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OCTOBER 2008

IN THESE TIMES

Big Pharma
wants your **arm**

'Prayer Warriors'
ready for battle

22

to know

Our picks for an Obama Cabinet

CONTRIBUTED BY:

**Jessica Clark • Adam Doster • Winona LaDuke
Barbara Miner • David Moberg • Salim Muwakkil
David Sirota • Jody Williams • and others**

PLUS:

**Susan J. Douglas on what
Bush has stolen from us**

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editorial

United We Fail

THIS ELECTION YEAR, the bandwagon to fix the healthcare system barrels along. On board is a motley crew of self-styled reformers, the agents of change. But not all change is created equal. And nowhere is this truer than with healthcare reform.

We've been here before, in 1994, when the Clintons' attempts to cure a sick healthcare system came a cropper.

In an interview with *The Harvard University Gazette*, Theda Skocpol—author of *Boomerang*, a 1996 book that analyzed why those reform efforts were unsuccessful—said, “As usual, everyone failed to anticipate the conservative ideological crusade against health reforms—yet such crusades have happened every time the issue has come up in U.S. politics.”

Let's look at some of the crusaders—and their progressive allies—who are again filling our airwaves:

America's Health Insurance Plans, an industry trade group, has established Campaign for an American Solution to promote “choice.” Meanwhile, the National Coalition on Benefits—a conglomeration of more than 50 corporations and trade associations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Aetna—is looking to ensure that any change benefits them.

Then there's Health Care for America Now, which has raised Harry and Louise from the dead and back to the kitchen table. “Healthcare should be at the top of the next president's agenda,” Harry and Louise tell America in the TV ad. “Bring everyone to the table, and make it happen.” Their “everyone” includes entrenched healthcare industry lobbies like the American Hospital Association.

Most prominent is Divided We Fail, a coalition led by the American Association of Retired People (AARP), with the support of SEIU, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the National Farmers

Union and Sojourners, among others. Its ubiquitous ads open with a fierce struggle between a red elephant and a blue donkey. Then, in what is meant to be a positive metaphor for bipartisan cooperation, the dust settles and the two animals are fused into a hideous abomination: the purple donkeyphant, a perfect totem beast for the Washington elite.

Divided We Fail promotes a system that provides “healthcare for all”—and continued profits for all coalition members with a vested interest in the current system. Vested interests like AARP, which gets about 60 percent of its revenue from the business of selling supplemental private Medigap policies to worried seniors. Were the healthcare system to really change, that income would be threatened.

It's little wonder that United We Fail does not mention anything about a single-payer universal healthcare system. According to Physicians for a National Health Program, a single-payer system “would save more than \$350 billion per year, enough to provide comprehensive, high-quality coverage for all Americans.”

Yet that option is conspicuously missing.

Whoever is elected president, private insurers are gearing up to make sure that change entails no change—with the help of progressive allies who are now lending their names to lowest common denominator reforms.

Was nothing learned from the 1993-1994 healthcare fiasco?

It is as if our progressive friends, in their haste to earn agents-of-change merit badges, have begun to heed the words of former Vice President Dan Quayle, who said: “My friends, no matter how rough the road may be, we can and we will never, never surrender to what is right.”

—Joel Bleifuss

IN THESE TIMES

“With liberty and justice for all...”

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mixed reaction

JUST THE FACTS



45 Number of days after 9/11 when President Bush signed the USA PATRIOT Act into law

1 Number of senators who initially voted against the Patriot Act

2,000 Annual number of deaths worldwide, on average, from terrorist attacks in the last 30 years

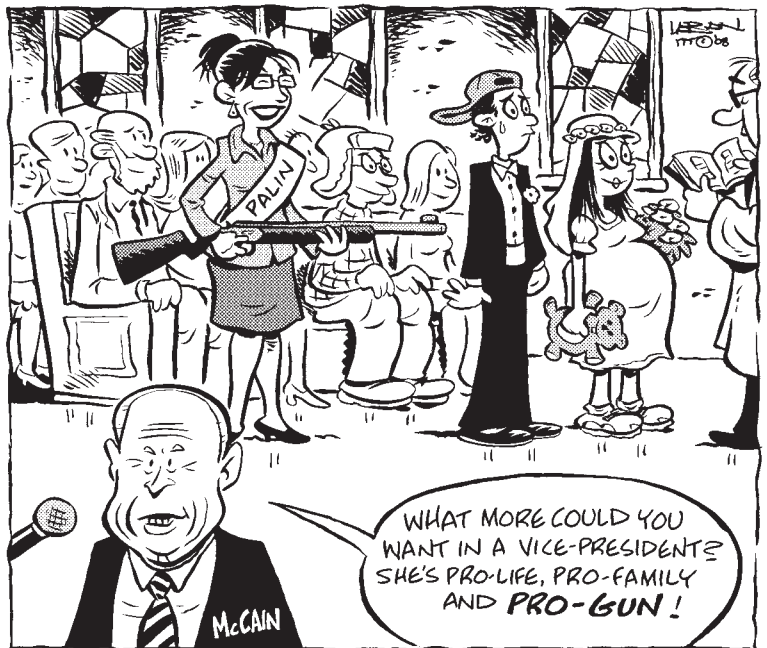
869,724 Number of Americans who died in 2004 from coronary heart disease, the major cause of death in the United States

“ [N]ot every wrong, or even every violation of the law, is a crime.

— ATTORNEY GENERAL MICHAEL MUKASEY, AUG. 12 SPEECH TO THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION.

”

LABANARAMA BY TERRY LABAN



QUID PRO QUO

THE QUID:

Alaska Gov. and GOP VP candidate Sarah Palin is the type of mavericky reformer Sen. John McCain is all about, someone who is absolutely, totally against federal earmarks ... except when she's not.

In 2000, as mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, Palin hired a lobbyist for \$24,000 a year (later increased to \$36,000) to make the federal monies rain on her fair city (pop. 6,700).

THE QUO:

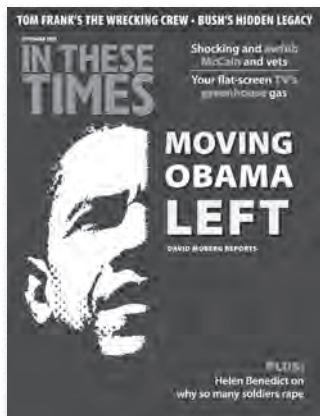
The rain came down: \$500,000 to purchase a parcel of federal land; \$450,000 for rehabilitating an agricultural processing plant; \$15 million for a rail project to connect the city with Girdwood, Alaska.

All told, during Palin's last four years in office, Wasilla received \$26.9 million in earmarks. That total is roughly the same amount that Boise, Idaho, received during the same period.



Not a bad haul for Palin, considering Wasilla's population is 28 times smaller than Boise's.

Letters



Move Everyone Left

Democrats have not won a majority of the white vote since 1964.

About a decade and a half ago, an overwhelming number of white voters in Louisiana voted for former Klansman David Duke to be governor (only a massive outpouring of opposition from black Americans barred this ghastly result).

In 2004, about 85 percent of the white vote in Mississippi went to President Bush.

In 2008, the Obama campaign in North Carolina feels it can win this state if it manages to get 35 percent of the white vote—and register hundreds of thousands of new voters.

I trust that those interested in “Moving Obama Left” (September) would also spend some time seeking to move “white America” left—otherwise, we shall all be in trouble.

*Gerald Horne
Via E-mail*

Military Disclosure

In regards to Helen Benedict’s “Why Soldiers Rape” (September), every recruitment office, every military

contract, every brochure that the Department of Defense gives out should disclose that if you are a woman serving in the military, the odds for rape are at least 30 percent. The odds for prosecution of a violent rape are 8 percent.

When women and the vital role they play in the military are not taken seriously, then they need to be warned that this is an endemic problem.

*M. Ely Hull
Via E-mail*

Those interested in ‘Moving Obama Left’ would do well to also move ‘white America’ left. Otherwise, we shall all be in trouble.

Campus Action

Jon Whiten’s review (“Ivory Tower Inc.,” August) of two books on the changing role of university faculty indeed paints a depressing picture. But there are bright spots as well.

I just spent a few months, in my role as an adjunct professor of sociology at George Washington University, as part of the contract action team that negotiated an excellent first contract for GW’s 1,150 part-time faculty (who teach some 60 percent of the school’s courses).

Until we organized as part of SEIU Local 500, we had no job security, no benefits and unbelievably low pay. Our new contract is a win in all these areas.

We plan to help organize the D.C. area’s part-time faculty, at public as well as private insti-

tutions of higher education.

*Chester Hartman
Washington, D.C.*

Straight Talk B.S.

With all of the mud the McCain campaign is sling- ing, how do we get the article (“McSexist,” August) on the frontburner of John McCain calling his wife the “c” word?

That would deflate every tire on the “Straight Talk B.S. Express.”

With his callous disregard

ludicrous argument of being able to run the country.

*Dave Walker
Via E-mail*

CORRECTION

In “Life After Foster Care” (August), the article inadvertently implied that all foster children between 18 and 21 in Illinois are not covered by Medicaid. But it is only foster children who leave the system before age 21 who are denied this coverage.

The article failed to mention that the data used was from 19 year olds who were no longer in care.

And Vermont is not the only other state to use state money to extend services to age 21. Foster youth routinely remain in care until they are 21 in New York and in Washington, D.C.

We regret these errors.

INTHESETIMES.COM

➤ Visit InTheseTimes.com for the latest from online columnists Megan Tady and Ken Brociner.

In mid-September, Tady described the “hijacking” of digital TV by corporate broadcasters. And Brociner, in his “American Left” column, explored whether American progressives are upholding their obligations to the world’s people.

➤ In early October, InTheseTimes.com will unveil a new look, with videos and weekly interviews with progressive activists, writers and artists. The site will also feature our most popular and most discussed stories.

We’d love to know what you think. Please send questions or comments to jeremy@inthesetimes.com.



contributors

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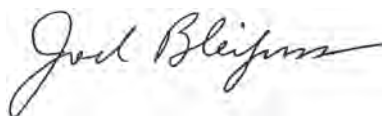
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Without donations from members of the *In These Times* community like you, we would have been forced to shut our doors years ago.

Today, the situation is worse. If you have the ability to donate beyond the cost of your subscription, please do. Your support is crucial.

Please take a moment to fill out the donation card enclosed between pages 24 and 25. And feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

In solidarity.



Joel Bleifuss
Editor & Publisher

P.S. You'll notice that the "Appall-O Meter," usually on page 12, is missing this issue. The author of that popular section, Senior Editor David Mulcahey, and his wife, Rebecca Bohrman, had a baby boy, Issac, on Aug. 28. Congratulations and best wishes to Dave, Rebecca and Ike!



MIKE JANSSEN is a freelance writer and editor based in the Washington, D.C., area. His articles frequently appear in *Current* newspaper, the trade newspaper covering public broadcasting. His website is mikejanssen.net.



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SAM STOKER

Native tribes and a ski resort battle over the future of Arizona's San Francisco Peaks.

Wastewater Ski Slopes

A battle over sacred lands could be heading to the U.S. Supreme Court

BY SAM STOKER

A LEGAL BATTLE OVER THE fate of the San Francisco Peaks, one of the southwest's most ecologically diverse and sacred mountains, could be heading to the U.S. Supreme Court.

A coalition of six Native American tribes and three environmental organizations says it intends to file an appeal after an Aug. 8 ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals favored Arizona Snowbowl Ski Resort, permitting the company to expand development and make snow from reclaimed sewage wastewater on a mountain that 13 tribes consider sacred.

The decision is the latest in a three-year legal battle—between the U.S. For-

est Service and Arizona Snowbowl, and the Save the Peaks Coalition—over the 12,000-foot-high mountain range, seven miles north of Flagstaff, Ariz.

Proponents of making snow out of wastewater applaud the decision and claim it upholds the government's right to manage public lands for multiple uses.

But Native tribes equate the decision to cultural genocide, and environmental groups argue the ecological and human health hazards associated with introducing wastewater on the mountain have not been properly investigated.

"The decision is a serious blow to Native Americans, the environment and the Peaks," says Andy Bessler, southwest representative of the Sierra Club, one of the

plaintiffs in the case. "It further goes to show that Native Americans don't have a fair shake under the Constitution."

Because of unpredictable winter snowfall—which has resulted in ski seasons as short as four days—Arizona Snowbowl argued that without snowmaking, the ski resort would have to shut down.

In 2002, the company proposed snowmaking with reclaimed wastewater sold by the city of Flagstaff. In 2005, the Forest Service approved the resort's proposal, prompting the coalition of tribes and environmental organizations to file a lawsuit seeking corrective action for alleged violations of the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and the 1969 National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

In January 2006, a federal district court initially ruled against the coalition on all claims. But in March 2007, a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit Court sided with the coalition on two claims and ruled the Forest Service's decision violated the RFRA and the NEPA.

The recent 8-3 decision by the *en banc* court—an 11-judge panel of the 9th Circuit Court that re-heard the appeal—overturned the previous three-judge court ruling.

In the majority opinion, Judge Carlos T. Bea stated that Native American tribes failed to prove that the presence of wastewater on the mountain created a "substantial burden" on the practice of their religion and that the only effect of the proposed upgrades is on the plaintiffs' "subjective, emotional religious experience."

"The opinion is unfortunate and, in my opinion, wrong," says attorney Howard Shanker, who represents the coalition of tribes and environmental organizations in the case. "The court is placing itself in the position of judging the legitimacy of Native American beliefs. It becomes the arbiter of religion, which is not the proper role for the courts."

In an Aug. 8 press release, Jeneda Bernal, a volunteer with Save the Peaks, said, "The cultural survival of more than 13 Indigenous Nations is directly intertwined

with the environmental integrity of the holy San Francisco Peaks. [The court's decision] not only places these ways of life in peril but sets the stage for an ecological and public health catastrophe."

Although the previous court had sided with the plaintiffs on the NEPA claim, the *en banc* dismissed it because it said the claim was improperly filed at the district court level.

In his dissenting opinion, Judge William Fletcher argued that the majority opinion misinterpreted the law and that the claim should have been heard.

"The question at hand concerning the NEPA claim is: What happens if a child eats the snow?" says Rudy Preston, a member of the Flagstaff Activist Network, also a plaintiff in the case. "It is the question we raised from the very beginning. It was never answered and that is the reason we sued."

Environmental groups argue that by throwing out the claim, the *en banc* court failed to uphold its responsibility to protect public health.

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has graded the reclaimed

wastewater A+, which they have determined to be suitable for snowmaking.

But Preston argues the department is contradicting itself; it typically cautions people against contact with reclaimed wastewater because of known trace elements of chemicals dangerous to human health.

Attorney Shanker says the reasons why the NEPA claim was thrown out were not clear to him, although, he adds, "It is better than them ruling against it." He says he is discussing with clients the possibility of re-filing that claim at the district level, in addition to the appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

J.R. Murray, Arizona Snowbowl general manager, says supporters of Snowbowl were pleased with the recent decision. Barring a Supreme Court hearing, he says Snowbowl plans to revise its plans and priorities for developing the resort this winter. "Other than that," he says, "we're hoping for another great ski season." ■

SAM STOKER is a freelance reporter based in Chicago.

More U.S. Meddling in El Salvador?

AS EL SALVADOR prepares to hold its presidential and parliamentary elections early next year, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) worries the Bush administration might be drumming up fear to sway results.

During a June visit to El Salvador, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte expressed concern over alleged links between the populist opposition FMLN party—Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front—and rebels in Colombia's FARC—Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

After Colombian troops raided a FARC camp on March 1, the Colombian government alleged it had seized a laptop computer that tied FARC and FMLN. (The FMLN has denied the allegations.)

"Any group that collaborates or expresses friendship with the FARC is not a friend of the United States," said U.S.

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SUSTAINABILITY, PASS IT ON

More than 60 years ago—before the word “sustainable” was in vogue—Heifer International was putting its model of sustainability into practice.

The group donates animals—from sheep to honeybees—to communities in need and, in turn, the recipients of those gifts pass on the offspring to others. The livestock that people receive from Heifer helps provide a source of sustenance and income to residents in places like Mozambique and Romania.

“The largest number of extremely impoverished people live in sub-Saharan Africa,” says Ray White, a spokesman for the organization. “You can see the impact of a gift of a goat or cow there almost immediately.”

Heifer International estimates that it has helped 8.5 million families since its inception in 1944. The group reaches 53 countries and 28 states in the United States.

You can help Heifer by becoming a volunteer, or by sponsoring the gift of a water buffalo, llama or flock of ducks to people in need.

“Hunger can be ended,” says White. “We have the technology and the resources today to produce enough food for everyone. It’s a matter of simple justice.”

Visit www.heifer.org to learn more.

—**Matthew Schwartzman-Stubbs**



Ambassador to El Salvador Charles Glazer, echoing Negroponte’s remarks.

On June 27, Glazer told a delegation of 12 Americans traveling to El Salvador with CISPES that the United States would not interfere with the country’s January parliamentary elections and its March presidential elections. However, CISPES alleges that Glazer also said that the United States had meddled in El Salvador’s 2004 elections.

According to a CISPES press release, “When asked directly if the U.S. government had intervened in the 2004 presidential elections on behalf of the [right-wing] Nationalist Republican Alliance party (ARENA), Glazer replied in the affirmative. When asked if such intervention would occur again, he said ‘no.’”

Robert Riley, counsel for public affairs at the U.S. embassy, wrote in an e-mail: “Ambassador Glazer acknowledged that certain American officials made public comments in the context of the 2004 Salvadoran elections. ... However, [Glazer] did not suggest or ‘confirm’ that the U.S. government intervened in those elections in any way.”

According to Riley, Glazer “has stated numerous times publicly, the U.S. government will not take sides in the upcoming 2009 Salvadoran elections.”

FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes led ARENA candidate Rodrigo Ávila by roughly 6 percentage points, according to a July Reuters poll. If Ávila loses, it would be the first time since the end of El Salvador’s civil war in 1992 that the conservative ARENA party would be out of power.

The United States has played a nefarious role in Salvadoran history, funding and training the right-wing military and death squads that murdered and disappeared 85 percent of the approximately 80,000 victims during the country’s 12-year civil war.

In the run-up to El Salvador’s 2004 election, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.) threatened that the United States would stop Salvadoran immigrants from sending remittances to their families if the FMLN party won. Remittances from the United States make up nearly 20 percent of El Salvador’s gross domestic product, and nearly a quarter of all Salvadoran families receive them.

That spring, newspapers reported on fears of remittances drying up, which some



Salvadoran presidential candidate Mauricio Funes (right), speaks at an April 18 meeting in Panama City.

say helped tip the outcome to ARENA candidate and media mogul Antonio Saca, who won 57 percent of the vote to FMLN candidate Schafik Handal’s 36 percent.

Then-U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Hugh Douglas Barkley did not respond to Tancredo’s threats until after the election, saying that the opinions of members of Congress are independent from the positions of the State Department.

“The U.S. Embassy in El Salvador never countered this absurd threat or clarified the impossibility of such legislation being passed,” says Rosa Lozano, a Washington, D.C., delegate who attended the CISPES meeting with Glazer. “Ultimately, such intervention helped turn a close race for the presidency into a decisive victory for the right-wing ARENA party.”

To help assuage CISPES’s concern about the upcoming elections, the U.S. embassy’s labor attaché Jami Thompson told the delegation that the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) will monitor the races.

But delegation members question the groups’ objectivity. Last year, the IRI and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) honored President Saca with a “Freedom Award,” which CISPES says establishes the IRI’s bias.

Says Laura Embree-Lowry, a delegate from Boston: “The presence of partisan groups like the IRI and NDI will be counterproductive to the goal of the Salvadoran people, which is to hold free and fair elections in 2009.”

—**Jacob Wheeler**

Hospital Flacks Spread Fake News

WHEN GLEN MABIE'S boss at WEAU-TV-13 told him he would have to start running stories suggested by a local hospital, featuring its staff and services, Mabie quit in protest.

The agreement with the hospital would have prevented the Eau Claire, Wis., station from using sources from other area hospitals in its stories.

"I was between a rock and a hard place," says Mabie, who had been news director at the NBC affiliate for a year. "I didn't want to be insubordinate to my superior and there was no way I could go into the newsroom and tell my staff this is a good thing."

WEAU ultimately scratched the plan after newsroom employees continued to resist it in the wake of Mabie's January resignation, he says.

The deal at WEAU was one of several that prompted the Society of Professional Journalists and the Association of Health Care Journalists to announce their opposition to the practice of broadcasting, printing or otherwise disseminating content paid for, or created by, medical providers.

"Content produced by hospitals does not fulfill the duty of news organizations to provide the public with independent medical reporting," the Aug. 13 statement from the two groups said. "Ethical problems are compounded when media outlets fail to adequately disclose the source of the content, misleading viewers, listeners or readers into thinking it is legitimate news."

The statement came about five months after a Maryland newspaper sold its weekly health page to a local hospital. The arrangement, which was explained to readers in a column, would have allowed the hospital to provide content for *The Capital*, an Annapolis daily with 47,000 readers. After publishing one column, the paper backed down in response to community pressure.

The alliance may have been the first of its kind for a print newspaper, but journalists' groups and ethics experts have raised concerns for years about broadcast outlets using video news releases that are produced by pharmaceutical companies and health-

care providers to look like news reports.

"We don't really know how big of a problem it is—and that's part of the problem," says Andy Schotz, chairman of the Society of Professional Journalists' ethics committee. "It blends into news coverage in a way that people don't even know the source of the news they're getting."

Eight broadcast reports by the Cleveland Clinic News Service—the PR arm of an Ohio healthcare provider—aired virtually unedited on 26 stations, according to an analysis published last year in the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Of those 26 stations, 23 were owned by Fox.

These video news releases are often inserted seamlessly into reports produced by a station's reporters.

"It takes advantages of news organizations that are pretty much pushed to the max," says Lee Wilkins, an ethics professor at the University of Missouri's journalism school.

In an era of shrinking budgets and rising demand for content in multimedia, news providers are often searching for ways to increase revenue while putting out more news.

Wilkins says part of the appeal of video releases is that they provide high-quality visual images that journalists have to cut through a lot of red tape to get, such as footage of surgeries. But she says while the reports may provide some good information, they are often one-sided and fail to include relevant facts, such as costs or survival rates associated with a procedure.

"It won't have in it the kind of information a good health reporter will go and get. And that skews the news," Wilkins says. "You won't get that kind of critical, analytical look."

Health news isn't the only sector in which partnerships between media outlets and companies have been struck. Last year, after newsroom workers objected, the (Memphis) *Commercial Appeal* newspaper backed off a plan to pursue a six-part series that would have been sponsored by FedEx. And the *Philadelphia Inquirer* also launched a column last year sponsored by a local bank.

Schotz says he didn't know if partnerships between media and companies could specifically be tied to smaller

newsroom staffs, but he did say that broadcast news directors who responded to his group's inquiry about the practice of using provided content said that staffing was a concern.

"The whole news industry is feeling pressure," he says.

The statement released by the two journalism groups advises media outlets to disclose the source of all information that's gathered by other entities, to avoid favoring advertisers and sponsors over the competition and to identify clearly



This news was brought to you by your local lobbyist.

the packaged stories produced by healthcare providers as ads.

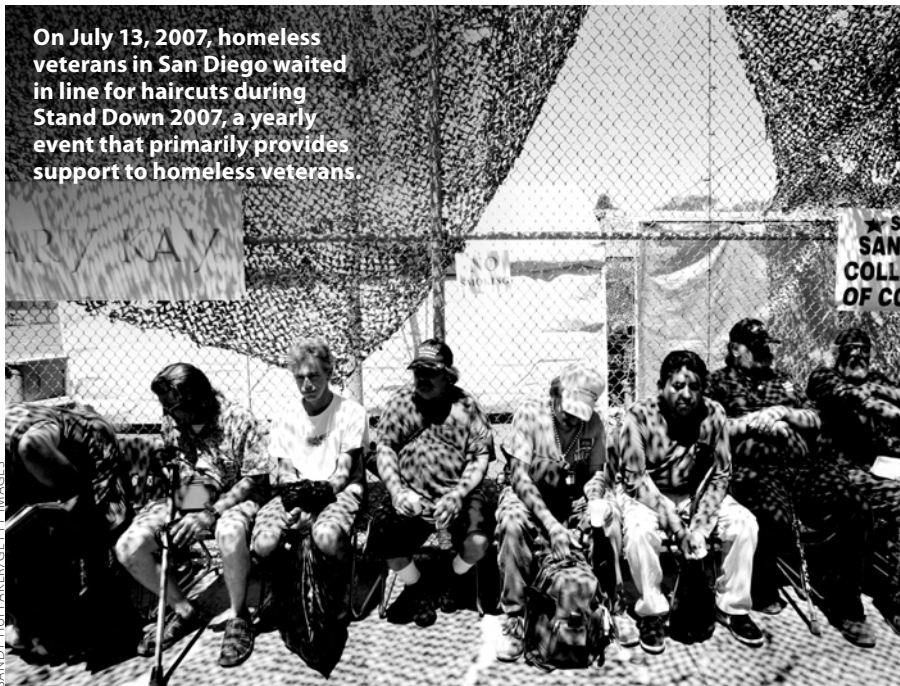
"The importance is how it's presented and how it's labeled," Schotz says. "If it's paid for, it's an advertisement. The importance is thinking about what your readers and viewers and listeners need to know. If this is a paid relationship, why not let them know?"

Former news director Mabie says he was concerned that if a deal like the one proposed at WEAU had taken hold, it would have paved the way for further ethically questionable alliances.

"Things like that are a slippery slope," he says. "Who's to say that six months down the road a Lowe's or a Home Depot isn't going to come to you and say, 'Talk to our people and we'll give you a home improvement segment two times a week'? Then pretty soon your newscast has become, quite literally, a paid commercial."

—Emily Udell

On July 13, 2007, homeless veterans in San Diego waited in line for haircuts during Stand Down 2007, a yearly event that primarily provides support to homeless veterans.



Homeless Court Advantage

OUTSIDE A HIGH school in downtown San Diego—on a concrete handball court that often sees action—is where the country's first homeless court began. No witness stand. No bench for the judge. Just a bare ground with some folding chairs.

Started by San Diego County public defender Steve Binder in 1989, the court offers the homeless population access to the legal system.

It took "a great leap of faith to go to the homeless shelter" to hold court, says Binder.

Many criminal charges against the homeless stem from their homelessness: loitering, sleeping on the sidewalks, drinking or urinating in public. Once cited, they don't have a mailing address to receive summonses if they fail to pay the fine. That means a single infraction can often mushroom into multiple summonses, resulting in an inability to secure a job and housing.

Since Binder held the first court nearly 20 years ago, 35 such courts—half of them in California—have sprung up, including in Columbia, S.C., Little Rock, Ark., and Milwaukee.

Because of the ad hoc nature of the court,

building trust between the homeless and their attorneys takes time, Binder says.

"A lot of defendants don't trust their public defenders," he says. At the same time, he says "some public defenders think people on the streets are just bums. We have to extend ourselves and get past that initial resistance."

For Binder, it took almost a year to earn the confidence of the first homeless person who set foot on that downtown San Diego handball court to see him. Now, Binder and his colleagues hold two sessions each month—one downtown and the other in north San Diego County. Each session sees, on average, 60 to 70 defendants, with more and more Afghanistan and Iraq War veterans in their midst.

Since the court's fledgling years, Binder's office has been working closely with the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV), a nonprofit organization that provides technical assistance to social service agencies that aid veterans. These days, the partnership has become even more important.

NCHV's Technical Assistance Director Melanie Lilliston says that although historically it takes a decade after their tour for veterans to end up homeless, some of those returning from Afghanistan and Iraq are now courting legal troubles much sooner and probably will face the

streets not long afterward.

"They're requesting service faster and showing up in the legal system faster," she says.

While the homeless court "is not a prevention tool," Lilliston says, "it helps [the homeless] resolve legal issues so they can move forward with their lives."

The court sometimes finds more productive redress than jail time.

Binder cited a recent case where a veteran, who returned from two tours in Iraq, had two drunk-driving convictions and was then arrested for driving on a suspended license. Appearing in the homeless court, the veteran explained that he had to drive to work. Instead of meting out a sentence, the judge arranged a legal way for him to commute.

Some homeless advocates, however, object to the idea of a special court because they say it encourages discrimination against homeless people.

"How can we stop the criminalization of homelessness if you have a justice system that sets up courts based on a person's (homeless) status?" asks Paul Boden, executive director of Western Regional Advocacy Project, an umbrella group whose membership includes many homeless providers and advocates on the West Coast.

"We perpetuate the criminalization [with these courts]," Boden says. His group is fighting efforts to open a special court in San Francisco. (No firm date has been set.)

Becky Dennison can attest to the benefits and the limitations of the homeless court in Los Angeles. As co-director of the grassroots Los Angeles Community Action Network, Dennison manages a legal clinic for the homeless. She says few people manage to clean up their records in court.

The L.A. homeless court deals with only minor offenses—not the more common drug charges. And the number of cases that the court is able to handle pales in comparison to the large number of quality-of-life citations—which, Dennison says, averages 1,000 a month in downtown L.A. alone.

"The problem is the court helps only a very small subset of people," she says, "but we can help a lot more people up front if we can just stop this style of policing."

—Violet Law

High Gas Hitting City Fleets

IF YOU GET pulled over for speeding in Holly Springs, Ga., you may notice a new addendum to your ticket: a \$12 fuel surcharge.

In June, the city council mandated this extra fee as a way to offset surging gas costs that, in the first five months of 2008, had consumed 60 percent of the police department's annual fuel budget.

This small town north of Atlanta is by no means alone. Municipalities across America have needed to find budgetary solutions to keep their auto fleet—from police cruisers to garbage trucks—on the streets. Some have used the opportunity to explore green solutions. Others, like Holly Springs, have passed expenses down to taxpayers.

Chicago is one city that has experimented with a bit of both. Mayor Richard M. Daley touts Chicago as one of the most environmentally friendly cities in America, but the city's approach in offsetting the monetary and environmental costs of vehicles—police cruisers, especially—is lagging.

In August, the Chicago Police Department announced it would substitute a portion of its current fleet of Ford Crown Victorias with Chevy Tahoes. Both vehicles have similar fuel efficiencies—if one can call 14 miles per gallon efficient.

Josh Mogerman, senior media associate with the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC)—a nonprofit environmental group—calls the decision to switch to Tahoes “puzzling,” especially in light of the city's move to develop hybrid buses.

Chicago Alderman Joe Moore (49th ward), known for his green reputation, wants the city not only to explore green alternatives for its auto fleet, but for police vehicles in particular. He says part of the solution is to have more cops walking commercial streets—an approach practiced in his ward.

“It's a great way for the city to save gas money and, at the same time, getting police officers in more direct contact with the citizens,” Moore says.

In the past year, diesel prices have risen 45 percent while gas has risen 34 percent.

In a recent survey by the U.S. Confer-

snapshot



DHAKA, BANGLADESH—A child bathes under an open tap in a communal wash area in a slum in Dhaka on July 29. The United Nations predicts that by 2015 the capital city, which is growing at 3.1 percent per year, will be the world's second most populated, after Tokyo. This explosion in population has left a scarcity of housing for millions. (Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

ence of Mayors, 117 mayors of 132 surveyed reported that rising fuel costs were affecting city budgets.

Mogerman says leadership on environmental issues at the local level is crucial.

“We're not getting that type of leadership at the federal level,” he says. “We need the federal government to make it easier for municipal fleets to utilize these technologies. When they're scraping to pay overtime for police, it's hard to put hybrid vehicles in front of those day-to-day operations.”

Chicago, like other cities, has added some hybrids. The Toyota Prius—which gets 46 mpg—has replaced 20 city vehicles. In DeKalb, Ill., 60 miles west of Chicago, Northern Illinois University's campus police began phasing out Crown Victorias with Prius hybrids in 2004. And in Westwood, N.J., the police force began replacing its fleet with Ford Escape hybrids.

During a typical 12-hour shift, Crown Victorias use roughly 20 gallons of fuel, which costs the city more than \$71 to

operate daily (at \$3.58 per gallon). By comparison, that shift costs \$21 with an Escape hybrid, which uses only six gallons, according to figures from *Public Management Magazine*, a publication for local government managers. As a result, Westwood saves more than \$31,000 per vehicle each year.

But replacing police cruisers with hybrids could be more difficult, especially in larger metropolitan areas. One issue is the energy required to operate the sophisticated computer systems in police cars; another question is how hybrids could perform in high-speed pursuits.

Even so, Mogerman says available hybrid technology bridges a temporary gap.

“The longer term solution is going to be plug-in hybrid vehicles,” he says. “That's a technology that's going to transform not only how we drive, but how we think of our electrical grid and the pieces that attach to it.”

—Michael Moreci

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

What Bush Has Stolen From Us



MANY OF US had been waiting for tougher talk from Barack Obama about John McCain and the Bush presidency. At the Democratic convention, Obama began to deliver—but it wasn't stark enough.

I recently visited Australia and New Zealand, and it made me realize that we need mythic language—the kind that comes from oral cultures reliant on hand-

ed-down legends—to capture what has happened these past eight years. Like the Aborigines' dreamtime stories, we need something more powerful than “the failed policies of the Bush administration.” I propose “The Stolen Years.”

It began, of course, with the stolen election in 2000. But just think how much has been stolen from us: our morality and, indeed, our sense of humanity.

These are not just policy failures. This has been a spiritual pillaging of any sense that the United States can ever aspire to, or represent, higher principles; that our nation is, or can be, a democracy, however flawed; that the government cares about citizens other than the really rich.

The Bush administration has seized all we hold dear and ground it into the dirt with its boot heels.

Most important has been the nation's sense of its own morality. Few of us are deluded that the U.S. government was, before the Bush regime, a beacon of moral rectitude and social justice. The United States has overthrown many governments, mostly in secret, and supported repressive rulers. But when have our leaders publicly and adamantly rejected the Geneva Conventions and endorsed torture as a matter of national policy? It's one thing for there to be a gap between national principles and government practices, and quite another for a president to deride those principles as no longer essential to the nation's moral compass.

Also stolen from us has been a faith in the rule of law, the notion that the U.S. Constitution is a foundational document whose principles must be adhered to. The lawlessness and barbarism of Guantánamo—where people have been imprisoned for years without trials, or denied the right to know the specific accusations against them, where people have been tortured—has leeched from us any sense that our judicial system is any better than, say, the secret

Star Chambers of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs.

After revelations in the '70s about the FBI's surveillance of artists, civil rights, feminist and antiwar activists, there was a national outcry. As a result, Congress restricted domestic spying on American citizens. Bush's warrantless wiretap surveillance program, however, stole that basic right to not be spied on by our government.

With Bush's suggestion that climate change was some imaginary hoax, with his thwarting of stem cell research, and with his FDA's negligence in applying strict testing to a host of products, he robbed the country of eight years of cutting-edge research on the environmental and medical challenges—if not emergencies—that face us.

Of course, what Bush most wanted to sack was any notion

that the government could help or support its citizens. His goal was famously articulated by right-winger Grover Norquist: to “cut government ... down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub.”

When have we ever had a president publicly and adamantly reject the Geneva Conventions and endorse torture as a matter of national policy?

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina gave us heart-wrenching images of what this meant: people stranded on their roofs, waving desperately for help; people forced to live in sweltering filth in convention centers; people left to rot. The ideology stole any vestigial notions of a common good in which we might all have an interest—and to which we should all contribute, especially those of us more privileged than others.

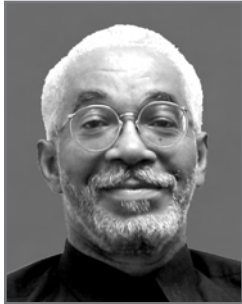
While presidents have often lied to us—the secret bombing of Cambodia, Iran-Contra, “I never had sexual relations with that woman”—none has mounted such a full bore, cynical, Soviet-style propaganda campaign against its own people as George “WMDs” and “Mission Accomplished” Bush.

Such propaganda efforts were especially aimed at women. While Laura Bush went to Afghanistan to show her concern for gender oppression, her husband was busily closing the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach, removing information about issues like pay equity and childcare from the Labor Department's website, and posting bogus information—such as the discredited claim about a link between having an abortion and getting breast cancer—on the National Cancer Institute's website.

These are not failed policies. This is Grand Theft Auto—who we are, and what we could become. Progressives and liberals should have “The Stolen Years” as our mantra, and say “never again.” ■

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

The War We Won't Talk About



THE WAR ON drugs has gotten little traction during this presidential campaign. The last time it was even mentioned was during the Republican debate in September 2007 at Morgan State University in Baltimore, when Republican candidate Rep. Ron Paul (Texas) spoke of its inordinate toll on the black community.

"I think inner-city folks and minorities are punished unfairly in the war on drugs," Paul had said. "For instance, blacks make up 14 percent of those who use drugs, yet 36 percent of those arrested are blacks and it ends up that 63 percent of those who finally end up in prison are blacks. This has to change."

Paul is right, but his sense of urgency never caught on. The social injustices encouraged by these policies are seeding unprecedented domestic turmoil, and its racial biases are threatening black America's viability.

The United States is the world's leading jailer, and a growing number of those jailed are drug offenders. Between 1980 and 2006, arrests for drug offenses more than tripled, according to a Human Rights Watch study released in May. In 1980, the number of arrests was 581,000. By 2006, it was 1,889,810.

African Americans have paid a heavy toll. In many resource-poor communities, young blacks often are tracked into the underground economy and invariably into the prison pipeline. Incarceration has become a central part of life for at least two generations of black youth.

According to the Sentencing Project, at the current rate of incarceration, one out of every three black males born today can expect to be imprisoned in his lifetime. Drug offenses are the major reason for this. More than 38 percent of all blacks entering prison in 2003 had been convicted of drug offenses, noted the Human Rights Watch report.

On average, one of every 14 black children has a parent in prison. Many cities with high incarceration rates also have serious gender imbalances. In parts of Washington, D.C., there are only 62 men for every 100 women. Black communities in many other parts of the country suffer similar imbalances.

I wrote about the ominous prospects of these imbalances more than three years ago. "There are more than 30 percent more black women than men in Baltimore, New

Orleans, Chicago and Cleveland," I noted in June 2005. "In New York City the number is 36 percent, and in Philadelphia, 37 percent."

Those statistics spell out catastrophe. Yet, discussions of this seem to be off limits, even for Sen. Barack Obama, a black man from the South Side of Chicago—one of the many "ground zeros" of the crisis.

Many in the black community are reluctant to discuss the drug war's collateral damage for fear it might tarnish Obama's glow. But shouldn't someone mention it?

During the heat of the campaign early this year, the Justice Policy Institute (JPI) released a study that documented the disproportionate damage the drug war has caused the African-American community.

"In 2002 ... there were five times as many whites using drugs as African American," the report read. "However our analyses indicate that African Americans are admitted to prison for drug offenses at

nearly 10 times the rate of whites."

JPI's study is one of many that have made the same point about adverse affects of the drug war and the delusions of the prohibitionists. We should have learned long ago that prohibition and crime are mutually reinforcing.

That symbiotic relationship is crippling much of the black community.

On a weekly talk show I host on Chicago's only black-owned radio station (WVON-AM), the callers' most consistent complaint is about neighborhoods brimming with ex-inmates seeking capital but lacking skills. This is another part of the deadly formula keeping much of black America in a descending spiral. That descent will pull all of America down, but many Americans are unaware of the danger.

We have heard much about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but little has been said about a domestic policy that is endangering this nation's future by threatening black America's viability.

Expressing the urgency of this task has been left to fringe candidates, such as the libertarian Paul, the Green Party's Cynthia McKinney or the independent Ralph Nader.

But the crisis demands mainstream attention because change won't come until the new president ends the drug war and, with Congress, channels massive investment into education and employment. ■

Many in the black community are reluctant to discuss the drug war's collateral damage for fear it might tarnish Obama's glow.

BY PAUL ARMENTANO

20 Million Arrests, and Counting



THIS NOVEMBER, MOMENTS before millions of voters flock to the polls to elect America's 44th president, law enforcement officials will make their 20 millionth marijuana arrest.

Yet in the days leading up to this appalling milestone, it's unlikely either candidate will call for—or even so much as entertain—any change in U.S. pot policies. It's even less likely the mainstream media will care.

Since the early '90s, the total number of Americans busted annually for pot has nearly tripled. In 1991, police arrested a modern low of 288,000 people for minor marijuana violations in the United States, according to the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Report. By 2006 (the last year for which data is available), a record 830,000 people were arrested. (Of those arrested, an estimated 90 percent are charged with minor possession—not trafficking, cultivation or sale.)

That's one American arrested for pot every 38 seconds.

Yet despite this massive increase in arrests—by contrast, federal statistics indicate that adult marijuana use has remained fairly stable over the past decade—the mass media and Congress continue to ignore the story.

By doing so, they ignore the plight of millions of Americans who suffer significant sanctions and hardships because of pot-related run-ins with law enforcement. These penalties include probation and mandatory drug testing; loss of employment; loss of child custody; removal from subsidized housing; asset forfeiture; loss of student aid; loss of voting privileges; loss of adoption rights; and loss of certain federal welfare benefits, such as food stamps.

Some Americans serve time for pot. Nearly 13 percent of state inmates and 12.4 percent of federal inmates are incarcerated for marijuana-related drug violations, according to a 2006 Bureau of Justice Statistics report. (The report did not include the estimated percentage of inmates incarcerated in county jails for pot-related offenses.)

In human terms, this means that some 34,000 state inmates and an estimated 11,000 federal inmates are serving time behind bars for violating marijuana laws.

In fiscal terms, this means U.S. taxpayers are spending

more than \$1 billion annually to imprison pot offenders.

The front-end criminal justice costs—such as the number of hours a police officer must put in to arrest and process the average pot offender—is far greater. Some researchers, such as Harvard University economist Jeffery Miron, estimate it at upward of \$7 billion a year.

But the financial and social costs tell only part of the story.

Up to 70 percent of all individuals in drug treatment for pot are placed there by the criminal justice system, according to statistics published by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. In other words, these individuals were ordered by a judge (or a drug court) to attend “rehab” in lieu of jail, or as a requirement of their probation.

Of those enrolled in treatment, federal statistics indicate that more than one in three had not even used marijuana in the 30 days prior to their admission.

Yet, disingenuously, the White House argues that these rising admission rates justify the need to continue arresting

Young people suffer the most under anti-pot laws, but they lack the financial means and political capital to lobby politicians to change them.

cannabis users, even though the policy, not the drug, is fueling the surge in drug treatment. At the same time, thousands of Americans seeking—and needing—drug treatment are denied because facilities lack bed space.

Equally troubling yet seldom discussed publicly is the reality that marijuana enforcement disproportionately affects citizens by age. According to data compiled by the FBI, 74 percent of all Americans busted for pot are under 30. One out of four is 18 or younger.

We now have a generation (or two) that is so alienated that many young people believe the police are an instrument of their oppression rather than their protection.

While young people suffer the most under current anti-pot laws, they lack the financial means and political capital to influence politicians to challenge them. They also lack the money to adequately fund the drug law reform movement at a level necessary to represent and protect their interests.

As a result, marijuana arrests continue to climb unabated. And few in the mainstream press—and even fewer lawmakers—feel any sufficient political pressure to address it. ■

PAUL ARMENTANO is deputy director of NORML and the NORML Foundation in Washington, D.C. His writing has appeared in the Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor and HuffingtonPost, among other publications.



Marriage Equality in Peril

'Prayer warriors' battle to pass state referendums banning gays and lesbians from marrying

BY JOHN IRELAND

IF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT seemed suspiciously quiet recently in the fight against same-sex marriage—get ready for a battle royale.

Conservative groups like Focus on the Family and the American Family Association put up a relatively weak fight when Massachusetts established same-sex marriage rights. Even San Francisco's attempt at marriage equality in 2004 yielded mostly tame and disjointed protests.

But now that the California Supreme Court has ruled that barring same-sex couples from marriage is unconstitutional, the Religious Right's top brass is galvanizing its funding base. It has reportedly summoned vast armies of "prayer warriors" to win the battle once and for all.

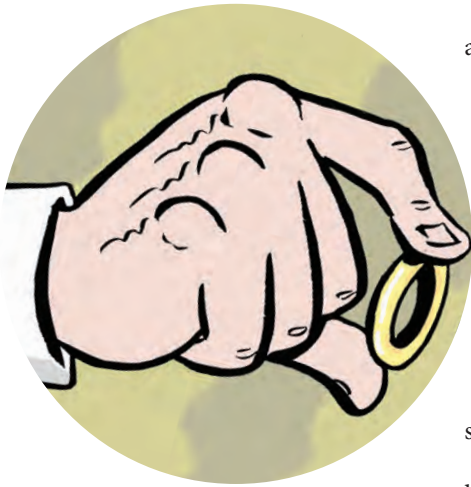
Groups from across the country are spearheading efforts in Arizona, California and Florida to amend those state constitutions to permanently restrict civil marriage to opposite-sex couples.

California's Proposition 8—a referendum on November's ballot—would add the following language to its state constitution: "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California." A Field Poll released in July found that, by a 51 percent-to-42 percent margin, California voters opposed the proposition, with the greatest opposition coming from voters under 30.

Arizona's Proposition 102 states, "Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in

this state." A February poll taken by Arizona State University's Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication found that 49 percent of residents would vote in favor of a marriage amendment if it didn't affect domestic partner benefits. Residents who said they'd vote against it accounted for 40 percent, while 11 percent said they were undecided. A majority vote is needed to approve the measure.

Meanwhile, Florida's Amendment 2 would insert the following language: "Inasmuch as marriage is the legal union of only one man and one woman as husband and wife, no other legal union that is treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent thereof shall be valid or recognized." A June 3 Quinnipiac University poll found



that 58 percent of Florida voters would support the proposition while 37 percent would oppose it. The amendment needs the approval of 60 percent of voters to become part of the state constitution.

A conference call to arms

The Religious Right is using these last months leading up to the election to amplify the debate nationally.

On his Aug. 1 broadcast of “Washington Watch” radio show, Family Research Council President Tony Perkins described California as a “springboard for the rest of the nation.” He said: “If California goes forward with same-sex marriage, mark my word, we will begin to see this march

across the country. ... Don’t think you are protected because your state has a state marriage amendment, those will be challenged in federal court under the federal constitution. ... It is vitally important that we help California’s Proposition 8] succeed.”

Two days earlier, on July 30, a who’s who of the national Religious Right leadership convened a conference call of more than 200 pastors in Arizona, California and Florida to lay out the strategy leading to the Nov. 4 election.

Hosted by pastor Jim Garlow of Skyline Church in San Diego, participants on the call included Perkins, Harry Jackson, senior pastor of the evangelical Hope Christian Church in Washington, D.C., and Maggie Gallagher, president of the Virginia-based Institute for Marriage and Public Policy—the principal organizer behind California’s Proposition 8.

Also on the call was Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, who called the battle over marriage equality, “the Armageddon of the culture war.” Over the past few decades, Colson has become an evangelical Christian powerbroker and, more recently, a well-known organizer in the fight to oppose marriage rights for same-sex couples.

Leaders on the July 30 conference call asked pastors to spare no effort in the

fight to pass the traditional marriage initiatives on the Arizona, California and Florida ballots and to reverse the gains of marriage equality advocates. Their exhortations met with a passionate response.

The Rev. Jim Franklin of Cornerstone Church in Fresno, Calif., emboldened his fellow callers with his assessment that, “We must be consumed with a holy anger. ... This is the time to fight.” He added that a church should be identified as a “mega church,” based not on the size of its budget, but on the size of “the enemy” it takes on.

Part political, part spiritual

According to People for the American Way (PFAW), the Religious Right’s campaign is training church members to write editorials, call talk shows and, in general, attract attention to its message.

In an e-mail to the group’s supporters, PFAW’s President Kathryn Kolbert explained that organizers planned to deliver “a good common sense rationale to protect marriage” to those who are uncommitted on this issue.

Ron Luce, founder and president of Teen Mania, an evangelical youth ministry, told fellow callers of his plans to organize 300,000 youth and their families for an Oct. 1 telecast. The Church Communication Network, which broadcasts religious programming to 6,000 churches across North America, offered to simulcast the event by satellite to close to 1,000 churches across Arizona, California and Florida.

Other efforts include rallies, a unified “Stand for Marriage” sermon on Sunday, Sept. 21, and a “family voting weekend” in mid-October that will encourage people to vote by absentee ballot to lock in votes.

According to *Charisma* magazine, which “spreads the name and fame of Jesus throughout the world through the mass media,” pastors on the call were urged to participate in a 40-day fast “scheduled to begin Sept. 24 in the run-up to Election Day.”

Named after California’s Proposition 8, the campaign identified the theme as “Eight for Eight.” People will be asked to pray eight minutes every morning and evening for passage of the initiative, give \$8, \$88 or \$888, volunteer eight hours—beginning 8/8/2008—send notes of encour-

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agement to at least eight pastors who stand for traditional marriage, register eight people to vote and eight more to vote by mail, contact eight families to participate in the family voting weekend and enlist eight other people to commit to this list of action items.

An infusion of cash from both sides

Although fundraising figures are not available from the Arizona and Florida campaigns, it appears that voters across the country are investing heavily in both sides of the issue. The conference call's organizers announced that, as of July 30, they had raised \$15 million of the \$23 million necessary to carry out the three-state campaign and that collections would continue throughout churches into the fall.

According to the California Secretary of State Debra Bowen, as of September 4, supporters of the anti-LGBT Proposition 8 had raised \$12,358,955 compared to \$10,239,821 raised on the other side. Roughly 32 percent of the funds supporting the ban came from outside California, compared to roughly 49 percent of the funds opposing it.

Notably large out-of-state gifts to help oppose Proposition 8 included \$2 million from the Human Rights Campaign (a national LGBT rights group), \$1 million from Bruce Bastian (the openly gay Utah-based inventor of WordPerfect), and \$500,000 from Cleveland businessman David Maltz.

The ban's supporters received \$1 million from the Knights of Columbus (a national Catholic men's organization), \$500,000 from the American Family Association (a socially conservative group) and \$400,000 from Focus on the Family.

Beyond the funds reported, "soft" resources have a tremendous role in swinging votes. "Evangelical Christian, Catholic and Mormon churches are spreading their message through the pulpits," says Joseph Conn, a spokesman of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "A lot of the expenditures on behalf of these initiatives will not be reflected in spending or fundraising reports."

Conn adds that the Religious Right has shifted into overdrive on this issue. He

says, "Same-sex marriage is equal to and, perhaps, more effective than abortion as an organizing and fundraising tool."

Tactics have evolved

In 1992, before YouTube and Netflix, the hottest viral video in conservative circles was *The Gay Agenda*. Produced by the Springs of Life Ministry in Lancaster, Ca-

Chuck Colson, evangelical powerbroker and founder of Prison Fellow Ministries, called the coming battle over marriage equality, 'the Armageddon of the culture war.'

lif., the video interspersed what it called "informational interviews," with sexually raw footage taken at gay pride parades. A pulsating club music beat pounded as scantily clad men gyrated atop floats and drag queens mugged for the camera.

Peter LaBarbera, a former Marine who now heads the singularly focused Americans for Truth about Homosexuality, sent the tape to members of the joint chiefs of staff and the U.S. Congress as they considered the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that bars LGBT people from serving in the U.S. military.

The video worked the Religious Right into a frenzy. Members organized a fundraising base for a political movement and provided foot soldiers to wage cultural warfare against the evolving gay civil rights movement. Perhaps most significantly, it coined the term "the gay agenda," which, when used, helps activate its base.

In his 2005 book, *Marriage Under Fire*, James Dobson, founder and chairman of Focus on the Family, described the gay agenda's goals as including, "the universal acceptance of the gay lifestyle ... muzzling of the clergy and Christian media, granting of special privileges and rights ... indoctrinating children ... and securing all the legal benefits of marriage."

The leaders of the Religious Right have long enjoyed an extensive radio and TV broadcasting reach, but the advent of the Internet has allowed them to push these streams to the Web and reach a much larger audience. Through OneNewsNow.

com, the American Family News Network packages "news from a Christian worldview," providing profiles of the Religious Right's work as a prolific newsfeed.

Marriage equality strategy

For its part, the LGBT political machine has evolved significantly, as well. In addition to the national LGBT lobbies, such

as Human Rights Campaign, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, state equality organizations have cultivated extended networks of activists who, at the prompting of an e-mail alert, will give funds, sign petitions and mobilize.

One such targeted cultivation run by Equality California (EQCA) set-up a wedding registry where LGBT couples could solicit donations in lieu of wedding gifts. The strategy has paid off. Spokesman Steve Smith says the group has raised, "hundreds of thousands of dollars online." He continues: "The Internet means fundraising happens anywhere."

Brad Luna, a spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign, says it uses multiple strategies to raise funds—e-mail appeals, direct donor asks, fundraising appeals and ticket sales. He is confident that the proposition will be defeated.

"Throughout the country, our community understands and is committed to the defeat of Proposition 8," Luna says. "Whether you are in San Jose, Calif., or San Antonio, Texas, the LGBT community, and our allies, are focused on doing our part to make sure discrimination is not written into the California constitution."

EQCA's Smith echoes the sentiment: "It's California, so we are running a full-scale TV and radio campaign. The Religious Right will raise millions and we will match them dollar for dollar."

He adds: "The stakes are huge for the nation." ■

22 to know

Our Picks for an Obama Cabinet

In 2007, the Pew Research Center conducted a poll asking Americans if they could identify a man named Robert Gates. As the Iraq War raged, fewer than one in four respondents knew he was the secretary of defense. Is this a sad commentary on whether the public is following events in Iraq? Perhaps. But more likely it's a reflection of the overall obscurity of our government's top decision makers.

In a media environment that portrays presidents as the sole messianic implementer of their agenda, the steep drop-off in name recognition is predictable—even if it belies how power really works.

Far more than a brain trust of advisers, the U.S. Cabinet has been the instrument by which political rhetoric becomes public policy. From Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins (under FDR) to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (under Ford and Bush II), Cabinet officials have been the chief sculptors and enforcers of the best—and worst—presidential policies.

In many ways, administrations are the

sum of their Cabinets' work, and that axiom would be especially powerful should Sen. Barack Obama win the 2008 election. With just four years of federal legislative experience, the Illinois senator would be the antithesis of the old Washington hands who tend to occupy the Oval Office—and based on his campaign themes, he will likely enter office with a mandate for progressive change.

Which raises the question: What would a truly progressive Cabinet look like? There has been no such thing in at least a generation (if not longer), so it is a difficult—but critical—question to answer.

After all, who heads our federal government's major departments will have an impact on all issues, from Africa policy to zero-tolerance criminal sentencing.

In These Times asked its editors and writers to suggest their top progressive choices for a potential Obama Cabinet. We asked that contributors weigh ideological and political considerations, with an eye toward recommending people who have both progressive credentials and at least an arguable chance at being appointed in an Obama White House.

This group of people would represent at once the most progressive, aggressive and practical Cabinet in contemporary history. Of course, it is by no means a definitive list. It is merely one proposal aimed at starting a longer discussion about the very concept of a progressive Cabinet—and why it will be important to a new administration, especially if that administration is serious about change.

—David Sirota

Secretary of State: Jim McDermott



SECRETARY OF STATE HAS two major tasks: To define and represent U.S. interests in the world, and to

bring the rest of the world's interests to the United States. Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.)—a 10-term member of Congress and a Progressive Caucus stalwart—would do both.

McDermott has been a consistent voice for single-payer healthcare, for increased funding for the U.S. and global HIV/AIDS crisis, and for maintaining the estate tax. And he has stated unequivocally that Big Oil and the Iraq War are causing skyrocketing oil prices.

Like any U.S. politician, his record isn't perfect, particularly on trade. But unlike most of his colleagues, McDermott is independent and willing to think and act outside the Washington box.

McDermott actively opposes U.S. threats of war against Iran, and he has challenged Israel directly, saying it's "both appropriate and urgent for the U.S. to raise questions about [Israel's] intentions" toward Iran.

Secretary McDermott would not only

call for redeploying combat troops out of Iraq, he would also press for bringing home all U.S. troops and mercenaries. He would enforce ignored laws prohibiting U.S. bases there. And he would immediately renounce U.S. efforts to control Iraq's oil. In fact, he read into the Congressional Record the full text of the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi treaty, which set the same terms for British control of oil that the Bush administration is trying to impose on Iraq today.

Secretary of State Jim McDermott would reclaim the primacy of diplomacy in U.S. foreign policy.

—Phyllis Bennis

Coupons for those boxes are limited, and advocates for elderly, minority and low-income Americans warn that they may be cut off from crucial emergency and public information services.

A battle is also raging over new spectrum allocations: Consumer advocates argue that “white spaces” should be left open to provide options for affordable public wireless networks, while broadcasters counter that this would interfere with broadcast quality.

Meanwhile, media consolidation continues. Current FCC Chairman Kevin Martin approved the recent merger of XM

Senate. For eight years, Prentiss also headed the Education Committee of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators.

She has developed initiatives that put into practice oft-stated goals of investing in children, involving parents and community, changing teacher practices, and closing the achievement gap. She demands more of teachers and schools, but refuses to scapegoat them: a delicate balance essential to any meaningful reform.

Because education is primarily a state responsibility, such a background will serve Prentiss well as education secretary.

—Barbara Miner

Michael Copps has done yeoman's duty, consistently protecting the public's stake in the communications spectrum under a string of hostile chairmen. He'd be an ideal choice for FCC chairman.

FCC Chairman: Michael Copps

#2 IN HIS TWO TERMS ON the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Michael Copps has done yeoman's duty, consistently protecting the public's stake in the communications spectrum under a string of hostile chairmen.

In his first term, Copps helped launch a series of public hearings about media consolidation. In 2007, he announced his American Media Contract, which asserts citizens' rights to “programming that isn't so damned bad so damned often.” And at the 2008 National Conference for Media Reform, Copps called for tougher, more frequent FCC monitoring of local broadcast licenses, and the enforcement of net neutrality principles.

Trained as a historian at the University of North Carolina, Copps would bring nearly four decades of public and private sector experience to the position. He'll need all of it to deal with the coming disruptions in the media environment.

On Feb. 17, 2009, the analog broadcast signal will be shut off, turning many Americans' TVs into doorstops unless they subscribe to commercial cable or satellite services, or obtain a converter box.

and Sirius, even though the move created a monopoly in satellite radio. Copps dissented, citing, as usual, the public interest.

It's long past time such dissent became mainstream.

—Jessica Clark

Education: C.J. Prentiss

#3 AN AFRICAN AMERICAN FROM Ohio, C.J. Prentiss has the background needed to confront the key tasks of any education secretary: maintaining a focus on student achievement, closing the achievement gap and mobilizing a broad constituency to demand reform beyond the current emphasis on teaching children to fill in bubbles on standardized tests.

For more than a quarter-century, Prentiss has been a legislator, policy-maker and community activist adept at building bridges among diverse groups. She currently heads a new initiative by Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland to increase the state's graduation rate for African-American males.

Prentiss began as an organizer in the '80s, working on literacy campaigns in housing projects. She went on to serve 15 years in the Ohio legislature, rising to become the Democratic leader in the Ohio

Labor: David Bonior

#4 OBAMA'S BEST CHOICE FOR secretary of labor would be David Bonior, who from 1976 to 2002 served as the progressive congressman from the Macomb and St. Clair County suburbs outside Detroit—the famous district of Reagan Democrats. During his tenure, Bonior championed unions, opposed trade agreements like NAFTA, and criticized both President Reagan's Central American counter-insurgency policies and President Clinton's civil liberties policies.

After Michigan Republicans re-drew his district in 2000 and he lost a bid for governor two years later, Bonior became chair of American Rights at Work, a labor-sponsored coalition of non-union groups advocating worker rights, especially the freedom to organize unions.

That work bolsters his credentials for pushing one of organized labor's top legislative goals: the Employee Free Choice Act. The measure would provide for union recognition when a majority of workers in a workplace sign cards indicating they want a union, increase penalties for labor law violations and guarantee access to arbitration to establish a first contract if employers refuse to bargain seriously.

Leaders on both sides of the AFL-CIO/



Labor: David Bonior

Change To Win divide respect Bonior, who managed John Edwards' presidential campaign. Bonior's time as party whip for a decade gives him experience working with Congress for what will be a tough fight on behalf of the Employee Free Choice Act, even with a large Democratic majority. And his stature would guarantee a strong voice in Obama's Cabinet for both unions and broader workers' interests, from the local workplace to the global economy.

—David Moberg

**Attorney General:
Charles Ogletree Jr.**

#5 FOR THE POST OF attorney general in an Obama administration, Charles Ogletree Jr. would be a good choice.

Ogletree, a tireless advocate for social justice causes, is the founder and director of the Harvard Law School's Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, which focuses on issues relating to race and justice, sponsors research and provides policy analysis.

Ogletree is another one of Obama's Harvard professors-turned-adviser. He counsels the candidate on constitutional and criminal justice issues. He would be the perfect antidote to a justice department poisoned by illegal, politicized hiring, a reprehensible tolerance for torture and a refusal to enforce civil rights legislation.

Before joining the Harvard faculty in



Attorney General: Charles Ogletree Jr.

1985, Ogletree served as a public defender in the District of Columbia, a position that helped shape his focus on civil rights and criminal justice issues. He has since earned a reputation as a brilliant legal theorist.

In 1991, he was legal counsel to Anita Hill during the Senate confirmation hearings for Justice Clarence Thomas.

Ogletree has also been a prominent media presence, moderating several PBS forums and serving as a commentator on national news programs.

He is author of several books, including *From Lynch Mobs To The Killing State: Race And The Death Penalty In America* in 2006, and the 2004 book *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education*.

Ogletree is co-chair of the Reparations Coordinating Committee, a group of attorneys pursuing a legal route to reparations for descendants of enslaved Africans.

In 2000 and 2002, the *National Law Journal* named him one of the "100 Most Influential Lawyers in America."

—Salim Muwakkil

**Transportation:
Earl Blumenauer**

#6 LAST SUMMER, AS CONGRESS wrestled with energy legislation, Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) offered a simple, \$1 million proposal to encourage bike commuting. To his disbelief, the plan was ridiculed by a number of Republicans, including Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-N.C.),



Transportation: Earl Blumenauer

who called two-wheelers "a 19th century solution to a 21st century problem." In a prospective Obama administration, Blumenauer should get the last laugh.

An eco-friendly labor advocate from Portland, Blumenauer couldn't be more representative of his liberal district, which he's served since 1996. In the Oregon legislature and later on the Portland city council, Blumenauer helped direct Portland's planning renaissance, championing bike lanes, light rail and streetcars. He brought his emphasis on smart growth to Washington, advocating for high-speed rail and launching the Congressional Bike Caucus. In fact, nobody in his congressional office applies for a parking permit.

An early and vocal supporter of Obama, Blumenauer could be tapped as transportation secretary, a post that will undoubtedly grow in importance as the United States grapples with rising energy prices and climate change. He seems to be preparing for the role. In July, he co-wrote a substantive energy bill that subsidizes telecommuting, public transit and transit-friendly affordable housing.

But the biggest challenge facing the new transit guru will come next year, when Congress revisits the Transportation Bill. If Blumenauer can redirect more revenue from the nation's gas tax to alternative forms of transit, he'll be laughing his way to a future where Americans live better with less oil.

—Adam Doster

Homeland Security: Donald J. Guter

#7

RETIRED REAR ADM. DONALD J. Guter, one of the many principled military lawyers who voiced strong opposition to the failed policies of the Bush administration, would make a great secretary of homeland security.

Guter was the Navy's top lawyer from 2000 until retiring in 2002, after 32 years of service. (He was also in the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.)

One of the first insiders to challenge then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld,

FEC Chairman: Spencer Overton

#8

IF BARACK OBAMA IS elected, he would take office with arguably more knowledge about what's wrong with our current election system—and how to reform it—than any president since the framers of the Constitution. At the University of Chicago, Obama taught election law courses covering public financing, the Electoral College, proportional representation and universal voter registration. He has sponsored state legislation to establish instant runoff voting

a partisan commission. Overton would bring the passion, knowledge and civility necessary to do just that, and ensure every vote counts and every vote matters.

—Rob Richie

Secretary of Veterans Affairs: Maj. Ladda "Tammy" Duckworth

#9

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS Affairs (VA) is the federal government's second largest department (after defense). With an annual budget of

When Attorney General Michael Mukasey was mumbling murky answers about waterboarding, Donald J. Guter argued that 'waterboarding is inhumane, it is torture and it is illegal.'

Guter waged an internal battle against the military tribunal system, arguing that it was inherently unjust.

In 2003, he was one of three high-ranking military officers to file an amicus brief on behalf of detainees being held indefinitely at the U.S. Navy base at Guantánamo Bay.

Last year, when Attorney General Michael Mukasey was mumbling murky answers about the legality of waterboarding during his Senate confirmation hearings, Guter and three other retired military lawyers sent a letter to Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), arguing that "waterboarding is inhumane, it is torture, and it is illegal." He is currently dean of Duquesne University's law school.

First order of business for Guter as secretary of homeland security? Change the department's awful, Third Reich-sounding name. Next, he should work closely with the attorney general to restore the full rule of law, from which true security derives, by abolishing racial and religious profiling, repudiating programs that encroach on the privacy rights of citizens (warrantless wiretapping, spy satellites on domestic targets, and the like), and implementing a humane and equitable immigration policy.

—Moustafa Bayoumi

and federal legislation to stop deceptive electoral practices.

As a result, Obama's choice to head the Federal Election Commission (FEC), which regulates campaign finance legislation and provides a bully pulpit for improving democracy, should be a good one. He could do little better than George Washington University law professor Spencer Overton.

A visionary academic grounded in reality, Overton has served on the boards of Common Cause—a nonprofit that advocates for an open and accountable government—and of Demos—a nonpartisan public policy research and advocacy organization. He has written widely on campaign financing and knows the rules, regulations and needed reforms.

More than one in four eligible U.S. voters is unregistered to vote, and campaign finance inequities are worse than ever. Moreover, our system's winner-take-all rules make most voters spectators in presidential and congressional races.

With more than 12,000 jurisdictions making independent decisions affecting federal elections—often with limited guidance and insufficient funding—a strong FEC member is needed to revamp the country's antiquated, voice-suppressing, vote-wasting elections, and to unify

more than \$90 billion, the VA employs more than 230,000 people at hundreds of VA medical centers, clinics and benefits offices that assist many of the 60 million U.S. veterans and their families.

But the Bush administration has woefully mismanaged the department, which is suffering from overcrowded facilities, lengthy waiting lists and a backlog of disability claims. The present state of affairs is the result of poor leadership and a failure to anticipate and allocate the requisite funding to support the needs of an escalating veteran population.

According to Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Stiglitz, "The number of disability claims exceeds 600,000, with another 1.6 million claims expected in the next two years." Overcrowded VA mental health facilities cannot provide comprehensive care to the hundreds of thousands of veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress. Not surprisingly, the suicide rate among veterans and service members is the highest it has ever been.

Maj. Tammy Duckworth, a double amputee pilot of the Iraq War, has the character and credentials to serve as our nation's secretary of veterans affairs. Her years of distinguished military service and her firsthand knowledge of the VA system—she has served as director of the

Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs since 2006—would serve her well.

Duckworth is the best choice to deliver what millions of veterans need—and have failed to receive from the current administration.

—Luis Carlos Montalván

Health & Human Services: Kathleen Sebelius

#10

FOR SECRETARY OF HEALTH and human services, Obama would do well to pick Kansas Gov.

Kathleen Sebelius.

ed executive ability to fill this vital post.

—Ramón Castellblanch

Energy: Dan Reicher

#11

CLIMATE CHANGE AND AMERICA'S fossil-fuel dependency are two of the biggest challenges an

Obama administration will face. Ironically, the job of energy secretary is ill-suited for tackling them. Most of the Energy Department's \$25 billion budget goes toward maintaining the nation's nuclear-weapons stockpile and handling waste disposal—leaving only a fraction

nies have smartly laid out how better federal policy could spur trillions in private investment toward cleaner and more-efficient technologies—just the questions the department *should* be obsessing over.

—Bradford Plumer

Urban Development: Valerie Jarrett

#12

VALERIE JARRETT'S BLUE-RIBBON RÉSUMÉ delivers a potent blend of corporate, government and civic

“street cred.”

Jarrett, 51, is CEO of the Habitat Co.—a

For secretary of agriculture, Obama can call on Jim Hightower, who is best known for his crusading print and radio journalism and his pithy, punchy, populist proverbs.

Three major obstacles face the next secretary. One, tens of millions of Americans lack health insurance. Two, any attempt to deal with this crisis will result in the private insurance industry—and its lobbyists—swooping in to turn policy changes into a windfall for itself. And three, for eight years, the department has been crippled by low morale and staff departures caused by Bush administration mismanagement.

The next secretary must have the ability to help undo this damage.

Sebelius has shown independence from the healthcare industry. While serving as Kansas insurance commissioner from 1995 to 2003, she rejected an attempt by Anthem insurance company to buy out Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas. As governor, she has challenged the pharmaceutical industry by advocating for the import of prescription drugs. She also set up a state agency to work on plans to obtain better prices for prescription drugs and other healthcare services.

Sebelius has a strong background in health policy, having served on President Clinton's Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry.

Most importantly, her experience as a governor could provide her with the need-

for developing alternative energy sources. It's tough to direct a clean-energy revolution with that portfolio.

Still, there's room for improvement. Under the Bush administration, the department has abandoned many of its successful partnerships to boost efficiency and curb emissions in dirty industries, while prioritizing costly clean-coal and hydrogen fuel-cell boondoggles that have achieved little.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has voiced interest in this position, but a head-cracking superstar like him might be better slotted in a new “climate czar” role. After all, the task of de-carbonizing the U.S. economy will be so titanic that someone will need to coordinate all the different agencies—from agriculture to transportation.

The Energy Department needs a smart manager who values sound research and understands the importance of efficiency—the cheapest, quickest way to curb our carbon output. Over the past year, Dan Reicher, a former assistant secretary of energy under President Clinton, has been doing just that—as head of Google's new climate and energy fund, seeding innovative projects across the country, from geothermal research to plug-in hybrids. His recent congressional testimo-

clout-heavy Chicago real estate firm—and the court-appointed overseer of the city's massive plan to transform its notoriously decrepit public housing developments.

A lawyer by trade, Jarrett has served as Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley's deputy chief of staff and planning commissioner, and has chaired the boards of the Chicago Transit Authority and Chicago Stock Exchange.

In 1991, Jarrett recruited Obama's then-fiancée Michelle Robinson, for a job in Daley's office. But first Jarrett had to pass muster with Obama. They sealed the deal over dinner, and today, Jarrett is a tight family friend and indispensable Obama confidante.

She's well prepared for the treacheries of the Washington Beltway. Jarrett has stood down an array of Chicago characters, like cranky transit riders, vociferous public housing activists and mendacious aldermen. Friend and foe consider her a no-nonsense, astute operative.

The first woman at Housing and Urban Development's helm will need to navigate multiple threats to the American Dream of home ownership: the subprime loan debacle, an affordable-housing crisis and skyrocketing foreclosures, to name a few. Whatever her prescriptions, she'll have the president's ear.



FEC Chairman: Spencer Overton



Attorney General: Charles Ogletree Jr.



Transportation: Earl Blumenauer

Then again, Jarrett—who has been called “the other side of Obama’s brain”—may be better suited for a Karl Rove-ian role in the White House.

—Laura Washington

**Agriculture:
Jim Hightower**

#13

TWO CURRENT U.S. SENATORS would make excellent secretaries of agriculture.

One is Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa). Harkin has been a committee chair and leader on agriculture issues, opposing deregulation and favoring supply management, conservation, antitrust actions and many progressive policies—only some of which he has managed to put into law.

The other is freshman Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.), an organic farmer with a distinctive flat-top haircut. Tester is a populist who is sympathetic to environmental issues and critical of corporate globalization. He might push more comprehensive reform than Harkin would.

But here’s the problem: Both are needed in the Senate.

Luckily, Obama can call on Jim Hightower, who is best known for his crusading print and radio journalism and his pithy, punchy, populist proverbs—like his book title, “There’s nothing in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and dead armadillos.”

But the funny, feisty Hightower also knows his farm and food issues. As Texas

Agriculture Commissioner from 1983 to 1990, he promoted organic agriculture, alternative crops (like wine grapes and native plants), direct international marketing by small farmers, strong pesticide control and comprehensive environmental management.

Hightower would be a cheerfully combative complement to Obama’s ultra-cool post-partisanship (although he may have been too post-partisan for some Democrats by supporting Ralph Nader in 2000).

If Obama ever needs a Cabinet member to attack the fat cats who keep the sweet stuff for themselves on the top shelf—out of reach for the little guy—he could send Hightower, who would perform the task with glee.

—David Moberg

**Health and U.S. Trade
Representative:
Marcy Kaptur**

#14

POLLS SHOW THE PUBLIC overwhelmingly opposes America’s NAFTA-style trade policies, and Obama

has committed to reforming those policies as president. Part of doing that means naming a fair-trade voice as his lead trade negotiator—and no voice for trade reform has been more dogged than Rep. Marcy Kaptur’s (D-Ohio).

A 13-term House member, Kaptur serves on the Appropriations Committee—one of Congress’ most powerful pan-

els. As Toledo’s representative, she has seen firsthand the devastation that comes with unfair trade pacts, and has led the fight against every major lobbyist-written deal that has come through Congress—from NAFTA to China PNTR to CAFTA.

That personal connection to the trade issue would serve Kaptur well in international negotiations where compromise too often means selling out the American worker. Similarly, Kaptur’s longtime experience in the House would be critical in powering fair-trade deals through what remains a corporate-dominated Congress.

Presidents of both parties have treated the trade representative position as an ambassadorship to a banana republic, appointing go-along-to-get-along hacks—such as former Clinton campaign chairman Mickey Kantor—who use the department as a taxpayer-funded training program for their post-government career in the corporate whorehouse.

Kaptur would be far different.

—David Sirotta

**Head of EPA:
Daniel Kammen**

#15

TO HEAD THE U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Obama would make a smart choice with University of California, Berkeley, public policy professor Daniel Kammen.

A senior energy and environmental aide to the Obama campaign, Kammen is the founder and director of the school’s Re-



Health & Human Services:
Kathleen Sebelius



Energy: Dan Reicher



Agriculture: Jim Hightower

newable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory, which designs, tests and disseminates renewable energy systems for industrialized and developing nations. He is also co-director of the Berkeley Institute of the Environment, which looks at environmental problems and their solutions.

At 46, Kammen signals the kind of youthful vitality the EPA needs. And as someone outside the Washington bubble, he hasn't been tainted by the political wranglings that have screwed up U.S. environmental policies for so many years.

As someone with a background in environmental issues and a primary focus on energy, Kammen has the necessary experience to address the two-headed beast of sound energy and climate policy.

He was also a coordinating lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports, which means that, unlike the current political appointees in the EPA, Kammen is well aware of the significance and urgency of this threat.

—Kate Sheppard

**Federal Reserve
Chair: Marion or
Herbert Sandler**

#16 FIRING UP THE PRINTING press at the U.S. Mint and handing over billions in cash to Wall Street con artists isn't a serious monetary policy—but that's been Federal Reserve Chairman Ben

Bernanke's response to the housing and credit crisis. When Bernanke's term expires in 2010, either Marion or Herbert Sandler would be a welcome replacement.

Over four decades, the husband-and-wife team built Golden West Financial into one of the most stable and successful mortgage companies—and they did it through the kind of responsible lending practices that the greed-is-good crowd mocked.

As the *Wall Street Journal* reported in 2007, "Golden West historically had very low levels of bad loans, which Mr. Sandler has attributed to his bank's careful vetting of borrowers and their credit." Indeed, the *Journal* noted that the Sandlers were "frequent critic[s] of competitors who required no down payment, set interest rates that reset quickly at high rates and sold bundled loans to far-off investors." They also spoke out against "the lax lending practices that pervaded the industry for the past few years—even writing a letter to federal regulators last year in support of tighter standards." That's precisely the kind of foresight America's bank of banks desperately needs.

What's more, the Sandlers are about as progressive as bankers come—and they put their money where their politics are. Their foundation underwrites, among others, the Center for Responsible Lending and the National Women's Law Center.

A Federal Reserve chairperson with a vague familiarity with—much less a connection to—such groups would inject a

populist perspective into an institution whose secrecy and insularity has made it one of the elite's most reliable weapons in the class war.

—David Sirota

Defense: Sarah Sewall



ADMITTEDLY A LONG-SHOT CANDIDATE, Sarah Sewall should be the next defense secretary.

During the Clinton administration, Sewall served as the first deputy assistant secretary of defense for peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance.

Currently the executive director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University and a lecturer in public policy, Sewall also directs the Center's program on national security and human rights.

Sewall has worked at a variety of defense research organizations. In addition to writing the introduction to the University of Chicago edition of the *U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (2007), she has written widely on U.S. foreign policy, multilateralism, peace operations and military intervention. She currently focuses on civilians in war, facilitating dialogue between the military and human rights communities on the use of force.

One of the biggest challenges facing our country today is recognizing—and adequately responding to—the broad

spectrum of threats we face in our globalized world. That includes environmental changes and disease pandemics that are contributing to global conflicts. It also includes the weaponization of space; the proliferation of nuclear weapons; and the extravagance of bloated military budgets—while our schools crumble and nearly 46 million Americans go uninsured.

The mindless use of military might—at the expense of meaningful diplomacy—has left the United States much disliked today. America seems to have lost its moral compass and with it, the ability to lead by example—once a hallmark of our nation.

sustainable business development, durable economic policies, community entrepreneurship, worker education, and small business development for women and people of color. Prior to that, Dorfman worked for General Mills and several small enterprises.

When the U.S. Chamber of Commerce led the fight against raising the federal minimum wage in 2007, Dorfman and the Women's Chamber led the fight to raise it. "We all lose when American workers are underpaid," she said. She has been a leading voice with Business for Shared Prosperity, a national network of

oversees efforts to uphold treaty rights and agreements with the federal government. What's at stake for Native people is the right to live on healthy land, have access to clean water and maintain control over their natural resources. The department also assists Indigenous tribes in creating a sustainable future for themselves. Williams lobbied for amendments that affected tribes' water rights and tax status.

Add to this résumé Williams' membership in various bar associations—the American Bar Association, District of Columbia Bar, New Mexico Bar and the U.S. Supreme Court Bar—and she couldn't be

The mindless use of military might has left the United States much disliked today. America seems to have lost its moral compass and with it, the ability to lead by example—once a hallmark of our nation.

With Sewall's extensive background in policy, defense and national security, she understands these challenges and would work to restore American leadership.

—Jody Williams

**Commerce:
Margot Dorfman**

#18 FOR DECADES, THE DEPARTMENT of Commerce has represented the interests of the U.S. global business elite to the detriment of healthy and sustainable commerce.

Since the '80s, the department has done little to abate the destruction of Main Street enterprise, the collapse of our manufacturing base, the looting of our public infrastructure, massive global outsourcing of jobs, and rampant tax shifting to overseas tax havens.

A prospective Obama administration should nominate Margot Dorfman for secretary of commerce. Dorfman would advocate for Main Street, not Wall Street, and for business owners and employees, not absentee shareholders. She would support high-road enterprise that encourages real investment and healthy growth, not speculation, outsourcing and exploitation.

As CEO of the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce, Dorfman has supported

forward-thinking business leaders.

Sub-appointments: Van Jones, of the Ella Baker Center, to direct the Commerce Department's new "green jobs initiative," and John Arensmeyer, of Small Business Majority, to oversee the economic development administration.

—Chuck Collins

Interior: Susan Williams

#19 THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE facing the new secretary of interior will be the bureaucratic mayhem that politicians have created. Worse, many of these lawmakers still fail to recognize Native people as part of true sovereign nations, especially in relation to the United States.

Susan M. Williams—a member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota tribe—would help untangle this mess. Her commitment to the environment and her involvement in civic affairs make her an excellent choice for the post.

After getting a degree from Harvard Law School (and working there as a lecturer), Williams worked in firms committed to Native law and served on boards that focus on improving relations between the federal government and tribes.

Typically, the Interior Department

better qualified for the position.

—Winona LaDuke

**FDA Commissioner:
David Blumenthal**

#20 FOR FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION (FDA) commissioner, the pick should be Dr. David Blumenthal, director of the Institute of Health Policy at Massachusetts General Hospital and a professor at Harvard Medical School.

One of the top issues the next commissioner will face is regulating the pharmaceutical and medical-device industries.

Under the Bush administration, FDA scientists have been beset with low morale and widespread concern that they cannot do their jobs without risk of inappropriate political interference.

This decade, Blumenthal has shown independence from the pharmaceutical industry. He is a critic of detailing, drug-makers' use of salespeople to pressure physicians to prescribe their most expensive medicines. He supports government use of drug formularies, which is an effective way of negotiating lower drug prices and protecting access to needed medicines. Blumenthal also advocates for comparative effectiveness research—an approach to studying the safety and efficacy of med-

icines that could save many lives.

Blumenthal was the founding chairman of AcademyHealth, the national organization of health services researchers. From 1995 to 2002, he served as executive director for the Task Force on Academic Health Centers at the Commonwealth Fund—a foundation whose goal is to improve healthcare quality for low-income people, the uninsured, young children, people of color and the elderly.

—Ramón Castellblanch

Housing and Treasury: Elizabeth Warren

#21

IF TREASURY SECRETARIES HAVE legacies, the two with the most memorable in the last 16 years are Clinton Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin and recent Bush Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson. At different points in their careers, both men championed extremist free-trade policies, had a hand in the deregulatory policies that led to corporate meltdowns; contributed to boom-bust cycles; and spent time heading investment banking behemoth Goldman Sachs. Perhaps the latest financial meltdown will break Goldman Sachs' death grip—and maybe, just maybe, Elizabeth Warren will be the first woman to head this key department.

A renowned Harvard Law professor, Warren may seem an unconventional choice for a position typically held by a business titan. But a presidency whose economic prospects will pivot on cleaning up conservatives' laissez-faire wreckage could use a tough-minded regulator at the helm of the government apparatus responsible for collecting taxes and policing Wall Street. Warren fits that description perfectly as one of the nation's leading experts on the laws and regulations that the treasury department is supposed to enforce, but too often doesn't.

Having made national headlines as a bestselling author and a leader in the fight against the lobbyist-written Bankruptcy Bill of 2005, Warren would set a new tone for a treasury department that has often been a bought-and-paid-for appendage of Corporate America.

—David Sirota

Director of National Intelligence: Ellen Laipson

#22

FOR DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL intelligence, President Obama should nominate Ellen Laipson, president and CEO of the Henry L. Stimson Center—a nonprofit public policy institute that focuses on peace and security issues.

I worked with Laipson at Stimson for four years and I know she values the knowledge found inside the bureaucracy—even if that knowledge can be difficult to extract. As director, Laipson would modernize the institution so that the intelligence community is the best information resource in government.

From 1997 until 2002, Laipson was vice chair of the National Intelligence Council. Before that, she was special assistant to the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations. She has had stints working for the Congressional Research Service, on the policy planning staff of the State Department and as a policy director at the National Security Council, giving her an invaluable perspective on policy.

In 2000, Laipson was responsible for one of the most forward-thinking public documents on intelligence and national security: *Global Trends 2015*, which pointed out transnational threats like criminal networks and terrorism. It remains highly relevant today.

Successful intelligence gathering in the coming years will require mending international good will. In that regard, Laipson's U.N. experience will serve her well. More importantly, her expertise lies in the Middle East—especially Iran, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula.

As director of national intelligence, Laipson must restore Americans' trust in its intelligence agencies. She can do this by working to resolve concerns about torture and surveillance, by putting a stop to the privatization of intelligence, by including Congress in the dialogue, and by communicating with Americans to build mutual understanding and respect.

—Lorelei Kelly

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MOUSTAFA BAYOUMI, an associate professor of English at Brooklyn College, CUNY, is the author of *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America* (Penguin Press).

ROB RICHIE is executive director of *FairVote* (www.fairvote.org), which promotes electoral reforms that respect every voice and every vote. He is co-author of *Every Vote Equal* and *Reflecting All of Us*.

LUIS CARLOS MONTALVÁN is a former U.S. Army captain who served in the Iraq War.

RAMÓN CASTELLBLANCH is an associate professor of Health Education at San Francisco State. He also represents labor and retiree groups in the California legislature.

BRADFORD PLUMER is an assistant editor at *The New Republic*, where he writes on energy and the environment.

LAURA WASHINGTON is a columnist and senior editor at *In These Times*.

KATE SHEPPARD is the political reporter for *Grist.org*, and frequently contributes to *In These Times*.

JODY WILLIAMS received the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, as did the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (www.icbl.org). She currently chairs the Nobel Women's Initiative (www.nobelwomensinitiative.org).

CHUCK COLLINS is a senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies where he coordinates the Working Group on Extreme Inequality (www.extremeinequality.org).

WINONA LADUKE is a White Earth Ojibwe tribal member who lives and works on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. She is a two-time U.S. vice presidential candidate, serving as Ralph Nader's running mate and representing the Green Party.

LORELEI KELLY is policy director of the Real Security Initiative at the White House Project (www.thewhitehouseproject.org).

No Jobs Make Mean Streets

As urban economies collapse, gun violence rises

BY JAMES THINDWA



In urban areas like Chicago, declining job prospects have correlated closely with rising violence.

MICHAEL DANIELS/MICHAEL WITTEBS

WHEN ANTHONY HAYDIN woke up on June 30, he did not imagine his street would be the scene of one of Chicago's most deadly shootings. Three people had been shot in an apartment right across the street from his. Police said the victims had been murdered in a "gang-and-drug related shooting."

On July 13, just hours after guns claimed the lives of three more people in separate incidents, the Rev. Robin Hood, a Chicago community activist, lashed out.

"No one should be surprised by all this shooting going on in Chicago," he said. "Our schools are crumbling, young people—especially young black people—have no jobs and don't have any hope. Politicians don't want to bring good jobs or make businesses pay us a decent wage. What do you expect?"

After a 30 percent decline in the last decade, gun-related violence is again on the rise in many urban centers, with a disproportionate impact on young black males. On July 20, the weekly *Chicago Defender* reported that gang activity is playing a role in the escalation of gun violence. This summer, the paper noted, "Several teens on the South Side were gunned down, apparently caught in gang crossfire." The paper described the "makeshift memorials of balloons, stuffed animals, flowers and poster boards with written sentiments" that have become commonplace on South Side streets.

But gun violence, like other ills plaguing urban communities, is a symptom of economic problems that have festered for decades.

In his 1996 book *When Work Disappears*, Harvard sociologist Julius Wilson wrote: "Many of today's problems in

the inner-city ghetto neighborhoods—crime, family dissolution, welfare, low levels of social organization and so on—are fundamentally a consequence of a disappearance of work."

Wilson argues that the loss of jobs, and the resulting increase in unemployment, leads to the breakdown of the social and cultural institutions that hold a community together.

After nearly 30 years of conservative discourse that promotes incarceration as the solution, local governments must resuscitate the idea that jobs and economic revival are the antidotes to crime. Such a revival is needed—and possible, given favorable political winds—because a confluence of factors is exacerbating the turmoil in inner cities, with disastrous implications.

Neoliberal cities

As economic prospects worsen, low-

income Americans are getting desperate. Unemployment is chronic—40 percent of black males and 38 percent of black females between 16 and 19 years old are jobless—and the federal safety net is vanishing.

America's big cities have failed to lift their inner-city communities out of poverty.

Jason Hackworth, a professor of geography and urban planning at the University

of Toronto, blames neoliberalism, which he defines as "an ideological rejection of egalitarian liberalism." In *The Neoliberal City*, a study of Chicago, New York City, Phoenix, Seattle and other cities, Hackworth maintains that neoliberal economic policies—gentrification, spending cuts, corporate tax giveaways, low wages and privatization—have left longtime and low-income residents defenseless in a hostile economic landscape.

If cities are to weather the country's economic storm, politicians must pass reforms. Nowhere is it written that people cannot—or should not—earn enough to enter the middle class.

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Add to this mix a gun industry newly energized by the Supreme Court—whose *D.C. v. Heller* decision overturned Washington, D.C.'s ban on handgun possession—and urban gun violence becomes an immediate threat.

Desperation and violence

Interest in the reciprocal relationship between violence and economic deprivation is not new. Writing in the *American Sociological Review* in 1938, famed sociologist Robert King Merton noted that people who are denied access to the legitimate means of achieving "our culturally legitimated goal of financial success" may turn to illegitimate means to reach that goal.

Decades later, not much has changed.

Amartya Sen, the 1998 Nobel Prize-winning economist, wrote in *Development as Freedom*:

There is plenty of evidence that unemployment has many far-reaching effects other than loss of income, including psychological harm, loss of work motivation, skill and self-confidence, increase in ailments and mor-

bidity (and even mortality rates), disruption of family relations and social life, hardening of social exclusion and accentuation of racial tensions and gender asymmetries.

In other words, what we are seeing in America's urban centers is desperation being played out in violent activity. And if there is going to be long-term, sustainable solutions, Americans must de-

mand a more honest and comprehensive analysis of gun violence—and crime in general.

City leaders have responded by marshalling law enforcement, calling for better parenting and pushing "personal responsibility." Politicians have also asked community "partners"—crime prevention and awareness groups such as CeaseFire in Chicago—to mobilize. These groups educate residents about violence prevention, hold rallies to pressure lawmakers and conduct direct intervention through peer counseling and mentoring programs.

In April, after 40 people in Chicago were shot—12 killed—in one week, Mayor Richard M. Daley convened an emergency summit with police, community leaders and religious leaders, to address gun violence.

At a May 10 press conference, the mayor railed against the gun lobby and lectured parents on taking responsibility for their children: "We live in a society that seems to downplay the importance of parental or adult responsibility." Based on the location of the shootings, the mayor clearly was addressing African-American parents.

But the violence has grown only worse. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, for the first seven months of 2008, murders rose 18 percent over the same period in 2007—from 246 deaths to 291. Murders rose 9 percent—or up from 266 deaths—over the same period in 2006. In July 2008 alone, the death toll was 62.

Daley's response was notable for what

it lacked—any acknowledgment that many black families are caught in a low-wage economy, and that the nation's most violent neighborhoods also suffer the highest unemployment.

In his 2002 study of world gangs, Missouri State University criminologist and social researcher Michael Carlie wrote that gang-dominated neighborhoods in the United States "may be characterized as having a disproportionate number of residents who are unemployable, unemployed or underemployed." Such neighborhoods, he noted, "are characterized by a lack of economic opportunities, poverty, inadequate city services, struggling school systems and are home to a significant segment of the city's minority populations."

According to the Illinois Department of Employment Security, black unemployment in Chicago stands at 10.9 percent, five times that of whites and one of the highest in the country. The national unemployment rate is 6.1 percent.

A national pattern

In 2007, when Baltimore achieved the status of second deadliest city in the nation, government and civic leaders mobilized.

Mayor Sheila Dixon formed a task force on illegal guns and installed a system that tracks guns that have been used in crimes. Her crime-fighting strategy centered on four basic steps: report a crime, prevent a crime, track crime, speak out. Dixon's "prevention," however, involves programs such as "operation crime watch" and "start-a-citizens-on patrol," but no mention of good jobs.

Like Chicago, Baltimore is embroiled in a protracted debate about the economic direction of the city. Labor and community groups oppose development policies that favor big business and ignore community interests. Business groups want to direct city resources into the downtown area for development projects, such as parking garages, luxury housing, retail and conversion of abandoned factories into high-tech office space.

Led by UNITE HERE!, a coalition called Baltimoreans' Forum on Responsible Development emerged to challenge the city's use of public funds to finance

private development. On July 29, the group held its first meeting. “The community response has been great” Jessica Turner, a union research analyst who helped to organize the meeting, told the *Baltimore Sun*. “We had more than 100 community members, and I think four city council members.”

Residents testified in opposition to city subsidies for a redevelopment project planned for Westport, a working-class neighborhood in South Baltimore. They also attacked plans for City Center—a \$750 million downtown hotel, condo and retail complex slated for completion in 2012.

Greg LeRoy, executive director of Good Jobs First, a national nonprofit research group that promotes “smart growth” and “accountable development,” decried the city council for not “linking these big downtown developments to tangible benefits in the neighborhoods.”

In its study of Baltimore’s development strategy, Good Jobs First noted that “the city has neglected to enact standards to ensure that the new tourism jobs are of high quality” and that most of the new jobs are low wage, part time and “pay less than the federal poverty line for a family of four.”

In Philadelphia, the situation is not much different. Although the city’s aggressive law enforcement has helped reduce gun deaths—from 417 between August 2006 and July 2007, to 334 between August 2007 to July 2008—community activists say that poverty and joblessness, complicated by a flood of guns, threaten the progress Philadelphia has made in reducing violence.

Fabricio Rodriguez who heads Philadelphia Jobs With Justice, a national workers’ rights organization, says law enforcement and community intervention strategies do make a difference, but “they don’t deal with structural problems that impede change.” [Disclosure: I am the executive director of the Chicago chapter of Jobs With Justice.]

Rodriguez says that the city focuses too much on individualized job training programs. “These are useful,” he says, but “collective solutions that involve organized workers are both empowering and create lasting change.”

“We have to turn these service-sector jobs into good-paying jobs, and one

way is to organize those workers. People should be able to enter the middle class working at Wal-Mart.”

Nowhere is the failure of urban politicians more evident than in their complicity in the false narrative—carefully orchestrated by corporate leaders—that service-sector jobs are inherently low wage. This claim is contrived to make it “unrealistic” for local communities to demand decent wages or persuade corporations to make community investments.

Indeed, the “low wage” narrative is increasingly difficult to make, especially in the era of obscene wealth and income gaps. A recent report by the Institute for Policy Studies and United for a Fair Economy, two nonprofit groups, showed that the average CEO of a large U.S. company made \$10.8 million last year. That’s 364 times what the average worker made. Target Corporation Chairman and CEO Robert Ulrich alone made \$20 million.

Same playbook

In the early 1900s, factory jobs—those now referred to as “good paying” manufacturing jobs—were the jobs of the poor. They were dangerous and dirty. But with unionization and changes in public policy,

they became middle-class jobs.

Today, if cities are going to weather the economic storms engulfing the country, urban politicians must follow the same playbook. Nowhere is it written that people who work service-sector jobs cannot, or should not, earn enough to enter the middle class.

As the service sector grows, municipal officials must reevaluate their relationship with these employers, who are, in many respects, captive to the city. The service industry, which includes retail stores, hotels, parking garages and restaurants, is dependent upon the purchasing power of American consumers. Cities can—and must—require these employers to pay higher wages and recognize the right of workers to organize. That must be a cornerstone to any long-term crime-prevention strategy.

An outraged citizenry has the right to demand that elected officials do more than attend the funerals of their loved ones or send condolence cards. They must act aggressively to rebuild the employment infrastructure of abandoned neighborhoods, so as to prevent the lure of gangs and the lure of guns.

Jobs save lives. ■

The Labor Movement and Progressive Politics In the Post-Bush Era

a Panel Discussion featuring

Bill Fletcher, Jr., past President of the Trans Africa Forum and Education Director and Assistant to the President of the AFL-CIO. Co-author, with Fernando Gapasin of *SOLIDARITY DIVIDED The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path Toward Social Justice*.

co panelists:

Richard Berg, President, Teamsters Local 743

David Moberg, Senior Editor, *In These Times*

Kim Bobo, Executive Director, Interfaith Worker Justice
will moderate

Wednesday, October 1st, 7:30 p.m.

UE Hall ~ 37 South Ashland ~ 1st floor ~ Chicago, IL

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Chicago Democratic Socialists of America (773 384 0327)

Back for the Future

Progressives at the Democratic National Convention look to FDR as a model for an Obama presidency

BY DAVID MOBERG

DENVER—IN POLITICS, TIME IS complicated. It's a mix of clinging to the past (often more imagined than real), fulfilling the demands of the present and looking to the hopes of the future. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), having learned the lesson from former President Bill Clinton, focused on the future as he accepted the Democratic presidential nomination in Denver.

Yet the discussions on the fringes of the convention often returned to another era: the 1930s. Progressives pointed to a panoply of problems facing the country: deepening economic downturn, environmental and economic crises based on our dependence on oil, record economic inequality, a broken healthcare system, and inadequate public investment in education and infrastructure.

Redressing these failings will require a "transformational presidency," like that of Franklin D. Roosevelt, as journalist Robert

Kuttner argues in his new book, *Obama's Challenge*. They will require the "next New Deal," according to U.S. Action, a coalition of statewide citizen organizations.

But it's not just the Democratic left that sees the present through the prism of a New Deal past. According to pollster Anna Greenberg, more voters see the present as a moment comparable to the '30s than as a time comparable to the '70s or '90s.

Obama addressed that hunger for dramatic change. "America," he said in accepting the nomination, "now is not the time for small plans."

Obama's plans are large, though perhaps not large enough to deal with the challenges facing the next president. But, as Kuttner argues, Obama has an ability to build alliances and to inspire the public that could enable him to take bolder steps once in office. That is, if the depth of crisis and pressure from progressives push him toward transformational reform.

But conventional wisdom, often even

among Democrats, denies the possibility of grand government action that makes most people's lives better. That wisdom, according to Kuttner, says: There's no money. Government doesn't work, except to cut taxes. It must bow before private markets.

Obstacles to dramatic action apparent at the convention included corporate influence and political "smallism"—what AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka calls the tendency to tinker rather than transform. At a Rocky Mountain Roundtable forum on infrastructure needs, even sympathetic Democratic leaders such as Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro lamented that they couldn't possibly pass a new gasoline tax or establish a capital budget to fund public works investment, let alone to develop new energy, transportation and communications systems.

Another forum on healthcare, sponsored by Families USA, a health reform group, and the Service Employees union (SEIU), presented advocates of universal



A spectator waves an American flag on day four of the Democratic National Convention at Invesco Field in Denver.

MAX WHITAKER/GETTY IMAGES

health insurance. But one critic contended that the forum reflected reformers who were willing to let insurance and medical corporations dictate what sort of “universal” insurance would be acceptable.

And at a party thrown by trade groups, such as the Business Software Alliance, and high-tech companies such as Google—which see potential profits in the Democrats’ energy and education reforms—lobbysts insisted that the federal government would have to keep taxes low, permit more temporary work visas for tech workers, and should not expect much high-tech manufacturing to occur in the United States.

Jumping the first hurdle

Despite such barriers to bold action, they will be moot if Obama doesn’t jump the first hurdle: getting elected. And that’s far from certain. But Obama and his campaign began doing several things around the time of the convention that both the campaign and supporters will have to escalate before the election.

First, taking on Sen. John McCain more aggressively, tying him to President Bush, discrediting his maverick claims and, most of all, making clear how his policies will hurt most Americans. Second, responding more vigorously to attacks, such as the effective, if silly, attempt to portray Obama as an empty celebrity. Third, and most importantly, taking on the corporate and political powers that have enriched the few at the expense of the many, and spelling out how an Obama administration could transform the daily lives of average Americans.

A strong whiff of economic populism was present in Obama’s acceptance speech, but it was not enough—nor early enough in the campaign—to attract key voters.

Then there are white, mainly male, working-class or “middle-class” voters with little or no college education. These voters have an economic interest in voting Democratic. Yet in recent presidential elections, Democrats have not won majorities of the white working class, as typically defined. But some recent polls suggest signs of hope.

Pollster Stan Greenberg recently returned to Macomb County, Mich., an ardently Democratic, working-class, white suburb of Detroit in the ’60s that turned

into the archetypal home of Reagan Democrats in the ’80s, then swung back to being a virtual draw between the parties in the last two presidential elections.

Greenberg found Obama trailing McCain by 7 percentage points in Macomb (though leading statewide and among all voters under 40 in Michigan, including Macomb). Race plays a role with older Reagan

A strong whiff of economic populism was present in Obama’s acceptance speech, but it might not be enough—nor early enough in the campaign—to attract key voters.

Democrats not supporting Obama, but not as strongly as it did in decades past.

Greenberg thinks that Obama could win more than a third of these wayward Democrats if he makes it clear he wants to be president for all the country (not mainly African-Americans), connects better with middle-class anger about economic conditions, and allays their doubts about his national security credentials.

According to Greenberg, these voters “remain open to Obama because they are desperate for change and a middle-class America where the American worker is center stage again.” Their biggest economic concern, more than high gas, food and healthcare costs, is outsourced jobs. But, Greenberg writes, “These voters are finding his project disconnected from their central struggle.”

McCain has a perhaps insurmountable edge with these voters on national security, but Obama has not yet taken advantage of McCain’s ardent support for NAFTA-style agreements to make the case that he will push new rules for the global economy.

Looking only at non-supervisory actively employed workers, pollster Celinda Lake, in a survey for the Change to Win labor federation, found that in August, Obama led 53 percent to 34 percent, but was in a virtual tie with McCain among white workers. Yet she found that 79 percent of Reagan Democrats—identified broadly as Democratic voters sympathetic to the view that “government is the problem, not the solution”—favored Obama to only 6 percent for McCain.

The testimonials from white workers that preceded Obama’s acceptance speech addressed their economic anxieties. The campaign should run ads non-stop of Indiana factory worker Barney Smith, laid off when his job was shipped overseas, telling the final night’s crowd, “America can’t afford more of the same. We need a president who puts the Barney Smiths be-

fore the Smith Barneys.”

‘The urgency of now’

Much of the work of reaching workers—white and non-white alike—will fall to the labor movement, which still reaches roughly a quarter of all voting households. Unions have geared up for a more ambitious campaign than ever, intensifying their efforts at workplaces, in walks through working-class neighborhoods, and with targeted phone, mail and Internet messages.

In this election, unions can also mobilize the votes of the 2.5 million members of Working America, the community affiliate of the AFL-CIO that signs up support for labor’s agenda among working-class families that do not include members of unions. Working America can double the number of union households that canvassers can contact in many neighborhoods. And despite divisions in the national labor movement, unions at the local level still largely cooperate on those labor walks.

For Obama to win in November, he and his supporters must clearly draw the lines: McCain represents the continuation of policies that favor the rich and powerful at the expense of the country and the vast majority; Obama offers hope for a “new new Deal” for America’s working families in the midst of a crisis much different from, but in many ways just as serious, as Americans faced in the ’30s.

That brings past, present and future together in what Obama, quoting the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., often describes as “the fierce urgency of now.” ■

You Can't Be President

The decrepit state of American democracy

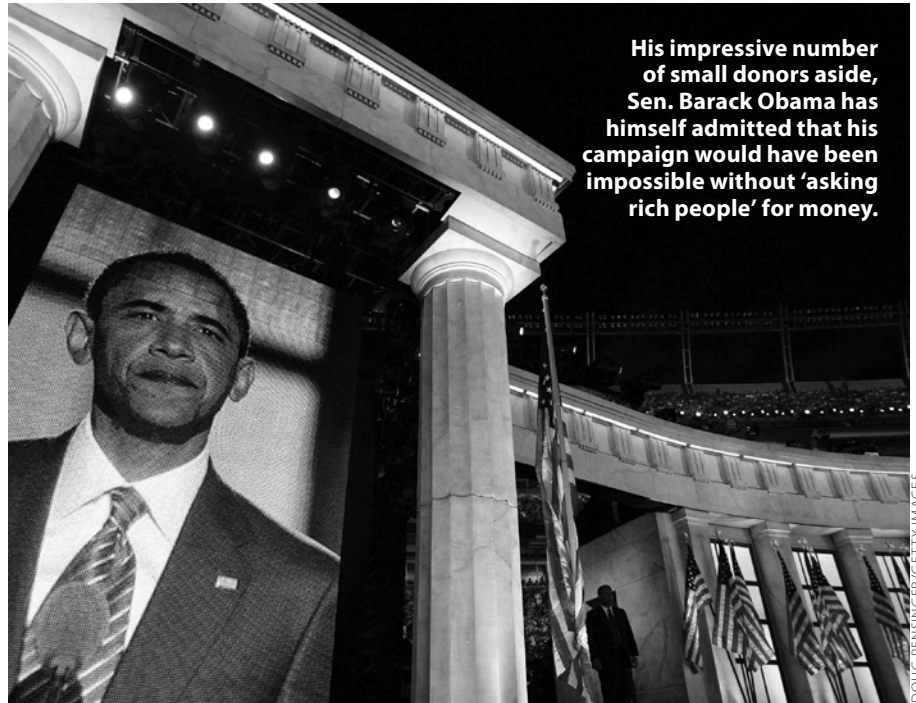
BY JOHN R. MACARTHUR

IN THE LATE SPRING of 2007, I found myself in a Manhattan playground in the midst of what can only be described as a children's riot. Moving to protect my younger daughter from the mob, I wound up surrounded by kids firing squirt guns and hurling water balloons at a boy who appeared to be the target of an organized attack. The wild intensity of the conflict made me curious, enough to ask the boy, while he fended off his assailants from the upper platform of a jungle gym, to explain his plight. He shouted his reply: "They're rebelling against me because I'm the dictator!"

So far so good, I thought. At least these 11- and 12-year-old Americans still understood the spirit of democracy. Unfortunately, I wasn't so sure about their parents. Granted, there were lots of prominent adults, ranging from political right to left, who continued to profess their faith in America as a functioning democracy committed to its Constitution. However, there was plenty of evidence to contradict their optimism.

Some pessimists might, for example, cite the disputed 2000 presidential vote count in Florida. Others could point to the Bush administration's frequent resort to torture and "rendition" of terrorist suspects, warrantless domestic spying, and presidential "signing statements" intended to nullify the will of Congress as evidence of a decline in U.S. democracy—and a commensurate rise in an imperial presidency.

But these skeptical voices, while significant, still formed a distinct minority. Most established commentators remained insistently upbeat about what they viewed as a fundamental, almost genetically coded American devotion to self-government and freedom—a profound faith that any damage caused by President Bush to the



constitutional system was somehow automatically self-correcting.

Typical are the editors of *Junior Scholastic* magazine. In a Sept. 3, 2007, article titled "Could You Be President?" the magazine's editors outlined what they said were the basic requirements for the job of "President/Chief Executive." According to *Junior Scholastic*, "The presidency has been called the world's toughest job," in part because of the "immense responsibility" of being "the leader of the free world."

But as hard as it is to *be* president, the editors clearly wanted to suggest that virtually anyone could *become* president.

Employing the format of a help-wanted advertisement, the article asked, "Before you decide whether or not to run, let's take a closer look at our ad—and the Constitution." True, as *Junior Scholastic* writer Kathy Wilmore explained, "you

might get" the idea "looking at the presidents we've had so far" that the Oval Office was off limits to vast sectors of the population: "All but one have been white male Protestants. (The exception, John F. Kennedy, was Catholic.)" But, according to Wilmore, this was no reason to be discouraged, since the wide-open eligibility rules under the Constitution had caused the current presidential campaign to be "more diverse than ever before."

To underscore this multicultural melting pot of presidential potential, *Junior Scholastic* included a photo depicting a young black female student with long braids, right hand raised above a lectern affixed with the presidential seal, as she "finds out how it feels to take the oath of office."

Still, while I don't doubt that the people at *Junior Scholastic* mean well, their cheerful discussion about access to the

highest office in the land only reinforces what is increasingly a destructive national delusion—that widespread, up-from-the-ground, truly popular democracy, both political and economic, really exists in America. I suppose we can be grateful that such a deep and abiding faith in the possibility of equality and self-government survives against such great odds.

At the same time, however, we should be alarmed by political propaganda that exploits the sort of naive assumptions promoted by both popular children's magazines and university professors. I'm all for hope, audacious or otherwise, but I'm opposed to wishful thinking in dire times. Saying that anyone can be president—or that Americans remain “resolutely democratic in bearing and aspiration”—is a bit like expressing a belief in the literal existence of Santa Claus.

The latest Pollyannaish narrative about the triumph of popular democracy focused on the savage duel between Sens. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, finally won by Obama in early June, on the night of the South Dakota and Montana primaries. Since the “*Could You Be President?*” issue of *Junior Scholastic* was published, Obama, with overt reference to Lincoln's own life, seemed to revive the hopes of authentic democratic choice. As the primary season wore on, the junior senator from Illinois was increasingly portrayed in the media as the “people's choice,” versus the junior senator from New York, who was, at least at the outset, clearly favored by the majority of state and national party bosses, foremost among them her husband.

But Obama's experience as a community organizer among the poor, mixed with his carefully blended rhetoric of populism and national unity, belied his impeccable establishment credentials. One need only examine their fierce competition for money to understand why Obama's idealistic-sounding campaign slogan, “Yes, we can!,” rings so hollow when contrasted with the political facts of life.

“Yes, we can!”—a softer, blander ver-

Adapted from You Can't Be President: The Outrageous Barriers to Democracy in America by John R. MacArthur. Published by Melville House.

sion of Howard Dean's 2004 campaign slogan, “You have the power!”—implies that ordinary people can determine their own political fate. Certainly Obama's early success at raising money in sums of \$200 or less (an estimated 625,000 such contributions compared with 210,000 for Clinton through January 2008, according to the Campaign Finance Institute) supported the argument that his was the more popular candidacy.

But this overlooks Obama's genuine experience as an organization man who posed little threat to business as usual in Washington. To read Obama's list of top 20 contributors—prominent bank, media, law-firm and corporate contributors, 11 of whom were also in Clinton's top 20—was to see a man already deeply compromised by the exigencies of power politics.

In his book *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama acknowledges that a successful campaign proclaiming, “Yes, we can!” isn't feasible in modern American politics without a huge amount of money to pay for the amplifiers.

“Money can't guarantee victory—it can't buy passion, charisma, or the ability to tell a story,” he writes. “But without money, and the television ads that consume all the money, you are pretty much guaranteed to lose. Absent great personal wealth, there is basically one way of raising the kind of money involved in a U.S. Senate race. You have to ask rich people for it.”

In his speech announcing his candidacy for president in Springfield, Ill., Obama alluded to Lincoln's famous “House Divided” speech—which highlighted the toxic split between slaveholding states and free states—to buttress his call for the country to “stand together.” But if one looked at the millions pouring into his campaign coffers from Wall Street and K Street, it was hard to know what sort of house Obama wanted to live in and on which side of town. Was it the house down the street or the house of J. P. Morgan?

The health of the herd

And what of us, the democratic people, so alienated from their government that barely half of us can be stirred to vote in any presidential election? From what I can see, the passion for “homeland security”

seems inexorably to be replacing the passion for a self-governing homeland.

In this observation I find support in Alexis de Tocqueville's celebrated second volume of *Democracy in America* (published in 1840, five years after the first).

The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent, and guided: men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting: such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.

When I survey the political landscape of contemporary America, I fear that what Tocqueville warned against has come true.

We now have a reckless, authoritarian president impervious to the will of Congress, and, more important, the will of the people; a Congress unwilling to defy the president; candidates in collusion with the money interests; an apathetic, consumption-obsessed citizenry that has lost the habit of exercising power.

Some would say that the best treatment for such a weakness in the body politic is an election, but as the next one approaches, I find myself returning to Tocqueville's darkest reflections:

It is in vain to summon a people, which has been rendered so dependent on the central power, to choose from time to time the representatives of that power; this rare and brief exercise of their free choice, however important it may be, will not prevent them from gradually losing the faculties of thinking, feeling, and acting for themselves, and thus gradually falling below the level of humanity.

And we might add, falling below the level of self-governing adulthood.

In 1777, Thomas Paine issued a rhetorical challenge to colonists anxious about the wisdom of separation from England: “To know whether it be the interest of the continent to be independent, we need only ask this easy, simple question: Is it the interest of a man to be a boy all his life?”

Without reference to gender, we would do well to pose the same question to ourselves in our capacity as democratic citizens: Do we really want to run our own government? ■

BY KEVIN COVAL

Hip-Hop's Planet Rocker

Afrika Bambaataa is legend in the world of hip-hop: an Afro-Futurist in the tradition of musician Sun Ra; a radical democrat and organizer; a sound-system blaster; a South Bronx DJ; a former leader of the street organization The Black Spades; and

father of the gang-structured, non-violent, community-minded Universal Zulu Nation.

Known as the Master of Records—for his broad musical tastes and rare, hard-to-find breaks—Bambaataa challenged and changed the sonic landscape of a de-industrializing South Bronx in the late '70s.

While midtown Manhattan was sniffing disco, in uptown innovating black DJs with West Indian roots were playing James Brown beats in succession.

Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash and Bambaataa brought new flavor and familiar funk to the block parties, high school gymnasiums and community centers, before spreading their sound to other boroughs—and soon, the planet.

In 1982, Afrika Bambaataa and his crew, Soul Sonic Force, put out *Planet Rock*, which, on vinyl, captured the blend of genres Bambaataa was creating in New York. He called it Electro-Funk—a mixture of funk and rock breaks, synthesized melodies, video game explosions, and samples from unconventional sources, such as '50s commercial jingles and the German electro group, Kraftwerk. The success of *Planet Rock* sent Bambaataa and his crew around the world, thrust into the role of hip-hop missionaries.

In *These Times* spoke with Bambaataa, now in his 50s, at the Smart Bar in Chicago. He discussed the origins of Electro-Funk, politics and how Sly and the

Family Stone revolutionized music.

The depth of your influences is so rich—where does that come from?

First, I have to give credit to the Supreme Force and then to my mother, who was well-versed in different music. Then I have to give it to myself for diggin' in the crates and, now, in the electronic type crates via the Internet.

So your mother had a lot of different kinds of music in the house?

A lot of different music: rock to old soul and, of course, you know James Brown all ways rules. Temptations. Motown. Staxx.

Once I started buying my own records, I got into the style of Sly and the Family Stone. That's when the whole thing started changing—really, the whole of black music, or the whole of music. There was the music before Sly and then there is music after Sly.

Motown and everybody had to change after Sly. Even the Godfather of Soul [James Brown] had to go into a different direction.

What was it about Sly that made everyone change?

Sly really funk'd stuff up. It was the first multicultural band, and the energy when they came on stage ... they was busting up a lot of groups.

If you look at the whole Woodstock thing, when they came on, the whole place got crazy lit up.

Motown groups started changing to the funk. Sly was a pre-dater to the funk. Sly,

James [Brown] and Uncle George Clinton from Parliament Funkadelic, those three were really my main influences.

***Planet Rock* took hip-hop from regional phenomena to national and international audiences. How did it become your introduction to the planet?**

When I first did it, I was making it for the punk rock people and the soul people who liked to funk. I didn't know it was going to stretch into all different type of nationalities and races.

The record started taking me around the world and breaking down barriers in places that didn't know nothing about hip-hop. And that was a struggle in itself. In different parts of Europe and Asia, you perform and people would just sit there. So we had to break it down. Go to Italy and grab people. "Get your butt up. Get up on stage, get down, shake it." Grab the kids, and make it seem fun.

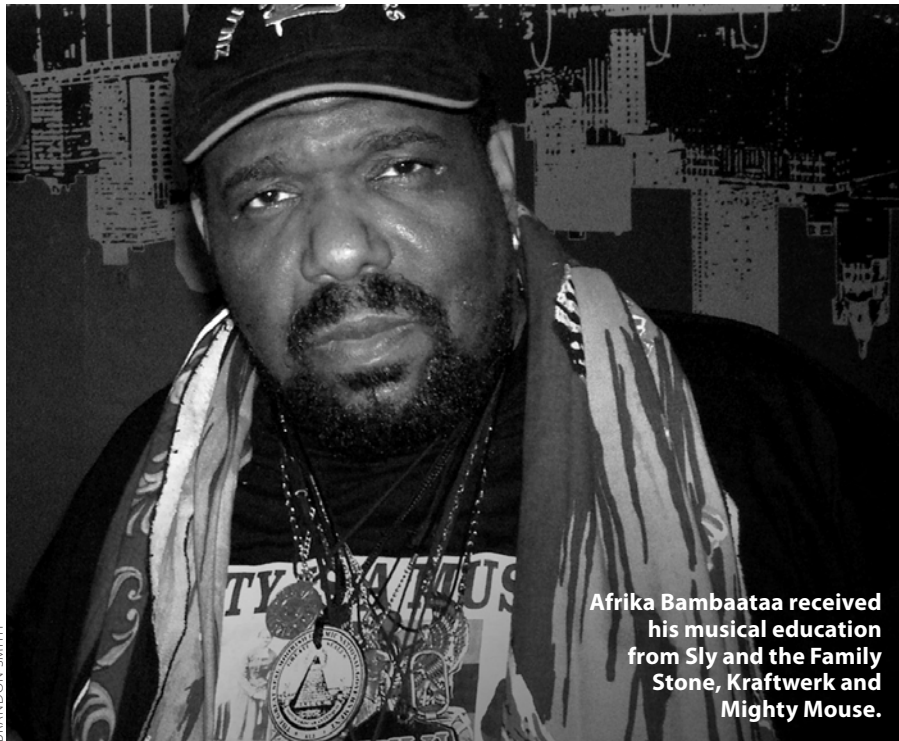
Sometimes when I threw up the funk sign, they thought it meant you were taxing somebody's mother, so we had to show them, "No, no, this is part of the funk."

You had to break down the meaning of all that and people eventually starting getting into it.

One of the prominent samples on *Planet Rock* is from Kraftwerk's *Trans-Europe Express*. What did you think when you first heard them?

I was digging in the crates and saw these four guys that looked real strange. They looked bugged out on this cover. I took the record home and I heard that wild sound. I was already into Yellow Magic Orchestra [a Japanese electro-pop band]. Then I heard these guys and I thought this was some other type of shit here. I said, "I am going to try this with my audience."

I started playing it and people were getting into it. And the more I played it at the different jams, it became a household—a



BRANDON SMITH

Afrika Bambaataa received his musical education from Sly and the Family Stone, Kraftwerk and Mighty Mouse.

big, gymnasium-hold—party record.

I just started going Kraftwerk-crazy, getting all the old albums before *Trans-Europe Express*. I mixed that side of the family with the funk side of the family and then came the birth of Electro-Funk.

You said *Planet Rock* was made, in part, for punk kids. What was that era in the late '70s-early '80s-New York like, when downtown met uptown?

I was already playing in rock clubs downtown. And a lot of punk rockers were starting to come uptown. The media was waiting for black and white youths to kill each other, but it was the music that crossed that barrier.

The punk rockers came in and started doing the punk rock dance, and you see black, Puerto Rican kids learning how to do their dance. Some laughed at it first, but then it became [incorporated into] dance in the community. Then [the punk kids] learned how to do the hip-hop stuff—the wop and other dances—and they just started crossing barriers.

We started playing downtown at Negril and The Danceateria and The Jefferson Club. Everyone was just having a good time. And our name started stretching out even further, and all these different people started coming to my party.

Once we got in The Roxy, it was over. Everybody who came to New York City had to stop at The Roxy to see Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation.

Your ability, innovation and practice of the mix, is it because you are a product of a post-industrial New York? Is it a trait of African diasporic culture, the ability to take seemingly disparate things and make a whole out of them?

You got to be musically inclined and have a love of music and not get caught up that this person is from that race and that nationality. All that shit is irrelevant. If it's good, it's good.

When we grew up, most of us might say we didn't know nothing about classical [music]. But we loved classical music from watching Bugs Bunny or the Road Runner. During the chase scenes, you hear classical songs. You hear opera in Mighty Mouse.

I've heard different types of music from other people in different languages, so I was never scared to play all this music in front of my audience.

As my audience became more international, I'd keep playing things and people would say, "ell, I don't like no metal. I don't like that funk." And I'd take them on a musical journey and say, "Well, you just danced to some house music, you

just danced to some salsa."

Your social and political thought is as deep as your record crates. How did you create such a complex consciousness?

Seeing so much, witnessing things in my community: the teaching of the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm X. Minister Farrakhan. The Black Panther Party. Hearing John Lennon, all the instant karma and power of the people. And, of course, the great Sly and the Family Stone. I just started incorporating all of that into my thoughts.

Once we began speaking to different people from around the globe, that played a key role to building the Zulu Nation.

People might tell us how it was in Italy. Or people tell you what was happening back in Africa, where people had the misconception that it was the dark continent, and then you find out that it is the mother and father of all civilizations. Then you learn the true history of the Americas.

You are seeing all this—all the lies people try to hide from each other. That played a big role. When you go to each country and really meet the people and learn what's really going on.

I wasn't one of those stars that stayed inside the hotel. I went to people's homes. And that lady became Mama Zulu of Germany, this one became Mama Zulu of France, one in the West Indies and another one in South America.

Is hip-hop responsible for producing this cultural moment that makes the prospect of electing Barack Obama possible?

Hip-hop played a key role, but you have to look at not just one genre. House, techno, electro—seeing people start accepting other genres, inter-mingling when they are in clubs, some getting into various political organizations.

You've still got the closed-minded people, but you have a lot of people who might say they are this or that, and then adapt to something else [when] they talk to people.

It is that time when more people are accepting that we are not alone. But hip-hop has brought more people together than all the politicians put together. ■

KEVIN COVAL is author of the forthcoming *Everyday People* (EM Press, November) and *Slingshots* (A Hip-Hop Poetica). He teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Andre Benjamin from *Outkast* stars as Django, a protester in the new film *Battle in Seattle*.

COURTESY OF REDWOOD PALMS PICTURES

BY BRIAN COOK

Sleepwalking Through *Seattle*

About halfway through *Battle in Seattle*, writer/director Stuart Townsend's cinematic dramatization of the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle, a group of activists are watching a local TV station's coverage of the explosive events

on the streets. Upon hearing the confrontations between the protesters and the police dubbed "The Battle in Seattle," one of the activists derisively scoffs, "Battle in Seattle? Sounds like a monster truck show!"

The statement's implicit critique—of a mainstream media that prefers hyping the salacious rather than examining the substance of complex events, thus reducing them to simplistic, binary clashes—is on-target. But it's hard to overlook that this scornful line is delivered in a film that is itself titled "Battle in Seattle."

It's a microcosm for the film as a whole—a well-intentioned effort that ultimately misses the mark, covering its unconventional subject within a drearily conventional framework.

Battle in Seattle sounds like the type of movie

that would warm the cockles of any leftist's (or anarchist's) heart. First-time director Townsend—an actor who you might (or might not) remember from such films as *The Best Man* and *Queen of the Damned*—has clearly done his homework. Though his film is not a documentary, Townsend does a good job outlining the consequences of the labor, environmental, agricultural and patent-law issues at stake in the WTO negotiations.

His protagonists are four direct-action protesters, played by Martin Henderson, Jennifer Carpenter, Michelle Rodriguez and Andre Benjamin, of the band OutKast. Townsend sketches them sympathetically (perhaps *too* sympathetically), accurately portrays some of their most effective tactics to disrupt the

meetings and essentially endorses their dissent. His villains are superficial TV producers, indifferent trade reps, timid politicians and macho policemen, eager to beat the nonviolent protesters. What's not to like?

Sadly, quite a bit. Townsend clearly wishes to counter the caricatures of direct-action anarchists regularly put forth in the media—best typified by *New York Times* Thomas Friedman's dismissal of the Seattle protesters as "a Noah's Ark of flat-earth advocates." (This, of course, came before Friedman himself penned a book titled *The World Is Flat*.) But in correcting these cartoonish phantoms of the elite's imagination, Townsend creates some of his own, drawing characters who are impossibly good: intelligent, kind, committed, moral and eminently reasonable.

The problem isn't that such characterizations are untrue; the above adjectives would certainly fit the direct-action activists I've met. But, at various times, so might a few others: neurotic, intense, immature, petty, self righteous. (Many also had an admirable indifference—if not outright hostility—toward personal appearance and hygiene that, despite the best efforts of the film's costume designer, the phenomenally good-looking cast of *Battle in Seattle* can't quite pull off.)

Worse than a crime against verisimilitude, this one-dimensional characterization is a dramatic mistake. There's plenty of conflict in *Battle in Seattle*, but it is nearly completely external—between police and protesters, "good" NGO representatives and indifferent WTO bureaucrats, etc. But these figures almost all arrive on screen already fully formed, leaving the viewer with lofty ideals to aspire to, not lived (and ongoing) struggles to relate to.

What's more, it leavens the film with a tediously dull earnestness that does a disservice to the very protesters *Battle in Seattle* means to salute. Say what you want about the international grassroots movement that's arisen to disrupt the anti-democratic practices of elite institutions like the WTO, but its participants are rarely (solely) earnest and never dull. (Indeed, I would say they are objectively pro-fun.) These ac-

tivists might put their bodies in front of police truncheons to express their beliefs, but many of them do so while dressed in ridiculously imaginative costumes, all the while screaming dada chants, like "The Pizza. United. Will Never Be Divided," or the delightfully meta "Three Word Chant!

***Battle in Seattle's* tedious earnestness and total lack of boisterous ingenuity do a real disservice to the protesters who the film ostensibly aims to salute.**

Three Word Chant!"

The only time such playfulness appears on screen in *Battle in Seattle* is when Townsend intercuts footage of the actual WTO protests with his reenactments. The boisterousness and ingenuity on display by the real-life participants arrive like breaths of fresh air, providing all too fleeting relief from the staid conventions that the film's fictional narrative adheres to.

Chief among those conventions is Townsend's shameless use of melodrama, which reaches a nadir of banality in a subplot involving a cop (played by Woody Harrelson) and his pregnant wife (Charlize Theron), who is caught up in a swirl of protesters and—in an "ironic twist"—is punched by another cop in the stomach. When she (inevitably) suffers a miscarriage, one half expects Townsend to fully embrace cliché and have her sob, "And I was going to name her Justice!"

Townsend uses the same schtick with his protesting protagonists, giving them dramatic backstories that help "explain" why they are so gosh darned angry at the WTO. (Apparently, it wouldn't be believable enough for them to be motivated solely by the existence of corporate sweatshops, the extinction of species or a world in which the richest 1 percent of the population has roughly the same amount of income as the poorest 60 percent.) They must instead have been "personally" affected by the WTO's policies.

In the case of the lead organizer Jay (Henderson), this means that his brother was killed while protesting a timber com-

pany. (This is presumably based on the real-life death of the EarthFirst! activist David Chain, who was killed in 1998 when a logger felled a tree that landed on top of him.) As the film's production notes explain, "For these protesters, this is very personal and the stakes are higher

than mere politics."

But with this elevation of personal grievances over "mere politics," *Battle in Seattle* follows the same logic of the neoliberal ideology at the heart of groups like the WTO, an ideology that privileges personal freedom (and individual wealth) over any collective political action that aims to redistribute wealth or natural resources more equitably and sustainably.

Of course, personal freedom and more equitable wealth are not necessarily at odds with one another. Indeed, they are mutually reinforcing. But the film's focus on the personal rather than the political obscures the protests' most important legacy.

This comes through clearly at the film's end, which shows our four protagonists walking toward the horizon, together again, after three of them have been released from jail. The scene has the feel of a comedy, as it's classically defined: a re-uniting of the social world, after it has been torn apart.

But what makes the WTO protests most significant—and this isn't meant to belittle or slight the very real and empowering sense of solidarity that its individual participants may have experienced—is their tragic element, again as classically defined. The protesters ruptured the WTO's "New World Order," creating a break that exists to this day. (There have been very few agreements reached at WTO meetings since Seattle.) It's only by focusing on this initial political fissure that we can see the slim utopian space, where, perhaps, we can truly be ourselves. ■

RADIO

Native Radio Building Community

By Mike Janssen

AS NEW TECHNOLOGIES take hold in the marketplace—and in the minds of consumers—old media are starting to look, well, older. FM radio is no exception. The debut of new cell phones that deliver audio applications spurred predictions of radio's demise.

But for many communities, radio still promises a way to spread news, share stories and support a cultural or regional identity. This is especially true for the country's Native American tribes, which have seized a rare chance to start new radio stations as a way of strengthening their communities.

Last fall, many Native people joined hundreds of schools, activists, churches and nonprofit groups that applied for new noncommercial FM stations with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Most of these applications were for frequencies in smaller towns and rural areas. (Radio spectrum in larger cities is too crowded to accommodate new signals).

Because the FCC had not accepted applications for noncommercial stations in more than seven years, demand was high.

Working to help tribal applicants was Native Public Media (NPM), a spin-off of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, which advocates on behalf of community stations across the country. NPM focuses on all media, not just radio. One of its goals is to increase Native access to broadband Internet.

But even in the Internet era, radio still suits the needs of Native communities, says Loris Ann Taylor, NPM's executive director. Cheap and ubiquitous, radio is easily accessible to the poor, the illiterate and the low-tech. Radio also covers great distances instantaneously, making it particularly valuable for tribal communities in far-flung villages.

In Alaska, Native communities use radio to exchange personal messages and keep abreast of potentially dangerous weather.



Hopi Reservation's KUYI Radio is one of many Native radio stations serving Indian Country.

"Radio really reaches across those barriers," Taylor says. "In Indian country, radio still works."

For Taylor, empowering Native communities with their own stations also carries a deeper significance. Through locally controlled media, tribal communities gain the power to reflect their Native cultures back to each other—a right denied them throughout decades of persecution and genocide. Taylor still remembers the grade-school teacher who pinched her hand if she spoke her Hopi language in class.

"What I find really important about my work is that radio allows us to be who we want to be," she says. "It's like freedom."

Many noncommercial stations around the country focus on community issues. This is especially true of Native stations, which cover topics such as health, education and the environment; feature locally programmed music; and broadcast in Native languages that in some places are spoken by very few people.

With help from Native Public Media, 37 Native nations applied for 51 radio stations last fall. None of the applicants currently operates a station, according to Taylor. Even if some of those applicants fail in their bid for licenses, Native radio could double its U.S. presence. (There are 33 Native stations on the air now.)

It could also branch out geographically. No tribal stations broadcast east of the Mississippi, but last fall's applicants included the Seneca tribe of New York and the Houma of Louisiana.

So far, 12 tribes have received FCC clearance to build stations. Many are now looking for startup funds, pricing equipment costs and planning programming.

One is South Dakota's Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe, which once operated a radio station but lost the license when it failed to meet annual FCC requirements. Its drive to regain a station began at the urging of a few tribal members who run an Internet station, says Garryl Rousseau, chair of the new FM station's board.

Many of the tribe's 6,000 members want the station to promote their Dakota language, Rousseau says, which is in need of a boost. In a 2003 survey, less than 10 percent of members rated their command of Dakota as either "fluent" or "good," and half said they couldn't speak a word.

"It hasn't gotten any better," says Rousseau. He envisions a radio station that could partner with tribal schools to develop language education programs.

Other tribes face a longer wait to see whether they will receive broadcast licenses, as the FCC sorts out conflicts involving multiple applicants vying for competing frequencies. Among these applicants are the Coeur d'Alene tribe of northern Idaho, where Valerie Fast Horse, the director of information technology, learned of the opportunity to start a station through Taylor. (Both serve on the telecommunications committee of the National Congress of American Indians, an organization of tribal governments made up of 250 member tribes).

The Coeur d'Alene reservation covers 345,000 acres and is home to 2,000 tribal members who have no radio station that provides programming about their region or culture, Fast Horse says. They get their news from a station in Spokane, Wash.

Fast Horse says she envisions a radio station that covers local sports, tribal government and the Coeur d'Alene's culture, music, language and history. The station could also deliver news about forest fires and heavy snowstorms.

And perhaps, most importantly, it could help improve the tribe's relationship with non-Native neighbors. The Coeur d'Alene recently encountered friction with a group of nearby residents over control of resources, says Fast Horse.

"We need to tell our own stories about ourselves in a way that's suitable to us," she says. "Others can say what they want—it could be favorable or unfavorable. If we can tell our story, people have another voice to listen to." ■

BOOKS

Mapping the Road Less Traveled

By Jean Forst

PROGRESSIVES NEED A book that demonstrates to idealistic young people that they can pay the rent and transform society. The book would also nudge older people into activism and address the responsibilities of adulthood.

Sadly, *Practical Idealists* is not this book.

A self-exploration manual, *Practical Idealists: Changing the World and Getting Paid* (Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University, October) draws on interviews with more than 40 people of varying professions who "opt for social change careers that reflect their values," write the authors.

At a scant 156 pages, this slim volume fans out in all the right directions—with the best of intentions—but with a reach that sorely exceeds its grasp.

One of the book's strengths is that it attempts to open up activism to everyone, striking an appealingly democratic note. It identifies agents of social change not as anthropologist Margaret Meade's "small group of thoughtful, committed citizens," but as anybody and everybody.

The book also occasionally offers useful advice. Authors Ann Barham, John Hammock and Alissa S. Wilson warn against arrogance—an all too common sin (or, perhaps, indictment) of liberals. One interviewee tells of a team member whose egotism delayed a report on human security issues. This person's "repeated attempts to contribute to areas where he had no educational background or professional experience meant that other team members had to waste time correcting his unsolicited edits and comments."

In chapter 3, "Work and Jobs," the authors insist that idealists set up camp where their ambition aligns with their usefulness. Noting that ambitious progressives often want to form their own organizations, the

[art space]



SIGNS OF REVOLUTION

The revolution may not be televised, but that hasn't stopped generations of activists from getting their message out.

"Signs of Change: Social Movement Cultures 1960s to Now" explores the symbiotic relationship between art and action by assembling decades' worth of posters, prints, films and other works of social agitation.

From the American civil rights movement, to the South African anti-apartheid struggle, to grassroots uprisings in France, Czechoslovakia, and South Korea, "Signs of Change" chronicles the artistic and cultural contributions of social movements in more than 30 countries.

The exhibition runs from Sept. 20 until Nov. 22 at Exit Art in New York City. For more information, visit exitart.org.

—Mark Berlin



THE PORN STARS OF ABU GHRAIB

In The Porning of America: The Rise of Porn Culture, What It Means, and Where We Go from Here (Beacon, September), Carmine Sarracino and Kevin M. Scott reflect on the connection between the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib and pornography.

The visual images, carefully posed and even staged with some complexity, turned a crime into porn—and that got everyone’s attention. Reports of abuse, after all, had been leaked to the public well before the storm of scandal broke in the spring of 2004. Until the photos surfaced, and the story took on the patina of porn, few Americans knew or cared about how prisoners were being treated in a prison whose name even most reporters couldn’t pronounce.

As indeed became clear, a culture of porn existed among the soldiers involved in the abuses at Abu Ghraib. An Army Criminal Investigation Command report, written in 2004 by Special Agent James E. Seigmund, compiled all of the images collected from the prison—more than 2,800 photographs and videos. . . .

As it turned out, 660 of these were images not actually from Abu Ghraib, but were, rather, professional pornography likely collected from websites by the MPs and passed around, on the same discs, with the violent pornography they created themselves.

These soldiers created for themselves a world that integrated porn into their lives and jobs, and that took pornography as the organizing principal of othering the detainees in their charge. The soldiers themselves have described the environment in the prison as “chaos,” a “hodgepodge,” and the “Wild, Wild West.” Indeed, the stories that have surfaced suggest a mix of teen sex comedy, porn movie plot and horror movie.



authors caution against such a choice.

In her interview, Amanda Edmonds, founder of Growing Hope, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that promotes community gardening, advises progressives to join existing groups so “you can really focus on doing your work as opposed to designing network computer systems or your database or those sorts of things.”

Moreover, resisting the impulse to form new organizations could curtail the splintering that sometimes weakens liberal America’s power against the more monolithic Right. In other words, the message is to work within the already-existing system.

The book also addresses financial anxieties, with plenty of solid guidance. The authors advise college students not to borrow more money than they need and to consolidate what debt they do incur. They

also suggest young people use debit instead of credit cards to help them understand how much they’re really spending.

Their emphasis on responsible personal finance also offers a welcome contrast to, say, the assurance a prominent activist once gave to her college student audience that, should they come work for her organization, she could help them ward off pesky student loan collectors.

The chapter makes a good point that it’s best for an idealist not to defer his or her activist ambitions because, once accustomed to higher paying work in the private, for-profit sector, people rarely prove willing to downsize.

The book advises idealists to make the most of college, make lots of friends, be frugal and identify his or her skills. Yawn. The authors of *Practical Idealists* would

have done better to link the book’s advice with progressive causes. Instead, they tread into territory that has been covered before in the self-help books *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* and *What Color is Your Parachute?*, which offered a step-by-step guide to finding meaningful work.

The authors relentlessly generate checklists, almost in a need to organize and control the process of becoming an activist. They offer questions to consider when working in the public sector, a list of tasks to perform to minimize one’s student loans, and questions to discuss with your partner about working long hours at a difficult job.

One could view this as a useful way to slow those prone to rushing into this or that project to save the world—but it’s unlikely a starry-eyed reader would ever slog through every question the book proposes.

Indeed, no frozen passions coming to a boil ever spill out onto the book’s pages. Far more often, we are treated to sentences and even paragraphs in the riveting vein of “it is about living out the meaning of one’s own life for the benefit of others through modeling practical idealist behaviors and involvement in social change.”

Why the need for the illusion of safety, the endless generation of checklists? Perhaps because it is daunting to consider foregoing a lucrative career to affect change that may never come, let alone be appreciated.

While it’s refreshing to read a liberal book resistant to caricature by conservatives, *Practical Idealists* plods too deliberately along, utilitarian to a fault. ■

BOOKS

Punk Manifesto

By Ben Terrall

ERICK LYLE’S *ON the Lower Frequencies: A Secret History of the City* (Soft Skull, May) may not have gotten much attention when it came out earlier this year, but that’s a shame.

This collection of material from the low-budget zines *Scam* and *Turd-Filled Donut* covers Lyle’s life as a grassroots musician and activist from the late ’90s to the early aughts. And it deals with issues still important today—such as gentrification,

homelessness and political dissent.

Lyle was a teenager in South Florida when he read about protests in Northern California to save the redwoods. In 1992, after his best friend returned from San Francisco's anti-Columbus Day protests in support of indigenous rights, young Lyle, using the moniker Iggy Scam, made his way northwest to investigate dissident rumblings on the "Left Coast."

Lyle train-hopped far and wide, posting dispatches from New Orleans, Chattanooga, Tenn., and other cities. But his focus remained mainly on street-level homeless advocacy and guerrilla rock 'n' roll in San Francisco.

When I worked in an office above the city's 16th and Mission BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) station, I witnessed several of the "generator shows" that Lyle details in *On the Lower Frequencies*. These events featured impromptu, permit-less concerts. The generator was portable, and powered amplifiers that could be packed and unpacked quickly.

It was never clear why the San Francisco police allowed them to go on without interference, although some speculated that the cops must have appreciated that the shows disrupted the open-air heroin market that was normally the distinguishing feature of the intersection. Whatever the reason, the up from the gutter concerts were a kick, and not just for dropout punk kids. The neighborhood's majority Latino population was also well represented in the audience, and many were clearly entertained.

Lyle's sense of civic responsibility extends beyond helping fellow noisemakers challenge the musical sensibilities of pedestrians and stray junkies, however. In the book, he includes an interview with Paul Boden, co-founder of the San Francisco-based Coalition on Homelessness. Boden tells Lyle that in starting the newspaper *Street Sheet*—given free to homeless, who sell them for a dollar—the coalition helped put several million bucks into homeless people's pockets. Boden exults, "I don't know too many nonprofits that can make that claim!"

Lyle and his friends also achieved a victory—albeit a short-lived one—by putting together a café that fed hundreds of people without charge and encouraged the cre-

ation of political art. Unfortunately, the café, like many of the spaces lovingly described in the book, was in a squatted building that suddenly became valuable during San Francisco's gentrification in the late '90s.

As for Lyle's *Turd-Filled Donut (TFD)*, unsalaried editors distributed the zine via commandeered newspaper boxes. The zine existed partly to challenge the pro-growth, pro-development politics of its mainstream rival, the *San Francisco Examiner*.

Lyle describes a meeting at *Examiner* offices where *TFD* staffers confronted their button-downed counterparts, asking for evidence supporting the paper's claim that crime had increased in the neighborhood. When *Examiner* employees failed to do so, Lyle's crew presented internal San Francisco police memos—received through a Freedom of Information Act request—that showed no increase in crime had occurred.

A two-page entry called "Scam Punks vs. Starbucks" describes printing thousands of fake coupons for free cups of Starbucks coffee, then distributing them in San Francisco's financial district with some friends.

At the end of the day, a hysterical Starbucks representative unsuccessfully attempts to make a citizen's arrest of one of Lyle's pals.

On the Lower Frequencies also includes a moving section on how powerless Lyle felt after worldwide actions failed to stop the Bush regime from invading Iraq.

Though he and his comrades are dispirited, they try to keep dissent alive in the age of the so-called war on terror.

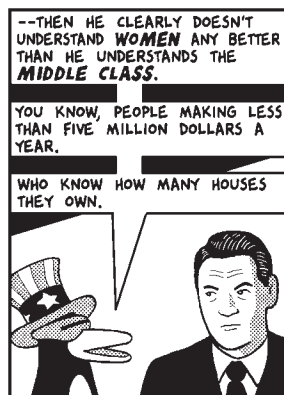
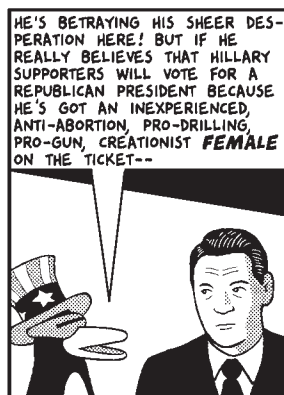
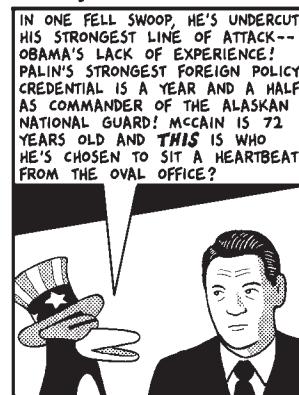
This book is as sprawling and packed with digressions as a novel you can't put down. It's fitting that author Hubert Selby Jr.—perhaps best known for *Requiem for a Dream*—is name-checked, as Lyle shares Selby's empathy for society's outcasts, not excluding its criminal elements.

As the housing market continues its collapse and ecological crises loom, Lyle's sensibilities seem prescient. Just as importantly, compassion and commitment to society's least fortunate—whose empires are the first to crumble—is also necessary if we are to maintain any shred of decency.

Lyle's book does an apt job of pointing us in that direction. ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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BY TERRY J. ALLEN

High Court May Immunize Big Pharma



STRUCK BY A blinding migraine, Vermont musician Diana Levine went to a clinic where she was injected with the anti-nausea drug Phenergan, produced by Wyeth Pharma-

ceuticals. Within weeks, the hand that had fingered her guitar was black with gangrene. Doctors amputated below the wrist and, when that failed to stop the necrosis, removed her forearm.

Wyeth's label had warned that hitting an artery could cause irreversible damage, but it did not specifically direct physicians to avoid delivering the drug with intravenous (IV) push injection—rather than free-flowing IV drip or intramuscular shot.

Levine sued in Vermont court, charging that, because Wyeth had known for decades that using IV push to inject Phenergan directly into a vein creates avoidable risk, it should have added specific instructions on its label barring the practice.

Wyeth argued that Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of Phenergan and its label immunized it from state-level lawsuits. The Vermont court disagreed and awarded Levine \$6.8 million.

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear Wyeth's appeal on Nov. 3, the day before the presidential election, when few people will be paying attention. They should be.

If Wyeth's legal defense wins, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) said at a hearing in May, "Patients [who are] hurt by defective drugs ... would no longer have the ability to seek compensation for their injuries."

Levine is in her early 60s, has clear blue eyes and white hair that falls loosely around her unguarded face. She laughs easily and there is anger, but no bitterness, when she reflects that "all Wyeth needed to do was that simple label change. This loss of my arm, and the effect it had on my livelihood and my whole life didn't need to happen."

As for the FDA, she says, "I know there are good hearts there and [if Wyeth wins] I want to ask them: 'How do you feel about not having us little people out here to tell you when something goes wrong, and a court system to help you hold drug companies accountable?'"

Wyeth's defense—and the fate of the kind of liability litigation that exposed the dangers of Vioxx—rides on whether the Supreme Court accepts the FDA's new doctrine of "preemption." The legal term means, in this instance, that a federal agency can write rules

that preempt—or override—the right of a person to sue for damages in state courts. Some legal experts see the Bush administration's embrace of preemption as part of a concerted, stealth strategy to impose, by bureaucratic fiat, the tort "reforms" that corporations failed to lobby through Congress.

"So far, seven federal agencies have issued over 51 potentially preemptive rules, often without any opportunity for public comment," wrote Kathleen Flynn Peterson, former president of the American Association for Justice.

What is at stake, then, is tens of thousands of product-liability suits against drug makers; the right of many consumers to sue if they are harmed by FDA-approved drugs; and a strong financial incentive for drug companies to set high safety standards, follow drugs after approval, update labeling and issue recalls. And, of course, there is Levine's compensation.



Diana Levine, in the kitchen of her house on a dirt road in Marshfield, Vt.

TERRY J. ALLEN

Consumers' right to sue for drug-caused injuries dates back to 1852. But in 2006, the FDA quietly tucked a pro-preemption phrase into the preamble of an FDA-labeling law.

"Preemption had never been raised by drug companies before Levine," says Richard Rubin, the small-town Vermont lawyer who won against Wyeth's high-powered legal team, "because there had never been any preemption."

The effect, of this "radical legal doctrine," said Waxman at the May congressional hearing, is "you might have been injured by a defective product, but you can't go and sue the manufacturer, who might have even known it was defective, because the FDA said it was not defective when they approved it. That to me is an absurd position."

But drug companies get the logic, as do other corporations subject to consumer lawsuits. Showing uncharacteristic affection for federal regulation, Boeing, Ford Motor Company, General Electric, Microsoft and R.J. Reynolds Tobacco are supporting Wyeth before the Supreme Court.

Siding with Levine are 47 U.S. states attorneys general, 18 members of Congress and a panoply of public interest groups that have filed "friend-of-the-court" amicus briefs. They are joined by former FDA commissioners Donald Kennedy and David Kessler whose August amicus brief notes that traditionally, corporations, not the FDA, bear "ultimate responsibility" for drug safety: "[P]ro-preemption arguments ... turn that understanding upside down, relieving manufacturers of front-line responsibility for the safety of their drugs, and handing that job to the FDA."

But the FDA isn't up to the job. The agency's own Science Board found that "American lives are at risk" because the FDA "is not positioned to meet current or emerging regulatory responsibilities."

A 2006 Government Accountability Office investigation found the FDA was incapable of ensuring drug safety. After initial approval—when many problems surface—the agency lacked the resources to gather independent data and the authority to compel drug companies to provide follow-up studies.

Add to that the conflicts of interest, cronyism and corporate influence that have flourished in Bush bureaucracies, from FEMA to the Justice Department to the FDA.

The architect of FDA's preemption policy is Daniel Troy. Before becoming the agency's chief counsel and primary liaison to the White House, Troy had represented industry, frequently suing the agency on behalf of drug and big tobacco companies.

The decision from a November Supreme Court case could make it illegal for a person to sue the manufacturer of a defective product—even if the company knew it was defective.

After leaving the FDA, he slipped into a top post at drug giant GlaxoSmithKline.

The revolving door also swung Randall Lutter into the post of FDA deputy commissioner for policy, where he defended the agency's embrace of preemption before Congress. Lutter was a member of the ExxonMobil-funded, global warming-denying Annapolis Center. He was also resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a right-wing think tank that takes oil and tobacco money and advocates vigorously for "tort reform."

The Supreme Court's acceptance of *Levine* falls into a pattern that suggests it is in sync with the Bush administration's push to make preemption part of its legacy.

A March Supreme Court case surrounding Rezulin, the now-withdrawn diabetes drug linked to liver failure, could have voided the right to sue—even when a drug company commits fraud by concealing dangers from the FDA. But that case, *Warner-Lambert Co. v. Kent*, failed to make law because a tie vote resulted when Chief Justice John Roberts recused himself over ownership of Pfizer/Warner-Lambert stock. (Although *Levine v. Wyeth* will have industry-wide impact, few expect another recusal.)

In February, the court ruled 8-1 in *Riegel v. Medtronic* for the makers of a faulty catheter that ruptured during heart surgery. The FDA approval that immunized Medtronic from liability now protects the

makers of most medical devices, including defibrillators and pacemakers, from liability suits.

Riegel is "a resounding victory for the preemption defense and for the business community," cheered Alan Untereiner, a lawyer for the Product Liability Advisory Council.

Wyeth v. Levine could be the next step for preemption—extending it to all FDA-approved pharmaceuticals, and drastically

restricting the right to a jury trial.

In *Riegel*, Justice Stephen Breyer provocatively asked which group you rather would trust: "An expert agency, on the one hand, or 12 people pulled randomly for a jury role? ...What worries me is, what happens if the jury is wrong?"

But in the recent cases of *Vioxx*, *Trasylol* and *Redux*, it was not the jury that was wrong in finding for the dead and injured, it was the drug manufacturers that "withheld key information from the FDA...while continuing to market their unsafe drug to an unsuspecting public," wrote the *New England Journal of Medicine* in a brief supporting *Levine*.

The new FDA stance, then, promises Americans "the worst of both worlds ... an FDA incapable of protecting them, and no tort system to provide compensation if they are injured," Georgetown University law professor David Vladeck wrote in the July *Cornell Law Review*.

Despite the preventable loss of Diana Levine's arm, Phenergan's label still doesn't bar intravenous push. In 2006, six years after Levine's amputation, Marie Caschetta, an 84-year-old woman in South Daytona, Fla., suffered a similar fate after a push IV injection of the FDA-approved drug.

So, as you follow the November election results, listen for news of *Wyeth v. Levine*—as if your right arm depended on it. ■

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Embedded in Pink

Continued from back page

Wilson founded the organization, beginning with a four-month White House vigil and joined by 100 dedicated, brightly clad adherents. The group has become a lightning rod for criticism of the antiwar movement—and of contemporary activism.

At a November press conference at the Heritage Foundation, President Bush singled out Code Pink—along with what he called “MoveOn.org bloggers”—for setting a dangerous, radical agenda for U.S. politics. This attitude is also echoed in our supposedly left-leaning media.

“The Daily Show” regularly stages parodies of Code Pink’s tactics of strategic irritation, satirizing interruptions at congressional debates, and openly mocking protesters at military recruiting stations.

Salon.com writer Cintra Wilson calls the group “an eyesore,” not unlike “an irritating children’s birthday party.”

Many activists have privately expressed similar wishes that Code Pink would just go away. As one well-dressed lefty confided to me in Austin after I’d stowed my cape: “Crap. Code Pink.”

Grievances

The criticisms slung at Code Pink hint toward sex, class, race and age biases still harbored in the political left. The middle-aged, upper-middle class white ladies who have traditionally made up the group’s core might seem better placed at the heads of kindergarten classrooms or behind the desks of libraries.

The underlying sentiment: ‘What could *they* possibly have to complain about? They are white! They are comfortable!’

For starters, they have much to opine about: a tanking economy, an illegal war, and a stripping of our constitutional rights. In fact, these middle-aged ladies are using their positions of comfort for the public good, agitating not for better coffee at PTA meetings, but for an ousting of military recruitment facilities from school campuses.

“These ‘middle-aged ladies’ are my daily inspiration,” Code Pink Campaign Manager Dana Balicki explains. And she’s in her 20s. “I’ve witnessed women go from total

discomfort with e-mailing to organizing local protests using Facebook and creating their own action blogs, leaving photos and YouTube videos in their wake.”

Code Pink’s D.C. House mama, Desiree Fairouz, joined the group two years ago because of “the creativity, the ‘in-your-face’ tactics, and the persistence,” she says.

You might have seen photos of Fairouz in

instead of a change-making movement.

Benjamin is quick to acknowledge failures: “The war is still raging in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are millions of Iraqis who are refugees and displaced—we have not been successful in getting more funds to help them—Guantánamo has not been closed, FISA was passed, and on and on.”

The Bush administration’s sway over

At any given moment, Code Pink has in place five or six campaigns. Another three or four sit on the backburner, occasionally reconsidered—or ‘pinked up’—for public view.

the media—images of her with her hands covered in blood, confronting Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about war crimes.

Since last spring, Fairouz led a Code Pink team to Capitol Hill every day for a year to call for votes against a \$165 billion Iraq War budget increase, which Congress passed in May. It’s a defeat that still stings.

“This is only the most recent, and perhaps most egregious betrayal,” says Medea Benjamin. “It was so obviously a political ploy to avoid another vote on war funding before the November elections.”

Even Sen. Barack Obama’s recently proposed timeline to pull out of Iraq hasn’t slowed Code Pink. Because of his pledge to shift focus onto the war in Afghanistan, the group has a new, secret campaign that will kick off after the election.

Code Pink often has in place five or six campaigns—aimed at avoiding war with Iran, shifting Obama to the left or decreasing dependency on fossil fuels. Three or four campaigns dominate weekly staff conference calls. Another three or four sit on the backburner, occasionally reconsidered—or “pinked up”—for public view.

On June 13, when a Berkeley, Calif., counter-recruitment campaign became heated, some Code Pink protesters responded to the rising temps by, well, taking off their shirts. “Breasts not bombs,” they explained to passersby and to the police who arrested them. (A later protest successfully shut down the station.)

But it’s moments like this when the group becomes known as an empty brand

media must cause us to question the depictions of the antiwar movement. The media did, after all, send us to war without due diligence—and told stories based primarily on the accounts of embedded reporters.

By contrast, little media surrounded Code Pink’s speaking tour of Iraqi women last year. The group visited more than 100 U.S. cities, calling for the military to leave Iraq. Families with enlisted sons and daughters called to lend support.

Other successes are just as personal. D.C. House volunteers tell stories of congressional security guards who whisper appreciation that the group continues to make its presence—and demands—felt on the Hill.

Benjamin points to larger victories: “The Democrats taking control of Congress in 2006 due to the antiwar sentiment; Obama winning over Hillary because of his stance against the war [and] the new growing consensus on the need for a timeline for withdrawal. ... And so far, the fact that the U.S. military has not invaded Iran.”

Still, what gets attention—even among our liberal media—is the girly color.

“Code Pink is about reclaiming the richness of femininity and power,” Balicki says, “which is harnessed in our general distaste of the color that, for many, represented all things typical, subdued, appropriate, predictable, simple and reasonable—values most of us struggled to leave aside.”

She adds: “Once you march with 10,000 women in pink around the White House, the color never looks the same. Neither do you.” ■

EMBEDDED IN PINK



PHOTO BY PAUL PARK

BY ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

IT'S JULY IN AUSTIN, Texas. I'm wearing an electric pink cape screeching to a milling audience of several hundred who await the appearance of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.). It's uncomfortable for many reasons, but I'm a reporter embedded in the antiwar movement. This is my job.

A team of seven rose-hued women surrounds me, all of us yelling in unison. Most of the women are better dressed, at least as far as the occasion calls for—hooker boots, glittery logos, lassos, tights and masks—and sport heroic monikers like “The Hammer of Common Sense,” “Justicia” and “Voice of the People.”

The lone male with us wears comically short prison grays, oversized plastic shackles and a giant paper-mache head meant to resemble the noggin' of the president of the United States.

“Impeach Bush,” his flyers proclaim.

We're at Netroots Nation, where Pelosi has been invited to respond to audience queries. Tensions had been high since the appearance was announced. Progressives balked online about her refusal to call congressional hearings to impeach Bush, a position

she's doggedly held since the 2006 mid-term elections.

Possibly to quell Pelosi's discomfort, event organizers took most questions in advance (none of that pesky democracy here!), and demanded the crowd limit “interruptions.” In other words—as some bloggers posited in real time at the event—they wanted Code Pink to keep quiet.

But interruptions came from elsewhere, not from the Austin chapter of Code Pink “Sheroes,” whose members kept quiet for the most part. They formed a silent line across the back of the room in front of the row of video cameras, directly in Pelosi's line of sight.

'Silly and girly'

Code Pink has come to be viewed as a gaggle of smart but silly women, an unkempt listserv, and a mismatched array of girly accoutrements, housed on Capitol Hill, in a space known simply as the D.C. House.

In 2002, Medea Benjamin, Jodie Evans, Starhawk and Diane

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47