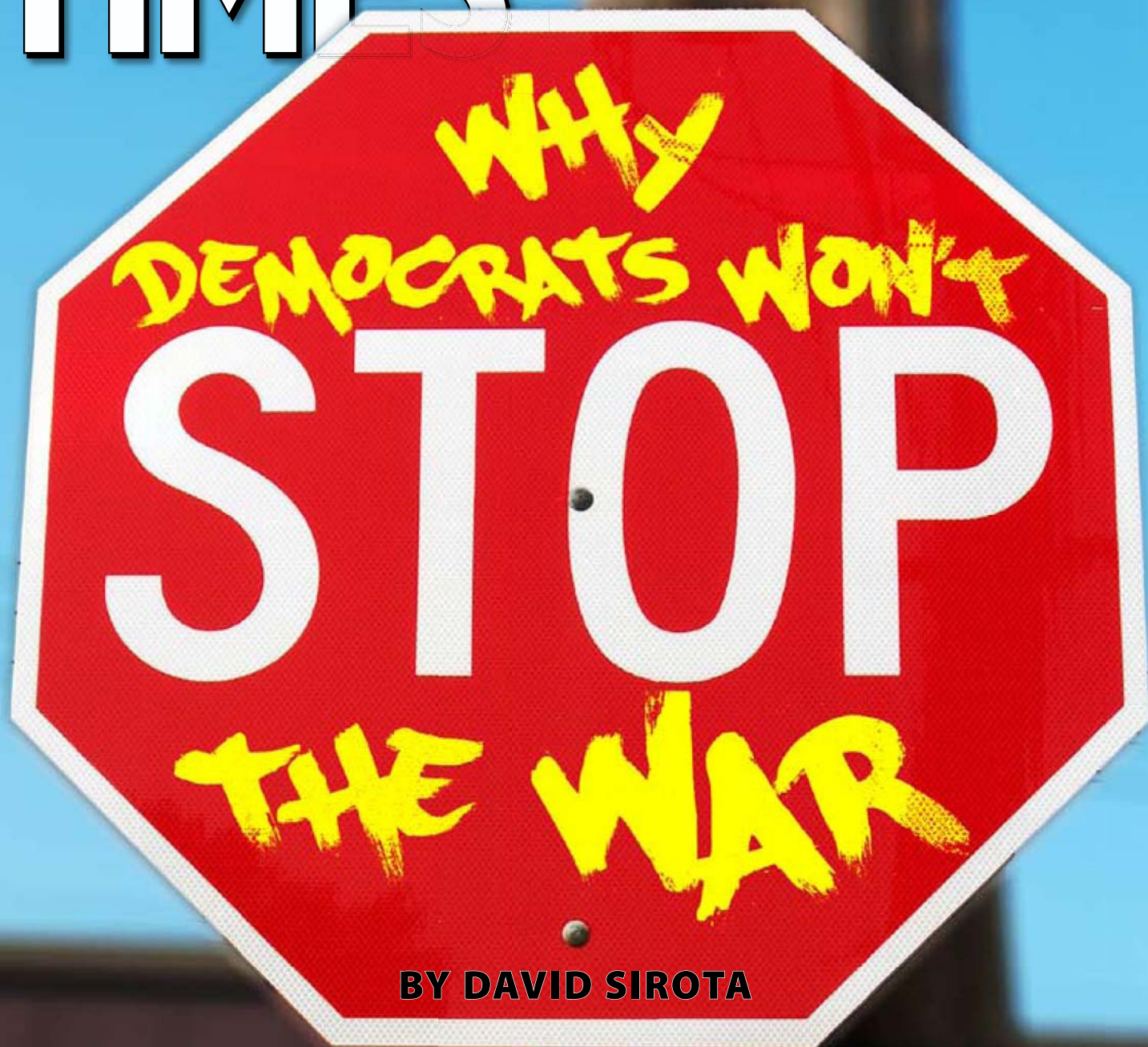


JUNE 2008

# IN THESE TIMES

Supreme Court  
OKs racial **profiling**

New Jewish lobby  
counters **neocons**



BY DAVID SIROTA

**PLUS:**

David Moberg on winning  
the white working class



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## Tilting at Media Windmills?

In April, the news media began a predictable turn to “image scandals” in the presidential campaign. And then it got worse.

ABC’s instantly scandalous April 16 “debate”—moderated by Charlie Gibson and George Stephanopoulos (who looked like newsmen, only smaller)—prompted an outpouring of protest and criticism. Public outrage—that it took 50 minutes to get to any issue of substance—became a news story in its own right.

These people do not think the news media is “too liberal.”

They think it’s too stupid.

The audience has grown more willing than ever to vocally criticize the corporate media and their refusal to serve our interests. Some of the credit for this goes to Bob McChesney and John Nichols, founders of the spirited media reform organization, Free Press, and to Josh Silver, its indefatigable director.

When the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) or Congress is about to offer yet another regulatory gift basket to conservative media mogul Rupert Murdoch, or to allow corporate interests to determine what you can and cannot get online, Free Press mobilizes hundreds of thousands and bombards the Feds with protests. In 2007 alone, it helped generate more than 1 million letters to Congress and the FCC—not bad for an upstart organization founded by an academic (McChesney) and a journalist (Nichols) and that includes media critics like me on its board.

Free Press started in 2003 as an effort to focus people’s exasperation over the inanities we saw on our TVs and the radio. (Remember when Clear Channel censored songs like “Hit Me With Your Best Shot” after 9/11?) Its goal was to also address the corporate consolidation going on behind the screens.

Of particular concern to progressives

was the domination of talk radio by right-wingers such as Rush Limbaugh, and the lack of ideological diversity in television news and public affairs programming. This was made possible by the deregulation of the media industry under President Reagan, its continuation under President Clinton (through the 1996 Telecommunications Act), and the Bush administration’s near complete give-away.

But Free Press’ portfolio quickly expanded because the effects—and influence—of media consolidation extended beyond what we saw on TV.

Free Press champions net neutrality—an Internet free of corporate gatekeeping—and started the SaveTheInternet.com Coalition to ensure affordable Internet access. It also fights to improve funding for NPR and PBS, pushes for community media in the form of low-power FM radio stations and leads the challenge against postal rate hikes for small, independent periodicals.

All this might seem like tilting at windmills. After all, despite Free Press’ and its allies’ pressure on the FCC and Congress, FCC Chairman Kevin Martin still eked out a 3-2 vote to undo the long-standing cross-ownership rules that restrict companies from owning newspapers and broadcast stations in the same market.

But Free Press now has a staff of 36, works the halls of Congress assiduously, has gotten a host of legislation proposed in subcommittees and successfully blocked the lobbyist-written 2006 Telecommunications Act, thanks to public disgust with the current state of affairs.

Free Press has something we all cherish and miss: optimism. In June, Free Press will hold its fourth annual conference, and organizers are expecting more than 3,000 people in Minneapolis. If you want to remember what that mix of optimism and outrage feels like, go.

—Susan J. Douglas

# IN THESE TIMES

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# mixed reaction

## JUST THE FACTS



**85** Number of U.N. member nations that consider homosexuality a crime.

**58** Years since the founding of the Mattachine Society, the first modern gay-rights organization.

**5** Years since Supreme Court's *Lawrence v. Texas* decriminalized homosexuality.

**0** Number of openly lesbian, gay, transgender or bisexual members in the U.S. Senate.

“ The great divide in this country is not by race or even income, it's by those who think they are better than everyone else and think they should play by a different set of rules. ”

—BILL CLINTON, SPEAKING TO WEST VIRGINIA VOTERS ON MAY 1

## LABANARAMA BY TERRY LABAN



## QUID PRO QUO

### THE QUID:

Imagine that you're a real estate developer in south Florida who owns 4,000 acres of land just east of a major highway, and that you could really benefit if the federal government would fund a nearby interchange. Thing is, persnickety local officials and whiny environmentalists keep moaning that it is unnecessary and will likely destroy the surrounding wetlands.

What's a cunning capitalist to do?

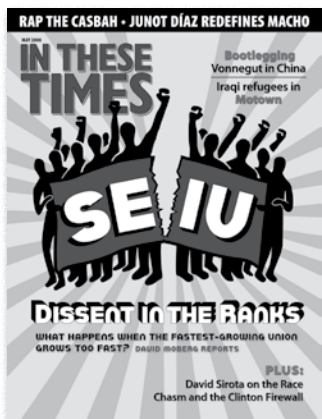
### THE QUO:

If you're Daniel Aronoff, you hold a \$40,000 fundraiser in 2005 for Rep. Don "Bridge To Nowhere" Young (R-Alaska), then-chairman of the House Transportation Committee. Next, watch as one of Young's staffers secretly transforms a \$10 million earmark (intended for widening roads) in the 2005 transportation bill (*already* approved by Congress) to fund the Coconut Road/I-75 interchange—right where



you wanted it. Pretty sweet, right? Well, maybe not. On April 17, the U.S. Senate voted 63-29, calling for the Justice Department to investigate any impropriety in the switched earmark.

# letters



## Don't bash Barack

I was disturbed to come across a short piece by Cassandra West in your April issue (“Yes, We Can ... Do What?”).

The main point of this article is certainly unobjectionable: We should demand a bit of steak with our sizzle, some specifics beyond the slogans. On her way to making this point, however, the author went out of her way to impugn Sen. Barack Obama's campaign. West seemed to convey that Obama's candidacy (more than any other) was filled with empty puffery.

Perhaps if she had not followed that with another segment mocking the mockable *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd for mocking Sen. Hillary Clinton, I would not have gotten quite the same subtly partisan message from West's writing.

It is perfectly within her rights to have a political opinion, of course. What is ironic, however, is for West to spin an apparent anti-Obama message into a piece on media spin.

*Peter Baxter  
Via E-mail*

## Bash Barack

Why not just call this latest issue (May 2008) “Why You Should Vote for Obama”?

In it, there were three small pro-Sen. Barack Obama articles—one of which altogether ignored the media slant against Sen. Hillary Clinton.

Hillary has more experience, has more detailed plans and has done better in the debates.

Women are tired of being put down. I expected your magazine to be different.

Lou Dobbs insists that the business sector not use immigrants to drive down wages of our most vulnerable workers. He is not a racist right-winger.

I will not be renewing.

*Susan Azia  
Via E-mail*

## Dobbs is tops

It was a relief to read in David Sirota's “The Upside of Nationalism” (April 2008) that CNN's Lou Dobbs is not Attila the Hun, as has been suggested by MSNBC's Keith Olbermann. I am greatly frustrated by how my fellow progressives describe Dobbs as a racist right-winger. Anybody who has watched his show and understands his perspective on immigration could not possibly describe him as a racist.

Dobbs insists that the business sector not use immigrants to drive down wages of our most vulnerable workers.

To not do so is tantamount to supporting a business sec-

tor that is intent on keeping borders wide open.

*Chuck Palson  
Via E-mail*

## Free to unionize

In “Dissent in the Ranks” (May 2008), Senior Editor David Moberg writes, “Over a three-year period, SEIU had worked for a neutrality agreement that reportedly barred both workers and management from talking about the union at the

There were absolutely no restrictions on workers under the neutrality agreement between SEIU and Catholic Healthcare Partners.

Workers were free to discuss the union without fear of intimidation from management. The agreement barred management and staff organizers from talking to workers, unless the workers called a toll-free number staffed by each side. This created a pressure-free atmosphere for workers to discuss the union among themselves for two weeks, leading to a secret ballot election.

As such, the agreement removed the real obstacles to rank-and-file discussion about organizing—management intimidation.

*Adam Weisberg  
SEIU Researcher  
Via E-mail*

hospitals.”

The claim that workers could not talk about the union is totally false.

## INTHESETIMES.COM



In a Web-only article titled “The Kosovo Dilemma,” retired professor Stuart Anderson looks beyond the revelry that followed Kosovo's February declaration of independence and re-examines the “humanitarian” narrative of NATO's 1999 campaign against Serbia.

Anderson writes about the surprising origin of the phrase “ethnic cleansing,” highlights the grim effects of NATO's bombing and looks at how ethnic Albanians have worked to push Serbs and other minorities out of Kosovo.



And, as always, be sure to track—and comment on—our staff blog, The ITT List. As the year progresses, we plan to feature a wider array of contributors and topics.



# contributors

## DAVID MOBERG RESPONDS

Adam Weisberg is correct. I regret the error.

## Blurred 'Snapshot'

The "Snapshot" photo and caption in the April issue was very one-sided and offensive. The caption stated that the brutal Israelis just completed a five-day assault in the Jabaliya refugee camp, where 110 Palestinians were killed. But no provocation was mentioned.

We won't argue the response of the Israelis to months of unprovoked rocket attacks in which the brave Arab freedom fighters hide among noncombatants, including women and children, to avoid inevitable retaliation.

We're 80 years old and noticing a greater anti-Israeli bias on the left. This is much more pronounced in Europe.

There is no excuse for this.

*Jay and Sue Woldenberg  
Via E-mail*

## Right on, Terry!

Terry Allen's "Pig Intestines, Downer Cows" (April 2008) was so right-on that I shared it with my staff at our two county health departments.

I'm glad someone has put these truths to our government on paper—no matter how unpopular they are. I will share this with others in the Florida public health system.

*Neftali Fernandez, Director  
Hendry/Glades Counties  
Health Departments  
Via E-mail*

## CORRECTION

The May cover art was inspired by the logo of the Union of Union Representatives, which is not affiliated with the SEIU. We regret the error.



**MICHAEL ATKINSON** has written six books, including *Ghost in the Machine*, *One Hundred Children Waiting for a Train*, *Flickipedia* and *Exile Cinema*. He writes regularly for *The Boston Phoenix*, IFS Blog, *Modern Painters* and *Sight & Sound*.



**BETSY VANDERCOOK**, like Hillary Rodham Clinton, left the Chicago suburbs long ago. But unlike Hillary, she returned to the city to raise a family, work as an environmentalist and write occasionally for the *Chicago Tribune*. Currently, she serves as a chief of staff to Democratic Alderman Joe Moore (49th Ward). She has no higher political aspirations.



**AKITO YOSHIKANE** is a staff writer for the *Nichi Bei Times*, a weekly Japanese-American newspaper in San Francisco. He graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he majored in International Studies and Rhetoric.

**PAUL HOCKENOS** has lived in Europe and written about Germany, Central Europe and the Balkans since 1989. His most recent book is *Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

**JAMES THINDWA** is executive director of Chicago Jobs with Justice, a labor-community coalition, and a member of the *In These Times* Board of Directors.



*The work of these writers is supported by the Puffin Foundation First Amendment Fund.*

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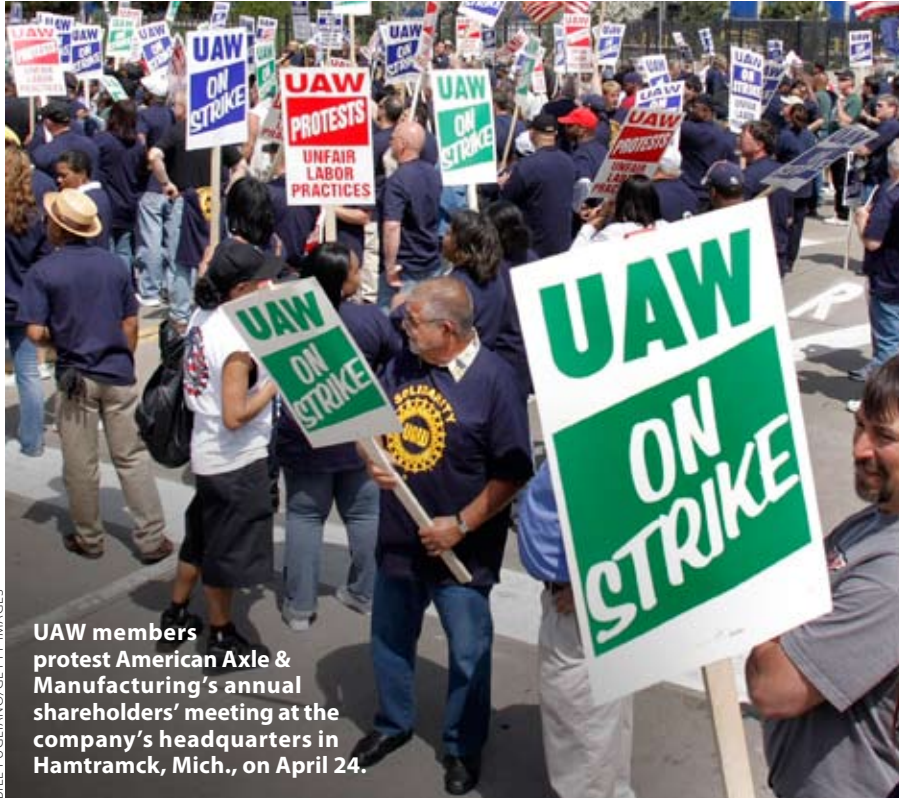
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UAW members protest American Axle & Manufacturing's annual shareholders' meeting at the company's headquarters in Hamtramck, Mich., on April 24.

## Axle of Evil

### Drastic wage cuts drive UAW members to picket American Axle & Manufacturing

BY JOHN PATRICK LEARY

**F**OR MORE THAN TWO months, 3,600 United Auto Workers (UAW) members have walked picket lines in Detroit, Three Rivers, Mich., and upstate New York. The strike at American Axle & Manufacturing (AAM), a major supplier of truck and sport-utility axles for General Motors (GM), is shaping up as a line-in-the-sand campaign for the embattled union.

The strike began Feb. 26, when AAM demanded steep wage concessions, from \$27 per hour to \$14 per hour. In order to stay in business, AAM says, it must secure "competitive" labor costs. "AAM is simply asking for the same changes the UAW has already agreed to with our U.S. competitors," reads the company website,

referring to recent UAW deals with companies like Delphi—GM's bankrupt auto-parts division—which slashed wages and benefits two years ago. AAM has said it may move production to its Guanajuato, Mexico, plant if its demands are not met.

However, Rob Segura, a machinist at AAM's Detroit plant, points out that the company is in much better financial shape than the rest of the auto industry. The company turned a \$37 million profit last year, while its main competitor, the Dana Corporation, only recently emerged from bankruptcy protection.

Segura says that given the size of the proposed wage cuts, "You're asking the average worker to vote on losing your home." Workers also point to Axle Chief Execu-

tive Officer Dick Dauch's salary, which totaled \$10.2 million in 2007.

AAM spokeswoman Renee Rogers says that Axle had a 1 percent profit margin in 2007. She adds that Dauch has no reason to apologize for his salary: "He's the founder of the company, he invested his own money, and now he's able to reap the rewards of that."

Dauch has headed AAM since 1994, when GM sold its former axle division. In 2005, AAM opened its world headquarters next to its main plant after receiving a special 12-year tax abatement from Detroit, which exempts AAM from most state and local taxes on the property, and \$4.4 million in additional state tax credits. (The exemptions resulted from AAM's threats to build its headquarters in Buffalo.)

Dianne Feeley, a retired AAM employee and co-editor of a rank-and-file American Axle newsletter, *Shifting Gears*, says the C.E.O. is a shrewd negotiator. "Dauch is a great poker player," she says.

AAM headquarters—a structure of white stone and mirrored glass, known to workers as "the Glass House"—rises high above Detroit's Chrysler Freeway. There, late-model American sedans and SUVs ferry salaried employees through a picket line of a dozen workers, such as repairman Mike Pockey.

"They're in there, breathing fresh air like a freaking casino," Pockey says, gesturing to the glass building, "while we're breathing this filthy air" inside the factory.

The union says five workers have died in industrial accidents at the plant since 1994. Rogers would not address that charge, but says, "safety is a top priority for American Axle."

Assembly-line work, strikers say, is a wearisome job. "You wear your body down for eight hours straight, every day," says one striker, who, like many other picketers, wished to remain anonymous. "Sure it's easy for five minutes, but do it eight hours."

Another worker, Rob, who declined to give his last name, says of the proposed \$14 hourly wage, "I can honestly tell you

that no one would go back for that. The plant life is such that you don't know what it's like unless you work there."

Workers say they have received little information from the UAW International, which oversees negotiations and strike pay. "If you watch the news," Rob says, "you know about as much as we do." (The International did not respond to *In These Times*' repeated requests for comment.)

UAW leadership abruptly postponed an April 16 rally in Detroit because of "some progress" in negotiations, according to a terse fax distributed to Detroit's two striking locals. Yet three days later, union President Ron Gettelfinger announced that Axle was not negotiating.

Bill Alford Jr., president of UAW Local 235, characterizes the strike as a major battle. "We're at war defending the middle class and its wage," he says. "If we lose here, then every other middle-class worker will be next." ■

**JOHN PATRICK LEARY** is a Ph.D. candidate at New York University and an instructor in the Department of English at Wayne State University in Detroit.

## The Push to Privatize PEMEX

**H**ALLIBURTON IS LICKING its chops at the prospect of Mexico's state-owned Petróleos Mexicanos going private.

Petróleos Mexicanos, or PEMEX, withstood a tsunami of privatizations of formerly state-owned companies in the late 1980s and '90s. But now, with pro-business President Felipe Calderón in office, the effort is being revisited—and the Mexican left is coming out en masse to defend the 70-year-old company, a long-time source of national pride and a symbol of Mexican sovereignty.

On April 8, Calderón, who served as energy secretary under former President Vicente Fox, proposed a reform package that calls for forging "strategic alliances" with private oil companies and opening 37 of PEMEX's 41 divisions to private subcontractors. Although Calderón carefully specified that the reforms would not amount to privatization, many

in Mexico are not convinced. The Mexican Constitution forbids private drillers from reaping profits from oil discoveries under Mexican soil.

However, PEMEX already subcontracts limited operations to outside companies, Halliburton being chief among them. But currently, these subcontractors can do little more than sell their labor, technology and expertise to PEMEX at a fixed price.

George Baker, publisher of *Mexico Energy Intelligence*, a trade publication that covers energy markets and policy developments in Mexico, says this stipulation limits the desirability of PEMEX contracts.

"What [oil companies] are interested in is barrels of oil, the value of which could double in the near future," Baker says. "If you just pay me in cash, it just goes into the cash register. It doesn't go into my bonus or the stock price or increase my reserves."

That's why Calderón is proposing to sweeten those contracts with bonuses for major discoveries, in an effort to lure the kind of skill and experience needed for the more risky, technologically advanced

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**FAUX PHILANTHROPY**

A new campaign aims to stop Starbucks' use of public interest for private profit.

Early this year, the Truth About Ethos formed after a group of self-proclaimed Starbucks junkies in Denver agreed that the company is shortchanging the public with its bottled-water division Ethos Water.

Ethos, which Starbucks acquired in 2005, pledges to raise \$10 million by 2010 for clean-water projects in Africa—with 5 cents from each \$1.80-bottle donated to philanthropic grants.

Robert Sanchez, who runs [www.TheTruthAboutEthos.com](http://www.TheTruthAboutEthos.com), says Starbucks' small ratio of giving is outright unethical. "Just because a company is big doesn't give it the right to do what it wants to make more profit—and at the expense of people facing a real plight."

In March, actor Matt Damon, co-founder of H2O Africa Foundation, began appearing as a spokesman for Ethos. Damon's image appears in print ads under the banner, "As a matter of fact, the water you drink does make a difference."

Sanchez and his group are petitioning Starbucks to donate at least half of net profits from Ethos sales. The petition, available at [TheTruthAboutEthos.com](http://TheTruthAboutEthos.com), so far has 174 signatures. Says Sanchez: "[Starbucks] said if we get 10,000 signatures on the petition, they'd be willing to listen to what we have to say."

With public support, the campaign could tap into Starbucks' profits.

—**Natasha Eziquiel-Shiro**



drilling in the Gulf of Mexico—anticipated to be Mexican oil's next great frontier.

That proposal, however, is on political thin ice.

When Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas wrested control of Mexico's oil fields from U.S. and British tycoons in 1938, Mexicans from all walks of life lined up to help fund the expropriation, donating family heirlooms, small handfuls of pesos, and even chickens and livestock for the cause.

Public ownership of PEMEX remains sacrosanct, and since rumors of the energy reform initiative began circulating, throngs of opponents have taken to the streets to keep their petro-pesos out of foreign pockets.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who lost the 2006 election to Calderón by a hair (amid widespread allegations of fraud), has been at the forefront of the movement. He accuses Calderón and his predecessors of purposefully starving the beast in order to create a crisis situation, thereby leaving little option but to call the private sector for help.

"The government, for 25 years, has acted in a deliberate manner ... to ruin PEMEX because they have only one goal: to make PEMEX into booty to be plundered, and to privatize the oil business," López Obrador told the *New York Times* on April 8.

PEMEX's pipelines are old and its facilities dilapidated. It hasn't built a new refinery since the '70s and, as a result, lacks sufficient oil refineries to process its crude. PEMEX currently sells 1.4 million barrels of crude oil per day to U.S. companies that then refine it and sell it back to Mexico. Making matters worse, since 2004, the country's oil fields have been drying up.

Added to this already dire situation is a powerful and corrupt Mexican Oil Workers Union, infamous for no-show jobs and major fund transfers to dirty politicians, including an alleged multimillion dollar pay-off to the gubernatorial campaign of Francisco Labastida, the current head of the Senate Energy Commission. The confluence of these factors has put PEMEX and the government—which relies on the company's revenues for nearly 40 percent of the federal budget—in a pickle.

Part of Calderón's proposal would increase transparency in PEMEX by add-



LUIS ACOSTA/AF/GETTY IMAGES

**Deputies from Mexico's Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) were protesting an initiative to privatize the state-run oil company Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) on April 14.**

ing independent members to its Board of Directors and establishing an independent auditing system. But privatization opponents, including López Obrador, say that should happen before any private solutions are considered.

"If they want to move ahead with PEMEX, first they should fully combat corruption," he said during an April 4 speech. "PEMEX as it exists is in ruins."

A group of lawmakers organized as the Broad Progressive Front began pushing for more public involvement and congressional debate on the very day Calderón introduced the proposal, fearing he would fast-track the initiatives before his April 21 trip to the North American Security and Prosperity Partnership summit in New Orleans. The lawmakers took over both houses of the Mexican Congress for more than two weeks, camping out in pup tents by night, leading massive rallies outside by day, and standing guard in shifts so that their conservative colleagues couldn't sneak in and push forward a vote.

On April 25, they secured an assurance that the reforms will be debated for at least 71 days, beginning on May 13 (after *In These Times* went to press). In the meantime, the opposition is organizing a nationwide canvassing campaign.

"We are all in this movement," Rep. Alejandro Sanchez Camacho said in an April 24 release. "Women and men who want to preserve our inheritance that our grandparents left us, which is our petroleum."

—**Jessica Pupovac**

## Supreme Court OKs Racial Profiling

**E**ITHER RACIAL PROFILING is odious and unconstitutional, with personal and social consequences for communities of color—or it's not.

On April 23, the U.S. Supreme Court, without any dissent, decided that it was not. The ruling obliquely, but forcefully, slammed the courthouse door on any attempts to challenge this widespread law enforcement practice.

In the case of *Virginia v. Moore*, the high court saw no violation of David Lee Moore's Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, even though his arrest was the result of a series of Keystone Cop-like miscues and an outright violation of Virginia law.

Here's how it played out: On Feb. 20, 2003, police officers received a radio call that a man known as "Chubs" was operating an automobile on a suspended license. Apparently, one of the officers knew that David Lee Moore went by the nickname of "Chubs." The officers pulled over Moore's vehicle and determined that his license had indeed been suspended. Under Virginia law, driving with a suspended license is not an arrestable offense, and the officers were obliged to issue him a citation for a future court appearance rather than take him into custody. Disregarding this clear legal mandate, however, the officers arrested Moore.

They took him to his hotel room where they searched him and found crack cocaine and \$516 in cash.

According to Justice Antonin Scalia's opinion, no search of Moore was conducted when he was initially stopped because each officer mistakenly believed that the other had already searched the suspect. As Scalia noted—presumably with a straight face—Moore "consented" to a search of his person and his room.

What is not mentioned in the Supreme Court opinion—but what can be ascertained in lower court decisions, including that of the Virginia Supreme Court when it reversed Moore's conviction—was that

the "Chubs" mentioned in the original radio transmission was not Moore but rather a man named Christopher Delbridge.

Also, one of the police officers explained at the suppression hearing that they had ignored Virginia law relative to the issuance of citations in such circumstances because it was "just our prerogative; we chose to effect an arrest."

But the most important fact in this case—which was ignored by the Virginia courts, the Supreme Court and the few media accounts of this litigation—is that David Lee Moore is African-American. (Portsmouth, Va., is a city of slightly more than 100,000 people, more than 50 percent of whom are black.)

Scalia and his equally myopic and complacent colleagues refuse to address the problem of racial profiling—or "driving while black"—that has been widely discussed in law and political science journals, as well as reported anecdotally by black males, both ordinary citizens and those who enjoy professional or political prominence.

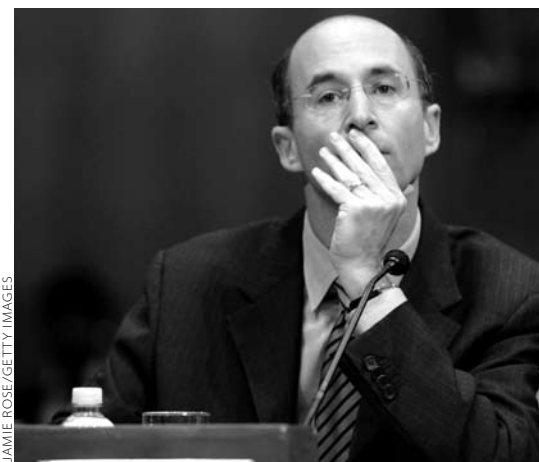
The *Moore* decision mirrors that of another unanimous Scalia opinion from more than a decade ago, *Whren v. United States* (1996). In that case, every member of the high court sitting at that time agreed that there was no impropriety, constitutional or otherwise, when plainclothes officers in an unmarked car in Washington, D.C., stopped two young black men for minor traffic violations in order to search for drugs. The officers were members of an undercover narcotics unit and were expressly prohibited by District of Columbia regulations from making traffic stops unless the driver was somehow threatening public safety. The court went on to uphold the validity of pretext stops.

Around the country, scholars, lawyers, community activists and even many progressive law enforcement officers are trying to eliminate the scourge of racial profiling. But read together, the *Moore* and *Whren* rulings demonstrate the Supreme Court's impatience with municipal and state efforts designed to circumscribe arbitrary police behavior often motivated by racial stereotyping.

—Stephen J. Fortunato Jr.

## New Jewish Lobby Counters Neocons

**O**N APRIL 15, after 18 months of planning, a new progressive Jewish lobby called J Street was launched as a counterweight to the increasingly conservative American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). There is no physical J Street in Washington, D.C., but the name conjures up K Street, the hub for lobbying on Capitol Hill.



**Robert Malley, a Middle East policy consultant for Sen. Barack Obama (D-III.), serves on J Street's advisory council.**

Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper columnist Shmuel Rosner writes that the "J" in J Street also jokingly refers to Jeremy Ben-Ami, the veteran political operative and public relations professional who served as a domestic policy adviser in the Clinton administration and has worked for various progressive and peace-oriented American-Jewish organizations. Ben-Ami is executive director of both J Street—a 501(c)(4) lobbying organization—and of its separately chartered political action committee, JStreetPAC.

As Ben-Ami explained by e-mail, existing pro-Israel, pro-peace groups—such as Americans for Peace Now, Brit Tzedek V'Shalom and Israel Policy Forum—cannot take political stances because of their nonprofit status. But, as individuals, leaders from all three organizations are allowed to serve as members of J Street's advisory council.

Initially, JStreetPAC plans to raise and

contribute money for a small number of candidates for the U.S. House and Senate, as indicated on its website, “to demonstrate that there is meaningful political and financial support available to candidates for federal office from large numbers of Americans who believe a new direction in American policy will advance U.S. interests ... and promote real peace and security for Israel and the region.”

J Street has a four-person staff and a projected \$1.5 million annual budget, as compared with AIPAC’s approximately 300 employees and annual expenditures of about \$60 million.

Early reports of this project focused on the participation of George Soros, the multibillionaire market speculator known for his outspoken views and his philanthropy for liberal causes. On April 12, 2007, Soros indicated in an article in the *New York Review of Books* that attacks on his character prompted him to withdraw his involvement from the group so as not to damage its efforts. As a result, Soros is not among the 100 people

named on J Street’s advisory council.

Still, others on the council could become lightning rods for attack. One is Robert Malley, a former Clinton administration official who, as a Middle East policy consultant for Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), has drawn fire for allegedly being “anti-Israel.” Malley has written critically of the U.S. and Israeli roles at the failed 2000 Camp David summit. Another is Henry Siegman, former head of the American Jewish Congress, who for years has written scathingly against Israeli policies in the West Bank.

A separate listing of 25 Israeli supporters includes professors, retired generals and former cabinet ministers. One controversial figure on this list is Avrum Burg, a former chairman of the World Zionist Organization and a prominent Labour Party politician. In 2004, Burg resigned from parliament, and last year wrote *Defeating Hitler*, an acerbic book that argues for an end to Zionism.

“For too long, the loudest voices ... when it comes to Israel and the Middle East, have belonged to the far right,” Ben-Ami

wrote in an e-mail to *In These Times*. He continues: “For the first time, political incumbents, as well as candidates, will know that there is organized support for sensible, mainstream positions on Israel and the Middle East—one that backs a two-state solution, opposes settlement expansion and advocates diplomatic, not military, resolutions to regional conflicts.”

Ben-Ami concludes: “These are sensible, smart ways to be pro-Israel, and to remain true to the values that the American Jewish community has always promoted of justice and peace for all.”

—By Ralph Seliger

## Red State, Green Campaign

**T**HIS ELECTION YEAR, one of the greenest campaigns is being run not in blue Massachusetts or California, but in bright-red Oklahoma.

State Sen. Andrew Rice (D-Oklahoma City) is challenging incumbent Sen. James

# appall-o-meter

## 0.7 Hard Times for Bankers

Thanks to the global credit crisis, banks have been forced to cut back on amenities long enjoyed by executives. The German finance titan Deutsche Bank—hard hit by its exposure to sub-prime mortgages—has issued a memo to its senior execs, ordering them to clear cab fare reimbursement ahead of time, to restrict business meals to \$100 a head and to limit first-class rail tickets, reports the *Independent*.

Oh, yes, and one other thing: Brothel visits, the memo read, can no longer be expensed. Nor can skin channels in the hotel room.

“In the good old days, you could pass off a trip to a knocking-shop as a restaurant if the name wasn’t too obvious,” one bank employee complained. “But we’re in an uptight, locked-down new puritanism now.”

## 9.1 A Different Kind of Team-Building

Times are also hard in the telemarketing industry, but one struggling company in Provo, Utah, is showing that the

creative use of punitive incentives can inspire peak performance in employees.

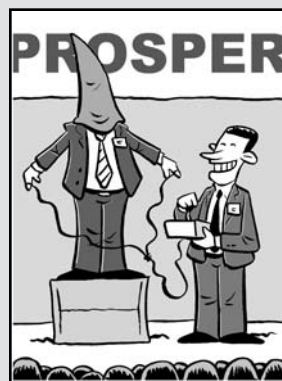
According to the *Washington Post*, an employee of Prosper Inc. was waterboarded as part of a “team-building exercise.”

Chad Hudgens and his fellow salesmen had spent all morning pitching something called “Trump University” to recent attendees of a real estate seminar, when supervisor Joshua Christopherson called for a volunteer for an exercise. Hudgens stepped forward.

Outside the office, Hudgens was held down as Christopherson poured water on his mouth and nose. “And halfway through he stopped for a second,” Hudgens told the *Post*. “I tried to mumble the words, ‘Stop, knock it off.’ I tried to get that out and he continued to pour.”

The good news is that Hudgens survived the ordeal. And Christopherson was able to use it as a teaching moment.

“You saw how hard Chad fought for air



right there,” he reportedly told employees as Hudgens retched and gasped. “I want you to go back inside and fight that hard to make sales.”

The bad news, for Prosper anyway, is that Hudgens has filed suit. He claims that among other peculiar management techniques, Christopherson would force employees to work standing up if the of-

fice went a day without a sale. He also kept a permanent marker to draw a mustache on the face of any employee whose attitude became “negative.”

Oddly enough, Hudgens hadn’t heard the term “waterboarding” until after it had been done to him. “I don’t know if the government should do it or not,” Hudgens told the *Post*. “But I can tell you firsthand, because it happened to me, it definitely works. I would’ve told them whatever they wanted me to tell them.”

—David Mulcahey

Inhofe (R), 74, Congress' most vocal denier of global warming, and is doing so with an innovative message that could serve as a future model for Democrats across the country.

In 2003, Inhofe infamously called global warming "the second largest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people." (The largest hoax, he has said, is the separation between church and state.) Inhofe frequently cites novelist Michael Crichton as a source of his rants, and last December he unveiled a list of 400 "prominent scientists" who allegedly agree that global warming is a hoax. (Several of those listed do not in fact allege that.)

Rice, 34, and his campaign are linking climate change (a term he prefers to global warming because of its ominous overtones) with energy independence.

"They definitely complement each other," Rice says. "Wouldn't we be proud as Oklahomans to be relying on our own energy sources and not be sending money to Saudi Arabia?"

He also connects energy independence to national security, a message he argues appeals to conservative rural voters.

In a heavily agricultural state like Oklahoma, changes in climate can be crippling. In recent years, the state has experienced a lengthy drought and unusually destructive rains. The Oklahoma Climatological Survey predicts that this will continue as global warming continues—with extended dry periods, more frequent heat waves and intense storms.

Hunters and fishermen across the nation have expressed concern about the changing climate and, along with farmers, have been key to recent Democratic victories in many Western states.

Rice's opponents claim that a focus on the environment could hurt job growth.

But Rice says Oklahoma's coal industry "and our big utility—which uses a lot of coal—use the economic argument, playing to people's fears. But I think you [can] get people into the shared sacrifice."

Last year, that big utility, the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company, unsuccessfully sought to build a \$1.8 billion coal plant—in a state that already gets more than 60 percent of its power from coal.

The Oklahoma Corporation Commis-

## snapshot



**A Tibetan activist shouts slogans from the back of a police vehicle following his arrest during an anti-Chinese demonstration in front of the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal, on May 5. Police detained some 120 Tibetan protesters who had gathered outside of the embassy. (Photo by Prakash Mathema/AFP/Getty Images)**

sion, the state's regulatory agency, blocked the proposal, partly on environmental grounds. The utility has since increased investments in wind power and natural gas. Says Rice: "Inhofe, who maybe 10 years ago started to say climate change is not a big deal, put himself in a bad position because I think he assumed Oklahomans would never care about it."

According to the campaign's polling, while 75 percent of Oklahomans approve of government action against global warming, only 39 percent agree that the United States should "take bold action to address the problem by developing alternative sources of energy, even if it means we have to pay more in energy costs." And 35 percent oppose doing anything if it involves increased energy costs or taxes, while 19 percent oppose doing anything at all.

In 2002, Inhofe's campaign was the second largest recipient of money from oil and gas political action committees, or PACs, in the nation—receiving more than \$242,000, despite a relatively un-

competitive race.

Few precedents exist for campaigns that have been based heavily on drawing awareness to climate change.

In Australia (one of the few developed countries whose government has been reluctant to take action against climate change), the opposition Labor Party won last year's election, in part by criticizing the conservative government and then Prime Minister John Howard's unwillingness to join the Kyoto Protocol—the international agreement established to curb greenhouse gases.

Could a similar political movement take place in the United States? With its electoral system designed to slow change, the only way to catch up to the rest of the world is one election at a time.

"If Inhofe went down in Oklahoma," says Tim Greeff, deputy legislative director at the League of Conservation Voters, "it would send a signal that the American people really have moved on this issue."

—Sam Boyd

BY H. CANDACE GORMAN

## A Kinder, Gentler Torture



**W**HILE STAYING AT his in-law's village in Afghanistan in December 2001, Abdul Hamid Al-Ghizzawi, my client at Guantánamo, knew little of Bush and Cheney.

Later, when vigilante thugs turned him over to the Northern Alliance for an American bounty, Al-Ghizzawi knew nothing of Donald Rumsfeld, Alberto

Gonzales, Jay Bybee, John Yoo or Matthew Waxman—the man who would become Al-Ghizzawi's personal war criminal and who is now a professor at Columbia Law School.

So, it was understandable that when Al-Ghizzawi heard American troops were coming, he tried to get himself turned over to them. As Al-Ghizzawi later told me, he thought he would be safe with the Americans “and have rights” and be treated “with respect.” Al-Ghizzawi convinced the Americans to take him when they learned he spoke English. That was all the troops knew about him. Ignorance of who he was or why he was there, however, proved no impediment to torture.

In the early years, “the Americans treated me very brutally and disrespectfully, worse than the Northern Alliance ... and the Northern Alliance was very bad,” Al-Ghizzawi recounted to me. “But now the torture is much different. Now the torture is my life every day in this prison, alone without my family, dying, with no rights and no charges.”

His American jailers spared Al-Ghizzawi the very worst of the worst in the long list of torture techniques now in use. He was not murdered or waterboarded. He did not have a razor blade taken to his penis, nor was he hung from the ceiling by his arms. One might describe Al-Ghizzawi's torture as a kinder, gentler torture.

In American custody, Al-Ghizzawi was *only* beaten with chains; bound to chairs in excruciating positions for endless hours; threatened with death and with rape; stripped and subjected to body-cavity searches by non-medical personnel while men—and women—laughed and took pictures.

Among many other brutalities and indignities, Al-Ghizzawi was also posed naked with other prisoners; terrorized with dogs; forced to kneel on stones in the searing heat; left

to stand or crouch for extended periods; deprived of sleep; subjected to extreme cold without clothes or covering; denied medical attention; and kept in isolation for years.

Again, as I said: a kinder, gentler torture.

Now, of course, Al-Ghizzawi knows all about Bush and his enabling minions. He knows that lawyers invented legal theories to justify the inhumane and indefensible treatment he received. He knows the role that lawyers such as Bybee, Yoo and Matthew Waxman played.

At the end of 2004, Waxman, then assistant secretary of defense for detainee affairs, who is currently trying to reinvent himself as one of the good guys, learned that Al-Ghizzawi and others were found not to be “enemy combatants” (EC) or threats to the United States by the military's

own combatant status review tribunals (CSRTs). Waxman set into motion a “do-over” CSRT, to make sure that Al-Ghizzawi's suffering continue, lest Waxman and the Bush administration suffer the

embarrassment of being exposed for holding numerous innocent men for years for no reason.

Note this declassified portion of an e-mail chain between Waxman and others:

“Inconsistencies will not cast a favorable light on the CSRT process or the work done by [Office for the Administrative Review of the Detention of Enemy Combatants]. This does not justify making a change in and or (sic) itself but is a filter by which to look ... . By properly classifying them as EC, then there is an opportunity to (1) further exploit them here in [G]TMO and (2) when they are transferred to a third country, it will be controlled transfer in status.”

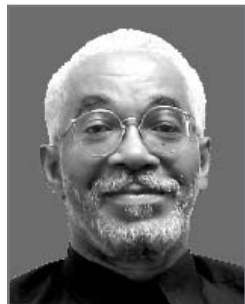
Every time I visit, Al-Ghizzawi asks me, “What happened to America?” I try to explain the unexplainable. I tell him that the American government now believes that torture is permissible; that we can hold people forever without charge; keep people in isolation for years; bar communications with family members; force-feed those who want to die and refuse to provide medical treatment for those who want to live. I explain that the American people, whose nation once stood as a beacon of human rights, neither care about this nor want to hear about it.

I also assure him that I am collecting the names of those responsible. ■

**Al-Ghizzawi told me he thought he would be safe with the Americans ‘and have rights’ and be treated ‘with respect.’ He was wrong.**

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

# The Vendetta Against Black Men



**D**ESPITE THE RISE of Sen. Barack Obama, black men remain in the bull's-eye of governmental repression and police brutality.

The government is currently re-trying six black men who have already faced two hung juries in a case accusing them of planning to blow up both the Sears Tower in Chicago and the Miami FBI headquarters.

Known as the “Liberty City 7,” after the

low-income Miami neighborhood in which they lived, the seven arrested men could soon become domestic casualties in the war on terror. (In December, the jury acquitted one of the men but then deadlocked on the remaining six.

On April 16, a second trial also ended with a hung jury.)

Close observers of the trial argue a case of government entrapment. The two FBI informants—immigrants from Lebanon and Yemen to

whom the government paid more than \$130,000 for their services—had incentive to exaggerate the scope of the plot. And, it turns out, they were the ones who suggested the targets, purchased the surveillance equipment and supplied the transportation.

More troubling is the larger inference that black radical groups like the Moorish Science Temple, to which the men had a peripheral connection, are somehow in league with Islamic radicals like al Qaeda.

It's an example of how American law enforcement tends to marginalize black discontent by attributing it to more organized external forces. This is a tendency rooted in U.S. tradition: black radicals and civil rights activists of past eras were often linked to communists and other “outside agitators”—as if the progeny of enslaved Africans needed Karl Marx to detail their gripes about life in America. Now, apparently, the government claims the link is with Osama bin Laden.

Despite no verdict of guilt, the men have been locked up since their 2006 arrest. Incidentally, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents took into custody the man acquitted during the first trial and transported him to a detention center in Lumpkin, Ga., a day after the trial ended. Deportation proceedings have since begun against the man, a legal U.S. resident originally from Haiti.

Surely, these six struggling black men—who neighbors

contend were simply trying to provide positive role models and improve their crime-ridden community—pose no serious threat to national security. However, by implying the men have mysterious Islamic links and a general hatred for America, the government can justify persecuting them.

It's enough to make you say, “God Damn America!”

And if that's not enough, consider the case of Sean Bell, an unarmed black man who died in a 50-shot fusillade of police bullets in Queens, N.Y. In November 2006, Bell had a bachelor party at a strip club the day before his wedding and was leaving with two friends when undercover officers confronted and then shot them. The officers mistakenly thought the men were armed and reaching for their guns. Bell's surviving friends said their attackers

never identified themselves as police officers.

The three cops who fired the bullets killing Bell and injuring his friends were acquitted of all charges. The judge ruled, essentially, that the officers'

fear justified firing 50 bullets at the unarmed trio.

The Bell case is just one of dozens—perhaps hundreds—of similar cases of police abuse against young African-American men.

In Chicago, for example, police—reportedly chasing a seat belt scofflaw—broke into a South Side home on April 30 with no warrant and arrested six members of a family, including two juveniles. Witnesses and lawyers for the family members say the police acted abusively. Among those arrested and brutalized was Elijah Henderson, 18, one of two youths wrongfully arrested in the 1998 murder of 11-year-old Ryan Harris.

“I don't think it's a coincidence that this young man, who was falsely accused 10 years ago, is now in a lockup, beat up by Chicago police,” says Andre Grant, Henderson's attorney.

Obama spoke briefly about the Bell case, urging aggrieved New Yorkers to express support for the judge's not-guilty ruling. But he has said nothing publicly about the Liberty City 7 verdict and re-trial or the problems of police brutality in his home city.

By downplaying these racial grievances, Obama is doing his part in the implicit deal he made with the American public to avoid any suspicion of playing the race card.

The Rev. Jeremiah Wright disrupted that deal, so he had to go. Question is: What else will go with him? ■

**American law enforcement has long marginalized black discontent by attributing it to more organized external forces.**

BY JAMES THINDWA

## Fox News' Criminal Pundits



**T**HE SENSATIONALIST MEDIA inquest into Sen. Barack Obama's associations has cheapened the national debate. It has also exposed the hypocrisy and double standard of the conservative media.

Fox News, which has championed this "guilt by association," questions Obama's fitness for office because of his relationship with the Rev. Jeremiah Wright and

Bill Ayers, a distinguished professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

But if Fox News truly believed in guilt-by-association, the network would have severed ties with some of its pundits and consultants.

Mark Fuhrman—of O.J. Simpson infamy—is now one of its talking heads. Fuhrman, if you remember, was convicted of lying under oath during Simpson's murder trial when he denied having used the word "nigger." For right-wingers unburdened with racial sensitivity, Fuhrman's easy use of the "n" word was probably not a big deal. And for Fox News, flouting the law is OK as long as the cause is right. O.J. Simpson was guilty, legalities be damned.

G. Gordon Liddy, sentenced to 20 years in prison for his role in the 1972 Watergate break-in (he served almost five), enjoys a post-prison celebrity status among conservatives. Liddy turns up on Fox News as a respected commentator, and has cultivated a fan base as a right-wing talk-radio jock. While Fox's pundits froth at the mouth condemning Ayers for his membership in the Weather Underground 40 years ago, Liddy, whose crimes created a constitutional crisis, is embraced and celebrated as a conservative hero.

How about Oliver North? His claim to fame was the Iran-Contra affair in the '80s, when he illegally sold weapons to Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and transferred the money to Nicaraguan Contras, in violation of U.S. law. He was charged with 16 felonies and convicted of three, which were later overturned because the prosecution had used testimony given under a grant of immunity. For his mockery of the Constitution, North became a right-wing folk hero, eventually landing a job at Fox News as an Iraq War correspondent. He was subsequently given his own television show, "War Stories."

Former Bush adviser Karl Rove is now a paid commen-

tator on Fox News. Though Rove has not been convicted of any crimes, he has had an uneasy relationship with ethics and the law: reportedly the mastermind of the political firing of nine U.S. attorneys; allegedly outing CIA operative Valerie Plame; spreading rumors in 2000 about Sen. John McCain having fathered a daughter with a black woman; and selling the Iraq War for political advantage. But to Fox News and its conservative base, Rove is a hero.

William Kristol is not a former convict, but as salesman-in-chief for the Iraq War he has committed crimes of conscience. Kristol has a permanent seat on Fox News Sunday. Despite his discredited claims about Saddam Hussein's nuclear programs and his many attempts to link Hussein with al Qaeda, Kristol continues to be featured as an expert on the war.

Bill O'Reilly, the big daddy of Fox News, reached a settlement in November 2004 with a colleague who had reportedly recorded him attempting to have phone sex with her as he

masturbated with a vibrator. This history contradicts the self-righteous protestations in his book *Cultural Warriors* and his screeds against "liberal" wrongdoers.

Newt Gingrich, Fox News' most erudite and self-righteous pundit, has a checkered past that includes reportedly serving divorce papers to his cancer-stricken wife while she lay in her hospital bed. The former House Speaker also admitted to an affair with an aide while he was still married, even as he championed President Clinton's impeachment. Most liberals believe these private matters should not disqualify people from public office. However, the pedantic moralists at Fox News cannot exempt themselves from the standards they apply to others. Their hypocrisy needs exposing.

Conservatives have created a two-tier system of accountability: one for progressives, the other for themselves. But their claimed moral rectitude belies an indulgent attitude toward questionable legal and ethical conduct. Mark Fuhrman, G. Gordon Liddy and Oliver North betrayed the rule of law that conservatives like to crow about.

Fox News and its right-wing functionaries threaten the fabric of our electoral system. The push back should start with denying them legitimacy. That means exposing their hypocritical invocation of the "rule of law," challenging their simplistic "anything goes" standard of patriotism and denouncing their use of guilt-by-association. ■

**Conservatives have created a two-tier system of accountability: one for progressives, the other for themselves and their claimed moral rectitude.**

BY LAURA S. WASHINGTON

# Obama Not Feelin' the Love from Smiley



**N**OW THAT SEN. Barack Obama has taken care of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Tavis Smiley appears to be the next black contender for an '08 smackdown with the presidential candidate. But this time, black folks are taking care of it on their own.

Obama's April was a month full of stormy Mondays, thanks to Wright, the senator's former spiritual adviser and

longtime pastor at Trinity United Church of Christ on Chicago's South Side. Obama's campaign endured a hailstorm as the controversial preacher dominated the cable talk fests, a presidential debate and multiple news cycles.

Wright's April 28 appearance before the Washington Press Club provoked Obama to do something he should have done more than a year ago—deep-six Wright and his anti-American rantings.

Now, it's Tavis' turn.

In the last decade Tavis Smiley, a self-appointed spokesman for black America, has morphed from a little-known mouth at Black Entertainment Television into a one-man multimedia machine. Smiley hosts a nightly talk show on PBS, a weekly program on Public Radio International, writes and publishes books, runs a foundation and mounts museum exhibits. That's just the short list.

His website, TavisTalks.com, pitches his branding slogan: "Enlighten, Encourage, Empower." He wants black people, as he puts it, to "feel the love."

He also knows how to bring in the bucks. Some of America's best-known corporate monoliths have backed his enterprises: Allstate Insurance, ExxonMobil, McDonald's, Verizon, Wal-Mart and Wells Fargo.

But lately, Smiley has run into a bit of trouble with the love. The Internet has been sizzling with commentary about Smiley's big dis of the Democratic presidential wannabe.

It all started at Hampton University in Virginia, at Smiley's 2007 State of the Black Union confab—an annual series of discussions Smiley has with some of the biggest names in black America.

Smiley, it seems, was ticked when C-SPAN's broadcast of the conference was interrupted for the kickoff of Obama's presidential campaign in Springfield, Ill. He went on to pre-

side over a lot of grousing among participants, like the Rev. Al Sharpton and Princeton Professor Cornel West.

Back then, I dropped a dime on Smiley for his backbiting of Obama. I noted that Obama wouldn't take the White House by pandering to the Smileys and the Sharptons. The race men don't care if Obama gets anywhere—unless they get a piece of the action.

Cut to February 2008: Time for another State of the Black Union. Smiley extended an invitation to Obama but, again, Obama was rather busy—this time immersed in a brutal Democratic primary battle with Sen. Hillary Clinton.

In a letter responding to the invite, Obama praised Smiley's conference: "The exchange of ideas raised at this annual symposium are invaluable as our nation strives to address the

critical issues facing not just African Americans, but Americans of every race, background and political party," he wrote.

However, Obama added, he must concentrate on the crucial March 4 primaries. "In

the final stretch, I will be on the campaign trail every day in states like Ohio, Texas and Wisconsin, talking directly with voters about the causes that are at the heart of my campaign and the State of the Black Union forum."

Smiley made his displeasure clear and gave Clinton a prominent role in the event. "I think it's a missed opportunity on Mr. Obama's part," Smiley told CNN at the time. "Now, I am not interested in demonizing him for his choice, but I do disagree with it."

Smiley's pique has turned off many of his fans. The talk show host says he has been barraged with angry e-mails, and he told the *Washington Post* that he has even received death threats. "I have family in Indianapolis. They are harassing my momma, harassing my brother. It's getting to be crazy," Smiley said.

Black people are no longer feeling the love.

That's the problem. It's all about Smiley. Until Obama landed on the national scene, Smiley was enjoying an oversized media profile as an arbiter of African-American culture, values and politics. Now, like Wright, the possibility of America's first black president is overshadowing his oversized ego.

Like Wright, Smiley is putting Obama in a no-win position. And he is beginning to wear out his welcome with the black folks.

Those corporate sponsors may not be far behind. ■

**Talk show host Tavis Smiley is putting Barack Obama in a no-win position, going after the presidential candidate for apparently upstaging him.**

# Piling it High

## The sewage sludge industry meets the light of day

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

**N**ANCY HOLT, A RETIRED nurse from Mebane, N.C., is beset by mysterious neurological problems. She blames the cause of her illness on the multiple unknown toxicities of the sewage sludge that has been spread since 1991 on the fields across from her house as “fertilizer.”

And Holt says she isn't alone. People in her neighborhood have a high incidence of cancer and thyroid problems. Local creeks are no longer safe for kids to play in—the danger of staph infection is too great.

In 2001, Holt began chronicling the health problems in her area of rural Alamance County—12 miles north of Chapel Hill. Soon she was tracking reports of sludge-related illnesses and deaths across the country.

“I put together the symptoms, the illnesses, the high cancer rates, the thyroid disorders in this community,” she says. “It is non-scientific, of course.”

“And we have precocious puberty, little girls developing breasts at 5 or 6 years old, little boys developing armpit hair. And that is something that people don't want to talk about,” Holt says. “They will talk about their thyroid glands, their cancers, but they will not talk about early puberty. We are on a true toxic tilt.”

For the first time since she became involved in the sludge issue, Holt is guardedly hopeful that her concerns will finally be addressed, and that the sulphurous alliance between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), municipal sewer authorities and Synagro Technologies (the nation's largest sludge disposal firm, which was recently bought by the Carlyle Group)—will be exposed for the blight it is.

In April, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), chair of the Environment and Public



VEOLIA WATER NORTH AMERICA OPERATING SERVICES, LLC

### Veolia Water turns sludge into Orgro High Organic Compost at its Baltimore plant.

Works Committee, announced that her committee will hold hearings on the issue this summer. The catalyst is a confluence of recent news reports about sludge-related scandals.

In the Potomac River, 60 miles upstream from Washington, D.C., scientists have discovered many small-mouth male bass with eggs inside their sex organs. The cause of these “intersexed” fish is almost certainly endocrine disruptors—also known as estrogen mimickers—in the water, chemical pollutants that disrupt an animal's natural hormonal system.

In February, the *Washington Post* reported that the concentration of intersexed fish is greatest near towns or near heavily farmed land. One major source of these endocrine disruptors is thought to be the post-treatment “cleaned” water from municipal sewage treatment centers that is discharged directly into the

Potomac River system and runoff from fields “fertilized” with sludge.

In 2006, U.S. Geological Survey scientists surveyed chemical contaminants found in sludge “destined for land application” and concluded, “Potential concerns about the environmental presence of OWCs [Organic Wastewater Contaminants] include adverse physiological effects, increased rates of cancer, and reproductive impairment in humans and other animals, as well as antibiotic resistance among pathogenic bacteria.”

In 2004 when the intersexed fish were first discovered in the Potomac, Gina Solomon, a scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) told the Associated Press, “It is not good news that there's something that feminizes fish in your water.” Particularly when the Potomac is the source of drinking water for Washington, D.C.

Egg-bearing male fish had first been found in 2003 in the South Branch, a Potomac tributary in Hardy County, W.V., from which some locals get their water. A 2004 survey found that women in Hardy County have higher-than-normal rates of cancer of the ovaries and uterus.

This news of male fish bearing eggs was followed with an April report by the Associated Press that in 2000, nine Baltimore families—all black residents of the city's east side—received food coupons in exchange for permission to allow researchers to spread “Class A” Baltimore sewage sludge (brand name, Orgro High Organic Compost) on their yards, till it into the soil and then plant grass seed.

The rationale for this experiment was to find out whether municipal sewage sludge could lower the amount of lead that children who played in the nine experimental yards would absorb. Veolia Water, the corporation that markets Baltimore municipal sludge as Orgro, claims its “beneficial biosolids” are so safe they are even used on the White House lawn.

“Beneficial biosolids” is the term that Powell Tate, a D.C.-based public relations firm, invented in the early '90s, in an attempt to linguistically detoxify the 7 million tons of sludge—industrial waste, hospital waste, pharmaceuticals in addition to feces—that the nation's 16,000 municipal sewer systems produce each year.

At the time, the EPA, working hand in hand with the Water Environment Federation and the corporate waste disposal industry, reclassified sewage sludge from a toxic waste to a fertilizer. As a USDA approved fertilizer, sludge was thus exempt from environmental regulations.

Today, waste disposal firms spread more than half of the 7 million tons of organic and inorganic toxins on American farms as “fertilizer.”

Andy McElmurray, a farmer in Hepzibah, Ga., fed his dairy cows silage that had been fertilized with sewage sludge laced with heavy metals. More than 300 of them died.

In February, a federal judge ordered the Department of Agriculture to compensate McElmurray for losses incurred when his land was poisoned between 1979

and 1990 by applications of Augusta, Ga., sewage sludge. That sludge contained levels of arsenic that were two times higher than EPA standards allow; of thallium (a heavy metal used as rat poison) that were 25 times higher; and of PCBs that were 2,500 times higher.

What's more, milk from his neighbor's dairy farm was sent to market

## **In February, a federal judge wrote, ‘Senior EPA officials took extraordinary steps to quash scientific dissent, and any questioning of EPA’s biosolids program.’**

with thallium levels 120 times higher than those allowed by the EPA in public drinking water.

In his ruling, U.S. District Judge Anthony Alaimo was particularly critical of the EPA and the University of Georgia for having endorsed “unreliable, incomplete and, in some cases, fudged” data about the Augusta sludge. That corrupt data was presented to the National Academy of Sciences, which then cited it in their July 2002 assertion that sewage sludge does not pose a risk to public health.

Alaimo wrote, “Senior EPA officials took extraordinary steps to quash scientific dissent, and any questioning of EPA’s biosolids program.”

For example, in May 2003, the EPA fired David Lewis, one of the nation's leading sludge researchers, for publicly criticizing the agency's pro-sludge policy. In February 2004, at a hearing of the U.S. House Mineral and Resources subcommittee, Lewis testified:

The EPA has completely politicized the scientific peer-review process, both inside and outside the agency. ... This whole process, of course, is nothing more than a scam. ... It is a scam run by program office managers who are not qualified as research scientists and whose official position descriptions require that they defend EPA policies. In this case, the same EPA officials who developed the agency's sludge policy are using the vast resources of the federal government to cover up adverse health effects and environmental damage resulting from the scientifically flawed policy they created.

The Resource Institute for Low Entropy Systems ([www.riles.org](http://www.riles.org)) has been a leader in the sludge fight since the early '90s. The Boston nonprofit was founded in 1990 by Abby Rockefeller, an ecologist involved with sewage-related issues since the '70s. (Disclosure: Rockefeller is a member of the *In These Times* Publishing Consortium.)

Laura Orlando, the group's executive director, sums up the current state of America's sewer systems this way:

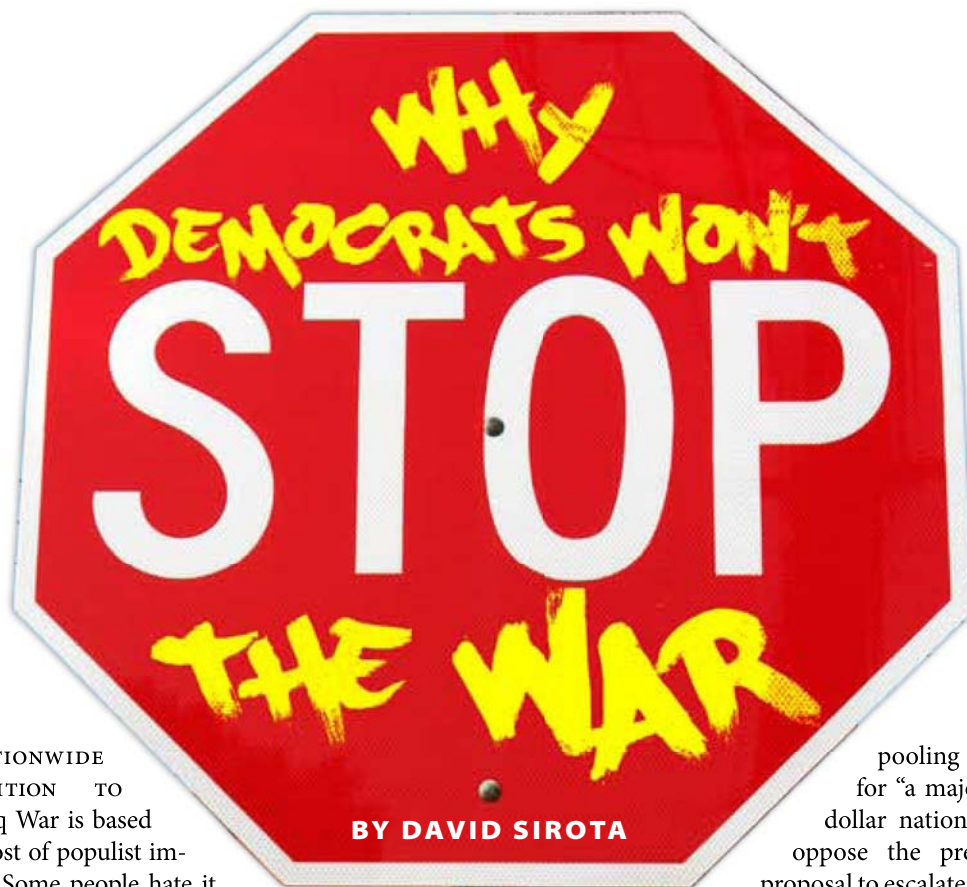
It's a public works program for corporations to dump their waste into publicly owned treatment facilities. We taxpayers pay for it not only in the infrastructure costs but also with our health from exposure to its toxic products—toxic wastewater and toxic sewage sludge—that are released into the environment. We are giving corporations a free ride. They have no liability. They dump their toxic waste down the drain and it is out of their hands.

Orlando, like Holt, is encouraged by the prospect of congressional hearings.

“There are thousands of people known to be sickened from the land application of sewage sludge,” she says, “people whose health is degraded, whose livestock have died or whose farms have been ruined. The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works hearing will be the first time these people will get a chance to tell their stories.”

Taking the long view, Rockefeller puts it this way: “We human beings, the world over, so concerned about the growing shortage of clean water, must reconsider our cavalier use of water as the transportation medium for all our waste—industrial and personal.”

What better way to mark the 45th anniversary of environmentalist Rachel Carson's June 4, 1963, testimony before the U.S. Senate Government Operations Subcommittee hearings on environmental hazards? ■



**T**HE NATIONWIDE OPPOSITION TO the Iraq War is based on a host of populist impulses. Some people hate it because they think lives are be-

ing sacrificed to pursue the oil industry's agenda. Some despise it because, without a military draft, the U.S. casualties—4,000-plus and counting—are disproportionately working-class kids. Still others abhor the war because it drains scarce resources away from pressing priorities at home. And yet, despite this groundswell of antiwar sentiment, the campaign to stop the war is adrift and dysfunctional.

On the one side are groups like United for Peace and Justice, that head what progressive activist Matt Stoller has deemed “The Protest Industry”—a clan “made up of those who decided that participation in the system was immoral” because they “have seen ‘compromise’ many times before and think they know where it leads.”

At Protest Industry rallies against the war in Iraq, you will find no effort to hone a basic message. You will see a sea of signs demanding (1) the end to a war with Iran that hasn't happened, (2) the impeachment of President George W. Bush, (3) the arrest of Vice President Dick Cheney, (4) the elimination of the death penalty, or (5) the overthrow of the U.S. government by Maoists who reason that the “world can't wait to drive out the Bush regime.”

These demonstrations are boisterous but ephemeral displays whose chaos and lack of message reinforce a self-defeating fringe image.

On the other side of the antiwar movement is a group of organizations and apparatchiks that have launched an operation called Americans Against Escalation in Iraq (AAEI)—a coalition of mainly Washington, D.C.-based advocacy groups,

pooling cash and staff for “a major, multimillion-dollar national campaign to oppose the president's ‘surge’ proposal to escalate the war in Iraq,” as its website says.

Within the uprising against the war in Iraq, AAEI and its allies are the “professional” side of the antiwar effort. Consider them The Players.

The Players imagine that the war will end not after a massive investment in long-term, on-the-ground local organizing against war, but by the short-term coordination of a few elite actors—political consultants, donors, politicians and maybe one or two organization heads—in front of a map of media markets and congressional districts.

The Players make their moves with campaign contributions, TV spots and PR campaigns—the conventional weapons in a media war—and they are playing their game *in Washington for Washington*. In contrast to the Protest Industry, they believe the only way to effect change is to play an inside game.

### **Hollywood for ugly people**

Media coverage is currency in the nation's capital. There, celebrities are people like *Washington Post* columnist David Broder, MSNBC's Chris Matthews and *Time* magazine's Joe Klein—people known to almost no one in the country at large.

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*Adapted from The Uprising: An Unauthorized Tour of the Populist Revolt Scaring Wall Street and Washington (2008) by the author, David Sirota. Published by Crown Publishers, a division of Random House Inc.*

Within the Beltway, however, they are influential celebrities because they appear on obscure chat shows, from C-SPAN's "Washington Journal" to Fox News' "Special Report" to MSNBC's "Hardball."

Our nation's capital has become Hollywood for ugly people.

Washington's self-absorbed fetishization of tiny-audience TV shows might be funny—except that the Iraq War was

ed because of Washington's obsession with television, it can be ended because of that same obsession.

### Washington's rules

Both the Protest Industry chanting on the Mall and The Players scheming in their downtown Washington offices are necessary parts of an effective antiwar uprising. The outraged rabble provides

to influence these people who "set the parameters of the debate," are often simultaneously paid by the very politicians who should be in their crosshairs.

The result is that ideological organizations become fused to the partisan political structure they seek to pressure.

### Hot Pocket politics

Take the leadership of AAEI. The group

## A new breed of companies is trying to bring to uprising politics the ease of microwave TV dinners. Problem is, these firms are as nutritious to your cause as junk food is to your body.

largely started because of this closed-circuit media obsession.

In the march to war, neoconservatives, like *The Weekly Standard's* William Kristol, staked out beachheads on Fox News sets, while so-called liberal hawks, like *The New Republic's* former editor Peter Beinart, dug trenches in CNN studios. These pundits established support for the war as a criterion of political respectability and a mark of worthiness for media access.

Now, out in the real world, beyond the confines of the TV studios, it's all gone to shit—all of it. The American public—which was ambivalent about supporting the unilateral invasion—is now firmly opposed to continuing the conflict.

Many of Washington's pro-war TV "celebrities" are trying to flee their previously televised warmongering. Klein of *Time* magazine, for instance, appeared on CNBC a month before the Iraq invasion to state, "War may well be the right decision at this point—in fact, I think it probably is." By 2007, he claimed with a straight face, "I've been opposed to the Iraq War ever since 2002."

In light of this, The Players believe that by funneling money into organizations like AAEI, pulling PR stunts and putting attack ads on television against pro-war legislators in Congress, they can make this antiwar uprising successful without organizing millions of Americans into a cohesive long-term movement. They believe, in short, that if a war can be start-

ed because of Washington's obsession with television, it can be ended because of that same obsession.

the boots on the ground that can pressure lawmakers in their local communities. And that popular ferment could be enhanced by a professional presence playing the Beltway's media game.

The crippling problem for The Players is the increasing difficulty of operating in Washington without being corrupted by it. As blogger Chris Bowers says, "In Washington, D.C., for those who run the government, the public is quite distant and faceless."

If the rules of Washington were written down, the first one would say: Anyone wishing to play its games has to sign up big-name political consultants who are perceived to have "influence." That buys you instant credibility with politicians and reporters there—"those folks who write the stories, and appear on television and radio to talk about the state of play in Washington," as the *Washington Post's* Chris Cillizza says. "Like it or not, the opinions expressed by these people tend to set the parameters of the debate when an election year rolls around."

As a Washington pundit, Cillizza's analysis inflates his own importance. But as biased as he is—and as much as his statement reeks of elitism—inside the Beltway his self-aggrandizement is a religious doctrine that creates a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This poses a problem for even the best-intentioned advocacy organizations in D.C. The same consultants they need to hire to play this Washington game and

is guided by Hildebrand Tewes, a consulting firm named for its original partners, Steve Hildebrand and Paul Tewes—both longtime Democratic Party operatives.

The firm is one of a new breed of companies that attempts to bring to uprising politics the ease of microwave TV dinners. Don't feel like making dinner? Throw a Hot Pocket into the microwave. Don't feel like doing the hard work of local organizing to build a sustaining, durable movement that lasts beyond the issue du jour? Put together a pile of money to hire a firm like Hildebrand Tewes and you can have your instant "uprising"—one that provides about as much nutrition to your cause as microwaved junk food provides to your body.

While the firm is supposedly leading an independent antiwar uprising by pressuring politicians in both parties, about half its employees—including the firm's two principals—were staffers for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), the re-election arm of the same Democratic U.S. senators that the antiwar uprising now needs to pressure to end the war.

But the conflict of interest only starts there.

At the same time Hildebrand Tewes is working with AAEI, the firm is being paid by various Democratic politicians for its services—Democratic politicians who have a vested interest in avoiding attacks from the antiwar uprising.

The consequences of such incestuous overlaps between party and uprising are best exemplified by Brad Woodhouse, the Hildebrand Tewes consultant leading AAEI. He came directly to Hildebrand Tewes after years as the DSCC's chief spokesperson and a mouthpiece for Democratic candidates. This supposed antiwar champion is the same guy who, as a campaign staffer, bragged to newspapers just before the Iraq invasion that the Democratic U.S. candidate he was working for, Erskine Bowles (N.C.), was more pro-war than the Republican candidate.

"No one has been stronger in this race [than Bowles] in supporting President Bush in the war on terror and his efforts to affect a regime change in Iraq," Woodhouse fulminated in the *Charlotte Observer* in September 2002.

Woodhouse is no anomaly. His history closely mimics how many war-supporting politicians suddenly changed their positions when the political winds shifted.

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), whose record on Iraq has been abysmal, has undergone an improbable transformation into an antiwar candidate. And former President Bill Clinton showed a special kind of retroactive courage when he declared last November that he had opposed the war "from the beginning." But it is the partisan conflicts of interest, not the hypocrisy, that pose the real problem.

You would think the central focus of any antiwar organization—whether inside Washington or out—would be on forcing Democrats to use their constitutional power to end the war to do just that: end the war. But you would be wrong.

Almost all of AAEI's "multimillion dollar national campaign" is being spent on TV ads or publicity stunts attacking pro-war Republican politicians up for reelection in 2008—people like Sens. Susan Collins (Maine), John Sununu (N.H.), Norm Coleman (Minn.) and Mitch McConnell (Ky.), the minority leader who Woodhouse spent years attacking at the DSCC.

These are Republicans who Democrats (and thus Democratic consulting firms like Hildebrand Tewes) want to defeat in order to retain control of the Senate, regardless of whether the war ends.

Relatively few AAEI resources, by contrast, will be spent on ads attacking Democratic House and Senate lawmakers who have either repeatedly provided the critical votes to continue the war indefinitely, or who have refused to use all of Congress's power to end the war.

Beyond its mission statement, AAEI does not even try to hide its partisan biases. In one classic display, Woodhouse used his AAEI position to defend Democrats when they refused to stop a war funding bill.

"We're disappointed the war drags on with no end in sight," he told Reuters in June of 2007, "but realize Democratic leaders can only accomplish what they have the votes for."

No mention of Democrats' ability to use their majority to vote down war spending bills or to stop any funding bills from moving forward so as to cut off money for the war.

If you believe this ultrapartisan allocation of resources has nothing to do with the fact that the people guiding the spending decisions are former employees of—and are still being paid by—Democratic politicians, then I'm sure George W. Bush has another war to sell you.

As antiwar Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) has said, the battle to end the war is "us versus them"—not in terms of Republican versus Democrat, but in terms of the uprising versus the "Washington inside crowd that sets the parameters of this debate."

In February 2007, Feingold told reporters, "The Washington consultants—especially those that were part of the previous Democratic administration—come into a room with Democratic congressional leadership and tell them, 'Look, if you propose a timeline or you try to cut off the funding, the Republicans will tear you apart.'" But, Feingold continued, "The power structure in Washington [is] desperately trying to figure out how to explain why they made one of the biggest mistakes in the history of our country. And that's why you gotta go right at them."

But you can't "go right at them" if your uprising is led by a tightly knit consultant class that has dual loyalties and has been part of the problem from the outset.

## The McGovern Fable

Conservatives have extrapolated President Nixon's "silent majority" demonization of Sen. George McGovern and cultural critique of the anti-Vietnam War movement into a fantasy that supposedly explains every Republican victory in the last 30 years.

This McGovern Fable posits that the Left's open confrontation with the Democratic Party may have helped end the Vietnam War, but it also resulted in the 1972 presidential nomination of McGovern, whose landslide loss in the general election supposedly gave Democrats a "national security gap" in public opinion polls. According to the Fable, this gap is singularly responsible for giving America 20 out of 28 years of Republican presidents, and came about not because Nixon ran a smarter race or because McGovern's campaign tactically stumbled, but because McGovern opposed the Vietnam War.

But as scholar Mark Schmitt has noted, the McGovern Fable is a sham.

"The real reason the Vietnam War divided and discredited Democrats and splintered the liberal consensus was because—let's not be afraid to admit it—Democrats started that war," Schmitt wrote on his blog in 2006. "Opposition to the war didn't unify or define the party, it divided it. Nixon won the 1968 election because [Hubert] Humphrey was associated with the war [and] couldn't split with [Lyndon B. Johnson]."

In fact, Schmitt pointed out that in the 1974 mid-term election following that 1972 campaign, the 75 Democrats who won congressional seats were overwhelmingly antiwar.

Few debate that making the war into a campaign issue was critical to the Democrats winning Congress in 2006. However, the consensus in Washington is that all the American casualties and the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Iraq would be acceptable had Bush just been a better military strategist. Some Democratic lawmakers seem to be saying this overtly.

With no ideologically antiwar voice in Washington, these Democrats are demanding that their party become ideologically "pro-war"—that is in favor of violent

conflicts as a standing principle, as long as the violence is managed properly.

“If we become the antiwar party, that’s not beneficial to Democrats in 2008,” Rep. Lincoln Davis (D-Tenn.) told reporters in July 2007, despite polls showing that two-thirds of Americans want the White House to start withdrawing troops from Iraq. Said Davis: “The kind of pro-war

Cheney zealots, the pro-impeachment activists and other assorted Protest Industry followers, they may be utterly disorganized and lack real-world political strategies, but at least their activism is about more than a sporting event. They aren’t just demonstrating to help one set of politicians defeat another set of politicians. And as importantly, they

mail when we did a lot of mail in the labor movement,” he says. “What happened over the years was that mail became a lazy way to communicate with people. It’s much easier to hire a mail vendor and send out a lot of mail to union members than it is to organize people going workplace to workplace and setting up systems to deliver flyers and organize weekend

## Say what you will about the anti-Cheney zealots and the pro-impeachment activists. Though utterly disorganized, their activism is at least more than just a sporting event.

Democrat that we ought to be [is the one that supports] the war that we fight wisely, the ones that we engage in wisely.”

Among The Players inside Establishment Washington, nobody—not AAEI, not the much-vaunted “liberal” think tanks—is making the opposite case, that Democrats have a moral and (as the insurgent campaign of Connecticut’s Ned Lamont showed) political imperative to be the antiwar party, not just the sort-of anti-Iraq War party.

The Players have opposed the escalation of the war in Iraq, but there has been no antiwar drumbeat—no larger argument made against wars as a concept or against the danger of the growing military-industrial complex. This means the next time a president wants to start an absurdly stupid war, he or she faces no ongoing antiwar uprising and just needs to do what Bush didn’t do—dot the “i”s, cross the “t”s and follow proper procedure. Put another way, favoring a narrow criticism of just the Iraq War over an attack on Washington’s more general prioritization of war as a foreign policy tool has laid the groundwork for neoconservatives’ next harebrained military fantasy.

As media critic Glenn Greenwald wrote at Salon.com in August 2007, “The Grand Beltway Consensus, one that encompasses both parties, is that War is how we rule the world. ... The only debates allowed are how many [wars] we should fight, where we should fight them, and how ‘wisely’ we prosecute them.”

Say what you will about the anti-

don’t dream of stopping just one war because that’s what is considered politically expedient.

They dream of changing society’s long-term outlook on war itself.

### Making them work for us

Like an exotic species at the zoo, true campaign junkies exhibit the same special markings: bags under eyes, graying hair, half-shaven beards (among the males) and expressions of permanent fatigue, like they could fall asleep at any moment because they need to catch up on shut-eye from 25 years of late-night envelope-stuffing sessions.

Steve Rosenthal exhibits all of these telltale signs.

Rosenthal heads They Work for Us, a group whose mission is to pressure elected Democrats to uphold the uprising’s antiwar and economic agenda.

“There’s a lot of swirling mass communications going on right now,” he says between gulps of coffee as we eat breakfast at a hotel restaurant in downtown D.C. “But it really isn’t personalized or organized, and it isn’t particularly effective.”

He is a rare hybrid of an insider and an uprising guy who got his start (like many 50-ish movement activists) first as a volunteer for George McGovern’s 1972 campaign, then as staffer for Sen. Ted Kennedy’s 1980 presidential bid. Today, Rosenthal is fed up with the substitution of Washington games for real grassroots organizing.

“It’s the same thing I used to say about

walks. That’s really hard stuff, and people now avoid doing it because it’s hard.”

He fills me in on all the different Democratic incumbents his group is looking at trying to unseat in primaries, and how he wants to “make them sweat and bleed and raise money so they have to think differently about things.”

But beneath the strategy talk, he is worried. He fears that even on an issue as pressing as the war, partisan loyalties are going to trump everything. That’s not just because of the intertwined Washington culture or the McGovern Fable, he says, but because a lot of the people in the uprising today don’t really comprehend how power works.

“What many people don’t understand is that these politicians carry more water for you as a result of being frightened,” he says. “In other words, what are these politicians going to do in the face of a primary challenge? Say, ‘Go fuck you guys because you might come after me?’ No, it’s going to be the other way around—they’ll try to appease us by being better, which is the point.”

But, the flip side is also true.

If Democratic office holders know that no functional antiwar uprising is ready to punish them for their war support, then they will just preserve the status quo—regardless of the TV ads against Republicans; regardless of the Protest Industry theatrics at rallies; regardless of The Players’ appearances on obscure shows like “Hardball”; and—worst of all—regardless of American troops dying in Iraq. ■

# No Strings Attached?

How U.S. funding of the world press corps may be buying influence

BY JEREMY BIGWOOD



Lebanese men in Beirut watch Alhurra, a U.S.-funded Arabic-language television network. The name of the satellite channel means 'the free one' in Arabic.

**D**OMESTIC PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS LIKE the “Pentagon Pundits” fiasco have been exposed and decried. Mainstream media outlets hired high-ranking military officers to provide “analysis” about the war in Iraq. Turns out they had ties to military contractors with a vested interest in continuing the war.

Below the radar, another journalism scandal is brewing: the U.S. government is secretly funding foreign news outlets and journalists. Government bodies—including the State Department, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) and the U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP)—support “media development” in more than 70 countries. *In These*

*Times* has found that these programs include funding hundreds of foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs), journalists, policy-makers, journalist associations, media outlets, training institutes and academic journalism faculties. Grant sizes can range from a few thousand to millions of dollars.

“The bottom line is that we are teaching the mechanics of journalism, whether it be print, television or radio,” USAID spokesman Paul Koscak says. “How to do a story, how to write with balance ... all of those types of things that you would expect in a professional piece that is published.”

But some people, especially those outside the United States, see it differently.

“We think that the real issues here are the foreign policy objectives behind these media development programs,” says a high-level Venezuelan diplomat who asked not

to be identified. “When the objective is regime change, these programs have proven to be instruments for the destabilization of democratically elected governments that the United States doesn’t support.”

Isabel MacDonald, communications director at Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), a New York-based media watchdog nonprofit, is also critical. “This is a system that, despite its professed adherence to norms of objectivity, has often worked against real democracy,” she says, “by stifling dissent and helping the U.S. government spread misinformation serviceable to U.S. foreign policy goals.”

## Show me the agency

Measuring the size and scope of independent media development is difficult because similar programs exist under different rubrics. Some agencies consider “media development” to be

its own field, while other agencies categorize it under “public diplomacy” or “psychological operations.” That makes it hard to figure out how much money goes into these programs.

In December 2007, the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA)—a State Department-funded office at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)—reported that in 2006, USAID doled out almost \$53 million for foreign media development activities. According to the CIMA study, the State Department spent an estimated \$15 million on such programs. NED’s budget for media projects was an additional \$11 million. And the small Washington, D.C.-based U.S. Institute for Peace may have contributed up to \$1.4 million more, according to the report, which did not examine Defense Department or CIA media funding.

The U.S. government is by far the largest funder of media development in the world, giving more than \$82 million in 2006—not counting money from the Pentagon, the CIA or U.S. embassies in recipient countries. To complicate matters, many foreign NGOs and journalists receive media development funding from more than one U.S. government source. Some receive funding from various U.S. subcontractors and “independent international nonprofit organizations,” while others receive money directly from the U.S. embassy in their country.

Three foreign journalists who receive U.S. media development funding told *In These Times* that such gifts do not affect their behavior or alter their reporting. And they deny that they practice self-censorship. None, however, would say this on the record.

Gustavo Guzmán, a former journalist and now Bolivian ambassador to the United States, says, “A journalist who receives such gifts is no longer a journalist, but becomes a mercenary.”

### A twisted history

The U.S. government’s funding of foreign media has a long history. During the mid-’70s, in the aftermath of Watergate, two congressional investigations—the Church and Pike committees, after Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho) and Rep. Otis Pike (D-

N.Y.)—dived into covert U.S. government activities in other countries. They confirmed that, apart from CIA-funded journalists (both foreign and American), the U.S. government also subsidized foreign print media, radio and television outlets—something the Soviets were also doing. For instance, *Encounter*, an anti-communist literary magazine published in England from 1953 to 1990, was revealed to be a CIA operation in 1967. And, as is the case today, benign-sounding organizations, such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, have also been CIA fronts.

Congressional investigations found that clandestine U.S. funding of foreign media often played a decisive role abroad, but nowhere more so than in Chile in the early ’70s.

“The CIA’s major propaganda operation, through the opposition newspaper *El Mercurio*, probably contributed most directly to the bloody overthrow of the Allende government and Chile’s democracy,” says Peter Kornbluh, senior analyst at the National Security Archive, an independent nongovernmental research institute.

*In These Times* asked the agency if it still funds foreign journalists. CIA Spokesman Paul Gimigliano responded, “The CIA does not, as a matter of course, publicly deny or confirm these kinds of allegations.”

### Enemies of the State Department?

On Aug. 19, 2002, the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela, sent a cable to Washington. It read:

“We expect Mr. Lacayo’s participation as an IV grantee to be directly reflected in his reporting on political and international topics. As he moves upward in his career,

our improved ties with him would mean a potentially important friend in positions of editorial influence.” [Editor’s Note: Mr. Lacayo’s name has been changed to protect his identity.]


The State Department had chosen the Venezuelan journalist to visit the U.S. under what is known as an IV grant—a cultural exchange program started in 1961. Last year, the department brought some 467 journalists to the United States at a cost of about \$10 million, according to a State Department official who requested anonymity.

FAIR’s MacDonald says that the “visits serve to build ties between the visiting foreign journalists and institutions that ... are extremely uncritical of U.S. foreign policy and the corporate interests it serves.”

The State Department funds media development through several of its bureaus, including the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), as well as through its regional bureaus and embassies worldwide. It also funds foreign journalists through another section called the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Most importantly, the State Department usually decides where other agencies, such as USAID and NED, should invest their media development funds.

(The State Department did not respond to *In These Times*’ requests for information about its media development budget, but the 2007 CIMA study shows that in 2006, DRL, for instance, received almost \$12 million for media development alone.)

The case of Bolivia is a revealing example of a country in which the United States has been funding media development. Ac-



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Radio Martí newscast team Pedro De Pool (left) and Sonia Barriel broadcast from the Radio and TV Martí headquarters in Miami.

JOE RAEBLE/GETTY IMAGES

According to DRL's website, the bureau sponsored 15 workshops in Bolivia on freedom of the press and expression in 2006. "The country's journalists and journalism students discussed professional ethics, good reporting practices and the media's role in a democracy," the site says. "These programs were sent out to 200 radio stations in remote areas throughout the country."

In 2006, Bolivia elected Evo Morales, its first indigenous president, whose rise to power the U.S. government and Bolivia's mainstream press has repeatedly tried to impede. Morales and his supporters allege that the U.S. government is backing a separatist movement in Bolivia's gas-rich eastern states, and they allege that part of that backing involves media development meetings, according to journalist and former presidential spokesperson Alex Contreras. USAID's Koscak denies the charge.

### This is the BBG

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), is most famous as the funder of the Voice of America. According to its website, BBG is "responsible for all U.S. government and government-sponsored, non-military, international broadcasting" that brings "news and information to people around the world in 60 languages."

In 1999, BBG became an independent federal agency. By 2006 it received a \$650 million budget, according to CIMA estimates, with about \$1.5 million earmarked for media development to train journal-

ists in Argentina, Bolivia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Besides Voice of America, BBG also runs several other radio and TV stations. Alhurra television, based in Springfield, Va., "is a commercial-free Arabic-language satellite television network for the Middle East, devoted primarily to news and information," according to its website. Alhurra, which is Arabic for "the free one," has been described by the *Washington Post* as "the U.S. government's largest and most expensive effort to sway foreign opinion over the airwaves since the creation of Voice of America in 1942."

BBG also funds Radio Sawa (for Arab youth, with streaming to Egypt, the Gulf, Iraq, Lebanon, the Levant, Morocco and Sudan), Radio Farda (to Iran) and Radio Free Asia (regional programming in Asia). BBG also supports broadcasts to Cuba through Radio and TV Martí, which will amount to almost \$39 million this year, according to the Foreign Operations Congressional Budget Justification for fiscal year 2008.

### Pentagon PR

The Department of Defense (DOD) refused to speak to *In These Times* about its media development programs. According to a Dec. 11, 2005, *New York Times* article by Jeff Gerth, "the military operates radio stations and newspapers [in Iraq and Afghanistan] but does not disclose their American ties."

The task of media development in Iraq "was given to the U.S. Department of Defense, whose major contractors had little or no relevant experience," states an October 2007 report by the U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP).

A 2007 study by the Center for Global Communication Studies at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication found that Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC), a longtime DOD contractor, was awarded an initial contract of \$80 million for a year to transform an entire state-run media system into an independent, BBC-style national news service—in part to counteract the effect Al Jazeera was having in the region.

"Supervising SAIC was a DOD office specializing in psychological warfare operations, which many believe contributed to the perception among Iraqis that the Iraq Media Network (IMN) was merely a mouthpiece for the Coalition Provisional Authority," the USIP report says. "SAIC's performance in Iraq was considered costly, unprofessional and a failure in terms of establishing the objectivity and independence of the IMN." SAIC eventually lost the contract to another company—Harris Corp.

SAIC wasn't the only Pentagon media subcontractor that massively failed. In an April 30 *USA Today* article by Peter Eisler, the Iraqi news website Mawtani.com was exposed as a Pentagon-funded information outlet.

### USAID: 'From the American people'

President John F. Kennedy created the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in November 1961 to administer humanitarian assistance and economic development worldwide. But while USAID prides itself on promoting transparency in the affairs of other nations, it is itself hardly transparent. This is especially true of its media development programs.

"In a number of countries, including Venezuela and Bolivia, USAID is acting more as an agency involved in covert action, like the CIA, than as an aid or development agency," says Mark Weisbrot, an economist with the Center for

Economic and Policy Research, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

Indeed, while investigators have been able to obtain general budgets for USAID's global programs through the Freedom of Information Act, as well as names of countries or geographic regions where money has been spent, the names of specific foreign organizations receiving this money are state secrets, just as in the case of the CIA. And in cases where the recipient organizations' names are known, and information is requested about them, USAID responds that it is "unable to confirm or deny the existence of records" about them, using the same language as the CIA. (Disclosure: In 2006, I filed an unsuccessful lawsuit against USAID in an attempt to identify which organizations it funds abroad.)

USAID funds three major media development operations: the International Research & Exchanges Board (more commonly known as IREX), the Internews Network and the largely privately funded Search for Common Ground. To complicate matters, all three have also received funding from the State Department, the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

According to its brochures, IREX is an international nonprofit organization that "works with local partners to advance the professionalism and long-term economic sustainability of newspapers, radio, television and Internet media." IREX's 2006 "990" tax form states that its media activities include "small-grant support for more than 100 journalists and media organizations; training for hundreds of journalists and media outlets" and has a staff of more than 400 that delivers programs and consultation to more than 50 countries.

The Internews Network, more commonly known as "Internews," receives only about half of IREX's budget but is better known. Founded in 1982, most of Internews' funding comes through USAID, although it also receives funding from NED and the State Department. Internews is one of the largest operations in the independent media development business, funding dozens of NGOs, journalists,

journalist associations, training institutes and academic journalism faculties in dozens of countries throughout the world.

Internews' operations have been shut down in countries such as Belarus, Russia and Uzbekistan, where they have been viewed as undermining local governments and pushing U.S. agendas. In a May 2003 speech in Washington, D.C., Andrew

## **The concept of separation of the powers of the press from the government is a basic tenet of not only the U.S. political system, but also Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**

Natsios, USAID's former administrator, described USAID-funded private contractors as "an arm of the U.S. government."

The other major USAID media development recipient, Search for Common Ground, receives more money from the private sector than it does from the U.S. government, most of which goes into "conflict resolution," according to the CIMA report.

Two major targets for USAID's media development and assistance are Cuba and Iran. USAID's budget for "Media Freedom and Freedom of Information"—to "transition" Cuba under the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba II (CAFC II)—totals \$14 million. This represents a \$10.5 million increase from the amount allocated in 2006. In Iran, USAID has budgeted some \$25 million for media development for fiscal year 2008. It is part of a \$75 million package for what USAID calls "transformational diplomacy" in that country.

### **Funding U.S.-style 'democracy'**

"A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA," said Allen Weinstein, one of National Endowment for Democracy's founders, in a 1991 *Washington Post* article.

Formed in the early '80s, NED is "governed by an independent, nonpartisan board of directors." Its purported aim is to support pro-democracy organizations around the world. Historically, however, the foreign policy objectives of Washington have defined its agenda.

"When the rhetoric of democracy is put aside, NED is a specialized tool for penetrating civil society in other countries down to the grassroots level" to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals, writes University of California-Santa Barbara professor William Robinson in his book, *A Faustian Bargain*. Robinson was in Nicaragua during the early '90s and watched NED work

with the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan opposition to remove the leftist Sandinistas from power during the 1992 elections.

NED also came under major public scrutiny in Venezuela, where it was exposed for funding the anti-Chávez movement. In her book *The Chávez Code*, Venezuelan-American attorney Eva Golinger writes that NED (and USAID) grantees were involved in the 2002 coup attempt against Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, as well as in the management-driven "labor strikes" aimed at shutting down the country's petroleum industry. Golinger also notes that NED funded Súmate—a Venezuelan NGO whose stated goal is to promote the free exercise of citizens' political rights—which orchestrated the failed recall referendum against Chávez in 2004.

### **Dependency and obligation**

The concept of separation of the powers of the press from the government is a basic tenet of not only the U.S. political system, but also Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. U.S. government funding of any press risks establishing client-donor relationships that cannot be considered independent media.

"Even the donation of equipment, such as computers and recorders by the U.S. government, affects the work of journalists and journalist organizations," says Contreras, the Bolivian journalist, "because it brings about dependency and an obligation to the hidden agendas of U.S. institutions." ■



In Mexico's Cerrito del Agua, freshly painted concrete houses line empty streets because most of their owners are working in the United States.

# Mexico's Ghost Towns

The other side of the immigration debate

BY JOHN GIBLER

**Z**ACATECAS, MEXICO—CERRITO DEL AGUA, population 3,000, has no paved roads—either leading to it or within it. No restaurants, no movie theaters, no shopping malls. In fact, the small town located in the central Mexican state of Zacatecas has no middle schools, high schools or colleges; no cell phone service, no hospital. Its surrounding fields are dry and untended. The streets are empty.

The explosion of emigration to the United States over the past 15 years has emptied much of central Mexico, even reaching into southernmost states like Chiapas and Yucatan. But it has simply devastated Zacatecas, a dry, rolling agricultural region located about 400 miles northwest of Mexico City.

A little more than half of Zacatecas' population—about 1.8 million people—now live in the United States, especially in areas surrounding Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles. Between 2000 and 2005, three out of its four municipalities registered a negative population growth. A 2004 state law created two new state legislative posts for migrants living in the United States. In 2006, depopulation cost the state one of its five congressional districts.

"Well, you've seen what this place is like," says Dr. Manuel Valadez Lopez, gesturing out the door of his small private clinic when I ask him how emigration has affected the town. "There has not been even minimal development here. There is not a single yard of pavement. The few people who have sidewalks in front of their houses built them themselves. Most people defecate outdoors."

Lopez, 40, a native of Cerrito del

Agua, is one of the few to leave the town and return. All six of his brothers now live and work in the United States. All four of his sisters married men who left to work in the United States.

In his teens, Lopez himself had moved to Guadalajara (about a five-hour drive southwest of Zacatecas) to attend high school and university, then stayed on to study medicine and receive a specialist's training in gynecology. He later returned to Cerrito del Agua for a visit and realized "there was so much work to do here that I stayed," he says.

That was eight years ago.

"The whole culture now is that people grow up and go to the U.S.—their parents, their uncles, their brothers and sisters, everyone goes," Lopez says. "The kids who are strong and smart, they all go to the U.S. There are no basic services here; the government has not carried

out a single project.”

The situation has been so dire, he says, that the staff at the clinic had to install its own sewage system. “There is running water, but it’s not clean,” he continues. “People get all sorts of infections, a typical Third-World situation.”

Worst of all, says Lopez, is that “people who could possibly stay here and do something, they all go.”

## The new U.S. colony

A January report by Richard Nadler, president of the conservative Americas Majority Foundation, found that the strongest state economies in the United States are those with high numbers of migrant workers. Nadler writes: “An analysis of data from 50 states and the District of Columbia demonstrates that a high resident population and/or inflow of immigrants is associated with elevated *levels* and *growth* in gross state product, personal income, per capita personal income, disposable income, per capita disposable income, median household income and median per capita income.”

Those who are leaving Mexico—those whose land goes unplanted, whose roads remain unpaved—are laboring in the United States, building shopping malls and factories, washing dishes in restaurants and cafés, picking grapes and pulling lettuce.

They are creating within the U.S. economy precisely the goods and services that their hometowns lack. At the same time, their anemic home economies falter on the brink of collapse.

“I think that the U.S.’s plan is to make Mexico into a kind of colony,” says Lopez, with a half smile. “People go to the U.S. to work and earn dollars. They come back to Mexico and spend their dollars on American products. It’s a nice, round business.” He continues: “Everyone here depends on the U.S. If this isn’t a colony, then how do you define colony?”

## Condemned to disappear

In the heated debates over U.S. immigration policy, the pressing questions seem to be “How many immigrants should be allowed in, if any?” and “How

should they be processed into the system?” But rarely considered is what this massive influx is doing to Mexico.

With nearly half a million Mexicans crossing the U.S.-Mexico border every year to look for work, Mexico has become the world’s largest exporter of its people. More people flee destitution in Mexico than in China or India—each with popu-

## Those leaving Mexico are laboring in the United States, building malls, washing dishes, picking grapes. They are creating precisely the goods and services their hometowns lack.

lations 10 times larger than Mexico’s.

Their remittances—the money Mexican immigrants in the United States save and send back to their families—equaled \$24 billion last year, and made up the third-largest source of revenue for the Mexican economy (after illegal drugs and oil).

“Theories of migration always show the interests of the North,” says Raul Delgado Wise, director of the Graduate School of Development Studies at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas and an expert on migration. He says migrants born in Mexico contribute 8 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP)—about \$900 billion—which is more than Mexico’s entire GDP.

Wise is one of several researchers studying Mexican migration at the University of Zacatecas. Together they publish an international journal called *Migration and Development* and are laying the groundwork for an alternative think tank to the World Bank, which will be called the Consortium for Critical Development Studies.

“With all of this, we need to see really how much it is costing Mexico, how much Mexico is losing,” Wise says.

He says that the mass migration from Mexico to the United States cannot be fully understood without considering the U.S.-Mexico economic integration. Begun in the ’80s, this integration reached its maximum expression with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which took effect Jan. 1, 1994.

What Mexico really exports, Wise argues, is labor.

The supposed growth in Mexico’s manufacturing sector is a “smokescreen,” he wrote in a 2005 article in *Latin American Perspectives*, a scholarly journal. Almost half of all manufacturing exports come from the *maquiladora* assembly plants (foreign-owned factories in Mexico) that import production materials and export their final products—and their profits.

Mexico adds only the labor.

Neoliberal policies—first implemented in the ’80s, and later through NAFTA—cut government investment in public works and agriculture, privatized key state enterprises and created low interest rates that attracted foreign capital. These policies opened the way for a 25-fold increase in *maquiladora* sales between 1982 and 2003 (though that growth peaked in 2000 and has since fallen as *maquiladora* owners seek ever lower wages and looser environmental regulations to compete with China’s abundant labor supply).

From 1994 to 2002, Mexico lost more than 1 million agricultural jobs. And from 1980 to 2002—the same period *maquiladora* sales soared—migration from Mexico to the United States grew by 452 percent, with more than 400,000 people crossing each year, on average.

“In Mexico, we have exported the factory of migrants,” says Rodolfo Garcia Zamora, an economics professor who also teaches at the Graduate School of Development Studies. Zamora, author of *Migration, Remittances and Local Development*, says Mexico “is mortgaging its future” with migration and remittances. In the 10 Mexican states with the longest migration histories, he says, 65 percent of municipalities have a negative population growth. “This means that in the future,” says Zamora, “these communities will not be able to reproduce, neither economically nor socially, because the demographics of migration have condemned them to disappear.”

## No escape?

"The United States economy demands cheap labor. Mexico has an excess of laborers. We complement each other," says Fernando Robledo, director of the Zacatecas State Migration Institute, a government office that administers development projects in conjunction with several U.S. migrant organizations.

He dismisses talk of depopulation and an abandoned countryside as "fatalism." "Zacatecas has a 120-year history of migration," he says. "Migration is historical."

Robledo describes the state government's development priorities as variations on the "three for one" program—where local, state and federal governments match each dollar provided by U.S. migrant organizations for use in local development projects, such as building interstate highways heading north and constructing greenhouses for growing export crops.

"If you had \$50 million in the budget," Robledo says, "would you use that to increase production in the countryside or to build an interstate highway? It is a political and economic decision."

Robledo puts priority on the highway.

But doesn't building super-highways toward the Mexico-U.S. border and changing agriculture to a cash-crop export reproduce the very neoliberal policies that dispossess migrants in the first place?

"We do not live in a socialist country," he responds, "where the government controls every aspect of the economy. We are in a neoliberal country. We cannot escape from neoliberal economics."

Garcia Zamora, who helped write the Zacatecas state development plan, is unconvinced. The main problem, he says, is the lack of real political alternatives to neoliberalism. According to Zamora, "there is only one political party in Mexico—the PRI," referring to Mexico's notoriously corrupt Institutional Revolutionary Party, which ruled the country from 1929 to 2000. "The PRD government in Zacatecas now acts just like a PRI government," Zamora says, this time referencing the Party of the Democratic Revolution, the opposition party to the PRI. "The same lack of planning and nepotism. It spends its time mainly implementing federal programs. They drafted a good development plan, but they ... have never carried out a serious regional economic development policy that seeks to diminish the massive exodus of 40,000 Zacatecas residents who abandon Mexico every year."

### Abandoned by migration

A few years ago, Mario García left Zacatecas to work in construction in Southern California, but after about five months he decided to return to El Carga-

dero, a tiny town about 50 miles west of the city of Zacatecas, the state capital.

"I thought, 'In Mexico, if you work a couple of shifts, you can live OK,'" he says. "Without so many luxuries and freeways, but you can live a more peaceful life."

García, in his early 40s, is a small farmer and municipal delegate. His wife and three daughters live in El Cargadero. All nine of his brothers and sisters, and more than 50 cousins, live in the United States.

El Cargadero, with a population of about 350, and a population in the United States of more than 1,000, is supposed to be a success story. Most of its roads are freshly paved, and residents have electricity and potable water, thanks to remittances and the "three for one" program.

"There are many points of view, but as you can see here, this is a community abandoned by migration," García says. "The government should work to keep people in the country, to find jobs, better living conditions. Here we have pretty streets, but where are the people?"

Driving from the city of Zacatecas to El Cargadero, mile after mile of empty fields, closed restaurants and boarded-up houses span the countryside. José Manuel, a taxi driver, who worked in California for four years, washing dishes and making salads, accompanies me on the drive. He says he remembers when these roads weren't paved yet, but the fields were full of corn and beans. It is now vast emptiness.

"Nobody works most of this land anymore," he says. "The owners went to the U.S. and left the land behind."

This is precisely what brought Mario García back. "The countryside is broken," he says. "The rural economy needs to be reactivated. But we export one of the most valuable things: our workers. And now we don't produce anything."

The legalization debate is misguided, he says, because it focuses, always, on the U.S. economy: how many immigrants to allow in and how to stamp their passports. That focus needs to shift to include Mexico.

"Mexico does not need an open border with the U.S. that invites Mexicans to go work there. People always talk about legalization, but no, what needs to be legalized is the Mexican's ability to stay [home] so that Mexico can grow and produce." ■

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# Winning the White Working Class

Obama needs its support, but this key constituency has yet to commit

BY DAVID MOBERG

**F**ORT WAYNE, IND.—To LEWANDOWSKI, a former General Electric factory worker, heads the central labor union council in this northeastern Indiana city of a quarter million people. Once an industrial powerhouse, Fort Wayne is still a manufacturing center despite decades of plant closings that have often been due to jobs being moved overseas.

Although socialists were powerful in local politics here before World War I, the town is now a Republican stronghold—even among many blue-collar workers—in a state that hasn't voted for a Democratic president since 1964. Fort Wayne, says Lewandowski, his wide grin flashing, is “a red stain on the red state.”

As a labor leader, Lewandowski remained neutral in the Indiana primary, which Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) narrowly won, but he personally supported Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) (after his first choice, John Edwards, dropped out of the race). Obama's “organizer mindset” appealed to Lewandowski, who has been building a working-class community affiliate of the labor movement. Obama's March 18 Philadelphia speech on race in America further impressed him.

Now Lewandowski wants Obama to take another big step, one that could strengthen Obama's appeal among white working-class voters who have gravitated more toward Clinton, as they did again in Indiana and North Carolina.

“Like what he did with his Philadelphia speech on race, he needs a speech on class,” Lewandowski says. “But, of course, we don't have class in America.”

Obama would do well to take Lewandowski's advice. Despite Obama's denunciation of the power of special interests and his increasing references on the campaign trail to trade and jobs, he has not been as



Democratic presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) walks with construction workers at Evansville University in Evansville, Ind., on May 5.

eloquent a champion of workers as he has been of general political reform.

Before the April and early May primaries, cultural and racial politics seemed to throw the Obama campaign off its stride, especially as the controversy over Obama's former minister, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, smoldered, then flared again. It angered Don Lutes, a retired steelworker and union official from Griffith, Ind., who voted early for Clinton.

“All this came out with the Rev. Wright and this [former Weatherman] Bill Ayers deal,” Lutes says. “I can't believe he knew this Ayers. They bombed the Capitol. How could he associate with people like that? That really turned me off. And [Obama's] wife says this is the first time she felt proud of being an American. That's what Rev. Wright teaches.”

Lutes says he knew many former steelworkers felt the same way, some claiming they would vote for McCain rather than

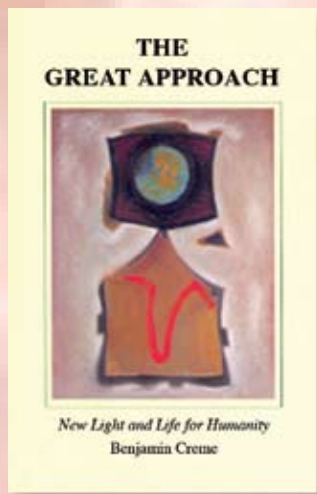
Obama. But Lutes says that regardless of the candidate in the fall, he will be “sticking with the Democrats. Our country is down so much.”

On April 30, the day after Obama repudiated Wright, Lutes called back. “[Obama] cleared up a lot by denouncing his minister,” Lutes said. “That helped a lot. If I'd known that he'd denounce the reverend, I would have voted for him.” But he worries it will be an uphill battle, as he hears local Republicans plan to exploit the controversies in the general election and hears “constantly” that “a lot of white people will not vote for a black person.”

Yet Obama may be able to make it through this racial and cultural minefield. Just as he has tried to explore the nation's racial history candidly, he needs to make his campaign a crusade to overcome economic inequality and class divisions.

Even when losing to Clinton, Obama has polled respectably in most states among

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working-class white Democrats (running, it should be noted, against another Democrat, not conservative Republican McCain). And if he is nominated, he can win independents and most of those Clinton supporters—especially her disproportionate share of working-class women who are strongly pro-Democratic.

If economic issues continue to dominate voters' minds, Democrats should be able to portray McCain as a continuation of both President Bush's policies and a badly functioning economy. And despite some real working-class conservatism, there's also strong evidence that a deep reservoir of support exists among working-class voters for progressive economic policy—if Democrats can tap it.

Obama may have been off target in his analysis when he talked about working-class voters clinging to religion, guns, anti-abortion views and criticism of trade out of longtime frustration. But he was right that many Americans are bitter and angry.

### Bitterness on the street

After the Zollner Piston auto-parts plant in Fort Wayne slashed employment and moved production overseas, Rich Schweyer, 38, retrained from auto-parts producer to a paralegal—and now makes half of what he did as a factory worker.

"There's one message I tried to get across to the Obama campaign," says Schweyer. "They keep talking about casualties from Iraq as forgotten soldiers. I consider myself a casualty, part of the forgotten middle class. I think a prop for society is a strong middle class, and it's gone."

He adds: "I understand what Obama was talking about, when he talked about bitterness. I am bitter."

There was plenty of bitterness in the Meadowbrook neighborhood of New Haven, a modest-income, largely white and Republican suburb of Fort Wayne.

Tom Topp, 59, was walking with his granddaughter one April afternoon.

"There's nobody to vote for me," he says. "I voted once for Clinton, Bill, but not for these people. They all suck. Democrats are going to raise taxes, and Republicans got the world screwed up. I ain't got a voice. I was a Democrat. I don't even like the Democrats now. Obama, I hate, not because he's

black, but I don't like his talk. I just want to stay out of it." Pointing to his granddaughter, Topp concludes, "I'm worried about the future, if there's going to be one."

Although Robin Marcum, 52, says she usually doesn't vote, the non-union auto-parts worker says she was planning to vote for Obama in the primary.

"It sounds like he's leaning to overhauling NAFTA," she says. "They slit our throats with that." She's most concerned about healthcare, education and jobs. "I would like national healthcare," she says, noting that her health insurance premium at work quadrupled this year, even though her wages have been frozen at \$12.15 an hour for four years. "If England and Canada can do it, why can't we, even if we have to pay more for it?"

Just as many Democrats support Hillary because of her association with Bill and better economic times, Marcum is one of many Hoosiers who rejects her because of the ex-president's record, especially on trade deals. "Obama says we're living paycheck to paycheck," she says. "A lot of us are. Something has to be done. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer."

Winning the support of white working-class voters will be a hard contest this fall. Unlike the prevailing sentiment before the Iowa caucuses that Democrats had many good choices, the mood in Indiana among many working-class whites seemed tepid toward all three remaining candidates.

### Whither the working class?

Pundits have debated for years whether the white working class is becoming more conservative and, if so, if it's because cultural issues are trumping economic issues. But the debate is often confused because there's no agreement on how to define "working class." The evidence shifts depending on whether analysts define working class as people without a college degree, people in the lower third (or two-thirds) of income or by occupation (which often leaves many service-sector jobs out of the working class).

Princeton political scientist Larry Bartels recently weighed in with his new book, *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. He argues

that since the 1950s, lower-income voters have remained more loyal to the Democrats than middle- and upper-income voters, and that most of the declining support from whites reflects the shift away from the Democratic “solid South” in the days of segregation. Republicans, by contrast, have gained mainly from middle- or upper-income voters, though many of those are modestly affluent voters who by other standards would be called working class (say, a household with a firefighter husband and nurse wife).

Bartels also argues that election surveys show that economic issues remain the most important for voters—especially for low-income voters—even though cultural issues have grown in importance (but notably faster for upper-income voters than for lower-income voters, contrary to popular views).

The National Election Study survey from 2004 shows strong voter sympathy for “working-class people” and for greater equality, even though many voters have no idea how rapidly the disparity in incomes and wealth has grown over the past two decades. The rise of conservative ideology has fed that misperception, since conservatives who pay more attention to the news are much less likely to acknowledge inequality than less-“informed” conservatives, according to research Bartels cites from political scientist John Zaller.

Bartels concludes that, despite many progressive values, Americans have a shortsighted view of their own economic interests, which has disproportionately helped Republicans win presidential elections. Although average Americans fare better economically under Democratic administrations, they often vote on the basis of election-year economic cues that mislead about broader trends. And even though Americans favor many redistributive policies, they also support tax cuts—which typically skew toward the rich.

Using different definitions, political scientists Ruy Teixeira and Alan Abramowitz argue in “The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of a Mass Upper Middle Class,” a Brookings Institution paper, that the white working class has abandoned the Democratic Party. But never fear, a new upper-middle class is expanding and

is more favorable to Democrats, while the white working class is disappearing.

They rely on a more complex but shifting definition that includes occupation, income and education, but their definition still has serious problems. For example, the authors define people out of the working class simply by virtue of their earning more as the country became more a u-

## **Despite some real, working-class conservatism, there’s strong evidence that shows a deep reservoir of support for progressive economic policy—if Democrats can tap it.**

ent or by virtue of having a college degree. More money or education may make a difference in people’s outlook without necessarily moving them out of the working class (which Tom Lewandowski defines as “anyone who has to sell time for money”). More accurately, the working class has become broadly varied by income, ethnicity, education, occupation and consumption patterns—and with fewer institutions, like unions, to create a cohesive class identity.

By combining voter survey information on occupation, education, income and self-identification, Teixeira and Abramowitz suggest that voter identification with the Democratic Party has dropped much more rapidly among lower socioeconomic status voters than among middle- or upper-status voters, even though lower-status voters are still much more Democratic. And even at the same income level, they write, voters with a college education are more likely than voters without a college degree to have voted for Al Gore or John Kerry.

They conclude that Republicans haven’t won over these lower-class whites with cultural issues like abortion. Rather, conservative working-class whites have abandoned Democrats as the parties became more ideologically polarized (and as African Americans challenged old racial politics). But even though their picture of the white working class seems less favorable to Democrats than Bartels’, Teixeira and Abramowitz conclude that the same issues that favored Democrats in 2006 will continue to help them reduce the GOP advantage among white working-class voters.

Similarly, according to Democratic strategists Stan Greenberg and James Carville, Democrats can prevail with a message of “middle-class populism,” focusing on attacking corporate interests, addressing rising health and gasoline costs, speaking about the outsourcing of jobs, advocating middle-class tax cuts, and breaking the congressional gridlock. Teix-

eira and Abramowitz would fine-tune that message to emphasize not just the squeeze on workers but also their hope for opportunity. Such “aspirational populism,” they argue, could also appeal to what they describe as the growing upper-middle class.

But it is also true that all levels of the working class and middle class are either treading water—or outright drowning—as the top 1 percent’s wave of economic fortunes rises—and as the influence of corporations, financial markets and the very rich has grown dramatically.

If Obama ever gives the speech that Tom Lewandowski wants, he will have to acknowledge the experiences of a broadly defined working class. He will need to take on the extreme inequalities of wealth, income and power that undermine the potential for shared prosperity, security and opportunity. And he will have to make clear how he would lead a government committed to giving all working people concrete, believable reasons for the hope he has been promising.

“It seems like nobody makes a change, no matter who you elect,” retired Fort Wayne autoworker Larry Johnston says. “We elected Democrats, and they didn’t change anything. But we need a change, and I don’t think McCain will make a change.”

After weighing Clinton, who he thought exaggerates her experience, and Obama, Johnston—like his wife and 99-year-old mother—decided to vote for Obama.

Can Obama ultimately win over disillusioned working-class whites? Yes, he can ... maybe. ■

# Does the E.U. Hate You?

Despite popular myth, anti-Americanism in Europe isn't on the rise

BY PAUL HOCKENOS

**I**N EUROPE, AS IN nearly everywhere else in the world, the image of the United States has taken a severe battering during the Bush years. Survey after survey shows that negative feelings toward America and U.S. policies have soared. Only 36 percent of Europeans, for example, view U.S. leadership in world affairs as desirable, according to a 2007 German Marshall Fund poll. Markedly lower is their approval of the Bush administration: a dismal 17 percent. In Harris polls since 2003, the majority of Europeans have even cited the United States as the greatest threat to international security—more so than Iran, North Korea or Russia.

But distinguishing between an all-encompassing animus toward the country and its people, and legitimate criticism of U.S. government policies, has proven extremely difficult. Only the former is anti-Americanism—an irrational, deeply embedded cultural aversion to a presumed American “national character.” A standard distinction between America-bashing and rational critique is between disapproval of what America *is* and what America *does*. Yet they inevitably blur into one another: After all, what one *is* informs what one *does*, and vice versa.

The Bush administration attributed the opposition of France and Germany to the Iraq War as a blunt expression of anti-Americanism. Even some left-of-center intellectuals, such as University of Michigan political scientist Andrei Markovits, claim that a virulent anti-Americanism is currently sweeping Europe—worse even than that during the Vietnam War or during the 1980s, when the United States deployed nuclear missiles in Western Europe.

However, the range of European issues with the United States is not wan-



On Feb. 15, 2003, protesters marched through the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin to demonstrate against the impending U.S. invasion of Iraq.

KURT VINJON/GETTY IMAGES

ton America-trashing but conflicting visions of how to organize society and conduct relations in the wider world. In the European Union (E.U.), citizens are voicing a preference for a greater European role in global affairs, with Germans (87 percent) and Spaniards (81 percent) at the top. As Jeremy Ri- in put it in his 2004 book, *The European Dream*, Europe's vision for the future has replaced that of the American dream.

In the United States, many who backed the Iraq invasion would gladly echo Markovits' conclusions in his 2007 book, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America*. He writes that underlying Europe's hostility to “everything American” is a “massive Europe-wide resentment of the United States that reaches well beyond American policies, American politics and American government.”

Markovits contends that the Bush

administration's contentious foreign policies have simply shot into overdrive a hatred for America that has long flourished in Europe, and is ultimately linked to anti-Semitism. On the right, European nationalists despise America as the epitome of the modern, a materialistic and hedonistic place run by Jews. The left's anti-Americanism focuses on the United States being an imperialist power—and in league with Zionist Israel.

Markovits is not entirely wrong: Anti-Americanism is alive and well in Europe, and, among hardcore America haters, there is often an anti-Semitic element. But Markovits and his like are incorrect about how pervasive this sentiment is and the extent to which it dictates European attitudes about the United States. While some anti-Americanism is embedded in European opinion, it is actually quite thin: In France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy,

it hovers around 10 percent (it is strongest in Greece), rising at times of transatlantic political friction, like the present.

Yet more than a quarter of these populations (40 percent in Italy) are consistently sympathetic to the United States. Even at the height of the Cold War's greatest crises, most Western Europeans favored maintaining a strong alliance with the United States. During the mass disarmament protests in the early '80s, only 20 percent of West Germans favored the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Federal Republic.

As American political scientists Robert Keohane and Peter Katzenstein demonstrate in their 2007 book, *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, negative European attitudes, even at their peaks, have zero impact on official policies toward the United States—or on transatlantic tourism, trade or consumer behavior.

Likewise, the overwhelming reluctance of both the German political elite and public to attack Iraq was not founded on bias against America. Germany, after all, participated in the 1999 NATO campaign against Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia, as well as far-reaching post-9/11 anti-terrorism measures and the toppling of the Taliban in Afghanistan, all of which enjoyed popular backing.

That support declined gradually, however, as European and Bush administration conceptions of counterterrorism methods diverged. Most Germans seemed to feel that the military approach was only one option in the campaign against terrorism. There were others, the Social Democratic-Green government argued, such as diplomacy, dialogue with the Islamic world, aid programs, and brokering a peace deal between Israel and Palestine.

Ultimately, using anti-Americanism to explain Europe's antiwar feelings tosses both anti-American tropes and perfectly reasonable evaluation of the Bush administration's foreign policy blunders into the same pot, robbing the latter of political content. This effectively discredits *all* critique of America's global policies, be it climate policy, dealings with the United Nations or human rights issues—and this explains why Bush loyalists invoke it.

While researching the West German student uprising in the late '60s, I was

consistently impressed by how essential American influences were for the 1967-1969 campus revolts. Even in protesting the Vietnam War, the student activists were conscious that they were using American protest methods: sit-ins, teach-ins and other forms of civil disobedience picked up from the U.S. civil rights movement. West German students

*They Think of Us: International Perceptions of the United States Since 9/11*, "traditional anti-Americanism could be plausibly dismissed as a relic of the past, and public culture often celebrated the advent of a homogenized transatlantic society."

The end of the Cold War not only altered Europe's strategic dependence on Washington, but also decoupled Europe

## The range of European issues with the United States is not wanton America-bashing, but rather conflicting visions of how to best organize society and conduct international relations.

told me their politics would have been inconceivable without Bob Dylan's lyrics, the works of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, and the examples of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. These young people (some of whom even yelled "USA-SA-SS," comparing the United States to Nazis) were more American than their parents ever could have been.

Perhaps the best symbol of this paradox was the Free University in West Berlin (FUB). Set up by the American military authorities in West Berlin as an antidote to the "not free" university in East Berlin, the FUB was the bastion of the West German student movement. The spirit of the project was to instill a new, participatory democratic ethic in postwar Germans. Its American founders certainly had no idea that the German students would take the mandate so literally.

### Europe's alternative

The transatlantic estrangement, Italian historian Federico Romero argues, is the product of a substantive cultural and social parting of ways that began with the end of the Cold War. During the East-West conflict, a consensual view existed of what "the West" and "Western" meant—in terms of shared values, institutions and procedures. Contrary to Markovits, Romero says that the number of hardcore America haters dropped as the decades progressed and were increasingly marginalized.

"By the 1980s," Romero writes in *What*

from the United States as an economic model, a cultural Mecca and political beacon. Europe grew more self-confident, and a veritable "rollback" of America's cultural presence ensued. Ongoing social changes in Europe and the United States—in religious attitudes, demography, wealth distribution and migration patterns—only accentuated those differences. What's more, the generation that has come of age in a globalized world needs the United States far less than their parents did.

This shift, argues Romero, is due largely to Europe's own self-perception: Europe as an adherent to a "European social model" based on collective solidarity, secularism, welfare state practices, post-nationalism and environmental responsibility. Europeans, even those who favor U.S. strategic leadership in the world, have become increasingly convinced that their model is more just and more effective. The Bush administration's anti-terrorism strategies and belligerent international behavior simply entrenched this belief.

These contrasting preferences in social model, cultural bearing and international strategy go beyond what America *does* and penetrate the essence of what America *is*. But they are differences based on rational comparative analysis, not knee-jerk antipathy. And, luckily, there is no reason for Americans to take personal offense or cancel their vacation to the Alps: While Europeans' opinion of America has suffered, their overall perception of Americans remains quite positive. ■

BY AKITO YOSHIKANE

## The Cho Show

Margaret Cho knows how brutal Hollywood can be. In 2000, in her critically acclaimed one-woman comedy show, “I’m the One That I Want,” Cho, 39, chronicled the struggles of her short-lived 1994 ABC sitcom “All-American Girl.” The project nearly destroyed her. Network

executives hired weight consultants to slim her down and ethnicity coaches who suggested she stick chopsticks in her hair to make her “more Asian.” The ordeal led Cho into an eating disorder, depression, drug addiction and hospitalization that left her struggling to find her identity.

Fourteen years later, Cho is giving television another chance. “The Cho Show,” a reality program, is scheduled to air in late August on VH1.

Her legions of fans know the Korean-American Cho for her incisive comedy and her relentless advocacy for civil liberties, as well as gay and minority rights. With honors from organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and the Asian American Legal Defense Fund, Cho—who identifies as bisexual—has traveled the country, combining her activism and humor into hilarious, over-the-top diatribes on the nation’s most pressing issues.

During the 2004 presidential election, Cho visited battleground states as part of her “State of Emergency” tour. At the same time, the Human Rights Campaign—a national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) nonprofit group—famously uninvited her from performing at a benefit held in conjunction with the Democratic National Convention. (The milquetoasts at the organization appar-

ently found her Iraq jokes impolitic.)

Between touring, shooting scenes for her upcoming show and blogging for the Huffington Post and CNN, Cho has accumulated plenty of new material for this election year.

*In These Times* caught up with Cho in San Francisco, her hometown, as she was getting ready for her “Beautiful” tour.

**What has humor been like under George W. Bush, and how has the political climate changed over his two terms?**

Well, it’s been great for comedians but pretty bad for the country. It’s a pretty desperate situation. We’ve ruined our reputation with the rest of the world. We’ve gone into this needless war with Iraq. People have died. The economy is in terrible shape. At the same time, we’ve been able to make fun of George Bush and his inability to be a good president and that, in itself, is comedic, though ultimately tragic.

But people now are really excited about the future, about wanting something different from what they’ve gotten so far with the Bush administration. They’re looking to Democrats to make a difference. Politics have gotten more progressive lately.

**Much of this election has focused on race and gender. What do you think of the way the press is framing those two issues?**

There’s too much scrutiny around Barack Obama and whom he’s associ-

ated with, like Rev. Jeremiah Wright. That’s ridiculous. I don’t think anything that Rev. Wright said was that bad. In any case, Barack Obama didn’t say it, so I don’t understand what the problem is.

If you look at John McCain’s spiritual adviser and his notions on abortion, those issues are so extreme and so inflammatory and volatile and crazy that it’s weird that they haven’t been brought to light. It’s really racist how the focus is only on Barack Obama’s spiritual leader.

Americans don’t know how to verbalize or vocalize ideas about race without coming off as racist or coming off as extreme. We haven’t had a way to talk about it until Barack Obama came along. His speech on race made people discuss race in a different way.

**There hasn’t been much attention paid to the Asian Pacific-American vote or the LGBT vote. Why do you think these communities are overlooked in the electoral process?**

I know the LGBT community is overlooked because the gay marriage issue was so divisive in 2004. And that’s really unfortunate because we need to be included in that discussion.

As far as the Asian-American vote goes, I don’t know why people aren’t paying attention to that either. We need more inclusion there. We need to have more of a sense of being addressed. I don’t know why it hasn’t happened.

**In California, the issue of same-sex marriage is currently being debated in the state Supreme Court and a decision is expected soon.**

I hope they allow it. It just makes sense. I was really proud when San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom let all those gay couples get married in 2004. That was inspiring.

California is a progressive state, even



**Comedian Margaret Cho says the Bush administration has provided great fodder for jokes, but has been tragic for the country.**

though we have a Republican governor. It is the new frontier. It's where all these new ideas come from, so it's important for us to have marriage equality.

**Obama and Clinton say they support only civil unions, yet both have sent press releases to the LGBT community in support of equal rights. What has changed for the gay and lesbian community in the last four years?**

I think things are getting better, but there hasn't been any kind of acknowledgement about gay marriage. There needs to be more activism around it, though it's a difficult issue to get involved in because homophobia is so prevalent.

I don't necessarily agree with Obama's and Clinton's stances on gay marriage. There needs to be equality.

**You were uninvited from the 2004 Democratic National Convention. Have you been invited to this year's convention in Denver?**

No, but I would like to go. I feel very included in this election. I'm actually a

Barack Obama campaign surrogate. I love this. I feel part of this whole idea of change. And I am also a Hillary Clinton fan. I think she's awesome. I just feel more connected with Barack Obama.

**Your tour is called "Beautiful." Is "beauty" political?**

Feeling beautiful is a very political idea. If we feel beautiful, we're more willing to be active politically, to voice our opinions and be heard, which is a really positive thing. The tour itself is about politics. It's about race, gender, homophobia, which are my big topics.

**Can you lay to rest, once and for all, rumors that you are the inspiration for Dandy, the character in Dennis Hensley's classic gay comic novel, *Misadventures in the (2)13*?**

That is me!

**Which comedians have inspired you? And who should we keep our eyes out for?**

I love Joan Rivers, Wanda Sykes and Bobby Lee. They are the past, present and future.

**You're back on TV. What can viewers expect from "The Cho Show"?**

It's very different from anything I've done on television. It's in the spirit of who I am and what I do. I just spent the last week making a porn for the show—not a real porn, but a fake porn. It's pretty wild. I think we go a lot further than any other show I've seen. It should be pretty extreme.

Because it is reality, I have a lot of control over "The Cho Show." It is everything I do, and know how to do. I get to use my voice a lot. I'm very much about controlling it all, and being a producer.

**"All American Girl" was the first network show to feature an entirely Asian-American cast. Yet, here we are 14 years later and we haven't seen an Asian-American family on TV since.**

And now we will because my parents are going to be a part of the show. We also have another Asian-American family, which brings to two the number of Asian-American families on American TV. My parents are actually really into it. It's a lot of fun for them. They love the attention—and it brings us all together.

**Is it still difficult for actors of color to avoid being typecast?**

I think it's hard when you have people—TV writers, executives—who don't understand the experience. You can't really talk about race in a context like that. But, in general, there are more Asian Americans on TV—even if half of them are my relatives—than when I started, which I love. I'm glad to be able to add to that.

**What do you think of the way LGBT characters are depicted?**

There needs to be a greater presence of lesbians. I don't see a lot of lesbians on television, which I think is troubling. I would love to see more lesbians and more topics about the gay and transgender community.

**You've battled against strict identity categories—body image, ethnicity and sexuality. How have you dealt with these labels?**

Just by creating my own work and enjoying myself and not worrying about the mainstream. And just by focusing on what I like to do. It makes me feel independent. ■



BY DAVID MOBERG

## Main Street Squeeze

Pick your metaphor for the current state of American workers: Are they squeezed? Caught? Crunched? Three new books—by two top-notch national journalists and a leading progressive economist—exploit these images to convey how average

Americans are losing out in today's economy. And despite varied but overlapping prescriptions for new policies, none of the three offers an easy way out.

In *The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker* (Knopf, 2008), *New York Times* labor reporter Steven Greenhouse pulls together some key statistics and compelling personal stories to depict the “broad decline in the status and treatment of American workers,” blue- and white-collar alike, over the past three decades.

Growing inequality costs workers dearly. For example, if the distribution of income today were the same as it was in 1979 (and if the economy had grown at the same rate as it has since then), the average family among the bottom four-fifths of Americans would now be earning \$8,000 more each year than it actually does. At the same time, life has become more insecure for most of these working families, with health insurance, pensions and education—as well as the broader social safety net—becoming less

generous and more precarious.

Greenhouse's reporting goes beyond these increasingly familiar inequities to the pressures that workers experience on the job. Wal-Mart managers lock janitors into its buildings overnight. Major companies like Taco Bell force employees to work off the clock or manipulate their time records to cheat them out of pay. Manufacturers like Landis Plastics minimize safety precautions at the cost of workers' lives and limbs.

Decades ago, Greenhouse argues, managers thought the “happy worker” was good for business, but now, he says, they employ a “bullying model” to “manage by fear.” Workers at the bottom fare worst, but even middle managers suffer from bullies above who are pushing them to cut costs and crush workers.

Although Greenhouse may overstate the benefits for workers from the informal social contract between business, labor and government after World War II, the contrast of today's conditions with that period is harshly instructive. In a quickly sketched account,

he blames—with varying degrees of emphasis—the deterioration of standards on globalization, immigration, union-busting (as well as unions' own shortcomings), declining enforcement of labor laws and the growing power of investors.

But Greenhouse does best when telling the stories of workers like Kathy Saumier, who courageously—though unsuccessfully—fought to form a union that could stop safety hazards, sex discrimination and exploitation at the upstate New York Landis factory. Or managers like Drew Pooters, who was morally offended by demands from superiors at two corporations where he worked—Toys “R” Us and Family Dollar—to cheat employees out of pay for work they had completed.

Although Greenhouse credits some companies (like Costco) with trying to treat their employees better than most do, he makes clear that the big squeeze crushes not only jobs, wages, benefits and economic security, but also the daily work and family lives of millions of workers—and, possibly, the last shreds of human decency.

In *Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalization* (Bloomsbury, 2008), former *Chicago Tribune* reporter Richard Longworth covers much of the same ground as Greenhouse. But in recounting the moving personal stories and observations from his travels, Longworth focuses more pointedly than does Greenhouse on the impact of globalization on communities in the Midwest.

Longworth vividly describes how globalization has hurt both small towns, like his hometown of Boone, Iowa, and big cities, like Detroit. But he also finds winners—or at least survivors—in communities like Beardstown, Ill. (where an influx of new immigrants fills the big, long-established meatpacking plant), and Chicago (where its “global city” status seems more precarious to me than Longworth suggests, and where many workers remain major losers).

Much as he laments the damage done, Longworth sees globalization as inevitable and argues that the Midwest must shed its long, successful reliance on manufacturing and find a new role in the modern marketplace. But he seems torn over whether

even the most lean-and-mean factories can compete with those in, say, China.

Ironically, the small-town corporate meatpacking factories that he cites as a success—such as the Beardstown Cargill plant—now rely on immigrants because the meatpackers so effectively destroyed

sectors adding the most new jobs in the near future won't require skills much beyond those provided by a high school education, and many jobs needing higher skills will face global competition that will displace work and drive down wages.

While the bottom 90 percent of Ameri-

## **The economic squeeze crushes not only jobs, wages, benefits and security, but also the daily work and family lives of millions of Americans—and, possibly, the last shreds of human decency.**

the good union wages that once prevailed (and globalization played little role in depressing those standards).

As alternatives, he promotes bioscience to build on the region's agricultural base, biofuels from cellulosic biomass (but not corn-based ethanol) and high-speed rail to link Midwestern cities. All are potentially promising but not likely to replace the jobs and wages lost in manufacturing.

Ultimately, Longworth writes, the region must shed old, parochial thinking and emphasize education, embrace immigration and work together more as a region. The advice makes sense but it suffers from the assumption that we can't also change globalization as it currently exists.

In *Crunch: Why Do I Feel So Squeezed? (And Other Unsolved Economic Mysteries)* (Berrett-Koehler, 2008), economist Jared Bernstein tries to elucidate the “mysteries” of his book's subtitle. Organized around a collection of questions average people often ask about the economy—such as “What's right and wrong about globalization?”—the book wittily and succinctly explains basic concepts (like gross domestic product) and discusses major issues (such as healthcare reform and poverty).

More than Greenhouse and Longworth, Bernstein—who works with the nonprofit Economic Policy Institute—offers explanations of the big squeeze. The heart of the problem, he argues, is growing inequality.

The elite opinion makers' explanation, which conveniently shifts the blame to each individual, is always that more education will mean less inequality. But the

cans have fared poorly with flat or declining incomes, many of the educated haven't done well, either. Bernstein notes that between 2001 and 2005, the incomes of the “only pretty rich” (from the 90th to 99th percentiles in income) grew 3 percent in real terms. The income of the top 1 percent, meanwhile, grew 23 percent.

The problem isn't education. It's power. “Those who hold a privileged position in the economic power hierarchy,” he writes, “are able to steer the bulk of growth their way.”

Globalization has played a part in that power shift, but Bernstein argues globalization can't (and, he implies, shouldn't) be stopped. It can, however, be shaped.

To reduce inequality, Bernstein advocates federal full-employment policy, infrastructure spending, energy independence, national health insurance, broader social insurance, better control of immigration (and better integration of immigrants already here), public service jobs for the hard-to-employ, minimum wage increases, easier access to higher education and more widespread unionization.

When it comes to strategy, however, Bernstein reverts to a hope that modest centrist initiatives will spin out into broader challenges to the holders of economic power. But what's needed is a movement that directly challenges the powerful and offers more ambitious hopes, nurtured by grassroots organizers and leaders who are willing to make inequality—and the big squeeze on American workers—central to the political debate. ■

FILM

# Errol Morris' Myopia

By Michael Atkinson

**F**ILMMAKER ERROL MORRIS has grown famous and revered as the pioneer of what could be called interrogatory cinema—documentaries that do not merely document but probe into mysterious matters with the intention of uncovering their unknown truths. (The idea that visual “truth” remains a mystery is an integral part of his worldview.)

This obsessive agenda worked like gangbusters when Morris, in *The Thin Blue Line*, reshuffled the testimony and facts of a Texas cop-killing and ended up freeing a man from death row. But it's a nettlesome and inadequate approach when Morris takes on larger political issues. In *The Fog of War*, he managed to grill former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara about details of his career without ever daring to ask him why he, McNamara, shouldn't be held at least partly responsible for the more than 2 million civilian deaths in Indochina.

In his new film, *Standard Operating Procedure*, Morris revisits the Abu Ghraib scandal in his classically myopic way, scrutinizing and re-enacting and scab-picking the minutiae of the infamous incidents at the Iraqi prison—without considering the larger political implications, impact or context. He may well be the only filmmaker in America who can make movies about atrocity and yet resists any sort of overt ethical inquiry.

Perhaps Morris, who's also been a part-time private investigator, has come to see “the truth” as a position that should place him outside the flow of political discourse.

But wait. Getting within fighting-range of *Standard Operating Procedure's* moral knots means first cutting through its textual defenses. Morris' famed dead-stare interview technique (a setup that allows subjects to talk to Morris while looking directly into the camera) serves as counterpoint to the film's over-produced barrage of digital gimmickry, visual manipulation, re-enacted scenarios, double exposures (the “ghost detainees” become



Director Errol Morris on set of *Standard Operating Procedure*, his latest documentary.

“ghostly,” get it?), focus-smudged close-up montages and bulldozingly “poetic” slow-motion asides (a frying egg, tumbling bullet cartridges, a prison hallway dreamily filled with shredded documents), none of which serve to elucidate anything at all. It's as if Morris, with all of this foofaraw, seems determined to avoid real issues. Instead, he manufactures an impressionistic head-trip, a blitzkrieg of imagistic doodles about an Abu Ghraib-of-the-mind, not an investigation into the real prison.

Atop this casserole is ladled a yowling, booming score by composer Danny Elfman, which strains to conjure pulpy menace and portent that, at times, the film feels like “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” as brought to you by director Tim Burton.

Morris' manic devotion to detail ultimately does the film in. *Standard Operating Procedure* is nothing if not an exhaustive recounting of what happened in the prison in the fall of 2003, among a handful of “specialists” of the 372nd Military Police Company and the assortment of detainees they were assigned to guard and, occasionally, “soften up” for interrogation.

What was happening elsewhere in the prison—and other incarceration sites—between interrogators and detainees, an untold number of whom died in the process, is of little interest to Morris. That's because in this tiny arena, where a bizarre and depressing kind of fun-loving Lucifer Complex manifested, the soldiers took photographs. The snapshots were, of course, why Abu Ghraib became a scandal, and Morris

is preoccupied with the chasm between what they reveal and what they don't.

Interviewing Javal Davis, Lynndie England, Sabrina Harman and the other grunts involved (not the still-incarcerated Ivan Frederick and Charles Graner), Morris constructs a careful timeline. He reveals (irrelevantly) how investigators catalogued the photographic material. He also ferrets out the subtleties of each famous image—such as how much they may or may not represent torture, as it's legally defined; how each came to happen; and how ambivalent everyone claims now to have felt then about the human pyramid, the simulated masturbation, the mock crucifixions and so on. In other words, the particularities trump the whole.

Years later, we'd have reason to hope that Morris' movie would come packing a meaningful revelation or two. But it doesn't. What's worse, the film helps support the Bush administration's official “bad apples” explanation.

Focusing the Abu Ghraib phenomenon on clueless and undertrained service members deflects complicity away from the chain of command that, in fact, insisted torture and abuse be instituted. (Alberto Gonzales isn't mentioned once.)

Remarkably, Congress, which instantly demanded then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld answer for the behavior at Abu Ghraib, could be said to have had a more conscientious grasp of the crisis than Errol Morris.

In this, *Standard Operating Procedure*

resembles the power-friendly approach of network news, and suffers from redundancy to boot—the media explosion around the images has already given us Morris’ full-length narrative, its traumatizing imagery, its evasive testimony and its how-could-this-happen thematic thrust.

There’s little doubt, too, about how the public “movie” we’ve already experienced evoked the larger specter of the war project’s inhuman posture and militaristic savagery in ways that Morris’ film evades. (What the photos suggested to us about the moral tenor of the American military was more chilling and troubling than the reality of individual acts of abuse.)

Morris thinks he’s dealing with only photographs but, in fact, whether he likes it or not, he’s up to his knees in human suffering and the culpability of state power. *Standard Operating Procedure* may be useful to an awakening somnambulist looking to catch up on the last half-decade of bad news. The rest of us, however, deserve something deeper and more responsible. ■

## BOOKS

# Sam’s Club Politics

By Adam Doster

**O**N A RECENT episode of the NBC comedy “30 Rock,” the cut-throat corporate executive Jack Donaghy, played by Alec Baldwin, needed some “cool Republican celebrities” to headline his John McCain fundraising dinner. To his dismay, Democrats had cornered the hip, star market, so Donaghy was forced to turn to the fictional Dennis Duffy, an obnoxious beeper salesman who had recently stepped in front of a subway train to save a fallen stranger. To be certain he had the right man, Donaghy asked Duffy to describe his politics. “Social conservative, fiscal liberal,” the subway hero deadpanned.

*The Atlantic Monthly’s* Ross Douthat, a senior editor, and Reihan Salam, an associate editor, would likely disavow that label, but the platform they advocate in their

thoughtful book, *Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream* (Doubleday, 2008), would likely earn Duffy’s vote.

By urging the GOP to address the economic needs of its working-class base—whom the authors call the party’s “Sam’s Club voters”—Douthat and Salam propose a forward-thinking domestic strategy that could revive a party ailing under the leadership of supply-side ideologues. And while many ideas in *Grand New Party* deserve serious scrutiny, progressives who are interested in building and sustaining a governing majority should consider the authors’ argument.

Part political history, part domestic policy paper, *Grand New Party* centers on a simple premise: Working-class Americans are struggling and need government to work for them. Like populists on the left, Douthat and Salam understand growing insecurity—inadequate healthcare, evaporating pensions, income volatility—and a hardening of the country’s socioeconomic

## [ art space ]



### War in Focus — Focus on War

Los Angeles-based curator Dane Jensen has combined the work of nine combat photographers serving in Iraq or Afghanistan, and created a compelling photo exhibition.

“Eye of the Storm: War Through the Lens of American Combat Photographers,” opens Memorial Day weekend at the Reform Gallery in Los Angeles and runs through July 5.

In 2003, Staff Sgt. Cherie A. Thurlby took this photo of Pfc. Jeffrey Wolf in a makeshift hospital in Baghdad.

Jensen is donating all proceeds to the Wounded Warrior Project, which aids severely injured American service members.

For more information, visit [www.eyeofthestormexhibition.com](http://www.eyeofthestormexhibition.com)

—James H. Ewert Jr.

classes to be the “greatest domestic danger facing American society.” Their political solution, however, gives as much (if not more) consideration to culture—specifically, the decline of traditional nuclear families—as it does to economics.

The last enduring political majority—President Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition—is, ironically, the standard-bearer for these conservatives’ vision of government. Rather than champion the New Dealers’ public works programs, Douthat and Salam find value in the reformers’ emphasis on dignity, ownership and independence among American families, promoted through the family wage and the 1935 Social Security Act, among other legislation.

But in the 1960s, the authors argue, rising crime, family breakdown, educational and economic stratification, and, to a lesser extent, the shifting racial platforms of the two major parties subverted the “cultural solidarity” so central to the New Deal. With this electoral coalition weakened, conservatives had a chance to cement their legacy by implementing, in the words of then-Nixon adviser Kevin Phillips, “policies able to resurrect the vitality and commitment of Middle America.”

Yet despite significant electoral successes, Republicans failed to consolidate a Roosevelt-like majority, precisely because they embraced a vision of small government at odds with the interests of working-class voters.

After Goldwater Republicans derailed President Nixon’s platform of “ideological conservatism and operational liberalism,” Tricky Dick forged an unsustainable majority built on working-class resentments of the ’60s counterculture, not creative public policy. Stagnating wages persisted and crime rose throughout the Reagan years, proving tax cuts alone weren’t a sufficient buffer against the destabilizing effects of globalization. The Newt Gingrich revolutionaries made pragmatic gains in President Clinton’s first term, but the Right’s irrational hatred of the Democrat ultimately ended their uneasy partnership. And on the stump, George W. Bush articulated a vision of working-class conservatism but abandoned it in favor of corporate welfare and war-making.

So, where are increasingly insecure



**Watch out, Sam's Club shoppers: The GOP is gunning for your votes.**

Sam’s Club voters to turn?

Douthat and Salam hope they will flock to a rejuvenated Republican Party, one that seeks to alleviate the economic burdens of the working class through culturally conservative policy prescriptions. From family-friendly tax reforms to government-subsidized childcare to comprehensive immigration and education reform, *Grand New Party* outlines a pro-family economic agenda that attempts to foster upward mobility among working families through directed government expenditures, a plan that admonishes the Republican domestic-spending status quo.

The authors should be applauded for tackling the topic of Sam’s Club insecurity, something legislators on both sides of the aisle have ignored for too long. Politically, it’s a smart argument for Republicans, as well. It hits the Democrats where they are weakest (their perceived lack of “moral values”) and could redirect voters’ focus away from cultural issues—same-sex marriage, stem cell research, evolution—that the conservative establishment has pushed for decades, thereby increasingly alienating moderate voters.

A platform like this couldn’t come soon enough for the Right, either. Republicans are rapidly ceding ground to Democrats among Latinos, independents and young people, suggesting they may need white, working-class supermajorities to survive.

But *Grand New Party* is not without its faults. For one, the authors’ presumption that Republican policies haven’t signifi-

cantly intensified inequality is flimsy, at best. In his new book *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*, Princeton political scientist Larry Bartels writes that when a Republican president is in power, people at the top of the income scale experience decidedly larger real income gains than those at the bottom. Because of differences in tax policy, social spending and business regulation, the dynamic is reversed when a Democrat is in power. In other words, economic polarization isn’t unavoidable and reforming policies that promote it can help quell family dislocation.

Douthat and Salam’s platform also may not be ambitious enough to address the economic inequities facing the population. For example, there’s little discussion of financial regulation, the need to rein in our bloated defense budget or about the massive debt we’ve accrued as a result.

And while they somewhat plausibly contend that race played only a secondary role in the breakup of the New Deal coalition, it’s clear that Republicans have since exploited those underlying racial tensions for policy, as well as electoral gain. By implicitly reinforcing the sensationalized image of the government-dependent “Other” (see Reagan’s nefarious Cadillac-driving “welfare queen”), Republicans have undermined support for public investment. In a sense, our rejection of a robust safety net is rooted not only in an abstract vision of American exceptionalism, as *Grand New Party* contends, but also in tensions stem-

SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

ming from our diverse ethnic makeup.

But paralyzing racial animosities are not inevitable. By speaking frankly about racial division and how the corporate class has exploited it for its own gain, progressives can offer a bold, politically popular platform focused on protecting all working families from the failures of the free market.

Regardless of the book's shortfalls, Republicans should take to heart *Grand New Party's* sharp advice. But those on the left needn't worry. To judge from the medley of Sen. John McCain's economic proposals—extending the Bush tax cuts, a one-year freeze in discretionary spending—working-class conservatism doesn't look to be coming any time soon. ■

BOOKS

# Atheism's Unholy Trinity

By Jarrett Dapier

**L**AST SPRING, CHRIS Hedges, the Pulitzer Prize-winning former foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*, flew to California to see some atheists about God. Over the course of two debates—one in Los Angeles, the other in Berkeley—Hedges sparred with Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith*, and Christopher Hitchens, author of *God Is Not Great*. According to Aneli Rufus, who reported on the Hedges vs. Hitchens debate for AlterNet, Hedges was “trounced.”

Atheism 2, God 0.

Now, out of these debates comes Hedges' latest book, *I Don't Believe In Atheists* (Free Press, 2008), a relentless, deeply considered defense of the religious impulse.

The book's title is neither an accurate personal statement nor a reflection of the volume's contents. As Hedges has said, he is no atheist. Nevertheless, he eloquently defends atheists who are “intellectually honest”—those “who accept an irredeemable and flawed human nature”—and believes “they hold an honored place in a pluralistic and diverse community.” Intended to provoke, the title sets up false expectations for a simplistic “no atheists in foxholes” screed that sells the book short.

Instead, Hedges' main target is utopia,

which he calls “the most dangerous legacy of the Christian faith and Enlightenment.” And primarily in the works of evolutionary biologist and author Richard Dawkins, as well as Hitchens and Harris—the “new atheists,” as Hedges calls them—the author finds a morally bankrupt utopian worldview that divides humanity between the primitive faithful and the civilized rational.

According to Hedges, the new atheists argue that once humanity is delivered from religion—what Hitchens has called “man-made filthy propaganda”—and places its faith in science and reason, we will finally advance morally as a species. But “hidden under the jargon of reason and science,” writes Hedges, this conviction is a secular version of religious extremism. To Hedges, this makes them dangerous.

“Too many of the new atheists, like the Christian fundamentalists, support the imperialist projects and pre-emptive wars of the United States as necessities in the battle against terrorism and irrational religion,” he writes. To make his case, he cites Harris' justification for a nuclear first-strike on the Middle East and Hitchens' continued sup-

port for democracy-via-bombing in Iraq.

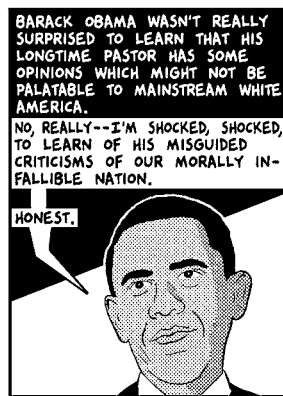
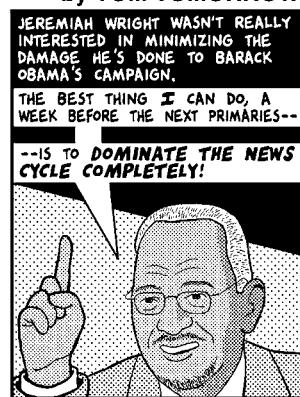
Hedges doesn't mince words about these atheists: They are “suburban mutations,” “hopeless epicures” and “products of the morally stunted world of entertainment.” Because many atheists conflate radical, literalist religion with all religion—and refuse to see any good that has come from faith—Hedges sees them as intellectually shallow. To him, one must come at faith honestly—through years of sustained thought, reading, reflection and introspection. The same goes for atheism.

One of the strengths of *Atheists* is Hedges' authority to write on the topic. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he witnessed how his father's faith inspired him to fight for social justice, even when it was deeply unpopular in the rural, upstate New York communities in which he preached. It was this model of courage-through-faith that led Hedges to pursue a degree from Harvard's Divinity School, where he gained his understanding of theology.

Hedges spent the next 20 years covering foreign wars for a host of newspapers, including the *Times*, where he served as

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



TOM TOMORROW © 2008... www.thismodernworld.com

the Middle East Bureau Chief. He has witnessed many of the late 20th century's worst horrors—in Algeria, Bosnia, El Salvador, Iraq, Kosovo and Sudan (where he was imprisoned).

In a 2008 interview with Salon, Hedges said, "I spent so long in war zones that I think we don't know what we would do under repression and abuse. ... That's the brilliance of the great writers on the Holocaust, like Primo Levi. ... They understood the humanity of their own killers."

Hedges spends the first half of *Atheists* refuting the claim that humanity has advanced morally. "The Enlightenment myth ... taught that our physical and social environment could be transformed through rational manipulation. ... [But] human history is not a long chronicle of human advancement. It includes our cruelty, barbarism, reverses, blunders and self-inflicted disasters."

In the second chapter, "God and Science," Hedges provides an engrossing history of Darwinism and the Enlightenment, and their dark legacies of violence. He cites Friedrich Nietzsche's fear that the British would use social Darwinism to justify imperialism, and offers a pellucid argument against science's application to philosophy.

Hedges understands the depravity of which human beings are capable—be they secular or religious. "To turn away from God is harmless. To turn away from sin is catastrophic," he writes.

At the same time, we all experience moments of transcendence—such as a parent's love for his child—that we are driven to account for. The meaning of this contradiction is the domain of religion. Science can never adequately grapple with such subjective human complexity:

Scientific ideas ... are embraced or rejected on the basis of quantifiable evidence. But human relationships and social organizations interact and function effectively when they are not rigid, when they accept moral ambiguity, and when they take into account the irrational.

Hedges draws from the works of artists like Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Willa Cather, Joseph Conrad, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Uta Hagen, as well as figures like Thomas Aquinas, Sigmund Freud, Reinhold Niebuhr and Arthur Schopenhauer.

## excerpt



### THE WEAK SLAT UNDER THE BED OF DEMOCRACY

In his new book, *Moyers on Democracy* (Doubleday, 2008), journalist Bill Moyers compiles 28 speeches he gave between 1986 and 2007. The following is from the introduction to a talk he gave on Aug. 9, 2007, to the Annual Conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication:

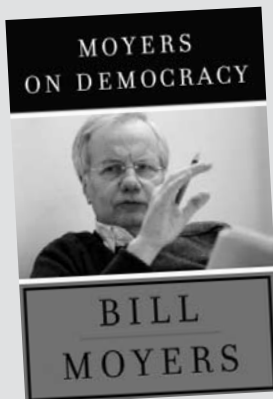
In the buildup to the invasion of Iraq, we learned what the late, great reporter A.J. Liebling meant when he described the press as "the weak slat under the bed of democracy." The slat broke after the invasion and some strange bedfellows fell to the floor: establishment journalists, neocon polemicists, right-wing warmongers masquerading as fair and balanced, administration flaks leaking lies as classified secrets—all romping on the same mattress in the foreplay to disaster. Five years, thousands of casualties, and hundreds of billion dollars later, most of the media co-conspirators caught in flagrante delicto are still prominent, still celebrated and still holding forth with no more contrition than a weathercaster who has made a wrong prediction as to the next day's temperature. ...

The late Walter Lippmann, the ultimate Washington journalistic insider, acknowledged that while the press may be a weak reed on which to lean, it is the indispensable support for democracy:

In an exact sense, the present crisis of Western democracy is a crisis of journalism. ... All that the sharpest critics of democracy

have alleged is true: If there is no steady supply of trustworthy and relevant news, incompetence and aimlessness, corruption and disloyalty, panic and ultimate disaster, must come to any people which is denied an assured access to the facts.

So it is that for all the blunders for which we are culpable, ... for all the nonsense to which so many aspiring young journalists are consigned, and for all the fears that corporate behavior is eroding the quality of the craft, when young people ask, "Should I go into journalism today?" I still answer emphatically, "Yes—if you have a fire in your belly, you can still make a difference."



These individuals, who wrestled with—and against—faith and a tragic worldview, serve as Hedges' touchstones as he seeks to express the core limits of humanity and what he calls "the possibilities of religion."

Hedges' writing has a hurtling, run-neth-over quality that can be redundant and vague at times (as in his section on the concept of "tempered free will"). He is also prone to cranky digressions (as in his section on a fashion designer profiled on CNN). And some readers may be disappointed to find that Hedges does not systematically dismantle each argument in the new atheists' books.

Instead, Hedges views the new atheists not so much as an organized threat,

but as indicators of a larger tendency in America toward a dangerously simplistic way of thinking. "It is fear, ignorance, a lack of introspection and the illusion that we can create a harmonious world that leads us to sanction the immoral," Hedges writes. "Our enemies have no monopoly on sin, nor have we one on virtue."

Hedges proposes the radical notions that we admit our complicity in the violence of the world and acknowledge the humanity of our enemies. Religion—with its other long history of encouraging compassion toward others and introspection about the evil at the center of humanity's heart—is too valuable in this aim to be flatly dismissed. Amen. ■

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

# By the Sewers of Babylon



**O**h, the  
gastronomy!

Europe and the United States are suffering a tragic shortage of buffalo mozzarella—the soft pillows of cheese

beloved by gourmards the world over. The crisis follows the discovery that the Mafia has long been dumping dioxin-laden garbage throughout Italy's grazing lands, turning creamy cheese to cancer curds.

Iraqis are having it tough, too—though more from terror than terroir. Deprived of the opportunity to be sickened by imported mozzarella, Iraqis are unglamorously poisoned by their own water. Some 83 percent of the country's sewage slides untreated into the country's waterways. With two-thirds of Iraqis lacking access to piped drinking water, the shit storm the U.S. government unleashed is literal as well as figurative.

Clean water is about as basic as it gets. In the 20th century, U.S. life expectancy rose from 45 years to 75 years. U.S. health agencies attribute 25 years of this increase to public health measures—chiefly, improved sanitation and access to clean water.

The International Bill of Human Rights considers these conditions human rights. The United States is a signatory to that treaty and also to the Geneva Conventions, which obligate our government—as Iraq's occupation force—"to ensure sufficient hygiene and public health standards, as well as the provision of food and medical care to the population under occupation."

But occupation, and the civil war

it sparked, have flushed Iraq's fragile but functioning public health sector down the toilet.

"We don't do body counts," Gen. Tommy Franks, who directed the Iraq invasion, famously declared in 2002.

And among the corpses "we" don't count are those killed by curable or preventable disease.

Last year, at least 30,000 Iraqis in 11 provinces displayed symptoms of cholera—a sometimes fatal disease spread by contaminated water and unsanitary conditions. Virtually eliminated in the West, cholera, if caught early, is easily cured with inexpensive drugs—and by rehydrating with clean water.

But not even the few water treatment facilities and distribution channels still operating in Iraq can guarantee potable water. Chlorine—added to kill bacteria that cause cholera and other diseases—is restricted "because insurgents have started using chlorine trucks in bombing attacks," says Mark Drapeau, a fellow at the National Defense University.

Since 2003, more than 70 percent of Iraq's doctors have fled and more than 600 have been targeted and murdered. One doctor who is holding on described his facility as having "no medicines, no bed linens, the smell is very bad. Sewage is out on the floor."

"Nothing can prevent a cholera outbreak next summer," Ni'man Mohammad, a physician in Baghdad, told the Institute for War and Peace Reporting in February.

Before the U.S.-led wars, Iraq had one of the best healthcare systems in the region. Now it has one of the worst. The World Health Organization now puts healthy life expectancy for Iraqis at 50 years old—16 years less than in 2002, and 17 years shorter

than for neighboring Kuwaitis.

Many of these lost human years are "collateral damage" from an occupation whose leaders flew in ice cream for its own, while allowing garbage and human waste to overflow into waterways, and then into the drinking water and food of the native population.

Many more casualties will surface in years to come. The United Nations has warned of thousands of toxic sites, derelict factories, battle detritus, chemical spills, unsecured hazardous material and depleted uranium. Narmin Othman, Iraq's environment minister, charged that some 311 sites were polluted by depleted uranium, the Associated Press reported in 2005.

Poor nutrition increases vulnerability to toxins and disease. Brutal as it was, Saddam's regime provided almost all citizens with a daily ration that met basic nutritional standards. Now, one in four Iraqi children under the age of 5 is chronically malnourished, according to the United Nations.

Only 4 million of Iraq's 27 million people receive any government food rations. And the rise in international food prices—coupled with high inflation—threatens even this paltry program. In a Feb. 26 article, the *Wall Street Journal* estimated that the price of the program would more than double, from \$3 billion in 2007 to \$7 billion-plus this year.

The Bush administration breaks no law—except that of decency—when it allows Americans to eat contaminated mozzarella. But as an occupying force, it is committing a war crime by maintaining priorities that inevitably result in widespread death from preventable or treatable disease. ■

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

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# Hillary

Continued from back page

“Hillary for President. Run with Hillary.” Bounding across the poster were images of horses. I am sure Hillary recruited all the best horse drawers in the class to come over and draw stallions. (Well, geldings—I mean, we were *girls*.)

But it wasn't enough.

She lost to a boy named Dave Kraemer. She later told me that she lost because all the boys in the class—and a few of the girls—believed a girl couldn't be president.

That campaign was our bonding experience—I had joined Hillary's circle. We ate at the same lunch table and, together in the late fall of 1960, we experienced another presidential race—between John Kennedy and Richard Nixon.

For all of us, being Republican and Protestant (Hillary and I were both Methodists with dangles of Sunday-school pins to prove it), only one person was qualified to win that election—and he wasn't Catholic.

Everybody—our mothers, our fathers, our aunts, our uncles—everybody we knew who could vote, voted for Nixon. When it turned out Kennedy had won, we couldn't believe it. Our parents couldn't believe it. Our aunts and uncles couldn't believe it. It was devastating.

The day after the election, on Nov. 9, 1960, we were sitting at our table in the Ralph Waldo Emerson lunchroom, having a dismal meal. We stared around. We clenched our hands. We lamented that we were too young to vote. We were powerless. What could we do? Nothing.

Then Hillary said, “I am going to do something about it.” And we said, “Hillary, we're 13. We're girls. Are you crazy?!”

But she continued: “You know why Nixon lost?”

We all knew why—it was Chicago and its Democratic machine. The city had voted heavily for Kennedy, and because of that, all of Illinois' electoral votes had gone not to Nixon but to Kennedy, resulting in his victory.

(In truth, even if Illinois had gone to Nixon, Kennedy would have still won,

but that myth lives on.)

Anyway, we had to blame someone for this outrage, and there were only three people you blamed for everything if you lived in Park Ridge—Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, union boss Jimmy Hoffa or Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley. This time, of course, it was “da mare” who had done the dirty work—the person who controlled the dead vote and had the living vote two or three times. We knew this cold, and so did Hillary. So she said: “I'm going to call up Mayor Daley right now.”

We screeched: “Hillary, nooooo!”

But she did.

We all walked with her out of the Emerson Junior High cafeteria, and up to the pay phone. Hillary took out a dime, got the number for the mayor's office and then called.

We stood there thinking, “How can she do this? How can she have the nerve?”

We were thrilled.

Well, it was lunchtime, and she didn't

reach the mayor. You know, here we were having our power lunch, and Daley was no doubt having his. But Hillary did reach someone in his office and she gave that person a piece of her mind.

“This is Hillary Rodham,” she said, “calling from Emerson Junior High School in Park Ridge. I want you to tell Mayor Daley that it was wrong of him to steal the election, and that Richard Nixon should have won!”

Then we went back to our table, and finished our milk and shared our cookies. We knew that we had just been a part of something out of the ordinary—that for a moment, we weren't powerless teenage girls.

But we never would have guessed that 48 years later, homemade cookies would reappear as part of another national campaign.

So, here it is, Hillary's cookie recipe. They *are* good. And when Barack Obama wins the Democratic nomination, I am going to bake them to celebrate. ■

## Hillary's Chocolate Chip Cookies

1½ cups unsifted flour

1 tsp. salt

1 tsp. baking soda

1 cup solid vegetable shortening (or unsalted butter)

1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar

½ cup white sugar

1 tsp. vanilla

2 eggs

2 cups rolled oats

1 12-oz. package semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease baking sheets.

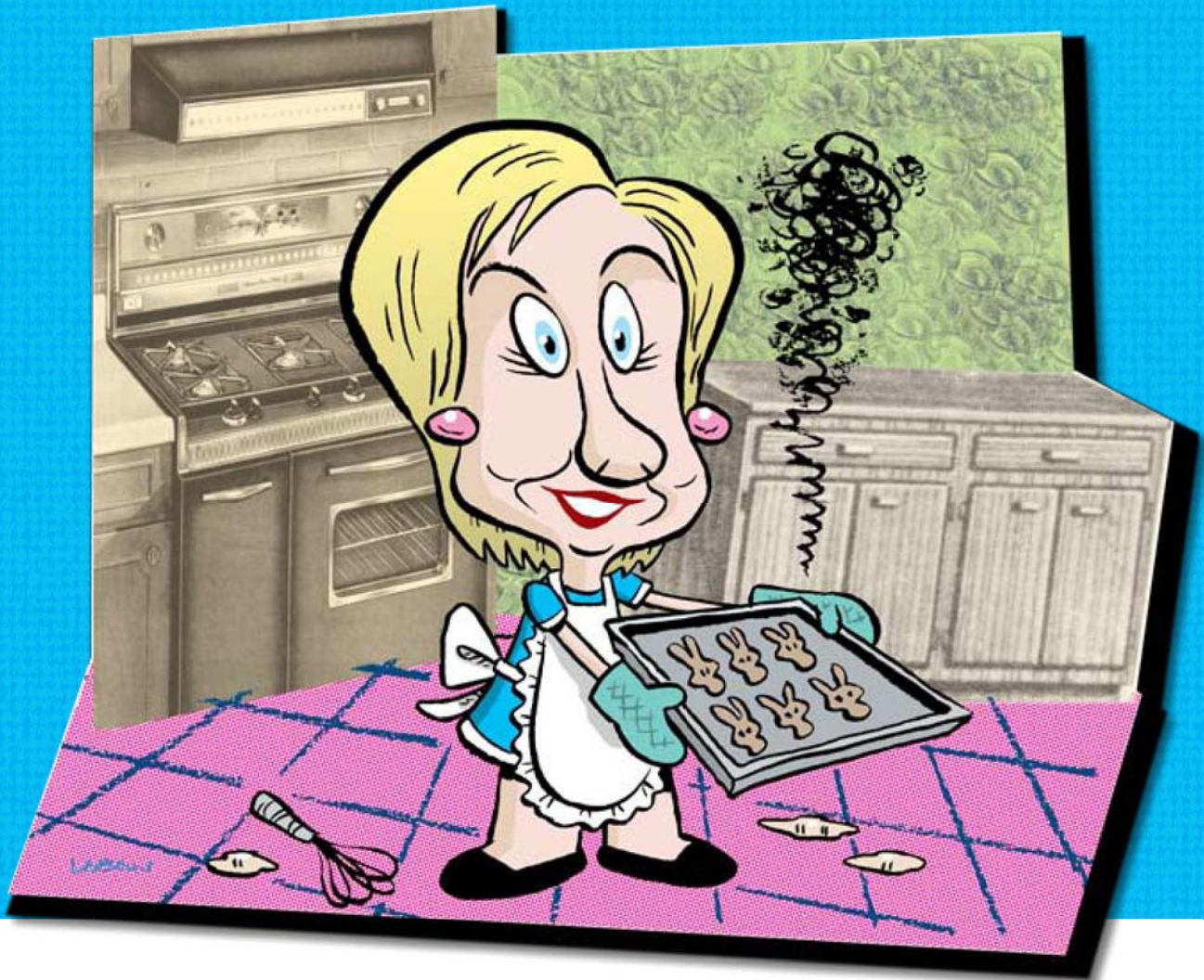
Combine flour, salt and baking soda.

Beat shortening, sugars and vanilla in large bowl until creamy. Add eggs, beating until light and fluffy.

Gradually beat in flour mixture and rolled oats. Stir in chocolate chips.

Drop well-rounded teaspoonfuls of batter on greased baking sheets. Bake for eight to 10 minutes, or until golden.

# Hillary for Class President



BY BETSY VANDERCOOK

FIRST ATE COOKIES AT Hillary Rodham's house on Wisner and Elm in 1960. Were they her now-famous, chocolate chip cookies? Perhaps. But whether this is the recipe for the cookies I ate doesn't matter. The main dish that Hillary served, even back then, was politics.

I had first met Hillary in the fall of 1957—in the fifth grade of Eugene Field School in Park Ridge, Ill. We weren't best friends. She was a Girl Scout. I was a Camp Fire Girl. She was better at sports. I was better at music. We were academic rivals. In the sixth grade, we were both the spelling champions of our own classrooms. But during the championship spelling bee, I was home sick in bed and Hillary won the

glory for her homeroom. My friends maintained that I could have beaten her had I been there. Right—just like Nixon could have beaten Kennedy.

Which brings us to 1960.

We were attending Ralph Waldo Emerson Junior High—a brand-new school that was turquoise and beige and glass and looked like a kitchen ad out of *House Beautiful*. It was there that Hillary came into her political own. She decided to run for class president, and I decided to join her campaign. I would go over to her house and we would drink milk, eat chocolate chip cookies, think up campaign slogans and draw campaign posters.

For the longest time, I had one of those posters. It read,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47