through eleven tracks with an ease and flow that if nothing else, defies the array of sounds being brought to the table. "New Detroit" displays some jangly chord progressions, and the ever present Whitney wailing and screaming above it all. Though far less spastic than The Blood Brothers, Neon Blonde is just as unpredictable. Varying sounds and tempos through every song give each its own identity.

A definite adventure of sorts, Neon Blonde's debut record offers some bite to its bark, and a swagger and flare that pull the diverse array together.

-Jordan Rogowski

### Ox

*Dust Bowl Revival*

Second Nature, 2005

www.secondnaturerecordings.com

To have the beauty and desolation of the midwest equally represented in your music is to immediately have an interesting viewpoint. Canadian exports Ox have done so with their most recent album, and the dynamics are finely rooted in equal parts simplicity and emotion. This subtle emotion is striking, as presented on "Weaving," in which Mark Browning's witting vocals and picturesque lyrics leave lasting images. "The sea is so empty October, the tourists have gone / The street is a windy town, and I can't help but think of you far away / Are you sleeping alone tonight?"

The harmonies presented by this three-piece accent whatever direction the album may take, be that slow, and calming, or more upbeat and folk-pop oriented. Despite any tempo changes, the lyrical matter and gorgeous melodies stay true to themselves. "Oh Eileen" is an absolute gem, and the instrumentation accents the vocals to a tee. The album is the showcase for a variety of musical collaborators, with such inclusions as the piano, violin, and electric lap slide tugging all the sorrow from your heart.



At just over an hour in duration, there's just enough time for your senses to soak in the subtle guitar plucking, and soothing violin. It's no wonder the album was the first to see #1 in over a decade on the Canadian college radio charts, and Ox have presented something that could very easily take over the first spot in your CD changer for as long as you'll let it.

-Jordan Rogowski

### Past Mistakes

*Purgatory*

The New Beat, 2004

www.thenewbeat.net

There's one element to music that not all bands strive for, but that puts the ones that do far ahead of the quickly lagging pack. That element? Mood. It can make or break an album, and in the case of Past Mistakes *Purgatory*, the former is the obvious case.

Using straining vocals and dissonant guitar textures, the mood presented is both one of desperation and one of calm. Past Mistakes work with a diverse sonic palette, becoming equal parts Texas Is The Reason and Explosions In The Sky. Long, free form instrumental tangents flow into raspy, emotional vocals with a very solid cohesion. Surprisingly enough, the band is only a three piece, but the music they make feels so much larger than that.

"Flesh & Blood Didn't Reveal This To You" reminds of Explosions In The Sky's "A Poor Mans Memory," with its delicate instrumentation leading into crunching guitars

and pounding, repetitious drum fills. The band has a more rocking section of their personality, as "Help" would attest, culminating in frenzied guitars, and desperate screamed vocals. The diversity that the band brings to the table is truly engaging, and no matter the song style, the album flows well, and knows when to accentuate its strengths and hide the weaknesses.

Not every listener will go in to, or come out of *Purgatory* in the same disposition, but I have no doubts that both your mind and your mood will be tested.

-Jordan Rogowski

## Various Artists

*Homemade Hits*, vol. 2

Kittridge Records, 2005

homemadehits.kittrnet.com

Volume 2 in what we can only hope is an on-going series of exclusive "homemade" recordings gives us 27 uniformly excellent tracks from 27 different artists from all over the globe, including Boyracer (originally from Leeds, England, but now based in Flagstaff, Arizona), Sleepy Township (Australia) and Tigre Benvie (aka Rob Benvie, from Canada), as well as all points US-wards. What you get is a sweeping overview of the wide spectrum of music straight-jacketed into the misleadingly restrictive genre labeled "Indie". The music here certainly goes a long way to ripping those restrictions wide open, as it varies from relatively straight-ahead rock (Boyracer) to plaintive pop (Golden Gram), taking in a slice of electronica (Captain Ahab) and dropping in some weird experimentation (Gang Wizard) to spice up the proceedings somewhat. All in all, a very satisfying and highly enjoyable collection that definitely gives "Indie" a good name and belies its homemade nature with the quality of the work on offer.

-Ray Boreham

## The Sharp Ease

*Going Modern*

ofFactory/Soft Spot Records, 2005

www.thesnell.org/ofFactory

The Sharp Ease is a 4-piece Los Angeles-based female band. This is the band's debut after releasing only a few seven-inches since their inception. Imagine this, Blondie, The Go-Go's, and The B-52's all in one CD and this is what you get with *Going Modern*. The singer sounds a lot like that of The B-52's singer, especially on their "Love Shack" classic hit song. This disc is full of melodies that are catchy and very sing-along-like. While this does have a lot of 80's flavor, it also has that modern feel to it, hence the title of the album. I really dig this CD a lot, from beginning to end. I really can't wait to hear what's next for these women. If you want to invest your money well, do yourself a favor and pick this up now.

-Adhab Al-Farhan

## [VIDEO]

### Boxers and Ballerinas

Mike Cahill and Bnt Marling, Directors

www.boxersandballerinas.com

In the midst of the War on Terror gone overdrive, *Boxers and Ballerinas* provides a refreshing counter-narrative about Cuban-U.S. relations against the backdrop of mainstream public debate about freedom, security and terrorism.

Rather than interviewing mainstream media's traditional quote-suppliers — policymakers and scholars — this documentary film intertwines four young people's stories

with voiceovers and montages to capture the impact of Cuban and U.S. foreign policy.

The voiceovers explain, for instance, that the Cuban government invests millions into education and that people live in neither extreme poverty nor extreme wealth. We also learn about the Cuban government's restriction of emigration.

*Boxers and Ballerinas* follows four young rising artists and athletes—two Cubans, two Cuban-Americans—as they make decisions about where to live and work, given the restrictions on movement they face.

We meet Paula, a 21-year-old Cuban-American dancer. She is the daughter of Rosario Suarez, once Cuba's Prima Ballerina, who defected to the U.S. in 1995. The film follows Paula as she decides between a professional ballet job in Washington or continuing to support her mother's dance company in Miami.

We are also introduced to Sergio, a 20-year-old Cuban-American boxer. Sergio's family moved to Miami because, as his father explains, the first place prize in Cuba was a bicycle, as compared with a Rolls Royce in the U.S. Indeed, we learn from the voiceover, a Cuban athlete's "freedom" could be worth \$1 million. When the filmmakers ask a Miami sports agent how these contacts take place, he avoids the question, instead emphasizing the "desperate state" Cuban athletes are in to get out. The film poignantly contrasts this reasoning with the phenomenon of U.S. homelessness. In one scene, Sergio remarks, "Look, bro, why don't you get a job?" in response to a homeless man asking for money, to later find his father at home after having lost his job.

Across 90 miles of water in Havana, we meet Annia, a 19-year-old Cuban dancer. She is scheduled to go on tour to Mexico only to find that her trip is delayed indefinitely after other Cubans defect to the U.S. She eventually travels to Mexico, but reflects at the end of the trip that she feels freer in Cuba.

The last of the four young people featured is a 17-year-old Cuban boxer named Yordenis. He too decides not to defect from Cuba, at one point declaring "Long live revolutionary sports!"

While humanizing the impact of Cuban-U.S. relations on the lives of these young people, *Boxers and Ballerinas* also refuses to silence the contradictions of the War on Terror and U.S. policy around Cuba. For instance, the film explores anti-Cuban Orlando Bosch's role in the 1976 bombing of a Cubana Air flight — and his subsequent pardon by former President George Bush.

The film is visually striking, filled with beautiful montages rife with symbolism. At times, however, these interludes only slow the narrative pace, drawing time and attention away from the film's protagonists.

*Boxers and Ballerinas* provides a glimpse into the lives of these four young people, critically examining the government policies shaping their decisions. In so doing, the film moves beyond the stilted anti-Communist rhetoric of mainstream U.S. media. With such an ambitious undertaking, however, viewers may find themselves wishing for more than just a glimpse.

-Vanessa Huang

### Disarm

Next Step Productions, 2005

www.nspfilms.org

Welcome to the Devil's Garden.

This ominous nickname belongs to the Shomali Valley north of Kabul, where a small city of landmines waits beneath the dirt, waiting for an unsuspecting foot to land. As I watched footage of the Devil's Garden in the documentary *Disarm*, I expected a Western activist to lecture the camera on the dangers of antipersonnel landmines. Instead, a Northern Alliance commander described how best to plant landmines, and why he had planted so many.

*Disarm* isn't narrated by Robert Redford or peppered with liberal talking heads. Statistics appear sparingly. The few Westerners we meet appear on screen to tie the story together, not to create the story. Leave that to the residents of Iraq, Colombia, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Burma — people who live with landmines in their backyards. Like the deminer working a field in Bosnia that gives the film an ironic twist. "It's the nature of the job that at one point, you come across a mine to demine it, and you realize that you planted it yourself," he said. Or the Burmese man's horrified expression we see while villagers "trimmed" strips of skin from his recently shredded leg. Prepare to empathize with these men, because *Disarm* is more than an anti-landmine brochure. Mary Wareham, the executive director and producer, has been a landmine expert Watch since 1998, and founded Next Step Productions in 2003 to launch *Disarm*. She seems to know there is more to demining the world than signing a treaty.

Beyond the stories we hear is the story we see. Shot in 2003 and 2004, the cinematography is stunning, and there was enough silence between the sentences to let me tune into a panoramic shot of lunar Afghanistan from a helicopter's vantage. Just as I grew accustomed to the sandy hills above Kabul, an aerial shot of lush Colombia appeared and suddenly, the world turned green. The seamless transition linked the War in Afghanistan to Colombia's 30-year civil war in a way that words couldn't. Brian Liu held the creative reins, and his photojournalism experience gives *Disarm* a disarming feel.

Watch this 60-minute film. Well, if you can — the filmmakers hadn't found a distributor by press time. Search film fests for *Disarm*, spread the word and follow its release at [www.disarmfilm.org](http://www.disarmfilm.org).

-Kaci Elder

### Letter to My Mother

Courtney E. Martin, director

[www.puppyflowers.com](http://www.puppyflowers.com)

Personalizing the protest video isn't easy. Part of the reason is that mass gatherings are to a great extent about losing oneself, becoming part of a larger movement, and, in the case of protest marches, uniting against a common oppressor. At the same time it's very difficult to convey the energy, enthusiasm, and euphoria of a protest march without showing the effects it has on those attending. In *Letter to My Mother*, Courtney E. Martin adds just the right amount of road movie to her footage of the April 2004 March for Freedom of Choice in Washington DC to show the transformation it engendered in herself and three friends. The 25-minute video depicts the journey of four recent college grads toward feminism.

The road movie has traditionally been considered a masculine genre. American culture has marked the open road as the place where masculinity is discovered—apart from the safety of hearth and home. So films as stylistically diverse as *Easy Rider* and *Sideways* share the American highway as the space where male comradeship and self-discovery occur. *Letter to My Mother* employs these same genre conventions for feminist ends, showing that in order to find feminism one must also leave the safety and security of the home, and take to the road.

After a brief prelude featuring still images of famous faces from the feminist gallery Martin and her friends set out on their road trip from Brooklyn to DC. In the car we briefly get to know Martin's friends. Her camera is intuitively observational, but not in the cinema verite-objective sense. She interviews her friends obtrusively, allowing them to speak, but interjecting, and turning the camera around on herself as well, while they discuss God, the president, marriage, and the differences between men and women. She also breaks up the conversation by titling particular lines, like "She said

'anti-christ' and she voted for him." While the titles are too small to read on the average TV monitor, they do serve to structure the anecdotes, and connect the film to some of the formally experimental feminist films of the 1970s.

The middle part of the video consists of the march itself, highlighting particular speakers, and capturing the diversity of the crowd. Interestingly, Martin also includes the anti-choice protesters standing on the sidelines and shouting at, or praying for, the marchers. Here her camera is not judgmental. There is a kind of fascination with the sheer visual spectacle of observing someone lost in prayer, but there are ominous overtones as we are forced to realize that these people reject choice, at least for women, and view feminists as the oppressors they are united against. The last part of the video consists of the drive home, but the friends are obviously changed by participating in the march.

Martin's film highlights the problems that third wave feminists have connecting with the generations that preceded them. She says, she wants to make a "story of how feminism became real" for her and her friends. The reality it underscores is that for many young women, feminism is not real. It is a term their mother's used, and its meaning is largely unknown. This is dramatized poignantly in the video when Martin asks one friend, "Are you a feminist?" The friend answers yes, but then says "Jesus Christ, Courtney!" when she's asked, "What does feminism mean to you?"

As the title suggests, this is a video that attempts to reconcile the generational rift. In the prelude Martin states, "Older feminists don't seem to understand that a lot of young women are afraid of the F word." To some extent their fear shows the effectiveness of calculated right wing attacks that have made "the F word" almost as bad as "the L word." But it also reveals a failure of older feminists to understand the particular needs of a new generation — a generation that hasn't quite figured out what its own needs are yet. That's where this road trip/protest video is so effective. Its four characters lose themselves in the human waves of protesters at a pro-choice march, but find themselves in the third wave of feminism.

-Joseph Christopher Schaub

### Mad Hot Ballroom

Marilyn Agrelo, director

[www.paiamountclassics.com/madhot/](http://www.paiamountclassics.com/madhot/)

While school arts programs are getting slashed around the country to pay for Bush's No Child Left Behind fiasco, New York City public schools' ballroom dance program is flourishing.

Marilyn Agrelo — director of the documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom*, which follows three classes of fifth graders from different economic and cultural backgrounds over 10 weeks as they learn to dance and vie for the 2004 title of citywide champions — thinks it's not the dancing, but the kids' exposure to the ballroom rituals that's the attraction. "I know this sounds corny, but there's something about 'the ladies and gentlemen' aspect of it," she says. Dancers learn to treat the opposite sex with a respect that they might not see practiced in the media or at home. "Telling a boy he has to escort his partner to the other side of the room, that he needs to take care of the lady, that he needs to look in her eyes, bow to her and give her his arm, it's almost revolutionary."

Agrelo, who was born in Cuba and grew up in New York, captures the students' attempts to sort out their budding feelings about the opposite sex and what it means to be a man or a woman. The students come from trendy Tribeca, working class Brooklyn and impoverished Washington Heights, and the movie provides glimpses of how those cultural and economic differences shape their views.

"There's a real cultural difference about touching," she says. In Brooklyn, the Asian-American girls' hands often hovered three inches above their partners' shoulders for the

first few lessons. The Washington Heights boys — mostly recent immigrants from the Dominican Republic — immediately embraced the sway of the rumba while the downtown Tribeca boys froze at the idea of moving their hips. "To them, men don't move like that."

Nor do boys dance with boys or girls with girls, at least not in the classroom. It's a rule Agrelo says has more to do with the kids' potential confusion over leading and following than enforcing traditional sex roles (certainly no such rules apply at the teachers' meeting). The film also catches hints of the dark issues that lie just ahead in adolescence. A boy quits dancing for basketball, but not before slamming a male classmate as gay. A girl ponders what a strange thing it is that girls have to be pregnant. Another voices their fears about walking by groups of drunken, leering men on the street.

And at every school, the girls (often towering over their shorter partners) complain that the boys aren't up to the job leading — a criticism that prompted one festivalgoer to ask Agrelo about the amount of male bashing in her film.

"I hadn't thought about it, but there is," she says. "You have a lot of that boy versus girl thing at that age. The girls at that age just don't think the boys are very smart."

-Irene Svele

### McLibel

Franny Armstrong, Director and Producer

Cinema Libre Distribution, 2005

[www.mcspotlight.org](http://www.mcspotlight.org)

*McLibel* is a compelling and inspiring documentary on the 15 year legal battle of two British activists accused of libel by McDonald's. In 1986, the two activists, Dave Morris and Helen Steel, along with several others involved in the group London Greenpeace, produced and distributed a pamphlet entitled "What's Wrong With McDonald's? Everything They Don't Want You to Know," which highlighted the corporation's poor nutritional food content, deceptive advertisements, harmful environmental effects, poor conditions for workers, and exploitation of animals. McDonald's hired private investigators to infiltrate the tiny group (including 7 spies) to learn about its activities, steal documents, and gather personal information about those involved. McDonald's then filed suit against five of the group's members, alleging libel and demanding that the members retract the statements made in the pamphlet and apologize to the corporation. Three of the accused reluctantly chose not to defend themselves and acquiesced to McDonald's demands.

The documentary focuses largely on the subsequent trial, and the seemingly insurmountable odds that the two faced. Morris and Steel had no prior legal knowledge and had only the part-time assistance of one volunteer attorney through much of the trial. They faced McDonald's ten-member legal team and its essentially limitless budget, which enabled the corporation to fly in experts from around the world (McDonald's spent roughly \$20 million on the case).

*McLibel* also highlights the personal toil the trial took on Morris and Steel, which provides some of the more engaging moments in the documentary. The trial consumed their lives (Morris admits at one point to having "no time" for his young son Charlie). They faced exhaustion and media scrutiny (as well as continued frustration in dealing with the corporate press) during what became the longest legal trial in the UK's history.

The documentary doesn't just harp on the overwhelming odds against Morris and Steel however, as it also emphasizes the large and effective support campaign that developed around the trial, including a website ([www.mcspotlight.org](http://www.mcspotlight.org)), and a small group of volunteers were able to bring in over sixty witnesses from throughout the world, including

a still from *Boxers and Ballerinas*  
courtesy of Holiday Matinee



scientists, environmentalists, former workers (among them a repented Ronald McDonald clown), and ex-cattle ranchers, who testified without compensation to the validity of the defendants' criticisms. Perhaps most importantly, Morris and Steel were able to bring substantial international attention to the numerous issues associated with McDonald's as well as corporations and capitalism more generally: exploitation of workers, animal cruelty, environmental degradation, third world poverty, corporate power and influence, etc.

Though the eventual court decision was mixed — with the judge ruling that the defendants had proved some of the claims in the pamphlet, but not all — this updated version of *McLibel* (the original version entitled *McLibel: Two Worlds Collide* was thirty-three minutes shorter and originally released in 1997) also chronicles the subsequent legal battle Morris and Steel undertook. They brought a case to the European Court of Human Rights (this time with the help of legal aid attorneys), arguing that UK libel laws more violated the European Convention on Human Rights' Articles on the rights to a fair trial and freedom of expression. They were victorious, with the European court ruling in their favor on February 15, 2005.

*McLibel* is a powerful demonstration of the lengths to which corporations will go to ensure that their version of truth is upheld and how seriously they take opposition to it. *McLibel* is also an inspirational portrayal of two activists (and countless other behind the scenes volunteers whom we don't meet in the film) who simply refused to give in to "the organizations that currently dominate our lives, our communities and our planet."

-Ben Holtzman

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# HERE

words and photos **Ida Lake**

In rural Hudson, New York, a community arts and media center called Time and Space Limited offering teens a free media arts and activism course. The course opened with a two day Graffiti Stenciling workshop taught by Kevin Caplicki and Kristine Virsis, members of Visual Resistance, a New York City-based group of political street artists. Nine diverse teens, some recently off parole and struggling with chaotic family situations, others coming from private school and protective home lives, found common ground in there anti-war stance and their love of making art. Together they dove into the medium of stenciling with enthusiasm and appreciation. ☆

For more on Visual Resistance: [www.visualresistance.org](http://www.visualresistance.org)

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