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at Peace with the World

**global struggles for a
better tomorrow**

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- + Fighting for Independence in West Papua
- + Queer Identity in India
- + Tsunami Recovery in Sri Lanka
- + Sudanese Refugees Still Wait for Help
- + Cholitas in Bolivia
- + Coffee Crisis in Ethiopia
- + Honduran Campesinos and CAFTA
- + The Rise of Hamas



A campesino from a
community outside of San
Cristobal de las Casas.

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“Palecek has constructed a masterpiece in *Looking for Bigfoot*.”

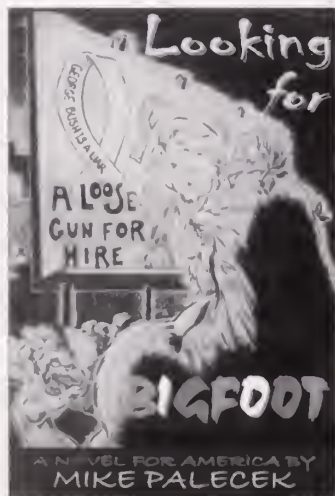
-January Magazine

If Jeremiah were alive in Iowa, his name would be Mike Palecek — a writer/activist who's done time for antiwar civil disobedience and written six powerful books before this one.

-The Briar Cliff Review

unrelenting fiction
from the heartland

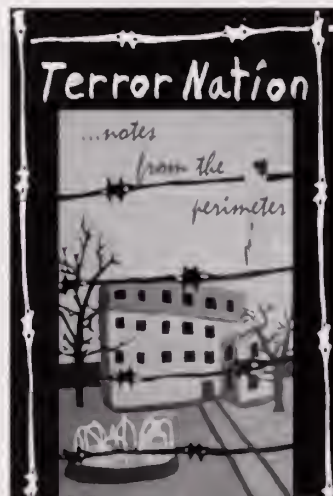
from Mike Palecek



Looking for Bigfoot

available from Howling Dog Press
www.howlingdogpress.com

Howling Dog Press publishes fine literature of the independent and unruly sort.



Terror Nation

available from Mainstay Press
www.mainstaypress.org

Mainstay Press is a new voice in leftist political fiction in the United States, providing a much needed outlet for truth-telling in American letters.



Clamor Music Festival

October 21, 2006

a nationwide celebration of independent music
details at www.clamormagazine.org/cmfb

from your editors

Clamor is a quarterly print magazine and online community of radical thought, art, and action. An iconoclast among its peers, Clamor is an unabashed celebration of self-determination, creativity, and shit-stirring. Clamor publishes content of, by, for, and with marginalized communities. From the kitchen table to shop floor, the barrio to the playground, the barbershop to the student center, it's old school meets new school in a battle for a better tomorrow. Clamor is a do-it-yourself guide to everyday revolution.

Sometimes it's hard just to wake up in the morning. Aside from the burdens we all carry on our individual shoulders (workaday stress, money issues, and the routine "what the hell am I doing with my life?" conversations we have with ourselves), it can be stultifying to even think about what role we play in the general fucked-upness of the world these days. As Americans, coming to grips with that complicity can be downright debilitating. Between cowboy imperialism and corporate neoliberalism, we've got a lot of work to do if we're going to make this world a place worth living in.

And yet, we DO get up everyday. We roll out of bed and do what we can each day to notch away at injustices we encounter in our own lives and in the lives of people close to us. We get up everyday because we're inspired by our friends and allies at home and abroad who are doing the same. Our friends in Mexico, Korea, Bolivia, or Argentina humble us and inspire us as Americans to step up and learn from their often more creative, advanced, and accomplished social justice movements. We get up every day because there is a war in Iraq and a WTO and the G8 wreaking havoc on the world — and we need to stop them.

In each edition of Clamor we include perspectives from individuals outside of the US, but we wanted to take this opportunity to remind you that we are not alone in struggle — that there are people out there who are working and winning with their art, culture, and activism. It is integral to social justice in the United States that we know and understand what is going on in the rest of the world — from how our country works and asserts itself around

the globe in our name, to how popular movements in far off places are organizing independent of any influence from Americans.

Even though we continue to learn important lessons from groups like the Zapatistas, we've spent this issue bringing to light struggles in some other areas of the globe like Sudan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Gambia. This world is a huge place, and we've got a lot to learn from each other.

This issue marks the second in our new quarterly schedule, and we couldn't be happier about how things have been going. Jason has expanded Clamor's geographical reach to the Southwest with his recent move to Tucson, Arizona. Jen has been crisscrossing the country speaking and representing at conferences all spring. Nomy Lamm, our Advisory Board Director, is hard at work creating a powerhouse roster of individuals assembled to make Clamor that much better (stay tuned for details on that). Mandy Van Deven, our Associate Publisher, has announced a merger of sorts as she closes the book on her labor of love, Altar Magazine, and welcomes her readers to the Clamor community.

With that, we bid you a good morning. Get out of bed. Today is going to be a great day.

PS: Don't forget to keep tabs on Clamor in between issues with our regularly updated blog. We keep you in-the-know with news about the magazine and amazing and absurd things happening around the world.
www.clamormagazine.org

EDITORS/PUBLISHERS

Jen Angel &
Jason Kucsma

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Mandy Van Deven

ADVISORY BOARD DIRECTOR

Nomy Lamm

CULTURE EDITOR

Kenyon Farrow

ECONOMICS EDITOR

Arthur Stamoulis

MEDIA EDITOR

Catherine Komp

PEOPLE EDITOR

Jessica Hoffman

SEX & GENDER EDITOR

Bnan Bergen Aurand

POLITICS EDITORS

Manana Ruiz
Chad Jones

REVIEW EDITOR

Keith McCrea

COPYEDITOR

Will Gorham

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Jason Kucsma

WEB DESIGN

Derek Hogue

VOLUNTEERS/INTERNS

Tony Jayne
Imani Lateef
Emily Nielsen
Sheryl Siegenthaler

PROOFREADERS

Elliot Adams, Kandice Ardiel, Jennifer Ashley, Hal Hixson, Andrew Petonak, Kristen Schmidt, & Ern Schwiderson

COVER THIS ISSUE

Andy Lin

TOOLS

Clamor is still waiting for donated Apple machines. Hello? Steve Jobs?

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letters

Please address letters to letters@clamormagazine.org or write us at PO Box 20128 Toledo, OH 43610
Letters may be edited for length.
Not all letters will be printed.
Bring it on!

Holding it Down in the Heartland

My mom sent me the profile on Clamor that appeared in the Toledo Blade* (I'm from Toledo), and I just wanted to let you know that I think what you're doing fucking rocks. Good for you. I work for a startup magazine in San Francisco and know very well what it's like (the debt alone is enough to give me a heart attack), which is why I was especially impressed with what you're doing.

Keep up the good work. There are lots of us out here who appreciate it — and I'll be looking for Clamor at Green Apple Books the next time I'm there.

Meredith Arthur
San Francisco, CA

*See for yourself at: toledoblade.com
(search for "Clamor Magazine")

Everyday Revolution Realized

Just picked up the geography issue. Amazingly well put together. From the wide binding to the design to the solid thematic, Clamor is looking great. It seems like you guys have learned something and are sharing it. The voice of this issue is a lot more calm, reflective, and realistically engaged with action — like it's not trying to sell the revolution but instead it is taking part in change with other actors.

Also, I totally dug the *Recipes for Disaster* review on all points. Interested that your back cover ad was for the book. Bold on both your parts.

Marc Herbst
Los Angeles, CA

Correction:

In the Spring 06 issue, our article "The Crisis of Crisis Pregnancy Centers" featured an incorrect website for additional information on feminist health care services. The correct site is: www.alternativereproduction.org

That Look is TOTALLY Us.

Got the new issue and I haven't got thru it yet but the article on mountain top removal in West Virginia was really good. Clamor has this ability to write on serious political topics in a way that is personal and human and interesting as opposed to a lot of activist material that is really stale and boring and self righteous. I was also really impressed with the photography, it really brings out the human dimension to the story.

Moe
Toronto, ONT, Canada

If By "Ungrateful" You Mean, "Totally Acceptable," then YES!

I appreciate how you refuse to simplify complex issues, but often your articles and interviews stop short in their most promising moments. I wanted to hear more from the LA urban farm ("14 Acres in South Central Los Angeles," Spring 06), I wanted the interviewer to push the documentarian's use of interns ("Slaying Giants," Spring 06) ... Is it ungrateful to ask for more? As a print magazine you have a format that a lot of progressive sources don't get to take advantage of — I have great hopes for your future issues.

Kristin McCartney
Chicago, IL

Satisfaction Guaranteed

I wanted to drop you a note about the new issue — it looks great, and I re-read it twice already (ok, so it was the only thing I took on my "spring break" to read that wasn't study material, but still...) I think on balance I'll be very happy with a bigger issue that comes less often. I would usually read the bi-monthly in one sitting and then be sad there wasn't more. So, congrats. I hope this achieves your editorial goals as well, but for what it's worth, you've got a happy reader over here.

Sarah Austin
Lansing, MI

Next Stop: Ugly White Dudes in Clamor Ads

Overall, I wanted to say that the redesign looks nice — perfect binding's always good, and it seems like you have a lot more photography. But I was alarmed by the Clamor ad of an Asian woman with a dragon shoulder tattoo with the words "Be Seen." What's a reader supposed to get from this ad? To me, it comes across as definitely sexist and possibly racist (a la Yellow Fever). I also don't think anyone who's actually concerned with "cred" — esp. of the "irrevocable" variety — will be swayed by a tagline in an ad saying their purchase of an ad will bequeath it to them. In fact, I think marketing "cool" almost automatically qualifies you for uncool status these days. I suspect that particular line was meant at least partially with tongue firmly in cheek, but that didn't come through in the actual copy.

Brian Awehali
Oakland, CA



the offending ad

uproar

This issue's installment of Uproar is being pre-empted to make room for the stunning photo essay that follows. Never fear, it will return, and there is still time to get your submissions in for the next issue!

Each issue, Clamor welcomes stories from readers on the theme. We want it all, from stories that will make us laugh to those that will make us cringe, conspiracies theories to your hopes and dreams.

Email your short piece, personal anecdote, or reflective story, up to 500 words, to uproar@clamormagazine.org with the topic in the subject line. Uproar selections should be non-fiction. Be sure to include your name and address so we can make sure you get a copy if your story appears. We encourage a wide interpretation of the theme.

make some noise

Deadline	Topic	Publication Date
July 10, 2006	.The Body	September 2006
Oct 10, 2006	.Food	December 2006
Jan 10, 2007	.Fear	March 2007
Apr 10, 2007	.Secrets & Conspiracies	June 2007

Photo: Immigration Rights Rally in St. Louis in April 2006. Photo by Theodore Hennessy

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Recovery

Life & Death in Sri Lanka After the Tsunami



above: Tsunami orphans in Jaffna, top right: sand dune tsunami memorial where almost all deceased dates on crosses read: 2004-12-26; bottom right: a young girl sings songs and plays games in Point Pedro

TEXT
J. Thomas Nguyen

PHOTOS
Theodore Hennessy

Before the word *tsunami* entered the working vocabulary of Sri Lankans, the nation was already ravaged by destruction on a secular level. The twenty-year civil war between the Buddhist Sinhalese and the Hindu Tamils had bred a culture of hostility, violence, and resentment. Despite a cease-fire accord, assassinations, bombings, and raids were still commonplace.

continued next page



However, on December 26, 2004, magnificently gigantic tidal waves devoured the coasts of the tiny island nation. The ensuing terror and physical destruction cast a hush over the political debates and the principles of war. Both the government and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam) fell quiet against the screams from their citizens.

38,000 people dead. 512,000 people displaced.

Sri Lanka changed irrevocably. A nation of orphans and widows created overnight. A nation of fishermen who now feared the sea. A divided na-

tion now united for one brief moment in the cause of life.

The violence vanished with the retreating waves. In its stead, hands began to stretch out towards the sea carrying food and medicine. Soldiers of the revolution erected camps and makeshift homes. Offices of the government worked with charities to provide water and shelter.

All of the suffering, the death, the tears, the endless carnage, all of it created a horrific backdrop for peace. Because what would a bomb mean

to a man who lost his wife and daughter? What would a blockade represent to a child who watched his parents drown from the safety of high ground?

This moment of tragedy crystallized a foreign beauty in Sri Lanka, a nation without peace for twenty years.

But everything ends. Just six months after the tsunami, when we visited the grieving thousands in the resettlement camps, two people were killed in Trincomalee. The motivations were political. We were



top left: a fisherman and his destroyed home with "We Need Shelter" written on a remaining wall; bottom left: casualties of civil war buried at the Tamil cemetery in Jaffna; above: a young girl looks out of the window of a temporary wooden shelter near Colombo where there is no electricity or running water.

planning to go to Trinco, but government blockades now made it impossible.

This new sprig of violence re-awoke the sleeping beast, and the separatism took hold again. This added a new dimension to the suffering of a hundred little boys and girls whose faces are forever etched into my brain. There was and is no appropriate requiem for the thousands that the tsunami claimed. But war is certainly a terrible and ill-fitting epilogue.

Sometimes, I will look at the photos from our trip and I will see a man standing in the jagged back-

drop of his crumbled home, and I will think: *What is the difference if a wave or a bomb destroyed this house? Why is there compassion for one but not the other? If the enemy of my enemy is a friend, who is friends with the wave? Who is friends with the water? Who is friends with the Great Destroyer Tsunami?*

As the violence continues to build, and the nation of orphans and widows grows, I wonder what was the message of the tsunami? What did we learn? Although the water has receded, I'm afraid the devastation has not. 📷



photo by Mark Evans

WEAR

Squashed media
makes for trampled
democracy in Nepal

NO EVIL

Since the February 1, 2005 coup d'etat staged by Nepal's King Gyanendra, the government has delivered an unprecedented clampdown on civil liberties. The disintegration has been particularly noticeable — and well documented — in its impact on Nepali press freedoms. Nepal's media was notably lively and open the decade prior to the crowning of Gyanendra in 2001, following a massacre at the royal palace by then-Crown Prince Dipendra. According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), over half of the world's cases of censorship in 2005 took place in Nepal.

TEXT

Carey L. Biron

PHOTOS

media photos courtesy
United Nations Educational,
Scientific, and Cultural
Organization

Leading up to this year's anniversary of Gyanendra's coup, the nation saw near-daily and increasingly violent pro-democracy street demonstrations, with over 150,000 people eventually gathering in a small town in southwestern Nepal in mid-January. The sight of such a mass assembly frightened the government enough for it to call a full-day curfew to thwart a planned capital demonstration, even though full-night curfews were already in place.

Just over a week later Nepal held its first municipal elections in seven years. Called by the king as an attempt to soften his autocratic image in the international community, the turnout was barely 20 percent and the elections were widely seen as a sham. A week after the polls, however, the Nepali Supreme Court scrapped the Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC), a controversial government body set up in the wake of last year's royal takeover which had been used to jail, among others, the country's former prime minister on charges of embezzlement. The bombshell decision has been seen as a distinct message to the palace that it is still not above the constitution — a positive step, but one that is not likely to help the citizens of Nepal in any tangible manner in the near future.

Even while the RCCC was being disbanded, however, the Broadcast Authority Ordinance (BAO) was being secretly set up, which would make permanent laws that have severely muzzled Nepal's media establishment — both independent and commercial. Critics of the legislation say it will be especially disastrous for the country's pioneering independent radio movement.

Many also worry that the BAO will force the closures of community broadcasters through significantly raised registration fees. All of this is having a drastic effect on a country that had recently made dramatic free-press achievements in a relatively short period of time. Prior to the royal takeover, Nepal's community radio movement had been one of the most active and diverse anywhere in Asia.

The Only Media

Nepal ushered in democratic reforms in 1990, and the following decade saw an explosion of new media initiatives. Rabble-rousing presses sprung up, as did television projects and the first independent, public-service radio station in all of South Asia. When Radio Sagarmatha began broadcasting in 1997, Ghamaraj Luintel was the first one to introduce the new station on the air.

"National radio only aired the voice of ministers, secretaries, and other highly profiled persons," he recalled during an interview with *Clamor* at his Sagarmatha office. "But we broadcasted many problems of shoemakers, of sweepers, of other persons — those kinds of issues." This niche was wide open: the airwaves had been the exclusive realm of government broadcaster Radio Nepal ever since the introduction of radio into the country in the 1940s.

Luintel says that while people did listen to the station — the country's only major radio broadcast — Radio Nepal was unable to win over many of the Nepali people. "Radio Nepal was *written* language, but our language was not written; it was oral language," Luintel said. "In our tradition, there was a long history of oral communication because many ceremonies told many stories; grandmothers told many stories to their children. So we begin to revive that history."

Based on this low-key approach, the success of Radio Sagarmatha (the Nepali name for Mount Everest) soon had its founders, like Luintel, touring the country, teaching workshops on how to set up independent broadcasts. Through 2003, the last licensing period, 56 radio stations had been set up throughout the country, reaching about 65 percent of the population. There were also other important ground realities that made Nepal such a ready market for small-scale radio initiatives. Radio Sagarmatha's first programming director, Raghun Mainali, said that the introduction of localized radio broadcasts into Nepal — one of the world's most isolated and illiterate countries — was a perfect fit for its rural communities.

"They find a kind of recognition — cultural recognition, language recognition, and caste recognition," he said. "It creates a kind of social harmony in between different caste and gender and other ethnic groups. So it creates a local identity, people feel their ownership. That's why it's become very popular."

Nepal is also a prime environment to emphasize radio's inherent democracy as a news or entertainment medium. In addition to a literacy rate of less than 54 percent — sure to be even lower outside of the few urban centers — only 20 percent of the country receives electricity. Print materials can take up to seven days to reach some of the mountain districts. "This kind of situation creates a vacuum of information," Mainali said. "In so many parts of the country, radio is not 'alternative media' — it's the only media."

The Save Independent Radio Movement

During the royal takeover, radio stations were some of the first to feel the effects. Radio Sagarmatha and scores of others were overrun by soldiers and

government officials, banned from broadcasting news of any kind. "First we got the physical directives," Mainali recalled. "Army people came to the station. They threatened us not to broadcast anything except for music."

"They controlled with guns!" Luintel confirmed. "If you are the presenter, they are pointing at you, with the gun, from the control room to the studio. We don't know why!" The official ban on broadcasting news continued for three months, although unofficially it continues to this day. Luintel recalls that the inability to relay any news in the aftermath of an event as monumental as a royal coup led to some bizarre broadcasts.

"We discussed only the harvesting," he laughed loudly, with a lingering sense of disbelief. "Or the planting, and sometimes about farming." When discussion of politics is banned, nearly every topic turns political: "You can't make a program of human rights. You can't make a program of transference or good governance. You can't make a program on development, because there are so many political issues in development."

After three months, Luintel, Mainali, and other radio advocates formed the Save Independent Radio Movement (SIRM). Last December, SIRM won an award from Reporters Without Borders as the country's "best press-defender," which Mainali says is partially due to its creative protests. "One example: our program was to hand over a coconut to the monkey," he recalled, with excitement. "In Nepali, there is a very popular proverb: *coconuts in the monkey's hand*. It's very symbolic. *Monkey* is the government and *coconut* is the radio."

Last July, SIRM also organized a countrywide street ballot, asking people whether or not they



A young community reporter from Madanpokhara Community Multimedia Center interviews a member of her local community for a weekly news program.

In Nepali, there is a very popular proverb: coconuts in the monkey's hand. It's very symbolic. Monkey is the government and coconut is the radio.

wanted news on FM radio. Over the course of a single hour, Mainali reports, more than 50,000 people voted, with 98 percent in favor of increased radio news.

The government's crackdown on news has spread far beyond radio and affects the entirety of Nepali journalists, says RB Khatry, the executive director of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ). FNJ organized a conference on the one-year anniversary of the king's takeover to discuss the events of the previous year. The daylong meeting started with an unannounced (though not unexpected) televised speech by King Gyanendra to the nation, wherein he claimed that democracy had been strengthened under his year of royal rule. The conference culminated with a public march, which ended 10 minutes after it began when riot police blasted the marching journalists with water cannons and carted more than 30 of them off to jail.

"What sort of press freedom can you expect in a country where army officers sit in the chairs of editors?" asked Khatry.

Outlawing Bad News

After the draconian Media Ordinance was quietly passed last November, the government lost a series of court cases filed by SIRM. The regime's initial silence has now manifested itself in the new Broadcast Authority Ordinance, due to come into effect in spring 2006. The government has been crafting the new legislation in such secrecy that few have even seen its potential provisions. Complaining that Nepal's radio market is already flooded, the BAO would also raise licensing fees up to 40 times the current rate in a stated effort to discourage the opening of new radio stations. A 500-watt station would be forced to pay regular registration fees of up to the equivalent of \$115,000 — a prohibitively large sum.

Even without the registration hike, Radio Sagarmatha has already seen massive cuts in its revenue stream — a drastic situation for South Asia's only public station, and one entirely untenable for the country's smaller community broadcasters. When listeners were no longer hearing what they wanted to hear, says Ghamaraj Luintel, they simply turned their radios off. Even though Sagarmatha is currently broadcasting news — albeit only items which do not directly discuss the king or his family — that dent has yet to rebound.

"They only want to stop new *community* radio stations," emphasized Luintel. "After that ordinance, only big business houses can establish radio stations. . . . And if businesspeople hold radio stations, then the community can't share their experiences and problems. There won't be any pro-public radio stations."

At an inaugural "interaction" between government and private-sector representatives on the BAO in late February, the state Information and Com-

continued next page

International Radio Resources

"Off the Hour," CKUT Radio in Montreal, Canada

www.ckut.ca

A one-hour daily public-affairs show that covers social-justice news and issues on both local and international levels. Regular monthly programs include "Labor Radio," "Prison Radio," and special community call-in discussions (often bilingual) on a range of topics from affordable housing to anti-terrorism legislation.

"Under the Pavement," ALL FM 96.9 in Manchester, England

www.underthepavement.org

Airing every other Monday, "Anarchy on the Airwaves" is a two-hour show fusing an eclectic music playlist with news and interviews from Manchester's activist communities. Past show topics include anti-deportation campaigns, Palestine Solidarity, anti-war movements, prisoner solidarity, cycling, radical book fairs, critical mass, veganism, and squatting.

Outer Voices, International

www.outervoices.org

A series of hour-long radio documentaries about the stories, strategies, and tools of women peace activists from the traditional cultures of the Pacific Islands and the Asian Pacific Rim. One program, titled "Girls from Cambodia," tells a remarkable and disturbing story of young girls who were sold into brothels and managed to escape. The broadcasts are produced thoughtfully with unobtrusive narration, music, and stories that often leave your mouth agape.

2SER Community Radio in Sydney, Australia

www.2ser.com

Sydney Educational Radio was established in 1979 and is one of Sydney's oldest community stations. It broadcasts a mix of music, news, and current affairs, with an emphasis on contemporary arts and political activism. Notable programs include "Women on the Line," about feminist news and current affairs, and "Jailbreak," a presentation of music, stories, and poetry from inmates.

OneWorld Radio Africa

www.radioafrica.oneworld.net

Part of OneWorld.net, OneWorld Radio Africa offers broadcasters and other social organizations a wide variety of audio content on human rights, civil society, and development topics related to Africa. Recent programs include a focus on avian flu in Niger and a survey of opinions from Sudanese women in refugee camps about Sudan's peace deal.

Voice of Radio Africa, London, England

www.voiceofafricanradio.com

Voice of Radio Africa went off the air in November 2004 while it sought a legal FM license. The community station plans to start broadcasting again in May 2006 on African Liberation Day. The station provides news, community information, cultural entertainment, and education to ethnic-minority communities in London, particularly African communities.

Women's International News Gathering Service (WINGS)

www.wings.org

One of the more well-known alternative radio programs, "Wings Weekly" is a news and current-affairs series featuring strong women's voices and ideas from around the world. WINGS is an all-woman, independent radio-production company that produces and distributes news and current-affairs programs by and about women from all parts of the globe.

The International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC), West Bank, Palestine

www.imemc.org

Based in the occupied West Bank of Palestine, IMEMC produces a weekly audio news report of socio-political developments in Israel-Palestine. IMEMC is an independent media center developed in collaboration between Palestinian and international journalists to provide English-language media coverage of Israel-Palestine.

-compiled by Liz Jones

munication minister said that news broadcasts on FM stations had led to "instability and confusion" in Nepal. The new Broadcast Authority, he said, would not be a governmental attempt to control the media, but to "safeguard professionalism."

At the moment, however, all that Raghu Mainali sees is a Nepali citizenry that is unable to get the information it needs — particularly in an ongoing situation of poverty, warfare, government crack-down and insurgency. The resulting information void, he says, is exactly what leads to the minister's ideas of instability and confusion.

"Two effects are there," he noted. "One is, if there is a vacuum, the vacuum is filled by rumors, which create a terror within the society and they feel insecure. The other thing is, when they don't get proper news or information, the people can't decide properly where to go, when to go, and what to do. They can't think for the future — they've lost their ontological need. They lose all of their hopes and become more immobilized, because it's a hopeless situation. That's the long-term effect for the people."

Nonetheless, the tide is looking to change in Nepal. Although the exact structure of the shakedown has yet to materialize, the social, economic, and political stages are being set in the national context and the calls for change are being increasingly echoed by the international community — not just from regional powerbrokers like India, the European Union, and (in a rather more dysfunctional way) the U.S., but also from traditional allies such as China. One way or another, the whole of the current royal regime appears headed for a dramatic shift, either of compromise or outright downfall.



A community media producer interviews a cultural historian. In the background are the temples of Patan Durbar Square.

The current maxim on the part of the political parties' leadership is that such a transformation must take place before the summertime monsoons, while the growing tones of the "Spring of 2006" reminds many of the 1990 People's Movement, which ushered in Nepal's decade of democracy. And toward such a shift, some sections of Nepal's intelligentsia and journalism circles are already preparing, and quietly wondering: How will we reverse the royal edicts? How will we give the airwaves back to the people, permanently? How will we convert the state broadcasters into public

broadcasters? How will we restore Nepal to the media position it attained a decade ago — as a beacon in the mountains, where the air is clear and free? These, of course, are the questions of a democracy. ☐

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The Telling Tale of an African Journalist

A Deadly Occupation

TEXT
Momodou L. Jaiteh

The cold-blooded murder of leading Gambian journalist Dyad Hydera nearly two years ago serves as a stark reminder of the fact that practicing journalism in many African countries is both difficult and dangerous.

Across the various regions of the continent journalists are threatened by military dictatorships and governments formed by warlords, rebels or pseudo-democrats. Facing one hurdle or another, the African journalist spends a great deal of each day calculating how to carry out the job without being killed, jailed, or physically attacked by enemies of press freedom and truth, or the thugs hired by the subjects criticized in articles or broadcast stories.

For Madi Ceesay, president of Gambia Press Union (GPU), an umbrella body for journalists in the country, his experience as a journalist is somewhat of a "mixed bag." "At times I find journalism very rosy and dynamic," Ceesay said. "I enjoy traveling and attending workshops and conferences that tend to go with the job." This, he says, is the good side. "[But] other times I feel like calling it quits and backing out. In fact, in 1997 while returning from coverage, my car was shot at by a member of Gambia's State Guards." According to Ceesay, the soldier was part of a convoy that was escorting the Gambian First Lady.

Ceesay further catalogued several attacks against journalists and their tools in the country. These include an arson attack against British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC)'s journalist Ebrima Sillah's residence in December 2004; the repeated burning down of Banjul-based Independent Newspaper's printing press in 2003 and 2004, among many others. He said that in none of these cases has anyone been arrested or brought to trial by Gambian authorities.

He added that in 2004, many Gambian journalists also received letters threatening them with death from a group identifying itself as the "Green Boys" who claimed to be supporters of the ruling party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction under the leadership of President Yaya Jammeh.

Despite all of these threats, the GPU President refuses to throw in the towel, saying "I had always wanted to speak on behalf of people who can not speak for themselves." Other challenges facing Ceesay and his colleagues include the enactment of repressive media laws and a poor relationship between the Gambian government and the private media. He said that the government did not want to open up to journalists working in the private media, preferring to control messages through state-owned media.

Turning to the plight of journalists operating in other countries in Africa, Ceesay said the picture is similar across the continent. Attacks on journalists and media houses may only differ in degree or scale in all countries across Africa, he said. Ceesay and his organization are calling on governments on the continent to do away with all forms of draconian media laws. "Journalists must not be seen as enemies of governments but information agents and partners in development," Ceesay insisted. He also made a clarion call to all journalists on the continent, urging them to unite and fight for their freedom and independence.

Sarjo Camara, a female journalist working for *Foroyaa Newspaper* (meaning "freedom"), said she has not faced any direct personal threat due to her work as a journalist, but added that the hostile media environment in Gambia is a big concern.

continued next page

"In today's Gambia there are so many repressive media laws . . . that journalism practice becomes a big task," she said. Quizzed as to how she tries to reconcile her journalism career with her family life, Camara replied: "Well, I am newly married and I have not encountered any serious obstacles so far, maybe this is due to the fact that I am not staying with my husband as he travels."

Meanwhile, the killing of Dyad Hydara, the former managing editor of *Point Newspaper* and correspondent for the freedom of expression watchdog *Reporters Without Borders*, was a watershed for many Gambian journalists working for private radio stations and newspapers. Hydara was brutally gunned down behind the wheels of his car on December 16 as his newspaper celebrated its 13-year anniversary. Following the killing, many Gambian journalists were thrown into a climate of constant fear and some, mostly the hardcore government critics, fled the country and sought refuge in neighboring Senegal.

Many colleagues of Hydara link his killing to his critical writings. After the murder, Gambian authorities issued a press release promising to track down the killers. But no commission of inquiry, as requested by journalists, was ever set up to dig into the matter and up to the writing this article, his killers remain at large. This lax attitude of Gambian authorities and the pattern of mishandling previous attacks on journalists and media houses have left some people doubtful the killers will ever be found and brought before any court of law.

Amie Joof-Cole, the Gambian-born Executive Director of Inter-African Network for Women in Media and Development, based in Dakar, Senegal has challenged Gambian authorities to do more in providing security for journalists in the country.

"Assassination, arbitrary arrests and detentions of journalists are the order of the day in our beloved mother land," she said.

Joof-cole questioned why Hydara's killers could not be found and arrested for over 12-months in such a small country, with a population of just 1.5 million people. "This is very serious and this cannot be allowed to go unchallenged and continued in our motherland," she added.

Many activists and journalists have argued that even if the Gambian authorities had no hand in the murder, they are certainly not displeased then that Hydara is now dead.

However, Gambia's Information Secretary Neneh MacDoll, herself a journalist, has responded to such statements on numerous occasions, maintaining that Gambian authorities should be allowed to go on with their investigation process without public interference. "People should stop pointing fingers at the government or individuals. The killers could be from anywhere, it could even be among Hydara's friends," she said.

SPEECH UNDER FIRE

edited by Emily Nielsen

While we will never know the exact number of atrocities committed against journalists in 2005, one thing is clear: it was a dangerous year to be researching and reporting the news. *Reporters Without Borders* states that 63 journalists and five media assistants were killed in 2005 — making it the most deadly year for journalists in a decade. In addition, at least 807 were arrested, and well over 1,000 were physically attacked or threatened.

It is essential to look beyond simple numbers and to investigate why and how these incidents occurred. Much of the violence appears to have been intentional, often connected to government and military officials. Of the total deaths, a vast majority were murders, many of which included acts of abduction and torture. And while Iraq remained the most deadly nation for the third year in a row, 2005 proved to be a dangerous year worldwide, even in countries typically considered safe for and encouraging of a free press.

To acknowledge the people who risked their safety and lives doing their job, *Clamor* compiled this brief selection of press freedom violations during 2005 to highlight the many places and situations in which journalists faced violent retaliation for their work.



January 5, Hanoi, Vietnam — Nguyen Thi Lan Anh was indicted with the charge of "appropriating state secrets" following a series of investigative articles about drug giant Zuellig Pharma and its monopoly on certain drugs in Vietnam. Her indictment was followed by an order not to leave her home, an action that is thought to be part of a government campaign to restrict journalism in Vietnam.



January 11, Cucuta, Colombia — Julio Hemando Palacios Sanchez, a controversial journalist who spoke against local corruption while working for *Radio Lemas*, was shot and killed by two motorcyclists on his way to work. Palacios had survived an attack nine years prior and had received anonymous threats in the year before his death.



February 9, Mogadishu, Somalia — Kate Peyton, a producer for the BBC, was shot and killed outside her hotel by assailants believed to be two independent militiamen. Peyton had just arrived in Mogadishu, where a transitional government was being installed. Somalia has had no central government since dictator Siad Barre fell in 1991, and local sources speculated Peyton's death might have been a warning sign to other foreigners.

Gambia is not alone when it comes to countries in the West African sub-region that are believed culpable in the mysterious assassination of journalists. Norbert Zongo, a journalist from West African country of Burkina Faso was also murdered in 1998. In the Federal Republic of Nigeria, leading journalist Dele Giwa was killed in mysterious circumstances in 1986. In July 2005, another journalist died in Sierra Leone from a sickness that was said to have been contracted following a severe beating he had received from a gang of thugs that was allegedly hired by a parliamentarian in that country.

Many people have now agreed on one thing: In Africa, journalists are the most endangered species. The relationship between African journalists and authorities is summed up in a statement once made by a former Gambian police chief: "Two individuals with long noses hardly kiss." By this, he means African power holders tend to have conflicting roles with journalists — while those in authority tend to promote the culture of secrecy, journalists fight to reveal the truth. 🗣️

Deyda Hydara, 1945-2004



Deyda Hydara was born on June 9th, 1945 in Banjul, Gambia's capital city. After his basic education at home, he moved to Dakar in the Republic of Senegal to pursue higher education, culminating in him becoming a journalist. He was the founding father of *The Point* newspaper, which has made a name for itself as a leading critical and independent publication that served as a voice for the voiceless in the Gambia. Hydara frequently and constructively criticized government policies and other burning issues affecting the Gambian society through his columns like: "The Bite" and "Good Morning, Mr. President."

He also served as the Banjul Correspondent for the Agence France-Presse and the Paris-based media watchdog, Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

He was the former president of Gambia Press Union and as an old hand in the journalism profession, Hydara played a crucial role in guiding many young reporters in the country. He was also very instrumental in GPU's battle with the government over the enactment of draconian media laws in the Gambia.

He left behind a wife, several children and grandchildren.



March 2, Baku, Azerbaijan — Elmar Huseynov, who founded and edited the weekly news magazine *Monitor*, was fatally shot in his apartment building. He and other journalists had been the targets of harassment from government officials in response to their news coverage. Prior to his death, Huseynov had been threatened several times and expressed fear of his safety.



March 24, Tacurong, Philippines — Marlene Garcia-Esperat, a writer for *Midland News*, was shot and killed in her home in front of her family. Garcia-Esperat reported on corruption scandals among police and government officials, much like other journalists who were also killed last year. Two officials from the Department of Agriculture were arrested and charged with murder, though the charges were later dropped due to what the judge called insufficient and conflicting evidence.



April 1, Baghdad, Iraq — Ahmed Jabbar Hashim was a reporter who worked for *Al-Sabah*, a daily that is part of the U.S.-funded Iraq Media Network. Eight men ambushed and kidnapped Hashim, decapitated him, and sent a video recording of the killing to his news organization. Insurgents often target journalists who work for U.S. government media, but some journalists speculated Hashim might have been killed because of his work for private U.S. media companies.



April 16, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico — Dolores Guadalupe Garcia Escamilla was a crime reporter who worked for radio station Stereo 91. Her car had been set on fire a few months earlier, but her life ended when she was fatally shot nine times in front of the station by an unknown assassin.



May 6, Singapore — Martyn See was harassed and told he was being investigated under the Films Act, which prohibits the making or distributing of "party political" films. If charged, he faces a fine of up to \$100,000 or two years in prison. His film, "Singapore Rebel," has not yet been seen anywhere in the world. See withdrew it from the Singapore International Film Festival in an attempt to avoid prosecution.



June 2, Beirut, Lebanon — Samir Qassir was killed after a bomb exploded under his car. Qassir wrote a popular newspaper column that vehemently criticized the Syrian government and its Lebanese allies. His criticism resulted in the confiscation of his passport by Lebanese security agents in 2001, as well as other threats prior to his death. There were mass demonstrations in Beirut after his death.

continued next page



from Palestine

the unflinching work of **JOE SACCO**

TEXT

Kristian Williams

IMAGES

Joe Sacco, courtesy Fantagraphics Books
www.fantagraphics.com



June 25, Pristina, Kosovo - Bardhyl Ajeti, a reporter for an Albanian daily *Bota Sot*, which is connected to the Democratic League of Kosovo party, was shot in the head by an attacker in a passing vehicle. He died in the hospital three weeks later. Ajeti's writing was often critical of opposition party figures, and he had previously supported authorities that arrested members of the Kosova Liberation Army. Ajeti had filed a complaint of having his life threatened the month before his death, but police did not disclose a motive for his murder.



death.
August 28, Baghdad, Iraq — Waleed Khaled, a soundman for Reuters, was one of three members of the media killed by U.S. forces in 2005, after being shot several times in the head and chest. Another member of the press, Haider Kadhem, was also wounded in the gunfire and then imprisoned for three days in an undisclosed location. Lt. Col. Steve Boylan, a U.S. spokesman in Iraq, said Kadhem was detained "due to inconsistencies in his story."



June 28, Azov, Russia — Magomedzigid Varisov, a prominent journalist and political analyst who often criticized government officials, was shot down in a "contract-style assassination" by attackers with machine guns. Varisov had written articles about being followed and threatened in the year leading to his



October 7, Taishi, China — Leu Siew Ying and Abel Segretin were physically attacked by a large group of unidentified men and then detained by police upon entering a village in the Guangdong province to report on local election corruption. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated the journalists had disobeyed rules on foreign reporting including obtaining prior government approval for coverage.

Countries with the Least Media Freedom

North Korea	Libya
Eritrea	Cuba
Turkmenistan	Nepal
Iran	China
Burma	Vietnam

(The US ranks at 44.)

Source: Reporters Without Borders

10 Countries with Most Media Freedom

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland*
Slovakia
Czech Republic, Slovenia
Estonia
Hungary, New Zealand, Sweden, Trinidad, Tobago
Austria, Latvia
Belgium, Germany, Greece
Canada, Lithuania
Portugal
United Kingdom

* Multiple countries in one slot implies that they are tied with equal scores

Source: Reporters Without Borders

Joe Sacco does not resemble the stereotypical war correspondent. He's polite, soft-spoken, and unassuming. But when you get him talking it's clear that he really cares about what he's saying — whether it's about war, politics, or cartooning. And with Sacco, the three are never altogether distinct.

Sacco earned his fame (and an American Book Award) in 1995 with the publication of *Palestine*. Combining the best elements of journalism and cartooning, the book offered a powerful portrait of conditions in the Occupied Territories, emphasizing just the sort of human-level consequences that get lost in policy debates or on CNN. "I tend to be more interested in civilians and those who are affected by history rather than by those who make it," Sacco said.

He found that comics were particularly well suited for the kind of reporting he wanted to do. "[Comics] can create sort of the mood and atmosphere very well visually," he explained. "It's something

I really try to get across, what a refugee camp looks like — just frame after frame — and what, say, Gorazde looks like. And I really try to bring out what those particular places look like. I mean, it's not like *any* refugee camp or *any* town in Bosnia. I really want to make it so that when I'm in a place I'm absorbing what's particular about that place."

While studying journalism at the University of Oregon, Sacco never anticipated a career in comics. "I wanted to write hard news," he said. But the life of the staff writer disappointed him.

"I finally got a job in journalism, working for an association publication. I was just bored out of my skull, thinking 'I did not go to school for this.' You know what I mean? [So] I personally fell back on what had given me pleasure all through my life, but mainly as a hobby. And that was comics."

Ironically, it was the turn to comics that saved his love for reporting. "In some ways I'd given up on

journalism and I started doing comics, and then I sort of came back to journalism through comics."

At first he wrote humorous autobiographical pieces like "In the Company of Long Hair," which recounts his experiences touring Europe with a low-rent rock band. Sacco's early pieces owe a clear debt to the previous generation of underground comics, but they also established one of the most distinguishing features of his own approach. Whether he's in a war zone or at a rock show, the stories he tells are as much about his encounter with the circumstances as they are about the events themselves.

Sacco credits the medium with helping him overcome the stylistic and ideological constraints that newspaper reporters commonly adopt in the name of objectivity. "Because I was doing autobiographical comics, it didn't seem like such a great stretch to put myself in a story and to have a point of view," he said.

continued next page



October 8, New Orleans, United States — Rich Matthews, a TV producer for the Associated Press, was filming two New Orleans police officers beating a man accused of public intoxication when another officer started beating Matthews. The tape reveals the officer ordering Matthews to stop filming, grabbing him, forcing him backward over a car, and jabbing him in the stomach. All three officers were suspended.



October 12, Israel/Occupied Territories — Dion Nissenbaum and Adam Pletts from the Knight Ridder newspaper chain were abducted and held for several hours in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian security officials reported that defectors from the ruling Fatah had been responsible. The kidnapping was just one of a large number of abductions of foreign journalists in Gaza last year.



November 17, Faridpur, Bangladesh — Gautam Das a reporter for *Samakal*, a daily newspaper, was strangled to death in his office. Das had a reputation for reporting on crime and illegal activities of politicians and others associated with the government. The son of a local member of Parliament was arrested two days after his murder, along with three other suspects.

Source:
Committee to Protect Journalists

Top 10 Most Deadly Countries

Such a list may obscure the relative freedom of the press in these and other places, as many countries have media that simply relay government-sponsored propaganda or imprison journalists who speak out. However, in terms of number of deaths, here are the top 10:

Iraq: 24 deaths
 Philippines: 7 deaths
 Afghanistan: 2
 Azerbaijan: 2
 Bangladesh: 2
 Dem. Rep. of Congo: 2
 Haiti: 2
 Lebanon: 2
 Mexico: 2
 Nepal: 2

Source:
Reporters Without Borders, www.rsf.org

Top 5 Countries with Journalists in Jail

China: 32
 Cuba: 24
 Ethiopia: 17
 Eritrea: 13
 Burma: 5

Source: Reporters Without Borders,
www.rsf.org

... my hope is the things I write about or the people I profile will have a resonance later on.

Naturally the point of view largely relies on matters of access — who you can talk to, what you can see. When it comes to gaining the trust of Palestinians, Sacco has one distinct advantage: "I'm Maltese, I'm not an American. Now with some people, it wouldn't have mattered. . . . But to some people, if you're an American, you know, 'Screw you. You're allied to Israel, we don't like you.'"

Of course, a Maltese passport also has its down side: "Recently, on the way back from Iraq, I got caught in Kuwait and I had a visa problem. I thought I would never get out, because I'm Maltese. There's no diplomatic relations. It seemed like no one was going to help me get out of there. And it worked out, someone did help me . . . but he didn't have to. It was just, like, some Yemeni guy who decided he'd make me his special little case."

Sacco followed *Palestine* with three books about Bosnia — *Safe Area Gorazde* (2000), *The Fixer* (2003), and *War's End* (2005). More recently, he embedded with U.S. marines in Iraq for a story published in the *Guardian*.

Now, he's turning his attention back to the Occupied Territories with a forthcoming book about Rafah, a refugee camp in the West Bank. The events it describes are largely historical, but the area continues to be very troubled and, despite Israel's withdrawal from parts of Gaza, Sacco suggests that the underlying conflict is mostly unchanged:

"I guess I agree with those who think of it as a withdrawal so that Israel can retain major parts of the West Bank [where] the Israeli investment is much, much, much greater. You know, we're talking about 7,000 settlers in Gaza as opposed to perhaps 400,000 if you count the occupied Jerusalem, too. It's a considerably different sort of game. They don't care about Gaza. They do care about part of the West Bank."

But, Sacco says, he hopes the value of his work reaches beyond its connection with the

morning's headlines. "The books I write are all within a historical context. They all basically end up being books of history. But I guess my hope is the things I write about or the people I profile will have a resonance later on. I mean, if you've read the book on Gorazde — people like Edin and Riki — I hope they will resonate with the reader twenty years from now or a hundred years from now. [It's] just sort of a universal story of people in those sorts of circumstances."

Kristian Williams is the author of American Methods: Torture and the Logic of Domination (South End Press, 2006) and Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America (Soft Skull Press, 2004).

from *Gorazde*



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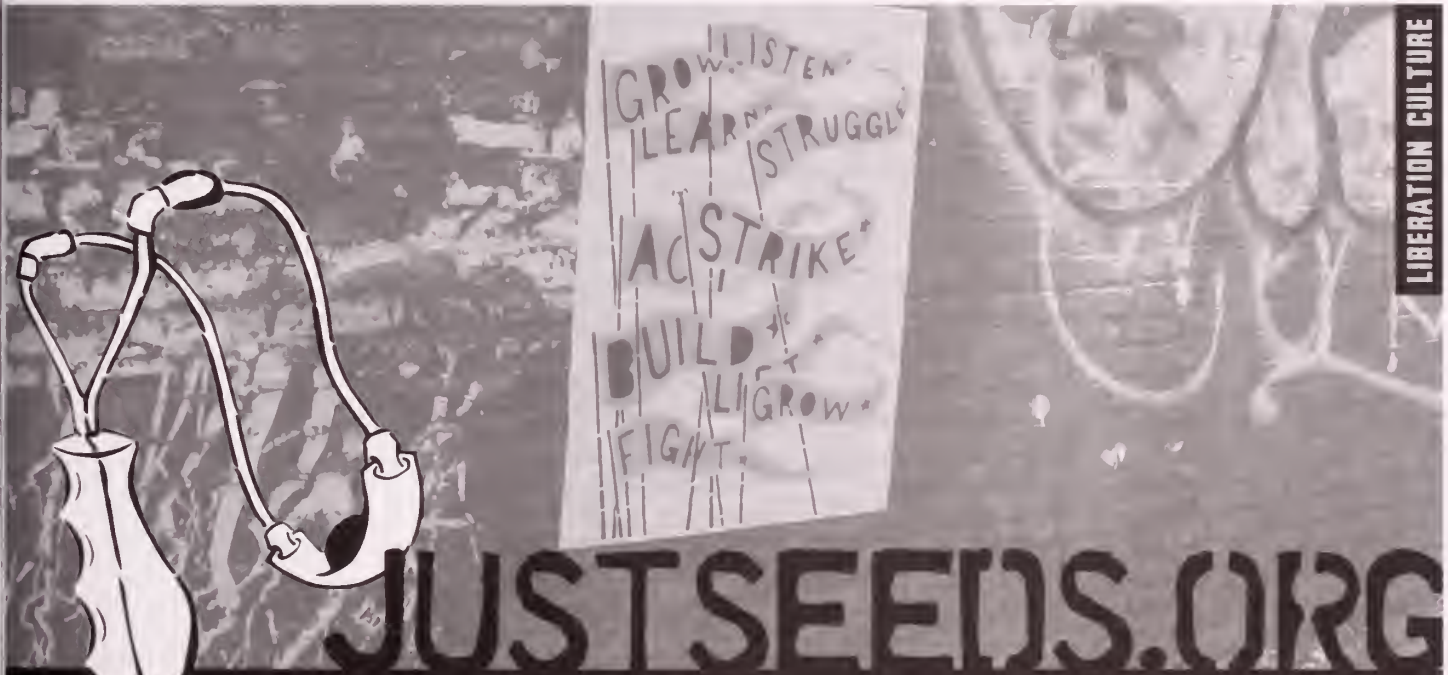
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If I Arise

Talking with Malalai Joya, Afghanistan's Youngest Revolutionary

On December 17, 2003, a 26-year-old woman named Malalai Joya joined hundreds of others in a large tent in Kabul, Afghanistan, to adopt a new constitution for their war-torn nation. The gathering, called a *Loya Jirga* (traditional grand assembly), was dominated by U.S.-backed warlords who were responsible for mass slaughter and violence in the 1980s and early 1990s. Malalai Joya was present as an elected delegate from the remote Farah province in western Afghanistan.

Like the rest of the independent delegates in the tent, she despised the warlords, and when Joya was granted permission to address the assembly for a few minutes, she did what no one expected by publicly and unequivocally denouncing them.

My criticism on all my compatriots is: Why are they allowing the legitimacy and legality of this Loya Jirga to come under question with the presence of those felons who brought our country to this state? . . . The chairman of every committee is already selected. Why do you not take all these criminals to one committee so that we see what they want for this nation? These [men] turned our country into the nucleus of national and international wars. They were the most anti-women people in the society . . . who brought our country to this state, and they intend to do the same again. I believe that it is a mistake to test those already being tested. They should be taken to national and international court. If they are forgiven by our people, the bare-footed Afghan people, our history will never forgive them. They are all recorded in the history of our country.

Her microphone was cut off before she could finish, but the two-minute speech changed Malalai Joya's life. She became a heroine of the Afghan people and a target of the warlords' wrath. Since 2003, she has had her home and office ransacked by warlord supporters, and has survived four assassination attempts. The BBC has called her "the most famous woman in Afghanistan."

TEXT

Sonali Kolhatkar

ILLUSTRATION

Angel D'Amico — angeldamico.com

PHOTOS

Sonali Kolhatkar &
James Ingalls

In September 2005, she ran for Parliament and won the second-highest number of votes in Farah province. During the opening ceremony of the newly elected assembly, she boldly promised, "First, I [will] represent my people here; and second, I will continue my struggle against warlords." Her plans include introducing legislation that will "protect the rights of the oppressed and safeguard women's rights."

In February 2005, I interviewed Malalai Joya in her office in Farah City, Afghanistan. A year later, in February 2006, we continued our conversation via e-mail.

When you were at the Loya Jirga in 2003, did you plan on saying the words you said?

Malalai Joya: I had decided to make a speech because I thought to myself that this would be the only place that I could talk about the painful stories and bad situation of our country. I wanted to ask our government and those countries that helped Afghanistan, especially the U.S., "Why did you replace the Taliban with the Northern Alliance?" These people destroyed our country from 1992 to 1996. Our people know them very well, especially the people of faraway provinces like Farah, Herat, and Nimroz.

When I went to the *Loya Jirga* I saw the situation becoming worse each day. This was not a democratic situation. I finally went to the chief of the *Loya Jirga*, Mojadedi, and told him that I wanted to make a speech on behalf of the young generation of Afghanistan. And that's how it happened.

Before the *Loya Jirga*, I had made a speech in Farah. Some democratic-minded women told me, "Your speech is very dangerous — in this situation you know that the warlords are in power and they will kill you. They will not even allow you to go to the *Loya Jirga*." I said, "No, I will never be afraid. Because I spoke the truth and I'm sure that if they kill me, my people are with me."

What kind of threats did you receive?

After the *Loya Jirga* my life has completely changed. After my speech, that night the National Army escorted me because they knew I was not safe. Also, all of the criminals were very emotional. They attacked the place I was staying at, the special place for women at the *Loya Jirga*. They said some things against me.



Joya at her office in Afghanistan

What did they say?

For example, "Die Malalai, she is not telling the truth," "We are against Malalai," and things like this — a lot of propaganda. It's difficult for me to tell you in English. For example, they called me a prostitute, infidel, communist, etc. But most of the women supported me. Some men of the *Loya Jirga* also agreed with me.

But I promise that while I am alive and have energy — you know that I am young — I have decided to work more and more for my people and struggle for women until we achieve rights for the women of Afghanistan.

How did the people of Afghanistan show their support for you?

Even one night after my speech at the *Loya Jirga*, I understood how much people of Afghanistan really support me. I am honored and proud. They do not support *me*. I am just a person. It means they support the pained people and suffering women of Afghanistan. They hate the enemies of Afghanistan.

I received a lot of warm messages. It gives me a lot of energy. I cannot tell you. It's difficult for me [choking back tears]. Even now as I talk about the emotions of my people I cannot control myself. I said that I am a servant of my people — I was just one person in this country. Now I accept this risk because of my people.

They [warlords] killed a lot of democratic people. Maybe one day they will kill me. But I will never be afraid.

What was your response to the constitution that was finally adopted?

The constitution that we passed has some mistakes in my opinion. But if the government of Afghanistan started to implement this constitution in

a practical sense, then eventually the mistakes will get corrected. But while the warlords are in power, this constitution that the delegates of Afghanistan — men and women — created will be just a useless piece of paper. But in the future it could be a great policy if the warlords were not in power.

What did you think about the clause in the constitution that makes Islamic Sharia law the supreme law of the land?

Most of the *Loya Jirga* delegates who were democratic-minded had a discussion with each other about this. Our people know very well why the warlords are forcing the name of Islam in the constitution. Our people are Muslim people. We are a Muslim country! I am also a Muslim woman. I also pray and wish to God that there will one day be peace and security in our country. But the warlords are using the name of Islam for their own benefit. They are not real Muslims. They are not real *jehadis*. They are the enemies of our countries that used Islam for about 25 years of war. After the Russian puppet regime they committed all kinds of crimes under the name of Islam. Now our people know very well that they are not Muslim. But the people are afraid of them. They have to obey them.

After the Loya Jirga, the then U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, wrote in the Washington Post that the fact that you were able to make that speech at the Loya Jirga was an example of democracy. How do you respond to that?

Why? Why didn't he say what happened after the speech? Now, nobody knows! You people — you democratic-minded people should ask your government and politicians why don't you say what happened after the *Loya Jirga*? Now what kind of life does Malalai have? Every step of my life is a risk of death. If you don't believe this, ask the people. It's a big problem for me. I want to improve my activities but now I have to be in the house with

But I promise that while I am alive and have energy — you know that I am young — I have decided to work more and more for my people and struggle for women until we achieve rights for the women of Afghanistan.



Joya being interviewed by Kolhatkar in Afghanistan

You know that there is no fundamental change in Afghanistan ... we want peace, we want security, we want women's rights. There is no Taliban anymore but women are burning themselves. Why?

bodyguards! I hate guns! The guns destroyed our country and killed a lot of people. But now I have to . . . I have to wear a burqa! I have to take care of my security. I am very ashamed that I have special bodyguards.

I want you to tell the American people, "Why don't you ask why they attacked this girl in the *Loya Jirga*? Does it mean democracy? Does it mean women's rights?" I have a lot of examples I could share with you. Afghans have health problems, economic problems, and education problems. Unfortunately now, because of the war in Iraq, and the situation in Palestine and some other countries, there is no attention to Afghanistan. I think it is good for people to pay attention to the other conflicts but the people around the world should know what is happening in Afghanistan. It is not good to forget.

George Bush and his administration have told the American people that Afghanistan has been liberated and that Afghan women are now free and there is democracy and elections. How do you respond to this claim that Afghanistan is free, liberated, and democratic?

I think it's just a slogan that Americans say we have been liberated. You know that there is no fundamental change in Afghanistan. In the capital Kabul it's true that Afghan women can have jobs and go to schools. But you can see in the faraway provinces how many health and educational problems they have. They have local warlords in their provinces that have ideas against women and girls — against half of the generation of Afghanistan. Some women in Afghanistan are burning themselves.

But we want peace, we want security, we want women's rights. There is no Taliban anymore but women are burning themselves. Why?

We have two kinds of problems. One is that our country is a male-dominated society. But the other problem, which is even more important, is warlords. Some of these men now wear a "suit of democracy." They have learned to speak about democracy. Some of them are now in the new cabinet of Afghanistan. Our people are afraid even of their shadow. I don't know why the U.S. government does not want to change their policy.

Also, our people requested of the government of Afghanistan, "Please change these policies — do not make compromises with the warlords." In the presidential elections, our people once again trusted [Afghan president] Mr. Karzai because they wanted to show their hatred for warlords. Mr. Karzai didn't kill anybody but he doesn't have much experience. He promised the people, "I will never have compromise with warlords." I met with Mr. Karzai and I told him about the message of the people of Farah, about their difficulties, about my problems and activities. He also promised me that he wouldn't work with the warlords but I don't know why he too has made a compromise with the warlords by appointing them to his cabinet.

What message do you have for the people of the United States?

After September 11, 2001, I had a ten-day trip to the U.S. sponsored by V-Day. I gave a speech there and met a lot of like-minded and democratic people. Not just women, men too. They really supported me and it gave me a lot of energy. It was

also a very wonderful message for me to bring to my people in Farah. I met people who like me had differences with the policies of their government. They agreed with me that the U.S. should not have replaced the Taliban with the Northern Alliance in the name of democracy.

It's very meaningful for me and it has a lot of moral value for me to tell everyone, not just Americans, that we have supporters, that we have sisters, we have brothers, even in America and some other faraway countries. It means a lot to us. I send them a warm message and warm feelings of my people to them.

E-mail, Los Angeles and Kabul, February 2006

Since we last spoke, you've become an elected Member of Parliament. Why did you decide to run for Parliament?

In fact it was not really my decision. Hundreds of people from Farah and other provinces continuously insisted that I run for Parliament. I was intending to decline from running because I believe that the Parliament will never bring anything positive for the nation. But my supporters kept saying, "Your voice at the *Loya Jirga* gave us a hope that there is at least one who understands our suffering. Now we want you once again to be the voice of voiceless at Parliament." I couldn't help but accept the honor to be the voice of my oppressed nation in a Parliament dominated by criminal warlords.

I will feel satisfied if I succeed in exposing the real nature of the current Parliament and informing the Afghan people from within the Parliament that the criminals sitting here make laws for the benefit of

the rich, the drug traffickers, warlords, and high-level bureaucrats, and against the aspirations of the down-trodden masses.

If the warlords are so unpopular, how is it that so many of them were elected to the Parliament?

Afghanistan is still a country being strangled by the hands of "Northern Alliance." These are a camp of fundamentalist bands notorious for their terrible crimes in the years of 1992 to '96. After 9/11, America and its allies helped these criminals occupy Kabul and dominate the entire country. Thus in a country under such religious fascists, holding free and democratic elections is out of the question. Elections in such conditions are widely rigged. It is unbelievable but still a reality that regarding the issue of multiple voting, Karzai himself openly justified it by saying, "This is an exercise in democracy. Let them exercise it twice!" The warlords have not been elected by the people but by the killing machine, political power, billions of dollars, and the intimidation of fundamentalists supported by the U.S. and numerous NGOs. It was not a free election, so one cannot conclude that people elected their killers as their representatives. It was a fraud, and an unfair election process, which made them MPs.

What do you think the U.S.'s position on the warlords is today?

Regrettably, as the U.S. administration revived the warlords in the first place, it is continuing to support and rely on them. This has simply revealed to most of Afghans that the U.S., as before, is not at all bothered by which criminal band will rule the country. Such a band would be acceptable to the U.S. as long as it is obedient to Washington, no matter how cruel, corrupt, and anti-democratic it is. That is why many in Afghanistan are of the opinion that even the U.S.'s very trumpeted "war against drugs and terrorism" and campaign to "promote democracy" are bogus because the U.S. has forged a unity with the most infamous, anti-democratic, religious terrorists and drug-mafia forces in the history of Afghanistan.

It seems that the U.S. government has its own strategic agenda in our country. Though recently its ambassador and secretary of state claimed that the U.S. will not repeat its past mistake of supporting fundamentalists, the U.S. is actually repeating that "mistake" in a much more painful and disgraceful way in Afghanistan. The U.S. is relying on the killers of tens of thousands of Kabul residents alone and allowing representatives of these killers to enter and dominate the Parliament and important posts in the government.

How can you change the political status quo with so many warlords in Parliament alongside you?

I think that such a claim would be too much for me or any other pro-people MP. But as I've promised to my people, I'll never get tired of unmasking the criminals in the Parliament, government, or judiciary.

I feel that my presence in the Parliament will lead to a small increase in political consciousness of those who have placed their hope on me. If that does not happen, then I will definitely resign. I would also like the world to know through my presence or resignation from the Parliament that the Afghan Parliament is another instrument in the hand of fundamentalists to try to legitimate and perpetuate their bloody rule in the country.

I have to be loyal to the people and their burning desire to defend the truth in front of their sworn enemies. ☐

Sonali Kolhatkar is co-director of the Afghan Women's Mission, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization that works in solidarity with Afghan women. She is also the host of Uprising, a nationally syndicated radio program based at KPFK, Pacifica Radio, in Los Angeles. For more information, visit: www.afghanwomenmission.org and www.uprisingradio.org.



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SWALLOW THIS.

TEXT
John Esther

FILM STILL
from *Black Gold*,
courtesy Speak It Productions
blackgoldmovie.com

WARNING: Your cup of coffee may taste bitter after reading this.

Among the numerous documentaries screened at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, perhaps none will affect our daily habits as much as Nick and Marc Francis's *Black Gold*.

No, this is not another film about crude oil. The title refers to the multibillion-dollar coffee industry. Coffee is the most valuable trading commodity in the world behind oil. Yet while coffee processors and retailers in the United States and Europe get richer, coffee farmers in countries like Ethiopia are getting poorer.

Coffee is the economic backbone of Ethiopia, and the combination of drought and fluctuations in the global coffee market have had dire impacts on the 15 million Ethiopians who depend on coffee for their survival. The recent drops in wholesale prices paid to coffee growers can be traced to World Bank policies that encouraged Vietnam to flood the world market, resulting in a coffee glut, and the breakdown of international agreements that long kept prices stable. Meanwhile, retail prices have hardly changed, so processors and retailers are enjoying increased profits while growers are starving.

After describing the situation in Ethiopia, *Black Gold* shifts focus to the 2003 WTO meeting in Cancun, where numerous African ministers, including Ugandan delegate and women's rights advocate Irene Ovonji-Odida, indicated that they do not want aid, just a fairer system of trade. This fell on deaf ears; the system continues to favor rich countries.

Against this backdrop stands *Black Gold's* central figure, Tadesse Meskela, who represents 75,000 coffee farmers from 101 Ethiopian cooperatives as the general manager of the Oromo Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union. Meskela travels to the United States, Europe, and Asia to sell coffee directly to buyers. Bypassing the international commodities exchange, Meskela can put more money into the pockets of the coffee producers.

Clamor spoke to British brothers Marc and Nick Francis at Sundance and interviewed Tadesse Meskela via e-mail.

continued next page



Tadesse Meskela, general manager of the Oromo Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union

Marc and Nick, why did you want to make this film?

Marc Francis: In 2003, we heard Ethiopia was about to experience another famine. There was a rich coffee-growing region in Ethiopia that was most affected. Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee, and we knew that in Europe and the United States, coffee has taken off big time. How can that be? How can everyone be having a cup of coffee here and a crisis is going on over there?

Tadesse, how do you feel about the documentary? Does it strike you as somewhat ironic that two white British men made it?

Tadesse Meskela: I appreciate the concern the filmmakers have for the poor and their dedication to make the work trade fair for all human beings.

Some of the film's funds came from Sundance. Do you think it is kind of ironic that Starbucks is a huge supporter of Sundance?

Nick Francis: First of all, reps from Starbucks were at every screening. They sat in the front row to make their presence known. But this really isn't about Starbucks. We never set out to make an anti-Starbucks film. I think the film is more poignant than that. This is about the whole coffee apparatus and Starbucks is just one player. There are bigger coffee companies, which have a more central role in the coffee industry.

MF: Nevertheless there is a big irony. The festival is dependent on corporate sponsors. Without their sponsorship these films can't be shown.

Tadesse, what do you think about Starbucks?

TM: Starbucks is buying our coffee for a fair-trade price. The conventional price of Starbucks is also good in comparison to other conventional buyers. Starbucks has to serve fair-trade coffees whenever they are asked — not only once or twice a

month.

How much do you think race plays into the exploitation of Ethiopian farmers?

MF: That's the best question anyone's asked us since we've been here [at Sundance]. Would this happen if 20,000 white people were dying every day of poverty or lack of clean water? Would that be tolerated? Is this Apartheid continued?

Do you think it is more of a racial issue than an economic issue?

NF: I don't separate the two. We think of it as economic apartheid.

How much do you think the World Trade Organization plays a role in the exploitation?

MF: Africans are poorer now than they were 20 years ago. Tadesse is looking for fairer trade practices and what you see in the film is the WTO making all these backdoor deals that does nothing to ensure fairer trade.

Women sorting coffee beans



TM: The rigged trade rule of the WTO plays a big role by making agricultural products from the South very cheap. The world trade rule has to work for the poor in the South who produce agricultural products.

Do you think there is a bigger reason why charity, rather than fair economic practices, keeps going? For instance, in Hupert Sauper's documentary *Darwin's Nightmare* it is pointed out that guns are being brought into Tanzania along with the food, fueling a civil war.

MF: The role of food aid is crucial to the understanding of what is going on in the film. There is a food-aid business that creates jobs for people here in America. Farming, shipping, packaging — there's a reluctance to bring food in from around the African region, where prices would be cheaper.

What would happen to the price of coffee if Ethiopian coffee farmers were paid a fair wage? Would costs rise for the consumer?

TM: If the farmers are getting a good price for their coffee they can feed their families, send their children to school, build good houses, build health centers, have good management, and they can live long and can keep growing and managing coffee. If the price of coffee increases for farmers, the impact of the price increase on consumers is not expected because the retailers can make 40 to 50 cups of coffee from one pound of coffee, which we sell for less than \$1.00.

What can the coffee consumer do to ensure fair-trade practices?

TM: Consumers have to know who is the coffee grower and should know his living condition. There are consumers who can bring changes because they are the ones who can buy or resist. Consumers have to ask for fair-trade products always. They have to make their culture consume fair-trade products. ☒

Rethinking '80s Nostalgia



Miskitu counter-insurgents from the group, KISAN, in peace negotiations with the Sandinistas, Spring 1985.

Connecting the Dots Between the Contra War & the War on Terror with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

For anyone who remembers the 1980s more for acid wash, leg warmers, and feathered perms than for the consolidation of free-market tyranny, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's new memoir, *Blood on the Border: A Memoir of the Contra War* (South End Press), is a wake-up call. Dunbar-Ortiz combines scholarly attention to detail and stunning knowledge of history with decades of radical organizing experience and the memory of an accomplished storyteller. Active in the women's liberation movement of the 1960s, a member of an underground sabotage organization in the early 1970s, and a respected academic on Native American history by the end of the 1970s, Dunbar-Ortiz began traveling to Nicaragua in the early 1980s to witness the results of the Sandinista revolution. In *Blood on the Border*, she delivers a gripping first-hand account of the devastation wrought by U.S. military intervention, urging us to take a closer look at the continuing legacy of U.S.-sponsored terrorism.

When you first travel to the Miskitua region of Nicaragua, you talk about the immediate similarities that you see between that area and the part of Oklahoma where you grew up.

It was the most unlikely comparison, because Oklahoma is dry, semi-arid — or where I grew up, the western part — and the soil is red, so there's a kind of red dust in the air all the time. And it's, of course, Baptist, and country music is the favorite music. And Church music. So here I am in this exotic Western Caribbean rainforest and I feel like I'm back in the rural town where I grew up. And so I realized — well, yeah — the music — and that's because the people were missionized by the Protestants, some of them Baptist, mostly Moravians — but the same thing. They use the same music — "Old Rugged Cross" and "Bringing in the Sheaves" — these kinds of Protestant songs; and then the country-western music because the area had been literally occupied by United States corporations and workers. And the soil is red, just like Oklahoma.

TEXT

Mattilda,

a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore

PHOTOS

courtesy Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

You also talk about anti-Communist fervor and racism and the hunger for U.S. products.

I tell the story of being in one home and the family was complaining that they couldn't even get toothpaste. They were blaming the Sandinista Communists that they couldn't get toothpaste. Even though I told them the U.S. Reagan

Administration had put into effect a boycott and asked companies not to export to Nicaragua, they still blamed the Sandinistas: They said they couldn't get toothpaste. And I looked up, and on the windowsill was a big long tube of what was obviously toothpaste, with toothbrushes around it, and I pointed to it and they said, "No, no. That's from Mexico. That's Mexican. Ipana is toothpaste." That made me think also about home when, for us, "bread" was Wonder Bread, although my mother baked this fabulous bread. When I think about it now, I think of all the good yeast bread I missed because she sold it in town so that she could buy us Wonder Bread, 'cause that's what was advertised and that's what we wanted. Also, the lack of information when I was growing up — where the preacher from the pulpit, anything he told us, we had no way of measuring it against something else. Or anything the government told us. We just trusted the government.

You talk about these different layers of colonialism in Nicaragua, from anthropologists to missionaries to military "assistance," and it's interesting, what you say about feeling like you were inside this moment in history.

It was a funny feeling that first night that I spent out there in the Miskitia in the coastal capital of the region, Puerto Cabezas, walking through the streets and thinking of all this and knowing that the Reagan administration — this was May 1981; Reagan had only been in office for about four months but had moved very quickly to try to overthrow the Sandinistas and started the Contra War a few months later — and just being aware that I was witnessing something inside a historical moment that was going to change everything. I could just kind of feel it, and I had never felt that way before. It wasn't the same as feeling you're part of history — I didn't really feel a part of it. I was very much an observer that first time, but I did feel inside, kind of inside this bubble, you know, where I could see the whole thing play out. And it wasn't a pretty sight. I felt I had to do something. I had to sort of commit myself to try to stop it.

You describe these signs all over the Miskitia region that said "Welcome to Vietnam," and I was wondering if you think these signs reflect a similar global consciousness, a feeling that something had to be done to bear witness?

That was when the Contra War really was gaining a great deal of steam at the end of 1982. And there were a lot of landmines, and there were still a lot of Nicaraguan Sandinista troops up there [on the border with Honduras]. And I was traveling with members of the North American Indian Movement, two of

which were Vietnam vets. They both were very emotional about it; they felt like they were back in Vietnam. And then suddenly we see a sign, this little handmade sign that said "Welcome to Vietnam." They just burst into tears, these two big Native American guys. It was almost as if the United States was trying to re-enact Vietnam, and this time win. You know, a country of two-and-a-half million people and three elevators and five bridges is not like Vietnam, with millions of people, masses of people and allies — the Soviet Union and China. It was a small enemy, but no less Nicaragua was just a little microcosm. They did feel that . . . I guess the Sandinista soldiers had put these signs up, because everything they had ever known about Vietnam . . . it seemed like the U.S. repeating itself.

It's very popular right now for people to appropriate the styles of the late '70s and early '80s — the exact period you're talking about — without having any sort of critique of what's behind those styles. So I'm wondering: How do you think such a critique could occur?

Well, I hope this book helps a little bit. It was one reason, among several, that I wrote it. It's also that the roots were being planted then — you can see a kind of arc to the present — including the same people, the architects of the Contra War being inserted by the Bush Administration to do this. Even before 9/11. That's why it's very clear they had a plan because they're putting those same people in positions: John Negroponte, who was the architect of the Contra War — he was the ambassador to Honduras — putting him in as ambassador to the U.N. and ambassador to Iraq after we invaded it, and now national intelligence chief. So he's very much involved. He always slips out, but he is a Machiavellian, and I'm sure he had something to do with the surveillance that was taking place as national intelligence chief.

Many in the younger generation have kind of come of age knowing nothing else in some ways — this has been their lives: 1979 to the present. I wasn't paying enough attention then. I was so obsessed with the Contra War. I was determined to be obsessed with it. I think in a way, to really do something, you almost have to be obsessed with it. I think two things: We weren't paying enough attention to what was happening in the culture, and we weren't paying enough attention to the Middle East and Afghanistan, where the U.S. was carrying on the largest CIA operation in its history. That's also another arc or trajectory from that time. So, I don't think I've completely done it in this book, but I think we need to look at that time. For young people now who are trying to bring back that time, to really look at it in full.

I think in a way, really do something, you almost have to be obsessed with it.



Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, left, with Dr. Mirna Cunningham, Miskitu medical doctor, Sandinista, and governor of the Miskitu region, June 1985.

I have a question about the idea of acts of treason, because I think in the book it comes up in several different ways. One is the ideal of treason toward the U.S. government, but secondly whether, when you're participating in the U.S. government, through diplomacy or lobbying — whether that is treason. And at the end of the book you come back to treason when you're talking about going to a protest to commemorate the murder of a U.S. citizen by the Contras, and accidentally ending up at a protest against the Endangered Species Act, and thinking that something feels really familiar — but also really wrong — about the demonstration. And then you realize that these are Oklahoman loggers in the Northwest, and someone comes over to you and says, "Oh,

portant people. Even the ones that aren't rich, you know — they're important because they're a columnist for *The Nation*. Certainly we need to get out of that. I think there is a lot that we can do that is outside of that.

I think in a way what you're saying about people who feel outside of the political process not voting, in a way that's a great sign, because they're not invested in the same way.

It's like, who are you supposed to vote for? I think they're less foolish than some of us who say, "I'll vote for Kerry" — he's for the war. So does anyone



Miskitu women with their children, collecting copies of the draft autonomy law that became a part of the 1986 Nicaraguan constitution.

I learned a lot from the Sandinistas about how you can work with people in raising their political consciousness without demeaning their lives.

our demonstration's over here — we didn't know that these rednecks were going to be here," and then you feel this treason towards the people you had grown up with.

I think that being a traitor to themselves is what people sort of feel about the Left establishment. Because, something has to change with the Left establishment in terms of how we have a contempt for the population in the middle, the red states, that they're — like that book, *What's the Matter with Kansas?* — they're a bunch of dummies, they don't know what their real interests are. When they're not voting. They are not involved. Most of the poor people in this country — and working-class people — simply are not participating in government. To me, that can also be read as saying that they feel alienated from it. But they also feel alienated from the Left, who has contempt for them. I really think something — if it doesn't start in the South or the Southwest or the middle of the country — we're never going to get anywhere. I think we need to have a new effort that is outside of those gatekeepers.

They're all still up there in their world of the wealthy and the celebrity and im-

know how to read such people? But I do think they are deeply steeped in patriotism — how could they not be? And of course religion. I learned a lot from the Sandinistas about how you can work with people in raising their political consciousness without demeaning their lives. It does kind of fall aside like a shell, like it did with me, as I became politicized. Those things kind of fall away. I no longer needed them. But I think if someone had really attacked me, I would have defended those things. But you do feel attached to who you are. You're kind of where you came from and the sort of culture you grew up in. You know, they [the Democratic establishment] feel that way also — there's a kind of a racism that they now can't practice against blacks and Latinos, but with poor whites it's fair game. A bunch of idiots. They're still the majority of this country. ☒

For more information about Roxanne, visit: www.reddirtsite.com.

Mattilda, a.k.a. *Matt Bernstein Sycamore*, is the editor of *That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation (Soft Skull)*. *Mattilda* is currently working on a new anthology, *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender*

An Internally
Displaced Person

Returns Home

the Sabiya Manzil Diaries



Fifteen years ago, Sithara Abdul Saroor was compelled to leave her home on Mannar, a small island in the northwest of Sri Lanka, by the armed conflict between the separatist Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government. On a cold October morning, the Tigers evicted all Muslims from northern Sri Lanka, Muslims who had coexisted for many years with the mostly Hindu Tamils. Sithara's family was fortunate enough to relocate from a refugee camp to Colombo, the capital city. To date, around 100,000 war-displaced northern Muslims remain in bleak makeshift camps in Sri Lanka, most of them in the northwestern district of Puttalam. On the anniversary of her displacement, this former Internally Displaced Person (IDP), who now works for the rights of other displaced people and women survivors of the conflict, decided to return home.

—Sarah H. Cross

August 22, 2005
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Today I am worried and mad at my mother. Why is she doing this? Is she crazy or greedy? She says it is foolish to keep something that will soon be taken over by "them."

"Mum," I cry, "it's our house. We have to keep it for your grandkids. Maybe even they won't live there, but it's the only connection we have to our hometown, to Mannar."

"Look, you think it's going to be your home again?" My mother puts her foot down. "People say they've even changed the name of our street. It's now named Murugan Street. What a daydreamer you are. I don't want to even imagine my grandchildren taking one step inside that house. I have decided to do away with the house before the war starts again."

I beg her to give me a few days to think, hoping to furtively lobby my brothers for support.

It appears my brothers have discussed this before. They shout out their questions one after the other: "Why are you so possessive of this ruined house? It was shelled twice and it's haunted. Who would even want to step in there again? Let Mum sell it off." My second brother tries to convince me, cautioning: "Remember, we sold our shop in Mannar for peanuts when we had to rent a house in Colombo. Come on, it's time to sell all we have there and invest the money here. Who knows when they will start fighting again?" My youngest brother, with his usual playfulness, tries to make light of the situation: "You know something, sister? Mum is smart and you should just let her do what she wishes; after all, it is her property."

I'm mystified. How can anyone put a monetary value on this house? It holds so many cheerful memories. It preserves a feeling of belonging, a feeling that was stolen away at gunpoint on the morning of October 24, 1990.

A friend of mine said of us, the Northern Muslims, "Before eviction you were all swimming in a pond. Now you have the ocean." True, my friend. We have an ocean to swim in but in an ocean we can so easily get lost. I didn't dare answer him aloud

— it would bring about the discussion that I most fear: a discussion about our departure.

My brothers were too small to feel how I do about being thrown out. They are simply angry about the IDP stamp on them. For them, the easiest thing is to get rid of everything that reminds them of being displaced, to wipe away the bitter past and accept their new identity as Colombo Muslims. I want to deal with the past because I am hurt and ashamed and disconnected. My wounds can be healed only by returning, by finding answers to my questions and, if possible, renewing relationships. It is difficult to explain to my brothers why I want to stay connected. They think our home is in enemy territory, and who would want to be connected to one's enemies?

Finally, I beg them all: "Look at what is on sale — our dignity. It is a real disgrace to our grandfather and our father." I know they don't understand what I mean but they stand by me because of my tears. This is how I stop (or should I say postpone?) the sale of our ancestral house, Sabiya Manzil.

I wonder why my mother doesn't feel the way I feel. I was told that Mum's birth brought lots of luck to my grandfather's business and that he built this house for her. She and her seven siblings grew up in this house; my mother's dream wedding took place there as well. Our next-door neighbor, Thevi-aunty, used to tell me stories about Mum's wedding: how my grandpa decorated the street that led from the railway station to our home with colored lights so that all his friends who were visiting Mannar for the first time would not get lost. (It didn't make any sense to me because we lived on such a small island — I wondered how anyone could really get lost there.) She told me how it was like Thirukaiteswaram Thiruvilla, with thoranums on both sides of the road, and how my uncles, Sivam and Shakti, covered up a well in our front garden to make a stage for musicians to play nathasvaram. (If only they knew that they were sitting on top of a well 36 feet deep, they would have caught the next train to Jaffna.) She told me about the fuss over Mum when she delivered me, the first grandchild, and how the whole house was made child-friendly. She used to point out the nail marks on the walls on either side of the stairs where my father cre-

ated a barrier to keep me away from the steps by nailing in wooden planks.

There are questions I never ask my mother. Mum, how is it possible for you to say that you don't want to go back there anymore? Why do you hate this house so much? Is it because you, like my brothers, don't want to deal with the bitter past? I never ask her for fear I would dig into her deepest wound — my father's untimely death triggered by our dislocation.

September 25, 2005
Mannar, Sri Lanka

I have been to my hometown many times in the last couple of years but I have never had the bravery to return to Sabiya Manzil. In fact, I have stayed with friends or relatives and avoided passing by the house. Nevertheless, as I return to Mannar this time, after all that commotion I made to stop selling my family's home, I decide to return to it. How nervous I am today, like going to see a long lost dear friend.

I reach for the best dress I have in my suitcase. Fifteen years — that is a very long time, isn't it? As I enter Moor Street, I glimpse my home standing just as strong as it used to. As I get closer to it, I notice something different. Yes — it has lost its friendliness. The porch and compound walls have shed their paint and are stripped naked. Years of negligence and war have dressed it with scars. During war this house brought hope and reassurance. For many of us this was the only safe haven that pulled all of us together — my aunts, uncles, cousins, friends and neighbors. I am reminded of festivals and weddings.

Usually after a fight there would be curfews. I loved curfews because our house used to be full of people — people of different ages, classes, castes, and faiths. Grandma borrowed big pots and pans from our Mosque that were used only for Kanthiry and cooked in the back garden on stone stoves piled high with wood. Christi-uncle — an amazing story-teller, a political-science teacher, and a superb cook — assisted her. Sivam-anna and Mustafa (who worked at the nearby grocery shop, Myillvahanam Kadai) tested each other's strength by splitting huge chunks of firewood with one blow. We gathered the chipped pieces of wood when they took breaks and brought them to Christi-uncle

TEXT
Sithara Abdul Saroor

ILLUSTRATION
Cristy Road - croadcore.org

in anticipation of the usual gifts. Christi-uncle always gave us rewards when we did something good. Most often he rewarded us by telling funny stories of his childhood, growing up together with my father in their village, Vidatthal Thivu. I loved his stories because they portrayed my father as a sturdy yet very mischievous boy. Smoke from the stone stoves engulfed the whole house and we all coughed endlessly with tears, but I loved those days and the tears too. We sat on the floor and ate whatever Grandma served on banana leaves. The food tasted so good that I secretly wished for long curfews. In the evenings Nimmi and my best friend Ranjini joined me in rehearsing the songs Sister Lourdes taught us during our last scout camp. We often forgot that we were in the middle of a bloody civil war.

I am still standing in our front garden trying to gather the nerve to step inside. Suddenly everything becomes threatening and hostile and I feel numb. The sharp memories of war and my last few days living here rise up in me — sorrow, loss, tension, fear, atrocities, and distrust. Memories that keep me awake most nights. God, now I can smell death and pain here. Ranjini became a freedom fighter and later was killed and proclaimed a martyr. Uncle Christi was accused of being a traitor: His body was hung on a lamppost with a bullet through his forehead. I became the “other” in my school, even among some of my closest friends. Myillvahanam Kadai was bombed one night and Mustafa too since he slept there. Thevi-aunty and her only son, Kumar, disappeared at a military checkpoint when they went to see relatives in Adampan. Sivam-anna, a brilliant and devoted mathematics teacher, was taken for questioning to Thaladi army camp, and no one saw him again. After that, math became a bitter subject for me. I remember my uncle Shakti-anna, who was admitted to Jaffna medical college yet opted to join the struggle for his homeland, choosing guns and cyanide capsules as his last resort for survival. If he had stayed with us, perhaps he would have disappeared like his brother. I saw Shakti-anna only once after he became one of “the boys” — the Tamil Tigers — when he came to alert my father the night before they attacked the Mannar police station. I remember our endless attempts to deter my brother from his growing interest in “Al Jihad,” and how he ended up being wanted by “the boys.” If not for our friends, neighbors, and Shakti-anna, he would have ended up on the lamppost too. The last few days in this house were like living in a hellhole. Calls for prayers, *adhan*, became a symbol of tension and fear. Every time the mosque’s loudspeaker came alive at odd hours our hearts stopped beating. The thought that something dreadful had happened out there killed us minute after minute. At the end, on October 24, as the same loudspeaker announced that we had 24 hours to vacate our homes, I knew that this time neither our friends nor Shakti-anna could come to our rescue.

My numbness turns into humiliation and distress. God, this is making me sick. I run out and walk back quickly to my friend’s house. My head feels so heavy I think it will explode. I run to the bathroom and sit beneath the tap. As the cold water pours on me I cry. Fifteen years on, I cry for the first time, tears wiping clean the memories of living in Sabiya Manzil.

Later, I call Mum and tell her: Let’s get rid of this ghost house. ☞

Sarah H. Cross is a U.S.-born writer, editor, and researcher who has collaborated with human-rights activists from the United States, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, and Brazil on print and radio projects to communicate their strategies and visions. Sarah and Sithara met in 2004 at the Women PeaceMakers Program at USD. Email: sarahhelen@igc.org.

Footnotes

- i. *Murugan is a Hindu god.*
- ii. *Sabiya is my grandmother’s name; “manzil” means “home” in Arabic.*
- iii. *A famous Kovil festival celebrated in my hometown.*
- iv. *A kind of decoration with young coconut leaves now only used in Tamil ceremonies.*
- v. *An instrument associated with Tamil Kovil festivals.*
- vi. *Jaffna is a main city in the north of Sri Lanka.*
- vii. *An annual Muslim ritual in which the entire Muslim community gets together at the mosque and prepares a meal for the whole town.*
- viii. *“Elder brother” in Tamil.*
- ix. *An infamous military base run by the Sri Lankan government forces.*

Sithara Abdul Saroor is currently working in her hometown on economic development and conflict-resolution projects with IDPs, women and children from mixed ethnic and religious backgrounds.

The Conflict in Sri Lanka

During Sithara’s lifetime, Tamils of different faiths (Muslim, Hindu, and Christian) coexisted peacefully as neighbors, a fact she highlights in her peace efforts. But the ethnic tension and conflict in Sri Lanka between the majority Buddhist Sinhalese and minority Tamils has spread to include intra-ethnic, religious-based violence.

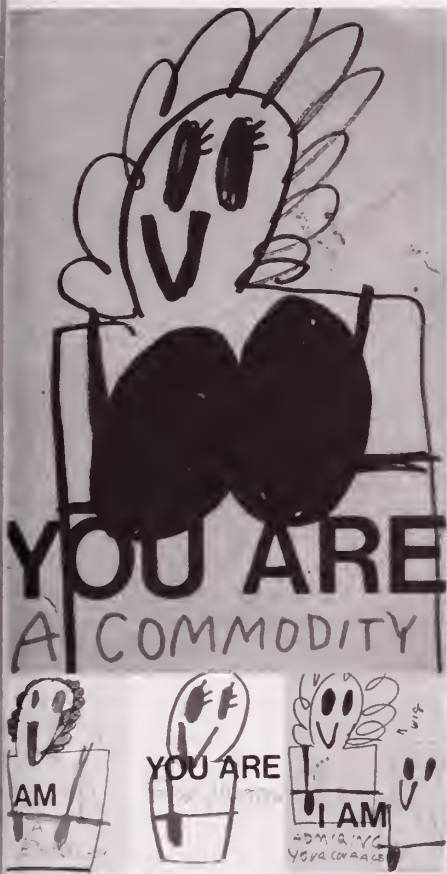
The seeds of ethnic tension were present when Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon) declared independence from the British colonial government in 1948. In part a response to the favored status of Tamils under British rule, the Sinhalese government began institutionalizing discriminatory policies against the Tamils, beginning with the Sinhala Only Act in 1956, which declared Sinhalese the official language and effectively restricted Tamil access to state employment. In 1972, the same new constitution that changed Ceylon to Sri Lanka gave Buddhism special status above other religions and restricted Tamil access to advanced education. Facing discrimination and chronic under-representation in parliament, Tamil nationalism rose, leading to the formation in 1976 of the main rebel group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, or Tamil Tigers), who embraced the notion of a separate Tamil state in the North.

In 1983, a government-organized pogrom against Tamils, set off by a Tiger attack against the army, ignited the conflict and gave way to decades of civil war. During this time, the Tamil Tigers originated the use of the suicide bomber and conscripted child soldiers, even after a ceasefire was reached. In the late 1980s, Indian peacekeepers, ostensibly sympathetic to the struggle of the Sri Lankan Tamil minority, ended up fighting against the Tigers. Thousands have died on both sides, and many thousands of families have been displaced.

The events of October 1990 were early evidence of the spread of the ethnic conflict to include violence among Tamils, as the LTTE forced Muslims in the North and East of the country from their homes in order to “cleanse” the land. That month, 75,000 Muslims from Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullativu, and Mannar were forced to evacuate within a 24-hour period. In Sithara’s hometown of Mannar, a large island in Northwest Sri Lanka, the LTTE first destroyed the only bridge to the mainland and then forced approximately 25,000 Muslims onto boats. In these overcrowded boats, evicted families with no personal belongings and virtually no cash arrived in Puttalam. Many of them continue to occupy what were set up as temporary camps.

While Sri Lanka technically remains under a ceasefire since the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in February 2002, the truce is tenuous. The December 2004 tsunami further destabilized the fragile peace. For current news, try reading local sources, including the pro-federal-government www.sundaytimes.lk and www.dailynews.lk, the independent www.tamilweek.com and www.thesundayleader.lk, and Tamil perspectives at www.tamilnet.com and www.tamil-eelamnews.com.

—Sarah H. Cross



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Athens old town - a street was transformed into race track for the 2004 Olympic Games

only a problem of Olympic Proportions

who gets all
those homes
built for athletes
after the Olympics
leave town?

Loose earth stirs on the ground of the Olympic Village in the dry air of Athens's early summer. During the 2004 Olympic Games the housing complex teemed with more than 20,000 athletes and other foreign visitors. More recently, with the grunt of electric drills and the hum of small trucks hauling plywood, it transformed into a bustling construction site for what was slated to become a permanent settlement.

As far as one can see, low-slung buildings — two-, three- and four-story multi-family dwellings — are laid out meticulously over the site. Each floor is rimmed with a brightly-painted veranda, the most popular living space for ordinary Greeks. There they cook, nap, chug ouzo, hang laundry.

A sleek glass sliding door separates the veranda from the rest of the apartment. All of the 2,292 apartments in the complex are equipped with central air and ample closet and storage space. The garage underneath each building provides at least one indoor parking space for every family — a rarity in Greece.

But what makes the complex even more unusual, not only in Greece, but among Olympic host cities throughout the world, is that after the star athletes and international press corps have long left town, this beautifully-appointed housing did not turn into sleek student dormitories or luxurious condos. The entire village became home to low-income families, with some 10,000 people moving in this past February.

TEXT
Violet Law

PHOTOS
Andreas Guskos (opposite page)
Violet Law (following pages)

A Legacy of Destroying Low-Income Neighborhoods

No other cities that have hosted the Games had the political will to turn a spanking new, multi-million dollar development into housing that benefits those who need it most.

"Often the Olympics's organizing committee will promise affordable housing as a legacy after the Olympics are gone, but it is only a tiny percentage of the housing," said Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, author of *Inside the Olympic Industry: Power, Politics and Activism*. "They don't want to convert (the village) into affordable housing because they will lose a lot of money."

In her 2000 book, the University of Toronto sociologist found that hosting the Olympics invariably wreaks havoc upon a city's poor. The homeless are swept up and jailed. Families are evicted so that swaths of low-income neighborhoods can be wiped out for new development. What Lenskyj calls "the housing legacy of the Olympics" has been overwhelmingly devastating.

In Atlanta in the early 1990s, in two of the city's oldest and largest public housing projects, Techwood and Clark Howell, nearly 1,200 units were razed to make room for downtown redevelopment triggered by the construction of infrastructure for the 1996 games.

The fight for a more positive Olympic housing legacy is now raging in Canada. Activists in Vancouver, host of the 2010 games, have organized to score a promise from the city's government that more than half of the village be set aside as affordable housing units for low- and middle-income families. But this early commitment has recently been curtailed by newly-elected conservative city council members.

For housing activists, the Greek example and the Vancouver struggle can be instructive. Few people have any use for a velodrome or an aquatic center. And as we've realized in Hurricane Katrina's wake, stadiums prove to be lousy quarters for shelter. But one fixture of the Games is always up for grabs: the Olympic Village.

Why Greece?

After World War II, the migration in Greece from rural villages to the capital was massive. Today, Athens is a sprawling metropolis of eight million people,

a place two-thirds of all Greeks call home. Since many Greeks moved without any prospect for employment, finding a place to live became the surest way for them to establish a foothold in the city. In 1954, the country's Ministry of Labor and Social Security established the Labor Housing Organization (known as *Organismos Ergatikis Katoikias* or OEK, pronounced OH-ehk).

OEK allocates housing aid a bit like the U.S. Social Security Administration distributes retirement funds. All Greek wage-earners are required to pay about one percent of their salaries into the housing fund and their employers match the contribution. Only those workers who have contributed a sufficient amount but cannot afford to buy a house are entitled to assistance.

"The state of Greece gave birth to OEK to solve the problem of workers and housing," said OEK's director of public relations Evi Kaila. "The government wants to shelter the people who don't have the income to buy in the private market."

OEK typically sells the homes it builds at cost and provides interest-free loans to homebuyers. The homeownership rate stood as high as 83 percent nationally by the time the Olympics returned to the founding country. Even though what OEK produces amounts to less than 10 percent of the homes built annually around the country, according to University of Thessaly planning and regional development professor Thomas Maloutas, it builds as much as 95 percent of the public-sector housing.

With so much expertise in housing development, the government put OEK in charge of building the Olympic Village soon after Athens won the bid to host the 2004 games. It was the first time in the history of the Olympics that a social housing organization has taken over the construction.

The Olympic Village is the largest project ever executed by OEK, which had to contract five construction firms to complete the E320.5 million project. On the 306-acre site in Acharnes, located nine miles northwest of Athens, the Olympic and Paralympic village today has blossomed into a newfangled town,

Below: an aerial view of the Olympic village in Athens, Greece



with a health clinic, a fire station, schools, day-care centers and a church. An ancient aqueduct has been preserved as part of the landscaped green space. Residents will also have access to a swimming pool, two gyms and the track and field facilities. The village is connected to the commuter train network by bus lines, and some government offices have also been relocated there to create a job base.

In early 2005, a national lottery was held to assign the housing to some 2,000 families.

As much as this outcome is worth emulating, not all of the housing stories coming out of the Greek Olympic Games were quite so rosy. In the years leading up to 2004, many Roma people in and around Athens were evicted from their settlements by state authorities, according to reports by the Geneva-based Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE). More than ten Roma homes were reportedly bulldozed or burned to the ground.

Beyond this, seven construction workers died in what was believed to be the worst accident in housing construction in the history of modern Greece. "We say the Olympic Village is constructed with blood," said Christina Kospini, who covers labor issues for *Kathimerini*, Greece's largest daily.

Start Organizing Now

No one died before the 1996 Atlanta Games, but the death knell for downtown public housing was definitively sounded.

The housing projects, Techwood and Clark Howell homes, had powerful, land-hungry neighbors — with the Coca-Cola corporate headquarters one street to the west and Georgia Tech to the north. These movers and shakers held sway over the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), which prepared the bid in a process shrouded in secrecy. Soon after the bid was awarded in August 1992, local activists began to organize in earnest against the demolition. But it was already too late.

continued next page

So, your city wants to host the Olympics ...

Neil deMause, co-author of *Field of Schemes: How the Great Stadium Swindle Turns Public Money into Private Profit*, considers how activists should respond to their city's desire to host the Olympic Games.

CLAMOR: Los Angeles is gearing up to bid to host the Games for the third time. Do you see any benefits of having a U.S. city as the designated Olympic host?

Neil deMause: A lot of people now feel that you should pick some city somewhere in the globe [to host all future Olympics]. That would be the ideal. That will lessen the impact of the Olympics. That way you already have the infrastructure in place, the stadium built.

The way they do it now, every four years some city will have to build the new stadium, the arena, the swimming pool, the velodrome, the beach volleyball court. It's a waste of money and efforts.



The Olympics seem mostly to benefit developers — movers and shakers of the host city. Do you have any suggestions on how the grassroots can get a fair shake?

If we're hosting the Olympics, we want the construction to benefit those who actually live here. You can try to negotiate a community benefits agreement. One of the best examples is around the building of Los Angeles International Airport and the Staples Stadium. You get everybody to the table, and there are opportunities to negotiate.

What do you think activists can negotiate for? And how?

Use your imagination. You have something they need, which is public support. And they're concerned about public support. "If you don't give us what we want, we're going to protest the bid and tell the IOC it doesn't have the public's support." The last thing the IOC wants is lots of people holding picket signs during the Olympics.

The main thing is to start really early. Once your city has gotten the bid, why should they give you anything? It's very much politics. The Olympics is nothing if not a giant political game. You have to start as soon as your city announces its interest in hosting.

Bring in housing advocates, union activists, transportation activists. On the bright side, it's a great opportunity for coalition building. You get everybody together to think about what you really want for your city.

- Violet Law



"The minute the bid is mentioned," is the time to get organized according to Anita Beatty, a long-time housing advocate who, as director of the city's Metro Task Force on Homelessness, galvanized the opposition. "Get the commitment from the local government before the bid is prepared so that there will be no net loss of public housing and shelters."

Vancouver's activists apparently have taken Beatty's advice to heart.

In 2001, as the city was preparing to bid for the 2010 Winter Olympics, housing, labor, transportation, and environmental advocates formed the watchdog group Impact on Communities Coalition, to negotiate with city officials for commitments to make sure the Games leave a beneficial legacy for all citizens.

The group, led by housing advocate Linda Mix, lobbied successfully to protect tenants from inflated rent and evictions. As a single mother raising a toddler in the 1980s, Mix remembered being forced out from her downtown apartment when her landlord jacked up the rent during the 1986 World Expo.

Further, her group won a promise from the city to convert two-thirds of the 600 housing units planned for the Olympic Village into affordable homes for families of low-to-moderate income. But after the city's November 2005 election, conservative new council members cut back the commitment to about 120 units.

"We had all of the good work our city council has done around the housing legacy pretty close to being wiped out by the new city council. It is heart-breaking," said Mix. "You can see how vulnerable the so-called legacy can be."

In later phases of the development in the South False Creek community, where the Vancouver Olympic Village is sited, Mix hopes her group can again push for more affordable housing. Meanwhile, the coalition is working closely with the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) to make sure that all the commitments are carried out.

"VANOC does not want to have a black eye," said Mix. "If we start to see mass eviction and erosion of those protections, we'll be yelling as loud as we can."

Ultimately, host city officials can do well by following their counterparts in Athens, who claim to have lived by this philosophy: "We want to the Games to be at the service of the city, and not the city at the service of the Games." ❏

Violet Law, a Pittsburgh, Pa.-based journalist, has covered low-income housing, design and community development issues extensively since 2000. Email Violet at VioletLaw@journalist.com



WTO Ministerial Dispatches a Bad Deal

Negotiators met in Hong Kong in mid-December for the Sixth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial. The last two attempts at moving global free trade forward had ended in spectacular failure: Seattle in 1999 and Cancun in 2003. This time around, however, the bad guys had a bit more luck.

The conference focused largely on trade issues surrounding agriculture. Midway through the proceedings, representatives of 110 poorer countries formed a new alliance, billing itself as the G110, to demand that the North remove export subsidies and open access to its markets to less-developed nations.

Out in the streets, the strongest voices belonged to farmers and farm workers involved with *Via Campesina*. From the outset, the Korean farmers were particularly well-organized and provided strong leadership, repeatedly highlighting the forced exclusion of those most impacted by WTO policies within the negotiations. On the second-to-last day of the ministerial, they led a large march to the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, displaying amazing courage up on the front lines. That night, police used brute force, including rubber bullets, tear gas and attack dogs, to smother dissent.

Unfortunately, the Northern powers were able to salvage the negotiations from total collapse. For now, rich countries can continue subsidizing domestic agribusiness and protecting key products from competition from less-developed countries, while the poor continue to make concessions. More negotiations are expected to take place this spring.

Rusa Jeremic is Global Economic Justice Program Coordinator at KAIROS Canada. She was in Hong Kong during the WTO 6th Ministerial Conference.

TEXT & PHOTO
Rusa Jeremic



Mining Independence in West Papua

TEXT & PHOTOS
Domenica Settle

Inset: West Papuan men were beaten up by Indonesian military in Waghete, in West Papua in late January. Foreground: Meki Nawipa looks forward to independence as he studies to be a pilot.

On January 18, a traditional long boat emerged from the Arafura Sea and landed on the remote northern tip of Australia with a Morning Star flag tied to its mast. Forty-three independence activists from the small, rainforest-covered region of West Papua were seated in the boat's hull. Their arrival was both an attempt to flee from a ruthless military occupation and to capture the world's attention for their cause.

The people of West Papua, or *Irian Jaya*, have resisted Indonesian rule for decades, armed with not much more than bows, arrows, and international solidarity. In their homeland, people have been jailed and even shot for flying the Morning Star flag. Herman Wanggai, one of the refugees, spent years in prison for participating in a peaceful flag-raising ceremony in 2002.

When the West Papuans's arrival briefly made Australian headlines, Indonesian presidential spokesman Dino Patti Djalal declared that Indonesian citizens do not need to seek asylum, as Indonesia has an open and free democracy. Anyone seeking political asylum abroad, he said, is an absurd liar.

Speaking in a shop on the edge of Melbourne's urban sprawl, 26-year-old West Papuan Meki

Nawipa has no trouble relating to the refugees' desire for sanctuary. In telling of his childhood in the cloud-covered mountain nation journalists are rarely allowed to enter, he describes torture and the burning of churches, schools, clinics, and houses. Often, he says, his neighbours have to flee their homes for days at a time and hide in the forest from the Indonesian military.

"How often?" I asked him.

"Oh, it's every week."

In mid-February, an Australian Greens Senator managed to smuggle videotape of the refugees out of the immigration detention center in which they were being held. The tape drew a new round of media attention, and featured Wanggai's plea, "If today we don't help the West Papuan people . . . soon plenty of people will die by the military."

Controlling Natural Resources

West Papua is the western half of the island of New Guinea, just north of Australia. It is cursed with an incredible wealth of natural resources, including oil, gas, wood and some of the largest copper and gold deposits in the world. Resources attract colonisers, and the Dutch once claimed West

Papua and what is now Indonesia as the Dutch East Indies. At the end of World War II, Indonesia shed its colonisers, while the Dutch granted a separate independence to the ethnically-distinct West Papua. Indonesia claimed that West Papua was rightfully theirs, and in 1962, with U.S. backing, they invaded.

In the decades since, West Papuans have joined independence organizations ranging from peaceful church groups to a jungle-based guerrilla movement typically armed with indigenous weapons rather than actual firearms. Indonesia has had a difficult time controlling the population, but understands the significant incentive to do so.

Deep inside West Papua, in rainforest 13,500 feet above sea level, the top of Grasberg Mountain is now missing. Home to what is thought to be the largest gold deposit and third largest copper deposit on the planet, the mountain is well on its way to becoming a crater. The Grasberg Mine is owned by Texas-based conglomerate Freeport McMoRan, the Indonesian government and mining giant Rio Tinto, and is protected by the Indonesian military. Upwards of 200,000 tons of waste from the mine are dumped into local rivers every day and nearly 90 square miles of wetlands are now covered in thick grey slime. Between 1992 and 2004,

Freeport earned Indonesia \$33 billion in direct and indirect profits. Freeport is big business.

The mine has been an on-going source of conflict in West Papua. In 1977 guerrillas destroyed a slurry line, shutting the site down temporarily. Security forces responded by strafing highland villages and killing 900 people, according to the Indonesian Government. Locals say it was twice as many.

In 1994, guerrillas led protests over Freeport expansion, and the military expansion which went with it, near the town of Timika. According to a 2004 report by the Yale Law School, the military responded by detaining and torturing four civilians for over a month, accusing them of being connected with the protests. They have not been seen since. The military also detained two women who were held in a water closet for a month. One person was tortured for hours, the report states, despite having no language in common with her torturers.

Yet the protests continue. On February 22 of this year, hundreds of West Papuans started blockading the mine, grinding production to a halt, in protest of Freeport's attempts to stop locals from panning for gold in the area. Indonesian environmental organisation WALHI argued that the loss of community land and resources to Freeport, along with the military's reign of terror, "is precisely [the] state of affairs which forces the local people to scavenge for discarded gold [in the first place]."

The Australian and U.S. Government have had conspicuously little to say about the reports of human rights abuses trickling out of West Papua. The United States is home to Freeport-McMoRan, while Australia and the United Kingdom are jointly home to Rio Tinto. Both Australia and the U.S. supply Indonesia with arms.

Freeport-McMoRan, in particular, has long maintained cosy relationships with government officials. The *New York Times* reports that Chairman James R. Moffett paid for vacations for an Indonesian dictator and his colleagues, and even for the college tuition of some of their children. Freeport's Board of Directors includes Roy J. Stapleton, a U.S. Ambassador to various countries, including Indonesia from 1996 to 1999. Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was also on the Freeport-McMoRan board from 1995 to 2001.

Other transnationals have also become embroiled in West Papua. Royal Dutch Shell began to tap oil there in 1907, while petroleum company BP intends to be producing at least 7.6 million metric tons per year of liquid natural gas at West Papua's Bintuni Bay when commercial operations start there in 2008 or 2009. While BP is keen to espouse their commitment to "sustainable development and community," they also admit that a

whole village has been relocated to make way for the project.

BAE Systems and Rolls Royce, meanwhile, are among the companies that profit from selling the Indonesian government the military technology used to keep the indigenous population in check. BAE Systems is known as a business not overly concerned about human rights — in September, the British newspaper *The Guardian* revealed that the company secretly paid over one million pounds to the former Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet.

On January 17, just a day before the West Papuan refugees' long boat landed in Australia, Freeport-McMoRan announced record profits.

Dreams of a Brighter Future

Back on the outskirts of Melbourne, Nawipa munches away on cold chicken and fries as he dreams about the future. "I want to set up Papua flying doctor service," he says, and smiles. "Because my mum and other mums in West Papua, they are struggling with their health. They are living in the jungle and they need someone to come and help them."

The service Nawipa envisions would involve flying health care providers out to visit patients in remote areas, and Nawipa is busy studying to be a pilot. Of course, he recognizes that starting the Papua Flying Doctor Service will require more than just a pilot's license; it will likely require West Papuan independence first.

Nawipa describes the path to independence as a plane flight: "If there's a cloud here, you can't go back, you have to turn right or turn left. And after, you try to calculate how many degrees you are off track. And then you come back, to regain the track." He talks about West Papuans studying overseas, the need for educated people to build a new nation, the need for money, but his flight path also includes international solidarity: "West Papua move first, and then international [people] can help us."

Nick Chesterfield also sees international solidarity as key to West Papua achieving independence. He is part of the Free West Papua Campaign, a collective of organisers spread across Australia. Church groups have also become involved in the issue in Australia, while the University of Sydney has joined the fray with an August 2005 report on genocide. And solidarity is not limited to Australia — there are also solidarity groups in the U.S., Belgium, the UK, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

"There have been small groups for many years in solidarity with West Papua," Chesterfield says, "but they have been very limited."

Things, however, may be starting to change.

"The opportunity that has been created by the asylum seekers arriving in Australia is now a huge amount of awareness where people do understand the issues going on," says Chesterfield. "So we are capitalising on that at the moment. With all the increased media exposure, we're having a forum and we're going to increase [the number of] demonstrations, creative actions. Every level of activism that you can possibly imagine is being done at the moment. Film makers are getting together, musicians are getting together, all sorts of different community networks are starting to get involved, which is really exciting, for actually raising the issues."

For his part, Nawipa is convinced that West Papuan independence is inevitable. Forty-four years of occupation and 100,000 deaths have not deterred them yet. "When people say we want independence," he says, "it's more powerful than guns." ☐

To learn more, visit: www.freewestpapua.org

Domenica Settle is a freelance writer from Australia.

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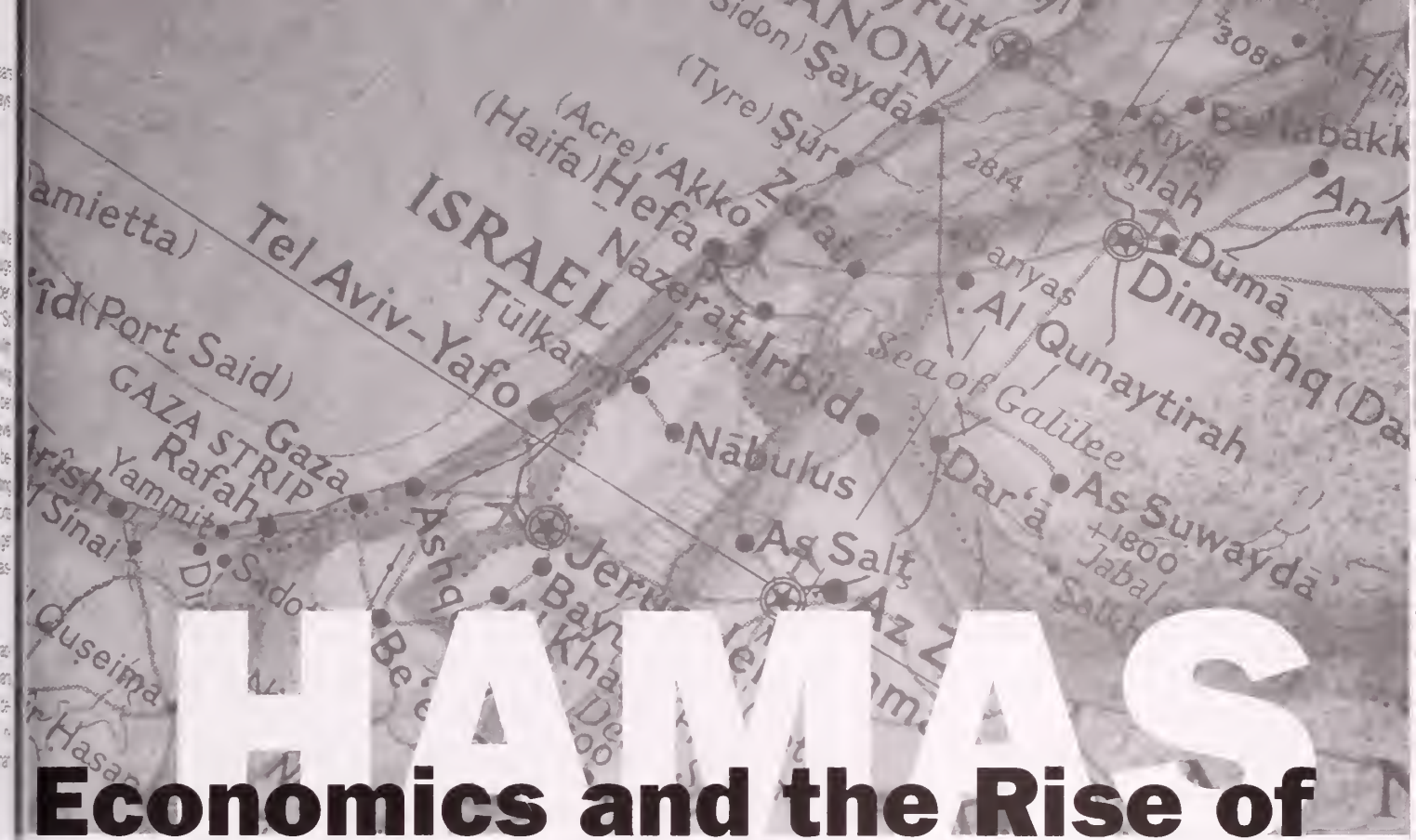


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HAMAS

Economics and the Rise of

TEXT
Marwan Kanafani

Mahmoud Abdullah is waiting in line with 15 other unemployed skilled laborers at the offices of Al Salah Islamic Society, a non-profit organization with suspected ties to Hamas. This is the cramped Palestinian town of Rafah in the Gaza Strip, early 2004. Outside, houses look like they are under a perpetual state of construction, and roads are paved with mud and trash. Mr. Abdullah is hoping for a check, but today he will be disappointed. Under pressure from the United States and the European Union to distance itself from Hamas, the Palestinian Authority has frozen Al Salah Islamic Society's accounts. Stipends that have previously been distributed to the poor and elderly will no longer be available.

The decision to freeze Al Salah's accounts strikes at the heart of the changing landscape of Palestinian politics. Mr. Abdullah says that such a move is an attempt by the old guard, the corrupt Fatah power-players who dominate the Palestinian Authority, to take down Hamas and its affiliates in order to sabotage the infrastructure of social service centers Hamas has been building since its creation in 1987.

"They say we help terrorists," says Ahmed Al-Kurd, Executive Director of Al Salah. "How many of the 4,000 people we help are terrorists — maybe one or two? The rest are women, the old people, orphans — are they terrorists?"

According to Bluma Zuckerbrot-Finkelstein, Director of Special Projects for the Middle East at the

National Office of the Anti-Defamation League, 95 percent of Hamas's \$70 million budget is believed to finance its social service activities. Finkelstein writes, "[m]any Palestinians are drawn primarily or solely to Hamas's humanitarian services rather than its political and military doctrines." Around the world, Hamas is identified as a terrorist organization. However, while the Palestinian Authority languishes under a haze of shady budgeting scandals, Hamas stands out on the streets of Palestine, not just as an armed guardian of the Palestinian people, but as a provider of basic social services.

Since the January 2006 elections in which Hamas swept 76 of the 132 parliamentary seats, the world has entered into a new debate around who can effectively represent the Palestinian people.

A Legacy of Social Services

International reaction to Hamas's parliamentary victory has focused on its official doctrine of destroying Israel in hopes of creating an Islamic state in Palestine. In their 1988 Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas includes a declaration by Imam Hassan al-Banna stating, "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."

Hamas has also faced criticism from many secular and moderate Palestinians who fear a total Islamization of Gaza and the West Bank. Recent allegations against Hamas have included the bombing of two co-ed community centers in Gaza last

summer, disruption of a rap music performance in Gaza in September, and regular harassment of women for not adhering to Islamic dress codes.

According to Christian Sterzing, Head of the Heinrich Boll Foundation in Ramallah, focusing on Hamas's history of violence and fundamentalism overshadows the role it has filled providing needed social services to the Palestinian people — not to mention the possibility that the new government can evolve into a peaceful and moderate broker.

"In the last one or two years," Sterzing says, "Hamas has taken an increasingly pragmatic course and shown itself to be more politically moderate. Hamas is not only a terrorist organization. It is also a political force. It is a social movement, which builds kindergartens and provides the hungry with food."

Hamas was elected by a population burdened by high unemployment, with over half of its people living in poverty. Israeli checkpoints and raids

back riding, potato sack races, and other summertime-fun activities. "In this camp we learn the important things of life — good behavior, respect," says seventeen-year-old Osama Abu Asi, who was spending the summer at a Hamas-run camp on the beach outside Gaza City. "They are not terrorists. We've been trained and taught to live and forgive. That is the lesson here."

Working the System

As long as Hamas enjoys the support of 60% of the Palestinian population, it will have the leeway to implement new programs and evolve into an internationally viable government. However, funding for their programs will need to reach all 2.5 million Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank, not just the groups who have sought help from Hamas. Securing this funding will require shrewd political maneuvering and at least some cooperation from Israel and the West.

"There is a recent example in which Israel was supposed to allow Palestinian produce to travel

ian government, Sterzing argues, "neither Europe nor the U.S. is interested in eliminating financial help for the Palestinians. A moratorium would be catastrophic for the population. The E.U. would do well to set precise conditions for further help and to define the terms of discussion with Hamas."

The first phase of Hamas's rise to power is complete. They have entered into an agreement with the Palestinian people not only to fight on their behalf, but to represent them to the world community.

"I think part of the reason why Hamas got elected is because they are in touch with the people," Hijab says. "When you provide services, when you go and reach out to people you're in touch with, they see you. You're very visible. If you're a bureaucrat, you're sitting in your office. You're providing services through another party or format or company. You have become part of the system."

Hamas has, indeed, become part of the system. Their new challenge will be in remaining true to the creation of a Palestinian state while balancing world opinion. ■

Marwan Kanafani is a freelance writer living in New York City. He is the editor of the political quarterly magazine The New Constitution and a contributing writer for the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs. You can contact him through the website www.thenewconstitution.com.

The first phase of Hamas's rise to power is complete. They have entered into an agreement with the Palestinian people not only to fight on their behalf, but to represent them to the world community.

have made travel extremely difficult, resulting in a severe lack of access to healthcare facilities and social services.

"Many health outreach programs in remote areas have been cut off, and Palestinian ambulances and medical teams face restrictions on movement, delays of access, and arbitrary searches by the Israeli military," reports Dana Leigh Hearn, independent consultant for Johns Hopkins University's Center for Technology in Education, in the study "The Palestinian Territories: Signs of Change Amidst Ongoing Suffering."

Out of these Israeli-enforced restrictions has emerged an armed Hamas, providing Palestinians with security and basic social programs — the two fundamental responsibilities usually assigned to a legitimate government. Over the course of 19 years, Hamas has, in fact, built itself a framework of governance. While the Palestinian Authority was engaging in internal power feuds among the various factions remaining from the defunct Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas was building its membership. As the Palestinian Authority funneled millions of dollars into the private accounts of Yasser Arafat and his associates, Hamas invested in schools, homes, hospitals, and community centers.

Every summer, to cite just one example, Hamas organizes a camp in the Gaza Strip that provides Palestinian youth with swimming lessons, horse-

through the Karni crossing [into Israel]," says Nadia Hijab, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Palestine Studies in Washington, D.C. "Israel has closed it for the past couple of weeks. This open crossing was part of the agreement that Condoleezza Rice negotiated for the Gaza disengagement. Palestinian produce is sitting on the ground rotting, or being donated so it doesn't go completely to waste. It's an economic disaster for the Palestinians. It's hard to see what Hamas can do about it because nobody, not the Europeans, not the United States, has been able to make Israel abide by its own agreement."

Hamas's victory was followed by a chorus of international threats to cut aid to any Palestinian government that calls for the destruction of Israel in its charter. Thus far, however, Hamas has shown no signs of drafting a constitution that renounces violence and recognizes Israel. As of March 2006, the U.S. and European Union policy towards aiding Palestinians is to transfer approximately \$50 million and \$140 million, respectively, to the United Nations Relief Works Agency and the World Food Program, both administered in the occupied territories by the United Nations. By its own law, the United States is barred from giving Hamas any direct aid. The question now is whether or not the Palestinian Authority, legitimized in 1993 by President Bill Clinton through the Oslo Accords, will inherit Hamas's terrorist classification. Despite the controversy over aid packages to the new Palestin-

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In the Shadow of CAFTA

Above: Goats graze on land at the "CREM" cooperative, reclaimed land which used to be a secret interrogation and torture base run by US and Honduran officials.

TEXT & PHOTOS

Kari Lydersen

Honduran Campesinos's Land Struggles Continue

In a community known as *El CREM* in the tropical northern coastal area of Honduras, Maria Reyna Ventura grabs a large knife and gracefully lops off a wedge of salty, pungent cheese from a large square block. The concrete-walls of the room hold the acrid smell of the milk fermenting in a trough, where it is pressed and churned to make various dairy products.

A hand-lettered sign on the rutted dirt road leading to the building explains "Se vende queso, se compra leche" — "Cheese sold, milk bought." Local farmers come here to sell their raw milk, which *queseria* workers turn into cheese and cream. A herd of cows and goats also wander contentedly around the lush but rocky pasture surrounding the business. When a sudden tropical rainstorm blows in, they rush to take shelter under the small eaves of a wooden cottage.

From the bucolic looks of it, you would never guess the history of this spot. Just two decades ago, it was a secret military base and interrogation center used by U.S. counterintelligence units, Salvadoran generals, and Nicaraguan Contras, a staging ground for right-wing government forces during the Cold War-era civil wars that rocked Latin America. Honduras hosted no large-scale leftist insurgency, but the right-wing government was a close ally of the United States during the 1980s and aided the brutal regime in El Salvador and the right-wing Contras in Nicaragua.

The *campesinos* who now call *El CREM* home have found a grisly legacy of human bones in the ground and secret tunnels under the earth. They originally located a whole village of huts, but moved the community to a site nearly a mile away after the low-lying land flooded and the children became sick with strange illnesses, which may have been caused by contamination left over from the military operations.

Like much land in Honduras, this spot was "reclaimed" by *campesinos* utilizing constitutional agrarian reform measures that allow the reclamation of unused land. Though many refer to it as *El CREM*, the name of the secret military base, its real name is Guadalupe Carney, in homage to a U.S. priest (James Carney) from Chicago who did human rights work in Honduras and Nicaragua and was ultimately murdered, possibly at *El CREM* itself. Now the area has been transformed from a symbol of that horrific period in Honduras's past into a thriving example of the present face of resistance and self-sufficiency in one of Latin America's poorest, most overlooked countries.

CAFTA: Leave Your Farm and Join a Sweatshop

"We've converted a zone of death and war into a zone of peace and brotherhood," said Adolfo Cruz Ruiz, one of the community leaders. "Father Carney died for the struggle. Now we are improving the lives of over 5,000 people. To us that is very significant."

Honduras was the original "banana republic," so named because of the enormous political and economic influence of the large fruit companies. The banana industry, known for its slavish working conditions and environmental destruction, has shrunk greatly because of competition from other countries and the degradation of the local soil. Economically, not much has taken its place. Large-scale palm and sugar cane plantations, as well as *maquilas* in the cities, provide relatively few and extremely low-paying jobs for back-breaking work. Most poor rural Hondurans eke out a living through subsistence farming. But they are in a constant struggle to acquire and hold on to land in the small mountainous country where corruption is rampant and multiple parties often claim title to the same property.

More than 40 *campesinos* have been killed in land struggles over the past decade in Honduras, and many more have been injured, had their houses destroyed or been otherwise prevented from working their crops. The nearly 600 families who live in *EI CREM*, one of the larger communities of reclaimed land, have faced forcible eviction, arrest, armed violence, and intimidation from police and private security forces in their six years on the land.

The scale of this repression is small compared to the dirty wars and counter-insurgency campaigns in other Latin American countries, but in Honduras these localized land reclamation struggles represent the greatest hope for desperately poor *campesinos* to survive with some degree of health and dignity. With the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) slated to take effect this spring, many Honduran *campesinos* and opposition political candidates expect land struggles to intensify and repression of *campesino* movements to worsen. As happened with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in Mexico, CAFTA will make it more difficult for *campesinos* to sell the bananas, rice, yucca, and other small-scale crops they grow in local or regional markets.

Since CAFTA will remove most tariffs on imports of agricultural and other goods from the U.S. and other more developed markets, farmers who grow crops on a very small scale without the aid of modern technology will not be able to compete with the prices importers can offer. Thus many of them will no longer be able even to eke out a living selling crops they grow. Many will be displaced to urban areas or will become part of the steady migration out of the country. *Maquilas* — factories, usually foreign-owned, that produce goods cheaply for export — are also expected to increase with the implementation of CAFTA, which will make the import of raw materials and the export of finished goods cheaper. In Mexico, many people displaced from farms by NAFTA ended up working in the *maquilas*. Many expect a similar, if smaller-scale, trend in Honduras.

Though any jobs are welcome in this impoverished country, *maquila* jobs are generally relatively low-paid with few worker protections or labor rights and workers usually end up living in squalid, dangerous slums.

"The TLC [*Tratado de Libre Comercio*, as CAFTA is known in Spanish] is not for the *campesinos*," said Oscar Mejia, a left-wing member of Congress and former leader of the *Centro Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo*, a militant *campesino* group. "It will benefit multinational companies but the *campesinos* don't have the capacity to compete. And the *maquila* sector will grow, so more youth will end up working in the *maquilas* than participating in land struggles."

A woman stands outside a sewing cooperative one of the small businesses at the CREM.

Carlos Amaya, a congressional candidate and son of the noted writer Ramon Amaya Amador, notes that *maquilas* are also an unstable form of economic infusion. Attractive to the business community primarily as a source of undemanding low-wage labor, jobs available in a *maquila* one day can easily be shipped elsewhere in today's globalized economy. In Mexico, many of the jobs in *maquilas* situated along the U.S. border have moved to Asia.

"The *maquilas* could just move all of a sudden to China or India and then we'll be left with nothing," said Amaya, who runs a Marxist bookstore in Progreso, the city which was the cauldron of a massive 1954 general strike among banana workers, miners, and others.

Campesinos and their advocates see land ownership as a much more positive, stable form of survival than the *maquila* and plantation jobs likely to be created through CAFTA. *EI CREM* is a perfect example of how localized land ownership allows *campesinos* to not only make a subsistence living farming, but also feel a sense of empowerment and control over their lives.

The Impressive *Empresas* of *EI CREM*

EI CREM has all the makings of a brilliant success story. After surviving several years of arrests and intense intimidation, they seem to have reached a level of stasis with the government and land-owners. The residents have obtained legal title to about half of the land they are occupying, and they have been in negotiations with the government to buy the remaining land, which is "owned" by a number of other parties.

EI CREM, like most communities in Honduras, is not run in a financially collective way; each family has their own finances. Honduran law actually forbids collective property holding so whenever the community wins legal title to new land, it is split up into individual titles. But the community works together, in small enterprise groups called "*empresas*," to make a living.

Pedro Bilches is the tall, gangly man with wide eyes and a huge, energetic smile who runs *EI CREM*'s general store, a concrete one-room building arranged with neatly-stacked rolls of barbed wire, shelves of veterinary medicines, piles of tools and seeds. Though he has little formal education, Bilches is an expert at calculating what supplies to buy and what price to sell them at to keep the store running. He is also knowledgeable about veterinary medicine, and helps run the community's dairy program wherein cows are essentially lent to families on credit.



I dream of having this land, so my kids don't need to live hand to mouth. I came here as a worker but I want to make a better life for my kids; that's why I'm here. We want to work and here we can make something out of our work

Along with the store in *EI CREM*, there is a sewing shop, a *campesino* bank, an egg project, an artisan workshop and a micropower radio station. The *campesino* who runs the bank describes proudly how he has only a sixth-grade education, yet can deftly manage accounts on a computer as well as keep meticulously hand-printed hard copies of each record. He serves as bank manager, accountant and teller, moving between the computer and two wooden teller windows which give the bare-bones building the feel of a "real" bank.

By pooling their resources (farm tools, sewing machines, raw materials and the like) through *empresas*, and by developing systems of credit, from bank loans to loaner cows, the community has been able to become relatively successful economically. Community members sustain themselves in a way they couldn't do on their own.

Armed with Mangoes, the Struggle for the Land Continues

Meanwhile, the fate of an even more remarkable community founded on land reclamation is unfolding in Atlantida. The fledgling community is significant because, unlike most of the male-dominated *campesino* movement in Honduras, it is led by a group of about 60 single women and their children. Unfortunately, its prospects do not seem as good as *EI CREM*'s.

The land the women have been occupying and farming since 2001 was initially owned by a division of the National University of Honduras and earmarked for an experimental agricultural project. But since the project was never launched, the land was officially listed in the government registry as eligible for reclamation. As is often the case, however, once the women occupied the land, representatives of the university resurfaced and demanded the land back.

In 2002, many of the women were arrested and jailed for six days. Among them was Sofia Vasquez Rubio, a 78-year-old with a wiry, muscular body and heavily lined face who farms a yucca plot on the land. Rubio is "sick at heart" because one of the three young granddaughters she is raising was recently struck and killed by a car. The other two children, with quick smiles and big brown eyes, cling to Rubio's hips as she describes her dedication to defending the land.

"I'm 78, but I'm strong," she said. "I can work all day because of them (the girls), and this place has given me the place to work."

During a twilight meeting, as fireflies light up the grass, mosquitoes bite mercilessly, and crickets and frogs hum, 26-year-old Maria Aminta Cruz rises to her feet and stabs her fist emphatically in the air as she describes how the land reclamation has changed her life.



Sofia Vasquez Rubio is able to make a living for her grandchildren on the women's farming cooperative in Atlantida. But now the women worry they will be forcibly displaced from the disputed land.

"I dream of having this land, so my kids don't need to live hand to mouth," said Cruz, a widow with three children. "I came here as a worker but I want to make a better life for my kids; that's why I'm here. We want to work and here we can make something out of our work."

She holds up a bag of snacks and candy she has bought for her kids, and says that only since being part of the community has she been able to make enough money to buy little luxuries like that. "Thank god since being here I'm getting back my *panza* (belly)!" she said.

The women have made the trip over winding, dangerous roads to the capitol Tegucigalpa numerous times to pursue their reclamation case through legal channels. It has been bounced back and forth between various government agencies and the Supreme Court, with different arms of the government often contradicting each other. Now they say they have pretty much exhausted the legal process, with rulings apparently leaning in the university's favor. They are afraid they will again be forcibly evicted from the land. But they say whether they have legal title to the land or not, they will not leave.

When police come trying to evict them, Sofia Vasquez Rubio said, "I'll be ready with stones and mangoes. It will be a big fight."

"It's like being a tree," another woman chimed in. "Sometimes you feel weak and think you're going to fall, but then the others hold you up." ❏

Kari Lydersen is a Chicago-based reporter who writes for the *New Standard News*, *In These Times* and other publications. She recently published a book *Out of the Sea and Into the Fire: Latin American-US Immigration in the Global Age* on *Common Courage Press*. www.karilydersen.com.

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American Home

Trafficking and the Return of Domesticity

Mira Sorvino's breasts, barely encased in a camisole top, are distracting enough that I don't register her words. She's on the *Tavis Smiley Show* promoting her HBO mini-series *Human Trafficking (HT)*. Her appearance coincides with a resurgence of public interest in sex trafficking, a phenomenon I'd described two years ago ("How Trafficking Became Sexy," *Clamor* September/October 2004). I'd argued that trafficking was sensationalized and sexualized in stories about evil Russians luring innocent girls into worldwide prostitution rings. Watching Sorvino, it's clear to me that trafficking has resurfaced in the public imagination but this time the threat is closer to home. Sorvino tells Smiley how afraid she is for her own daughter after having made the film. Later she tells the *New York Times (NYT)*, "I would hope that people would be very, very careful with their daughters after seeing this."

It's tempting to overlook Sorvino's exaggerated rhetoric as a desperate ploy for public attention — her last significant role involved fighting giant roaches in *Mimic*. This time, she plays an Immigration and Customs Enforcement Officer who takes on an international sex trafficking ring. Clips of *HT* show Sorvino as both law-enforcer and maternal figure, fighting evil traffickers to save a girl.

But Sorvino's paranoia, feigned or otherwise, is symptomatic of a significant shift in how we're asked to think about trafficking and whom it affects. Trafficking has gone from being represented as a crisis that affects mostly female immigrants ("sexy" trafficking) to one that affects young American children. My initial article argued that these hypersexual narratives erased the fact that the phenomenon depends on the use of cheap or free migrant labor, not coerced sex work. In 2005, Debbie Nathan made a similar point in *The Nation* and exposed the bizarre collusion between anti-porn feminists and Christian conservatives. This alliance ensured that the Trafficking Victims Protection Act categorizes all trafficked persons as involuntary "victims" of "sex slavery" even if they voluntarily entered prostitution.

TEXT

Yasmin Nair

ILLUSTRATION

Renee Nault - reneenault.com

In February, *Counterpunch's* Alexander Cockburn took aim at "Nicholas Kristoff's Brothel Problem" and the *NYT* columnist's obsession with rescuing girls in India. Cockburn pointed out that Kristoff's self-aggrandizing tales obscure the wide-ranging costs of US-engendered neoliberal economic policies, which force larger numbers of people into prostitution. More recently, also on *Counterpunch*, Nathan wrote about ABC's *Primetime* show on trafficking and revealed that new laws permit inflation in the numbers of domestic trafficking victims by misleadingly classifying as "sex slaves" even minors who run away from home and engage in prostitution to survive. This induces a new public hysteria that "our" children (read: white American) are being trafficked under our noses.

So trafficking is back, it's sexier than ever, and we're left to understand why, despite the abundance of material to the contrary, the phenomenon is still cast in the overly sexualized and hysterical paranoia about particular bodies. But this time, its "victims" are no longer foreign workers but our own children. And mothers are being called upon to protect their children. This recent incarnation of a trafficking crisis is cast as a struggle to preserve the innocence (read: virginity) of the girl-child.

The shift from "sexy trafficking" to "innocent victim trafficking" is a reminder that women's bodies are endlessly mobilized to turn issues of labor and immigration into deeply personalized narratives about family and nation. A recent Oprah Winfrey show on the topic focused on *child* sex trafficking. Winfrey relied on the power of the imagination to conjure nightmarish scenes about the plight of children. In a series of short segments, celebrities and celebrity journalists like Ricky Martin and Christiane Amanpour lent their reputations and perpetuated falsehoods and hyperbole about the supposed danger to children worldwide and in the US.

In a segment about Mexican girls trafficked into the US, the reporter Michele Gillen is led into what looks like a set of *The Blair Witch Project*, a dark woody

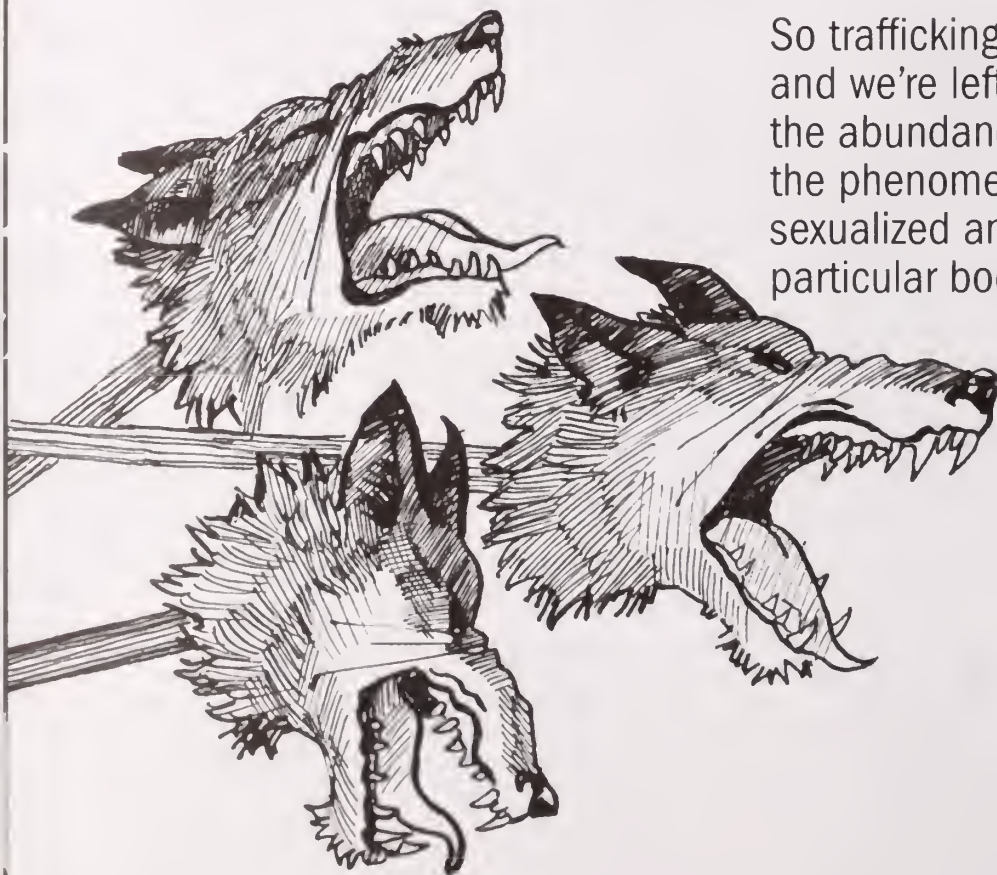
area where they supposedly serviced their clients. With no evidence that there were ever any girls there, her guide talks about *imagining* that they must have cried out for help. Gillen even repeats the widely debunked Peter Landesman story about young girls dressed up in white communion dresses, without revealing her disputed source.

In another segment, Amanpour tells Oprah that she spoke to a couple of women in the audience *that day* who said, "even 20-odd years ago, in their own towns, there were stories of girls disappeared and ending up in the sex trafficking business. So this is going on." Amanpour's willingness to extract fact from speculation is part of the show's reliance on half-baked stories and rumors fuelled by dubious sources. She also speaks with Gary Haugen of the International Justice Mission (IJM). Neither she nor Winfrey reveal that IJM is a Christian organization. Practically re-enacting Nathan's point about the collusion between Christian conservatives and some feminists, Amanpour asks earnestly: "What can individual Americans do to help?"

Given the demographic focus of the Oprah show, those "individual Americans" are clearly women and mothers. It's no surprise that Oprah focused on *child* sex trafficking rather than on adult women. This allowed her to avoid the issue of chosen sex work. But as we trace the shift in the emphasis in trafficking, it becomes clear that there's more to it than persuading American women to identify as the mothers of trafficked children.

If looked at closely, the story about sex trafficking and children is also a story about the failure of the family to protect children. This is apparent in the account of Kim Meston, a former Tibetan refugee from India allegedly trafficked into the United States by a Christian minister at the age of 16. Meston has posted her story on the website of Trafficking Victims Outreach and Services, a Cambridge-based organization where she works as the co-director. A slightly different version appears on the website of the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance. She also appeared on the Oprah show on child trafficking.

So trafficking is back, it's sexier than ever, and we're left to understand why, despite the abundance of material to the contrary, the phenomenon is still cast in the overly sexualized and hysterical paranoia about particular bodies.



Human rights agencies like International Justice Mission and Amnesty International play their part in perpetuating myths about trafficking.

Her tale, while ostensibly about how girls are trafficked into this country, in fact contradicts the stereotypes that Winfrey propagates. (Meston did not respond to my requests for an interview). She writes about growing up happy and carefree in a Tibetan camp in Southern India until the minister convinced her parents that he could give her a much better education and life in the States, assuring them that he would treat her as his own daughter. Meston arrived in a small rural town outside Westchester, Massachusetts and attended school, but had to work as a domestic servant and was forced into sex by the minister. Eventually, Meston married. She was persuaded by townspeople to report the minister when he brought two of her cousins into the country.

There seems little doubt that Meston did go through a traumatic experience. But one aspect of the case bears scrutiny. Meston was not trafficked into the country by a nefarious trafficking ring. She was simply transferred from one family unit to another, even if under false pretexts. Looked at closely, Meston's story reveals the vulnerability of the family unit to neo-liberal economic pressures and the hypocrisy of and potential danger posed by US faith-based representatives and initiatives in the developing world.

Tibetan families like Meston's are under double economic duress as refugees in an impoverished country. It's impossible to discern exactly why her family would allow her to be taken so far away. But the harsh reality in a country like India is that it's simply not economically feasible for millions of impoverished families to keep hungry children around — it makes more sense to send them away to places where they might be fed and make money as well. By a rough and probably conservative estimate, there are as many as 5 million child domestic workers in India. In that context, it's not unlikely that Meston's arrival in the US may well have been part of an implicit economic pact — her labor (intended as sexual or not) exchanged for either a fee or the guarantee of income from her work. It may well also be that her family genuinely thought she would be treated like a daughter, but that should not distract us from the fact that they felt an economic need to send her away.

These details provide a clearer lens through which we can understand how the tropes of innocence, victimhood, and shattered families function in the latest version of trafficking hysteria. Meston speaks publicly as both victim and heroic survivor of sex trafficking but neither she nor Oprah Winfrey, who profits hugely from the suffering of others, can afford to provide a more complex portrait of trafficking.

Such a portrait would involve examining the complicated and tangled relationship between faith-based organizations and neo-liberalism. Governments everywhere increasingly rely on these for social services that states should provide. The *carte blanche* afforded to people like the minister allows them to openly procure and bring in foreign adolescents for their own use. Meston's story reveals the kinds of labor, sexual and commercial, that may be extracted from family members under economic stress. It reveals that the lines sometimes blur, contradicting our easy divisions between innocent victims and sexual agents, sex work and domestic labor.

What does this tell us about mothers and daughters and sex trafficking as a threat to the virginity and safety of innocent girls? The fiction of the inviolate bond between mother and daughter and the fixation on violated virgin girls are pretexts for making other economic relations invisible. While only somewhat less problematic than the Oprah show, *Frontline's* recent show about trafficking in the former Soviet Union did indicate the economic realities be-

hind the numbers of people who move between borders in search of work. Trafficking exists but it does not require kidnapping or coercion, and it's not always about sex — the aftermath of a post-cold-war economy ensures that there are more than enough people, men and women, willing to take a chance to earn income however they can. Many of the *Frontline* women are from Moldova, where 80% of the population lives under the poverty line. One, desperately needing money, tries to return to Turkey to find sex work even after having been snared by authorities.

Human rights agencies like IJM and Amnesty International (AI) play their part in perpetuating myths about trafficking. These popular organizations garner public support and funding because their causes look so worthwhile. But a closer look reveals that they don't critique the systemic conditions that lead to phenomena like trafficking in the first place, making them at least partially culpable. I spoke with IJM's Paula Livingston since her organization claims to have helped rescue hundreds of young sex trafficking victims across the globe.

When I asked Livingston why IJM did not engage directly with the systemic conditions of poverty in different countries rather than resorting to "rescue," her response was that they chose to leave that work to local NGOs and governments. But when pressed, IJM did not have a list of these NGOs handy, and failed to provide it despite my requests. So, while its website claims that it "empower(s) local authorities to stop ... abuses" (with no rationale about its right to do so), IJM provides no real facts about its work. It emerges instead as a Kristoff-like heroic entity, providing its supporters with an attractive vision of American heroes rescuing desperate brown people.

IJM's missions of rescue as a Christian organization allow it to ignore the economic machinery that surrounds the people it claims to help, except when advancing the US government's policies. Gary Haugen's response to Amanpour's question about what Americans might do was that "we" needed to let other countries know of the consequences in their relations with the US. Haugen was referring to economic sanctions. But sanctions only allow the US to exercise economic, cultural and moral dominance. And nations can justifiably resist. In 2005, Brazil decided to forego \$40 million from the United States Agency for International Development so that Brazilian AIDS organizations could continue distributing condoms to prostitutes. This came after the US demanded that "foreign recipients of AIDS assistance must explicitly condemn prostitution" or lose funding, according to the *NYT*.

Similarly, AI condemns the effects of war; its work on human rights abuses often centers on war-torn places. But it has so far refused to condemn war itself, surely the main cause of many human rights infractions. At the same time, AI, through celebrity spokespersons like Sorvino who seek public attention, creates and exploits tenuous links between issues like domestic violence against women and "sex trafficking."

Hysterical narratives about sex trafficking raise our sense of personal vulnerability and ignore neo-liberalism's effects of crushing local and foreign economies in the name of free trade and consumer choice. People -- women, men, and occasionally their children -- are compelled to move through borders to look for work. That work might well involve some amount of sex work — it's hard to discern the exact amount. But such migrations are incidental to the search for work, not brought on by demonic sex trafficking rings. It's easier for sex workers to claim being kidnapped and forced into sex rather than admit to looking for sex work — the former might result

in deportation but the latter might land them in jail. Such are the results of sexist and moralistic trafficking laws that induce judgments about "innocent" victims versus those who supposedly "deserve" their suffering by seeking sex work. And sometimes, yes, "our" children are kidnapped and abused — often by family members or people we know, not by sex traffickers preying upon innocent victims. Examined closely, the new hysteria about sex trafficking exposes difficult truths about family, sex, and work. None of these is more precious or purer than the others and the distinctions between them frequently collapse.

In the '70s and '80s, stories about incest and satanic abuse of children fired our imagination. Today, sex trafficking stories are symptomatic of our uneasy relationship with a new global economy. But we avoid making the connections between an abstract set of economic relations and their effects on our lives. Instead, a return to the pure American home becomes the panacea for all our woes. There's nothing like the specter of shattered domesticity to ensure that women and children are fixed in their roles as either creatures in need of rescue or perennial caretakers. Ultimately, sex trafficking is the latest urban legend that polices women's lives and keeps them almost hysterically attached to their children — "very, very careful with their daughters." 📺

For further sources on the myths about sex trafficking, see:

Laura Agustin's website:
http://www.nodo50.org/conexiones/Laura_Agustin/

Cockburn, Alexander. "Nicholas Kristoff's Brothel Problem."
www.counterpunch.org/cockburn01292006.html

Nathan, Debbie. "Oversexed."
www.thenation.com/20050829/nathan

Nathan, Debbie. "The Teen Sex Slave" Scams: ABC's Primetime Fakery."
www.counterpunch.org/nathan02172006.html

For a critique of Lifetime's *Human Trafficking*, see Kerwin Kaye's take on the AI website: www.amnestyusa.org

For related essays, see *Regulating Sex: The Politics of Intimacy and Identity*. Eds. Laurie Schaffner and Elizabeth Bernstein. Routledge, 2005.

Yasmin Nair is an academic and writer based in Chicago. She can be reached at welshzen@yahoo.com

Homosexuality is illegal or repressed in most African countries, and there are few openly LGBT news outlets, social and human-rights groups, or archives on the continent. Despite this underrepresentation, organizations in Egypt, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa are working to address queer concerns — and to ask how homosexuals in Africa can develop their own models for expressing themselves.

afrol News

www.afrol.com

Located in Norway, Spain, and Lesotho, *afrol* is an independent news agency that provides extensive coverage of Africa in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. It covers a wide variety of topics pertaining to almost every corner of the continent and has special sections on gay and lesbian issues, gender and women's concerns, health, and human-rights stories. Subscriptions are free to individuals; professionals and businesses are asked to pay a small re-print fee.

Behind the Mask

www.mask.org.za

Behind the Mask is a major non-profit website magazine on gay and lesbian affairs in Africa. In operation since 2000, it is actively engaged in counteracting the war against gays and lesbians and assaults on human rights and health on the continent. According to its mission statement, "Behind the Mask, through journalistic activism, strives to mainstream lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and intersex (LGBTI) interests and to change negative attitudes towards homosexuality and same sex traditions in Africa." In addition to providing an extensive survey of laws and summaries of social attitudes concerning LGBTI issues throughout Africa, Behind the Mask works closely with many other African and international gay and lesbian organizations.

GayEgypt.com

www.gayegypt.com

An information, connection, and entertainment website, Gay Egypt sponsors over 3,500 forums and message boards for 175 million gay Muslims across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and worldwide. The site also features links to news and history.

African Veil

www.africanveil.org/

"Zambian fruits welcome you to a friendly site of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender people." With that tagline, African Veil is the most inviting organization on this list. African Veil is a developing, independent resource for the coverage of news, arts and culture, HIV/AIDS, and tourism in many African countries, concentrating on issues that concern those who feel left out of other gay communities. Ultimately, the site hopes to reap the sweet and good fruits of their efforts by con-

necting to an international smorgasbord of writers with special knowledge and experiences.

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ)

www.icon.co.za/stobbs/galz.htm

Although there are no official laws restricting homosexual activities in Zimbabwe, homosexuals there have long been plagued by the repressive homophobia of their government. For well over 15 years, GALZ has been able to counter this climate by providing a communication network (sometimes clandestinely) for Zimbabwean gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and others seeking a more open society. Now working directly to rewrite the laws and make visible the nation's large number of homosexuals through social events such as the 1995 Book Fair demonstration, GALZ is striving to affect all of Zimbabwe. After "outing" themselves, GALZ has been building networks with other human-rights, women's-rights, health-rights, and civil-society associations. Also visit *gayZIM* at <http://www.angelfire.com/zine/gayzim/index.html>, "Zimbabwe's only online, interactive magazine for the lesbian and gay community and friends."

GALA: The Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa

www.gala.wits.ac.za

South Africa remains the only country in the world whose constitution protects against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Although such protection has not made South Africa a queer paradise, it has helped many more groups and forums thrive in the country — to the point where some have begun calling South Africa's Pride Day just another commodified event. Since 1997, GALA has provided an independent, permanent wing of the South African History Archive to document and display the evolution of gay and lesbian experience in the country and to house a wide range of historical and archival material relating to that experience. GALA publishes a newsletter, promotes local arts, cultural events, and social programs, produces and collaborates on documentaries, and, according to its mission statement, "aims to be a source of information to the public and to serve as a catalyst for generating other, previously silenced community histories and personal narratives." See also Q-Online: Our World Our Way at <http://www.q.co.za>, a large South African online community and editorial website committed to queer ideas, culture, and society.

To profile sex and gender resources, libraries, or museums in your area, e-mail Brian Bergen-Aurand, Sex and Gender Editor, at brian@clamormagazine.org.

queering gender



TEXT
Guatam Bhan

ILLUSTRATION
Zack Giallongo

Hijras in India

The past decade has seen the birth of an increasingly confident queer movement across India — one that has grown from protesting isolated incidents of violence to speaking a more assertive language of rights, pleasure, and equality.

Most major Indian cities now boast political, social, and support groups for queer people. The Internet has transformed queer space in the country, allowing both political organizing and social contact between queer people across regions. After years of lobbying by activists, all major national newspapers have taken editorial stands supporting gay rights and continue to regularly publish pro-queer reports. Activists have also legally challenged the Indian version of the Texas anti-sodomy statute — an 1860s British colonial law barring “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” — arguing that it violates the fundamental rights. The case is currently being heard in the country’s highest courts. While strong social and legal censure on alternative sexualities remains, queer expression and communities now have breathing space and opportunities to voice their dissent at such laws.

The queer Indian movement by nature must raise different questions and focus on different goals than similar movements in the West. For many of us who identify as same-sex desiring people in India, queer identity is a complex derivative of cultural, political, and sexual matrices, and our expressions of sexuality are tied to a different understanding of sexuality in and of itself: Indians are not afraid of desire — queer or otherwise — but they are reluctant to talk about it, and suspicious of any sexuality that does not result in marriage. The biggest concern when it comes to LGBT identities is not so much same-sex desire, which most Indians don’t have a puritanical/moral/religious objection to, but the assumption of a public identity based on sexuality and the implications it holds for the eternal cornerstone of all Indian society, i.e. the heterosexual, patriarchal family.

Yet for centuries Indian culture has recognized and accepted transgressions of gender and sexuality that are, ironically, the only publicly acknowledged gender and sexuality-based identities. The hijra communities in the country are perhaps the best known example of this ritually sanctioned space for gender and sexual transgression.

The hijra identity cannot be contained in a single definition because there is no single hijra reality, voice, or even community. Hijras in the North, Alis or Aravanis in the South, and dozens of other names in other Indian tongues, the people I term as the hijra community comprise a spectrum

of gender and sexual identities. Some are anatomically male but consider themselves to be women. Others were born male but have been castrated. Many were born intersexed, or hermaphroditic.

People join the hijra community in many ways. Babies born with indeterminate genitalia (about 1 in 150,000 babies worldwide) are given away by their families to hijra communities. Others who feel like women trapped in men's bodies often join the hijra community at a later age, seeing it as the only space where they can freely express their gender preference. At this point, they are asked to dress and live like a woman for two years before they undergo "transition" or castration. Hijras publicly dress, act, and, therefore, appear as women, and most desire men. Most hijras live in complex familial and patronage-based "families" where loyalty to one's guru is absolute and critical for survival.

Hijras see their roots in many Indian myths, both Hindu and Muslim. In the South, they call themselves Aravanis after Aravan, a warrior in the *Mahabharata* who was to die in battle but not to do so while still unmarried. Seeing his plight, Krishna took the form of a woman and spent a marital night with Aravan before becoming a widow the next day. At Koovagam, the annual Aravani festival, this mythical marriage is recreated in celebration of the gender transformation of Krishna, and his finding of a husband. Each part of the country claims a similar legend that provides the hijras with a foundation for their belief that their gender transgressions are actually journeys on well worn and blessed paths.

The contemporary reality of hijras, however, is far from blessed. Acknowledgment in historical tradition is a far cry from acceptance. Hijras are almost uniformly poor, mostly due to their extreme political and economic marginalization. They rarely have any official identification since government officials refuse to issue passports or the equivalent of food stamps without writing "male" or "female" in the gender columns. Hijras themselves are divided be-

tween wanting to be termed "female" and having a separate identity as a "third sex." Employers are loath to hire them, leaving most hijras to make a living either by resorting to sex work, dancing at weddings or on auspicious occasions like the birth of a child, or asking for money on trains and in city streets.

Yet hijras are by no means merely passive victims. Recently, several hijras have stood for and won local government elections in various Indian states. Others have started support groups and employment generation programs for other hijras. Hijra activists have come to speak for the community, both to the larger LGBT community in India and to society at large, and are articulating their views from positions of strength. Though the community has a long way to go, it is finally beginning to take on the world on its own terms. ■

For more on hijras, Gayatri Reddy's recent book *With Respect to Sex* is a great place to start. For organizations that work with hijras, see: www.sangama.org

Gautam Bhan is a gay rights activist and writer based in New Delhi.



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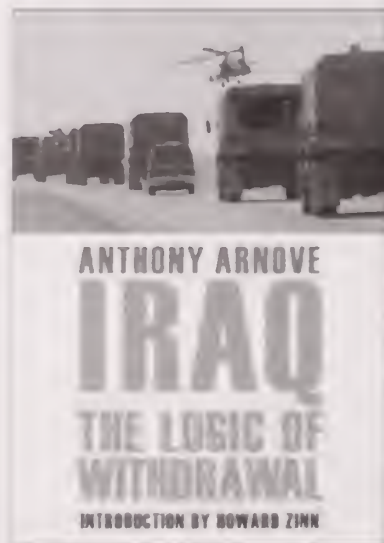
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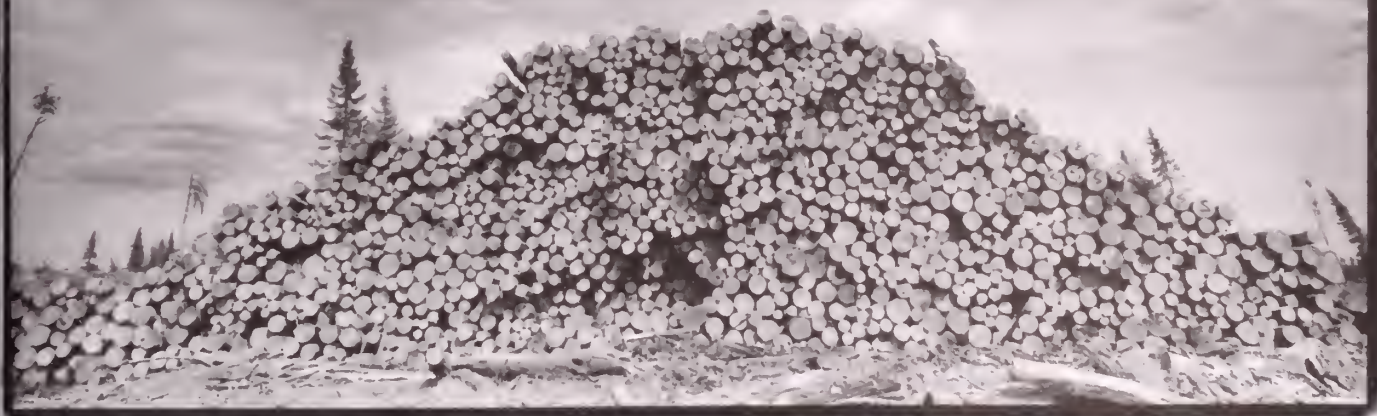


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Women-Led Resistance in the Boreal Forest



Grassy Narrows, Ontario. Currently the longest standing blockade in Canadian history. Initiated on December 3, 2002, to stop the clear cutting of the surrounding forests by the world's largest manufacturer of newsprint, Abitibi Consolidated.

On a given day Judy Da Silva can be found homeschooling her five children, organizing women's gatherings or traditional powwows, educating youth about their rights as First Nations people, taking complicit Canadian government officials to task, blocking logging trucks from entering Grassy Narrows traditional territory, or taking on some of the world's biggest multinational corporations.

Although Judy is extraordinary, she is not unusual. Throughout Canada's vast Boreal forest — which stretches from Alaska to the Atlantic Ocean and is home to 25 percent of the world's remaining ancient forest, 600 First Nations communities, and over one million indigenous people — there is a growing movement of Native women and youth actively resisting corporate and Canadian state control, seeking to re-take control of their futures, and defending the Boreal forests on which they depend.

Judy Da Silva is a key organizer in her remote indigenous community of Grassy Narrows in Northern Ontario. Weyerhaeuser, the world's largest lumber company, and Abitibi Consolidated, the world's largest producer of newsprint, have been logging huge areas within Grassy Narrows's traditional territory, devastating the local economy and the support systems on which local indigenous people have depended for thousands of years. Judy has been a powerful force in leading and sustaining a logging blockade which has turned Grassy Narrows into a rallying point and inspiration for First Nations and ecological justice seekers across the Boreal, throughout North America, and beyond. Through her broad and holistic work, Judy is setting the foundations and building the capacity for the revival of her people and for the active defense of the forests that sustain them.

The Problem

Since time immemorial, the indigenous people of Grassy Narrows (*Anishnaabe*) have lived on the English River system and sustained themselves physically, culturally, spiritually, and economically on their Traditional Land Use Area (TLA) in the Boreal forest. Beginning in the 1850s, large numbers of settlers began arriving in the area. From those days on, a long trail of broken promises, negligence, and deliberate deception has led to the current situation. Decades of successive land use and policy decisions have ignored the rights and interests of the *Anishnaabe*, degrading a once thriving ecosystem, undermining the economy, and tearing the fabric of a vibrant society.

TEXT

Brianna Cayo Cotter

PHOTO

Jon Schledewitz - kickittilitbreaks.com

continued next page

For decades the children of Grassy Narrows were forcibly taken from their families by the government of Canada and raised in church-run residential schools. In the 1950s a dam on the English River system caused sporadic fluctuations in water levels that ruined harvesting sites for wild rice — a key local staple. In the 1960s the community was relocated by the Canadian government and resettled in a location with permanent road access. In the 1970s it was officially revealed that the local fisheries contained dangerous levels of mercury from the effluent of a paper mill upstream. This meant the loss of another basic food staple, and a cornerstone of the local economy. The community was left to deal with the cumulative impacts of displacement, loss of traditional economy, unemployment and the associated social problems, racism, and a mysterious new ailment called Minimata Disease: mercury poisoning.

Most recently, in the 1990s, Weyerhaeuser wood supplier Abitibi Consolidated dramatically increased logging in the Grassy Narrows TLA. Using highly mechanized industrial techniques, Abitibi creates massive clearcuts virtually overnight, leaving nothing standing. The largest of these clearcuts currently planned is 62 times the size of New York's Central Park. These clearcuts destroy trap lines, eliminate berry and medicine patches, damage delicate soils, and disrupt wildlife populations and game animals. Rather than allowing natural regeneration, Abitibi scarifies the land, aerially sprays herbicides, and re-plants monoculture tree plantations. They have severely damaged the ecological life support systems that the Grassy Narrows *Anishnaabe* depend on.

Until 2002, this industrial extraction was continuing in spite of the strong objections of the Grassy Narrows *Anishnaabe*. It represents the latest of many attacks on the rights of the *Anishnaabe* to self-determination, spiritual and cultural practice, economic self-sufficiency, and even basic sustenance in their Boreal home.

While the impact of logging is often understood in ecological terms, to the *Anishnaabe* environmental issues cannot be separated from the social crises they generate or from the political-economic framework which generates them. The forests, waters, and air are connected intimately

and personally with the health, sustenance, economy, and autonomy of the *Anishnaabe*. Here ecology and society are not simply linked; they are inseparable.

Women-Led Resistance

Over the past decade Judy Da Silva has worked tirelessly to confront these many problems in the most organic and holistic manner possible. In the past three years her efforts have led to dramatic results and widespread impact. She has used a remarkable balance of education, skill sharing, role modeling, mentorship, motherhood, sisterhood, and direct action. Judy is setting the foundations and building the capacity for the revival of her people's culture, spirituality, economy, and sovereignty.

In 1999 Judy Da Silva began organizing multi-day gatherings of her community, their neighbors, and supporters. Since then she has hosted a number of gatherings, including annual environmental youth gatherings, women's gatherings, community gatherings, and traditional powwows. These gatherings bring together like-minded people to share time, network, discuss problems, strategize, and make plans for action. They unite communities and help people find support, understanding, and strength. Additionally, they serve as an opportunity for learning about the environment, teaching traditional ways and knowledge, envisioning positive alternatives, and preparing to make them realities.

As divisions arose in the community between people who believed the multi-nationals were good for their future and people who believed in their sovereign rights to maintain their traditional territories, Judy recognized the need to provide some awareness and education geared toward the women in the community because of their role as first teachers. Throughout history women were among the decision makers in Grassy Narrows but today, because of colonization, *Anishnaabe* women are on the bottom rungs of social, political, and economic issues.

The women's gatherings were created so that Grassy Narrows aunts, mothers, grandmothers, and sisters could uniquely address issues of traditional

Haida Gwaii Victory in British Columbia

In April 2005, through a community action called "Islands Spirit Rising," the Haida Nation seized \$50 million worth of cedar logs and set up road blocks that completely shut down Weyerhaeuser's logging operations on Haida Gwaii (a.k.a. Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia) for a month. The Haida Nation, with broad local and international support, demanded Weyerhaeuser and the B.C. government respect the Haida people's right to determine their own future and control the resources on their island.

In recent years Weyerhaeuser clear-cut much of the island's ancient cedar forestland, a fountainhead of Haida culture and economy. In a devastating blow to the local economy, the company shipped the cedars — many over 700 years old — off the island as raw logs, eliminating local benefit from processing and manufacturing.

Haida statements maintained that "When law, diplomacy, and negotiations fail, it is time to stand and accept our responsibilities . . . The signs on the road say it all — Enough is Enough!"

"Weyerhaeuser has shown no respect for the land, the culture, or the people who have worked for them . . . Now the company is poised to sell its interests and in its final hours is attempting to strip all that it can from this land. The opportunity to design a future that maintains the land and culture while providing for a sustainable economy is in our hands. The next generation will not have the same chance if the forest industry is allowed to strip our lands in the next few years."

On April 22, the Haida came to a landmark agreement with the B.C. government that set aside areas identified in the Haida Land Use Vi-

sion to be "protected for cultural and ecological purposes." The government agreed to a new approach to land-use planning that "connects land and resources to community viability, with the intent to design a sustainable Island economy." Future logging would be "done in a manner that takes into account Haida interests and is culturally, ecologically and economically sustainable."

The Haida are not resting. The community is pushing to ensure that the B.C. government's commitments are implemented and that the community is ultimately granted full title over its lands. The Haida recently filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court of Canada for the right to co-govern the island with the B.C. government.

Follow up at www.haidanation.ca.

-Branna Cayo Cotter

Judy Da Silva is setting the foundations and building the capacity for the revival of her people's culture, spirituality, economy, and sovereignty.

land and treaty rights, actively take part in decision making for their children's futures, and elevate indigenous women's ancient and often-forgotten role as nation builders.

The goals and objectives of the women's gatherings are to:

1. *Unite indigenous women of Grassy Narrows to work together on finding effective solutions and remedies to the oppressive and often disastrous decisions made on behalf of their children;*
2. *Serve as a collective voice and provide voice and advocacy to the issues around women and our children's futures;*
3. *Promote opportunities for women to share their experiences so we can meet their social, economic, political, spiritual, social, and cultural needs;*
4. *Promote awareness of the roles and responsibilities of our traditional positions as Anishnaabe within our nations and regions, both nationally and internationally; and,*
5. *Provide support and network among other women of our Nationhood.*

Anishnaabe women are now working to better develop a community-based traditional women's council and actively achieve women's participation in decision making as well as to mentor and establish leadership programs with young Grassy Narrows women and have them fully participate in governance and decision making.

In December 2002, inspired by Judy's mentorship and prepared by these different gatherings, youth from Grassy Narrows lay down on the main logging road and stopped Abitibi's trucks from logging near their community. To this day, no logging trucks can use that road. With Judy's leadership, this action developed into a permanent blockade that is officially supported by the community's Band Council — a rare cooperation between community activists and local governance. Judy has been a key force in sustaining and popularizing the blockade. In addition to providing motivation and strategic guidance, Judy coordinated development of the blockade site into a small year-round eco-village complete with log cabins, a traditional roundhouse, powwow grounds, solar panels, and composting toilets. In 2003, the community high school moved their classes to portables on the blockade site, both contributing to the blockade and recognizing its importance as an educational experience.

Judy has also worked tirelessly to spread the word of the blockade and build the base of supporters. She has organized multiple speaking tours, press conferences, public protests, and marches to highlight the environmental issues that affect her community and others. Consequently, a broad range of First Nations, environmental NGOs, grassroots environmentalists, anti-poverty organizations, religious groups, and human rights activists stand behind the Grassy Narrows blockade.

Beyond the blockade, Judy also works to strengthen her community. In 2003 she organized a scientific study of contaminants found in wild meats to educate her community on the risks they face and to provide solid information on which traditional food sources are safe to eat. With her husband, Judy has promoted and developed a selective horse-logging pilot project since 2004 that, coupled with the community's new log house building lathe, aims to provide ecologically sensitive economic opportunities for her community. She provides constant support, advice, leadership, mentorship, and role modeling to the youth and young mothers of her community. In her uniquely quiet but

strong way, Judy consistently teaches and personifies the values of respect for the Earth and all peoples.

This is extremely important work in a community that faces serious social and ecological problems that are typical of the legacy imposed by recent colonial history on Native communities in Canada. It is this unique synergy of healing, education, capacity building, and leadership in action through which Judy builds the strength of her community and which allows the people of Grassy Narrows to boldly challenge the status quo of environmental destruction and dispossession.

The Movement Spreads

These issues are not unique to Grassy Narrows, but rather they are representative of the intertwined social and environmental problems that have been and continue to be imposed on Native communities across Canada's vast Boreal forest. What is unique is the inspiring stand the community of Grassy Narrows has taken in defense of the land, their rights, and their children's futures. This accomplishment is significant on an international level because it acts as an inspiration and a hopeful example for redefining the status quo of environmentally and socially destructive industrial resource extraction in the Boreal forest — the largest remaining intact forest ecosystem in North America.

Increasingly, environmentalists are turning their attention to the once obscure and imminently threatened Boreal forest that represents 25 percent of the world's remaining ancient forests. This area is home to hundreds of indigenous communities and intact populations of wolves, lynx, woodland caribou, wolverine, and bears. It also provides habitat for nearly 50 percent of all bird species found in North America. As the world's largest terrestrial carbon reserve, the intact Boreal forest plays a key role in global climate control, mitigating the effects of global warming. The industrial liquidation of the Boreal forest has a very tangible international face. Abitibi sells newsprint to newspaper publishers around the world including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the Knight Ridder newspaper chain. Trus Joist, a wholly owned subsidiary of Seattle based Weyerhaeuser, is the single largest destination for trees logged from the Grassy Narrows TLA. Trus Joist Timberstrand products are marketed across Canada and the U.S. as "green" building products and are used in housing developments in our communities.

Judy Da Silva and Grassy Narrows are leading the way in the fight to protect this ecological and cultural treasure for future generations. In April 2005 the women of Saugeen and Mishkeegogamang Boreal First Nations initiated a blockade on their traditional territory; they credit Grassy Narrows with inspiring their actions. Judy is a quiet powerhouse and leader of this growing movement of Native women and youth seeking to re-take control of their futures and to defend the Boreal forests — the basis of their culture, spirituality, and economy.

In the coming years the pressing issues of the Boreal forest and its inhabitants will become increasingly prominent in the public eye. Judy and her work will increasingly stand as a beacon of courage, vision, and hope for environmental justice. Judy's work represents perhaps the greatest chance of a sustainable and just future for the Boreal forest and its peoples. ■

For more information and to find out how you can support Grassy Narrows, go to FreeGrassy.org.

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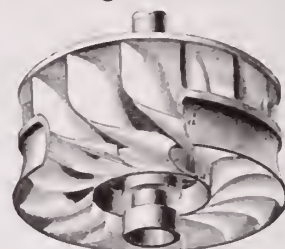
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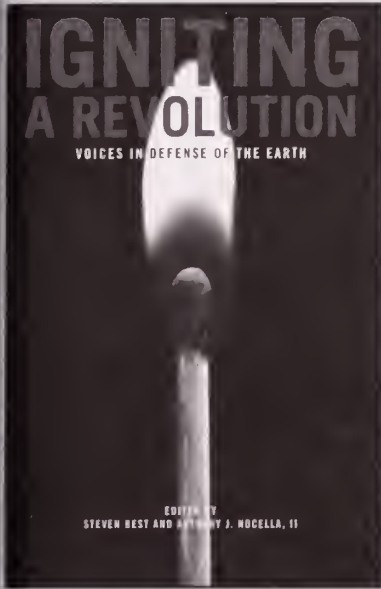
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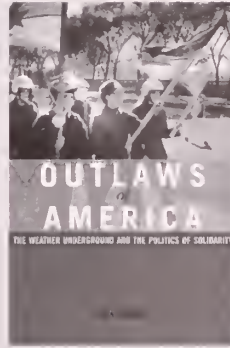
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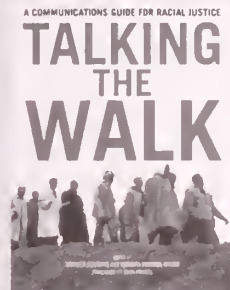
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TEXT & PHOTOS
Themba Lewis

where's the UN when
Sudanese refugees
need it most?

STREETS

The prospect of return for many refugees is an unfathomable fate: many would sooner commit suicide (and do). In fact, under international law, the act of refoulement — returning a refugee to the country from which they have fled — is not only a violation of the 1985 Convention Against Torture, but a breach of the most fundamental tenet of refugee law.

From a balcony high above Mustapha Mahmoud Park, a resident of Cairo's busy Mohandiseen district frantically searched for his video camera to document the scene below. Egyptian riot police had surrounded a small park and threatened thousands of demonstrating Sudanese asylum-seekers and refugees with forcible removal if they did not voluntarily board waiting buses for detention. What the amateur videographer saw that night became, the next morning, the biggest news story in the world. That night, December 30th, 2005, the brutal police attack on the demonstrators resulted in injuries and at least 27 deaths.

Scenes of bloodied Sudanese made the front page spread of the New York Times, and CNN, the BBC, and al-Jazeera all covered the event live. Largely unreported are the stories of why the refugees were there, and the responsibility of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the agency created to provide protection and assistance to refugees worldwide, and its donor countries, including the United States, Australia, and Britain.

For many refugees, flight from persecution is only the beginning of a long struggle for the reclamation of basic rights and dignity. In Cairo, that struggle has been complicated by UNHCR's ineffectual role in 'integrating' refugees into a society that is unwelcoming and sometimes downright hostile. While the issue of racism is a contentious one in Egypt, police programs, like 2003's "Operation Track Down Blacks" that rounded up hundreds of people for interrogation in the Cairo suburb of Ma'adi, expose a particularly menacing underside to the predominantly black-African refugee experience in Egypt.

During the Cairo demonstration nearly 2,500 refugees moved all of their worldly belongings into a small central park, where many lived for three months. After the violent break-up, these belongings remained, scattered along the sidewalks.

Because the ultimate authority for dealing with refugees lies with the host country, UNHCR's work in a place like Egypt is hard. The Egyptian government maintains a significantly anti-integration refugee policy that makes education, employment, and healthcare all but inaccessible. Coupled with many refugees' frustration with livelihood obstacles in Egypt and their wish to be resettled elsewhere - an option available to only a tiny fraction of refugees - the task of UNHCR is gargantuan.

Refugees must routinely wait months and years for the interview that determines their access to protection and assistance, and even then are often rejected without explanation. Appeals are possible but rarely contradict UNHCR's original determination. Those who do succeed in gaining official refugee status often receive nothing more than the bare minimum of assistance, and how well they are protected depends on the host country's policy.

Since its inception, UNHCR has pursued three durable solutions to refugee situations: repatriation (return to the country from which they fled),

resettlement in a third country, and local integration. Repatriation, UNHCR's preferred solution, is a violation of international law unless done completely voluntarily, because it contradicts the fundamental premise of seeking refuge, indicating that a person is no longer in need of protection. Resettlement is a prized achievement for many of Africa's refugees who dream of better lives in Europe or North America. However, it is limited by strict and meager quotas, subject to the whim of local political climates and international relations. Ultimately, the third solution of local integration determines the social and geographic fate of many refugees, including most refugees in Cairo. However, UNHCR's ability to successfully enable local integration in Cairo is restricted.

Without enough donor funding or resettlement spots to relieve the pressure of huge numbers of refugees, UNHCR depends on transit countries with limited resources, like Egypt, to shelter refugees. And so in Cairo, faced with contradictory bureaucracies, strained resources, discrimination, practically non-existent protection, and little chance of resettlement, a group of Sudanese refu-

gees began to demand reform by sitting quietly in a park.



Mustapha Mahmoud Park is little more than a large grassy median in the midst of traffic, surrounded by a short iron fence, opposite one of Cairo's most frequented mosques. The refugees chose the spot strategically. Not only was it logistically viable - with access to water and bathrooms at the mosque — but it was only yards from the front door of UNHCR's regional offices, and unavoidable to Cairo commuters. The protest's start date, September 29th, was also significant; many refugees were losing whatever seasonal employment they could find, the hot summer sun was beginning to cool, and it was just days before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, a time characterized by massive mosque attendance and a generous and hospitable spirit; a time to consider the less-advantaged.

Within days, banners were hung around the park calling for international attention, accusing UN-

Photographs left at the park after the eviction. The protest ultimately left the Sudanese refugees in Cairo facing more dire circumstances as many now live in fear of increased harassment and detention.



HCR of mismanagement, and commemorating the deaths and disappearances of refugees in Egypt. A makeshift kitchen, a hospital, complete with IVs and medications, and organizing committees — media, security, hospitality — were created. The park's population increased more than ten-fold within a week as refugees arrived from all over Egypt. Fed up with living in inhospitable limbo, they brought all their possessions — blankets, suitcases — in hopes that this protest would lead to change, or maybe a better life somewhere else. "What if the UNHCR doesn't respond to your requests?" I asked one of the organizers, a few weeks into the protest. He looked at and said, "We will wait here, we will die here." UNHCR responded by claiming no responsibility for anything that might happen to the protesters.



"We arrived in Mohandiseen at 2 am," Nour Khalid, a fifteen-year-old from south Sudan recalled. "The first thing I saw was a huge number of police standing everywhere near the garden. They were wearing black and holding rods and shields. Some were sitting in front of the garden but they stood up when they saw us coming. They told us no one is allowed inside. I saw other Sudanese people in the same situation, unable to get inside. One of them was crying because his kids were inside the garden."

Nour is an asylum-seeker in Cairo. She fled the war in south Sudan with her family three years ago, traveling to Khartoum on borrowed money and few supplies. With her mother and two brothers, she found her way from Khartoum onto a 1957 Hungarian passenger freight for the notoriously exhausting three day journey through the open desert across the Egyptian border, tracing the Nile to Cairo. For the past three months they had been sleeping in shifts alongside the 2000 other Sudanese asylum-seekers in Cairo's Mustapha Mahmoud Park to protest the UNHCR and their dismal experience as refugees in Egypt.

The night the riot police cleared the park, Nour and her family had returned to a shared flat on the outskirts of Egypt's sprawling capital to do laundry and get some supplies before returning to the protest. While there, the phone call came: "something is happening, maybe traveling." To Cairo's 20,000 strong Sudanese refugee population, traveling is a loaded word, used to signify forced deportation and return to Sudan.

The prospect of return is an unfathomable fate for many refugees; some would sooner commit suicide (and do). In fact, under international law, the act of refoulement — returning a refugee to the country from which they have fled — is not only a violation of the 1985 Convention Against Torture, but a breach of the most fundamental tenet of refugee law.

The international definition of refugee was created in Geneva in 1951, a time when the protection of refugees was politically and morally validating; the definition applied to Europeans displaced by World War II. As refugee crises shifted to the global South in the following decades, official terminology changed to eliminate date and geographic restrictions, but the global North's commitment to house and protect changed as well. Refugees were no longer considered heroes to be welcomed, but burdens to be shouldered, or kept out altogether. Politicians used anti-immigrant and xenophobic appeals to gain political support, and popularized the image of the invading foreigner, leaching from the system and stealing jobs. UNHCR, at the will of donor countries, has reflected these political trends, and so refugees fleeing to Australia and the global North are increasingly left stranded in resource-strained transit countries like Egypt, Libya, Indonesia, and Morocco.

In the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, UNHCR the camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo became de facto militarized zones and recruiting centers for killing raids back into Rwanda by the Hutu perpetrators of the genocide. The realities on the ground overrode the political imagery of international humanitarian action, and ultimately, the Rwandan army closed the camps by force, opening the debate about the effectiveness and motivations of the world's refugee assistance body.



"Look around," Yasser said one day in October while we were walking through the park. "We're a map of Sudan. We're here from the South, the North, Darfur . . . We are Christians and Muslims but we pray together." It was Ramadan at the time and Yasser was proud of the fact that so many non-Muslims were waiting to eat until sundown, to break the fast together, alongside their Muslim counterparts. "Those people," he slowly swung his arm towards the crowd, spread out on patchwork blankets and tarps, tilting his hand up ever

so slightly, "they are victims of peace when in the past they were victims of war."

As a result of a ceasefire and peace treaty in south Sudan, UNHCR Cairo ended refugee interviews for all Sudanese in 2004, anticipating that stability would soon come to their homeland; instead, they began to promote voluntary repatriation for Sudanese like Nour. Yet the UN's own news network for Africa reported that the south was 'not ready' for any such return, and refugees continued to flee northward. In Egypt, however, they faced a future on hold: no way forward, without the possibility of resettlement, and no way back, their country crippled by landmines and continuous fighting. As Yasser told one UNHCR official during a protest negotiation meeting: "Go ask the new arrivals if the south is safe!"

The refusal to accept voluntary repatriation was the first of thirteen requests made by the protesters to UNHCR. Other requests called for extra protection for the elderly, women, children; refusal of arbitrary detention; protection from Sudanese government personnel, the re-opening of closed files, a rejection of living under discrimination, and most controversially, a rejection of local integration. The obvious solution to their underlying complaints was resettlement.

UNHCR remained dismissive, claiming that the demonstrators were economic migrants feigning the role of refugees to sneak into the West, an attitude parroted by the media. Had the organization gone to the park and done a simple survey, as one local graduate student did, they would have found that the overwhelming majority of demonstrators, more than 75 percent, held UNHCR refugee identification cards.



During the protest's three months, Egyptian police had maintained a friendly relationship with the protesters, who felt, for the first time in Egypt, that the police were protecting them. When, on December 29th, police attributed their swelling numbers to a phony political rally at the nearby mosque, few demonstrators suspected anything. But just after midnight, 5,000 riot police in padded vests and metal helmets surrounded the park five rows deep, and journalists' cell phones started to ring.

As a photojournalist told me the next morning, "by 2 am everyone knew something was going on."

The prospect of return for many refugees is an unfathomable fate; many would sooner commit suicide (and do). In fact, under international law, the act of refoulement — returning a refugee to the country from which they have fled — is not only a violation of the 1985 Convention Against Torture, but a breach of the most fundamental tenet of refugee law.

The protesters were told to board busses to be taken to camps with clean water and food. The response was overwhelmingly one of skepticism. "Let us send five people to check out the camps and report back to us," the demonstrators suggested. There was no time, an officer responded. "Then let a UNHCR representative go and report back," the demonstrators asked. Again the police refused, and announced over the megaphone: "You have five minutes to leave the park."

Moments later multiple water cannons drenched the crowd. Mothers hid their children under tarps, and the elderly were shuttled to the park's central tree. The riot police started marching in place, chanting "Egypt, we would die for you."

At 4:30am two officials from the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement entered the park to negotiate at the behest of the Egyptian authorities. The protesters refused to leave for the camps until given guarantees about their destination. "This is your last chance," came the final warning over the megaphone, "to get on the busses." The protesters huddled together. Two minutes later, the police shut off all the streetlights and entered the park from all sides, batons raised.

Nour and her mother were on the outside. "I heard the Sudanese people screaming inside and they were saying 'Allahu Akbar.' I saw some praying inside the garden. Then the Egyptian police attacked the Sudanese people inside the garden and they beat them savagely. I was so scared and I cried really hard. The people who were standing with us cried also." Within an hour the park was clear. All that remained were the blankets and suitcases full of belongings. By morning the eerie silence was broken only by the morning call to prayer and scratching of harsh brooms sweeping pools of blood from the wet pavement.

Early official reports claimed that 12 people died, and that the protesters had provoked the violence. However, human rights lawyers recorded at least 27 bodies, and protesters compiled a list of 53 dead. In total, 2,174 Sudanese, many unconscious, bleeding, and close to death, were bussed to horrendous detention facilities. One boy collapsed and died of exhaustion, only to be yanked out from his mother's arms by officers. Another demonstrator hanged himself. Over the following weeks, the detainees were slowly released to random parts of Cairo, separated from their families and belongings. In prison, the feared Sudanese government had registered all of their names.



The Egyptian government never released autopsy reports, and refused to allow relatives to transport bodies to Sudan for burial. What is surprising about the Egyptian government is that they did not raid the refugee protest sooner. Protest with-

out a permit is illegal in Egypt. Over the course of the demonstration, Egyptian police broke up many other protests, one only a few yards from the park. Such a long sit-in is unparalleled in Egypt, and is indicative of the increasingly tenuous relationship between UNHCR and host countries with many refugees and few resources.

Like most transit countries, Egypt views refugees as a temporary phenomenon, in need of short-term shelter until their home countries return to normal. Little effort is made to integrate refugees through education, employment, or medical services. Similarly, refugees consider their situation to be temporary, until they find resettlement through UNHCR or, sometimes, smugglers. Resettlement countries have strict quotas for receiving refugees, and only accept refugees through UNHCR. Ultimately, this quandary forces UNHCR to promote local integration, a solution that neither refugees nor their transit countries want.

Policy debates about refugee issues occur at the highest levels of government, out of reach of refugees themselves. However, Sudanese in Cairo, like Ivorians and Sierra Leonians in the north of Morocco, Bhutanese in Nepal, and Somalis in Yemen, are demanding entrance into the dialogues that determine their futures.

However, a top-down mentality pervades UNHCR and its donors: a refugee is expected to say only "thank you." UNHCR donor and resettlement countries that criticized the protest's brutal end, like the United States, Australia, and Britain, need to also reconsider their UNHCR donations and resettlement policies, which could result in tremendous positive change.

In Cairo, nothing has changed for the refugees except increased resentment and desperation. "You will be aggressive against the community that degrades you. If you are oppressed by someone, this oppression stays inside and if it is released there will be an explosion," Yasser said to me. He is worried about the future, terrified of being arrested by Egyptian authorities, but found a sense of worth in the protest. "But just listening is a psychological treatment. Listening to our voice, this protest." ❏

Themba Lewis is a printer/designer and freelance writer who spends most of his time trying to keep the desert out of his Cairo apartment. He can be reached by email at mt_pleasant@hotmail.com or through his website www.mtleasantpress.com

Local and regional media placed blame squarely on the protesters after the death of nearly thirty Sudanese refugees at the hands of Egyptian riot police.





dismantling pillars of power with Scott Parkin



PEOPLE POWER

In 2005, Scott Parkin was detained and then deported from Australia for organizing against the war. Among other things, Scott advocates a “people power” strategy, used by anti-war activists and others as a way to break down complex issues into more manageable pieces. A people power analysis of the Iraq War, for example, identifies pillars — things that the government and corporations need for the war to continue, like soldiers, weapons, or public support. Once those pillars are identified, groups can strategize about how to dismantle individual pillars, like using counter-recruitment actions and education to reduce the number of enlistments.

TEXT

Jen Angel

ILLUSTRATION

Brandon Bauer = brandonartwork.com

Clamor spoke with Scott in early 2006.

You and I met because of your experiences in Australia - but before that, you were doing organizing and anti-war activism in the U.S. Tell me a little about the work that you were doing in Texas.

I lived in Houston for nine years, the last five of which I got involved in struggles around global justice, the environment, and the war in Iraq. I co-founded a grassroots direct action popular education group called Houston Global Awareness. We began in the summer of 2001 organizing for the IMF/World Bank meetings that were scheduled for that September, but were cancelled in the wake of 9/11. After 9/11, the group really took off as we organized many teach-ins, skillshares and protests around the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Enron, Starbucks, Exxon, Central American Free Trade and numerous other issues.

As the U.S. prepared to invade Iraq in 2002 and 2003, we began protests and street theater outside the headquarters of KBR, a subsidiary of war profiteer Halliburton, in downtown Houston. By the spring of 2004, we partnered with Global Exchange and Corpwatc on a more strategic campaign, including turning the traditionally low key Halliburton shareholders meeting into a mass 500-person protest with street theater, a 200-

continued next page

foot-high inflatable pig, rolling blockades outside the meeting, and five people locking down inside the meeting pouring fake blood all over themselves. The campaign carried on from there.

In the spring of 2005, we began counter-corporate recruiting outside Halliburton's job fairs, picketing and flyering potential employees about what they faced if sent to Iraq. We also organized another protest at their 2005 shareholders meeting. Sixteen people were arrested inside and outside the hotel. The campaign merged anti-war sentiment with a corporate power analysis that has so put Halliburton on the defensive that they relocated their 2006 shareholders meeting to the small rural town of Duncan, Oklahoma.

Why did you go to Australia, and what kind of work did you do when you were there? How did you become involved with local activists?

In June 2005, I arrived in Australia and spent three lovely months surfing, camping, hiking, backpacking and traveling. I also spent some of that time networking and organizing with local environmental and peace communities in Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne. I gave talks and workshops on the American anti-war movement, the campaign against war profiteer Halliburton, people power organizing strategies, and non-violent direct action.

I spent a week at a Climate Action camp, sponsored by Greenpeace, and gave trainings on strategic organizing and media to over 60 activists from all over Australia and Fiji. During the last days of August 2005, I worked with student and autonomous activists at Sydney protests against American businessman Steve Forbes's Global CEO conference. During those protests I organized some "tongue in cheek" street theater at the Sydney offices of Halliburton with a group of friends dubbed the "Coalition of the Billing." We modeled the protest on the American street theater group Billionaires for Bush. During this event, the large group of New South Wales police that kept watch of us found our antics quite amusing.

Why do you think that you were targeted as an organizer? Were any Australians targeted as well?

First and foremost, I was an easy target. I traveled there on a tourist visa and it was very easy for them to "cancel" it and remove me at their leisure. But, in a larger sense, I think I made them nervous as I spoke to groups of activists about the Iraq war and Halliburton profiting from it. Halliburton is all over Australia. They have built transportation systems all over that country. They recruit heavily out of Australian military and law enforcement for their security operations in Iraq.

I also made them nervous because I taught non-violence techniques. Teaching people how to make their voices heard in more effective ways always scares authorities.

As far as I know, no Australians were targeted in the same way. I do suspect they heavily surveilled some of the groups I worked with during the Forbes protests. But in 2000, my friend, fellow nonviolent activist and U.S. citizen

Doyle Canning, organized with Australian activists in the months leading up to the World Economic Forum protests in Melbourne. In August of 2000, before the protests, she needed to return to America for personal reasons. Upon applying for an extension visa, the Department of Immigration (DIMIA) detained her for a few hours and then let her leave the country voluntarily. When she tried to return a year later, DIMIA informed her that ASIO had assessed her to be a direct or indirect threat to national security. Upon her terminal appeal to then Minister of Immigration Phillip Ruddock (now the Attorney General, who oversaw my detention), Doyle was permanently banned from the country.

Even worse, the Australian Dept of Immigration regularly detains migrants from the Global South for years for reasons based on their skin color, religion, or immigration status.

You and I have talked about "the battle of the story." Can you explain what this is, and give an example?

Our media-saturated society is based on ideas, images, stories, and symbols that maintain the status quo. Support for an illegal war in Iraq, logging in the Boreal forests of Canada, or poverty in the streets of cities all over world all are out of step with the common sense values of most people, yet they continue because powerful governments and corporations spend more time and energy shaping popular opinion than actually solving any problem. My friends in the *smartMeme* Training and Strategy Project, a social change strategy and cultural analysis group, call this "**the battle of the story.**" Power holders and activists engage in a battle of the story to tell competing interpretations of events.

A great example of this is Gold Star Families for Peace co-founder and anti-war mom Cindy Sheehan. She really exposed the contradictions of what the Bush administration has been saying to us for the past three years about the war in Iraq. By holding vigil outside of Bush's Crawford Ranch she really defined where the country was at in their feelings about the war. Her face became the anti-war movement and it was quite a compelling story.

One of the main reasons I wanted you to talk about what a "people power" strategy is — and how your work fits into this larger structure. Can you talk about how this is being used as a strategy for the anti-war movement?

Throughout history, social movements around the world have utilized a people power strategy to assert real democracy. From the overthrow of dictatorships in the Philippines, South Africa, Eastern Europe and Serbia to grassroots anti-corporate movements against Bechtel in Bolivia and Taco Bell in the United States, people power movements have successfully identified systemic flaws and brought about social change outside the normal channels.

Author George Lakey describes it in a metaphor he learned from the civil rights movement. If you view society as a house, then the foundation is the cooperation and compliance of the people and the roof is the repressive apparatus of the state. What happens if the foundation is destabilized and ultimately removed? Furthermore, what happens to "the roof" if the repressive

Support for an illegal war in Iraq, logging in the Boreal forests of Canada, or poverty in the streets of cities all over world all are out of step with the common sense values of most people, yet they continue because powerful governments and corporations spend more time and energy shaping popular opinion than actually solving any problem.

apparatus grows with materials such as guns and tanks? He further states that this is not the sort of analysis you learn from any official channel. The power holders don't want people to realize that the real power resides in their hands and only with our compliance. Therefore, as activists we need to convey a systemic analysis which identifies the "pillars" of support for the corporations and the government that loves them.

During the build up to the Iraq war, there were clear attempts to stop the war around the globe using a mixture of people power strategy, direct action tactics, and mass protest. In Ireland, activists putting their bodies on the line successfully stopped American military planes from using the Shannon airport as a refueling station. Throughout Western Europe, grassroots anti-war activists blockaded ship and train shipments of American equipment going to Iraq. In Turkey, mass protests against the war led to the Turkish legislature to bar American military aircraft from using their airbases and airspace for the strike against Iraq. In San Francisco, Direct Action to Stop the War (DASW) organized a unified diverse coalition and shut down the city's financial district the day the war started, [resulting in] economic, social and political costs on the business sector profiting from the war.

Now as the war and occupation is entering its third year, the anti-war movement has shifted to a more long term people power strategy working to undermine the pillars of military recruitment, war profiteering, and media propaganda. This has led to a serious logistical and political crisis for the Bush administration and the US military.

I currently work with some friends in a collective called Popular Education Action CollectivE (P.E.A.C.e.) that trains folks on people power strategy. We cannot simply end the wars by doing trainings — but we can support grassroots campaign building and movement building by popularizing much-needed strategy skills, thinking, and discussion and creating a culture of strategy.

How do you feel your case has been covered in the media — both in Australia and here in the U.S., by mainstream and independent media? I know that I didn't hear a lot about it from many sources here. Was it covered better in Australia?

My detention put an enormous amount of pressure on the Australian government and they went into full media spin mode. The government had no evidence of any kind to charge me with a crime, so they created a web of stories and ideas to marginalize me and limit the negative impact of their behavior in the public eye. Attorney General Phillip Ruddock and others began stating that I had "participated in political violence," "incited political violence," and "incited spirited protest." Prime Minister John Howard, members the Liberal party and the opposition Labour party defended the government's actions by stating they had been privy to the assessment of my case but could not reveal its content on national security grounds (a classic power maneuver — "I can't tell you for your own good"). None of which could be validated in any official capacity. Similar to the American media, the Australian media took a sensationalistic tone in reporting the back and forth between governmental officials and my supporters and failed to get at any substantive issues surrounding the denial of my civil liberties by the Howard government.

To add insult to injury, after my return home, *The Australian* — a conservative Rupert Murdoch owned newspaper — published a story stating I had taught protesters to roll marbles under police horse hooves and how to surround police officers during marches. The two establishment propagandists posing as journalists who wrote the story depicted me in a very unfavorable light yet failed to mention who told them. Anonymous sources within the government obviously passed the untrue and misleading information along to them trying to cover their bungling of my detention and removal. The story in *The Australian* showed the desperation in the government's argument that I posed any sort of threat to Australian national security.



Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock was confronted by Scott's supporters at a speaking engagement. Photo by Anthony Bruzzese.

What's the status of the case now?

I currently am suing the Australian Security Intelligence Organization to open up the assessment of me. Furthermore, I am suing them for acting unlawfully in my detention and removal. I can't say too much about ongoing legal proceedings, but I can say more will be happening soon on this front.

I'd like to know what you have been working on since then and have you changed anything about your activism? What do you think you learned from this experience?

I became more determined to make my voice and the voices of other heard in this ongoing struggle against war and empire. I learned I took civil liberties for granted. Furthermore, I took the corporate media's power over our day to day information for granted. They were never my issues. I have spent years organizing for the environment, peace, and justice, but I never gave what I consider basic freedoms in our two countries, or the freedom to voice them in an open forum, a second thought.

After I returned, I got a job with Rainforest Action Network as a grassroots organizer on their global finance campaign. Currently, we are organizing a campaign against Wells Fargo who lacks any sort of socially or environmentally responsible lending, financing, or investing policies. 📌

To read more about People Power, including a list of other resources, visit www.peoplepowerstrategy.org

The River. The Water. The Rain.

TEXT & PHOTOS
Andy Lin



I saw a young boy pushing a toy car in the mud. The toy car had no wheels or chassis, and was placed on a wooden block. Essentially, the boy was moving a glorified piece of wood through the melted dirt. I saw all of this in a community spotted with thatched huts, nestled in the jungled mountains outside of Palenque.

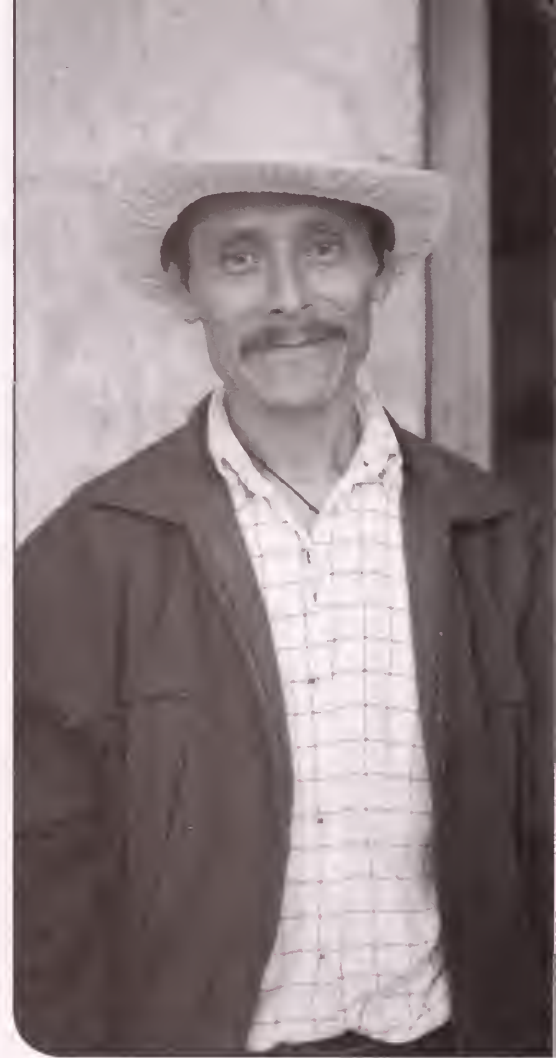
This community had the beginnings of a water pump system. Still incomplete, the women had to get their daily water from a spring a kilometer away. It wasn't the distance so much as the terrain that surprised me: the spring is at the bottom of an incredibly steep hill. If the hill were a ski-slope, it would undoubtedly be a black diamond. The day I went to see the spring it was raining, and everyone slipped multiple times just going down the hill. I can't even imagine going up the hill with one or two buckets of water. I was told that a woman has to make three or more trips a day to the spring for each household.

A little ways up the road, there is a river. The river separates this community from a Zapatista community, from which it split due to differences. This is axiomatic. But these differences were not so much political, in my understanding, but rather the head of this one community felt that the Zapatista Junta de Buen Gobierno — or "Good Government Council (which determines who gets what funding) of his municipality — was continually glossing over his community's needs. He decided to split from the Zapatistas, while maintaining autonomy from the Mexican government. Despite his pleas, other communities followed his example. The Zapatistas planned to ambush him, but he was warned in advance.

This man simply desired the same thing that motivated the original Zapatista uprising — the right to live in freedom for himself and his community.

I also learned that in this same Zapatista community, just across the river, was also where an Italian woman was raped while the community denies it ever happening. Today I learned that the Zapatistas are not perfect, but are human, like the rest of us — prone to the same judgement in error, the same emotions, and the same drama as everyone else. Today was also the day that Commandanta Ramona, one of the original Zapatista commandantes, was buried. She passed away the previous evening. As a result, the junta's normal processes were halted, and we were turned away. We rode our truck back across the river and spent the day in festival with the community that left. 🇲🇽

Andy is a Lower East Side-based creative; his work has been published in National Geographic Traveler, Hemispheres, Altar, Punk Planet, and Kos-Mag. His affiliations include I See Love collective, Overspray street art magazine, rock band Nozomi Phoenix, and the non-profit Resource Generation. He is also an international social change donor.



Clockwise from the top left: a Chiapian indigenous woman offers tortillas created from Mexican corn grown in her community; One of the elders from the autonomous community, at the top of the hill leading to the spring; A campesino from a community just outside of San Cristobal de las Casas; citizens of the autonomous community gather outside of the dining hut; the Roberto Barrios Zapatista community; a lovely fern in Chiapas — the poorest state in Mexico.



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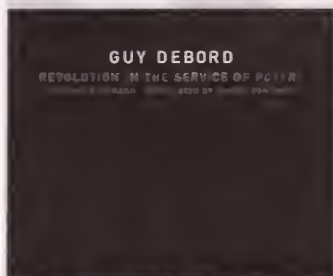
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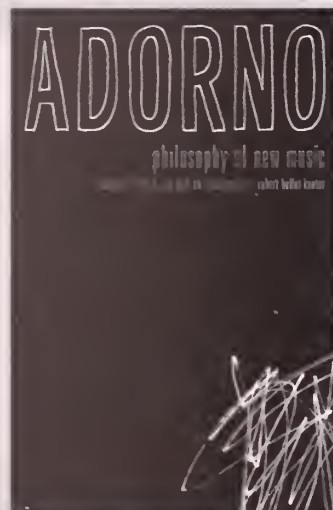
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CULTURE





tough women meet saucy styles in Bolivia's traditional cultural costumes

TEXT & PHOTOS
Yasmin Khan

Abelina Botello gave me a sideways glance from behind a tangerine-spotted skirt and a white lace petticoat.

"My daughter's not here. She's the owner. We can't do an interview. Where did you say you were from?"

Typical Cholita.

Why waste time with me? I was a stranger, and probably wasn't going to buy anything. I present a contradiction for most Bolivians. I have a brown complexion similar to most indigenous people here, but my stop-and-go, Chicago-accented Spanish often gives me away as a *gringa*. People often ask, "Why are you brown, but you speak like a *gringa*?"

My admiration for the *polleras* (pol-YEH-rahhs) — the traditional multilayered skirts worn by Cholitas in Bolivia — and the wide, spangled and fringed *mantas* — the shawls that accompany the skirts — must have convinced her of my potential as a customer because within minutes. Abelina, whose daughter owns "La Orquidea" pollereria in La Paz, Bolivia, had clipped my microphone to her *manta* and was telling me all about this year's style.

"Bright, light, young," said Abelina as her younger daughter hung a zebra-striped *pollera* next to a bright blue skirt embroidered with golden sunflowers. "Last year was dark."

The Cholita outfit is one of Bolivia's most interesting cultural costumes. Tough-looking women wear their waist-length hair in braids connected together at the ends with tassled *tullmas*. They hurry about the busy streets of La Paz decked out in quadruple-layered underskirts called *centros*, bright *polleras*, little patent-leather or clear plastic slip-on shoes, fringed *mantas* neatly folded and worn across their backs, and small felt bowler hats balanced on top of their heads.

In the chilly winter or rainy summer, they throw on a pair of alpaca leg-warmers and sometimes wrap their hats in plastic bags, but still manage the muddy streets in their Cinderella-style slippers.

Primitiva Lima de Perez, owner of "Creaciones Primi," noted that styles change slightly every two or three months. Primitiva, with her gold-capped teeth and custom-made, fuzzy sea-green *manta*, proudly opened her "most fabulous" creations to show off the newest fabrics and styles.

She also explained more subtle changes in Cholita style: hat height varies a centimeter or so year-to-year, and how you form your braids describes your social status. Cholitas wear their braids "normal," and women *de vestido* — those who don't wear *polleras* — braid in reverse. She pointed out that my braids were wrong.

I always marvelled at the exotic-yet-familiar look of the Cholita's outfit. The blue, gray, or black bowler hats, patent-leather shoes, intricate gold and pearl jewelry, and the distinctly European embroidered shawls. But when wrapped around the



strong, stout bodies of Andean women in the frantic Bolivian markets — selling plucked chickens or bloody skinned lambs, carrying huge loads of coca leaves on their backs, sitting behind mounds of purple and pink potatoes, frying puff pastries and serving purple corn drinks — the look is anything but European.

Where Cholitas Come From

The Cholita's outfit has remained basically the same since the 18th century when it was adopted from the closets of high-class Spanish women — the only people who could afford the expensive fabrics and stylings.

Cholitas borrowed the style to separate themselves from indigenous people who lived in the country, called "campesenos." Now, the *pollera* and *manta* are uniquely Bolivian, demarcating Mestiza women with Spanish and indigenous blood who live in the city and who sometimes speak more Spanish than their native languages of Aymara and Quecha.

Mestizos were historically looked down upon by both the Spanish and the 100-percent indigenous. The rejection of Mestizos in Bolivia is exacerbated by the fact that pure indigenous groups of the Andean country consider the Spanish to be pillagers of their silver, gold, land, and other natural resources, as well as destroyers of their religion and language. The arrival of the Cholita costume coincided with the initial commingling of the Spanish and indigenous peoples, and the first Mestizos may not have had a way to distinguish themselves. And since the *pollera* was not prevalent among Spanish settlers but was still part of the Mestizo culture, it may have been a natural progression for Bolivian Mestizos to adapt the costume to their own culture.

Despite their struggles, Bolivian Cholitas have risen in social status in recent years. They are known for their don't-tread-on-me attitude and for huge pro-

Bolivia's New Era

La Paz, Bolivia -- Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui kneels on a llama skin in front of her living room altar.

She selects three perfectly oval coca leaves from the embroidered bag in front of her and before burning them she asks her ancestors for protection of La Paz, for her family and finally for protection of president-elect Evo Morales and Bolivia's new socialist government.

Rivera and other supporters of Morales say this is the climax of Bolivia's indigenous revolution. In his first speech as president in La Paz, Morales addressed an elated crowd which had traveled from all corners of South America's poorest and most indigenous country to see the former coca grower step up to the presidency.

Dressed in red alpaca shawls from the far south, leopard skins and parrot plumes from the tropical north, bowler hats and slippers from urban cities, miners helmets and gas lamps from the silver mines and jeans and sweaters, Morales supporters waved flags of Che Guevara and the Indigenous multi-colored Wiphala.

"We expect radical changes and the end of corruption. We expect that our resources are used for the benefit of the people and exported afterwards. We expect a very clear stance against the narco traffickers who have damaged our culture and used the good and healthy coca plant in an evil manner," Rivera said, adding that until now Bolivia's government has been run like a "family business" by the country's elite.

Morales, who has been described as the U.S. government's "nightmare" because of his support of Bolivia's cocaleros, is unlikely to continue to implement any U.S. supported eradication efforts. In its frantic "war on drugs," Washington has spent millions of dollars in the past 20 years trying to stamp out the traditional crop, which Morales wants to legalize for medicinal and industrial purposes. Morales has promised "no tolerance" for narco traffickers or cocaine production.

Rivera, a sociology professor at the Universidad Mayor de San Andres in La Paz, Bolivia, is a supporter of Morales, South America's first indigenous leader, who was elected by majority vote December 18, 2005. No other president has been elected

by majority vote in democratic Bolivia. Bolivia's electoral system is such that if two presidential candidates share most of the votes, Congress decides who will be president. But if one candidate has 50% or more of the total votes, they are automatically president. Evo Morales' victory was the first time this happened since Bolivia changed from a dictatorship to a democracy in 1982.

Although many are happy to see Morales in power, some Bolivians are wary of how the radical change in government will affect the country.

Gabriel Ramirez Rojas, an Amayra worker in the sprawling indigenous city of El Alto, said many people are afraid of how other nations, including the U.S., view Morales.

tests and fearless street blockades in La Paz and other urban areas when they need the government to listen to them.

In January, Bolivia's new president, Eva Morales (the country's first indigenous leader) pointed out that the plazas were full of Cholos and Cholas and Asmara Indians from the country — the same people who weren't allowed to walk on the sidewalks of La Paz 50 years ago.

Where You Can See The Latest Styles

The Cholita dress doesn't come cheap: The underskirts run about 250 bolivianos, *polleras* each fetch 500 to 750 bolivianos, shawls cost 350 to 400 bolivianos, and the hats can cost from 250 to a whopping 4,000 bolivianos. All together an outfit can run from 1,350 to 5,400 bolivianos — the equivalent of \$168 to \$675, a huge investment for a people whose average monthly salary is \$200. Some Cholitas have taken to attaching their pricey hats to their hair with bobby pins or elastic straps to foil thieves who snatch them in the city crowds.

Some may think the Cholita outfit is a materialistic extravagance for such a traditionally hardworking and poor country to embrace. But perhaps that is exactly why there is such an obsession. In many indigenous cultures, the ceremonial costume is extravagant, featuring rare bird feathers or animal skins, embroidered silk kimonos, sequined and gold-threaded saris. There is a desire to exhibit a degree of wealth, even if it doesn't exist. Even in North American culture, people plunge themselves into thousands of dollars of debt to look the part. The abject poverty of South America's poorest country may contribute to the desire to appear well-turned-out and polished. Needless to say, Cholitas don't wear their most expensive garb on a daily basis any more than Americans wear \$2,000 Manolo Blahnik shoes to the grocery store. The

outfits are reserved for dancing, weddings, and other ceremonies, Primitiva explained.

"Some Cholitas have up to a dozen different outfits for dancing," said Primitiva, who added that for each dance you need one outfit for practicing, one for the *convite*, or last practice, and one for the dance itself. "Some have one very nice outfit, but they just don't dance as often."

She pointed out that Cholitas dance all year long in festivals and in "Cholita clubs" that play *cumbia*, *morenada*, and other dance music. Their spinning dances, reminiscent of whirling dervishes with braids, show off their costume's candy colors and long macramé fringe.

This month, Abelina and Primitiva are busy selling the latest fashions for the last days of Carnival in La Paz. They haven't even started making the newest skirts for the festival of El Gran Poder in May since they are waiting for even newer fabric to arrive from Korea.

Primitiva invited me to return the next day and dance in the last celebration of Carnival with the Cholitas. She even invited me to wear a kantuta *manta* and promised to lend me a hat. "And we'll fix your braids," she added with a gold-capped grin. ☺

Yasmin is a 28-year-old journalist from New Mexico living in La Paz, Bolivia with her Bolivian drummer boyfriend. She broke away from working for mainstream newspapers New Mexico to write about culture and politics in South America. Her work can also be seen as a weekly blog in the Santa Fe youth culture magazine U Mag at www.theumag.com.

Email Yasmin at yasmin008@yahoo.com for info on her freelance works.

The landslide election of Bolivia's new Socialist President has Bolivians hopeful for and anxious about the future.

People are worried because many countries say they are going to reduce their support for Bolivia because Evo is a coca grower. And there are also companies, oil companies, who want to leave because Evo wants to nationalize our hydrocarbons and so the companies will not make as much money," Ramirez said in Spanish.

Ramirez said the most pressing matter for the new government is to create jobs and to work smoothly with all social classes of the divided nation. "Evo should't be so radical as to say that now that the indigenous are in power the white people must obey us. That does not have to happen."

Luis Gomez, a political writer in La Paz, said although Morales won by

a historical majority vote, he may still have a rough time working with other politicians.

"The government is very scared. They were expecting a win by five or eight percent. They are afraid of this enormous vote," Gomez.

Gomez said there will be an expectation to implement social programs with funds from exporting national resources, and that the decriminalization of the coca plant will be an issue within the country.

Rivera, who travels the world speaking on Bolivian politics and the coca crop, agreed that the country's natural resources have been exploited both by the government and by trans-national cor-

porations from Europe and North America.

"It is incredible that we have so much gas but we cannot cook with that gas," Rivera said, "We have to get control over our resources. The coca leaf is a valuable resource and it has been demonized, thought of as synonymous as cocaine."

She also said the election in Bolivia will have a domino effect in other Latin American countries, with people like Rigoberta Menchú in Guatemala and other countries with an indigenous majority.

"We will be backed by so many people who are struggling for the earth... That is why people are dancing in the streets. It's like when Man-

TEXT

Yasmin Khan



delá took power in South Africa... I think it is a wonderful hope and it has been expressed through the polls. So they cannot tell us we are terrorists or narco traffickers because we are chewing coca leaf," Rivera said.

For Rivera, the December 18 elections were an act of conviction.

"We really trust that the force of this country stems from its being indigenous," she said. "I feel the people are good, they are clever." ☺



Angelique Kidjo

golden hair. golden voice.

When I first saw West African singer Angelique Kidjo, I was in a crowd of thousands at Meskel Square in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia during the Bob Marley 60th Birthday Celebration in February 2005. Draped in a long, colorful skirt and black biker jacket, Kidjo lit up the stage with more than her chic golden low-cut pixie 'do. Her voice boomed over the microphone, as she mixed an eclectic blend of jazz, funk, pop, Latin, and African rhythms.

With the popularity of world music connecting people from all over the globe, Kidjo's explosive performance repertoire has garnered the songstress a place on the charts as well as in the hearts of fans everywhere. Kidjo has also used her international appeal to champion the Millenium Development Goals of the U.N.

Her message of universal humanity and connectedness are showcased in a new album, *Oyaya!* which means "joy" in Kidjo's native Yoruba. *Oyaya!* is a compilation of African and French lyrics extracted from the musical traditions of the Caribbean and its diaspora. In collaboration with husband Jean Hebrail, Kidjo composed 13 original songs in a variety of indigenous Caribbean styles, including salsa, calypso, meringue and ska. She sings the tracks in Yoruba, Fon, English, and French.

TEXT

Robtel Neajai Pailey

PHOTOS

courtesy of Aye Music

Clamor sat down to chat with Angelique the day she was preparing a tour for the latest album. Her energy was infectious, her voice raspy and comforting, and her rapport on the phone an interviewer's delight.

CLAMOR: On your latest album, the song "Djovamin Yi" is dedicated to Celia Cruz. How has she inspired you? Who else inspires you, and why?

Angelique Kidjo: I was lucky once to share a stage with Celia in Paris in the late '90s before she passed away. It is a memory I will never forget. When she asked me to sing with her, I said "Me, sing with you?" We went on stage without rehearsing, and it was amazing! And you talk about me having energy! I liked her spirit, her joy of life. She was out there having fun and it was infectious. Her voice was like an instrument. I'm also inspired by artists like Mariam Makeba of South Africa, Bella Bellow of Togo, Aretha, James Brown, and all the Motown classic artists.

Out of your list of nine albums, which one are you most proud of?

I am proud of all of them. I don't believe in pleasing the market and all my songs are important. I feel like I'm touching the spirit of the people when I'm on stage. When you're singing, you have to be able to be naked. That's what I've been able to do since I was a kid.

Most of your albums are multi-lingual and you've managed to surpass language barriers and catapult yourself onto the world stage. Why do you think your sound is so popular nowadays?

Truth and sincerity have no language. They cross borders, even color. Artists who survive are the ones who do it for the pure joy of it.

I understand that you were one of a few African performers at the Live 8 concert in the UK last July? What was it about the message of Live 8 that encouraged you to support their cause?

Live 8 has been a controversy from the start. It was a response to another concert held at Hyde Park in the U.K. by Bob Geldof. I was invited by Peter Gabriel to perform, and he's been a friend of Africa for years. He doesn't treat us like we're in a zoo, so I conceded. It is terrible to see how people assume that Africans are stupid and can't speak for themselves. I went to Live 8 to make this point. I wanted to scream and shout to the international community, "Do things with us, let us be a part of the solution too so that we can impact our people!"

continued next page

It is terrible to see how people assume that Africans are stupid and can't speak for themselves. I went to Live 8 to make this point. I wanted to scream and shout to the international community, "Do things with us, let us be a part of the solution too so that we can impact our people!"

Getting to the Root Africans and Blacks in the U.S.

Angelique Kidjo's latest CD, *Oyaya!* is the final album in a trilogy dedicated to exploring the roots of West African music in the diaspora. While *Oyaya!* focuses on Latin America and the Caribbean, *Black Ivory Soul* takes on the music of (Afro) Brazil. The first CD in the series, *Oremi*, delves into the depths of African-American soul, funk and R&B. Africans and Blacks in the diaspora continue to have major influences on one another, even beyond the realms of music and culture. Here are some ways that West Africans and their descendants in the Americas have, and continue to, impact each other:

- Benin, Kidjo's native country, is the birthplace of Vodun, referred to as Voodoo in the U.S. Though much maligned in the West as "black magic, evil, or witchcraft," voodoo is practiced by over 60 million people worldwide, and is believed to date back some 6,000 years. Haiti and New Orleans have long held communities of voodoo devotees.

- While Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association is the most famous example, movements to migrate Blacks in the West back to Africa was not a new idea in the early 20th century. 1820 saw the first organized group of African-Americans to expatriate to West Africa, from New York to Sierra Leone.

- Liberia, which recently elected Africa's first woman president, was founded as a colony to repatriate Blacks from America in 1822 by the American Colonization Society. The country's two recent civil wars were in part rooted in the conflict of the descendants of Blacks from the U.S. who were handed power by the U.S. government, and the indigenous African majority who held and continues to hold little political power.

- According to the Migration Policy Institute, there are now more than 1 million African immigrants residing in the U.S., over 35% of those immigrants are from countries in West Africa.

- African-Americans in large numbers are leaving Christianity and rediscovering traditional West African spiritual practices (especially Ifa & Vodun) and their counterparts in the diaspora — Voodoo, Lucumi, Santeria, Palo Mayombe, Candomble, etc..

- Due to active lobbying by Blacks in the diaspora, the African Union in 2003 also amended its charter to "encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of the continent"

- The nation of Ghana is considering a bill to give dual citizenship to African-Americans. Many say that this idea is in part to help fight the African "brain drain" of many Ghanians with education and capital who leave the country to work in Europe and the U.S. Other West African nations are considering similar measures.

To keep up with news and current events on Africa, visit www.allafrical.com

-Kenyon Farrow

Not only are you a musical prodigy, but you've also inserted yourself onto the political landscape. How has being a Special Representative of UNICEF changed your notions of socio-political issues affecting Africa?

I can see the kids, the reality. I hadn't realized the scope of the problems. My post has given me a sense of what can be done from the international community. Women need to be given education, info on maintaining the health of their kids. Go and tell them, don't treat them with contempt! The Western media often talks about HIV/AIDS as if they're speaking about a basketball game. They present the issue as if it's far removed from their reality.

In your opinion, does the U.N. have any significant relevance for Africa today?

If we jeopardize the integrity of the U.N., then we run the risk of another Hitler coming to power. We have to move the U.N. out of political manipulation. It should remain a neutral body. There should be no exceptions. The U.S. has tried to undermine the U.N. and people have mixed feelings. The countless international U.N. Missions to Africa prove that it is relevant to the continent today, and has always been.

How did you first become involved with the U.N.?

They called me to do a show with children three years ago at the U.N. headquarters in New York. The campaign was "Say Yes to Kids." It took all those years to realize that kids have rights. After the show, they asked me to be a U.N. Goodwill Ambassador, and I said "Hell yeah!" I can't be politically correct all the time. When I was a kid, most of my vaccines were administered by UNICEF in Benin, so I felt compelled to help out.

Well, it seems to me that you are a staunch child rights activist. What are some of the other causes you currently champion?

I'm currently passionate about ending female genital mutilation. I just think that's wrong. There are good traditions in Africa and bad ones. We have to eradicate the bad ones. I'm also championing girls' education. Nothing is possible in Africa without educating girls. Women are the backbone of that continent. We will never eradicate the woes of the continent without educating girls. Education also has to be made available in Africa for free.

As a performer from Benin, do you think all African artists have a responsibility to give to the continent in service and deeds? Why or why not?

It is my duty because I am a human being. If we don't realize that we are linked, we're all gonna fall.

What were some of the challenges you faced in the early stages of your career? Was it particularly hard being a West African woman?

It's hard being an African woman in the business, period, because the business is dominated by men. The truth of the matter is record companies are interested in money. It's not fair because there are lots of talented artists being placed in the washing machine and then dried out. ☹

A native of Buchanan, Liberia, Robtel Neajai Pailey currently serves as assistant editor of a Washington, D.C. based community newspaper. After traveling extensively throughout Africa, she is interested in projects and initiatives that bridge the divide between Africans and Africans of the Diaspora. E-mail her at rpailey@yahoo.com.




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Holding On To Another Jamaica

I've visited Jamaica just three times, most recently for the funeral of Steve Harvey, the Gay AIDS worker whose abduction and murder on the eve of World AIDS Day last year made international news and generated a *New York Times* editorial in which Steve became the emblematic victim of Jamaican homophobia.

Jamaica is internationally renowned for the deadly violence of its homophobia. Over the past decade, Jamaican activists, in an effort to change the political conditions in which they live, have eagerly drawn international attention to the particularly Jamaica's virulent homophobia and the cultural collusions that support it. This is the Jamaica that has violently claimed the lives of Steve and many others. It is the Jamaica elicited when (in reaction to a planned protest over Jamaican sodomy laws and bias violence by student activists affiliated with Amnesty USA) hundreds of heterosexual Jamaican expatriates gathered in their national colors outside the Jamaican Consulate in New York City in April of last year to proudly defend their right to homophobia against international interference. Many of us situated in the global North have, in well-meaning efforts at solidarity, embraced and advertised as our primary image of Jamaica this "darker side of Black," a title Issac Julien chose for his BBC-funded film on the violence and nihilism of Jamaican dancehall and other popular Black music that, almost a decade and a half ago, began to mainstream such a vision of Jamaica.

TEXT
Colin Robinson

PHOTO
Damali Abrams

Ensuring the dominance of this representation of Jamaica in the global media has been a central strategy for survival and change on the part of queer Jamaicans, in the face of the inattention by the Jamaican government and much of Jamaican society. Straight Jamaican society's insistence on its cultural right to homophobia has been coupled with a denial of this homophobia's destructiveness. Even though the New York City Consulate protestors reinforced an image of Jamaica as irrationally homophobic, their goal was less to celebrate this notion than to challenge it, asserting their right as Jamaicans to define Jamaica, in terms of both its values and its public representation. A similar response greeted the publication of a damning 2004 report, "Hated to Death," a collaborative effort between Jamaican activists and the U.S.-based NGO, Human

Rights Watch that vividly documented violent homophobia, police abuse and other government neglect, and sought to tie these issues to the growth of Jamaica's HIV epidemic. Embarrassment, offense and outrage greeted the considerable international attention the report received and generated diplomatic and public relations efforts — including some by expatriates — to undermine the report's accuracy, methodology and authorship, and to use Jamaica's epidemic murder rate and rampant gun violence to discount the significance of the sexual orientation of victims of bias violence.

The effectiveness of "Hated to Death" was a black eye to the pride of a fiercely nationalistic country with a tourism-dependent economy and an eagerness to win its share of a recent infusion of international funding for HIV into the Caribbean. It came on the heels of other, ongoing efforts to take advantage of Jamaica's economic dependence and the unfashionable-ness of homophobia among those in the global North who hold leverage over Jamaica's development funding, tourism sector, and music industry. White activists in localities across Europe and North America have eagerly partici-

I most eagerly recall in remembering Steve. The Jamaica Steve showed me is a much more complicated and hopeful one than the bleak, savage one-dimensional Jamaica of the international community's eye.



In 2000, visiting Jamaica for the first time, I was a sex tourist of a different kind: one goal of my visit was a sexual rendezvous with a man of Jamaican descent living in Europe who was visiting his grandparents at home. An equally important goal, however, was to reconnect with several of the 14 Jamaican men and women I had met three years earlier at a Curaçao gathering of GLBT folk from 17 Caribbean territories. That convocation, an effort to found a Caribbean Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (C-FLAG), had followed a similar pan-Caribbean gathering in Jamaica the prior year funded by international donors.

It was no surprise to me, therefore, when two years after Curaçao some of those same activists boldly announced the founding of a Jamaican

He talked with me about the spaces he found for Christian worship supportive of his sexual identity. He took me to Club Entourage, the multifunctional Gay dance space owned by Brian Williamson. There was no secret password, no locks or gates, and lots of sweat. I discovered from Steve's colleagues and friends a fascinatingly creative approach to creating community, service provision, and support. The two-year-old J-FLAG had amassed a lending library of several dozen GLBT-themed novels, educational books and videotapes available to community members, many of them by Caribbean authors.

I heard stories and saw videotapes of a young men's netball team (a sport similar to basketball common in the former British Commonwealth, traditionally played by women) that formed the core of a youth development and HIV prevention program. Team members and leaders told stories of competitions with other teams in rural Jamaica where they would be teased in a friendly way with jests like, "Yes, Mary, pass the ball!" A video documentary of an international competition showed team members in behavior ranging from the mili-

There is no doubt that Jamaican homophobia is a real, serious and deadly force that not only undermines HIV efforts but allows young men to be chased to their deaths in public places, even in tourist areas, with no governmental response.

pated in, and in numerous instances led, a wave of anti-dancehall music protest campaigns in the past few years that have burned holes in the pockets of recording artists and brought the leadership of the industry to the negotiating table. Dancehall culture, especially the lyrical bravado of the music, lionizes homophobic violence, establishing it as a characteristic of masculinity, and etches this imagination further into popular culture.

There is no doubt that Jamaican homophobia is a real, serious and deadly force that not only undermines HIV efforts but allows young men to be chased to their deaths in public places, even in tourist areas, with no governmental response. It inflicts deep and lasting psychological wounds, and deprives tens of thousands of Jamaicans of citizenship. The abduction from his home and murder of someone as widely beloved as Steve seriously rattled many and brought this vulnerability home last year.

And yet, Steve's death and my trip to his funeral have also occasioned my own reminiscence of how we met, when he was my primary guide to Jamaica during my first visit and helped introduce me to a surprisingly vibrant and inspiring experience of how Jamaican Gay men and Lesbians live their lives, resist and make community — the Jamaica I know and fell in love with, and the one

queer organization, J-FLAG. In the early 1980s as a young Caribbean foreign student coming out in the United States I had looked for inspiration to an earlier group, the Gay Freedom Movement, founded in the 1970s by Larry Chang, who mailed me copies of the *Jamaica Gaily News*.

Shortly after my arrival in Kingston in the early days of the new millennium, I met Steve. The AIDS service organization where he worked in an administrative support role assigned him to chaperone me. As he answered my questions about Jamaican culture and politics with refreshing insight, I discovered precisely what his eulogizer Nisha Haniff articulated last December, how he was "an organic intellectual . . . [whose] discussions were marked by a consciousness of all the critical issues of race, class, homophobia, poverty, imperialism, gender and so on. Yet he did not go to college. My conversations with my students . . . were never as politically charged, aware and as intellectually mature as my conversations with Steve." Coming from the *laissez-faire*, Carnival and *picong* culture of Trinidad, I would discover how much this combination of passion, critical thinking and engaged relationships I found in Steve marks the Jamaican national character, and how the independence and persistence it fosters shapes the kinds of queer community Jamaicans have been able to forge. Steve was my Jamaica

tary sternness of the opening ceremony's *march past* to the campy camaraderie of the dressing room and after-parties.

Moreover, the very existence of Steve's organization, even as it struggled with the prospect of funding losses and staff layoffs, spoke volumes. Founded through the vision of a number of Jamaican Gay men, the group boasted a staff of 22 over five sites, a budget of \$4 million in local currency, much of it from international donors, and ran a 12-bed hospice staffed by 7 nurses that has served over 300 people.

My second visit to Jamaica would come five years later. This time it would be in the role of tour guide, bringing with me a group of service providers and community organizers interested in improving the lives of GLBT Caribbean folks in New York City with the intent of demonstrating to them how much creativity existed in this otherwise hostile place called Jamaica in tackling the problem they were concerned with addressing in the mecca of North American Gayness. *Fluid Bodies*, a project initiated by my employer, the New York State Black Gay Network, took 15 New Yorkers to spend three days in Kingston alongside a dozen leading Gay organizers from around the Caribbean region and to experience the complexity of queer Caribbean reality outside of the tourist economy. Despite a

brief panic that participants would be ambushed and killed at the airport, the group learned by experience that amidst the violence and fear and heartbreak of Jamaican Gay living, there is creativity and courage and community and joy. Steve attended several of our sessions, sharing some of the imaginative ways programs he had initiated and run found to reach and engage Gay men, despite significant stigma.

At the airport, we were greeted by our local hosts unashamedly holding up placards saying *Fluid Bodies*. Several curious locals in the crowd asked what our group was; we began joking that it was a dance troupe. We stayed at the Medallion Hall, a small aging Kingston hotel whose service, while challenging, was in no way hostile. Local taxi drivers who seemed as straight as they come were called to ferry us to and from parties that took place on two of the nights we were there, on the fringes of Kingston. Scores of GLBT Jamaicans, most without cars of their own, found their way there and partied with intensity to dancehall music, some undergoing miraculous gender transformations in the bathrooms.



I worry that Caribbean GLBT activists, both at home and in the diaspora, have invested too heavily in a stunted vision of Jamaica — and by extension the Caribbean — as sexually backward and irrationally homophobic, something that strikes me as a surprisingly neocolonial approach to imagining our people, or to winning our liberation.

Why does this matter? If the middle-class White Lesbian and her friends on the picket line outside BeenieMan or TOK's Midwestern concert are making life possible for young Jamaican Gay men by creating a cost to homophobia for dancehall artists and promoters, who cares if her eagerness in signing up is because this fits her image of Caribbean people? Does it matter whether the international media understand that Jamaican Gay reality is more complex than the stultifying dancehall lyrics if their attention to them is making it harder for Jamaica's leaders to turn a blind eye to anti-Gay violence? I field a lot of calls from lawyers seeking to gain residence in the U.S. for Caribbean nationals based on their fear of persecution due to their sexual orientation. How an immigration official views the credibility of these fears can be a matter of life in the U.S. or death in a place like Kingston. So I know that how Gay life in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean is perceived is more than academic.

But I've also become friends with a teenager of Jamaican heritage who's struggling with questions about his sexual desire. He told of a cousin who took him along at age 12 to administer *batty judgment* (a fag bashing) in a neighboring town. He has no vision of any possibility that Jamaican Gay life or community exist; he cannot imagine Gay

Jamaicans on any terms other than as violence victims. While Phillip Pike's scrappy independent 2003 film *Songs of Freedom* begins to capture Gay Jamaica's complexity by allowing Jamaicans to speak for themselves about their daily lives, this is a Jamaica my teenage friend and I do not find in print. But it is the Jamaica Steve Harvey represented for me in life.

"What are the words you do not yet have?" Grenadian-descended Audre Lorde asks in her essay "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action." As a U.S.-based, Gay Caribbean man, even one who's an activist and is committed to the region and to Jamaica, I cannot define Jamaican reality or the best way to conduct a brave and life-threatening struggle on whose front lines I do not live. But what I believe in my heart is that we can neither envision nor fight for a Caribbean or a Jamaica where freedom of expression and the possibility of full citizenship as GLBT people exist unless we can imagine ourselves as vibrant and worthy agents and not simply as victims.

I got a call today from a reporter who remembered a comment I made to him over a year ago at the expatriate Brooklyn forum in response to *Hated to Death* — that while single-issue allies may rally with us around the idea that homophobia anywhere is repugnant and fighting it is their struggle too, in the long run, "You've got to love Jamaican

culture in order to change it." I fear that Caribbean GLBT activism, at home and in the diaspora, suffers from a shortage of imagination that often stunts its authenticity.

In 2000 I fell passionately in love with the sense of possibility and vision and passion of a group of Gay and Lesbian Jamaicans who had created awe-inspiring achievements more impressive than what I had witnessed in considerably more open territories in the Caribbean. I was in awe of what other Jamaicans might call their "brightness," a brash national spirit that produces both Jamaica's cultural and political vibrancy and its crippling and pervasive interpersonal violence. I fear that with his murder, the Jamaica Steve embodied for me in life and continues to represent in my memory is at risk of erasure in public consciousness and of becoming invisible to GLBT Jamaicans outside Jamaica in our political rush to foreground Jamaica's homophobia. I want the many realities of Jamaican queer resistance and productiveness I've experienced to become as much a part of how we imagine Jamaica's queer reality and future and remember Steve Harvey's life as holding up the shame of its homophobia that killed him. So I am trying here, with humility and with respect, to write a little piece of this Jamaica myself. ☹

Altar
magazine

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Films by Women

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Evil Twin Booking workers collective helps to bring socially conscious independent films and performance artists to both small towns and large cities. We believe that art and information are for the people, and not only for the privileged. Folks get in touch with us when they want to bring any of the presentations on our roster to their town: We help them figure out how to host an event.

Normally the task of exhibition is a difficult one for an independent mediemaker: Smaller distributors and self-distributed projects are often forced to compete against well funded studios for limited amount of space and time in metropolitan art-house theatres. At Evil Twin Booking we're trying to remedy this problem as many of the projects we deal with are politically oriented and cutting edge and need a little more push. (As subcaninophiles: we root for the underdog.)

After years of touring with the Lost Film Fest and numerous bands, Scott Beibin, Liz Cole and a bunch of friends applied the Do-It-Yourself ethics learned in the punk rock scene to form a collectively run organization that helps bring anti-authoritarian and underground films, performers and speakers to unexpected places.

Evil Twin Booking teaches people how to circumvent the corporate owned media + allow challenging films to be shown in settings such as theaters, universities, warehouses, activist spaces and infoshops, art spaces, cultural gatherings, film festivals, concerts, squats, community centers, rooftops, union halls, street parties, churches, synagogues, mosques, caves, parks, alleyways etc: We also arrange residencies at institutions for the presenters we work with.

Wherever independent and conscious art and media is needed, we can be found.

If you would like to propose a project to us, one can submit a proposal using the online form at www.eviltwinbooking.org. Currently we are seeking projects representing people of color, women, queer and transgender issues, alternative fuels, sustainable agriculture-permaculture, natural healing and vegan diet.

Thanks! **The Evil Twin Booking Collective:**
Liz Cole, Scott Beibin, Danielle Loftus
Dave Miller, Leslie Dreyer, Ally Barlow.



what we're
talking about

Shoplifting

10 Excellent Reasons Not to Join the Military

Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg, editor
The New Press, 2006
www.thenewpress.com

This small book (157 pages), geared toward those considering enlistment, contains 10 essays on topics such as "You may be killed," and "You may be asked to do things against your beliefs." Each essay has a different author, including Cindy Sheehan who contributes an essay and an introduction. Like most collections or anthologies, some contributions are stronger than others. The real standouts are pieces written by veterans and others with direct experience with the military. Aimee Allison, a conscientious objector during the Persian Gulf War, contributes a powerful piece telling recruits that they may face discrimination in the military. She combines examples racism and sexism she experienced firsthand with statistics to tell a compelling story. Adele Kubein's essay on her daughter's struggle to receive appropriate medical care after being injured in Iraq as a member of the National Guard is equally as convincing. Other strong pieces include Robert Acosta and Nina Berman's, "You may be injured," Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg's "You may be lied to," and Louis and Marti Hiken's "You may find it difficult to leave the military."

Overall, this is a great resource and most of the pieces are well written, but some language is problematic ("You may kill others who don't deserve to die," for example. Who decides who deserves to die? Are there people killed during war that do deserve to die?). I think

the challenge will be getting it into the hands of individuals who are considering enlistment and their families. But with declining support for the war, this may be the tool many are looking for to talk to their friends and families, including the resource list at the end that covers not only resources for soldiers and their families, but help with alternatives such as other sources of college funding.

-Jen Angel

Against the New Authoritarianism: Politics after Abu Ghraib

Henry A. Giroux
Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2005
www.arbeiterring.com

In his latest book, *Against the New Authoritarianism*, Giroux exposes the cogs of the present political machine as well as the oil that lubricates it. If you are not outraged or enlightened by the time you finish this book, read it again, because Giroux crams a lot of information into under 200 pages. And as if that's not enough, Giroux takes the reader on a "cite-seeing" adventure at the end of each chapter. Don't worry; most sources are available online to read at your leisure.

The book delves into the events after September 11 that molded the base of Bush's push for an authoritarian form of government. This type of society views examples of public discourse with the same regard as a child's temper tantrum: Daddy knows best and will protect you. Giroux links this rise in indifference to human rights and suffering with the influence that the Christian Right, ma-

yor corporations, and media moguls have on setting US policy at home and abroad.

At the same time, an eerie mind-set comes into play: Either you are with us or against us. Giroux demonstrates how Bush filets the English language into sound bite-sized jargon and feeds it to the media while opportunists jump on the bandwagon to back the Administration. After all, who wants to be labeled "unpatriotic"?

If you think all this reads like a bad Tom Clancy novel, you're right. Unfortunately in this case, truth is stranger than fiction. With the authoritarian attitude in place that under the Bush regime, the United States can do no wrong, atrocities like Abu Ghraib may only be the beginning.

But Giroux does offer hope in the form of education. First we choose to get involved and teach others to recognize what is happening and those taught teach others. Consequently we can unravel the corporate flag cloaking our nation and reweave one to again stand for democracy.

-Cindy Kerschner

Hellen van Meene: Portraits

Hellen van Meene, photos
Kate Bush, text
Aperture Foundation, 2004
www.aperture.org, www.hellenvanmeene.com

The photographic work included in *Hellen van Meene's: Portraits* is inward and melancholy with an unsettling element. Her young models' eyes are downcast, closed, or gazing off to one side of the frame. They

are engaged in their own worlds, paying no mind to the viewer.

There are some recurring themes. Many of the models are stuck on something: delicately arranged hair tied to branches, arms trapped in a skirt, a head in a waste basket. There are children lying still dressed and in the bath, heads in profile floating in a sink or a basin, a girl in a wet blouse, or crouched in a puddle. We are catching solitary moments of these models or characters. Some seem less believable as an everyday reality, but these make just as compelling a narrative.

Kate Bush's essay does a good job placing van Meene's work in the context of contemporary art. However, it leaves me confused as to why van Meene is obsessively focused on making highly staged images of adolescence. The images are interesting and beautiful regardless of the artist's reasons for making them.

-Dorian Katz

Last Week's Apocalypse

Douglas Lain
Night Shade Books, 2006
www.nightshadebooks.com

The literary equivalent of the Talking Heads' bitter classic "Life During Wartime," *Last Week's Apocalypse* visits the lives of a handful of people living different variations on the theme of Portland, Oregon. Some exist in the present time, or a time very much like the present; others inhabit various near futures. As the world goes to hell, these ordinary people find ways to cope, or — more often — to stick their heads in the sand. In "The Sea Monkey Conspiracy," a psychology student analyzes television news so that he doesn't have to think about what he's watching. In "84 Regress," a young couple takes drugs that disguise the drabness of today as the gee-whiz shiny silver future. In "I Read the News Today," nuclear warfare takes a back seat to revelations of adultery. Everyone is running in place, and as the bomb drops and aliens land and material goods crumble away, they cling to the illusion of normalcy with all their strength, knowing that it's all they have left.

I recently read "On a Scale of One to Three" (in which a doctor tells his son that a woman dying of radiation poisoning is just having a mild heart attack) aloud to friends and was startled when they started giggling at parts I thought were troubling, wrenching, and sad; yet I also had to hold back laughter by the time I reached the end of the story. It was the sort of laugh you inadvertently emit when you're trying to cheer up someone in terrible circumstances, when a friend asks you a question of

emotion or conscience that hits a little too close to home, when you're so appalled by what just happened that you find yourself trying to ward it off with disbelief and mockery. Lain has a gift for finding the small, intensely personal tragedies of modern life and presenting them with a stark simplicity that calls up surprisingly strong emotional reactions. He never preaches; his narration often has the flat affect of the deeply depressed or disturbed. His characters believe themselves to be prisoners of their circumstances and their minds, to the point where you want to shake them and shout at them to wake up and take control. In a way, the collection is a paradoxical call to activism, not through polemics but through the exhibition of people driven to madness and despair and the occasional brilliant but short-lived revelation by their circumstances. It seems to say, "This could be you. What are you going to do about it?" After reading this collection, you will no longer be satisfied with not having an answer to that question.

-Rose Fox

The Lone Surfer of Montana, Kansas

Davey Rothbart
Touchstone/Simon & Schuster New York, 2005
www.foundmagazine.com

We Michiganders are a strange breed. We come from a wilderness that was chewed up and spit out by industry. Every fall, businesses shut down and deer carcasses grow on the roofs of vehicles. We tend to be descended from people who didn't fit in or got kicked out of other places and signed up for some free land up north near the frigid lakesides. Like local native Madonna, we get through long winters by regularly trading in our public identities. Also like Madonna, we get the hell outta there. We roam the continent in old salt-rust scarred cars. We gawk at the world innocently but with a strange sense of humor formed by postindustrial decay. We enjoy the reputation for being tough motherfuckers that comes with having survived the economic version of a neutron bomb and for being from the land of Hoffa. We get through difficult situations with a combination of hardened numbness and excruciatingly polite mannerisms. After you've been to Autoworld, there's not much absurdity that's going to phase you.

In his book of short stories, "The Lone Surfer of Montana, Kansas," Davy Rothbart establishes himself as one of the emerging voices of the Michigan Diaspora. He grew up in the poor and deolate sections just outside of snobby liberal Ann Arbor where I moved to with my mom when I was fifteen. Davy Rothbart is best known for having started the small media empire

that is FOUND Magazine which curates what people find on the ground and in the trash and send to him. His goofy accent is frequently heard on the public radio program "This American Life", where he can be heard doing things like taking his psychic channeling mom to Brazilian faith healing camps and asking Mr. Rogers about a real Chicago neighborhood.

In this book, there are eight stories filled with convicts, bad situations, dysfunctional families, Chicago, bad parties, difficult relationships, dark little towns, and odd little moments of beauty. The stories blast forth with a narrative strength that comes from a people that sit around all winter drinking, repeating, and honing their anecdotes. Some read like biography. Some are clearly fictional. They all are about the quiet dignity and everyday weirdness of people surfing their way through the absurd situations they find themselves in.

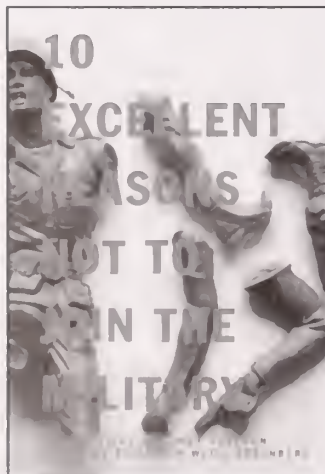
-Chris "Spam" White

Making American Boys:

Boyology and the Feral Tale

Kenneth B. Kidd
University of Minnesota Press, 2005
www.upress.umn.edu

In *Making American Boys*, Kenneth Kidd tracks the construction of white middle class masculinity through the lens of "boy culture" — stories, 4H programs, guides, and psychological analysis of boyhood from the late nineteenth century to contemporary child rearing advice. Kidd makes a well-researched and interesting argument about the construction of middle class white US boyhood. That boyhood is defined and circumscribed by the feral tale — the idea that boys are wild and untamed, and that training and instruction are provided for the feral boy to "evolve" into the civilized adult white middle class man. Kidd is very clear about the racism of the construction, and offers numerous examples of feral boys compared to both animals and to men of color — there's a brief discussion of this phenomenon in England, with the books of Rudyard Kipling being the tool by which young English boys are compared to the "wild" peoples of India. The book also discusses "boyology." The last section of the book takes the feral tale's location in psychoanalysis, illustrating the emergence of the tale in the works of Freud, and the general prominence and popularity of psychoanalysis in the US as it relates to narratives regarding childhood. The book's final connection to the feral tale is to current parenting manuals, advice shows, and other media productions where we learn about what it is to be a boy. The connection is convincing



— particularly in light of reporting on the purportedly ever-shrinking attention spans of boys, the supposedly new and monstrous behavior of boys, and the general need of parents and other adults to be constantly on the lookout for potentially destructive behavioral impulses. There's also a brief and interesting conversation about the heterosexism inherent in this argument — that the flip side of feral boys, feminized boys, are also, apparently, as deeply destructive to boys as life-long feral status. As a book of sociology, this book is surprisingly entertaining to read — especially to those of those who spend a lot of time thinking about where our ideas about gender and sex come from.

-Laura Mintz

Not a Minute More:

Ending Violence Against Women

Written and Published by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005
www.unifem.org

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) has been improving women's lives since its establishment in 1976. *Not a Minute More* is an official UNIFEM report that provides an overview of the gains in global women's rights and explores the many roadblocks to ensuring women's safety and freedom.

Since the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, NGOs, governments large and small, and a multitude of other actors have been making progress in the fight to end violence against women. *Not a Minute More* highlights legal, institutional, and research contributions to this cause.

UNIFEM champions their own efforts, but does not fail to stress that the improvement of women's lives is the work of international and regional organizations, and individuals. One of the benefits of the book is that it provides snapshots of specific regions such as North Africa, Moldova, and the European Union. The purpose of the report, however, is not to give in depth analysis, but a summary of the movement.

One strength of the report is the substantial section on legal reforms. Legislation on domestic violence and gender-based violence was not easily gained, and is still missing from the agenda in many countries. The struggle to follow through and effectively implement progressive legislation is a discussion that the report does not shy away from. Getting law enforcement and other front line workers to carry out anti-violence laws continues to be a challenge.

Not a Minute More provides a realistic report on the movement to end violence against women around the

world. Progress is noted, but more importantly, UNIFEM stresses that more energy, time, and a greater commitment of resources is needed to continue the fight.

-Michelle M. Alletto

Patriots Act: Voices of Dissent: An Oral History

Bill Katovsky
The Lyons Press, 2006
www.lyonspress.com

Patriots Act could have been a pivotal book. The oral histories of activists of varying stripes hold much in the way of promise. Hearing from a variety of people who loved our country enough to stand up to its government could be inspiring, but Bill Katovsky's latest book needs some revamping.

Throughout *Patriots Act* we hear firsthand accounts from everyday citizens who've done extraordinary things as well as government officials who blew whistles and ruffled feathers. Where the book falls short is not so much in its purpose as in its delivery. The stories you hear seem unedited and at times ramble along. You hear distinct, real voices (good) but with that comes some long-winded styles (bad).

The book asks important questions: What does it mean to be an American today? What is freedom? Who has it? The courage of each of the patriots within the pages can not be denied. Their sacrifices for freedom, their ability and willingness to force introspection when many want to do nothing deserves enormous respect. The book simply does not do the acts justice.

-Heather Myrick Stocker

Rove Exposed: How Bush's Brain Fooled America

James Moore & Wayne Slater
Wiley, 2006
www.wiley.com

The Hammer Comes Down: The Nasty, Brutish, and Shortened Political Life of Tom DeLay

Lou Dubose & Jan Reid
Public Affairs, 2006
www.publicaffairsbooks.com

Damaged people in a damaged system, Tom DeLay and Karl Rove are both examples of how misanthropic behavior is often rewarded in American public life. In a very real sense, 21st century America is Tom and Karl's world. And the rest of us are just forced to live in it.

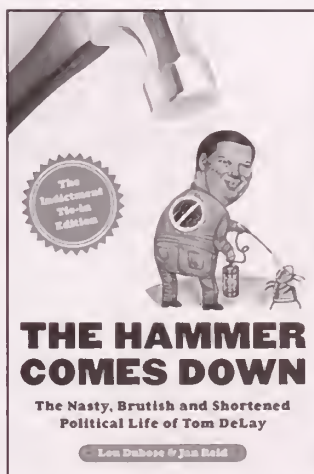
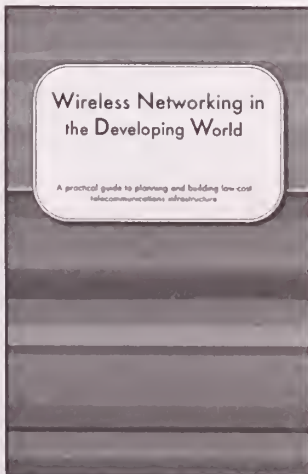
Every *Clamor* reader knows who these guys are. Rove, the feral intelligence behind the proudly stupid Bush administration and DeLay, the corrupt and thug-

gish master of the "people's house" — the US House of Representatives. As of this writing, DeLay is under indictment and has had to step down as House Majority Leader (but not as member of Congress from TX-22) and Deputy Chief of Staff Rove faces a federal grand jury investigation from his office in the White House. But that's not the story here. Whether either or both end up serving out their remaining years on the taxpayer's dime in jail jumpsuits, they have still won. They have proven what they set out to prove: If you're a big enough asshole, if you're willing to ignore any ethical constraint, and if you're completely uninterested in anyone's well-being save that of yourself and of those to whom you toady, you can come out ahead in American politics. Short jail terms will not undo what they've both done, what they've both built.

Angry white men are made, not born, and Tom and Karl both have plenty of anger. DeLay's dad was, in his son's words, a "domineering alcoholic" often absent on oil rigs. Rove never knew his biological father and his stepfather (who Rove believed to be his father) left his family while Rove's mother later committed suicide. Both Rove and DeLay were aware early on that the world was not waiting for them and both harbor a resentment of the people that they've viewed as their social betters. Joe Neely, a dentist who lived next to Rove gives a telling example. Fighting over a boundary on their lawns, Neely and Rove feuded for several years. Neely, tired of avoiding his neighbor's gaze, went over one day to bury the hatchet. Rove said forget it, he could never forgive what his neighbor had said to him. Perplexed, Neely asked what it was. Rove replied, "You said you moved out here to get away from people like me." Neely was stunned — he'd never said anything of the kind. Rove had fabricated this reason to be bitter out of whole cloth and seemingly believed it. A similar sense that people who considered themselves superior were looking down on DeLay also mark his career.

Books like these serve a valuable purpose in documenting the despicable actions of these bastards, but ultimately these creeps are symptom, not disease. In a democratic society, the disease can only be cured by organizing and making sure people like Rove and DeLay are never again given access to power. Let's hope that the subjects of the next generation of political biography are the organizing, the leaders, the people, and the communities who make Rove and DeLay's misanthropic style of politics history.

-Keith McCrea



Sex and War
Stan Goff
Soft Skull Press, 2006
www.softskull.com

Stan Goff was the ultimate warrior, a combat-hardened member of the Rangers, Special Forces, and Delta Force. His conscience proved stronger than his military indoctrination, however, and he quit and turned against the state's institution of terror. Once outside it, he devoted himself to understanding the social and psychosexual roots of organized violence. *Sex and War* is his third and most ambitious book on this topic.

Stan Goff constructed this book as a mosaic form. Each piece has its own discrete integrity, and it also fits together with the others into a whole. *Sex and War* is written in riffs and blips, in shards with lots of edges. Some English comp instructors would give it a D for organization. But this seems the right form for this topic in our fragmented times. When the reader pulls back from the pieces, the overall pattern emerges. The book has two perspectives: in your face and off the wall.

Goff writes often with grace, always with energy, and almost always with clarity, but his zest for theory sometimes propels him into convoluted, abstract sentences that require a second reading, though the backpedaling is worthwhile. He flashes from vivid descriptions of his military operations, through stories of the plight of women forced to live under patriarchal militarism to insightful renderings of the stunted psyches of warriors and Marxist analysis of the US's violent drive for hegemony, while connecting us to the work of other writers on these issues.

He gives us insider reports on the military mentality and makes clear the inevitability of atrocities. Then, in a synaptic leap, he shows that the abuse of women is a similar syndrome but much more widespread throughout society. In his portrait of a Delta Force friend turned rapist, we see how rape in all its varieties is a mainstay of patriarchy as a whole, not just its military branch.

Goff was a medic, among other things, in the Special Forces. Now he emerges as a diagnostician of the pandemic pathology of our culture. And like a good medic, he has suggestions for curing us of this disease of sexualized violence.

Sex and War is both a personal and an analytical tour de force. It's a book that only Stan Goff could write, and I'm very glad he did.

-William T. Hathaway

Verbicide #15
Scissor Press, Winter 2006
www.scissorpress.com

I don't read zines because I want to be cool or alternative. I read zines because most of them are much better than mainstream magazines. *Verbicide* is yet more proof that the zine world is producing more interesting and thoughtful writing than anything Conde Nast has going on. *Verbicide*, a tri-annual zine dedicated to punk, art, and literature, combines interviews with famous and not-so-famous musicians, with well-written fiction, essays on art, and reviews of books, films, and albums.

There is a youthful energy to this that I really dug. The writers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and talented. The interview with Chuck D. is a perfect example. It's obvious that interviewer Avir Mitra is stoked to be talking to one of his heroes, and his excitement comes through without him seeming like a dilettante. He asks Chuck D. questions about everything from the state of today's youth to the war on terror, and Chuck comes off like a slightly bemused elder statesman.

The review section was pretty good, full of honest opinions on a slew of punk and metal releases. I have to admit I was pretty weirded out by the Mormom kid who quoted scripture in his review of Christian hardcore albums. I hate to be judgmental, but to me Christian punk makes about as much sense as white supremacist gangsta rap.

Everything in the zine is approached with a positive attitude by people hungry to create, rather than hell-bent on being jaded and critical. The fiction is pretty good, and there are some interesting articles on artists I hadn't heard of. *Verbicide* is a solid effort, and a worthy addition to your zine collection.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

**White Slave Crusades:
Race, Gender and Anti-Vice Activism 1887-1917**
Brian Donovan
University of Illinois Press, 2006
www.press.uillinois.edu

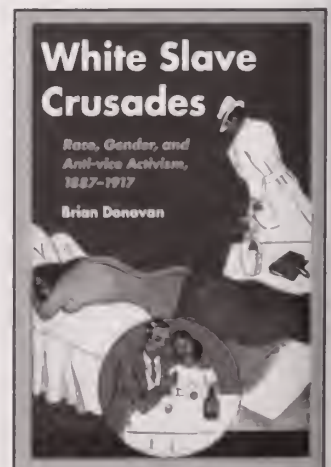
"White slaves" was the popular term in the late 19th and early 20th century U.S. for women working in the sex industry, even though many such women were actually African-Americans or immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and therefore not considered "white" at the time. The reformers who organized to abolish the

sex trade during this period were largely white and from well-established "native-born American" backgrounds. These reformers popularized an image of a corrupt underworld system in which women and girls were "lured" or "forced" into "white slavery" and exploited by "white slavers" — the pimps and brothel owners vilified as "foreign" and a threat to "native-born" Americans. Yet, anti-white slavery activists were not uniformly against immigrants or in favor of repressive social policies; they included women's suffrage and temperance activists, workers in the settlement house movement, and missionaries who worked with immigrant populations. Many of these organizations and individuals would have described themselves as advocates for immigrants, blacks, workers, and women, as well as critics of at least some of the excesses of capitalism.

In this book, Brian Donovan looks at the complex racial and gender politics of the movement against white slavery, and the part it played in developing new ideas about race in the United States. Racial terms used in the mid-1800's distinguished between native-born, or "Anglo Saxon" Americans, other Europeans, African-Americans, and people of mixed African and European ancestry. As the European immigrant population grew, and white native-born elites sought to solidify their control over newly free African-Americans, the idea developed of a "white" race made up of Europeans and a "colored" race made up of people with any African ancestry at all.

After reviewing and engaging with other research about the development of the idea of race, relationships between conceptions of gender, sexuality, and race, and some of the cultural and economic history of this period, Donovan looks in detail at efforts against white slavery in Chicago, New York, and San Francisco. He concludes that the movement's rhetoric set up norms of male and female sexuality that incorporated taboos against sexual and social mixing between "whites" and "blacks." Europeans who conformed to these norms came to be accepted as "white."

This, however, is an oversimplification of what this book does. Most of it deals with description and analysis of activism against white slavery in these three cities. The in-depth look at different individuals and organizations with their different ideologies, influences, internal contradictions, and interactions with each other is *White Slave Crusades'* richest aspect. Particularly illuminating is its look at white slavery literature from the period, including journalistic accounts, pamphlets warning about the danger of white slavery, and "white slave narratives," that ostensibly told true stories of former white slaves.



The material makes for a considered, nuanced look at the basis of socially accepted ideas about race, and at the way social movements can operate with blind spots about class, race, gender and other hierarchies.

-Patricia Lietz

Wireless Networking in the Developing World

Rob Flickenger, ed.

www.wndw.net

With the advent of wireless networking and its subsequent popularity, the cost of providing Internet access to communities is starting to fall. However, many communities worldwide still do not have this technology because they lack the knowledge required to start such a network. But a new effort aims to change that. *Wireless Networking in the Developing World: A Practical Guide to Planning and Building Low-Cost Telecommunications Infrastructure* aims to make Internet access a reality by bridging this knowledge gap.

The manual — available for free on the Internet — is written by a global team of people including open source experts, software developers, social technology advocates, even a former military paratrooper and insect scientist, who found common ground in bringing Internet capabilities to places that previously had none. True to its title, the vast majority of the 254-page book consists of practical information about the logistics of developing a network. As a result of the contributors' hands-on experience in the field, the book is greatly enriched by the inclusion of a chapter dedicated to case studies, complete with trials and tribulations, both technical and human, in setting up wireless networks in specific sites.

Community involvement is a crucial element of this project. As a result, the book is written for people who wish to develop wireless Internet networks in their local communities and stresses the need for group participation at all stages. While this book is of import, it is only the kernel of a larger project, which consists of a number of other supporting resources. These include: a PDF version of the book, a website, an archived mailing list (to promote discussion of the book), training course materials, information about the latest equipment, lists of pertinent websites, and a wiki. Clearly, this project is an organic and interactive one, as the authors actively solicit feedback and continually update their materials.

In order to encourage the spread of these materials, the book and the PDF file have been released under a "creative commons" license which means anyone is allowed to make copies of the book and even sell it for profit as long as the authors are credited for producing the work and the copies carry the same copyright rules. The group is also working on translating it into Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, and other languages. An ambitious project with a promising start, *Wireless Networking in the Developing World* is pushing the reach of the Internet, and helping others help themselves.

-Emily Nielsen

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Meena

Volume 1, Issue 1, August 2005

Andy Young and Khaled Hegazzi, editors

www.meenamag.com

The debut issue of *Meena*, a bilingual English/Arabic literary journal, was curated by editors based in New Orleans, USA, and Alexandria, Egypt. Most of the editorial work occurred in Alexandria in summer 2005, and the magazine was sent to print in New Orleans that August.

On August 29, Katrina hit.

Meena (the word means "port of entry" in Arabic) was forged by writers and artists in port cities on seemingly opposite sides of the world, in the midst of what was increasingly being described—in relentlessly binary terms—as a fateful clash between civilizations. And then it was published while many of its editors were displaced, and distributed during months when its mailing address was deemed undeliverable by most shipping services. It's impossible to read this first issue without all the weight of that—war, cultural imperialism, a devastating natural disaster made further devastating by social injustice—bearing down. And the work, for the most part, holds up under that weight, responding, reflecting, filling out the partially imagined with emotional and sensory specifics.

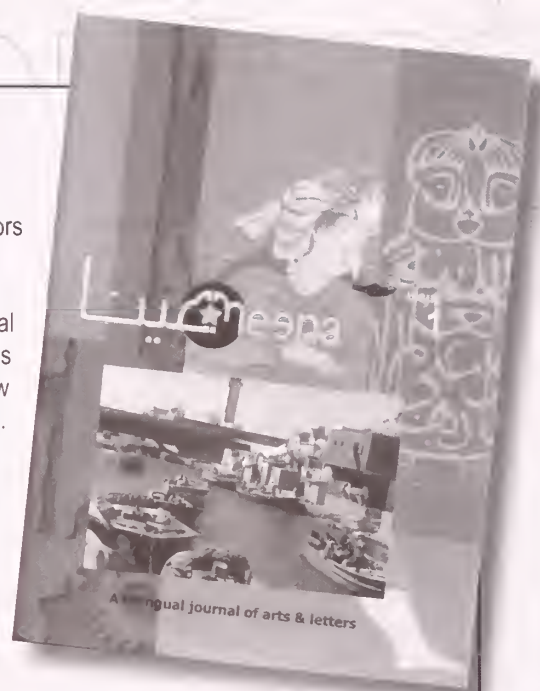
At approximately 115 pages per language, this is a substantive volume featuring poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and visual arts in a range of styles and voices—among them U.S. literary stars such as Yusef Komunyakaa and Naomi Shihab Nye, renowned Egyptian artist Aly Ashour, and a host of emerging and established artists from various nations (India, Iran, Palestine, Romania, Sudan, Morocco...). Laura Mullen has contributed a striking piece, "Embedded," about representation of war that opens

A photographer marries a rock, comes back with reams of useless negatives, shots of the river or the pile of rubble to the left of the dead, to the right of the bleeding, sobbing, furious survivors. "There was someone just here you can't see," pointing out into the air beyond the frame.

In "City Calendar," Hamdy Zedan writes a non-linear, personalized history of Alexandria as a pluralistic city that has taught him "the difference between global humanity and barbaric globalization."

Resisting the notion that cultural difference must mean opposition and conflict, *Meena's* editors refer to Palestinian poet and translator Salma Khadra Jayyusi's belief that "if we read one another, we will be less likely to kill one another," offering *Meena* as "a port to enter one another's worlds." The same material is presented in both languages, with a mix of translations and originals in each (several of the translations done by the writers themselves). While the quality of the work in this first volume is somewhat inconsistent, there are several fine pieces in the bunch and the value of the effort is clear. As I cross my fingers for more international and multilingual litmags, I hope you'll check out this one.

-Jessica Hoffmann



16 Horsepower

Hoarse

Alternative Tentacles, 2006

www.alternativetentacles.com

This is a reissue of a live compilation from 1998, recorded in and around Denver. 16 Horsepower is a straight ahead rock band augmented by an accordion and violin. The mystique that the group creates is based upon the oompah sound that they concoct while swaying between rock and country idioms. The originals on this album are all relatively similar. Maybe that can be contributed to the band's style as opposed to their lack of breadth or width of ideas. Three covers grace this slab: Creedence, Gun Club, and Joy Division. The Gun Club cover, being almost totally faithful to the original, makes me appreciate what 16 Horsepower is capable of in the language of rock. Really, though, it just makes me want to listen to *Fire of Love* (1981).

-Dave Cantor

Angels of Light and Akron/Family

Self-Titled

Young God Records, 2005

www.younggodrecords.com

To coin a new musical genre, I would have to call the Akron/Family's newest release (a collaboration with Michael Gira) "psychedelic campfire music." If there's one thing they're good at, it is creating moods of rich human connection, where musicians delve deep into their own experimental subconscious but at the same time aren't afraid to show off their own rough edges — a wavering voice, a bit of background noise. Put out in late 2005, this split with producer/collaborator/seasoned art punk, Michael Gira shows an angrier, louder Akron/Family than albums past. Maybe it's the relentless touring schedule since their first, also self-titled release, or the direction from Gira (Ex-Swans), but this album is decidedly harder and rougher than the timid beauty of their first, a collection of melodic vocals layered on top

earlier time. They've been relatively consistent, and it's a testament to their beliefs that the band still has something to say after their numerous releases. Overt political messages don't generally make for good pop music based upon the fact that some segment of the listening audience will be offended at some point. That's why our Pittsburgh friends aren't MTV stalwarts. *For Blood and Empire* actually seems to increase the political messages as well as the different styles of punk they play. Almost each track bounces off of some branch of punk which easily makes this their most radio friendly release to date, except of course for the lynx, which are relentless critiques of the government, the press and American society in general. So, this record will not take AF to the general ear holes of Americans, but they are now releasing records through RCA. Even with this, they maintain their vision of what their band should be, which is admirable. Maybe the distribution will help. Maybe millions more will hear what they have to say. Or maybe they'll just become lazy millionaires and start releasing dance punk records.

-Dave Cantor

Avail



Cherise Roants Lanson

Avail

Dixie; 4AM FRIDAY; Over the James

Jade Tree, 2006

www.jadetree.com

This fall, Jade Tree will be re-releasing these three early Avail albums with new artwork and liner notes, plus tons of extras such as live tracks and singles.

Avail was a very important band for me in the '90s. These three albums (plus the debut *Saltate* and the 10" *Live at the King's Head Inn*) form the bulk of what I consider their best work. Admittedly, I don't own and haven't listened to any of the records after *Over the James*, as I feel the band's sound changed significantly around that time (incidentally, that's also when they signed to Fat Wreck Chords). This early work has certainly withstood the test of time for me - I still own the records and return to them for their sound and not just nostalgia, over 10 years after having first heard them.

But, let's talk a minute here about how fucking over the top the press materials that came with this release are: Avail was an important band to me, but I don't consider them "instant classics of contemporary hardcore" or that they "irrevocably changed the landscape of melodic hardcore music." Their sound is described as "emotive powerchord balladry," the recording as "thunderously pristine." Um, yeah. Despite that, for those of us who own these records on vinyl, it's great to have these available again in a format that's compatible with all our fancy computer gadgets

-Jen Angel

Alif Tree

French Cuisine

Compost Records, 2005

www.compost-records.com

The music, at least the first half of the album, is gorged with European-style electronic hip hop. Out of the first four tracks, Nina Simone and Shirley Horn are sampled over top of minimal, lo-fi beats with jazz inclinations and strings. That in and of itself would be enough for me to guess not only Europe, but also France as the birthplace of this album. And that's true. Alif Tree has a studio in the suburbs of Paris where he finds the laid back atmosphere conducive to creating his albums and varied production work. After the four tracks most related to hip hop, the sound veers drastically towards laid back piano lines and electronic production flourishes. Ending an album can frequently be difficult, and Alif Tree attempts to end this affair with an homage to minimalist composer Steve Reich. It works out well, sending a message of appreciation to the composer while giving the listener a many-layered finale to an interesting and schizophrenic album.

-Dave Cantor

of acoustic guitars and electronic beeps and bleeps. There are still definite A/F signatures in their multi-part compositions, as on "Raising the Sparks," a sprawling number that ranges from '60s prog jam to backwoods tent revival. Themes of time and change constantly crop up through this collection: "This moment is over/ The idea that you/ Were the same when it started as/ When it is through." It's as if the band themselves are confronting their own evolution, and the inevitable criticism therein. But, rather than toy with the familiar, the music shows a current, slightly different Akron/Family — and a reflection of their present selves.

-Erik Neumann

Anti-Flag

For Blood and Empire

A-F Records, 2006

www.a-frecords.com

Anti-Flag has been doing approximately the same thing for almost a decade. At the onset of that time period, they toured consistently to build a fan base that appreciated their fast nineties punk style, pulling from an

Covington

Devised Without a Plan

Tiberius/ Phratry Records, 2005

www.tiberiusrecords.com

www.phratryrecords.com

Covington are a Cleveland threesome who play melodic, emotive punk. Their previous band, Ampline, was all instrumental, which explains the tight musicianship and interesting song structures, as well as the instrumental track "Form and Divide." Thankfully, they avoid the overplayed quiet/loud sing/scream song structure of so many similar bands out there. The songs are all competently written and ably played, and the production does a fine job of getting everything to sound clear. Maybe that's

why it took them a year to release these songs after recording them.

I liked this disc best when the boys strayed away from the standard emo-punk sound and moved into something more interesting, as on "Flight 326" and "Black-Eyed." Most of the album, however, is pretty standard impassioned vocals over tight guitars. The lyrics are vague, with lack of clarity sometimes standing in for poetics. It seems like they have something interesting to say, and I'm glad they didn't drop any clunky rhymed couplets, but I do wish they had been a little less cryptic.

While this isn't destined to be the stand-out album of the year, fans of the genre will certainly dig it. Hello, Cincinnati!

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Dark Skies

Self Titled

Empty Records, 2006
www.emptyrecords.com

Ya know, I love the MC5, but I don't really need them name dropped every ten minutes (this was an example of name dropping to ensure my credibility). The trio that is Dark Skies draw from that pool of rock and release an album of music easily surpassed by the cover art. I'm pretty confident that living in the sixties and seventies would have provided me with a great deal of fun, so I can understand the affinity bands have for attempting to recreate that time through notes. Each track of this recreation has positive elements, whether it's the funky bass, a musical freak-out or guitar screeches, but when taken as a whole, the album falls short of anything that could be listened to more than once, or even once all the way through. Empty Records is toying with our emotions folks. The general public will be exposed to The Reatards or some other viable act and then we're given Dark Skies. Mr. Empty Records Label Boss, we want to love you, but give us a reason

-Dave Cantor

Hope You Choke

Self-titled

One Percent Records
www.onepercentrecords.com

As evidenced pretty clearly by the name of the band, Hope You Choke are not messing around. Mixing elements of metal and hardcore for a sound not unlike genre forerunners Integrity, this five piece offers a short but aggressive blast of power.

In no more than twenty minutes, Hope You Choke combines viciously delivered vocals with a thunderous rhythm section and lead guitar solos that will surely light your speakers on fire. The amalgamation of metal and hardcore is surely not a new one, but not often does it sound so fresh and full of bite. The lyrics are scathingly delivered amidst the ruckus that is the music behind it. The guitars blast quickly and effectively, with the drum and bass combination steadfastly anchoring it all.

While the album is without any true standout tracks, that allows for each and every minute to be as solid as the last. Be it the invigorating guitar squeals of "Ad Nauseum," or the more traditional hardcore delivery found in "No Cure For Cancer," there's simply no weak patches to speak of.

Full of unrelenting intensity and musicianship to match, Hope You Choke's self titled effort will no doubt please fans of metal and hardcore alike.

-Jordan Rogowski

Jandek

Newcastle Sunday
Corwood Industries, 2006
PO Box 15375, Houston, Texas 77220

Diane Cluck

Macy's Day Bird/Black With Green Leaves
Important Records, 2006
www.importantrecords.com

After a series of dreary and indistinct releases in 2005, Texas recluse Jandek mixes things up in a refreshing manner with this live(!) double(!) CD recorded May 22, 2005 in Gateshead, England. For over 80 minutes Mr. Smith jams with drummer Alex Neilson and bassist Richard Youngs to an enthusiastic crowd. Our man sports a highly flanged/phased/fucked electric guitar sound and his playing is better here than it has been in years, with his backup team flailing about relentlessly. This is the Jandek record we've been waiting on for quite a while now, very energetic and detailed and more than scratching the itch. Lyrics are as bleak as ever, with song titles like "Mangled and Dead" and my favorite, "Cottage In The Rain." Excellent.

NYC songstress Diane Cluck is like a feminine reflection of an earlier, quiet, acoustic Jandek, with a stunning voice that is beautiful and haunting at once. This double CD reissues her 2001 debut and its 2002 followup EP, self-released by Cluck back then and tough to track down in original format now. Sparse piano and guitar arrangements augment Cluck's engaging songs perfectly, and the care that went into these recordings is obvious. Like much of Jandek's earlier work, the production conveys a sense of the artist being not just right in the room with the listener, but actually inside the listener's head. An amazingly intimate release from one of the best songwriters I've ever come across.

-Chad Kelsey

Kind of Like Spitting

Learn: The Songs of Phil Ochs
Hush Records, 2006
hushrecords.com

Phil Ochs was a seminal folk singer in the '60s and '70s, known for protest songs such as "I Ain't Marchin'

Any more" and "Draft Dodger Rag." Though often called a contemporary of Bob Dylan, I've found his songs ultimately more compelling over the years.

With this record, Kind of Like Spitting cover nine of Ochs's songs in the same style — acoustic guitar and singer(s). I have mixed feelings about this record. On the one hand, I'm ecstatic that a new generation of people are being exposed to Phil Ochs and his legacy, that they appreciate and understand the importance of protest music in these days of war.

On the other hand, Ben Barnett and David J don't have the vocal versatility or warmth to really pull it off. The familiar chords really resonate with me, but the singing is often flat and nowhere near as captivating. I think there's something to be said for taking a song and making it your own, instead of trying to replicate the original — as is done here. No one can be Phil Ochs. Yeah, call me a purist, OK? If you like KOLS, buy this record. If you want to know about Phil Ochs, go for the original.

-Jen Angel

Lambsbread

Greasy Channel
Maim & Disfigure, 2006
mmnddsfgr@yahoo.com

Monstrously fucked post-Sun City Girls free from this Columbus, Ohio trio of basket cases. Drone dude Zac Davis goes Ginn-on-steroids with his guitar, Kathy O'Dell pushes lysergic feedback out of hers, and Shane Mackenzie smokes mad crack in between car wreck drum fills. This stuff is kinda like Borbetomagus times infinity, but without the horns getting in the way. It's a doom trip, man, and there's not any way out. It's raised on equal parts SST jamming and American Tapes gurgle and sputter, perfect for both hipster post punkers and armchair cosmonauts like myself. The original edition of 60 on Megafauna Records is long gone, but the Maim & Disfigure reissue has five extra tracks, so go for it, head.

-Chad Kelsey

reviews continued next page



The Lawrence Arms
Oh! Calcutta!
Fat Wreck Chords, 2006
www.fatwreck.com

I wanted to review this CD just so I could send it as a gift to an avid Lawrence Arms fan. Now, I'm sitting here looking at it and the dubbed cassette copy I made and grappling with which one to mail to him. You know you've got an honest to goodness punk album when 12+ songs clock in under 35 minutes. Thirty-five minutes of virtually non-stop and unstoppable pop. Not the most unique musical output but a tried and true one for sure. Power pop? Pop punk? Whatever classification you want to file it under it's upbeat enough to shake your ass to and still hard enough to nod that head until your neck aches. Dueling, yet equally scratchy, vocals deliver lyrics about feeling lost, lonely, and disillusioned. There is a fight against those feelings waged with living for the moment, drug references, and party anthems. And what's with Fat making a habit of releasing albums with biting criticisms of the Van's Warped Tour, largely Fat's baby? (See Propagandhi's "Rock for Sustainable Capitalism" and the bonus track right here on *Oh! Calcutta!*) Let's hear it for self-accountability!

-dominic armao

The Like Young

Last Secrets
Polyvinyl Records, 2006
www.polyvinylrecords.com

A boy. A girl. More solid pop rock and roll than two people should theoretically be able to make without enlisting in the help of a couple of friends. This has been playing non-stop while I'm putting this issue together, and I'm still sad that we couldn't get these two to drive down from Chicago for the *Clamor* party last March.

-Jason Kucsma

Harvey Lindo

Kid Gloves — A Modaji Long Player
Compost Records, 2006
www.compost-records.com

This album was originally released during the summer of 2005 in Japan and unfortunately only now are we, the west, getting to hear this. Harvey Lindo is Domic Jacobson, a producer whose background is ensconced in electronic music, which implies a certain degree of knowledge regarding hip-hop. And that's mostly what this album is, hip-hop. There are a number of tracks featuring Phillipa Alexander, who lays her voice over chilled out dance tracks. But let's not have our focus deterred by the less than pleasurable moments. Count Bass D, one of numerous guest MCs, is featured on "Rugged Individuals." Here he sounds as self-assured and mellow as Guru at his peak. Amongst the instrumentals, there are some funky numbers, but also a few club-influenced tracks that don't come across as ridiculous, unlistenable or even out of place on this album. *Kid Gloves* is able to balance this producer's electronic tendencies with his interest in hip-hop without one detracting from the other.

-Dave Cantor

The Loved Ones

Keep Your Heart
Fat Wreck Chords
www.fatwreck.com

As *Clamor* readers know, Fat Wreck Chords have a real history in the punk rock scene of the 1990s. Face To



The Like Young

Face, Lagwagon, NOFX, all rose to popularity as label flagships, now, in 2006, a new breed of bands will be carrying that very same flag. Among those are Philadelphia upstarts *The Loved Ones*.

This three piece knows just how to truly pack a punch, combining powerful melodies with surging rhythms and tight and effective drumming. Singer Dave Hause's scruffy stylings set the tone brilliantly and give each song its own unique identity. The up-tempo "Over 50 Club" accomplishes a great deal in less than a minute and a half, with the guitar work cascading over the rousing drum fills and powerful bass lines. Even in a more reserved effort such as "The Odds," each musician gels in terrific fashion with the others, giving ample reason to tap your foot and sing along.

It may be early in 2006, but this is a terrific punk rock record and it captures the spirit of everything the genre wants to be. It'll be a hard one to top.

-Jordan Rogowski

Nausea

The Punk Terrorist Anthology Vol. 1
The Punk Terrorist Anthology Vol. 2: '85-'88
Alternative Tentacles, 2006
alternativetentacles.com

The '80s you see on TV these days doesn't look much like the one I lived through. MTV, *The Preppie Handbook*, and Reagan were the way that the '80s went down in the suburb where I came up and me and my like-minded fellows huddled in cold, dark rooms — crappy clubs doing all-ages shows and abandoned warehouses to listen to bands that shared our dissatisfaction with the sunny and stupidly optimistic tone of the era. These records bring back the '80s as I recall them. Hardcore bands were experimenting with metal, politics was everywhere, and only morons were optimists.

Nausea were a product of their time, but that doesn't mean that they were just a composite of the influences and feelings in the air. On both of these records, Nausea prove that they could deliver the goods with power, clarity, and honesty and make it seem sooooo simple. Taking cues from the awesome riffs of Discharge, the ideological integrity of Crass and the Ex, and the cool parts of metal, Nausea built a sound that bludgeoned you with

power while reminding us of the value of collaboration during the waning days of the Decade of Competition.

Originally self-released in 2001, *The Punk Terrorist Anthology Vol. 1* features most of their *Extinction* LP along with a bunch of singles and comp tracks. The shit rages pretty hard — alternating male and female vox, pounding drums, and thick guitars with occasional (ok, more than occasional) mangled solos. This record has the jams on which Nausea's rep rests and, nearly twenty years later, they still hold up while a rugged video of "Cybergod" shows you what you missed, liveshow-wise.

The Punk Terrorist Anthology Vol. 2: '85-'88 digs deeper into the vaults. With classics like "Smash Racism" and "MTV (Feeding the Fortune 500)," we get to see a fuller picture of Nausea's politics in smudgy demo sound. Pretty fucking hot. Covers of the Subhumans, Discharge, Omega Tribe, and the Business pay tribute to their roots and "New Generation" is one amazing punk-assed anthem.

At about 75 minutes a pop, there is no good reason not to buy these. Nausea pointed the way to the countless crust bands that followed and remind us that a band can be effective format to express rage, hope, and solidarity. Buy now and see how little has changed since Reagan Youth were still youths

-Keith McCrea

Nightmares on Wax

In a Space Outta Sound
Warp, 2005
www.warprecords.com

Instrumental electronic and hip-hop albums are always a tenuous outing. Whether or not one enjoys the album as a whole, there are inevitably a few moments that are less than pleasing. I suppose, though, that this notion is applicable to any album of any genre, but specifically a useful thought in the case of *Nightmares on Wax*. In the mid-nineties NOW was hailed as the leader of instrumental albums, much like the one before me now. *In a Space Outta Sound*. Unlike previous releases by NOW, the first two thirds of this album eschew the more electronic sounds that Warp Records is known for and simply goes for seemingly organic grooves. Of course this is all production tckery Jamaican influence infect a num-

ber of cuts here, which is always a nice coupling with hip hop. There are a few moments of soul and ambient music getting the best of the producer, but overall a more than satisfying release from a name that is and should be synonymous with instrumental music.

-Dave Cantor

Of Montreal

Live in Ann Arbor – April 9, 2006

Polyvinyl Records

www.polyvinylrecords.com

I stood in the back of a crowded bar with about 400 of my closest friends. I could barely see Of Montreal without pushing my way to the front of an unbelievably packed crowd, but it was still the best live show I've seen in a long time. Over an hour of solid joy-filled, pretension-free energy. Of Montreal is definitely comfortable in their skin, and they look damn good in it. I said a few issues back that Polyvinyl is kicking my ass with releases like *The Like Young*, *Decibully*, and *Of Montreal*. I can only imagine how the new *Aloha* is going to sound.

-Jason Kucsma

Pattern Is Movement

Stowaway

Noreaster Failed Industnes, 2005

www.nflabel.com, www.patternismovement.com

I think all art students should be forced to start bands, and all musicians should be forced to study art. Good things often come of it: *Wire's* herkey-jerky punk, *Crass's* sound collages and entire aesthetic, the *White Stripes* garage-rock-meets-Godard minimalism. Particularly if you are going to work within the constraints of bass/guitar/drums, you either need to be a 19-year-old fuck-up going balls out, or have some sort of grounding philosophy. Otherwise you end up being *Nickelback* — and no one wants that.

I don't know if *Pattern Is Movement* are art school kids, but they certainly sound like it. On the surface, they are your typical indie band — bass/guitar/drums, well-versed in both *Belle and Sebastian* and *Built to Spill*. However, they defy the limitations of indie rock and create something much more interesting and unique.

Their name tells you what they are going for — their music is all about patterns, repeating patterns, particu-

larly. "Maple," the opening song, starts out with a simple melody and the line "I love you when you come near/ Standing naked in the door." Then it repeats the line over and over and over, until it goes from being a cute little melody into being something kind of disturbing.

The resulting album is something that is sweet, whimsical, and a little unsettling. The songs can be enjoyed on both a purely aesthetic level as a fun little indie tunes, or they can be appreciated for their experiments in song structures and sound. Like a *Truffaut* film, there is a depth to *Pattern Is Movement*, but they are also entertaining, and you don't need an MFA to appreciate them. I'm glad bands like *Pattern Is Movement* are keeping indie music interesting, and I highly recommend this disc to anyone bored with the ordinary.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Shoplifting

Body Stories

Kill Rock Stars, 2006

www.killrockstars.com

Escapism ruled the sound of the first half of this decade. From the guitar-based dance bands that have mutated to rule mainstream airwaves, to underground noise jammers who continue to snowball in popularity, musicians find audiences all the more willing to be swept away by gentle, deafening drones, harsh frequencies, or hedonistic disco beats and go-go bass lines. *Shoplifting* holds on to the revivalism aspect of these times, but eschews the escapism. On their *Body Stories* CD, the band spawns a creature comprised of equal parts no-wave and riot grrrl revivalism, their strongest suit being their lyrical resoluteness.

The disc opens with a not-exactly-inviting groove that holds steady for the first couple songs. The opening salvo, "M. Sally" (the M. abbreviated for copyright purposes) takes the *Wilson Pickett* standard on a gender reversal journey. The vocals are genderless, and perhaps this is why they chose to open with this otherwise unremarkable track.

"Talk of the Town" is the empowering musical centerpiece of the album. The song starts out off-kilter, the dual vocalists becoming less obtuse and exposing a fair amount of vulnerability, quietly admitting they are "precious kid(s) no more, just the talk of the town." It's a front of course; this rape story doesn't end like that, and with a rousing "fuck that," the cheerleading, protesting chorus kicks in, the rhythm section finally kicks it proper, and guitarist Chris

Pugmire follows with a serpentine guitar line that wouldn't sound out of place coming from Keith Levene circa *Meta/Box*.

Shoplifting's affectation for sloppy dub doesn't stop there. Check the interesting musical turn on "Cover to Cover." The instrumental "Flying Factory" is *Shoplifting* telling us their record and bookshelves are equally deep, but where are the vibes and the ghostly organs that close out the track on the rest of the songs? Other songs on the album address castration as liberation, the semiotics of terrorism, and most frequently, the ambiguity of sexual ethics in an entirely convincing manner. Beyond the name-checkable influences, there's a surprising amount of *Dead Kennedys* in these songs, a pleasant realization.

Shoplifting gets their point across, and its one that needs to be heard. If the band can become less of a musical mixed-bag, their records will become the formidable weapons they want them to be.

-Matt McDermott

Stereo Total

Juke Box Alarm

Kill Rock Stars, 2005

www.killrockstars.com

The synthesizer can be a dangerous instrument. It can either provide a band with a fresh and unique sound, full of jarring dissonance and foot tapping rhythms, or it can be the single most annoying thing you've ever heard in your life.

Luckily, Germany's *Stereo Total* are well versed in the art of tact, as their synthesizer use only serves to enhance the lush pop melodies that the band specializes in. The subtle fuzz of feedback behind the delightful vocals of singer *Angie Reed* offer a stark contrast but a terrific mixture. Opening up with the heavily synthesized "Holiday Inn," the bands charms are immediately evident in both delivery and overall composition. Simplistic, but wildly effective, each track offers up enough of its own identity to feel new every single time.

An enjoyable electro pop record that impresses in a variety of areas and should score another hit for *Kill Rock Stars*.

-Jordan Rogowski

Stereo Total

My Melody

Kill Rock Stars, 2006

www.killrockstars.com

One of my favorite genres of music is sixties female Euro pop, and *Stereo Total* serve it up in spades. *My Melody* offers up 19 tracks of sweet, goofy, non-English goodness, with lyrics in German and French. I was in a horrible, horrible mood the first time I put this disc on, and it immediately put me in a good mood. How can you be bummed out listening to a girl sing about the issues of make-up in German over a quirky synth beat? You just can't.

Stereo Total could easily be the younger sibling of *Stereolab*, only while *Stereolab's* songs are overtly political, *Stereo Total* keep things much lighter. I don't speak French or German, but from what I can understand, they aren't exactly criticizing the current socio-economic system and fomenting socialist revolution. Most of the songs are about love, I think, except for the songs dedicated to *Yoko Ono* and *Ringo Starr*, and the one about being a badass disc jockey.

Besides their own stuff, they also cover *Serge Gainsbourg*, and do a rowdy version of "Drive My Car" titled "Tu Peux Conduire Ma Bagnole". It all sounds very



sixties and yet contemporary. The disc brought me back to the heyday of the Britpop revival in the mid-nineties, and the nights I spent at Bardot-a-Go Go celebrating Mr. Gainsbourg's birthday with the rest of the San Francisco francophiles. Maybe that's because *My Melody* was originally released in 1999, that kinder, simpler time, before the economy crashed and we decided to go to war with the world. *My Melody* is a charming and enjoyable record, and is guaranteed to do more to lift your mood than all of the antidepressants on the earth.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Tarkio

Omnibus

Kill Rock Stars, 2005

www.killrockstars.com

The vocalist, guitar player, and chief songwriter of this now-defunct band is Colin Meloy. Currently, you can find him appreciating his recent and ongoing success in a group he now heads called The Decemberists. He is now a rock star. And because of this I need to point out the inherent irony in a label called "Kill Rock Stars" releasing a band that hosts a current rock star as leader. This double album, which encompasses the band's lifespan, was recorded in the late nineties, when Meloy was not a rock star, but a college student in Missoula. So is a label that prides themselves on releasing interesting, unheard music and making new underground rock stars guilty of cashing in? Kinda. Surely, a great deal of people want to hear the band that birthed Meloy. However, in the liner notes there is a picture of a rejection letter from Arista Records. So, in fact this band, Tarkio, sought a deal and could not find one. Is this the fault of KRS? Nope. But it is the fault of the label for releasing two hours of country rock that rarely varies in tempo while sustaining a measure of interest due to the entertaining vocals and well-crafted song. Should Meloy be a rock star? I guess so. Should Tarkio have gotten a record deal in the nineties? Probably not.

-Dave Cantor

Ursula Rucker

Ma'at Mama

!K7 Records

www.k7.com

Ursula Rucker's mouth is a womb; when poetry flows from her lips, she brings truth to life. On her third album *Ma'at Mama*, Rucker speaks as the mother of truth, the album a 15-track manifesto for restoring ma'at — universal order and balance — to a world plagued with injustice.

On "Rant (Hot in Here)," a funky track punctuated by blaring trumpets, Rucker prods, "Here/put this gun in your hand/go shoot some shit up," and then proceeds to spit verbal bullets at everything from poverty, the prison industrial complex, and gun culture, to war, AIDS in Africa, and the Patnot Act.

"Children's Poem" highlights the ma'at mama's concern with raising our children more positively, protecting them from the negativity of an adult world rife with pedophilia, child murderers, and inadequate schooling. "No/this is not just another poem about children/it is a prayer/a plea/a lament," Rucker declares.

The album also explores various manifestations of black womanhood, and she infuses songs like "For Women" (a reinterpretation of the Nina Simone classic) and "Poon Tang Clan" with feminist impulses. In the latter song, Rucker takes on the personas of Black Pearl, Rah Rah, and Half Blood, womyn who speak



their truths unabashedly over a simple drum and cymbal beat.

Not singularly concerned with new world order, she gets personal over the futuristic boom-bap of "I Ain't (Yo Punk Ass Bitch)," the mellow, steady beat of "Uh Uh," and the mid-tempo groove of "Broken," speaking on the difficulties of relationships and her refusal to surrender who she is to who her lover wants her to be; at the risk of losing love, she stays true to herself.

With *Ma'at Mama*, Rucker proves that poetry is just as powerful on wax as it is on paper as she uses her words to speak the truth that will restore order and set us all free.

-Kendra Graves

Various Artists

States of Abuse

Entartete Kunst 2006

www.entartedkunst.info

Entartete Kunst are a San Francisco-based label who specialize in avant-garde electronica and radical politics. On *States of Abuse*, they've lined up 19 tracks of politically charged hip-hop from both North America and Europe. Hip-hop has replaced punk as the global music of rebellion, and this disc is the proof. It's striking to see that people from so many different places sharing a similar musical language and political ideology. There are MCs rapping in French, Italian, and Spanish, along with British and American artists.

There are a lot of gems on this disc. Among them are BC400's pissed-off rant on Bush and Chirac, which comes through even if you don't understand French; Filastine's "Judas Goat" which incorporates Middle Eastern instruments; and Giddee Limit's blippy, gnomy "Revolution Soldier." These tracks combine banging beats with righteous anger, which is both cathartic and inspirational, just like a good punk song.

As with all comps, not everything here is solid gold. A couple of the songs are too preachy and simplistic; I appreciated that their hearts were in the right place, but wished they had more finesse in turning political arguments into good songs. This comp is definitely about the message first and music second, and sometimes it showed.

However, the majority of this disc is good, and it does a great job of presenting a unified, global assault against

the Bush Regime, the War on Terrorism, and corporate greed. I've heard a million rappers yell "fuck the police", but this was the first time I heard one quote Proudhon. This is sure to be the soundtrack of the next WTO protest, and worth checking out.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Various Artists

The We That Sets Us Free

Building a World Without Prisons

Justice Now, 2006

www.jnow.org

This CD accomplishes a rare thing: A compilation of poems, spoken word, interviews, and songs meant to educate about the prison industrial complex and the affect of incarceration on women, their families, and communities also moves you with strong rhythms, strong images, strong music. An educational tool that can challenge and instruct the most educated organizer for prison abolition will also reach those with no background or understanding of the role of prisons in the US, the physical realities of negligent health care, sexual abuse, worker exploitation, or the emotional effect of cages, humiliation, and state abuse. An account of a most oppressed group in the US (complete with staggering statistics — women of color comprise over 60% of imprisoned women nationally, about 80% of women in prison in California are mothers, the world's two largest women's prisons are both located in Chowchilla, California) through its very honesty and thoroughness also leaves us hopeful and more open than when we heard the first beat.

This is a CD you may get for the information — where else can you hear women activists inside and outside of prisons delivering truly cogent and incisive analysis — but you'll keep coming back to for the music and the beauty. Which is fitting for a CD that aims to open listeners' imaginations to the idea and reality of a world without prisons, and to challenge us to conceptualize a society that bases relationships on compassion, respect, and meeting everyone's needs. Another rare thing. To so fully convey that possibility, to let us bear witness, and, in the process, to liberate and transform us too.

-Sarah H Cross

Milking and Scratching: Hand-Made Films

Directed by Naomi Uman
Peripheral Produce DVD, 2005
www.peripheralproduce.com

This collection of five short films by Naomi Uman, a former private chef to Malcolm Forbes, Calvin Klein, and Gloria Vanderbilt, is both compelling and introspective. Here Uman examines the role of women as sexual objects, explores the nature of the creation of films, and experiments in telling a narrative through light and movement on the screen.

In the first short film, *Leche*, Uman portrays the life of a contemporary farming family in Aguascalientes, Mexico as a timeless life style of living off of the land. While this can be a hard, even cruel life at times, the film seems to glorify its simplicity. It shows the poverty and lack of education of the featured family in an almost positive light through scenes like a grandmother making cheese and children learning math by counting bottle caps. This is in stark contrast to her second film, *Mala Leche*, which shows members of this same family some years later after having moved to Pixley, CA. This film shows a mother shopping for groceries at a Food Depot, and an alcoholic father who gets through life without speaking English or being able to read or write in any language. The town of Pixley is centered on a large dairy in which men work twelve hours a day six days a week — a stand in representing the evils of modernization and capitalism. Instead of the quaint black and white footage of the former film this one presents life in all the colors of modern slavery. Though illegal families are not allowed to get Social Security the film makes a point of showing they are still given tax payer ID numbers. This short film shows how the green breast of nature can be exploited for profit.

Removed shows clips from 1970s pornography with the women shown only as white empty spaces, hollow and less than human. This makes a powerful statement about the role of women not only in media but in their everyday lives where they may feel invisible and merely tactile objects deriving worth only from their use and not their identity.

Finally, *Hand Eye Coordination* gives an interesting look at the way in which films are made and opens a unique window into the creative process while *Private Movie* is the illumination of a life through light and movement. It conveys emotion while leaving the literal interpretation of the action on screen very open to individual divination. Check it out.

-Jessica Neal

Silence:

In Search of Black Female Sexuality in America

Directed by Mya Baker
National Film Network, 2004
www.nationalfilmnetwork.com

Where is the voice of black women regarding their own sexuality in America? Why are black women the fastest growing group of new HIV cases? Where did sexual liberation leave us? What do black women think about the images portrayed by the music industry? Where does God come in to all this? Mya B addresses all these questions and more in her courageous documentary *Silence: In Search of Black Female Sexuality in America*.

The documentary primarily interviews with notable scholars-religious, medical, and academic-and everyday women on the streets of Chicago and New York. She intersperses the stories and opinions of these real life women with historical footage from film, TV, and adver-

tising to paint a portrait of the social stigma around sexuality in the black community.

Women, old and young, speak about the way sex was introduced to them growing up. "I grew up in a black household where sexual discussions were unheard of," says one woman. This sentiment is echoed by most of the women throughout the film. "Don't do it," is the most that some women ever heard from their families about sex.

The documentary's images are repetitive. The same images pound out a rhythm of systematic sexual oppression in the viewer's mind. It is a compelling vision into the roots of cultural silence. It speaks to the absolute necessity for communication about sex, and the dangers of growing up without free information.

I found particularly fascinating the commentary on the ties between religion and sex. "Due to the link between teachings...many black women struggle to embrace sexuality without sinning," she says. Mya B also confronts the classic and still prevalent black female characters in modern mythologies, Jemima and Jezebel.

She states, "The belief that blacks are more sexuality active than any other ethnic group predates slavery," and proves its persistence through interviews on the streets.

Another huge topic of discussion around black female sexuality is the characterization of black women in pop media, the "video ho" and her relationship to black women's sexual freedom. The point is brought up that around the advent of music videos, white rock bands portrayed extremely misogynistic images of white women, and suffered serious fallout from the feminist community. Now, however, those motifs transferred onto black women draw much less disapproval.

Unfortunately, her documentary has a decidedly heterosexual focus and the silence around queer black female sexuality remains. *Silence* is her first full-length film (her first, the short *Warrior Queen* came out in 1994) and is nonetheless a film worthy of praise, and, I hope, only the beginning of what we'll see from Mya B.

-Surgeon Scofflaw aka Natalie Brewster Nguyen

Starter Set:

New Dance and Music For The Camera

Various Artists
Kill Rock Stars
www.killrockstars.com

This DVD is not music videos of new dance music, but rather a series of short films of new modern dance set to new music. At first I was disappointed but I hung around for the charm. I'm not the biggest dance expert, but I've watched the arresting visuals and humor of new dance folks in Philly like Headlong Dance Troupe or Power Performance Project with enjoyment and respect. Modern dance has benefited from its collision with performance art in recent decades and vice versa. The ability of dancers to throw a flexible amount of narrative, props, and extra symbolism into the dancing helps keep the audience's attention. Meanwhile, the ability of performance to rest on the aesthetics of movement helps keep



Starter Set DVD

it floating whenever narratives and text run thin.

The best segments are the ones that occupy this bridge between the two elements like "Laundrodsey Part II: The Detergency." The DVD throws the third element of short filmmaking into the mix with the same level of mutual benefit. Janet Pants Dance Theatre's "I'm the Insides" adds different types of shots and voiceovers to enhance their flashback of "the highlights 1970s gestalt therapy session." Leg and Pants Danse Theatre use the backdrop of a breathtaking plain under a really big sky to enhance "DNA: a Blood Memory." Overall, the DVD is worth watching and will help bring together indy scene folks in the modern dance world.

-Chris White

War i\$ Sell

Directed and Produced by Brian Standing
Prolefeed Studios, 2005
www.prolefeedstudios.com

Baghdad fell in April 2003, and with it that infamous statue of Saddam. *War i\$ Sell* opens on this scene, which at the time purported to show a large crowd of Iraqis celebrating "freedom" by toppling their absent leader in effigy. This, we were supposed to think, is why the war was worth it.

But zoom out, as director Brian Standing does, and the images tell a different story: in the bigger picture, the crowd is small and the U.S. military a hulking presence — a terribly amateur performance of a painstakingly crafted script, one more scene intended to add to the heroic narrative of Gulf War II.

The big picture is what Standing wants his viewers to see. According to the film, 40 percent of what is passed off as news in America today is public relations from government and corporations; in short, propaganda. This remarkable statistic demonstrates why *War i\$ Sell* is so necessary (and why there are so many stories about weight loss fads on the evening news). The anti-war movement couldn't even buy advertising to promote their cause, but Dick Cheney's press releases are read verbatim at 6 p.m. So much for the liberal media.

Moving easily between footage from both Gulf Wars, 9/11, and World Wars I and II, exploring perspectives political, educational and anthropological, *War i\$ Sell* draws a direct connection between propaganda techniques and advertising. Selling running shoes, selling war; it's all the same thing; it's all about the branding. The shaky camera movements and scenes of grainy video seem an implicit critique of the polished advertising/propaganda that Standing condemns.

"Public diplomacy" and "public information" are not new, and Standing shows how campaigns were implemented to great effect during World Wars I and II, and with considerable impact during Gulf War I. The excellent archival materials included on the DVD offer a fascinating overview of propaganda through the 20th century. The messages are familiar: one World War II poster proclaims, "We're on God's side," while another shows a Nazi stabbing a Bible. Still another informs us, "Victory may be measured in gallons (of oil); keep it flowing," while a film poster for "Oil Goes to War" invites us to "[s]ee how petroleum production is helping the war effort!" Sixty years ago oil helped us win the war; today it is a compelling reason for it. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Tracing the evolution of propaganda, from posters (WWI) to film (WWII) to the modern phenomenon of propaganda as world-historical event, *War i\$ Sell* urges vigilance in a world of lies and half-truths. "All propaganda strives to be invisible," John Stauber says early in the film. "Recognizing propaganda is the key to resisting it."

-Kandice Ardiel

mere



TEXT

Subsubcommandante Robin Hood

PHOTOS

Ian Teh - ianteh.com

Run Away From The Circus

“ We are rebels because we will always desert and disobey those who abuse and accumulate power. Because rebels transform everything - the way they live, create, love, eat, laugh, play, learn, trade, listen, think and most of all the way they rebel.

We are clowns because what else can one be in such a stupid world. Because inside everyone is a lawless clown trying to escape. Because nothing undermines authority like holding it up to ridicule. Because a clown can survive everything and get away with anything. ”

-CIRCA recruitment materials

Last summer an army of rebel clowns marched and played through the streets of Edinburgh and Glasgow, along the security fences of Faslane Nuclear Submarine Base, and through the hills and woods of Scotland. We confronted the eight most dangerous men in the world — the G8 — with ridicule and disobedience; from clowning traffic to a standstill — blocking G8 delegates on the A9 motorway — to undermining police discipline with laughter and games.

The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) formed to greet Bush's visit to London in November 2003, and rebel clowning has since spread around the world. Rebel clowning is an experiment in the search to find new forms of direct action. By bringing together the ancient art of clowning with the more recent practice of disobedience and nonviolent direct action, rebel clowns work with our bodies to peel off the activist armor and find the inside person who once felt so deeply. To be a clown, we find courage to both feel and overcome the fear and despair that makes activists withdraw behind that armor.

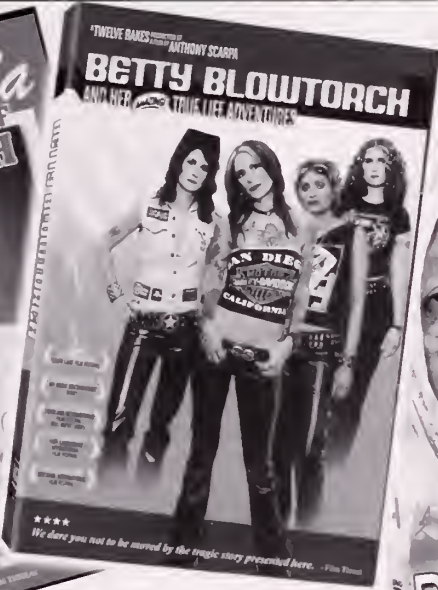
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ClownArmy.org



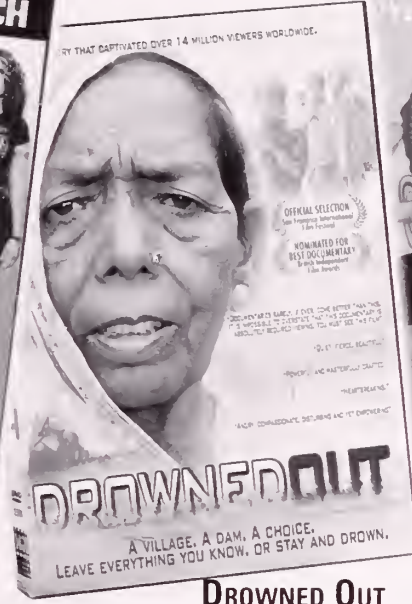
WE BELIEVE THAT MOVIES SHOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE.



POPAGENDA
 This acclaimed and award-winning film chronicles anti-corporate pop artist Ron English in his quest to 'liberate' billboards with his subversive images.



BETTY BLOWTORCH
 For two years a filmmaker follows the all girl rock band Betty Blowtorch documenting the bands ferocious sound and dangerously low-tech pyrotechnic show, unaware of the turmoil and tragedy that he will ultimately capture.



DROWNED OUT
 Shot over three years by director Franny Armstrong (McLibel), Drowned Out tells the true story of an Indian village who decides to stay at home and drown rather than make way for the new massive Narmada Dam.

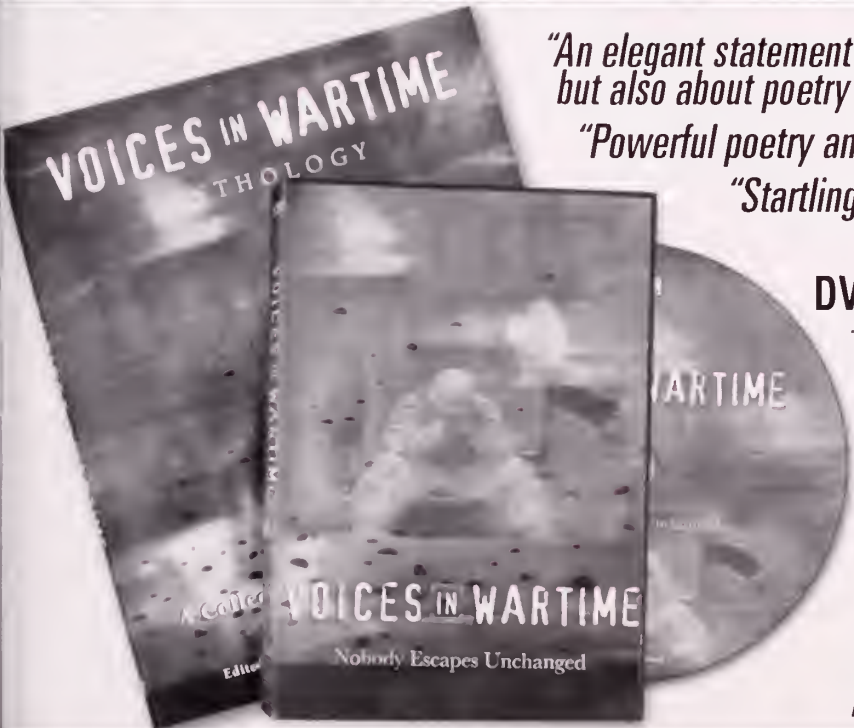


TIM ROBBINS' EMBEDDED LIVE
 Embedded Live is a ripped-from-the-headlines satire about the madness surrounding the brave men and women on the front lines in a Middle East conflict. Written, directed and starring Tim Robbins.



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www.voicesinwartime.org

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Watch the trailer at www.crimethinc.com.
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PICKAXE

An eclectic mix of activists take a stand to protect an old growth forest from logging at Warner Creek in the Willamette National Forest of Oregon, blockading the logging road and repelling the State Police. Over months a community builds around the illegal blockade as it develops into the Cascadia Free State and similar actions spread across the region. Years after its release, *Pickaxe* has become a classic document of the potential for grassroots direct action to achieve victory against the forces of both government and big business. Lovingly crafted by the participants themselves, the film expertly presents every moment, from confrontation to celebration. [94 min.]

THE MIAMI MODEL

Against the prescribed template of paramilitary oppression, information warfare, and profit above all values, activists converge in Miami to demonstrate grassroots resistance, creative action, and international solidarity—a clash between competing visions of globalization, soon to be known as the Miami Model. Indymedia activists shot hundreds of hours documenting the 2003 FTAA protests in Miami and shaped it into a documentary that cuts through the mass media blackout to reveal the brutal repression and assault on civil liberties that took place, as well as the inspiring alternatives to capitalist globalization that were also in full effect in Miami. [91 min.]

BREAKING THE SPELL

An hour-long look at the 1999 Seattle WTO protests and the anarchists who traveled there to set a new precedent for militant confrontation, this documentary picks up where *Pickaxe* left off. Filmed in the thick of the action, including footage that aired nationally on *60 Minutes*, it captures a moment when world history was up for grabs. [63 min.]

FIVE SHORT FILMS

An hour of shorts with three documented thinktank experiments (*Safetybike* [3 min.], *How to Turn a Bicycle into a Record Player* [13 min.], *Auto Re-Vision* [26 min.]) and two CrimethInc. essays recreated for the screen by SubMedia (*Join the Resistance*, *Fall in Love* [17 min.], *Why I Love Shoplifting From Big Corporations* [5 min.]).

