

BARBARA EHRENREICH CALLS FOR **PUBLIC DANCING**

MARCH 2007

# IN THESE TIMES

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the new town hall?

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Return of the health  
care monster

## PREACHING REVOLUTION

Evangelicals you  
need to know

BY ZACK EXLEY



**PLUS:**

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bashes Bush's budget

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new **counterinsurgency manual**

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get to be called . . .

# hippies?

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## Which Side Are We On?

**I**N EARLY FEBRUARY, PRESIDENT Bush told a group of Wall Street executives that “income inequality is real; it’s been rising for more than 25 years. ... And the question is whether we respond to the income inequality we see with policies that help lift people up, or tear others down.”

It’s ironic that this president raised the issue of income inequality because his own trickle-down economic policies have contributed to the growing gap between the very rich and everyone else, a situation worse today than at any time since the ’20s.

Despite Bush’s professed concern, the budget he recently submitted to Congress will exacerbate the enormous gap between the rich and the poor, squeeze the middle class, reward war profiteers and hurt those most in need.

The president’s budget cuts the number of children receiving childcare assistance by 300,000 and terminates food stamps for 280,000 families. At a time when veterans urgently need access to healthcare, the president’s budget imposes a new enrollment fee for Veterans Administration healthcare as high as \$750. And the list goes on and on.

Over the next decade, the Bush budget would cut Medicare by \$252 billion and Medicaid by \$28 billion. In 2008 alone, education will be cut by \$1.5 billion and the Environmental Protection Agency will lose \$509 million.

The administration claims we just don’t have the money to reduce childhood poverty or provide universal healthcare. Meanwhile, millionaires would receive an average tax break of \$160,000 per year at a cost of \$739 billion over the next decade. And, the president’s 2008 defense budget—\$608 billion—is more than at the height of the Vietnam and Korean Wars.

Class warfare is being waged in America and the wrong side is winning. It is time for the new Democratic majority in Congress to stand with the working families of our country. It is time we offer a

budget that reflects the needs of working people instead of the wealthy.

And it is time for citizens across the nation to stand up and demand that their representatives and senators, Democrats and Republicans, do so and thereby represent the interests of all Americans, not a select few.

We must ask: Which side are we on? Are we for the rich and the powerful or the middle class and working families?

As a member of the Senate Budget Committee, I see a pretty clear answer. I will not be voting for more tax breaks for the outgoing CEO of Home Depot, who recently received a \$210 million golden parachute. Rather, I will be voting to substantially increase financial aid for low and middle class families so that every American, regardless of income, can receive a college education.

I will not support a tax cut for the former CEO of Pfizer, who received a \$200 million compensation package. Instead, I will vote to substantially increase funding for childcare so that families can find affordable and quality care for their children.

The former CEO of ExxonMobil, who managed to get a \$400 million retirement package, does not need more tax relief. It is far more important that we keep our promises to the veterans of this country who now find themselves on waiting lists to get the health care they need.

If we as a nation are serious about creating a more egalitarian society, we need to invest more federal resources in education, health care, housing, infrastructure, environmental protection and sustainable energy. We also have to reduce our national debt. Given that reality, Congress must develop the courage to stand up to the big money interests and roll back the tax breaks for the wealthiest one percent, stop corporate welfare, eliminate unneeded defense weaponry, and demand that the wealthy and powerful rejoin American society.

We should do nothing less.

—Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.)

# IN THESE TIMES

“With liberty and justice for all...”

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# mixed reaction



**39** Number of times President Bush invoked references to God and Christianity in his State of the Union and Inaugural addresses.

**27** Percentage of Americans who report attending church on a weekly basis.

**64** Percentage of the population who believe religious leaders should not try to influence politicians' positions on issues according to ABC News/Washington Post Poll.

**10,594** Number of clergymen, as of Feb. 18, who had signed onto the Clergy Letter Project, acknowledging evolution as a scientific fact.

“ After all this effort, I am left with two simple sentences for policymakers. You have no military solution for the issues of Iran. And you have to make diplomacy work. ”

—RET. AIR FORCE LT. COL. SAM GARDINER, SUMMING UP HIS CONCLUSIONS FROM A WAR GAME CONDUCTED BY THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY IN FALL 2004

**LABANARAMA** BY TERRY LABAN



## QUID PRO QUO

### THE QUID:

Congress hasn't updated the Federal Railroad Safety Program since 1994, and government statistics show an increase in railroad accidents and fatalities over the past decade. Congressional debate over reauthorization began in early February, and some Democrats have been proposing improved track inspections, more thorough accident investigations and heftier fines for companies that break the rules.

### THE QUO:

"All aboard!" has been the response of the Association of American Railroads (AAR), an industry group recently hiring the relatives of key lawmakers and staffers. The father of Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.), who just took a seat on the House transportation committee, is now working as a lobbyist for Big Rail, as are the father and brother of Jennifer Esposito, the new majority staff director of the House subcommittee on railroads.



# letters



## Not Intended For Torture

I enjoyed your February issue and Mischa Gaus' "Interrogations Behind Barbed Wire." I especially appreciated the perspective that the military did not, over time, support these practices as they occur at places like Guantánamo.

Over the past several years, I have been responsible for the development of SERE 222, the course used to train and certify SERE psychologists. During that time I met and worked with many of the psychologists and administrators of that program. I rarely found that they had any particular interest in using these techniques for the interrogation of enemy combatants.

Instead, they focused on working with victims of the practice and preparing Americans who might become the victims of these practices. SERE 222 is a non-classified course and only provides information regarding the practice of psychologists in this area.

*Terry Thompson  
via e-mail*

## Shame of the Nation

I felt I had to write to you in the middle of reading your three recent articles on Guantánamo. I am totally opposed to closing Guantánamo unless every one of its inmates is freed. Because I am sure that, if the camp were closed without this condition, those detainees would just disappear into other black holes, suffering the same, or even worse, tortures.

Yes, Gitmo is the shame of the United States, and

I seem to remember that some pacifists floated "hem" a while back for a non-sexist pronoun to use as the object of verbs and prepositions.

the world is helpless to do anything about it because the United States is the best-armed bully on earth. At least the rest of us see it ... let it be a warning to us.

*Evemarie Moore  
Chicago*

## Us vs. Hem?

I thank Joel Bliefuss for giving us "ze" and "hir" in "A Politically Correct Lexicon" (February). That takes care of the nominative and possessive cases, but what about the objective and accusative?

I seem to remember that some pacifists floated "hem" a while back for a non-sexist pronoun to use as the object of verbs and prepositions. I remain in grammatical solidarity,

*Sam Abrams  
via e-mail*

## THANK YOU

We would like to honor the following people for supporting *In These Times*, and add their names to those recognized in our February anniversary issue.

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Mike Farin		

# contributors

## Come one, Come all.

In 2006, *In These Times* launched a series of panels and discussions with leading thinkers, journalists and activists, including *Nation* columnist Katha Pollitt, photojournalist and Gaza-based blogger Mohammed Omer and philosopher Slavoj Žižek. This year's events promise to be as stimulating as last. Join us at the *In These Times* Chicago office:

- **March 8, 7:00 p.m.:** Learn about the latest peace-keeping efforts in Darfur at panel discussion led by **Jen Marlowe**, author of *Darfur Diaries*. Invited guests include Illinois State **Sen. Jaqueline Collins** and Darfuri refugee and activist **Muhammed Abdel Rahman**.
- **April 23, 7:00 p.m.:** Author **Riane Eisler** will challenge our assumptions about economics and read from her latest book, *The Real Wealth of Nations*.
- **May 17, 7:00 p.m.:** Senior Editor **Christopher Hayes** and author **Jeffrey Lane** will discuss image and race in the NBA, the emergence of an influential basketball culture and Lane's new book, *Under the Boards: The Cultural Revolution in Basketball*.

And look for *In These Times* at the following conferences:

- **March 9-11:** Left Forum, New York. [www.leftforum.org](http://www.leftforum.org)
- **March 30-April 1:** Women, Action and the Media 2007, Cambridge, Mass. [www.centerfornewwords.org/wam](http://www.centerfornewwords.org/wam)
- **April 21-22:** Green Festival, Chicago. [greenfestivals.org](http://greenfestivals.org)

To schedule an event with *In These Times*, contact Associate Publisher Erin Polgreen at [erin@inthesetimes.com](mailto:erin@inthesetimes.com). You can find more information at [www.inthesetimes.com/events/](http://www.inthesetimes.com/events/).

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**ZACK EXLEY** is a senior strategist with OMP, a D.C.-based communications and fundraising firm, and co-founder and president of the New Organizing Institute. He was director of online organizing and communications at Kerry-Edwards 2004. Before that, he served as organizing director at

MoveOn.org, and played a bit part in the drama of the early Dean Internet campaign.

Exley spent the '90s working as a union organizer around the Midwest and South in various industries. At the crest of the Internet get-rich-quick bubble he wasted his time creating political parody websites, including *GWBush.com*, which drew an attack from the Bush campaign and earned him the nickname "Garbage Man" from the president.

**LISA SOUSA** is a writer, videographer and media activist barely surviving her first winter in Chicago. She co-produced the news program *StreetLevel TV* while previously living in San Francisco. Sousa currently works for *Young Chicago Authors*, a nonprofit dedicated to teaching creative writing to teenagers.

**NEIL DEMAUSE** covers poverty and corporate subsidy issues for the *Village Voice*, *Extra!* and *In These Times*.

*Field of Schemes*, his exposé on sports stadium controversies (co-authored with Joanna Cagan), is due out in a newly expanded edition from University of Nebraska Press in spring 2008. *America's Mayor*, an exposé on Rudy Giuliani that includes his essay on Giuliani's welfare policies, is due out in a newly updated edition from Soft Skull Press any day now.

He lives in Brooklyn, New York, where he expects gentrification to have pushed him into the sea by the year 2012.

**REBECCA HARRIS** is a junior at Northwestern University majoring in journalism and comparative literature. When she has free time, she spends it biking, crafting, visiting the library and making wildly unrealistic plans.

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The doll test: This little girl, like three out of four black children, chose the white doll over the black one (from *A Girl Like Me*).

PHOTO COURTESY OF YOUTUBE.COM/A.GIRL.LIKE.ME

## Making Black Voices Heard

### A new study examines minority youth opinion

BY CHELSEA ROSS

**O**N FEBRUARY 10, THE short documentary *A Girl Like Me*, about the pressures faced by young black females living in a white-dominated society, hit number one on YouTube.com's featured videos. One of the interviewees, Jennifer, 18, looks straight into the camera and confesses: "Since I was young, I considered being lighter [skinned] as ... more beautiful than being dark skinned. ... I used to think of myself as ugly because I was dark skinned."

The film, which had been viewed more than 450,000 times as *In These Times* went to press, gave voice to a population that is often talked about but rarely heard from, much less listened to. A new University of Chicago study examining the experience of black youth in post-civil rights America plans to change that.

"I talk about the two Bills—Bill O'Reilly and Bill Cosby—who are both willing to talk about and demean young

black people. [I thought] it would be interesting and important to actually have a study where young black people get to speak for themselves," says Cathy Cohen, a University of Chicago political science professor and lead researcher of the Black Youth Project ([www.BlackYouthProject.com](http://www.BlackYouthProject.com)), which was released in early February.

"We want to interrupt this narrative of young black people, even for a moment or two, so we can really think through how we can empower their voices and empower them, so they and we can better their lives," Cohen says.

The team of researchers surveyed almost 1,600 black, Latino and white youth aged 15 to 25 from several Midwestern cities, and conducted in-depth interviews with 40 black youth. The study exposes the complex attitudes and behaviors of these groups when it comes to sex, hip hop and politics.

"I've been a little surprised at how many people have said, 'Wow, [black youth] are

really thoughtful,' or, 'Oh my god, they really have positions on policy,'" Cohen says. "Well, they're the targets of these policies. Yeah, they have positions."

For example, 93 percent of black youth believe that sex education should be mandatory in high schools, and 76 percent think the government should stop funding only abstinence programs. And while almost half of black youth believe that abortion is always wrong, nearly 60 percent think that abortion should be legal in some circumstances.

The project also reports that while more than 70 percent of black and Latino youth feel they "have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in politics," more than half believe the government "cares little about them."

Sixty-eight percent of black youth believe that the government would do more to cure AIDS if more white people were afflicted with the disease.

"Even though some people will celebrate the end of Jim Crow and legal segregation," says Cohen, "these young people are very clear that in their daily lives ... they perceive young black people to experience very high levels of discrimination." Almost 70 percent of black youth reported that they had been discriminated against due to their race, and large majorities of all youth believed that "on average, the police discriminate much more against black youth than they do against white youth."

When it comes to music, 58 percent of black youth report listening to rap everyday, but even greater majorities (92 percent of females and 74 percent of males) think rap music videos portray black women offensively. In the project's third stage, which begins this spring, researchers will perform thorough content analyses of the top rap songs of the past 10 years.

Kyle Myhre, a hip-hop MC and project coordinator for the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Diversity Education Program, says the report is "an important piece of the puzzle. Any large-scale social change ... needs to be a multi-tiered assault. There need to be academic studies, but there also need to be community organizers and a media that can cover things properly."

Cohen says she plans on reaching out to those people, disseminating the study's findings to community leaders, educators and policy makers, in the hope that the study will be "used in classrooms, by community organizers and by youth advocates."

"It would be nice if one of the presidential candidates, maybe Sen. Obama, would comment on and ... listen to young black people," Cohen says. "And not just listen, but take their positions seriously; vote their voices in policy positions and make them a central component in evaluating how well this democracy is working."

She also hopes the study will draw attention to arenas where young people are already speaking out, such as spoken word poetry, underground hip-hop and independent films, such as *A Girl Like Me*.

"The question is," says Cohen, "will people listen to what they have to say?" ■

**CHELSEA ROSS** is a Chicago-based freelance writer, photographer and graphic designer. She last wrote for *In These Times* about the 2006 Bi-owners Conference in Marin County, Calif.

## The Occupation Project Begins

**O**N THE MORNING of Feb. 5, eight activists entered the downtown Chicago federal building that houses the offices of Democratic Sens. Barack Obama and Richard Durbin. Four headed directly to Obama's office; the rest gathered in the building's cafeteria and quietly went over their plans.

Gus Roddy would lie on the floor of Durbin's office, under a white sheet and paper flowers. "We're going to keep humming 'Taps' while we cover him up," said Suzanne Sheridan, who distributed programs for what they intended to be a memorial service for Iraqi and American war dead.

The group then took an elevator to the 38th floor and filed into Durbin's office. The Occupation Project had begun.

The project is a nationwide campaign. Activists visit the local offices of their national lawmakers and vow to stay until legislators pledge to vote against supplemental funding for the Iraq war—or until they are forcibly removed. On the first day, protesters were arrested at

Senate offices in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Fairbanks, Alaska. They plan to continue through the end of March or until the funding for the war comes up for a vote in the Senate.

Chicago-based Voices for Creative Nonviolence (formerly Voices in the Wilderness) initiated the campaign, and is organizing nationally along with CODEPINK and Veterans for Peace. So far, about 500 people in 25 states have signed up on the project's Web site for campaigns, which Voices co-coordinator Jeff Leys says is "the tip of the iceberg." Many participants—in Chicago, as many as 90 percent—have joined through local groups, rather than signing up online.

The campaign is timed to coincide with the White House's request for \$93 billion in supplemental funding for Iraq and Afghanistan. It follows a \$70 billion "bridge fund" bill that was allocated in September

Although Durbin voted against the war, he "voted for every dollar requested for the troops because if his son or daughter were in Iraq he would want to make sure they had the equipment they need," says John Normoyle, deputy press secretary at Durbin's Chicago office. But Voices ac-



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On Feb. 7, the Jubilee Action Network hand-delivered more than 10,000 “I heart Liberia” valentines to U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, asking him to “Have a heart and cancel Liberia’s debt.”

Liberia is struggling to move forward after two decades of civil war ended in 2003, but its \$3.5 billion debt severely inhibits the government’s ability to help its impoverished citizens. According to Jubilee’s Debayani Kar, the valentines, phone calls and organized pressure on the Treasury resulted in Paulson sending a letter to Congress asking legislators to work with the Treasury to fund Liberian debt relief. And on Feb. 13, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced the United States would forgive all of Liberia’s \$391 million debt.

Next, Jubilee and its more than 75 member organizations—which include the Institute for Policy Studies, Africa Action and Friends of the Earth—rallied for debt relief to Zambia. Jubilee organized a massive effort to call Michael Sheehan, owner of Donegal International, the “vulture fund” that cheaply purchased Zambia’s debt when it was about to be written off, then sued the country in order to collect the full amount. Kar said callers successfully shut down Sheehan’s phone line on Feb. 20.

To get involved in Jubilee’s next campaign, visit [www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org). Both Jubilee and the Institute for Policy Studies ([www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org)) have extensive information on the importance of debt relief for African countries.

—Anna Schneider



**Code Pink and Occupation Project activists stage a sit-in at Sen. John McCain’s office in Washington D.C. on February 5, 2007.**

tivists respond by citing a House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee hearing where it was learned that equipment purchased with money appropriated for troops will not actually reach Iraq until 18 months after the bill passes.

“The war’s only going to end when the funding stops,” says Laurie Hasbrook, who participated in the Feb. 5 action at Durbin’s office. When the group was ordered to leave, those not willing to be arrested left as planned. Hasbrook and three others stayed and were arrested.

In Obama’s office, the activists displayed pictures of ordinary Iraqis, and read aloud from prepared texts, including a letter from an Iraqi who opposes the occupation, a letter from a U.S. soldier who served in Iraq and the Sermon on the Mount. Between readings, they talked with members of the staff, who brought them water. Ken Bennett, Obama’s state director, negotiated, offering to meet with one person in the inner office.

“If one of us goes into the inner office then all of us have to go,” says Dan Pearson, a co-coordinator with Voices who participated in the action that day. The meeting did not happen.

The four were told they could stay in the office until closing time if they would sit down and be quiet. They refused, continued with their readings and singing, and were arrested.

“If we’re disrupting the office, then so be it,” says Ron Durham, another one of the protesters arrested. “What goes on in the office contributes to the war continuing over there.”

Seven of those arrested Feb. 5 face federal charges of disturbance and state

charges of criminal trespass, both misdemeanors. Hasbrook received a federal charge of disturbance and a state charge of assault. (She says she’s “mystified” why her charge is different from the others.) In Washington, D.C., 10 people were arrested at Sen. John McCain’s (R-Ariz.) office on charges of disorderly conduct.

The following week, Occupation Project participants arrived at the federal building bearing valentines with pictures of smiling Iraqi children, but found Obama and Durbin’s office doors locked to those without an appointment. After negotiations with security, three people entered Obama’s office (though they had to leave the valentines behind); Durbin’s office would not allow the activists inside.

Voices co-coordinator Kathy Kelly, who visited Obama’s office that day, says the group had a cordial conversation with Bennett. Obama has introduced a bill that would remove all combat brigades from Iraq by March 31, 2008, which Kelly and others find unacceptable. Staffers let the group read the names of the dead until closing, when the protesters left.

“They feel the same sense of urgency that Obama does about a war that never should have been authorized and never should have been fought,” says Obama spokesman Tommy Vietor.

But regardless of whether it actually changes votes, Leys says, civil disobedience is valuable. It creates opportunities for people to consider “pushing the envelope” in their own lives, he says, whether that means speaking one’s mind or risking jail.

—Rebecca Harris

## Return of the Cold War

**P**RAQUE—AS IF THE Bush administration didn't already have its hands full with the "war on terror" spiraling out of control in Iraq and Afghanistan, its Jan. 20 announcement that it plans to expand the proposed U.S. missile defense system into the former Warsaw Pact nations Poland and the Czech Republic is threatening to re-ignite the Cold War.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has spoken out forcefully against the proposal, calling it emblematic of the United States' "increasing disregard for the fundamental principles of international law." In response, he threatened to pull Russia out of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, which spells out how many soldiers and how much military hardware can be deployed throughout the continent.

Putin isn't alone in his anger. Several hundred people gathered on a snowy day in late January at Wenceslas Square in Prague, to protest the controversial anti-missile defense system. The proposed construction has sparked debate in the central European country and mobilized progressives who oppose it.

Referring to the Soviet crackdown on the "Prague Spring" reform of 1968, demonstrators held up placards reading: "1968—Go Home, Ivan! 2007—Go home, John!" Pavel, a Prague university student, said he was tired of his government "kissing someone's ass."

Under the proposal, the Czechs would house the radar system and the Poles the silos with 10 rockets to shoot down missiles fired from "rogue regimes" like Iran and North Korea. The United States already has missile interceptor sites in California and Alaska.

A missile site in Poland would be the first part of the anti-missile shield outside the United States and the only one in Europe. "The government does not have a mandate to authorize the base," says Jan Tamas, a leader of the "No Base" movement, which is calling for the issue to be decided in a national referendum.

Prime Minister Mirek Topolaneck has opposed the idea, arguing that "security issues usually are not decided by referendum." "Locating the base here will undoubtedly improve the security of the

Czech Republic and Czech citizens," Topolaneck said.

But many Czechs fear the base will make them the target of terrorist attacks as they are dragged into Washington's geopolitical schemes. Nevertheless, several polls show a majority of Czechs back the plan if it entails only a radar base, perhaps in hopes that in exchange the United States will drop visa requirements (and the onerous fees) for them. Lingering fears of Russia may also be tipping many Poles and Czechs into the arms, literally, of the Americans.

Backers also see it as a chance for the Czech Republic to do its part in the "war on terror." Most prominent among them is former dissident, playwright and president, Vaclav Havel, who has backed several American interventions, including the Iraq war (although he now advocates for a U.S. withdrawal).

"Do the Czechs want to be a modern European society, which feels a shared responsibility for the state of the world," Havel asked on Jan. 25, "or would we prefer to leave the resolution of global problems to others?"

Topolaneck faces a tough fight to win parliamentary backing for the American plan. His fragile center-right government was cobbled together in January after seven months of on-again, off-again talks. Topolaneck's Civic Democratic Party generally supports the radar scheme, but the coalition partner Christian Democrats are less enthusiastic, and the third and oddest member of the government,

the Greens, are the most hostile, saying it would back the plan only if it is part of a NATO system and not just an American one.

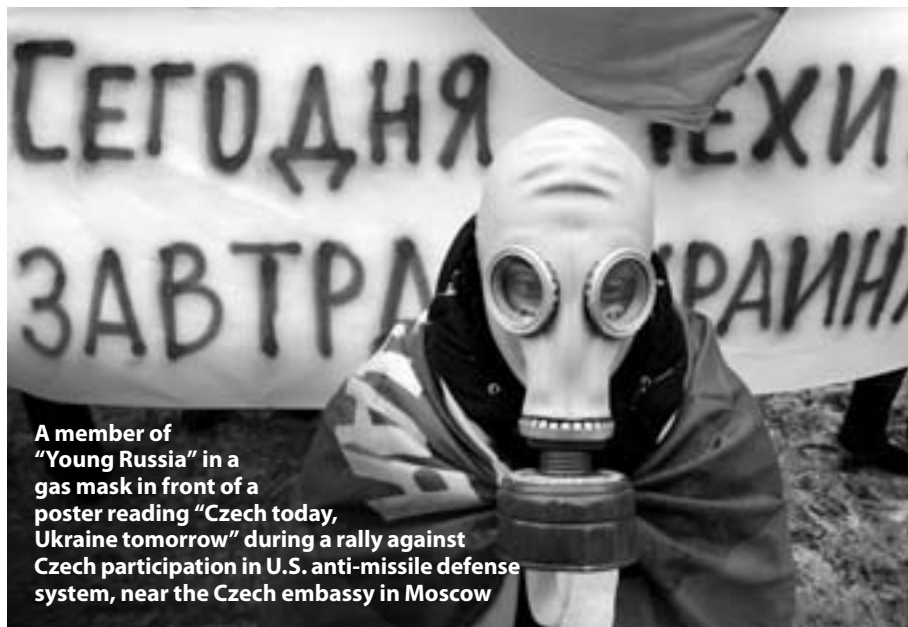
The leader of the opposition Social Democrats, Jiri Paroubek, has said most of his party's members oppose the idea. In early February, Paroubek backed off from calls for a referendum after "being leaned on," by U.S. officials in Prague, according to the London *Guardian*. Still, the Social Democrats and, even more so, the Czech and Moravian Communist Party are in the opposition camp.

Some of the warier Czechs are those living in Jince, about 30 miles southwest of Prague, where the United States wants to base the radar installation at a former military site. Protests have been held there as well.

Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg visited the region in February to meet nervous local mayors and reassure them that hosting about 200 Americans will pump up the local economy.

"The Cold War is returning to Europe," says Josef Hruby, mayor of Zajecov, who met with Schwarzenberg. "I just don't want to live through my kids having to learn how to put on gas masks."

Judging by the rhetoric, Russian fears dwarf Czech concerns. On Jan. 23, Vladimir Popovkin, who commands Russia's space forces, told Russian news agencies Interfax and ITAR-TASS, "The radar in the Czech Republic would be able to monitor rocket [Russian] installations in central Russia and the Northern Fleet."



A member of "Young Russia" in a gas mask in front of a poster reading "Czech today, Ukraine tomorrow" during a rally against Czech participation in U.S. anti-missile defense system, near the Czech embassy in Moscow

NATALIA KOLESNIKOVA/GETTY IMAGES

And on Feb. 19, General Nikolai Solovtsov, commander of Russia's missiles forces, upped the ante, saying, "If the governments of Poland and the Czech Republic take a decision to this effect, the strategic missile troops will be capable of having these facilities as targets."

On the same day in Warsaw, Topolek and his Polish counterpart Jaroslaw Kaczynski said the system was not aimed at Russia and expressed their clearest support yet for the plan.

Russia wants Washington to promise in writing that the missile system is not aimed at its country, according to a Feb. 6 Interfax report. "The Russians say, 'This is my backyard. You need our cooperation.' They are right. You cannot stop Iran or contain Iran without Russia. You need the Russians on board," Andrew Brookes, a space technology expert at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies, told the AFP news agency on Jan. 26.

Some experts question the point, militarily at least, in building a radar station in the Czech Republic. According to Bruno Gruselle, a researcher at the Paris-based Strategic Research Foundation, "the U.S. military already has radar

stations in Norway, in Greenland, and in Britain—on top of its Defense Support System satellite alert system—which permit the early detection of missiles, wherever they come from."

There's also the question of whether the missile defense system will ever be functional. Despite being the single largest defense research and development project in U.S. history, with the Bush administration spending more than \$40 billion on the program, only five of its 10 tests have been successful, and all of those were achieved within carefully controlled environments that did not reflect real-world conditions.

Perhaps the U.S. goal is more political than military. In his 1997 book, *The Grand Chessboard*, former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote that maintaining U.S. primacy would require Washington "to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to prevent the barbarians from coming together."

None of the vassals here in "New Europe" are making any mention of that.

—Tony Wesolowsky

## Rolling Back the Regs

**E**MISSIONS LIMITS ON coal-fired power plants, endangered species protections that inhibit logging, and restrictions on chemicals in drinking water have all been thorns in the side of the Bush administration.

But an executive order released on Jan. 18 with little fanfare could give the White House-controlled Office of Management and Budget (OMB) much greater control over such agencies as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

With the new Democratic majority in Congress, the Bush administration has less power to pass laws that weaken environmental protections, worker safety, public health standards and the like. Critics fear the White House will now carry out its political agenda by dictating how federal agencies can interpret and enforce policies.

## appall-o-meter

### 3.0 That's Mexican Work

What kind of Republican is Karl Rove? Is he the by-the-bootstraps, sweat-of-the-brow, honor-in-all-work kind? Or is he the genuine kind? Judging from a posting on *National Review's* Web site "The Corner," he's the latter. Blogger Mark Krikorian shocked conservative readers by passing on the porcine strategist's bon mots justifying President Bush's proposed amnesty/guest-worker program. According to a congressman's wife, Rove quipped, "I don't want my 17-year-old son to have to pick tomatoes or make beds in Las Vegas." Genuine sentiment, no doubt, from a man who ought to be making license plates.

### 1.3 Depends® Rock City

Ah, the '70s ... they seem like another country. In that rosy-fingered dawn of commodified deviance, the band KISS was a true pioneer, purveying its blend of cock rock and antinomian kitsch not just to the kids but to the kiddies, in objects ranging from lunchboxes to a Hanna-Barbera cartoon. And they did this all before the advent of pop irony—very

impressive.

Those who just had to have the lunchbox may want to apply for the KISS Platinum Visa Card, featuring an introductory 0% Fixed APR for up to 12 months (restrictions apply), no annual fee, balance transfer savings and valuable platinum services. Every time they whip it out to buy a skinny mochaccino or to tank up the Tahoe, they can gaze upon Gene Simmons' schlongy tongue and fondly recall their loss of innocence.

Meanwhile, consumer capitalism continues to astonish with its ability to decimate context. A new ad campaign for the oldster pressure group AARP features the peppy strains of a song only a handful of proto-retirees will recall from their safety-pinned rebellion phase—"Everybody's Happy Nowadays," a 1979 gem by the Buzzcocks. (A more daring ploy might have been to repurpose "Orgasm Addict," another 'Cocks hit, but maybe it doesn't quite suit the demo anymore.)



### 2.2 Why, I Would Never Suggest ...

What is it about fundamentalists that makes them so tone-deaf? Consider Pastor Philip Andrukaitis of the South Portland (Maine) Baptist Church, who placed an ad on the "Religion & Values" page of the *Portland Press Herald* with this catchy

title: "The Only Way to Destroy the Jewish Race."

Now if that kinda creeps you out, then the joke's on you, see, because there *is* no way to destroy the Jewish race. And that, explained Andrukaitis in a contrite letter to the newspaper, was the message he intended to deliver to anybody who saw the ad and decided to drop in. But, of course, the whole plan went pear-shaped when people who don't take an interest in genocide spotted the ad and ... well, anyway, you can bet his "God hates fags" sermon went into the circular file.

—Dave Mulcahey

## snapshot

The order could have devastating consequences for environmental protections, says Howard Learner, executive director of the Chicago-based Environmental Law and Policy Center.

“The Bush administration is now trying to do through administrative barriers and regulatory policies what it can’t do through Congress,” he says. “The administration has long been trying to change the Clean Air Act, forestry protections, and other environmental and natural resource statutes. The realignment of Congress clearly makes that more challenging. So they’re turning to administrative processes that gum up the works.”

(The OMB and the EPA did not respond to requests for interviews.)

A series of executive orders, the most recent being number 12866, have allowed the White House to review regulations before they are published in the *Federal Register*. The new order gives the OMB the expanded power to review “guidance documents” published by federal agencies.

Guidance documents are statements that explain how an existing regulation will be interpreted, implemented and enforced. In a worst-case scenario, the OMB review of guidance documents could take the nuts and bolts of interpretation and enforcement out of the hands of agency experts and turn it over to White House appointees with political agendas.

During a Feb. 13 House Science and Technology Committee hearing, Rep. Brad Miller (D-N.C.) said, “It is not good government when agency action is based on economic or political back room deals rather than environmental or public health consequences.”

The bulletin defines “significant guidance documents” meriting OMB oversight as those that, among other things, would result in “an annual effect of \$100 million or more or adversely affect ... a sector of the economy.” In other words, environmental or other regulations that would cost industry considerable amounts of money—like cleaning up archaic coal-fired plants—would be subject to extra administrative oversight.

The new executive order also raises the bar for what corporate activities warrant government regulation. It stresses “market failure” as the main standard for determining whether something should be regulated. A toxic chemical like mercury, for example, would only be subject to federal emissions limits if it is proven that market



**NEW ORLEANS**—Fatima Shaik, a former reporter for the *Times-Picayune*, writes for *In These Times* on New Orleans. She sent us this photo with her dispatch from Mardi Gras. “People are reunited momentarily to dance with friends who had to move out of town. They enjoy the company of their children, who have been sacrificed to other cities, and better schools.” Read her story at [www.inthesetimes.com/article/3049/mardi\\_gras\\_flame/](http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/3049/mardi_gras_flame/) (Photo by Fatima Shaik)

forces will not protect public health. This standard is particularly disturbing as it relates to adverse effects with long time delays, like climate change, the effects of which don’t show up for years.

The order also calls for detailed cost-benefit analyses to be used in considering government regulation. And it authorizes a policy officer, appointed by the administration, to oversee each agency as a liaison with the OMB.

“It creates a new layer as far as annual priority planning goes,” says Robert Shull, Public Citizen’s deputy director for auto safety and regulatory policy. “[The officers] will have their hands on everything internally at the agencies. It will lead to political priorities shaping what should be public policy.”

Watchdog groups Public Citizen and OMB Watch are particularly disturbed because these processes will likely be overseen by Susan Dudley, a hard-line anti-regulation ideologue. During her tenure at the industry-funded Mercatus Center at George Mason University, Dudley opposed safeguards against arsenic in drinking water and smog.

“I read this as an invitation for Dudley

to go on the attack, handing her an axe to chop Congress off at the knees,” says Shull.

Critics fear the extra studies and proof required by the order could delay critical environmental, health and safety regulations from taking effect for years. Shull notes that guidance documents largely govern the implementation of the Superfund environmental clean-up program. The new regulations could cause massive delays in the already severely underfunded and bureaucratically mired program.

The OMB bulletin describes the executive order, which was published in the Jan. 23 *Federal Register* and takes effect 180 days later, as a way to increase government agencies’ transparency and accountability. It mandates that electronic versions of guidance documents be available to the public, and that agencies accept public comment on significant guidance documents. These are arguably positive developments, but it does not obligate them to take action based on public comments.

Far from increasing public participation in policy, critics say the executive order does just the opposite. “This,” says Learner, “is inside baseball in the extreme.”

—Kari Lydersen

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

## Molly and the Mainstream



**O**NLY PAUL KRUGMAN of the *New York Times* seemed to get it. In “Missing Molly Ivins,” Krugman was a lone voice in the mainstream press to capture her unique gifts, and the enormous heart she gave to us all. Some people really should live forever, and Ivins was one of them. The hole she leaves in public commentary is enormous, and with every new outrage to come (and they seem to come in bat-

talions), we will miss her more and more. Krugman emphasized two things about Ivins that others failed to note: “her extraordinary prescience on the central political issue of our time” and her adherence to the principle that the times “when people are most afraid to challenge authority are also the times when it’s most important to do just that.”

Ivins was a fierce critic of hypocrisy and venality, and she was very, very funny: Her bullshit detector was possibly the most finely honed in the business, and her ability to make us feel the delicious combination of indignation suspended in laughter was what made us love her. What one needed when observing politics (especially in Texas, which she referred to as “the National Laboratory for Bad Government”) was “a keen appreciation of the surreal.” In one of her better-known quips, Ivins said of a congressman, “If his I.Q. slips any lower, we’ll have to water him twice a day.”

It is her humor that seems to have given the mainstream media license to trivialize her death and sanitize her politics. Heidi Collins on CNN announced, “Every now and then Molly Ivins liked to poke a little fun at the politicians.” She then noted that Ivins had written several books, “including two about George W. Bush.” On CBS, Ivins’ death was only briefly noted by Katie Couric, and the CBS Early Show reiterated that Ivins “poked fun at politicians.” Not even the more detailed obituaries on NPR or the *New York Times* noted that Ivins was a feminist and a progressive, whose writing appeared in *The Progressive* for 20 years.

Ivins was doing a bit more than “poking a little fun” when she emphasized, early on in 2003, that the American public had been “lied to” about the war in Iraq. By October 2003, Ivins noted, “We have now lost more soldiers in the ‘peace’ than we did during the war.” She added, ruefully, “I have a suggestion for a withdrawal deadline: Let’s leave Iraq before

we’ve killed more Iraqis than Saddam Hussein did.”

She skewered Bush’s repeated lies about the deficit and the alleged positive impact of his tax cuts, reminding readers that those cuts, if made permanent, “will add more than \$3 trillion to the deficit over the next 10 years. The federal budget would be virtually in balance if there had been no tax cuts.” Of Team Bush’s all out war on the press, Ivins wrote, “We are under full attack now, and it is time to fight back.”

And then there were those “two books” she and Lou Dubose wrote about Bush. *Shrub* and *Bushwhacked*, both bestsellers, were ferocious, infuriating and, yes, funny exposés of Bush’s policies while governor of Texas and of his importation of these disasters to the federal level, where they hurt far greater numbers of people while

also devastating the environment. *Bushwhacked* was about Bush’s various misbegotten programs “doing cruel things to real people.” There were fabulous sentences like, “Public policy stamped MADE IN TEXAS is like

Hungarian wine—it does not travel well.” Ivins’ witticisms eased us into accounts of everyday people fighting against incinerators in their neighborhoods that would burn toxic sludge, with the Bush administration eliminating any recourse for appeal of their construction. The book reported on USDA intentions to relax its standards for fecal contamination of beef and its plans to add irradiated meat to the nation’s School Lunch Program. Are we all still laughing? This is merely “poking a little fun”?

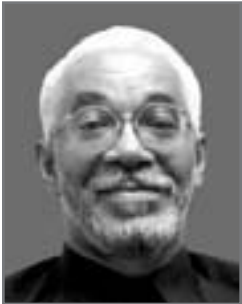
Oh how we will miss her. I want to read what she would have said about the brouhaha over Joe Biden’s surprise that a black man could be both “clean” *and* “articulate.” Was this a cloddish remark? Sure. Did it deserve front-page coverage, given what else is going on in the world and given the many deadly lies from Team Bush that never got this kind of scrutiny? And, should we be surprised at Biden? No—and Ivins would have been the first to remind us of Biden’s bungling of the Anita Hill hearings, where he suppressed testimonies from women who would have corroborated her claims about then-Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas.

As the Senate stumbles along, as the war in Iraq continues to exact its heart-breaking toll and as Team Bush persists along its arrogant path of calamitous policies, we will indeed miss Ivins’ sarcasm. But we will miss her courage, her ferocious commitment to social justice and her extraordinary ability to cut to the absolute heart of issues even more. ■

**Ivins was a fierce critic of hypocrisy and venality, and she was very, very funny: Her bullshit detector was possibly the most finely honed in the business.**

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

## For Israel's Sake?



**T**HE MORE WE examine the disaster that is the Bush administration's Middle East policy, the more apparent becomes the corrosive influence of Israel, or more accurately, of those U.S. officials acting on what they construe as Israel's best interests. Yet Congress is oddly unwilling to bring any investigative focus on the role of Israel's fervent supporters in instigating this deepening debacle.

What makes this issue especially crucial is the well-established link between the Bush administration's neoconservative brain trust and Israel's right-wing government. Two members of Bush's neocon corps are now in the news for their attempts to warp intelligence to justify a preemptive invasion of Iraq. In the past, both men (like many neocons) publicly advanced attacking Iraq to benefit Israel. The same group also has put Iran in their bomb-sights.

The two are Douglas Feith, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy between 2001 and 2005, and I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff.

According to a February report by acting Inspector General Thomas F. Gimble, Feith's Office of Special Plans at the Pentagon took "inappropriate" actions to advance the assertion that al-Qaeda was working with Saddam Hussein—assertions that were not backed up by the nation's intelligence agencies. In other words, Feith manipulated intelligence to justify an invasion.

Feith is a co-author of "Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing The Realm," a strategy paper written in 1996 for Israel's right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that urged a break away from the Oslo Peace Accords, a military defeat of the Palestinians, the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and the installation of a Hashemite king on the Iraqi throne. A co-author of "A Clean Break" was David Wurmser, Feith's chief aide at the Pentagon.

A long time activist in right-wing Israeli politics, Feith wrote his own prescription for the Jewish state in a 1997 paper titled "A Strategy for Israel," in which he urged Israel to re-occupy "the areas under Palestinian Authority control." According to a 2005 book by *New Yorker* staff writer George Packer, a departing Colin Powell denounced Feith to President Bush as "a card-carrying member of the Likud." Packer's rigorously researched book, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*, provides a careful anatomy of this network of American "Likudniks."

**In 1997, Douglas Feith authored a policy paper in which he urged Israel to re-occupy 'the areas under Palestinian Authority control.'**

Feith's office was still reeling from an earlier scandal, in which aide Lawrence Franklin was charged with passing classified information to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and to an intelligence official at the Israeli Embassy. The charge emerged from an extensive FBI investigation of the lobbying group.

Franklin, who worked in Feith's Office of Special Plans, pleaded guilty and was convicted on three lesser charges in exchange for his cooperation in the FBI's continuing probe. He was sentenced to 12 and a half years in prison and fined \$10,000.

Libby is officially charged with lying to the FBI and the grand jury about his talks with reporters outing CIA agent Valerie Plame. Unofficially, he is blamed for trying to discredit former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, who, in February 2002, had investigated claims that Iraq sought uranium from Niger and found the story untrue. Wilson later wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* suggesting Bush misled the American people to justify invading Iraq.

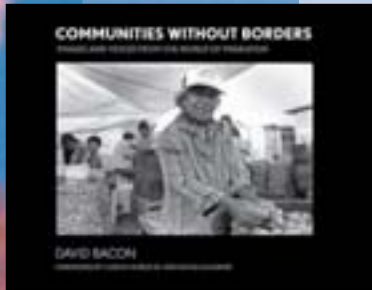
Libby, and by extension, Cheney's office, sought to debunk Wilson by suggesting that Plame, his CIA-officer wife, sent him on a junket to Niger. This, of course, was to cast suspicions on his rejection of Bush's alarmist claims about Iraq.

These are not just examples of neocon ideology gone wild, as Packer, himself a former supporter of the Bush invasion, points out in his somewhat rueful book. "The idea of realigning the Middle East by overthrowing Saddam Hussein was first proposed by a group of Jewish policy makers and intellectuals who were close to the Likud," he writes. "And when the second President Bush looked around for a way to think about the uncharted era that began on September 11, 2001, there was one already available."

These policies were designed with Israel in mind, as well as the United States. In fact, writes Packer, "For Feith and Wurmser, the security of Israel was probably the prime mover." Such talk invariably sparks charges of anti-Semitism for suggesting the canard about Jews' dual loyalties. However, the connections between Bush's influential corps of neocons and Israel's expansionist Likud Party are too obvious to ignore. These neocon ideologues have transformed the United States into a rogue state that is an echo of Israel; locked in a vicious cycle of occupation-resistance-revenge, steeped in belligerent militarism, globally isolated and loathed.

Congress' willful ignorance of these links is a grievous malfeasance of duty. Where are progressive Democrats on this issue? ■

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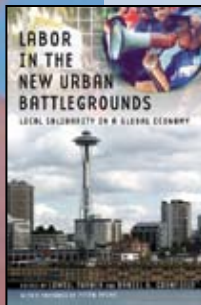
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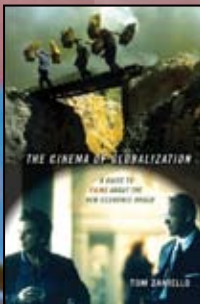
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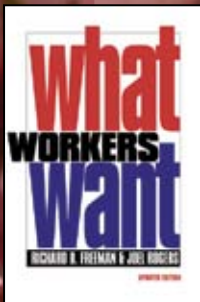
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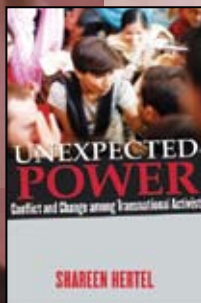
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LAURA S. WASHINGTON

## Obama's Base: Broader Than Black



**B**LACK LEADERS, BE wary. If you eschew the Obama phenomenon, you may have to pay a price. On Feb. 10, Sen. Barack Obama announced his presidential candidacy in Springfield, Ill., the Land of Lincoln. The Obama train has left the station and it ain't comin' back.

Playing petty plantation politics may feather a few nests and puff up some chests, but Obama is looking to turn the black political equation upside down. If he

goes all the way, black politics will never be the same. That's a good thing.

On a sunny, sub-freezing Springfield morning, Obama's top strategist, David Axelrod, shared some of the Obama strategy. "Sometimes movements from the grassroots can overcome entrenched politics, and I think this is one of those times," Axelrod told me. "No one represents a 'turning of the page' that we need, no one represents the future, more than Barack Obama."

African-American leadership had better get ready to turn the page with him. That isn't going to be easy for black pols who have been hamstrung by dubious and dependent relationships with the Democratic Party for far too long.

Some Obama critics were outraged by his recent endorsement of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley's re-election bid. Daley has been challenged by two African Americans who are running as progressive reformers. But Obama doesn't need Daley. It's the other way around.

At 45, Obama didn't sprout out of the civil rights movement. His father wasn't a sharecropper. He's not a preacher. He's not beholden to either the Washington or New York black establishment

Illinois State Senate President Emil Jones, Obama's political mentor, recently set 'em straight. The salty and savvy Jones was on the Obama train before the East Coast elites had even heard his name. Like Lincoln, Obama launched his political career in the Illinois Senate.

In early February, according to the political news site Politico.com, Jones flew to Washington, D.C. to speak to the Democratic National Committee's black caucus. He used the platform to make a no-nonsense plea that black Democrats coalesce behind Obama, noting that they don't "owe" any allegiance to other presidential contenders, à la Hillary Clinton.

He noted the jobs and appointments President Bill Clinton had doled out to blacks. Some of those people were in

the room. Then Jones went in for the kill—he asked when they would stop owing the Clintons.

Some Clinton allies in the room were livid. "You could hear a pin drop," said one person in the room who doesn't currently support either Obama or Clinton," the Web site reported. Jones says he's not backing off. African-American leadership, Jones says, must get past "the crabs in a barrel syndrome. Every time one of us pulls up, we want to pull him down."

There has been a backlash. While Obama was announcing in Springfield, PBS host Tavis Smiley was honchoing his annual State of the Black Union conference at Hampton University in Virginia. Coverage of the all-day event on C-Span was interrupted for the Obama announcement.

Smiley said that Obama had called him to apologize for missing the event. The Rev. Al Sharpton scolded Obama for making his announcement before a predominantly white crowd in Springfield, rather than at the forum. He added that he is looking for Obama to explain "what's his embrace

**At 45, Obama didn't sprout from the civil rights movement. He's not beholden to either the Washington or New York black establishment.**

of our agenda."

Cornel West, the Princeton University professor and black intellectual, said African Americans should ask Obama, "How deep is your love for the people" and "Where is your money coming from?" In the background were a blinding array of banner logos trumpeting the "sponsors" of Smiley's conference: ExxonMobil, Verizon, Wells-Fargo, McDonald's, Allstate Insurance, etc.

The Obama candidacy is dead in the water if he adopts a sectarian agenda. Until now, African-American presidential candidates have made little serious effort to extend their attention beyond the base. This is one big reason why black politicians usually crash and burn when they seek office in white majority districts.

Thirteen percent of the nation cannot elect a president. And the last thing Obama needs is to be seen pandering to the race men. It's time to turn that page and play ball with the adults. The crowd that cheered back the chill in Springfield was predominantly white and spanned all ages. Obama's kickoff rally the next day in Chicago turned out thousands more, mostly black. Obama has true rainbow appeal.

That spells progress for our issues and a surge in progressive power. Last month, my *In These Times* colleague Salim Muwakkil noted that Obama's prospects present black America with a "brand new bag." Salim, here's one back at you: Obama's candidacy adds a new set of hues to the Democratic palette. ■

# Colombia's Third Way

With the FARC having devolved into little more than bandits, a new left-wing party has emerged.

BY JAMES NORTH

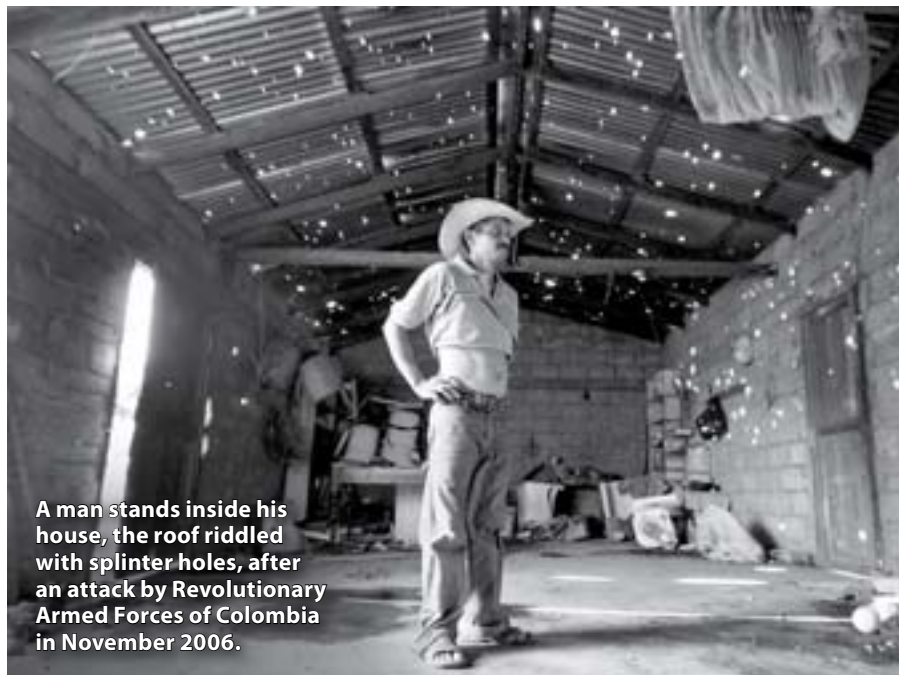
**P**EREIRA, COLOMBIA—JORGE FRANCO is a 54-year-old truck driver and a political paradox.

On the one hand, he enthusiastically supports Colombia's right-wing president, Álvaro Uribe, who won reelection last May in a landslide. "Uribe pushed back the subversives and he's making the country safe again," Franco says. "That man truly wears pants.

At the same time, Franco is disturbed by the ongoing economic injustice in Colombia, and he takes an open-minded approach toward the new nonviolent left-wing party, the Polo Democrático Independiente (PDI), that continues to grow after finishing a surprising second in last year's election with 22 percent of the vote. He angrily dismisses the recent absurdly low increase in the minimum wage—imposed by Uribe—and says he will certainly consider voting for the PDI in regional elections later this year and in the next national vote in 2010.

The PDI also owes its rise to a tremendous scandal that has reached officials at the top of President Uribe's ruling coalition, even if it has not yet touched him personally. Over the past decade, right-wing, private paramilitary soldiers—numbering up to 30,000—have massacred thousands of the rural poor, trafficked drugs worth hundreds of millions of dollars, and seized vast tracts of the Colombian countryside—up to one-quarter of the arable land, by one estimate. The paramilitaries, which operate privately but cooperate directly with the Colombian army, are the main reason the country has 2.5 million internal refugees—the largest number in the world outside of Sudan.

Uribe has increasingly come under pressure from the U.S. government, which is unable to ignore the blood his vicious allies are spilling. He offered the "paras" a tacit deal: stop fighting, admit some of your crimes and you will get light prison terms. Thus cleansed, the para leaders could continue to par-



A man stands inside his house, the roof riddled with splinter holes, after an attack by Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in November 2006.

MAURICIO DUENAS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ticipate in Colombian political and economic life with the hundreds of millions they have made off the drug trade.

But Uribe's scheme is falling apart. A paramilitary chief's computer was discovered to contain direct communications between the paras and leading politicians in Uribe's coalition. A courageous PDI Senator named Gustavo Petro is hammering away at these connections. He wears a bulletproof vest and travels with up to 20 bodyguards.

Unfortunately for the left, when truck driver Franco refers to "subversives," he is still talking about the 17,000 or so guerrillas of the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), an insurgency that was once a left-wing movement—the oldest and largest in Latin America. In the past, the FARC stood for the rural poor, but it has degenerated into armed bands with little political content. The FARC now tax and profit from the drug trade in the areas they still dominate. When Uribe

came to power in 2002, the FARC was already kidnapping travelers off Colombia's highways (the group holds about 1,000 hostages), carrying out massacres of its own and launching indiscriminate gas cylinder bombs that kill scores of innocent civilians.

Uribe, aided by the billions of dollars he gets from the United States, enlarged the army and police and pushed the FARC back to remote areas. Now, one can travel safely around Colombia again, which is the single biggest reason Uribe won 62 percent of the vote last year. The president successfully convinced the public that the FARC was their main enemy, even though three-quarters of the 4,000 political deaths each year are caused by the Colombian army and its paramilitary allies.

The strategy succeeded because leftists sometimes mistakenly downplay the value of public order, while rightists understand that personal safety and stability are often more important than even basic economic demands. The PDI is not

making this mistake; some of its members have belonged to various guerrilla groups in the past, but firmly distancing itself from the FARC has helped the party gain the support of a growing number of Colombians.

President Uribe is partly a victim of his own success. As Colombians feel safer, they are taking a closer look at their society, and what they see is an unequal nation still dominated by traditional Latin American oligarchs, now joined by the newly rich paramilitary drug barons. Unemployment and underemployment are tremendous; to give one example, thousands of Colombians make a tenuous living by standing around on street corners with cellular phones, offering calls to passersby for a few cents a minute.

**W**HILE PROSPECTS FOR the Colombian left are promising, activists in the United States also believe they can convince the new, Democratic-controlled Congress to modify the Bush administration's policy, Plan Colombia, which has spent nearly \$5 billion in aid, most of it militarily, in a "war on drugs" that has not only failed to stop the cocaine and heroin trade, but actually strengthened the criminal right.

Here in Pereira, a city of 600,000 in central Colombia's famous "coffee zone," new buildings are going up, but they are not financed by the mountainous area's traditional export. The local paper, *El Diario*, recognized recently that the city might be experiencing "an artificial boom" due to "drug money—like all over the country." The coffee zone is just emerging from a worldwide crisis during which prices fell 82 percent below their old level, and along the road down to the Colombian city of Armenia, one can easily see where the frustrated growers actually pulled out coffee bushes from the deep green slopes and replaced them with cattle pastures and banana groves. Jorge Franco, who knows the agriculture of this area well, says you will find the more lucrative export, coca, from which cocaine is derived, "up in the mountains."

No one, aside from a few half-hearted Bush administration spokespeople, denies that the "war on drugs" in Colombia has failed. As much coca is grown here as in 2000, before the U.S. spent billions of dollars to spray and eradicate it. Colombia and other Latin American countries still produce more than enough to

meet world demand. And the price on U.S. streets has not risen at all—which would have happened if the source of supply were really choked off.

In early February, the Bush administration proposed continuing Plan Colombia at \$600 to \$700 million a year—the most aid given to any country outside the Middle East. The Center for International Policy (CIP) and the Washington Office

to having met some para leaders "socially." Not just rumors but years of persuasive allegations by courageous eyewitnesses have linked the right-wing armies to massacre after massacre, yet Uribe somehow manages to know nothing about them. Even if technically innocent, he is guilty of staggering moral blindness.

Among the thousands of victims of the paramilitary violence is Yolanda Iz-

## As Colombians feel safer, they are taking a closer look at their society, and what they see is an unequal nation still dominated by traditional Latin American oligarchs and paramilitary drug barons.

on Latin America, D.C.-based human rights and solidarity groups that work on Colombia, will lobby not to cut aid, but to shift the proportion away from weapons and fumigation toward strengthening Colombia's judicial system and helping the rural poor.

Adam Isacson, who coordinates the Colombia program at the CIP, explains: "American addicts and drug users are in effect buying guns for both sides. So you can argue that we have some moral responsibility for what happens there. And a democratic system is growing in Colombia, even if it is far from perfect."

He hopes the U.S. public will ask more from their elected officials: "Over the past few years, the Bush policy has continued on autopilot because congressional staffers tell us, 'My boss doesn't hear from constituents on Colombia.'"

The lack of attention to Colombia is quite extraordinary, when contrasted with the U.S. mainstream media's obsession with neighboring Venezuela and its fiery president, Hugo Chávez. Uribe, George Bush's best friend in Latin America, presides over a nation with thousands of political killings each year, most of them linked to his allies, and yet Colombia receives almost no attention from the editorial pages of record and television pundits. Meanwhile Chávez, who has been blamed for very little political violence, is regularly vilified.

That Uribe himself will probably not be directly implicated in the paramilitary scandal is a tribute to his power of denial. Before he won the presidency in 2002, he governed the province of Antioquia, a paramilitary stronghold, and he admits

quierdo, a 43-year-old impoverished woman from the lawless frontier area in the northern part of the Province of Córdoba whose family's land was stolen by the para in the '90s. She was not afraid to speak out, and she traveled to the nationally publicized hearings into paramilitary violence to represent 800 other families whose small farms were also stolen.

Izquierdo received anonymous threats. She asked for government protection, but it never came. On Jan. 31, she was murdered in a shantytown outside the regional town of Montería, where she, her husband and their five children had fled after losing their land.

The words "Colombia" and "violence" have become synonymous, often with the implication that kidnapping and murder are an intrinsic part of the nation's history and culture, and that change is therefore hopeless. In fact, the violence in Colombia is not of the result of irrational outbursts but rather a cold, calculated strategy by the politically dominant to hang onto, and increase, their power.

Yet there is hope. An overwhelming majority of Colombians reject violence, and the nonviolent, democratic left is stronger than ever. The question that confronts the Democratic Congress is this: Will the United States send hundreds of millions of dollars to support Uribe and his friends or will it come to the aid of people like Yolanda Izquierdo? ■

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# PREACHING REVOLUTION

BY ZACK EXLEY

## A new evangelical movement offers lessons for the left.

**R**ECENTLY, I BLOGGED A series of essays titled “The Revolution Misses You,” in which I called for progressives to revive the forgotten dream of practical yet radical change. Friends and colleagues immediately scolded me for using “extreme” terms such as “revolution” and “radical.” “You’ll only alienate people,” they said. “This will come back to haunt you.”

At first, I was surprised by what felt like a dramatic overreaction. But I soon realized why I had fallen out of sync with the progressive mainstream on the use of the “R-words”: I had been spending time listening to and reading evangelical Christians who are preaching revolution.

In Grand Rapids, Mich., a 36-year-old evangelical pastor named Rob Bell regularly describes his ministry as “revolutionary,” “radical” and “an insurgency.” Far from alienating people with such language, Bell’s Mars Hill Bible Church draws thousands of new worshipers each year from the mostly conservative and white suburbs of west Michigan. In one recent sermon, available as a podcast from MarsHill.org, Bell tells his congregation that the only time Jesus speaks of God directly taking someone’s life is the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-22), a story about a man who builds bigger barns to store a surplus harvest instead of sharing it with those in need. He closed the sermon by listing a dozen places around Grand Rapids where congregants could unload their own surplus wealth.

In his book *Irresistible Revolution*, 30-year-old author Shane Claiborne, who is currently living in Iraq to “stand in the way of war,” asks evangelicals why their literal reading of the Bible doesn’t lead them to do what Jesus so clearly told wealthy and middle-class people to do in his day: give up everything to help others.

The popular evangelical Christian magazine *Relevant*, launched in 2003 by Cameron Strang, the son of a Christian publishing magnate, contains a “Revolution” section complete with a raised red fist for a logo. They’ve also released *The Revolution: A Field Manual for Changing Your World*, a compilation by radical, Christian social-justice campaigners from around the world.

Bell and Claiborne are two of the better-known young voices of a broad, explicitly nonviolent, anti-imperialist and anticapitalist theology that is surging at the heart of white, suburban Evangelical Christianity. I first saw this movement at a local,



**Revolutionary preacher Rob Bell broadcasts his sermons to thousands of American suburbanites each week.**

conservative, nondenominational church in North Carolina where the pastor preached a sermon called “Two Fists in the Face of Empire.” Looking further, I found a movement whose book sales tower over their secular progressive counterparts in Amazon rankings; whose sermon podcasts reach thousands of listeners each week; and whose messages, in one form or another, reach millions of churchgoers. Bell alone preaches to more than 10,000 people every Sunday, with more than 50,000 listening in online.

**B**UT THIS MOVEMENT is still barely aware of its own existence, and has not chosen a label for itself. George Barna, who studies trends among Christians for clients such as the Billy Graham Evangelical Association and Focus on the Family, calls it simply “The Revolution” and its adherents “Revolutionaries.”

“The media are oblivious to it,” Barna wrote in his 2006 book *Revolution: Finding Vibrant Faith Beyond the Walls of the Sanctuary*. “Scholars are clueless about it. The government caught a glimpse of it in the 2004 presidential election but has mostly misinterpreted its nature and motivations.” According to his research, there are more than 20 million Revolutionaries in America, differentiated from main-

stream evangelicals by a greater likelihood of serving their community and the poor and oppressed within it, a more “intimate, personally stirring worship of God” in daily life, and a much greater chance of studying the Bible every day.

One indication that this movement is new, nebulous and spontaneous is that Gregory Boyd, a like-minded mega-church pastor two states away in St. Paul, Minn., knew nothing of Rob Bell’s theology until recently. He only heard of the pastors’ conference after the fact be-

2006 book tour for *God’s Politics* began to develop the feel of a revival tour. At evangelical Christian Bethel University in St. Paul, Wallis spoke shortly after a rally held by Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family. More people attended Wallis’ event. “One of the Dobson organizers came over and told me, ‘If they make us keep focusing on just two issues [abortion and gay marriage], they’re going to lose all of us,’” he says.

Wallis has long been known on the left as a progressive evan-

## ‘FOR TOO LONG WE’VE SPREAD A GOSPEL OF SUBURBANISM, OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS, OF CAPITALISM, OF POLITICAL CONSERVATISM...NOT THE GOSPEL THAT CAME FROM CHRIST.’

cause his book *Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church* was distributed to conference participants.

“There’s definitely something going on,” says Boyd. “I’ve only become aware of it as people have responded to my book. It’s not organized—it’s amorphic. It would include the ‘emerging church movement,’ but it’s bigger than that. It’s a vision of the kingdom [of God]. It’s a new kind of Christianity.”

Heather Zydek, the former “Revolution” section editor for *Relevant* magazine and the editor of *The Revolution: A Field Manual for Changing Your World*, says, “I definitely don’t have a name for it, but, yes, something is happening. Some people say it’s a Generation X—or Y—thing. But baby boomers are in on it too.”

Jim Wallis, the founder of *Sojourners* magazine and author of the bestseller *God’s Politics*, says, “‘Progressive evangelicals’ was thought to be a misnomer, but now we’re a movement.” He was as surprised as anyone when his

gelical voice in the wilderness. But in fact, over the past decades Wallis has had plenty of company, including Brian McLaren, Tony Campolo, Ron Sider and N.T. Wright, among others. And while this new generation has been inspired by many of those teachers, they do not have the same association with the organized left that some of their predecessors do. Shane Claiborne is one of the few young voices in this movement who at least knows the history of cross-pollination between the Left and Christianity, mentioning *Catholic Worker* founder Dorothy Day’s socialist origins in *Irresistible Revolution*.

Zydek characterizes the movement this way: “We want to get back to the roots of Christianity, to the essence of Christianity, which is about service to those in need, sacrifice, denial of self for others—it’s about [Jesus saying] ‘pick up your cross and follow me.’ But for too long we’ve spread a gospel of suburbanism, of self-centeredness, of capitalism, of political conservatism—but not *the* gospel: the gospel that came from Christ.”



Rob Bell on the Nashville stop of the “Everything Is Spiritual Tour”



Students from Norway on stage at the “Isn’t She Beautiful” conference

**I**HAD BEEN A regular listener of Rob Bell’s sermon podcasts for a few months when he announced the January 20-21 “Isn’t She Beautiful” conference (“She” being the church). The invitation was open to “Church leaders, pastors, and basically just revolutionaries and insurgents from all over the world.” I signed right up.

I arrived at Mars Hill the evening before the conference, in a heavy snow, just in time to catch the regular Sunday night service. The Mars Hill church building is a converted mall. From the outside it looks just like any other old shopping center—they’ve never put up a sign. So when you walk in and see the teeming, logo-free community inside that has taken over every inch of this entire mall, you get the feeling that you’ve walked into an alternate universe. Imagine walking into a McDonalds to find your mom’s kitchen inside.

The sanctuary is a hollowed-out department store that used to host RV shows and swap meets—no decoration, just exposed aluminum walls, ducts and beams. As I walked in, a volunteer handed me a Bible. Three thousand people were on their feet, singing powerfully and worshiping in an explosive expression of collective joy that simply does not exist in the left of this era. There were certainly some “hipster Christians” in the crowd (tattoos, goatees, etc.), but overwhelmingly the congregants were mainstream-looking Michiganders.

Rob Bell finally took to the stage, sport-

ing plastic-rim, hipster glasses, a white belt and cool shirt. He looks like a grown-up indie rock star (and used to play in a popular Grand Rapids band). The son of a Reagan-appointed federal judge, Bell graduated from Wheaton College, where male and female students live in separate dorms with curfews and are encouraged to abstain from physical intimacy. After receiving his M.Div from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., Bell interned at a conservative, non-denominational evangelical church in Grand Rapids, from which he launched Mars Hill as a “church plant” in February 1999. The name Mars Hill refers to the site where the apostle Paul preached to non-Jews by making the gospel current and relevant to their own culture.

On this night, Bell barely preached himself, and instead spent the evening, as he often does, interviewing a member of the church about how she was living out the gospel. She and her husband had moved to a broken inner-city neighborhood and begun a tutoring and family assistance ministry that is now in the process of expanding out of a church basement to fill an entire renovated warehouse.

If you compare the Mars Hill complex to progressive community centers or union halls, it has no rival. The entire mall has been converted. Most of the stores are now classrooms for the different grades of its enormous Sunday school. One of the large depart-

ment stores has been converted into an events and youth meeting space with a stage, and ping pong and pool tables. The broad, carpeted concourse is now filled with comfy sofas and chairs for sitting and talking. Though the complex is perfectly clean and attractive, you get the feeling that the church, in renovating the facilities, has spent the minimum possible resources to meet functional needs.

More striking than the size of Mars Hill is the intensity of participation among the membership. The Mars Hill house church program—where small numbers of people come together in a home for Bible study, fellowship, mutual support and as a launching point for outreach into the community—involves more than 2,000 members in hundreds of groups, each with its own leaders. Several hundred volunteer as childcare providers and Sunday school teachers. And hundreds more serve each Sunday as ushers, parking helpers and medics. (With 3,500 people in a room, you never know what can happen.)

Yet Mars Hill is not atypical. According to the Barna Group, nine percent of Americans attend house churches (up from one percent 10 years ago). And tens of thousands of churches are *de facto* community centers, serving and supporting virtually all aspects of their members’ lives, usually with a significant percentage of members acting as volunteers. In this way, churches have left progressives in the dust in terms of serving and engaging people directly. The union hall is the left’s nearest equivalent, but not only is it dying, it rarely attempts to serve anywhere near as many of the needs—spiritual and practical—as churches do.

**C**OULD THE SHIFT in focus from personal salvation to the building of the “kingdom of Heaven” be the inevitable result of the long rise of “back to the Bible” fundamentalism? Tens of millions of American Christians are not only reading the Bible, but getting together in groups and studying it—studying the historical context in which the authors wrote, the nuances of the original Greek and Hebrew, and the issues raised by translation and conflicting source texts.

Zydek says, “No matter how you pick and choose your favorite Bible passages, if

you know that Jesus died on the cross for you, that's going to affect the way you treat other people. If you're a Bible-believing Christian, maybe you choose to emphasize evangelism or maybe you emphasize works, but you can't ignore Jesus' example of unconditional love on the cross."

Wallis agrees. "The religious right is being replaced by Jesus," he says. "They're just really digging into Jesus, and what they read in [the Book of] Acts doesn't correspond to their churches.

which made national news, he said:

Never in history have we had a Christian theocracy where it wasn't bloody and barbaric. That's why our Constitution wisely put in a separation of church and state. ... I am sorry to tell you, that America is not the light of the world and the hope of the world. The light of the world and the hope of the world is Jesus Christ.

He also spoke out against the exclusive focus on abortion and gay marriage

had never received so much positive feedback in his career: "Some people literally wept with gratitude, saying that they had always felt like outsiders in the evangelical community for not 'toeing the conservative party line.'"

Yet the Revolution is not primarily a reaction to Republican attempts to politicize the church. What sets it apart from mainstream evangelicalism is not a liberal rejection of Republican politics, but rather a more radical rejection of conser-

## THE THINKING OF THIS MOVEMENT IS AS UTOPIAN AS THE MOST FAR-OUT SECT OF ANTIGLOBALIZATION ANARCHISTS, YET THEY ARE LIVING IT RIGHT AT THE HEART OF SUBURBAN AMERICA.

And so they're changing them or going out and creating new communities."

The Revolutionaries' faith in the Bible leads them to a gospel of social justice, but it also leads to a morality that is far out of step with mainstream American culture and the left. Sex outside of marriage, divorce, "lust," "sexual immorality" and homosexuality are all things Jesus or other New Testament voices spoke about with varying degrees of intensity.

According to Wallis, the Revolutionaries are "breaking away from the Right in droves—but they will never be captured by the left. They're going to challenge the left on a lot of things: For these Christians, sex is covenantal and not recreational. And they oppose abortion and they are not going to move away from that."

Where Revolutionaries most part ways with many mainstream evangelical churches' interpretation of the Bible is in their embrace of women as leaders, elders and preachers. Mars Hill's lead elder (board chair) is a woman. A similar process of reversal of the restriction on women in leadership is taking place in many evangelical churches across the country.

**B**OYD'S *MYTH OF a Christian Nation* is based on a series of six sermons called "The Cross and the Sword" he delivered at his St. Paul church in the politically-charged atmosphere of the 2004 presidential election, in which Minnesota was a heavily-targeted swing state. In those sermons,

by many evangelical leaders. "Those are the two buttons to push if you want to get Christians to act," he said. "And those are the two buttons Jesus never pushed."

His not-very subtle rebuke of Republican electioneering caused around 1,000 members of his congregation to leave. "Close to 700 left during the six-week 'Cross and the Sword' sermon series," he says. "Another 300 or so left when I 'didn't have the good sense' to back off the topic but rather returned to it once again just prior to the election." But 4,000 stayed. And he said he

vatism and liberalism, and anything else that is not the "kingdom of God."

To the Revolutionaries, what seems righteous or commonsensical to humans does not matter; all that matters is what God wants. Boyd writes in *Myth of a Christian Nation*: "To the extent that an individual or group looks like Jesus—dying for those who crucified him and praying for their forgiveness in the process—to that degree they can be said to manifest the kingdom of God. To the degree that they do not look like this, they do not manifest God's kingdom."

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The Mars Hill “Isn’t She Beautiful” conference winds down after a lecture.

And that is where anticapitalism and anti-imperialism come in. Capitalism doesn’t look like Jesus. Empire doesn’t look like Jesus. In their critique of the political and economic institutions of the “kingdom of the world,” the Revolutionaries are following in the tradition of early Christianity. In *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*, pastor and theologian Brian J. Walsh and theologian Sylvia C. Keesmaat write:

Just as in the ancient world, the [Roman imperial] images of peace and prosperity masked the reality of inequality and violence, so the contemporary images projected by advertising mask the reality of sweatshops, inequality, and domestic and international violence created by our lifestyles. And in the face of the ubiquitous imagery of the empire, Paul proclaims Jesus as the true image of God (Col 1:15) and calls the Colossian Christians to bear the image of Jesus in shaping an alternative to the empire.

For the Revolutionaries, the new “temple”—from which Jesus chased the money changers in the Bible—is the shopping mall. They write:

Globalization isn’t just an aggressive stage in the history of capitalism. It is a religious movement of previously unheard-of proportions. Progress is its underlying myth, unlimited economic growth its foundational faith, the shopping mall its place of worship, consumerism its overriding image, ‘I’ll have a Big Mac and fries’ its ritual of initiation, and global domination its ultimate goal.

In the shopping mall liberated by Mars Hill, the *Colossians Remixed* authors—a married couple who home school their children—discussed their work during an all-day forum attended by a thousand suburban, white, middle-class moms and dads. How many authors from the antiglobalization left have presented their ideas to a willing mass audience of middle-class suburbanites?

The thinking and dreaming of this movement is as utopian as the most far-out sect of antiglobalization anarchists, yet they are living it right at the heart of mainstream America. And they are organizing with unbelievable success, attracting thousands of new participants every week and spawning hundreds of new churches and thousands of new small groups and house churches every year.

**A**T THE “ISN’T SHE BEAUTIFUL” conference, the non-theological sessions were devoted to one of the secrets of this movement’s success: leaders—identifying them, recruiting them, “loving them” and letting them lead. The pastors at the conference all seemed to view their church memberships as seas of under-utilized leaders, and spent as much time as they could learning from each other and the Mars Hill staff how to be the best “fishers of men” they believe Jesus called them to be.

This high-density leadership organizing model stands in stark contrast

to anything I’ve ever seen working in unions, progressive organizations and Democratic political campaigns. On the left, recruiting and mobilizing leaders has become devalued work that is typically left to inexperienced recent college graduates. The pastors at this conference, however, saw recruiting and inspiring leaders as one of their central callings. Too often, the left pays lip service to the grassroots, but lacks faith in grassroots leaders. The result is that too many of our organizations are one person deep and stretched impossibly thin. At the conference, I tried to imagine what Kerry campaign field offices (where I spent a lot of time in 2004) would have looked like if we had recruited leaders instead of “bodies” and expected them to be “faithful, committed members of a team” (words included in Mars Hill volunteer job descriptions). Some organizations on the left do include “leadership development” in their organizing models. But churches seem to assume that there are already plenty of “developed” leaders in their midst and go straight to giving them as much responsibility as they can.

Andrew Richards is the “local outreach pastor” at Mars Hill, charged with driving the Mars Hill house church program to reach people in need in the greater Grand Rapids community. “We’re not only taking care of the needs of our own community, but we want to respond to the needs that are in the greater community,” he said before a recent Sunday service while trying to recruit more leaders. He laid out five areas of focus: urban at-risk youth, refugees, poverty, community development and HIV/AIDS.

Rob Bell and other church leaders seem to be building up to a big challenge. It is unclear exactly what is in the works. (Bell does not give interviews.) But he has been preaching more and more about “systemic oppression,” poverty, debt and disease—not just locally but globally. And other leaders have indicated to the membership that the current level of sacrifice for others in the community and the world is not in line with Jesus’ teachings.

On Dec. 10, 2006, Bell kicked off a series of sermons, titled “Calling all Peacemakers,” during which he said:

Never before in history have there been a group of people as resourced as us. . . . Never before has there been a group of people

who could look at the most pressing needs of the world and think: well, we could do it ... History is like sitting right there, in the middle of war, and great expenditure, and violence, and the world torn apart in a thousand directions—[waiting for] a whole ground swell of people to say, ‘Well, we could, we could, we could do this. We could do what Jesus said to do.’

But, as of now, the Revolutionaries seem to be embracing person-to-person, “be the alternative” solutions to the exclusion of advocating for social policy that is more in line with their vision of the kingdom. Boyd says, “I never see Jesus trying to resolve any of Caesar’s problems.”

Wallis believes this reluctance comes from the recent experience of being dragged into the mess of partisan politics on the terms of the Republican party.

“But the prophets [of the Bible] don’t talk about just being an island of hope—they talk about land, labor, capital, equity, fairness, wages,” says Wallis. “And who are the prophets addressing? Employers, judges, rulers. On behalf of widows, orphans, workers, farmers, ordinary people. The gospel is deeply political. It’s not partisan politics, but a

prophetic politics. It is what the prophets and Jesus finally call us to.”

“Take any big issue we’ve got: Politics is failing to deal with it. They see that,” Wallis continues. “But I’m saying that we need to change politics. Social movements change politics—and the strongest social movements have spiritual foundations.”

I asked Wallis if leaders like Rob Bell were part of a rebirth of the Liberation Theology movement that took root in Latin America in the ’60s and ’70s. “This movement is in a sense liberation theology in the best sense of the word,” he says, “but it’s more personally faith-based, more street-based and finally more community-based. I remember you’d go to a [liberation theology] event and it would be analysis, analysis, analysis—and there would never even be a prayer.”

This new generation of Christian Revolutionaries most definitely places prayer above analysis. But where will their prayers lead them? Will they forever restrict themselves to person-to-person, “relational” solutions? Or will they choose to influence political leaders on issues they share with the left—poverty, war, environmental destruction—with

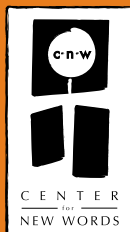
the same force that the Christian Right exerted around abortion, gay marriage and other areas?

All that’s certain is that they will keep praying for answers with a desperate yearning and remarkable openness—as Rob Bell did recently:

God, give us a vision for a new kind of world. We grieve, we honor, we condemn. But we want to move through that. We want to have asked the hard, hard questions. But we want to move through that too. And we want to be people of a dream, which we believe is your dream for the world. But then, God, we want to move past *that*. We want to move to *action*. ... God, what would this look like? Show us millions of different ways to *bless*—to *bless* in such a way that it would literally shake the foundation of the Earth and capture us with this kind of dream. ... Please, God, open our eyes.

And 10,000 American suburbanites replied, “Amen.” ■

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# COUNTERINSURGENCY

# 101

BY KRISTIAN WILLIAMS

**A** SOLDIER IN BAGHDAD, IN town for the “surge” and wondering whether things really are as bad as they seem, might want to read *FM 3-24*, the U.S. military’s Counterinsurgency Field Manual, released last December. On Page 1-29, our soldier will find a handy table—“Successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgency operational practices”—that outlines the Dos and the Don’ts. (See sidebar.)

In which column would one place the major decisions of the Bush administration? The dissolution of the Iraqi army, the de-Baathification of the civil service, the failure to guard important historic and cultural sites, the granting of reconstruction contracts to American firms, and the long-term neglect of legal due process—all correspond to the advice on the “Don’t” side of the chart. And that’s not accounting for atrocities like those in Falluja, Haditha or Abu Ghraib. The “Dos” column, on the other hand, reads like a list of what the United States has failed to do: meeting the population’s needs, expanding secure areas, politically isolating the insurgents, training and equipping Iraqi forces, securing the borders and so on.

If this table serves as a pocket-sized score card, the 280-page manual is a full-bodied treatise on the subject. This is the first new counterinsurgency field manual to appear in 20 years, and as such, it serves as a tacit admission that the American strategy in Iraq is simply not working. The manual’s perspective takes on additional significance since its chief author, Gen. David Petraeus, has just taken over as the top commander in the war.

Petraeus, who wrote his dissertation at Princeton on the military lessons of the Vietnam War, distinguished himself in Mosul with his hearts-and-minds approach. Shortly after the 2003 invasion, he used the 101st Airborne to establish an overwhelming presence in the city, then promptly



Iraqi soldiers man a checkpoint at the entrance of Sadr City, an impoverished Shiite Muslim neighborhood in Baghdad, on Feb. 6, 2007.

instituted foot patrols, held local elections and distributed money for reconstruction. At the year’s end, Mosul was one of the few pacified areas. But Petraeus’ approach ran counter to Rumsfeld’s. At the beginning of 2004, Rumsfeld replaced the Airborne with a Stryker force one-fourth as large. The Stryker Brigade halted the foot patrols and the local government’s efforts. Within a few weeks, Mosul was in chaos. The question facing Petraeus now is whether that process can be reversed—three years later, on a much larger scale, and with a budding civil war. It’s a tough test for the theory set out in his handbook.

Written primarily for “leaders and planners at the battalion level and above,” *FM 3-24* sets doctrine for the Army, Marine Corps, Army Reserve and National Guard. It addresses practical, organizational and theoretical dimensions of low-intensity conflict, starting with general principles and then focusing on specific operations. Hence, it begins with a detailed analysis of the nature of insurgen-

cies, which is then followed by chapters on the integration of civilian and military activities, the use of intelligence, the design, execution and sustainment of operations, developing local government forces and ethical constraints.

According to *FM 3-24* the ultimate aims of a counterinsurgency program are political—winning legitimacy for the government and undermining the claims of the rebels. Strategically speaking, it is as important to meet the population’s needs as to hunt down the enemy. A counterinsurgency program is, as the manual puts it, “armed social work.”

But mounting a successful counterinsurgency is a dangerous balancing act. Any sign of weakness benefits the insurgents, who will exploit the atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity in their efforts to discredit the government. But if the military is overbearing and oppressive, the insurgents can use public resentment and sincere grievances to gain support and justify violence. It is not enough to win the

battles if the government loses the backing of the population in the process.

*FM 3-24* does a good job conveying this complexity. It refers repeatedly to the localized, “mosaic” nature of insurgencies, and to their tendency to shift suddenly, unpredictably and often. The guide provides a list of “counterinsurgency paradoxes.” For example: “Sometimes, the More Force Is Used, the Less Effective It Is,” and “Tactical Success Guarantees Nothing.” It practically makes a mantra of the slogan “Learn and Adapt.” It also stresses the need for decision-makers to familiarize themselves with local conditions, the history of the region, the culture and the country’s institutions. While always careful to remind the counterinsurgent of the inevitable role violence plays, the manual especially emphasizes need for political legitimacy.

So along with the tedious details of military organization and procedure, the handbook provides a substantial outline of basic sociological concepts (plus an appendix on “social network analysis”), a political science lecture on the nature of legitimacy and history lessons drawn from American involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam, El Salvador and the Philippines; T.E. Lawrence’s Arabian campaign; Mao’s guerilla war in China; and several less famous (or infamous) colonial wars, revolutions, resistance movements and terrorist fights.

Direct discussion of the Iraq war is relatively polite and tends to foreground stories of U.S. military success. But since it is impossible to read the book without the present war in mind, certain implications are nevertheless obvious. There is scant mention of Abu Ghraib, for example, but there are extensive, repeated discussions of the legal, moral and political prohibitions against torture. (An appendix reprints the complete text of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions). There is also a brief retelling of the French experience in Algeria:

During the Algerian war of independence between 1954 and 1962, French leaders decided to permit torture against suspected insurgents. Though they were aware that it was against the law and morality of war, they argued that—

- This was a new form of war and these rules did not apply.
- The threat the enemy represented, communism, was a great evil that justified extraordinary means.
- The application of torture against insurgents was measured and nongratuitous.

This official condoning of torture on the part of French Army leadership had several negative consequences. It empowered the moral legitimacy of the opposition, undermined the French moral legitimacy, and caused internal fragmentation among serving officers that led to an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1962. In the end, failure to comply with moral and legal restrictions against torture severely

undermined French efforts and contributed to their loss despite several significant military victories. ... France eventually recognized Algerian independence in July 1963.

Under the circumstances, especially given the list of reasons for the French policy, it is hard not to read this paragraph as the professional military’s direct repudiation of the Bush-Gonzales-Rumsfeld torture doctrine.

Other historical cases cited in the manual provide similar, unsettling grounds for comparison. For example:

During Napoleon’s occupation of Spain in 1808, it seems little thought was given to the potential challenges of subduing the Spanish populace. Conditioned by the decisive victories at Austerlitz and Jena, Napoleon believed the conquest of Spain would be little more than a “military promenade.” Napoleon’s campaign included a rapid conventional military victory but ignored the immediate requirement to provide a stable environment for the populace.

The French failed to analyze the Spanish people, their history, culture, motivations and potential to support or hinder the achievement of French political objectives. ... Napoleon’s cultural miscalculation resulted in a protracted occupation struggle that lasted nearly six years and ultimately required approximately three-fifths of the Empire’s total armed strength, almost four times the force of 80,000 Napoleon originally designated. The Spanish resistance drained the resources of the French Empire. It was the beginning of the end for Napoleon.

The authors are not so blunt as to draw a direct comparison with Bush’s present misadventure, though they do certainly invite one. (Note the phrase “military promenade,” so like the “cake walk” we were promised in Iraq.) The analogy also poses inevitable questions, questions the manual does not and probably cannot answer directly: Given the central importance of political legitimacy, what do you do when the government is not legitimate, when the war is not just? What happens when the moral high ground has been irrevocably lost?

The counterinsurgency Field Manual hints at an answer. It comes as the heading to the Algerian case study quoted above: “Lose Moral Legitimacy, Lose the War.”

Petraeus the general still insists that the war can be won; Petraeus the theorist would seem to disagree. ■

**KRISTIAN WILLIAMS** is the author, most recently, of *American Methods: Torture and the Logic of Domination* (South End Press, 2006).

**FM 3-24: “Successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgency rational practices”**

Successful practices	Unsuccessful practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize intelligence.</li> <li>• Focus on the population, its needs, and its security.</li> <li>• Establish and expand secure areas.</li> <li>• Isolate insurgents from the populace (population control).</li> <li>• Conduct effective, pervasive, and continuous information operations.</li> <li>• Provide amnesty and rehabilitation for those willing to support the new government.</li> <li>• Place host-nation police in the lead with military support as soon as the security situation permits.</li> <li>• Expand and diversify the host-nation police force.</li> <li>• Train military forces to conduct counterinsurgency operations.</li> <li>• Embed quality advisors and special forces with host-nation forces.</li> <li>• Deny sanctuary to insurgents.</li> <li>• Encourage strong political and military cooperation and information sharing.</li> <li>• Secure host-nation borders.</li> <li>• Protect key infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overemphasize killing and capturing the enemy rather than securing and engaging the populace.</li> <li>• Conduct large-scale operations as the norm.</li> <li>• Concentrate military forces in large bases for protection.</li> <li>• Focus special forces primarily on raiding.</li> <li>• Place low priority on assigning quality advisors to host-nation forces.</li> <li>• Build and train host-nation security forces in the U.S. military’s image.</li> <li>• Ignore peacetime government processes, including legal procedures.</li> <li>• Allow open borders, airspace, and coastlines.</li> </ul>

FM 3-24 MANUAL

# Reclaiming What Makes Us Human

Through the ages, the killjoys of governing elites have been threatened by public expressions of collective joy.

BY BARBARA EHRENREICH



**T**HE ENEMIES OF FESTIVITY have argued for centuries that festivities and ecstatic rituals are incompatible with civilization. In our own time, the incompatibility of festivity with industrialization, market economies and a complex division of labor is usually simply assumed, in the same way that Freud assumed—or posited—the incompatibility of civilization and unbridled sexual activity. In other words, if you want antibiotics and heated buildings and air travel, you must abstain from taking hold of the hands of strangers and dancing in the streets.

The presumed incompatibility of civilization and collective ecstatic traditions presents a kind of paradox: Civilization is good—right?—and builds on many fine human traits such as intelligence, self-sacrifice and technological craftiness. But ecstatic rituals are also good, and expressive of our artistic temperament and spiritual yearnings as well as our solidarity. So how can civilization be regarded as a form of progress if it precludes something as distinctively human, and deeply satisfying, as the collective joy of festivities and ecstatic rituals?

In a remarkable 1952 essay titled “The Decline of the Choral Dance,” Paul Halmos wrote that the ancient and universal tradition of the choral dance—meaning the group dance, as opposed to the relatively recent, European-derived practice of dancing in couples—was an expression of our “group-ward drives” and “biological sociality.” Hence its disappearance within complex societies, and especially within industrial civilization, can only represent a “decline of our biosocial life”—a painfully disturbing conclusion.

Perhaps the problem with civilization is simply a matter of scale: Ecstatic rituals and festivities seem to have evolved to bind people in groups of a few hundred at a time—a group size at which it is possible for each participant to hear the same (unamplified) music and see all the other participants at once. Civilizations, however, tend to involve many thousands—or in our time, millions—of people bound by economic interdependencies, military exigency and law. In a large society, ancient or modern, an emotional sense of bonding is usually found in mass spectacles that can be witnessed by thousands—or with television, even billions—of people at a time.

Ours is what the French theorist Guy Debord called the “society of the spectacle,” which he described as occurring in “an epoch without festivals.” Instead of generating their own collective pleasures, people absorb, or consume, the spectacles of commercial entertainment, nationalist rituals and the consumer culture, with its endless advertisements for the pleasure of individual ownership. Debord bemoaned the passivity engendered by constant spectatorship, announcing that “the spectacle is the nightmare of imprisoned modern society which ultimately expresses nothing more than its desire to sleep.”

But there is no obvious reason why festivities and ecstatic rituals can’t survive within large-scale societies. Whole cities were swept up in the French Revolution’s Festival of Federation in 1790, with lines of dancers extending from the streets and out into the countryside. Rock events have

sometimes drawn tens of thousands for days of peaceful dancing and socializing. Modern Brazil still celebrates Carnival and Trinidad preserves its Carnival. Recent nonviolent uprisings, like Ukraine's Orange Revolution, invariably feature rock or rap music, dancing in the streets, and "costuming" in the revolution-appropriate color. There is no apparent limit on the number of people who can celebrate together.

Nor can the growing size of human societies explain the long hostility of elites to their people's festivities and ecstatic rituals—a hostility that goes back at least to the city-states of ancient Greece, which contained only a few tens of thousands of people each. No, the repression of festivities and ecstatic rituals over the centuries was the conscious work of men, and occasionally women, who saw in them a real and urgent threat. The aspect of "civilization" that is most hostile to festivity is not capitalism or industrialism—both of which are fairly recent innovations—but social hierarchy, which is far more ancient. When one class, or ethnic group or gender, rules over a population of subordinates, it comes to fear the empowering rituals of the subordinates as a threat to civil order.

For example, in late medieval Europe, and later the Caribbean, first the elite withdrew from the festivities, whether out of fear or in an effort to maintain its dignity and distance from the hoi polloi. The festivities continued for a while without them and continued to serve their ancient function of building group unity among the participants. But since the participants are now solely, or almost solely, members of the subordinate group or groups, their unity inevitably presented a challenge to the ruling parties, a challenge that may be articulated in carnival rituals that mock the king and Church. In much of the world, it was the conquering elite of European colonizers that imposed itself on native cultures and saw their rituals as "savage" and menacing from the start. This is the real bone of contention between civilization and collective ecstasy: Ecstatic rituals still build group cohesion, but when they build it among subordinates—peasants, slaves, women, colonized people—the elite calls out its troops.

In one way, the musically driven celebrations of subordinates may be more threatening to elites than overt political threats. Even kings and colonizers can feel the invitational power of the music. Why did 19th century European colonizers so often describe the dancing natives as "out of control"? The ritual participants hadn't lost control of their actions and were in fact usually performing carefully rehearsed rituals. The "loss of control" is what the colonizers feared would happen to themselves. In some cases, the temptation might be projected onto others, especially the young. In the fairy tale, the Pied Piper used his pipe to lure away the children from a German town. Rock 'n' roll might have been more acceptable to adults in the '50s if it could have been contained within the black population, instead of percolating out to a generation of young whites.

**B**UT ELITE HOSTILITY to Dionysian festivities goes beyond pragmatic concerns about the possibility of uprisings or the seduction of the young. Philosophically, too, elites cringe from the spectacle of disorderly public joy. Hierarchy, by its nature, establishes boundaries between people—who can go where, who can approach whom, who is welcome, and who is not. Festivity breaks the boundaries down.

While hierarchy is about exclusion, festivity generates inclusiveness. The music invites everyone to the dance; shared food briefly undermines the privilege of class. As for masks, they may serve symbolic, ritual functions, but, to the extent that they conceal identity, they also dissolve the difference between stranger and neighbor, making the neighbor temporarily strange and the stranger no more foreign than anyone else. No source of human difference or identity is immune to the carnival challenge: cross-dressers defy gender just as those who costume as priests and kings mock power and rank. At the height of the festivity, we step out of our assigned roles and statuses—of gender, ethnicity, tribe and rank—and into a brief utopia defined by egalitarianism,

**Celebration photos from around the world, clockwise from bottom left: England, Germany, China, Italy, India and Spain**



PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

creativity and mutual love. This is how danced rituals and festivities served to bind prehistoric human groups, and this is what still beckons us today.

So civilization, as humans have known it for thousands of years, has this fundamental flaw: It tends to be hierarchical, with some class or group wielding power over the majority, and hierarchy is antagonistic to the festive and ecstatic tradition. (Whether this is an inherent feature of civilization, we do not know, though advocates of genuine democracy can only hope that this is not the case. Contemporary anarchists and socialists differ on this point, with some proposing complex methods of grassroots democratic planning that would presumably abolish hierarchy of all kinds while preserving modern means of production. Michael Albert proposes such a system in his 2003 book *Parecon*. Others, most notably the anarchist thinker John Zerzan, argue that the problem goes much deeper, and that we cannot achieve true democracy without eliminating industrialization and possibly the entire division of labor.) This leaves hierarchical societies with no means of holding people together except for mass spectacles—and force.

Contemporary civilization, which, for all its democratic pretensions, is egre-

giously hierarchical along lines of class and race and gender, may unite millions in economic interdependency, but it “unites” them with no strong affective ties. We who inhabit the wealthier parts of the world may be aware of our dependence on Chinese factory workers, Indian tech workers and immigrant janitors, but we do not know these people or, for the most part, have any interest in them. We barely know our neighbors and, all too often, see our fellow workers as competitors. If civilization offers few forms of communal emotional connection other than those provided by the occasional televised war or celebrity funeral, it would seem to be a rather hollow business.

**W**E PAY A high price for this emotional emptiness. Individually, we suffer from social isolation and depression, which, while usually not fatal on their own, are risk factors for cardiovascular and a host of other diseases. Collectively, we seem to have trouble coming to terms with our situation, which grows more ominous every day. Half the world’s people live in debilitating poverty. Epidemics devastate whole nations. The icecaps melt, and natural disasters multiply. But we remain for the most part paralyzed, lacking the means

or will to organize for our survival. In fact the very notion of the “collective,” of the common good, has been eroded by the self-serving agendas of the powerful—their greed and hunger for still more power. Throughout the world (capitalist and postcommunist), decades of conservative social policy have undermined any sense of mutual responsibility and placed the burden of risk squarely on the individual or the family.

The family is all we need, America’s ostensibly Christian evangelists tell us—a fit container for all our social loyalties and yearnings. But this, if anything, represents a kind of evolutionary regression. Insofar as we compress our sociality into the limits of the family, we do not so much resemble our Paleolithic human ancestors as we do those far earlier prehuman primates who had not yet discovered the danced ritual as a “biotechnology” for the formation of larger groups. Humans had the wisdom, wit and generosity to reach out to unrelated others; hominids huddled with their kin.

Our civilization has its compensatory pleasures of course. Most often cited is the consumer culture, which encourages us to deflect our desires into the acquisition and display of things: the new car, or shoes, or face-lift, which will enhance our status and make us less lonely, or so we are promised. The mall may be a dreary place compared to a late medieval English fair, but it offers goods undreamed of in that humbler setting—conveniences and temptations from around the globe. We have “entertainment” too, in the form of movies; ever-available, iPod-delivered music for solitary enjoyment; computer games; and, possibly, coming soon, experiences in virtual reality. And we have drugs, both legal and illegal, to lift the depression, calm the anxiety and bolster our self-confidence. It is a measure of our general deprivation that the most common referent for ecstasy in usage today is not an experience but a drug, MDMA, that offers fleeting feelings of euphoria and connectedness.

But these compensatory pleasures do not satisfy our longings. Anyone who can resist addiction to the consumer culture, the entertainments, and the drugs arrives sooner or later at the con-

**Tu men perform the “Wutu” dance around the village of Nianduhu in northwest China in late December, 2005. The dancing is part of a ceremony held every year to drive evil spirits from the town.**



CHINA PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

This article is adapted from *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, out now from Metropolitan Books.

clusion that “something’s missing.” What that might be is hard to pin down and finds expression in vague formulations such as “spirituality” or “community.” Intellectuals regularly issue thoughtful screeds on the missing glue in our society, the absence of strong bonds connecting us to those outside our families. In 1985, Robert Bellah et al.’s book *Habits of the Heart: Individuals and Commitment in American Life* found Americans caught up in their personal ambitions, unable to imagine any larger sense of community. In 2000, Robert D. Putnam published *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, in which he reported a decline not just in civic participation but in any kind of group activity. There is even an intellectual current called communitarianism, which aims to somehow restore the social cohesion characteristic of smaller, less divided societies, and its adherents have included such notables as Bill and Hillary Clinton.

For most people, though, the “something” that’s missing is most readily replaced by religion. Far from withering away, as Marx predicted, religion has undergone a spectacular revival, especially in the largely Christian United States and the Muslim parts of the world. People find many things in their religions—a sense of purpose and metaphysical explanations for human suffering, for example. They may also find a sense of community—the umma of Islam or the neighborliness of a small-town church. The anthropomorphized God of Christianity, in particular, is himself a kind of substitute for human solidarity, an invisible loving companion who counsels and consoles. Like a genuinely caring community, he is said to be a cure for depression, alienation, loneliness, and even mundane, all-too-common addictions to alcohol and drugs.

But compared to the danced religions of the past, today’s “faiths” are often pallid affairs—if only by virtue of the very fact that they are “faiths,” dependent on, and requiring, belief as opposed to direct knowledge. The prehistoric ritual dancer, the *maenad* of ancient Greece or the Caribbean practitioner of Vodou, did not believe in her god or gods; she knew them, because, at the height of group ecstasy, they filled her with their presence. Modern Christians may have similar experiences, but the primary require-

ment of their religion is belief, meaning an effort of the imagination. Dionysus, in contrast, did not ask his followers for their belief or faith; he called on them to apprehend him directly, to let him enter, in all his madness and glory, their bodies and their minds.

**F**OR ALL KINDS of reasons, then, our imaginary “unconverted savage” might despair over what civilization has wrought. He would bemoan the

### **The prehistoric ritual dancer or the Caribbean practitioner of Vodou did not believe in her god or gods; she knew them, because, at the height of group ecstasy, they filled her with their presence.**

absence of the gods, which is manifested by the new requirement that they be summoned by the imagination, through interior faith rather than through shared ritual. He would be baffled by the fact that our great reproductive achievement as a species—the huge population, even overpopulation, of the earth—routinely leads to frustration and hostility, rather than to an enrichment of individual experience. He would cringe from the misery around him—the poverty and disease that our technological cunning has proved incapable of relieving. Above all, he would be stricken to find his species on what may be the verge of extinction—through pandemics, global warming, the nuclear threat and the exhaustion of resources—yet too isolated from one another to stand together, as early *Homo sapiens* once learned to do, and mount any sort of mutual defense.

We try, of course. Many millions of people around the world are engaged in movements for economic justice, peace, equality and environmental reclamation, and these movements are often incubators for the solidarity and celebration so missing in our usual state of passive acquiescence. Yet there appears to be no constituency today for collective joy itself. In fact, the very term collective joy is largely unfamiliar and exotic.

This silence demands some sort of explanation, so let us give the enemies of festivity—or at least the revolutionaries among them, like Robespierre and Lenin—their due. What is lost is not that important, they would argue, should

they be good-humored enough to even entertain the argument. And indeed you would have to be a fool, or a drug-addled hippie, to imagine that a restoration of festivity and ecstatic ritual would get us out of our current crisis, or even to imagine that such activities could be restored in our world today, with anything like their original warmth and meaningfulness. No amount of hand-holding or choral dancing will bring world peace and environmental healing.

In fact, festivities have served at times to befuddle or becalm their celebrants. European carnival coexisted with tyranny for centuries, hence the common “safety valve” theory of their social function. Native American Ghost Dancers could not reverse genocide with their ecstatic rituals; nor could colonized Africans render themselves bulletproof by dancing into a trance. In the face of desperately serious threats to group survival, the ecstatic ritual can be a waste of energy—or worse. The Haitian dictator François “Papa Doc” Duvalier actually encouraged Vodou as a means of strengthening his grip on the population.

My own Calvinist impulses—inherited in part from those of my ancestors who were genuine Calvinists, Presbyterian Scots—tell me insistently to get the work done, save the world and then maybe there’ll be time for celebration. In the face of poverty, misery, and possible extinction, there is no time, or justification, for the contemplation of pleasure of any kind, these inner voices say. Close your ears to the ever-fainter sound of drums or pipes; the wild carnival and danced ritual belong to a distant time. The *maenads* are long dead, a curiosity for the classicists; the global “natives” have been subdued. Forget the past, which is half imagined anyway, and get to work.

**A**ND YET ... It does not go away, this ecstatic possibility. Despite centuries of repression, despite the competing allure of spectacles, festivity keeps bubbling up, and in the

most unlikely places. The rock rebellion broke through the anxious conformity of post-war America and generated an entire counterculture. Then, at the other end of the cultural spectrum, where the spectacle of athleticism merged with nationalism, people undertook to carnivalize sports events, reclaiming them as occasions for individual creativity and collective joy. Religions, too, still generate ecstatic undertakings, like the annual Hasidic pilgrimage to the Ukrainian town of Uman, which has sprung up just since the fall of communism and features thousands of Hasidic men, dressed entirely in white, dancing and singing in the streets in honor of their dead rebbe. The impulse to public celebration lives on, seizing its opportunities as they come. When Iran, which is surely one of the world's more repressive states, qualified for the World Cup in 1997, "celebrations paralyzed Tehran," according to *Newsweek*. "Women ripped off their government-mandated veils; men gave out paper cups of strictly forbidden vodka as teenagers danced in the streets."

There are also cases of people coming together and creating festivity out of

nothing, or at least without the excuse of a commercial concert or athletic event. Thousands of women gather every summer for the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, described on its Web site as "the best party on the planet." Gay male culture features "circuit parties," involving dancing and some times costuming, and, with some help from chemical stimulants, these can go on for days. It was gay culture, too, that first appropriated Halloween as an adult holiday, now celebrated with parades of costumed people of all sexual inclinations.

We might also note such recently invented festivities as the Berlin Love parade, an outdoor dance party that has attracted more than a million people at a time, or the annual Burning Man event in the Black Rock Desert in Nevada, where thousands of people of all ages gather annually to create art, to dance and to paint and costume themselves.

And whatever its shortcomings as a means to social change, protest movements keep reinventing carnival. Almost every demonstration I have been to over the years—antiwar, feminist or for economic justice—has featured some

element of the carnivalesque: costumes, music, impromptu dancing, the sharing of food and drink. The media often deride the carnival spirit of such protests, as if it were a self-indulgent distraction from the serious political point. But seasoned organizers know that gratification cannot be deferred until after "the revolution." The Texas populist Jim Hightower, for example, launched a series of "Rolling Thunder" events around the country in the early 2000s, offering music, food, and plenty of conviviality, and with the stated aim of "putting the party back in politics." People must find, in their movement, the immediate joy of solidarity, if only because, in the face of overwhelming state and corporate power, solidarity is their sole source of strength.

In fact, there has been, in the last few years, a growing carnivalization of protest demonstrations, perhaps especially among young "antiglobalization" activists in Europe, Latin America, Canada and the United States. They wear costumes—most famously, the turtle suits symbolizing environmental concerns at the huge Seattle protest of 1999. They put on masks or paint their faces; they bring drums to their demonstrations and sometimes dance through the streets; they send up the authorities with street theater and effigies. A Seattle newspaper reported of the 1999 demonstrations: "The scene ... resembled a New Year's Eve party: People banged on drums, blew horns and tossed flying discs through the air. One landed at the foot of a police officer, who threw it back to the crowd amid cheers." The urge to transform one's appearance, to dance outdoors, to mock the powerful and embrace perfect strangers is not easy to suppress.

And why, in the end, would anyone want to? The capacity for collective joy is encoded into us almost as deeply as the capacity for the erotic love of one human for another. We can live without it, as most of us do, but only at the risk of succumbing to the solitary nightmare of depression. Why not reclaim our distinctively human heritage as creatures who can generate their own ecstatic pleasures out of music, color, feasting and dance? ■

**BARBARA EHRENREICH** was one of the original "sponsors" of *In These Times* when it was founded 30 years ago.

**Young travellers on a beach in Goa. The tiny Indian state became known as a hippie heaven in the '60s and its beaches have hosted all night parties for adventurous backpackers ever since.**



AMI VITALE/GETTY IMAGES

# The Health Care Monster Returns

Even Republicans acknowledge its ravages, but what's the best way to slay the beast?

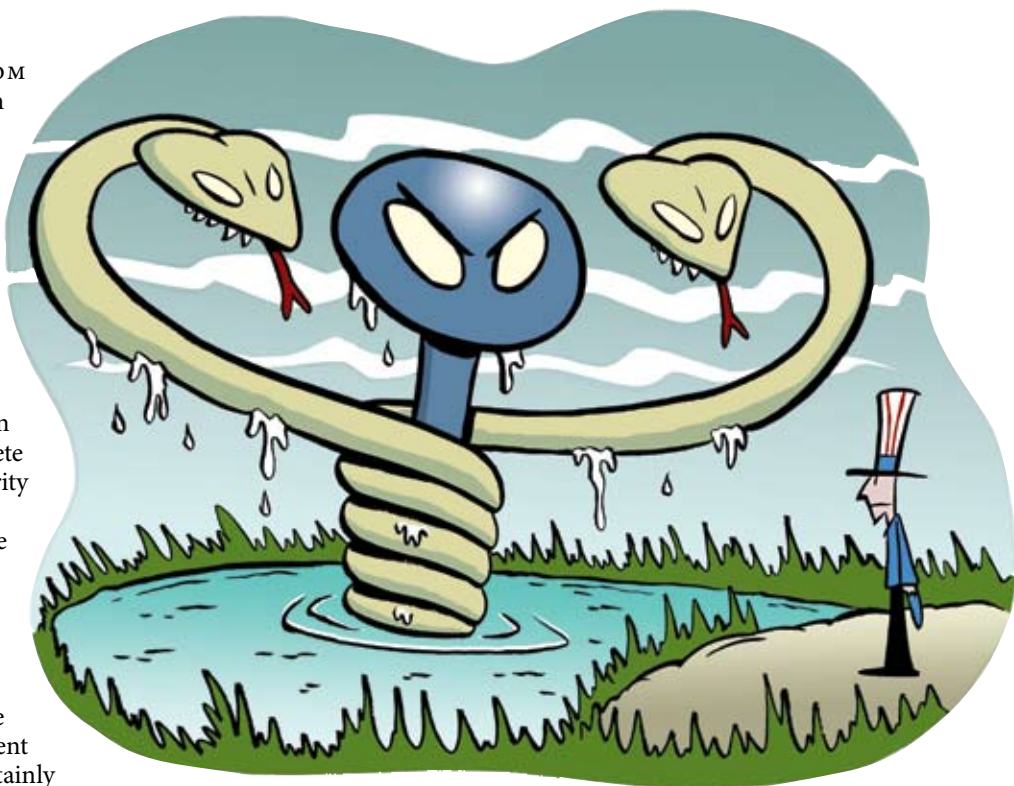
BY DAVID MOBERG

**L**IKE THE CREATURE FROM the Black Lagoon, the health insurance monster has returned, creeping back onto the public stage. After President Clinton's jury-rigged pen to contain the monster collapsed in 1994, it never really went away. Political leaders tried to ignore the beast or deal piecemeal with its ravages, but it pushed more unsuspecting civilians into the uninsured pit, devoured more family budgets, squeezed even giant corporations' ability to compete globally, and raised fear and insecurity among the populace.

Now its depredations have become too loathsome to ignore for even cautious politicians and business executives—who still are inclined to see the monster as one of their own. After a rebuff in the fall elections, when voters ranked health care as one of their top concerns, President Bush offered a plan that almost certainly would not deliver his promise of “quality, affordable health care for all Americans.”

Recently, chief executives like Lee Scott of Wal-Mart—under attack for its skimpy health insurance coverage of employees—and Steve Burd of Safeway—which endured a long strike by southern California grocery workers to cut their health insurance—joined progressive leaders like Service Employees Industrial Union (SEIU) President Andy Stern, head of the nation's largest health workers union, to call for major changes in the health care system. Under fire from both other labor unions and many citizen health care groups for joining with strange bedfellows on behalf of very broad principles, Stern argues that “the most essential change is to get everyone in a system where they have health care,” then work to improve it.

Although the war in Iraq is likely to dominate the already energetic Democratic presidential primary race, health care is emerging as the leading domestic issue in both parties. Shortly after announcing his candidacy, John Edwards laid out a comprehensive health care plan. Barack Obama said that the nation should provide universal insurance coverage by the end of the next president's term, though so far he has mostly advocated for minor and politically easy reforms, like computerizing health records. Republican candidate Mitt Rom-



ney signed a flawed plan for universal health care when he was governor of Massachusetts, and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, after vetoing statewide single-payer legislation passed last year, has his own health insurance plan.

There's reason for hope when leaders across the political spectrum recognize the problem. But there's no guarantee that such agreement will lead to a good solution. For more than a decade, conventional wisdom has dictated that only incremental steps should be taken. Now more politicians are willing to consider bolder steps—but the right is still determined to push its agenda. And many progressive reformers are cautious about pursuing their ideals, as they continue to nurse scars from the fight business interests waged against the Clinton plan.

“Overwhelmingly, people are trying to find incremental responses instead of a national response,” says Marilyn Clement, national coordinator of Healthcare-NOW, a coalition advocating a public insurance program as the single payer of health care bills. “They are still putting forward the same proposals as last summer, such as ‘The first step is to get national health care for children.’ Well, that's good, but we won the election. It's time to escalate our hopes.”

**T**HE FIRST CRUCIAL step is to define the problem. For many people, it's the rising number of Americans without health insurance, now nearly 47 million. But equally problematic is the decline in quality and scope of coverage for those who have insurance. And much of the public ranks the cost of health care as their top medical and economic concern. Focusing primarily on insuring everyone won't necessarily solve those problems. Indeed, the skyrocketing cost of health care is the main reason that the ranks of the uninsured continue to grow. Faced with rising insurance premiums, businesses have been trying to cut costs by evading responsibility for providing health insurance, leading Stern to declare that "the employer-based health care system is dead."

But the more fundamental problem is our reliance on private, for-profit corporations to provide health insurance—the real monster in this saga. They're the main reason for rising costs (making health insurance in the United States about twice as expensive as in most industrial countries), for the growing number of uninsured, and for the inferior

health results for the average American. In 2004, the United States spent \$6,100 per capita on health care, compared to \$2,250 per capita on average by the countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which have national health insurance programs. Because public expenditures cover 60 percent of American health care costs, U.S. taxpayers are paying more than the cost of national health insurance, but not receiving it.

"How much can a new system depend on private insurance companies to provide affordable, good health care for everyone?" asks Roger Hickey, co-director of Campaign for America's Future, a Washington, D.C.-based progressive advocacy group. "That should be the debate."

Now the country is faced with two radically different proposals for reform. The first, pushed by conservatives and embraced by Bush in his new plans, would make individuals more responsible for buying their own health insurance. While giving them tax breaks to help pay the premiums, it would push them in the direction of lower-cost, less comprehensive plans (partly by tax-

ing employer-provided insurance as income). As part of this strategy, conservatives have also undermined Medicare, first, by subsidizing private insurance companies to provide Medicare insurance and, second, by establishing a prescription program only available through private insurers.

The Bush strategy would be a boon for wealthy and healthy individuals, as well as employers and insurance companies, but it would ultimately leave most Americans paying more for less health security. The harsh edges of the plan could be softened—by regulating the insurance companies' attempts to charge more or deny coverage to people seeking insurance, or by offering tax credits or direct subsidies to the poor instead of tax deductions. But these changes still embody what economist Jared Bernstein, of the progressive think tank the Economic Policy Institute, calls YOYO ("You're On Your Own") economics.

The diametrically opposite alternative is to recognize that "we're in this together" (WITT, in Bernstein's schema) and move towards social insurance, or a plan like Medicare. In this case, the federal government—through a public agency—would provide comprehensive insurance. It would be financed directly by progressive taxes on individuals and business, unlike the current system, which provides \$200 billion a year in economically regressive and largely unrecognized tax deductions to subsidize employer-based health insurance. The public insurance agency would then bargain with health care providers, drug companies and others to control prices and improve quality of care.

The Bush YOYO strategy assumes that when health care consumers—otherwise known as patients—confront costs of medical care, they'll consume less, and overall medical costs will go down. But Americans already spend more out-of-pocket on health care and use doctors and hospitals less than citizens of almost every other industrialized country. Yet, while the overall health cost in the United States is much higher, the outcomes—by virtually every measure of health—are worse. U.S. health care costs more mainly because of private insurance: Overhead at insurance companies runs close to 20 percent of total revenues, compared to less than 4 percent for Medicare. When the extra administrative costs imposed on providers are

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counted, the overall overhead that private insurance imposes on the system eats up about one-third of what Americans spend on health care. Eliminating those costs, as proposed by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) and supported by Ohio Rep. and Democratic presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich, could finance most of a Medicare expansion to cover all Americans much more comprehensively than the program does now.

**M**OST PROGRESSIVE REFORMERS acknowledge that Medicare for everyone would best slay the health crisis monster, but many strategists worry that trying to eliminate the private insurers will provoke a withering counterattack. Consequently, many current proposals try, as Hillary Clinton did in 1993, to preserve a more regulated role for the insurance companies and at the same time expand public programs, on the model of Medicare, to provide a competitive alternative to private insurers.

Edwards' plan would require employers to cover employees or help pay for their insurance (what's widely known as "pay or play"). Everyone would have to buy insurance, taking advantage of tax credits, expanded programs such as Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or new regional "health markets" that would provide a choice of competitive private plans and a public plan. Along the same lines, but with a simpler design and more robust public component, Yale political scientist Jacob Hacker proposes that everyone not in Medicare be covered either by insurance at work or a public insurance pool, including both regulated private plans and a Medicare-like plan.

Both these proposals move in the direction of Medicare for all, but strike a compromise with the existing system, losing the potential for better efficiency and more equity in the bargain. Why not push for universal Medicare (aka, a "single payer" plan)? Proponents of compromises say Medicare for all is a political non-starter. Americans, they argue, are suspicious of government, like choices and often like the private insurance they already have. And besides, they say, the insurance industry—along with most business interests and political conservatives—would launch a scorched earth campaign against such a proposal.

"There are a lot of dedicated, smart people who have made the judgment that taking some steps toward a comprehensive system with a public health care plan is better than waiting for the perfect system," says Hickey, whose organization supports Hacker's proposal. The labor movement, which was divided over support of a single-payer system in the '90s, seems even more cautious now.

## **Most progressive reformers acknowledge that Medicare for everyone would best slay the health crisis monster, but many strategists worry that trying to eliminate the private insurers will provoke a withering counterattack.**

"The political will isn't there now, but it could get there for single-payer," says AFL-CIO health care lobbyist JoAnn Volk. A close union ally adds, "Most of the labor movement has already accommodated to the reality that we're not going to get a pure single-payer system. They have made the judgment that it's just not within the range of possibility."

SEIU's Stern—who has argued that the United States needs an "American" plan, and not a foreign model like Canada's single-payer system—says, "First we should create [a health care system] in which everyone is covered, then we can figure out how to rationalize it. It will cost more money than if we did it the other way [i.e. pursuing the best alternative], but I think we have more chance of getting it done. The perfect cannot be the enemy of the good."

**A**LTHOUGH A SMALL but rebounding movement for some form of Medicare-for-all exists, some progressive groups that would be its natural partisans are reluctant to commit themselves to a specific plan. William McNary, president of USAction, a national group of statewide citizen organizations, notes that many of their allies are splintering over proposals. "Things are fracturing," he says, "it would be best for us to line up behind principles," and not a plan. Jim Dean, chairman of Democracy for America, a liberal movement within the Democratic Party, thinks the United States is ripe for universal health care, but worries about both infighting over the best plan and the specter of corporate attacks. He

wonders, "Can we figure out a way to talk about this so as not to get bogged down, sway, with "Harry and Louise" commercials [that the insurance industry used against President Clinton's plan]?"

But there's no guarantee that insurance companies won't launch a war against these compromises, especially any that curtail insurance industry profits. And corporations that support universal health insur-

ance will almost certainly oppose any plan that doesn't seriously reduce their financial responsibility, which would threaten to shift costs to individuals. "Everyone says they're for universal health care," says Don Bechler, chair of the California Universal Health Care Organizing Project. "But the fundamental question is, 'Who pays?' Is [universal health care going to be] a sliding scale health care plan where everyone is entitled to first class health care, or a flat tax to sell junk insurance?"

When Clinton tried to finesse such political opposition by making insurance companies central to his plan, he suffered merciless attacks. No plan worth having will win without a massive grassroots organizing and education campaign. And Medicare for all is the one most likely to do so, while simultaneously strengthening progressives politically.

The American people are at least open to the argument. In a 2003 *Washington Post* poll, one of the few to pose alternatives fairly, 62 percent of respondents said they would prefer a universal health insurance program like Medicare, run by the government, to the current health insurance program. And support for the Medicare program remained nearly as high even if it limited the choice of doctors or led to waiting lists for non-emergency procedures.

Eventually, Medicare-for-all advocates might have to settle for a compromise. But the opportunity for major change in the health care system doesn't come around very often. Since any change will require a massive effort, why not fight for the best? ■

BY LISA SOUSA

## In Defense of a Free Press

Sarah Olson, a journalist based in the San Francisco Bay area, has become a hero for Americans concerned about the erosion of press freedoms in the Bush era. On May 30, 2006, Olson interviewed Army First Lieutenant Ehren Watada, the first commissioned officer to

publicly refuse deployment to Iraq, for the Web site [truthout.org](http://truthout.org) and Pacifica Radio. For that refusal, on Feb. 5, the Army hauled him before a military court in Fort Lewis, Washington, for a court-martial. The Army charged him with one count of “missing movement,” for refusing to deploy to Iraq, and four counts of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman—two of which stem from statements he made to individual journalists regarding his opposition to the Iraq war.

To help make their case, in December, the U.S. military subpoenaed Olson to testify in Watada’s military trial, where if convicted he could face a year in jail for each of the two charges related to speaking with Olson and, on a separate occasion, Greg Kakesako of the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*.

The subpoena required Olson to appear in court on behalf of the prosecution to verify Watada’s statements, even though audio files were available on the Internet. If she refused to comply, she risked a felony charge and six months in jail.

So, Olson started a campaign to challenge the subpoena. On Jan. 29, bowing to public pressure, the Army dropped the subpoena against Olson just prior to the start of the trial. The defense and the prosecution had reached a deal: Watada would verify the statements attributed to him and in response the prosecution would drop the two charges resulting from statements he made to journalists. Watada’s court-martial resulted in a mistrial on Feb. 7, when the military judge nullified the Stipulation of Facts accepted

by the prosecution and the defense. A new trial will begin on March 19.

For upholding the First Amendment right to freedom of the press, Olson will receive the James Madison Award from the Society of Professional Journalists on March 13. The award is named after Madison, the fourth President of the United States and the creative force behind the First Amendment.

*In These Times* recently spoke with Olson about her case, its significance and the challenges currently facing defenders of the First Amendment.

**A number of journalists have recently been subpoenaed to reveal their confidential sources and/or hand over unpublished material. How was your situation different?**

It was a military court that subpoenaed me, rather than a civilian court. The military is the only place that I know of where people in the United States can be charged with making personal political statements. For me, that’s the biggest difference.

**Why didn’t you just verify what Lt. Watada said and get it over with?**

It’s a journalist’s job to report the news, not to participate in the government’s prosecution of personal political speech. These kinds of subpoenas erode the barrier between press and government. When speech itself is a crime, journalists are turned into an investigative tool of the government. It also scares journalists away from covering

stories that may not be popular with the current administration.

**How would you compare your situation to that of former *New York Times* correspondent Judith Miller?**

Judy Miller’s case is about revealing confidential sources and who leaked classified information about something. Everything Lt. Watada said is on the record. So it’s not the typical framework people think of when they think of journalists being subpoenaed. This case is about preserving the right of ordinary Americans, particularly men and women in the armed services, to speak to the press without fear of retribution or censure. A number of people have suggested that the Army may be using his court-martial to send a message to the rest of the military that public opposition to the war isn’t going to be tolerated.

A lot of people are really down on Judy Miller. I can understand that because she may have done more than any other single person in the United States to help create the war in Iraq. Her consistently bad reporting and unwillingness to verify the accuracy of the things she was saying is one of the reasons that we’re in the war today. America’s threshold for bringing journalists into court has been significantly lowered in part because of Judy Miller.

**Josh Wolf, another Bay Area-based media worker, is in jail for refusing to hand over his unpublished material. Do you think your victory is relevant to his case?**

I certainly hope to raise awareness about his case. Josh was working as an independent videographer—he sold his footage of a San Francisco protest against the G8 Summit in 2005 to the local news—and the local/federal law enforcement agencies wanted his unpublished outtakes. That’s totally protected under



KAREN BLEIER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**Independent journalist and radio producer Sarah Olson speaks at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in early February.**

the California state shield law. [The shield law protects a journalist from being held in contempt of court for refusing to disclose unpublished information that was gathered for news purposes, whether the source is confidential or not.] The prosecutor got around that by convening a federal grand jury, saying that a cop car allegedly set on fire during the protest was purchased in part by federal dollars.

On Feb. 6, he broke the record for the longest number of days that a journalist in the United States has been incarcerated for not handing over his unpublished material to a federal grand jury. It's possible that Josh will continue to sit in prison after having broken no law whatsoever, which is an infuriating and gross injustice.

**Did you ever waver in your decision to challenge the subpoena?**

No. I was contacted by the Army in July and I was subpoenaed in December. I had a lot of time to think about the situation and work myself into a First Amendment frenzy. By the time I was subpoenaed I was very clear about what the issues were.

**Can you foresee any circumstance in which you would testify on behalf of a government prosecution?**

I think a person could make a reasonable case that there are certain situations when journalists should be compelled to reveal certain pieces of information.

For example, in a hypothetical situation, what if in the course of your interview someone told you they had a nuclear bomb that was going to go off in 48 hours and they told you where it was, would you reveal that information? This is just simply not one of those situations. Obviously I would take each situation at its face value.

**Did you learn anything about the rights of journalists or the First Amendment that you didn't know?**

Absolutely. The first thing is that journalists don't really have any rights. That was really shocking to me. I wasn't aware that the courts didn't uphold a journalist's ability to object to a subpoena and I wasn't aware that you could be compelled to participate in the prosecution of someone who is speaking to you.

**You say that media workers—and not just members of the press—should be covered under shield laws. Why do you make that distinction?**

It's important to protect the whole scope of people who are engaging in acts of newsgathering. That includes bloggers, Indymedia journalists and people who are working on a contract basis, for example, people who are working as assistants, translators and fixers in Iraq. A whole host of people work in newsgathering who are not traditionally defined as journalists, and who don't necessarily work for the Hearst Corporation or a huge paper.

**Do you have any criticisms about how the media covered your role in the Watada cases?**

The media did a fine job for the most part. One of the things I've learned through this process is how challenging it is for journalists to follow stories that address not just the who, what, where and when, but also the why. My situation might be very disturbing to me, my family and my friends, but the reason I began speaking publicly is not because I see this as a situation about me as a person. It's not even a story just about Lt. Watada. It's not about the individual players. I think we need to think more about why we don't have a place in the daily news for stories that tackle the question of why.

**What are the ramifications of the Army going after Lt. Watada for speaking out?**

The Army's own numbers show that more than 50 percent of the military is unhappy with the war and there are a number of high-profile objection cases or AWOL cases. This is the context in which Lt. Watada's court-martial is happening—it's a very political context. I do believe that the Army would like to send a message in some way.

I think that Lt. Watada's court-martial will set legal precedent for decades into the future about what's allowable speech, and it will set political tone today for what is tolerated in terms of dissent.

**We don't know what is going to happen to Lt. Watada. What do you hope people take away from his court-martial and your role in his case?**

I hope there is greater support in the United States for journalists to be able to gather and disseminate news without the government interfering in that process. That fundamental notion of press freedom is not as irrelevant to individuals and institutions as we sometimes think. When journalists are able to fight back against these subpoenas, it's possible for them to be dropped.

With regards to Lt. Watada's situation, I want to underscore that there is a growing amount of dissent within the military. A majority of the troops in Iraq would like to come home, and active duty members of the military are increasingly finding ways to express their discontent and opposition to the war. It is very important that we have a media that can cover that perspective. ■



The input of many is a powerful tool in today's DIY media.

BY PAT AUFDERHEIDE

## Is Wikipedia the New Town Hall?

Public broadcasting everywhere is in crisis, and in part it's because technology seems to be turning pubcasters into dinosaurs. In fact, not just them, but all broadcasters. Consider the business leaders: NBC formally declared itself an "Internet

company" and is slashing its analog TV investments. Mega-media mogul Rupert Murdoch bought MySpace last year and is now considering dumping his satellite assets because he's looking forward to wireless digital TV. Pubcasters used to be providers of trusted information. But when bloggers are so busy linking to each other that they hardly have time to watch television or read newspapers, is the mainstream media—even the PBSes and NPRs—becoming irrelevant?

No wonder pubcasters are suffering heartburn these days. But why should the rest of us care about their problems? Because communications make up the circulatory system of public life in a democracy—and for almost a century mass media have

been central to the public sphere.

The public sphere is the informal part of our lives where we manage the quality of our shared culture. Church, the post office, sidewalks, Starbucks, the water cooler—they are all places in the physical world (or what our digerati friends like to call "meat space") where people bring along their experience with the media. It is an informally structured set of social relationships, where power can be mobilized against large institutions such as the state and large corporations.

Mass media have acted as a pseudo-public sphere. Broadcast news services were stand-ins for our collective, top-priority concerns of public life. Popular programs were, similarly, pseudo-public culture,

distilled examples of how a culture understands itself—or at least as corporate broadcasters would like it to.

Public broadcasting has been a protected, if compromised, zone that provides some higher-quality opportunities for people to learn about each other and their problems, and to share a common cultural experience of consuming the same media. But public broadcasting is still a stand-in for public communication, because it is a mass medium. The broadcasters speak to the many, who then talk to each other.

Can digital media change this? Can new technologies bring media made by, with and for the public? Could pubcasters be part of it?

Certainly new technologies have created such opportunities for “many-to-many” communication, and people are leaping upon it. The pace of change is extraordinary. The blogosphere is doubling every six months, as measured in the number of weblogs. It’s a multilingual and multicultural environment. Social networking has exploded. Traffic on MySpace, which two years ago was insignificant, had already by early 2006 far outstripped traffic to traditional news Web platforms such as the *New York Times* and CNN.

What used to be the audience is gradually being supplanted by a new entity—a wildly fluctuating set of networks of people engaged in issues and topics and passions who seize upon communications media to make their networks real and make things happen. Yesterday’s screen talked to you; you talk through today’s screens, whether through Skype or on your video-enabled cellphone. Yesterday you listened to the news; now you link to it on your blog. Yesterday you watched the movie; now you make a video, put it on YouTube and link it to your Facebook account. Never before have there been so many opportunities for publics to communicate, critique and create media.

But will this new open environment actually generate *public media*—media for public knowledge and action, media that helps a public into being and nourishes it? There’s reason for some enthusiasm. In a new book, *The Wealth of Networks*, legal scholar Yochai Benkler makes a powerful argument that DIY (do it yourself) media offer unprecedented oppor-

tunities for truly public communication. Communications can now, finally, visibly be the constitutor of public life.

This is not merely an idea. Today, everybody has a blog—there are at least 70 million. They are growing by the minute, and they are growing around the world. Blogs, it turns out, are socializing machines. Writers want readers and get them by linking up with other bloggers, and so blogs form complex clouds of social relationships.

## How accurate is Wikipedia? That depends on the strength of the publics that gather around the topics being discussed. But what’s shocking is how accurate it frequently is.

What about the public part, though? Are they actually fueling conversations about issues that affect the public in ways that allow publics to form and act? Consider a traditional role of public media: to serve as a watchdog on power. The blogosphere has acted in this way, transcending at times political partisanship.

For instance, when Sens. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) and Barack Obama (D-Ill.) proposed the creation of a searchable database of all federal government contracts and grants over \$25,000, political bloggers of all stripes loved the idea. It would be a treasure trove for anti-corruption research. Then suddenly one senator put a “secret hold” on the bill, stalling it.

The blogosphere erupted, especially Republicans and libertarians. Bloggers told people to contact their senators. Everyone did. Bloggers also pooled efforts to flush out the secret-holder—Ted Stevens (R-Alaska)—and the outcry forced him to lift the hold. Mainstream media reported on the event. The bill was passed. And the Office of Management and Budget, which will maintain the database, had a meeting with bloggers to ask for their continued support for efforts to monitor spending.

How about the provision of reliable information, another function of public media? Wikipedia is surprisingly good proof that collaborative work by amateurs can provide balanced and reliable information, and even become a vigorous site of public debate and negotiation. Wikipedia is an open-source

encyclopedia of whatever information people want to explain to other people. It’s wide open to anyone, has more than three million articles in 125 languages... and only three employees, counting founder Jimmy Wales. Everyone else is a volunteer, donating money, time and energy—many of them briefly. They follow a few clear rules, including one that calls for a “neutral point of view”—not objectivity but a fair representation of different perspectives.

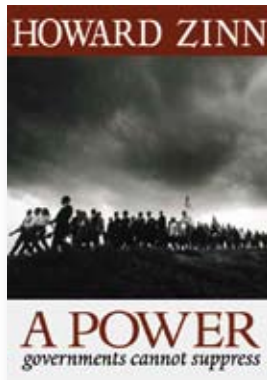
A Wikipedia entry is a living and constantly changing organism, reflecting the current state of negotiations between people of vastly differing opinions on a subject. For instance, the entry on abortion reflects constant input, monitored and edited by others of differing views.

How accurate is Wikipedia? That depends on the strength of the publics that gather around the topics that are covered. But what’s shocking is how accurate it is. Science entries are more accurate than entries in history. Facts that stand alone do better than those for which the meaning changes dramatically in context. But the community of active contributors does a lot for accuracy. When Alex Halavais, a professor of interactive communication at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut, deliberately entered errors—some minor, some middling—into 13 widely differing Wikipedia entries, all were corrected within three hours.

What is so exciting about Wikipedia isn’t just the generation of new information, but the creation of active publics around the creation of knowledge for publics. People who have certain entries on their watch lists are part of a public in which there can be vigorous disagreement but shared interest in addressing an issue.

Wikipedia and blog actions take some explaining. How can you get reliability out of a mass of unreliable actions? James Surowiecki, an economics writer at the *New Yorker*, gives it away in the title of his book, *The Wisdom of Crowds*. He analyzed the research lit-

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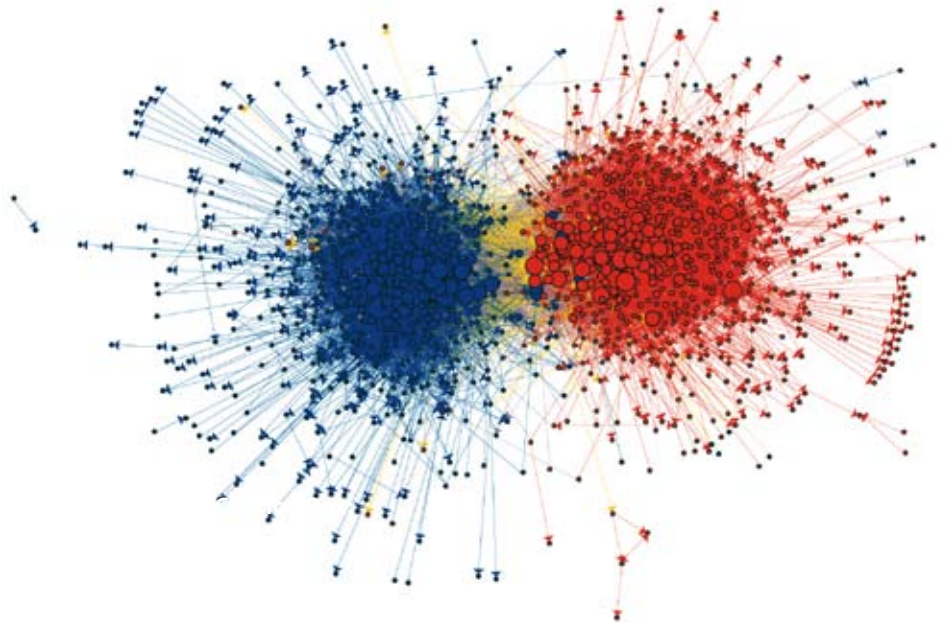
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**The community structure of political blogs. The colors reflect political orientation, red for conservative, and blue for liberal. Orange links go from liberal to conservative, and purple ones from conservative to liberal. The size of each blog reflects the number of other blogs that link to it.**

erature on group decision-making and exposed the counter-intuitive fact that crowds can in fact be wise, under certain conditions. In fact, time and again when asked to solve a problem, groups of people who individually and without consultation pool their opinions—even when their expertise varies widely and includes real experts—seem regularly to come up with answers that are at least as good as that of the most accurate member of the group.

Not all crowds or groups, though. They need to be diverse, not in a politically correct sense but in the sense of a great variety of kinds of knowledge. You need the ignoramuses along with the smart alecs. They need to guard against being influenced by what they think others are going to say. They need to have ways to aggregate their knowledge. They need to be able to coordinate their actions based on that knowledge.

Now people can make their own media, share it with others and aggregate what interests them, and rank this material. That is a “wisdom of crowds” recipe for decentralized, collaborative media creation.

Plenty of policy roadblocks remain in the way: How will we allocate this spectrum in the future? How will commercial and noncommercial providers of

Internet access structure their networks? How will today’s inequalities be translated into the online environment? How will we safeguard the public from violation of privacy and fraud while maintaining equality of access? But this is a thrilling if also terrifying time for public media. Pubcasters could be leaders in developing new platforms.

And some pubcasters are toying with the idea of playing a role as facilitator of open public media spaces. For instance, Minnesota Public Radio has turned its listeners into sources and generators of new stories with Public Insight Journalism. StoryCorps is generating grassroots oral histories for public radio. The Independent Television Service and Boston TV station WGBH are both hosting “mashup” sites for online video. They’re all demonstration sites that let us glimpse the possibilities of public media made by and for the public itself. ■

**PAT AUFDERHEIDE** is a senior editor at *In These Times* and the director of the Center for Social Media at American University in Washington, D.C. She runs the Future of Public Media Project, funded by the Ford Foundation. She recently gave the annual Graham Spry Lecture on Public Broadcasting in Montreal (Spry founded Canada’s public broadcasting system). This essay was adapted from her remarks.

BOOKS

## America's Own Worst Enemy

By Mark Engler

**I**N MARCH 1999, President Clinton toured several Latin American countries, surveying areas devastated by Hurricane Mitch and meeting with governmental delegations to promote his vision of globalized trade and cooperative regional diplomacy. In each country, he received a warm welcome. When Clinton spoke before the National Assembly of El Salvador, members of the leftist FMLN party, former guerilla leaders who had become elected representatives, responded with a standing ovation.

Given that the United States had worked diligently throughout the '80s to destroy the rebel movement, this was an astonishing sight. Yet, in spite of the United States' long interventionist history, Bill Clinton was popular in Latin America. He had a way of charm-

ing would-be critics. Gabriel García Márquez shared dinner with Clinton, listened to the president spontaneously recite long passages of Faulkner and subsequently wrote an admiring profile.

These days, the world's Nobel Laureates are more likely to turn acid pens against the White House. The Bush administration shocked the international community with its aggressive militarism, its belief in unitary executive power, its use of torture and its good-versus-evil understanding of global affairs.

These same troubling traits have commanded the attention of Chalmers Johnson, who believes they have brought us to the "last days of the American republic." Johnson, a retired professor of Asian Studies at the University of California, San Diego, and current president of the Japan Policy Research Institute, popularized the CIA-originated term "blowback" with his 2000 book of that title. That volume warned that America's covert interventions abroad would come back to haunt us, and it became a best-seller after the attacks of 9/11 seemed to

fulfill the author's prophesy.

Since then, according to Johnson, our country's predicament has only worsened. His new book, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*, takes its name from the Greek "goddess of retribution and vengeance ... punisher of pride and hubris." Put secularly, Johnson is arguing that the United States is its own worst enemy. Sooner rather than later, he contends, U.S. arrogance will be its downfall.

Johnson's book is made up of largely autonomous chapters on a range of loosely-related subjects: how the Bush administration's executive power grab undermines the U.S. Constitution as well as international law, how the CIA functions as the president's private army, the extent to which America's extensive global network of military bases provides an infrastructure for imperial power projection, why space may be the final frontier for military expansion, and what lessons might be learned from the defunct British and Roman empires. Together these topics

## [ art space ]



Beneath the streets of Stockholm, graffiti sculptor **Tibet** is building an infantry of artifacts that are meant to stand the test of time. Each cement sentinel is bolted, glued or welded to its post, be it in Stockholm's sewers or the foundations of a decaying industrial complex. A rough mishmash of human and simian forms clad in bio-hazard gear, Tibet's creations function as a kind of cave art from a bleak and apocalyptic future.

Tibet calls the sculptures "a message in a bottle with a twist," and documents their installations at [www.tibetunderground.blogspot.com](http://www.tibetunderground.blogspot.com). "What someone who actually finds one [of my sculptures] will think ... I will never know. It's the question that keeps me awake at night and propels the whole project."

—Erin Polgreen

indicate the end is near. "The time to head off financial and moral bankruptcy is short," he writes. "We are on the cusp of losing our democracy for the sake of keeping our empire."

Johnson's writing is often described as "polemic," but that doesn't capture the heartfelt concern that underlies his distress about our country. Whereas many of us have grown numb to White House outrages, Johnson's indignation at the administration—its torture memos, its contempt for the freedom of public information, its defacing of established treaties—is vivid. This might be due to his conservative background: A Navy lieutenant in the early '50s, consultant for the CIA from 1967 to 1973, and long-time defender of the Vietnam War, Johnson became horrified at American militarism and interventionism only later in life. He writes like he is making up for lost time.

Johnson's most distinctive contribution to the debate about U.S. empire is his documentation of America's vast network of overseas military bases, a project he began in his 2004 book, *The Sorrows of Empire*. "Once upon a time, you could trace the spread of imperialism by counting up colonies," he writes in *Nemesis*. "America's version of the colony is the military base." The United States maintains 737 bases worldwide, costing more than \$127 billion and covering at least 687,347 acres in some 30 foreign countries. For local populations exposed to the pollution, bar fights and brothels that surround such encampments, they are wounds that fester daily. At home, Johnson argues, Americans suffer from the bloated military budgets required to maintain this "baseworld."

Each of Johnson's erudite chapters both enlightens and disturbs. But his underlying jeremiad about democracy's death lacks analytical force. Johnson looks incredulously upon "those who believe that the structure of government in Washington today bears some resemblance to that outlined in the Constitution of 1787." And it seems that there is no going back: "The legislative branch of our government is broken, and it is hard to imagine how it could repair itself, given the massive interests that feed off it." Likewise, a grassroots movement to reclaim democracy "is unlikely given the conglomerate control of the mass media and the difficul-



Feminist pop culture icons: Buffy, Ellen, Ani

ties of mobilizing." Johnson has essentially thrown up his hands.

Such pessimism is overblown. The republic has survived Richard Nixon and J. Edgar Hoover, and democracy, however battered, will outlast Bush as well. The president has lost his deferential Congress; his approval ratings have sunk to all-time lows. Bush is less an omnipotent tyrant than a lame duck.

In terms of geopolitics, the Bush legacy is also ambiguous. *Nemesis* is a book about hard power. Likening America's far-flung bases to Rome's garrisons, Johnson posits that not much has changed since the days of Caesar and Octavian. But, with nuclear weapons scattered amongst major and minor global powers, hard power has its limits.

To judge the strength of a nation, then, one must also gauge its talent for softer persuasion. And here the Bush administration militarists have become their own worst enemies. Acting out visions of global dominance, they have inflamed world resentment and spawned ever more challenges to American power. Our troops are embattled. Bush's state visits attract street protests. Discourteous politicians hover at every podium. It all makes you wonder: How much more dangerous was it when our president was both commanding and esteemed, lauded by laureates, touring our imperial backyard to standing ovations? ■

## BOOKS

### Bisexual Healing

By Jessica Clark

CRINGING IS OFTEN a sign of unfinished political business," according to feminist author Jennifer Baumgardner.

She should know. Since 2002, Baumgardner has been spearheading the confessional "I had an abortion" campaign—most recently captured in the documentary film *Speak Out: I Had an Abortion* ([www.speakoutfilms.com](http://www.speakoutfilms.com))—and in her new book, *Look Both Ways: Bisexual Politics*, she's tackling a topic that makes both straights and gays wince: the explosion of young women experimenting with bisexuality.

"The label *bi* sounds bad," writes Baumgardner, "because at least in some ways, bisexuals are an unliberated, invisible and disparaged social group." And yet, she notes, according to Alfred Kinsey's famous studies (and a more informal survey of Nerve.com personals), more than 30 percent of women have had or seek same-sex encounters. In the past decade, they have become nearly *de rigueur* on liberal arts campuses, inspiring the disparaging acronym "LUG" (Lesbian Until Graduation). Why?

Porn-inspired dorm fantasies aside, the rise in bisexual experimentation among

young women, Baumgardner argues, is indicative of their desire for equality in romantic partnerships—and they bring these “gay expectations” back to their encounters with men. Not just lusting after “anything that moves,” as the stereotype goes, young women who “look both ways” are interested in romance, in being understood completely and treated as full people. Bisexuality, writes Baumgardner, is as much about “crazy, overwhelming, cue-the-orchestra love” as it is about “hot, messy, cue the Led-Zeppelin-record sex.”

Many of Baumgardner’s theories are drawn from her own experiences, both as an openly bisexual woman and as a feminist writer who noted the rise of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender activism on college campuses while on previous book tours with writing partner Amy Richards. Though she shares the values of the larger “queer” culture, she eschews the term itself, noting that younger activists tend to use it, but she isn’t comfortable doing so. In *Look Both Ways* she tells her own story, and reexamines the stories of both contemporary and second-wave feminists who have had relationships with both women and men. For Baumgardner, life narratives are key to understanding and defining one’s bisexuality. She argues that a person’s sexual identity is formed from cumulative sexual experiences and attractions, rather than who is one’s partner at any given time.

“People who look both ways deserve to have a sexuality that originates in them, not one that’s a reflection of who they are currently sleeping with—a core of sexuality that is our own,” she writes.

As a lover of complex stories, Baumgardner cooks up quite a stew for the reader: a pinch of Freudian psychology; a dollop of passionately retold feminist history; a cupful of pop culture icons like Buffy, Ellen and Ani; and generous portions of personal anecdotes, including her own dalliances with Amy Ray of the Indigo Girls and her trouble achieving orgasms with male partners. The effect is a bit like a late-night grad-school gabfest: revealing, smart, titillating—and, yes, sometimes cringe-inducing. Along the way, she brings up topics that most feminists would rather let lie, such as her own internal prejudices she encountered in the relationship with her first girlfriend, Anastasia, whom she met while working at *Ms.*

“With Anastasia, the relating was very

intimate,” she writes “but too similar, too familiar. There was almost a lack of respect on my part, a bit of misogyny. Anastasia was so delectable, but also, like *Ms.*, a ghetto—too confining, over-populated, under-resourced, and undervalued—a margin that is expected to hold too much.”

Passages like these add depth to *Look Both Ways*, as they cut straight to the heart of many young women’s fraught relationship to both feminism and their own femininity. While Baumgardner acknowledges and honors the powerful role that feminism has played in the lives of generations of American women, she also recognizes that the movement has lost steam as women have gained more power. Like the second wave feminists who came before them, young women exploring their sexual identities are idealists—but they are less hampered by a rigid code of political conduct that forces them to forswear men entirely. Once-revolutionary women-only spaces like the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival have become quaint and claustrophobic. Yet, individual women must still grapple with stereotypes and glass ceilings. Baumgardner deals with this tension by recasting feminism as both a crucial les-

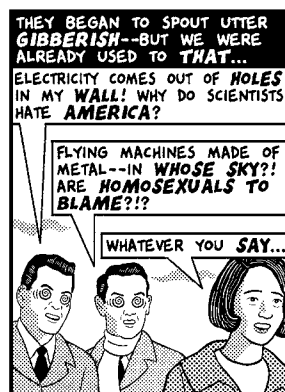
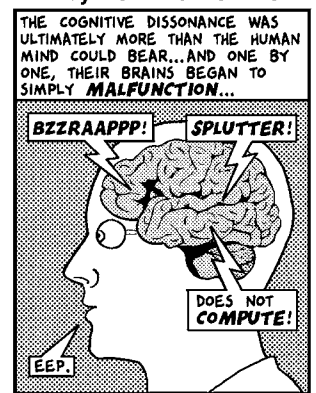
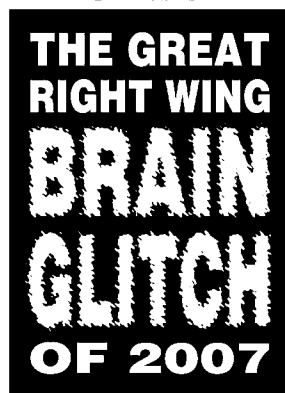
son and a phase, “a stage of development ... like puberty.” She values the time she has spent in women-only spaces and relationships. However, she suggests that dwelling in a sense of oppression ultimately “fetishishes male power, making it larger than it is.”

While experimenting with same-sex relationships can reveal internalized prejudices for women, it also allows them to play with male roles—including sleeping with and even objectifying women—demystifying masculine power. Such freedom from traditional interaction patterns can be liberating and instructive. Baumgardner notes that feminism has too often downplayed the pleasure of personal sexual expression and display. She calls women’s reclamation of the objectifying gaze “defanging the babe.”

Baumgardner places *Look Both Ways* squarely in the feminist tradition by framing the struggle for civil and social rights as a historical progression. For her, fighting for bisexuals to be recognized and treated as equals in their own right is a feminist impulse, as it extends the battle for personal freedom to a still-maligned group. In her own life, Baumgardner notes, it accords with her desire for inclu-

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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sion. She writes, “I don’t want there to be a space that I don’t have access to.” While this need has inspired her feminism, she notes, “it is the GLBT movement that is changing the world *right now*—as opposed to feminism, which is embedded in our culture and laws, and in many ways is much less visible.”

Perhaps it’s this currency, this political frisson, which makes bisexuality sexy to young women, along with its lingering whiff of taboo. But for how long? After all, according to Baumgardner, the end goal is not the endless production of ever-more-boutique political movements, but the serial dissolution of movements, allowing each of us to be socially recognized as “complex individuals.”

She suggests that such progress can be judged, in part, by the way that minorities are treated in popular media. Take the trajectory of gay television characters as an example—from the mincing queens and bull dykes of comedy to the courageous martyrs of the AIDS era, through a phase as “chic” mascots in the ’90s, to more recent roles as everyday characters with human foibles. Baumgardner offers the example of “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” as a parable. Just as this series ends with the birth of many slayers, freeing Buffy from the burden of individual heroism, she suggests, the acceptance of contested identities by the larger population frees activists from the burden of heroically embodying their race, class or sexual preference.

Baumgardner began her project just before gay pop culture became ubiquitous. “*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* did not exist, nor did *The L Word*. ... Ellen did not have a great new talk show that proved how popular she was despite being gay. Gavin Newsom hadn’t yet rushed gay marriage out of the land of theory and into the messy world,” she writes. She suggests that even current controversies about gay marriage have widened acceptance. “All of the news stories about gay marriage, for instance, make people who wouldn’t normally talk about gay people or rights talk about them. I have to believe that it leads to the next steps of liberation, the ones where gay people aren’t a cute cultural topic or a fad to exploit.”

Rejecting the pressure to be a “model” feminist or lesbian, Baumgardner counterintuitively champions the virtues of entitlement and the messiness of authentic personal discovery. Her discussion of the privileges of bisexuality is sure to raise the

## excerpt



### Homeless and Scorned

*Lisa Gray-Garcia, aka Tiny, grew up homeless in California. Gray-Garcia, a journalist and founder of the San Francisco-based POOR Magazine, tells of her childhood in Criminal of Poverty: Growing Up Homeless in America. Below, Gray-Garcia describes the point when she says “our official homelessness began.”*

I experienced my first bitter taste of class discrimination at the Shangri-La. “Miss, how long are you planning to stay here?” the undertaker-like front desk man would ask us each day. Theoretically that was none of his business since we were paying him every day before check-out time, but still he would ask, and then suddenly, one week after our arrival he shook his head from side to side in a defiant “no” when I tried to pay him for that night’s stay. “I’m sorry miss, but I can’t extend your stay.” “But why?” my breath began to leave my chest. “We’re booked,” he wouldn’t look at me. “But you told us the room was available all winter when we checked in.”

“Well, I’m sorry.” [...]

Later that day as we were dragging out our burgeoning Hefty bags containing everything we could carry (we didn’t have money for luggage and would try to make the white and black plastic bags look less like trash bags by tying them in elaborate knots at the top) the bellman told us quietly, sadly, and in solidarity that the hotel management had gotten a lot of “comments” about us. “Comments” is code for “trash,” “homeless,” “bums,” et al., and as I thought about it I couldn’t understand what would elicit those comments—we didn’t smell, our clothes were clean and relatively new, our hair was clean, we were showered. What had condemned us, then?



But it didn’t matter, we were homeless, we were two women alone. Our car was old, filled with everything we owned, topped off by a weary, blue king-sized mattress perched on it’s side like a cloth wave in mid-break. We didn’t belong to anyone or anything. We paid with cash, we had no credit cards, we owned nothing of value.

hackles of gay and feminist activists, but its one of the most interesting moments in the book. By looking both ways (both physically and metaphorically), bisexuals are able to pass as straight. Because of this, she argues, they expect and demand equality and acceptance to an extent that earlier generations of closeted gays and lesbians couldn’t. In this, they are much like the young women who embody feminist ideals while turning their backs on movement dogma.

“It’s the tragic part of being gay (or thereabouts) that I don’t want any part of, honestly,” writes Baumgardner. “It’s not so much that I am afraid of it. It’s more that tragedy is not the whole story and, like focusing on back-alley butchers to justify abortion rights, it’s over-told.”

Paradoxically, she suggests, the end result of so many young women looking both ways may be to allow gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and everyone in between to develop “straight expectations”—the assumption that they will be seen and treated as fully human no matter who they sleep with.

Baumgardner says that she hopes her book will validate the experiences of young women, providing an opening for identification and quintessentially feminist consciousness-raising. While she is sometimes embarrassed by revealing the details of her life, she told me, “I think the shame is not OK, it’s going to hurt me.

“It’s my experience that if you’re bold enough to have the conversation, incredible things come out of it.” ■

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

# HPV Vaccine: Betting on a Mercky Record



**M**ERCK LAUNCHED ITS new cervical cancer vaccine with a major advertising and lobbying blitz, and pushed to make the drug mandatory for all 11- to 12-year-old girls. Cervical cancer, caused by the

sexually transmitted human papillomavirus (HPV), affects 10,000 women in the United States every year, and kills 3,700. The toll is far greater in the developing world, where women lack diagnostic Pap tests.

Gardasil may well be what Merck claims: a lifesaving vaccine that protects against key HPV strains without any significant side effects. Because the drug is most effective on unexposed populations, the FDA recommends vaccinating girls as young as nine—before they are sexually active.

Merck—along with Women in Government (WIG), a recipient of Merck funding—went one step further, advocating mandatory vaccination. WIG has introduced bills in 20 states; in Florida, Merck helped write the legislation. In Texas, brushing aside abstinence junkies and the legislature, Gov. Rick Perry issued an executive order requiring vaccination for all girls entering the sixth grade unless parents opt out.

The stealth timing (late on Friday, just before Super Bowl Sunday), politics (Perry is a pro-abstinence Christian Conservative), and speed of Perry's order (just months after the FDA approved the vaccine and before all the data have been published) raised questions. It soon emerged that the WIG state director is the mother-in-law of Perry's current chief of staff, and his former chief of staff is now one of Merck's three Texas lobbyists. The governor received \$6,000 from Merck's political action committee.

While Perry's pace is suspect, Merck's is transparent. If Gardasil becomes routine, the \$360 course will generate annual sales of \$3.2 billion by 2010. This potential windfall has led cynics to dub the push the "Help Pay for Vioxx" program. Before Merck withdrew the arthritis drug in 2004, it may have caused almost 28,000 deaths, according to FDA estimates. In one Texas liability trial, lawyers produced documents and e-mails from Merck scientists discussing Vioxx's potential heart risks as early as 1997, more than two years before it went on the market.

In the meantime, people will have to weigh the risks of trying a new vaccine. While there are good reasons for women to take Gardasil—especially if they lack access to regular Pap tests—there are also solid reasons for waiting before making it mandatory. (They do not include the paranoid belief that all vaccines are evil, or the worry that protecting against an STD encourages girls—already undeterred by fear of AIDS, pregnancy, fumbling teenage foreplay, eternal damnation, or being labeled a slut—to indulge in unbridled sex.)

"The safety of new agents cannot be known with certainty until a drug has been on the market for years," according to a 2002 study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. "Serious ADRs [adverse drug reactions] commonly emerge after Food and Drug Administration approval." Reacting to outrage over Vioxx and other drug safety debacles, the FDA announced on Jan. 30 that it will eventually require comprehensive safety reviews of new drugs 18 months after their introduction.

For now, assurances of efficacy and safety are only as good as the data on which they are based. While more than 20,000 women between ages 16 and 26 took part in trials, the sample of 9- to 15-year-old girls was small—only 1,184. And since no participants have been followed for more than five years,

long-term effects remain unknown.

"The published data looks great, but at the very least, I would like to see efficacy data among 11- and 12-year-olds, which won't emerge until they are sexually active," says Karen Smith-McCune, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of California, San Francisco.

It also takes time to assess whether data are comprehensive and reliable, and mirror real-world conditions. Merck outsourced some of its Gardasil trials to Contract Research Organizations (CROs) in the developing world, including Jayajan Pharmaceutical Research in India. CROs are part of a \$14 billion industry that recruits subjects and runs trials for Big Pharma. Conflicts of interest can arise when CROs are paid royalties only after a drug is approved rather than getting a set fee independent of results, or when CROs believe favorable findings will lead to future contracts. Merck spokesperson Amy Rose refused to specify how, or even if, the company oversees CROs.

The FDA—hobbled by underfunding, politicization and dependence on Big Pharma money—has few resources to assess foreign trials and relies on drug companies. Even U.S. studies are subject to manipulation, as when researchers simply exclude unfavorable trials from those submitted to the FDA.

Of course, none of this means that Gardasil is unsafe. Few things in medicine are guaranteed, and odds are good that the HPV vaccine is a life-saving breakthrough. But consumers, activists, health professionals, and parents wanted the option of waiting for more data. The mighty PR stink they raised smothered Merck's lust for an instant blockbuster. On Feb. 20, the company announced it would immediately stop lobbying state legislatures to make vaccination mandatory. ■

**CONTACT** Terry J. Allen at [tallen@igc.org](mailto:tallen@igc.org)

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# New Left Elders

Continued from back page

Nobody minds. It's a day for joking, mostly about lost hair and gained pounds, just like any reunion. Eventually, everyone sits down and begins swapping stories. Kisseloff's books are notable for including very few famous people, though a few do slip in (Daniel Berrigan is the ringer this time around): to make the cut, the only criterion is to be a great storyteller.

Great stories are on hand. Zellner, who joined SNCC as a college student in his native Alabama, tells of the segregationist who tried to gouge out his eyes at a rally on the city hall steps in McComb, Miss. Later, as he sat in a ramshackle jail not knowing whether to fear more his jailers or the mob that waited outside, "four men came in suits and ties to interview me and take pictures of my wounds—that was the FBI. They said, 'We were there, and we didn't want you to think you were all alone. We wrote it all down.'"

David Cline, an early activist with Vietnam Veterans Against the War, tells how in 1967 he had broken his leg in a car accident, and it healed a half-inch shorter, something he assumed would keep him out of the draft. "But '67 was a pretty heavy year, and they were just looking for live bodies to replace dead bodies." He ended up in combat for six months, getting shot twice and hit once by mortar shrapnel. He recalls the moment of his radicalization: his superiors led him to the body of a young North Vietnamese soldier he'd shot, saying, "You did a good job, son, here's the gook you killed," and all he could think of was how the man's mother would react to the news.

Marilyn Salzman Webb, who was active in the civil rights, anti-war and feminist movements, recounts the incident that helped lead the women's liberation movement to split from the broader New Left. After being jeered off the stage at a Nixon counter-inaugural rally for daring to give a women's rights speech, she says, she got a phone call. "If you or anybody else ever gives a speech like that anywhere in the country," said the voice on the other end, "we'll beat the shit out of you." Webb thought she recognized the distinctive cadence as that of Students for a Democratic Society activist Cathy Wilkerson.

In the book, the anecdote ends there. But

Webb adds a coda: Years later, she ran into Wilkerson, and found out that she hadn't even been at the rally, let alone made the phone call. She later discovered that the FBI had been running a COINTELPRO counterintelligence operation to infiltrate and disrupt the anti-war movement at the time. The call, she now assumes, came from someone imitating Wilkerson.

There are knowing nods around the table. Jim Fouratt, a founder of the Gay

**'I think that America as a nation is perfectly happy to keep [the history of the '60s] quiet, because they can't afford for young people—black and white—to follow their idealism.'**

Liberation Front and one of the Yuppies who tossed dollar bills onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange to protest the war (the resulting mad scramble shut down trading), chimes in that he spent three months in a Texas jail on a trumped-up drug charge, emerging to hear rumors that he was an FBI informant, something he says has "haunted him" the rest of his life.

"It came, I believe, from this program," he says. "The goal was to take potential leaders and destroy them."

**A**LL THOSE ASSEMBLED still consider themselves activists, in one way or another. On the *Generation on Fire* Web site ([www.generationonfire.com](http://www.generationonfire.com)), which features interviews (including Fouratt's) that were cut from the book, Kisseloff notes that this continued engagement didn't sit well with agents or publishers: "I think that rankled a lot of people who would have preferred that the people in the book all ended up as sellouts."

Cline works with both VVAW and Veterans for Peace, and has advised the nascent Iraq Veterans Against the War. Verandah Porche, co-founder of the Vermont commune that inspired Kisseloff to begin this project, stages "Voices of the Uninsured" poetry readings to promote universal health coverage. And Barry Melton, former lead guitarist of antiwar heroes Country Joe and the Fish, is now a public defender in California—where, he says, he now commonly has to shoo military recruiters who accompany defendants to court, hoping to get them off so they can be shipped to Iraq.

All present hope that the stories in *Generation on Fire* will cut through the haze of legend to inspire young activists today. Gloria Richardson, a civil-rights veteran whose battleground was not the Deep South but her hometown of Cambridge, Md.—when JFK ordered locals to halt their protests against whites-only restaurants after the governor declared martial law, Richardson famously replied that the president could go to

hell—is most peeved that the civil-rights movement has been painted as a collection of Kings and Abernathys, with an occasional fed-up Rosa Parks added for every-person flavor.

"This was a secular movement," she says. "Almost everybody was a church member, but it was not led by preachers." It was only after the first wave of demonstrators had been jailed repeatedly, she says, that she and other parents went to SNCC to demand training to pick up where their children had left off.

"I think young people today are always looking up to this Martin figure," she says. "Nobody talks about who went to jail. Predominantly, those hundreds of cities in the South that were organized were mostly by high school and grammar school students putting their bodies on the line." It's a good model for organizing, says Richardson, because "they can't control those young people. They can't fire them, they can't stop them from getting a loan at a bank."

Richardson, now in her 80s, has no patience for "listen to your elders" talk. "I think that America as a nation is perfectly happy to keep that quiet, because they can't afford for young people—black and white—to follow their idealism.

"A lot of times people empathize with an issue, but they don't really know what to do—I know that happened to us at first in the movement," she says, as the *Nation* interns finish their free sandwiches and the guests of honor take turns cleaning up the remains of the meal. "You stand there and watch and you hope they succeed, but you don't really realize that you too can go in and do it." ■

# Elders of the New Left

BY NEIL DEMAUSE

IT SOUNDS WORRYINGLY LIKE the setup for a punch line: What do you get when you put nine '60s radicals in a conference room at the offices of the *Nation* magazine? Or maybe a the title for a reality series—you have the Chicago Eight member, the anti-war veteran, the feminist, the white civil-rights activist and the black civil-rights activist—“That '60s Show,” perhaps.

Fortunately, this gathering is a less high-concept occasion: the publication of *Generation on Fire*, the latest book by Jeff Kisseloff, whose previous oral histories brought to light turn-of-the-century Manhattan (*You Must Remember This*) and the early years of television (*The Box*). A labor of love that took a decade to find its way to publication, his new book focuses on the social movements that raged during Kisseloff's formative years. For the *Nation* Nine, who represent about half of the book's interview subjects, this luncheon will be their first meeting outside of the printed page, aside from those who knew each other back in the day.

The first joke flies about 15 minutes after we've arrived. Bob Zellner, who came to fame as the only Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizer whose daddy was a Klansman, tries to gather the assembled to sit down and eat. Yet everyone mills around even more aggressively. And the *New York Times* photographer quips: “This is going to be true to the times, isn't it?”



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