

# **Post Colonial Anarchism**

**Essays on race, repression and culture in communities of color: 1999–2004**

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## **Dedicated to My Mother Gwen White**

Much Love to Laurie Ann Phillips, mom and dad. Carmen, Carol, Pleaz, Leah, Sookie, and Tyrone. Loving Gratitude to Auntie Marge and Uncle Lloyd, Michael, Leroy, Zulma and Family. Special Thanks to Adrienne Carey Hurley for helping to edit. Thanks also to the Data Center, all my APOC comrades, Mark Sterling, Charles Bennett, Colin Asher, Bianca Agustin, Jeremy Rayner, Anna Couey, Sonya Mehta, Heather McCormick, Jeremy Soh, Tomas Moniz, Victor Chavez, Priscilla Hung, Julia Glazer, Lynx, Christina Wilson, Micha Frasier and everyone who've I had a chance to discuss issues with over the years. I'd also like to thank the folks at Critical Resistance, All of Us or None, and all my east-coast peeps who are with me in spirit. Thanks for all the input and inspiration.

# Introduction

It's not immediately clear that anarchists of color (APOC), as a group, have any basic philosophical or strategic differences with our white allies and fellow travelers in the 'movement.' We don't exist as a formal, national organization (probably a good thing). Many of our experiences in anarchist scenes have been characterized by a mixture of racial isolation and patronizing tokenism. Some of us are just now beginning to break out of this social and political box.

But just because our ties are not immediately clear doesn't mean that they don't exist. What connects anarchists of color, I think, is our common history of victimization and struggle against white supremacy, capitalism and other forms of social domination, our common experiences of marginalization in various anarchist circles, and our respective spiritual/ cultural traditions that gave our ancestors inspiration to fight in the face of odds even more daunting than the ones we face today. Our comparable histories of victimization and struggle, our social experiences from within the movement and our cultural traditions provide APOC's with a common ground to build trust and unity.

These short essays, written between Fall 1999 to Fall 2004 are an attempt to articulate some of those points of contact between colored organizers, activists, cultural and support workers in the movement against authority and capitalism. I don't pretend to speak for anyone but myself and those who agree with me but don't have time to sit around writing essays. The topics range from re-thinking the traditional anarchist stance on electoral involvement to punk to the fight against the prison industrial complex. There are themes that run throughout. The need for anarchists of color to develop our own analysis, priorities and ideals. The need to reconstruct the history of non- white anti- authoritarian societies and struggles so we can develop and pass down our own traditions of resistance to youth of color. The need for us to create our own institutions and organizations in order to produce a legacy of struggle of our own.

All over the U.S. anarchists of color are communicating, building and struggling together. This may prove to be one of the most important developments in the North American movement against social domination in the years to come.

# **Race and Anarchy**

## Towards a Different Path

In her now famous essay “Where Was the Color in Seattle?” Elizabeth Betita Martinez looked into some of the reasons why, despite all the progressive left talk about being committed to a multi-racial movement against corporate globalization, “the overall turnout of color from the U.S. remained around five percent of the total.” ( Colorlines, v3 N1, Spring 2000) According to Martinez, Direct Action Network had only one person of color involved in it’s “central planning” process. It’s true the progressive left has an unimpressive record when it comes to dealing with race and inclusion. But with few exceptions (Love and Rage being the most recent) anarchists have no record. We’ve chosen not to deal with it.

Anarchists have generally taken their cues from other movements when it comes to how to think about race. Organizationally anarchists have followed the white radicals of the late 60’s and 70’s and have created de-facto white solidarity groups that supported some of the struggles of communities of color but have failed at creating effective, enduring alliances. In radical socialist and progressive left circles white solidarity made some sense because there were organizations of color in communities of color to give life to the ideas, and traditions of the movement. Anarchism had no organizations in communities of color committed to organizing. It’s not clear whether communities of color have any better understanding of what anarchism is and what its general ideals are today than they did 30 years ago.

Anarchists have also failed to distinguish themselves in other ways on race. Some still carry around the old marxist class analysis of racism as being a “secondary” oppression, the first being the war over control of the means of production. The oppression of people of color, and women mean very little on their own, but under the meta-war of the proletariat and the ruling class it all makes sense. Many believe that the working class still represents a vanguard of sorts, but like to idealize black and brown workers instead of white ones these days. White anarchists and marxists still seek to chart the direction of the struggle against white imperialism that activists and organizers of color are engaged in. In this sense, APOC is a declaration of self- determination in our struggle for liberation.

These first set of essays examine some of the theoretical and organizational issues that anarchists of color are facing in our attempt to develop a politics that appeal to communities of color. This is no attempt to force some old European ideology down the throats of communities of color. We have our own histories of effective struggle against domination. Its an attempt to construct a vision that draws on the similarities of the communalist, village based system of social organization that has characterized the lived experience of much of the global south for centuries and the current movements for self-determination and autonomy from the gods of global neo-liberalism. The goal is to build a vision that retains the communal heritage of our ancestors but rejects the political and social domination that has plagued societies all over the world throughout history. This task by itself is worth any effort we have the energy to give to it.



# Post Colonial Anarchism

I should be clear up front. I'm not a nationalist. Nor am I a tribalist, nor an internationalist, nor a municipalist. Peoples from all over the globe have been figuring out how to organize themselves into various collectives long before I came onto the scene and no one in any of these groups has ever bothered to ask me what I thought about their decisions. I won't hold my breath.

I do believe in free association and federalism because they usually represent the most non-coercive avenues for people to develop ways to live together in self-determined freedom and community. Anarchists have traditionally been particularly hostile to nations and have often attributed the worst crimes of states to them. This rejection of nations and their struggles for self-rule (nationalism) may not be the same as the anarchist demand for no rule, but getting free from foreign domination is a step in the right direction. This is one reason why anti-authoritarians (including anarchists) have generally supported anti-imperialist movements regardless of their nationalist aspirations.

The rejection of nationalism by many North American anarchists is often an expression of a colonial mindset that requires all of the peoples of the world fighting for liberation to define their social selves in relation to the class war. In this war there are two classes—the workers and the ruling class. The downtrodden of the world are to see themselves as workers. For this identity shift we gain the solidarity of the class war anarchists.

Other anarchists who don't subscribe to industrial age class war dogma simply would like to see anarchists cut their ties to the left completely. This severance would presumably free them of all of the political baggage that solidarity with revolutionary nationalists and indigenous autonomist struggles attract. The two above interpretations of the international role and responsibility of the anarchist movement with respect to the fight against neo-colonialism and imperialism are not the ideas of an anti-state fringe. They represent the two strongest tendencies in the North American scene.

Not all nations are states. In fact there are about 1600 nations in existence today (about eight times the number of states in the world). And as Sylvia Walby points out in her essay "The Myth of the Nation-State," "Nation-states are actually very rare as existing social and political forms...there are many states, but very few nation-states. The notion that there have been neatly bounded societies ...is inadequate."<sup>1</sup> There are many different types of states—theocratic-states (the Vatican, Iran), city-states (Singapore, Luxemburg), familial states (Saudi Arabia) tribal-states (Israel), multinational states (Canada, Spain) and super-states (the United Nations). Each type of state has been implicated in crimes against various peoples over their histories. Since the European enlightenment these various social groupings that states have succeeded in attaching themselves to have been understood by the left as backward and atavistic. They argue that peoples of the world should transcend things like families, clans, tribes, and nations and embrace "univer-

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Walby, *The Myth of the Nation-State: theorizing society and politics in a global era*. British Sociological Association, August 2003.

sal” principals of human identity. In truth, many of the social ideals that the left has asserted as universal are culturally situated in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

## The Politics of Arrogance

It’s regular for North American anarchists to use their political label as a synonym for anti-authoritarian; although one is a term referring to a specific social and political movement born in the 1800’s in Europe and the other is a broad description of a political tendency that has reared its head in some form in just about every society over the last few centuries. A mainstream definition of authoritarian describes someone who favors “blind submission to authority; of relating to, favoring a concentration of power in a leader or an elite not constitutionally responsible to the people.”<sup>2</sup>

Now certainly anarchists are not the only folks on the world scene who are against the “blind submission to authority” and the “concentration of power” in an unaccountable leader. But this easy inter-changeability is an effect of a larger attitudinal cause. The attitude being that non-white legacies of struggle and our histories of stateless, communal modes of existence are at best, irrelevancies to the current struggles against state/ corporate domination or, at worst, an obstacle to be swept aside.

This attitude pervades the intellectual history of all the major European political traditions—not just anarchism. But if those of us who identify with the historical movement for non-hierarchical, free and non-coercive social relations don’t begin to fundamentally rethink the way we understand our struggle both internally and externally, we will lose international allies and continue to alienate ones closer to home.

A different way of understanding anarchism in relation to the centuries-old struggle against arbitrary power is to view it as the newest member of a global family that includes numerous historical and present day communal societies and struggles against authority. The village communalism of the Ibo, and First Nations like the Zuni and the Hopi are a part of the family. The indigenous autonomist movements for self determination going on today in West Papua and Chiapas, Mexico with the EZLN are a part of the family. The international prison abolitionist movement, perhaps to most coordinated attack on the state’s monopoly of the administration of justice, has deep anti-authoritarian currents, just as the numerous stateless hunter and gatherer bands, clans, and nomadic tribes that have managed to survive centuries without armies, flags, or money systems do.

Anarchist movements have also played a part in the fight against authority. Some valiant, if rather short-lived, episodes include the Spanish CNT and FAI battles during the 1930’s and the Paris Commune 50 years earlier. The full record shows that North American anarchists haven’t had much experience in maintaining long-term stateless, social formations. But they have produced theory and “analysis”—plenty of it. And it’s this busy intellectualism that has scorned and turned its nose up at our national struggles for liberation as “statist” and “reformist” while demanding that global south anti-authoritarians adopt anarchism’s workerist mantle or conform to some romantic notion of how pre-agricultural peoples lived. To help put this in context it’s important to look at the universalist underpinnings of the traditional anarchist worldview and how

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<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

its adherents understand their movement in relation to other struggles around the non-European world.

## Colonial Universalism

To many, a critique of universalism on the left will seem like an anachronism. After all, if post-modern social philosophy has had any discernable political thrust, it's been in opposition to foundationalist claims and totalizing theories of human nature, relations, and power. But despite the last six decades of post-world war II thinking and action against universalism, there are still plenty of stubborn anarchists who refuse to let go of the most Euro-centric aspects of historical materialism.

Marx's critique of capitalism has had an influence way beyond those who choose to identify themselves as marxists. On the left, it has encouraged analysis that puts the class struggle at the center of the historical stage. Before the identity movements of the late 60's this analysis would regularly portray racism and other historical oppressions as subalterns of class oppression. But after these movements began to challenge some of the dogmas of class struggle orthodoxy some accommodations were made.

Progressives embraced multiculturalism even as they focused most of their attention towards corporate globalism and the international institutions that protect them. Marxists supported revolutionary nationalism, arguing that the modern vanguard is the black and brown working class. Even liberals argued for a cultural pluralism that made limited accommodations for social, cultural and religious differences while clinging to the last vestiges of the welfare state. Anarchists have largely rejected such left-of-center developments in response to the legacy of white supremacy and cultural imperialism, but have failed to develop their own. The default has been a rigid century and a half-old economic determinism that even some marxists have abandoned.

The embrace of universalism by anarchists has had a significant impact on their analysis of important issues and events. The interpretation of imperialism as an economically driven regime of capital and the view of nationalism as inherently retrograde and divisive owes a lot to the internal logic of universalism. If imperialism has as much to do with cultural hegemony or geopolitical dominance as the capitalist market expansion and raw material exploitation of private business, then maybe an international workers revolution may not come first or be the most fundamental task before all the world's oppressed. If nations and national liberation movements are not necessarily the statist antithesis of internationalism but represent just another social grouping of peoples with a common land, culture, and language, some of whom are willing to fight to maintain their ways of life, then maybe anarchists need to rethink their opposition to nationalism.

European universalism has never truly been about the recognition of our common humanity. In practice it's been about forcing the particular norms, prejudices and ideals of white, Christian cultures on the rest of the peoples of the earth, sometimes through economic domination, sometimes through cultural imperialism, sometimes through force.

Christendom used appeals to universalism as a justification for crusades and the persecution of "non believers" and native populations practicing their traditional religions in various parts of the world. For left internationalists, universalism provided a nice humanitarian cover for a massive social engineering project that sought to strip the masses of their national and communal

identities in exchange for a workerist one because, as Murry Bookchin put it, there was a “need to achieve universality in order to abolish class society.”<sup>3</sup>

Under this view the universality and primacy of the class struggle is a strategic necessity for the overthrow of the capitalist order. It’s not a conclusion that comes out of the study and analysis of the history, situation and cultures of all peoples. At this stage, anarchists, autonomists, abolitionists and anti-authoritarians of color can not afford to be swept up by theories that have never bothered to view non-white peoples as historical subjects. We are not mere props in the political stagecraft of white leftists.

Political universalism is part of the philosophical residue of Anglo-European colonialism. Today we witness this in the attempts of the U.S. to impose democracy in the Middle East and other parts of the world. One of the problems with this view is that it “offers a hegemonic view of existence by which the experiences, values and expectations of a dominant cultural are held to be true for all humanity” and is a “crucial feature of imperial hegemony because its assumption of a common humanity underlies [an] imperial discourse for the advancement or improvement of the colonized, goals that mask the extensive... exploitation of the colony.”<sup>4</sup>

So when the anarchists behind the FAQ web-site project declare that anarchists “oppose nationalism in all its forms as harmful to the interests of those who make up a given nation and their cultural identities,”<sup>5</sup> we recognize that the blatant condescension imbued in those sentiments are a reflection of the conviction that they know what’s best for the colonized, not the colonized themselves.

## No War But The Class War

Ever since Antonio Gramsci’s writings on marxism in the 20’s and 30’s the left has been re-thinking the role of the worker in revolutionary practice. He argued that cultural hegemony was the key to class subordination and that in order to change economic and political structures we had to take over the institutions that transmit culture—the schools, the church, the media, etc. This shift from the economic determinism of orthodox marxism to the identitarian pluralism of what some call “cultural marxism” lead a shift in emphasis away from the worker towards a broader group of the marginalized that included women, racial and sexual minorities and outlaws.

This thinking had little effect on the way marxist organizations and regimes have operated over the last 90 years. Groups like the Spartacist League in the U.S. have spent decades trashing black nationalism and feminism as ‘petty bourgeois’ and ‘separatist’ and claiming that their class analysis of racism, sexism, and other social systems of hierarchy (as by-products or divide and conquer tactics of capitalism) is more relevant to people of color and women than our own studies of how white supremacy and patriarchy have maintained systems of domination over us. Many Marxists groups have had an even worse record on LGBT liberation.

Khrushchev’s imperial attitude towards Mao’s peasant-led cultural revolution in China reflected, in part, his inability to make common cause with an Asian leader with the audacity to question the dogmas of soviet communism. As the U.K. Guardian noted a few years back “Mao

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<sup>3</sup> Murry Bookchin. “Nationalism and the ‘National Question’” [www.democracynature.org](http://www.democracynature.org) March 1993 P.1

<sup>4</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Post Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Routledge New York, NY 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Are Anarchist Against Nationalism? *The Anarchist FAQ*. Alternative Media Project. [infoshop.org](http://infoshop.org)

deeply resented the Soviet assumption of superiority towards China, which he described as the unacceptable behaviour of “a father towards his son.”<sup>6</sup> It’s been argued by anarchists like Murray Bookchin that the Marxist support for nationalist movements is strategic not ideological. In this instance we can attribute the failure of the two most powerful and populous communist countries on the globe to unite against the capitalist world in large part to a colonialist mentality that couldn’t accept non-white regimes who strayed too far from the European materialist intellectual plantation—strategy be damned.

The most organized elements of North American anarchism today are class war based and anti-nationalist. The Northeast Federation of Anarcho-Communists state “anarchists oppose the idea of nationalism” and instead “believe in waging a class war.”<sup>7</sup> The Workers Solidarity Alliance equates nationalism with “the idea that somehow both the rich and poor can be wrapped in the same flag and thus have the same interests...”<sup>8</sup> Of course class war anarchists attempt to wrap the victims of colonial imperialism and the beneficiaries of it together in the same black flag as if the two have the same interests. As it turns out, it’s just as hard for whites to give up imperial race privilege as it is for rich people to give up class privilege.

Rather than acknowledging the importance of class stratification along side other societal hierarchies and recognizing that each of them are potentially as repressive and exploitative as the other depending on the social context, class war anarchists have adopted a hierarchy of oppressions that makes the class war the primary struggle and the worker the primary agent of that struggle. The popular slogan “no war but the class war” masks a deep historical truth over which many white leftists are still in denial. White elites and their dupes, pawns, agents and allies have been waging a race war on peoples of color for centuries. When people of color who share a common culture, language and land decide it’s time to make defending ourselves a priority, we’re told by anarchists that they “never call for the victory of the dominated country over the imperialist. Instead we call for a victory of the workers (and peasants) of that country against both home and foreign exploiters (in effect, ‘no war but the class war’)” Are Anarchist Against Nationalism?<sup>9</sup>

If communities of color can’t count on anarchists to do more than merely recognize their ‘right’ to defend themselves against white imperialism, then perhaps all anarchists can expect from communities of color is the recognition that they have a right to protest against the IMF every time they meet. If the price of solidarity is that we abandon our communal identities and accept one created for us by some left-wing Euro-elites over 150 years ago, then the hope of developing closer alliances with other movements against authority around the globe is doomed.

## Anti-imperialist anti-nationalism

Many anarchists have recognized that opposition to native or national self-determination against Euro-Anglo colonial domination is a betrayal of their anti-authoritarian principals and commitment to anti-racism. This is why despite all the finger wagging that goes on by the scribe defenders of the anarchist faith about global south movements not being anarchist enough, there is a long history of anarchist solidarity with nationalist movements for self rule. Lucien van

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<sup>6</sup> John Gittings, The day Khrushchev and Chairman Mao saw red Spitting images mark the end of the Sino-Soviet alliance. *The Guardian* (UK) 27 November 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Northeast Federation of Anarcho-Communists. November 2002.

<sup>8</sup> *Against the Madness*. Workers Solidarity Alliance. [workersolidarity.org](http://workersolidarity.org).

<sup>9</sup> *The Anarchist FAQ*. Alternative Media Project. [www.infoshop.org](http://www.infoshop.org)

der Walt, a South African anarchist activist, details the many national struggles anarchists have been involved in his essay “Towards a History of Anarchist Anti-Imperialism.” He mentioned how groups like the Anarchist Group of Indigenous Algerians, the Mexican Liberal Party and other anti-imperialist anarchists “paid in blood for [their] opposition to imperial domination and control.”<sup>10</sup>

The movements and organizations he wrote about were by-and-large made up of activists of color working in their own struggles for both social revolution and national liberation. What these activists didn’t do was refuse to fight along side nationalists because they believed that the class war was the most important or only fight worth engaging in. They didn’t try to convince their people that getting rid of the factory bosses, of whom there were relatively few, was a bigger priority than getting rid of the colonial administrators who controlled where they could go and when they could go there, how or whether they could practice their faith, and what they could produce on their own land, among other things. They didn’t spend time trying to foment hatred between urban workers (who represented a relatively privileged class in many of these countries) and the middle classes in an effort to polarize their nation into a class war. They knew that the colonial masters controlled both groups and would only use internal divisions to solidify their own domination. They instead worked to educate the masses about how class also contributed to their oppression and how national liberation wouldn’t necessarily address those issues.

National liberation struggles don’t end when the imperialists decide that economic control and the threat of military intervention are more effective means of domination than army bases and colonial governments on native soil. They continue through early independence when the imperialist powers are busy stabilizing their puppet regimes, and corporate markets. It continues through the imposition of neo-liberal economic pressures and dictates from organizations like the IMF, World Bank, and the World Trade Organization along with a host of regional outfits and private organized interests. And if and when those mechanisms aren’t enough, the Security Council or the U.S. military will step in. International solidarity is not about committing to a process. It’s about committing to a people and their struggle for liberation. This commitment means viewing solidarity not as a reward for doctrinal compliance among the colonized but as a discourse between peoples and across cultures about how we all can live, not in some imposed western ideal of freedom and equality but in a self-determined freedom where different people decide for themselves how they will arrange their affairs. This doesn’t mean that anarchists always must agree and when we don’t we should support voices in those societies who are committed to the visions most like our own.

## The nation and the state

It’s not that anarchists have always been closed to nationalist arguments or have never questioned class war fundamentalism. Hakim Bey in his book *Millennium* suggests that anarchists align their struggles against authority with anti-colonial and nationalist movements around the globe. (See his chapter “Notes on Nationalism” Hakim Bey *Millennium* Autonomedia & Garden of Delight. 1996). Bob Black has rightly observed that the anarchist ideal of the worker revolutionary in syndicalism is more popular among college professors than with workers in North

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<sup>10</sup> Van der Walt, Lucien. *Towards a History of Anarchist Anti-Imperialism*. Northeast Federation of Anarcho-Communists. nefac.net.

America.<sup>11</sup> Even Bookchin in his 1971 essay “Listen Marxist” offered a devastating critique of class war fundamentalism and argued that “Marx’s emphasis on the industrial proletariat as the ‘agent’ of revolutionary change, and his ‘class analysis’ in explaining the transition from a class to a classless society” are “false in the context of our time.”<sup>12</sup> The problem is that these writers and others either hide in the safe shadow of critique where they debunk but don’t bother to offer alternatives (Black) or come up with alternatives just as colonial as the universal worker (Bookchin gives us the universal citizen).

But there’s an even bigger problem. Not only do these critics and theorists fail to offer non-colonial alternatives, they actually find time to dismiss efforts among activists of color and anarcho-feminists who dare to work for liberation from domination from our own self identities. Black dismisses anarcho-feminism as “separatist in tendency” and “oriented more toward statist feminism than anarchism.”<sup>13</sup> Bookchin in his essay *Nationalism and the National Question* lamented that the New Left in the 60’s embraced “the particularism into which racial politics had degenerated instead of the potential universalism (read European) of a humanitas...the New Left placed blacks, colonial peoples, and even totalitarian colonial nations on the top of its theoretical pyramid, endowing them with a commanding or ‘hegemonic’ position in relation to whites, Euro-Americans, and bourgeois-democratic nations.” He adds, “In the 1970’s this particularistic strategy was adopted by certain feminists...”<sup>14</sup>

Bookchin’s assertion that blacks and “colonial peoples” occupied the top of some theoretical new left pyramid is reminiscent of the stereotypical poor white in the U.S. who’s convinced that blacks get all the breaks and the reason for their own condition has more to do with affirmative action than with the system of corporate feudalism that they’re the victims of. To the extent that any white radicals on the new left in the early 70’s paid more attention to what black, brown, red and yellow revolutionaries we’re saying than intellectuals like Bookchin, it was because they realized that the prime victims and biggest targets of state/ capitalist repression and exploitation around the world were in communities of color and their voices needed to be taken seriously.

Given the lack of clearly articulated alternatives, it’s not hard to understand why many white anarchists cling to this narrow conception of workers revolution. They feel that nationalism is in opposition to their work because historically its Euro-and Anglo-manifestations have been so closely tied to imperialism, and racism that, for them, it’s not a revolutionary option. But the categorical rejection of all nationalisms due to their perceived hostility to class revolution is not a necessary conclusion of anarchist intellectual history.

## Bakunin

For most of Bakunin’s political life he could be described as a pan-Slavic revolutionary nationalist and an anarchist. He didn’t believe that his anti-imperialism and his anarchism were in conflict. He felt “strong sympathy for any national uprising against any form of oppression” declaring that “no one is entitled to impose its costume, its customs, its language and its laws.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bob Black. *Anarchy after Leftism*. Cal Press 1997 p. 149.

<sup>12</sup> Murray Bookchin. *Post Scarcity Anarchism*. Ramparts Press 1971 p.211.

<sup>13</sup> Black, p.150.

<sup>14</sup> Bookchin. “Nationalism and the National Question.” P. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in D. Guerin, 1970, *Anarchism*, Monthly Review, p. 68.

Bakunin was not agnostic on the issue of self-determination. He clearly supported peoples who were fighting for it.

Not only did Bakunin support self-determination, he recognized the distinction between a nation and the state. "The state is not the fatherland, it is the abstraction...of the fatherland. The common people of all countries deeply love their fatherland, but that is a natural real love. The patriotism of the people is not just an idea, it is a fact; but political patriotism, love of the state, is not the faithful expression of that fact..."<sup>16</sup> Nationalism is not the worship of the state, because it refers to a people and the love that they have for their land, their cultural and their language.

This was before the era of 'diversity' so Bakunin didn't see anything in the commitment people had to the preservation of their national culture to celebrate. But he was smart enough to know that being anti-national was pointless. "Therefore we bow before tradition, before history, or rather, we recognize them, not because they appear to us as abstract barriers raised metaphysically, juridical and politically...but only because they have actually passed into the flesh and blood, into the real thoughts and the will of populations."<sup>17</sup>

What Bakunin objected to was the principal of nationality because he felt that it wasn't universal. He gradually became more intolerant of national struggles against colonialism because he saw how these movements inspired national chauvinism and hatred across Europe. His growing internationalism and commitment to workers solidarity put distance between him and national liberation advocates towards the end of his public life. "There is nothing more absurd and at the same time more harmful, more deadly, for the people to uphold the fictitious principal of nationality as the ideal of all the people's aspirations, nationality is not a universal human principal."<sup>18</sup> It's important to remember that Bakunin's critique of nationalism was within the context of intra-European conflicts.

True internationalism is not anti-nationalist. It is a constructive ideal that seeks to create mutual respect, solidarity, and alliances among nations. To the extent that class elites attempt to use race, religion, gender, immigrant status, sexuality, age, or disability to divide the people in the name of the nation, anarchists should stand against it. But there are many nationalist struggles that are about self determination and human dignity, not division. The Palestinian struggle comes to mind along with the anti-colonial movement in Puerto Rico. Anarchists may fairly critique the statist elements in these movements. But the across the board opposition to the national unity of people of color in our struggle against imperialism renders many anarchists incapable of supporting even non-state, indigenous movements for autonomy in places like Chiapas, Mexico, or the Tamil struggle for autonomy in Sri Lanka.

## Rocker

If there was some level of ambiguity around the relationship between anarchism and nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that ambiguity ended with Rudolf Rocker's opus *Nationalism and Culture*. Written in the 1930's, the book highlighted the role that nationalist appeals were playing in solidifying domestic support for European fascist imperialism abroad and racial hatred at home. It also challenged the mythology of nationhood as an organic social grouping. He wrote "the nation

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<sup>16</sup> *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*. Edited by G.P. Maximoff. The Free Press New York 1953 P.324.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>18</sup> Maximoff P.325.



is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state that creates the nation, not the nation the state.”<sup>19</sup>

The nation is a construction. And political leaders who resort to blood and soil tales of national origins do so because their reactionary nationalism is rooted in appeals to racism and imperialism and therefore needs a biological–land tie. But the fact that nations are developed by human action does not somehow invalidate their authenticity. Tribes are also human constructions, as are families, bands, etc... The only way to judge the usefulness of different social groupings is by observing their longevity and their tendency to support the type of lasting bonds between people that make human survival and growth possible. Families, and ethnical based tribes have survived the three most significant revolutions in human history—agriculture, industry, and the information age. Nations are a newer development. Only time will tell whether this construct will survive globalization and what some call ‘the new world order.’

For Rocker the free-city of Europe’s middle ages represented “that great epoch...of federalism whereby European culture was preserved from total submersion and the political influence of the arising royalty was for a long time confined to the non-urban country.”<sup>20</sup> He compared this age to the rise of the monarchical nation-state and claimed that among the medieval, European men of the free-cities “there never existed...those rigid, insurmountable barriers which arose with the appearance of the national states in Europe.”<sup>21</sup>

Rocker’s comparison of the golden age of autonomous, federated medieval cities to the rise of the nation wasn’t very useful. This is because the two are different in kind. The city is a geographic designation, like a province, or a country, or a county. A nation is a human designation—like a family, a tribe, or a gang.. This distinction is important because it sharpens the dilemma that anarchists of color find themselves in when we’re sorting through our politics. Since Rocker slammed the door shut on nationalism, non-white anarchists have been told to choose between our nation (or *people*) and our social philosophy. This choice is much more profound and, in the end, unnecessary, than whether we think cities are better units of social organization than counties. This choice has also led some to abandon anarchism.

Perhaps the most illustrative passage in Rocker’s book on the colonial character of universalism and its role in the construction of anti-nationalism can be found in his description of the social glue that tied medieval man together. “Medieval man felt himself to be bound up with a single, uniform culture...It was the community of Christendom which included all the scattered units of the Christian world and spiritually unified them.”<sup>22</sup> Fair enough. But now for the kicker. “Church and empire likewise had root in this universal idea...For pope and emperor Christianity was the necessary ideological basis for the realization of a new world dominion...For medieval man it was the symbol of a great spiritual community...” but “while the Christian idea united them, the idea of the nation separated and organized them into antagonistic camps.”<sup>23</sup>

What Rocker leaves out are the crusades, the inquisitions, the witch burnings, the Jewish pogroms, the slaughter of pagans. And that’s only in Europe. By the late medieval period the conquistadors were in Central and South America committing genocide against the heathen indigenous populations in the name of Christianity. The Church may have had a unifying effect for

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<sup>19</sup> Rudolph Rocker. *Nationalism and Culture*. Black Rose Books 1998 (Reprint) Original 1937 P. 200.

<sup>20</sup> Rocker P.2.

<sup>21</sup> Rocker P.3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

some Europeans, but this unity was achieved with the blood of millions both inside and outside of the continent. I'll take the divisions of the nation over the "unity" of the Christian Church any day.

For all its limitations, Rocker's *Nationalism and Culture* was a mammoth effort and clearly a classic of anarchist literature. More than any other book, it detailed the connections between reactionary nationalism and racism and made clear how the state used both to enhance its power over the masses. While his sweeping dismissal of all nationalism is regrettable, it is at least politically understandable within the context of the rise of Euro-fascism in the 1930's. What's harder to reconcile are post-world war II anarchists who have witnessed the anti-colonial movements in the global south and still maintain that national movements for liberation against colonialism are "the same" as the imperial nationalist movements of Europe in the last two centuries.

## Colonial Contemporaries

Murry Bookchin addressed himself specifically to anarchist universalism within the context of the 'national question' in 1993. After echoing Rocker's idyllic view of the free cities of medieval Europe, he warned "the great role assigned to reason by the enlightenment may well be in grave doubt" if we forget that "our true social affinities are based on citizenship, equality and a universalistic sense of a common humanity."<sup>24</sup>

Are 'our' true affinities based on citizenship? I'm not sure that the tens of millions of non-citizens in the U.S. who, due to their status as undocumented immigrants, would agree. In fact, citizenship has historically been a construction of property owners as a way to exercise privilege and power over poor migrants, and religious and racial minorities. This has been true from Roman times to present day America. And affinities based on a "universalistic sense of a common humanity" sound good, but who gets to define what that common humanity is? The First International (an almost exclusively European affair)? Or maybe a bunch of Institute for Social Ecology graduates?

The underlying issue is not the lack of diversity of various left circles and movements that purport to represent universal principals. It's the very supposition that any single movement or political ideal could represent any meaningful global consensus on how communities should arrange their social institutions. Anarchists have their ideas and should work in their communities to, among other things, demonstrate that those ideas can work in the real world for other peoples around the globe. Some success in this endeavor should be a prerequisite for international anarchist criticism of national liberation and indigenous struggles against western imperialism.

In the essay Bookchin evokes fondly the lyrics of the socialist anthem the Internationale—"Tis the final conflict!"—and longs for the "sense of universalistic commitment" that those words embodied.<sup>25</sup> Forgive me for not being two inspired by the image of Bookchin and a group of his old left New York buddies, hunched over in a semi-circle ready to bust a note. But he goes into attack mode when he picks up where Rocker left off and applies his across-the-board rejection of nationalism to the colonial struggles of Africa, Asia, and the Americas of the 1950's and 60's. Bookchin mocked the national liberation movements of the period through his sophomoric use

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<sup>24</sup> Bookchin, "Nationalism and the National Question." P. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

of quotes in describing their “attempts to achieve ‘autonomy’ from imperialism...even at the expense of a popular democracy in the colonized world.”<sup>26</sup>

Bookchin doesn’t bother to identify one colonial popular democracy (a contradiction in terms) that was overthrown by nationalists or native movements in the quest for autonomy. He doesn’t because none existed. But that’s alright...we all know that darkies are always better off under white rule. Bookchin’s larger point is that the nice, idealistic, white kids in the new left got duped and intimidated into supporting authoritarian national liberation movements by the usual assortment of black national revolutionary thugs, solemn and sympathetic Native Americans fighting to hang on to their land, Latino political gangs lurking in the barrio, and other stereotypical ghosts of 1960’s radical mythology. It’s astonishing that at this late date Bookchin would still be walking around blaming black revolutionary nationalists and Asian Maoists for the decline of the new left and the rise of ‘micro nationalism.’ It’s always easier to blame others than it is to look in the mirror.

## ‘Post Left’ Colonialism

There seems to be a developing split between anarchist journal writers and activists on the national question. To their credit, lots of anarchists have participated in anti-imperialist struggles with respect for the people with whom they’ve struggled. Currently, anarchist organizers and cultural workers in North America are increasingly throwing off the shackles of dogma and are doing solidarity work with national and autonomous movements against colonialism. But as this divergence has taken place, the colonial anarchists have become even more desperate in their attempt to hang on to the tradition. And on this front the attempt to protect colonial anarchy has been led not by the class war anarchists, but by a loosely knit network of green and primitivist intellectuals who argue that anarchists should cut their lingering ties to the left altogether.

A 1993 screed by Fredy Perlman that appeared in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* asserts that the fascist nationalism of Europe in the 1930’s and 40’s “could now be applied to Africans as well as Navahos, Apaches as well as Palestinians. The borrowings from Mussolini, Hitler, and the Zionists are judiciously covered up, because Mussolini and Hitler failed to hold on to their seized power...”<sup>27</sup>

This appeared in the same journal that did a four-part series called ‘Post-Left Anarchy’ in the fall of 1999 in which Lawrence Jarach reprimanded anarchists who dared to show solidarity with the EZLN for their “uncritical support.” “The name of the organization should be enough to cause anarchists to pause” (Zapatista National Liberation Army) because “national liberation has never been part of the anarchist agenda...The EZLN, for all its revolutionary posturing, is a broad based democratic movement for progressive social change within the fabric of the Mexican state.”<sup>28</sup> How do you even engage with people about colonialism who treat “Africans” as some sort of Hitler-inspired nationalist monolith or who claim that indigenous autonomists who have successfully sustained a decade-old uprising through disciplined armed struggle are basically revolutionary poseurs? Generally, you don’t.

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<sup>26</sup> Bookchin, “Nationalism and the National Question.” P. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Fredy Perlman, “The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism” *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. #37, Summer 1993.

<sup>28</sup> Lawrence Jarach, “Don’t let the Left (overs) Ruin Your Appetite” *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. #48, Fall – Winter 1999–2000.

But in the Spring 2002 issue of *Green Anarchy* a Zapatista did. It was a response to an article that appeared in the paper a few months earlier entitled “The EZLN is NOT Anarchist.” The article labels the EZLN as “fundamentally reformist” not working towards anything “that could not be provided for by capitalism.”<sup>29</sup> The piece went on to instruct anarchists to find ways to “intervene in a way that is fitting with one’s aims, in a way that moves one’s revolutionary anarchist project forward.”<sup>30</sup>

The Zapatista responded “It would be difficult for us to design a more concise list of colonial words and attitudes than those used in this sentence. “Intervene?” “moves one’s ‘project’ forward?” Mexicans have a very well developed understanding of what ‘intervention’ entails.”<sup>31</sup> He ended with this, “Colonialism is one of the many enemies we are fighting in this world and so long as North Americans reinforce colonial thought patterns in their ‘revolutionary’ struggles, they will never be on the side of any anti-colonial struggle anywhere. We in the Zapatista struggle have never asked anyone for unflinching, uncritical support. What we have asked the world to do is respect the historical context we are in and think about the actions we do to pull ourselves from under the boots of oppression.”<sup>32</sup>

If and when North American anarchists learn how to do this with all of the struggles against colonial and neo-colonial domination around the globe—whether they’re nationalist or go under some other label, then we’ll be welcomed into a much larger and richer international tradition of people’s struggles against domination. This is where we belong.

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<sup>29</sup> Green Anarchy. *The EZLN is NOT Anarchist*. #6 Summer 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Green Anarchy. *A Zapatista Response to The EZLN is NOT Anarchist* #8 Spring 2002 P. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Green Anarchy P. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

# On Separatism

Since its enlightenment inception, the left has associated separatism with tribal, primitive, backward instincts. It's lineage "begins with reactionaries, nationalists, and romantics," in the words of Todd Giltin, who "mock[ed] the pretensions of the enlightenment." (Todd Gitlin *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, Metropolitan Books 1995, P.210) Left universalism offered a new man. Armed with the light of reason he would throw off his provincial ways, cast off place and prejudice and see himself first as a member the universal brotherhood of man. Universal man shifted to the universal worker after a while but the idea remained. Why worry about your little language and religion and silly folkways when you have "our" universe. Anarchists nurtured on the enlightenment ideal of cultural pluralism, naturally rejected separatist movements that ran against this historical tide.

But as we travel further down the road of neo-liberal global consolidation and the "twilight of sovereignty" it might be time to re-examine separatism and make critical distinctions between reactionary separatism and separatist movements that seek to maintain or re-establish political self-determination. The latter aims to defend the social, cultural, and economic integrity of a people from the social repression of imperial states or the onslaught of multi-national corporate hegemony. The desire among some to develop a universal culture, an old left dream, shouldn't make people blind to the fact that America's lifestyle industry and the corporations and armies that stand in its shadows, are the agents of a creeping global consumerism (what Benjamin Barber called "McWorld"). This new world order drives out the scared, and unmediated. It supplants experience with virtuality and replaces local culture with Euro- rationalism. This is universalism today John Lennon's Imagine on IBM billboards, soldiers in blue helmets enforcing a precarious peace in hostile lands, faceless IMF bureaucrats adjusting monetary policies in far away places from their 19<sup>th</sup> Street D.C. offices and a Wal-mart on every corner. Some people around the world have the audacity not to want anything to do with this.

## Political Separatism

All political separatist movements are not equal in inspiration or character. Autonomist or secessionist struggles can be organized into at least three main categories. The first group can be labeled liberal separatist. Liberal separatist movements are usually motivated by the desire of propertied elites and the middle classes in a region to consolidate their class status and protect the religious, language and/or racial/ ethnic constitution of their communities. This is sometimes linked to rhetoric about freedom and independence and often involves settler populations. In many ways contemporary Taiwan fits the first description as does the so-called U.S. war of independence from Great Britain.

The second type of political separatism can be called resistance separatism and is defined by the attempt by indigenous and multi-ethnic/racial communities to maintain or re-establish their traditional cultures and life-ways in the face of imperial state violence and the encroachments of

the remote rules and rulers of global neo-liberalism. Above all else these populations seek self-determination and community control over their own economies and cultures. In this group you can include East Timor, the Tamil Eelam of Sri Lanka, and the EZLN.

The last type of separatism can be referred to as exile separatism. This is a group of people who seek to withdraw from society altogether. The reasons vary: some are white racials who simply don't want to have to see or be around blacks and other people of color. Some seek to get away from technological society, "get off the grid" and live off the land.. Sometimes the latter comes in the form of the hippie commune, and sometimes it comes in the form of the lone white man against modern society (Ted Kaczynski).

These aren't clear-cut categories. Historically there has been much overlap between liberal and resistance separatism. Sometimes alliances for secession or autonomy develop between the two camps each wanting to breakaway but for different reasons. The Basque separatist movement has consistently had more support from the poor and working class sectors of the region than the middle classes. But the ETA has always attracted advocates from every class over the years including wealthy enthusiasts. And nationalists inspired by the goals of liberal separatism have been known to use the people's legitimate desire to hang on to their culture as a way to whip up racial bigotry in the hopes that after the fighting is over they'll be next in line to rule after independence is won.

But these overlaps shouldn't lead us to reject all separatist movements out of hand. Active opposition to social institutions and movements that use force and domination in order to gain and maintain power is consistent with the anarchist belief in non-coercion. (If anarchists can support the use of force against institutional purveyors of violence then we should be able to support the use of force against individuals, and political mobs that use violence to deny people their autonomy and agency.) But in the absence of the above, it's difficult to see on what grounds we could oppose any of the various types of separatist scenarios. Being uncomfortable with the motivation of a separatist movement is different from refusing to acknowledge the right of a people to break away from a larger political unit. This distinction is crucial to the development of a more nuanced anarchist analysis of separatism.

## Case Studies in Unity

Where have non-white anarchists and anti-authoritarians stood on the question of support for separatist struggles against colonialism? In Cuba an 1892 resolution in support of the war for separation from Spain was passed by the First Workers Congress the largest and most influential anarchist organization in the country. The resolution stressed the important point that anarchism (what they called revolutionary socialism) could not be an obstacle to "the triumph of the independence of our country." (Maurice Halperin: "The Rise and Fall of Fidel Castro," University of California 1972 p.4) Their support for succession didn't turn them into republicans. They still believed in the class struggle. But this belief didn't make them put the class war first either. Cuba anarchists like Enrique Cresci and Eduardo Gonzalez (two authors of the resolution) thought that it was more important to demonstrate solidarity with the people's legitimate desire to be free from white colonial domination than it was to be "good anarchists" in the international workers revolution. The Eastern Anarchist Federation, an alliance that included anarchists from China, Vietnam, Taiwan and Japan was first animated by the anti-colonial struggles in the re-

gion against Japanese hegemony. It was these struggles that, according to Jason Adams, brought anarchism to Korea.

“Korean migrants living in Tokyo came under the influence of Japanese anarchism and engaged heartily in the anti-imperialist movement. As a result over 6000 were rounded up after incredulously being blamed by the authoritarian Japanese state for Tokyo’s 1923 earthquake. They were beaten, jailed and two were even sentenced to death along with their Japanese comrades in the “High Treason Case”(MacSimion, 1991). Later, during the 1919 independence struggle, in which anarchists were prominent, (my emphasis) refugees migrated into China, which was at the height of anarchist influence as a result of the New Culture movement. At the same time, Japanese anarchists at the time continue their solidarity work with the Korean liberation movement.” (Jason Adams, “Non-Western Anarchisms: Rethinking the Global Context 1993.)

### **Adams describes a courageous break away attempt by the Korea Anarchist Communist Federation (KACF)**

“The Apex of Korean anarchism however came later the same year outside the actual borders of the country, in Manchuria. Over two million Korean immigrants lived within Manchuria at the time when the KACF declared the Shinmin Province autonomous and under the administration of the Korean People’s Association. The decentralized, federative structure the association adopted consisted of village councils, district councils and area councils, all of which operated in a cooperative manner to deal with agriculture, education, finance and other vital issues. KACF sections in China, Korea, Japan and elsewhere devoted all their energies towards the success of the Shinmin Rebellion, most of them actually relocating there. Dealing simultaneously with Stalinist Russia’s attempt to overthrow the Shinmin autonomous region and Japan’s imperialist attempts to claim the region for itself, Korean anarchists by 1932 had been crushed (MacSimion, 1991)” (Ibid)

The Korean example shows not only that separatists struggles against colonial rule and anarchism are compatible but that they can be intimately connected in the fight for liberation. For Japanese and Chinese anarchists solidarity with the Korean immigrants of Manchuria didn’t turn on the movement’s nationalist profile or whether they saw themselves as workers first and Koreans second. Adams plays down the nationalist character of the East Asian anti-authoritarian formations of the period “the “nationalism” of Chinese and Korean anarchists can be seen as a form of anarchist internationalism dressed up in nationalist clothing for political convenience.” (Ibid.)

But in truth nobody was dressing up anything because they didn’t have to. The East Asian example demonstrates how any social grouping, including national ones, can contribute to the fight against empire and colonial rule within the context of anarchist ideals.

White anarchist support for separatist struggles for self determination has been a tougher sell.

During the Algerian war for independence France’s anarchist community was divided and politically marginal. In the book “The Brother’s Comrades: Trotskyites and Anti-Authoritarians

in the Algerian War” Sylvain Pattieu reported that the Federation Anarchiste (FA) refused to support the FLN due to its nationalist and religious ideas. Instead the FA promoted an irrelevant third way by telling the Algerian people to join “the only valuable struggle”- Euro- anarchist one. The FA rejected anti-colonial praxis for meaningless gestures and self important navel gazing. (Sylvain Pattieu, “The Brother’s Comrades: Trotskyites and Anti-Authoritarians in the Algerian War” Paris: Editions Trotskyites, 2002)

On the other hand, a smaller France based group, the Federation Communiste Libertaire (FCL) chose what it called “critical support” for the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria. This position supported the anti- colonial struggle by cultivating contacts with the Algerian anarchists (few in number as they were) and showing solidarity with them. The FCL also refused to let themselves be used by the supporters of colonial rule by denouncing the FLN tactics in public. They too had misgivings about the more reactionary elements and tactics in the Algerian separatist movement but they recognized that Frances’s colonial domination was the trigger of the suffering and violence taking place and their responsibility was to weaken the empire not to tell the victims of it how to liberate themselves from it. (Ibid.)

## **Anarchist societies and anarchist communities**

It’s critical to distinguish between the ideal anarchist community and what anarchy would most probably look like in a stateless society. In an anarchist community one could presume not only the existence of anarchist civic arrangements and practices (community control of public resources, direct, participatory decision making, free association) but also of certain social and cultural values that inform the way we live (solidarity, mutual aid, anti-racist, queer, feminist) In an anarchist society the statelessness would be a reality but not necessarily the values and ways of life. Another words, noncoercion entails tolerating local communities living in ways that don’t square with the prevailing social and cultural priorities of anarchism.

Separatist movements have the effect of fracturing political jurisdictions, making the units of social organization smaller and more amenable to direct democratic practices, (although this is not always the goal of the separatists). The more fractured political jurisdictions become, the less dominant “the state” is. The monolith of authority disintegrates. Its power is diffused. Its ability to coerce from remote perches of privilege are undermined. Its proximity to the people is increased. This is the paradox. An approximate anarchist society might entail many more, weaker states than the world has today on the road to a stateless world. The ability of anarchists to seriously challenge states is tied to our ability to diminish their power, and political reach. This is not a question of whether one is a real anarchist or not. It’s a question of figuring out the best way to attack state authority and power. If non-participation in electoral politics, event planning, demonstrations and property destruction were the answers (the current anarchist “strategy”) the state would be an historic relic by now. By linking up with nationalist, autonomist, and political separatist movements we potentially join in a broader struggle of resistance to global corporate control and state colonialism. Each level of resistance- individual, tribal, familial, national, international, is an important point of challenge to the state and global neo-liberal tyranny.



## Organizational Separatism

A second, and perhaps more controversial, part of the separatism debate centers around whether it makes sense for anarchists of color to start their own organizations and political projects to the exclusion of whites. APOC groups, conferences and blocks at demonstrations have been labeled “separatist” and have been accused of breaking up the unity of the working class and reinforcing the oppression of non-whites by using group identities to fight against their domination instead of dealing with it as an individual. Heavy shit. Let’s take a look see.

The problem appears to be the rise of “identity politics.” Its latest wave in the 80’s and 90’s spawned a number of campusbased movements that were driven by racial, gender, and sexuality-based organizing strategies. A few of these groups left out straight white males. Many others simply required them to step back at meetings and be allies instead of leaders in the struggles against white supremacy, patriarchy, and homophobia. But a mid- 1990’s backlash found expression in the re-embrace of political universalism at the height of the U.S. academic interest in French post-modernism with its rejection of foundationalism and the “meta- narratives” of the Enlightenment. Books like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.’s *The Disuniting of America*, Gitlin’s *Twilight of Common Dreams*, and articles like Jonathan Chait’s “Backfire on Campus” in the *American Prospect* accused identity activists of everything from dividing the progressive movement to seeking to create new hierarchies in it (presumably with a working class, black, disabled, undocumented, lesbian immigrant witch at the top and a rich, straight, white, adult, Christian American male at the bottom).

On the class war front, the problem with identity politics was that its adherents viewed anyone who didn’t fit into their self-defined identity as “the enemy” and saw “all other people in society” as “part of the problem” (Sharon Smith, “Mistaken Identity- or can identity politics liberate the oppressed?” *International Socialism Journal* Issue 62 Spring 1994) By contrast, the class struggle united “different groups of activists into a common struggle.” (Ibid.)

If there are a few separatist feminist, queer, and race-based organizations that traffic in bigotry of “the other,” there are many more that exist simply so that they and their constituencies can define for themselves what the critical issues and problems are and can lead the struggle to address them. Contrary to Smith’s assertion, this hasn’t meant that identity-based organizations have rejected support and solidarity from others. What they’ve rejected is the argument that claims when people most effected by a particular form of domination demand that they lead the fight against it that that makes them bigoted dupes of the capitalist class.

Identity politics on the left is divisive because whenever people lose the ability to define a relationship of power (whether ally or enemy), they lose power and folks generally don’t like losing power. As Kwame Toure and Charles Hamilton point out in their 1967 book *Black Power*, coalitions between groups with unequal social power are always steeped in condescension and resentment. In the end these coalitions often wind up doing more harm than good.

The class warriors aren’t the only folks unhappy with identity politics. Wolfi Landstreicher, a post-left anarchist, argued in his essay *From Politics to Life: Ridding anarchy of the leftist millstone* that

“The political need for categorization... leads the left to valorize people in terms of their membership in various oppressed and exploited groups, such as “workers”, “women”, “people of color”, “gays and lesbians” and so on. This categorization is the

basis of identity politics. Identity politics is the particular form of false opposition in which oppressed people choose to identify with a particular social category through which their oppression is reinforced as a supposed act of defiance against their oppression. In fact, the continued identification with this social role limits the capacity of those who practice identity politics to analyze their situation in this society deeply and to act as individuals against their oppression.” (Wolfe Landstreicher, “From Politics to Life: Ridding anarchy of the leftist millstone,” *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* Issue 54 Winter 2002–2003).

Landstreicher echoes a familiar right wing individualist refrain. People who have borne the brunt of state or private repression would be better off fighting against institutionalized violence and exploitation as an individual. Get an education, work hard, stay outta trouble and you too can make it. Don’t worry about other people who happen to be in the same boat as you for the same reasons. Don’t wallow in your victim hood etc.

To begin with, the Left is not alone in its “need for categorization.” Categorization happens to be a low order form of critical thinking that most kids start to learn fairly early on in life. Political categorization takes place because some people have more social power, and access to resources than others and this disparity is a fault line that determines who lives and who dies. This causes people to coalesce into communities of interest in order to keep what they have, or to get what they consider their fair share. Some wealthy and powerful individuals are able to defend their interests and agency alone. Most can’t. There is power in numbers. Any woman who’s ever tried to confront her boss about fair treatment, or any person of color who’s ever been the victim of mob violence knows that solidarity means everything. Uniting with other people who, due to their color, or race are the victims of domination is the most intelligent thing that the marginalized can do. Trying to prevent us from uniting with one another is the most intelligent thing that people with privilege, power and wealth can do to hang on to it.

Truth is, APOC is not identitarian. We’re a multiracial, multi-gender, movement of people who come from every class, sexual orientation and place. In other capacities we work with white folks on any number of different political issues and events. The only biological characteristic that we all have in common is that we’re human. Because many of us question or reject the biological relevance of race, even the non whiteness of folks in the APOC network is provisional and leads to debate more often it leads to outright exclusion.

This makes the charge of separatism silly. APOCs have no essential culture, history, ethnicity, or land that we choose to use as the basis for separatism, (although we do have lots of common experiences and traditions of resistance) And even if we did, any anarchist who would equate the decision of historically subordinate and marginalized groups to come together without whites to plan strategies for our liberation with the separatism of patriot movement types or white suburban neighborhood associations, should retake the challenging white supremacy workshop.

There are a number of reasons why APOC formations and projects exist. North American APOCs have largely been ignored in anti-authoritarian literature. We’re making the time and room to study and disseminate our own history. We’re tired of being hit over the head with the dead, white males of anarchy; primitivism vs. syndicalism; the organizers and activists vs. the anarchist scribes. It’s a white conversation, and it’s boring.

APOCs also find interesting other people of color in projects and campaigns easier when meetings, work spaces and demonstrations are mainly people of color spaces. Whites have a way of

dominating even when they're not aware they're doing so (As men do). This is what is meant by "white transparency." Whites aren't conscious of their race and the broad behavioral traits of whiteness because they are white, and enjoy a majority status and social power that makes what they do, say, and think normative. Activists and organizers of color get tired of that. Colored folks just being introduced to anarchist circles often make early exits because of white obliviousness to white power.

Perhaps what's so offensive to some white anarchists about the existence of APOCs is that we actually set off space and tell them they're not invited. To a people who are used to going wherever they want, whenever they want in "their" land, (free, white and 21!) this can be politically unsettling. This makes sense. White North Americans are the most privileged white people on the face of the earth. If any group of folks think they're entitled to be anywhere they want, whenever they wanna be, it's them. The very fact that APOCs have dared to draw a line is a good lesson in how the dispossessed can create power for themselves and humility among the master class.

# Identity Politics and Essentialism

Is anyone who has ever defined their political work through a social category historically associated with inferiority or submission in a particular culture “essentialist?” Do activists involved in ‘identity politics’ necessarily think of themselves as biologically or morally superior to straight, white men? Is social victimization something anarchists really need to be worried about? The answer to these questions could determine the future relationship that anarchism has to women, people of color, the LGBT community, immigrants and other groups of people who have lived in the shadows of unaccountable authority because of their real or perceived membership in a particular group.

In a Winter 2005 *Anarchy: the Journal of Desire Armed* article Lawrence Jarach raises these issues and responds in a way that invites anarchists to view essentialism as the inspiration of all identity driven political work and to reject calls for solidarity with movements that base their struggles on demands for justice for the victims of social domination. Instead, anarchists should focus on the ways that the victims are complicit in their own victimization by looking at how the recognition and identification with social classifications work to continue their own oppression. All this may seem like a slightly right of center interpretation of Foucault but Jarach does more than simply point out the fluidity of power relations. When he claims “...the ideologies of innocence and victimization can quickly transform an identity based on the history of shared oppression into a posture of superiority” he is echoing a more right-wing analysis that is closer to figures like Dinesh D’ Souza, David Horowitz and Shelbe Steele.

An essentialist is someone who believes there are different human archetypes that correspond to a set of fixed attributes in the group that the archetype represents. Plato is generally considered the author of this wacky notion. On the left, Carol Gilligan’s 1982 book *In a Different Voice* is a modern example of such thinking. “Left” essentialism has generally been a minor tendency since the early seventies. By contrast social constructionism has been much more popular in feminist, queer and multiculturalist movements- the three theoretical complements to the contemporary identity movement.

Self-identification with a particular social class or category does not imply the belief that that class or category is static, eternal, superior, or organic. Our identities are fragmented, intersectional, and open to change. But oppositional identities are sometimes imposed from the outside- a privilege of power that some people and communities do not have the agency to resist. The reality is that in North America over the last 600 years, white, Christian, men have held power and privilege over and above others and they have often used that power and privilege to the detriment of others. This doesn’t mean that people who recognize this fact with a period instead of a “but...” think they are superior to white, Christian, men (many of the people who recognize this fact are white, Christian, men) It simply means that we refuse to tell lies in order to build unity in the service of some ideology.

“The Jarach offers the concept of “counter essentialism. counter-essentialist discourse of Identity Politics attempts to invert the historical categories of oppression into categories of celebration... Counter-essentialism supposedly proves that the victim is eternally innocent, so victims’ actions and reactions are forever beyond reproach; all good Christians know that suffering is ennobling. Oppression is never the result of anything the victim has actually done to the Oppressor, so whatever strategies of resistance the victim chooses are legitimate. Self-defense is its own justification.”

Under this view the female victim of domestic violence would be complicit in a discourse that perpetuates her own domination if her demands for justice went beyond an individual quest for recompense against the perpetrator. If she happened to figure out that 95% of all domestic violence victims are women and girls and concluded that there were systemic and cultural causes that made women and girls targets for abuse and men perpetrators of it, she’d be told by some post left anarchists that she’s embracing the inverse of an historical narrative that assumes female passivity and male domination. If she decided to take a step further and become active in the feminist movement to fight against violence against women she’d be labeled an essentialist by Jarach and would find few allies among the post left anarchists.

Once we recognize a pattern in victimization that corresponds to a social category that exists in reality — it effects the way people think, act, and perceive- then the question of who invented the categories becomes a topic ripe for a drunk PHD at an ethnic studies department holiday party. The priority becomes stopping the victimization. The ability to stop it and hold the victimizers accountable largely depends on the number of people who decide to stand up and demand it stop. Not just for themselves but for everyone who has been victimized due to the “outward markings” (Jarach’s phrase) that they share in common regardless of their biological meaning (or lack thereof). The physical attributes that are invested with negative meaning by people who create social hierarchies based on their existence become relevant to those who’ve been targeted for victimization for possessing these physical attributes because they’ve been targeted for victimization for possessing these physical attributes! In this climate pretending this discourse doesn’t exist just because you didn’t create it can get you killed. The first order of survival is the ability to recognize a present reality and adapt your behavior to meet its demands.

The unity of those who have suffered under oppression is the most powerful weapon in the fight to end that oppression. It’s great to have allies who will stand with your community when it’s under attack (as anarchists should do). But the first priority of resistance is raising the awareness of the people inside the community by sharing knowledge about the ways in which their efforts to live in dignity and self-determination are being denied and subverted and what they can do to fight back. To label activists who are dedicated to this important political education “essentialist” is absurd.

In the end the post left anarchist rejection of identity politics reveals a double standard in its concern about hierarchy. The anarchist rejects the state because it imposes political hierarchy. But getting rid of the state wouldn’t necessarily dramatically effect social hierarchy at all. (In fact, with the existence of corporate feudalism it could make it worse) The state may solidify social inequality but it’s not the author of it. Getting rid of social hierarchy will demand true solidarity with those who have born the brunt of injustice and repression. This is something Jarach and many his post left anarchist friends are not willing to do.

## Group X: Lessons in Multiracial Anarchist Organizing

Group X was an organization that actually never was. The effort was coordinated by a group of mainly East Bay Area anarchists who had been involved in a series of post-Seattle meetings around how to harness the growing momentum and interest in anarchist activism. These meetings officially were in preparation for a conference. Strategic Resistance, that was to take place in August of 2001 (and did). But a smaller set of conference participants thought the time was right to move towards creating an anarchist organization in the Bay Area. Unlike most similar efforts in the past, this group would stress accountability and be “highly structured.” In order for anarchists to take full advantage of the organizing possibilities that the WTO victory created, it was time to think big and get serious.

The following account is a reflection on a series of meetings organized by Group X in preparation for its May 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 2001 organizational meeting. I revisit these conversations, impressions, and confrontations not to point fingers after the fact but to spur all of us into thinking more critically about how anarchists deal (or choose not to deal) with the issue of race in general and multiracial organizing in particular.

### The Screen

My first meeting was in the first week of April, 2001 with two members of the original core who started Group X. This was an interview. I was told later that the point wasn't so much to keep out agent provocateurs or the FBI, but to weed out the anarchist wheat from the chaff and to keep out those crazy orthodox marxists with the glazed-over eyes, and permanently attached forearm clipboards. You couldn't just decide to be in Group X. You had to be recruited. At least this was the rule.

The two organizers I met with seemed normal enough. They were cordial and even laid back but serious -self consciously so. The woman who came had done work in the early 80's with Fireworks, an offshoot of the legendary Weather Underground of the pervious decade, and third world solidarity organizing as well. Her smile and her eyes made me feel more comfortable, if not relaxed.

The guy was a few years younger than the female with a tall, imposing body and a shaved head. He had done some union organizing in New York and had been involved in a few anarchist projects in the Bay Area. They were both white and knew I was black before we met. I didn't like the idea of being “interviewed” by them. But I wasn't surprised by the lack of color. With the possible exception of the neo nazi youth scene and the Christian identity movement. North American anarchism is the whitest political tendency around. This is a bigger problem to some in the anarchist movement than it is to others. My guess is that if they had had a black person in their core organizing committee to send to the interview they probably would have- but they didn't.

We had a short conversation about the anti- globalization movement and how to channel the upsurge in youth activism. We agreed that the blanket condemnations of third world nationalists struggles against white colonialism (new and old) were short-sighted and dogmatic. They stressed the strategic importance of race in building more effective antiauthoritarian struggles and repeated their belief that the inability of anarchism to mount a sustained challenge to state/

capitalist structures was rooted in the old anarchist equation of structure, clear direction, and accountability with authoritarianism. I agreed and still do.

## Second Prep Meeting

After going to a small prep meeting in Oakland a few weeks earlier that focused on the vision thing, I was called to come to a second planning meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April. There were about 30 people at the meeting. I saw some familiar faces and met some anarchists of color whom I had seen before but had never been introduced to.

The bulk of the meeting was taken up talking about what should be the main priorities for the group for the first six months. We broke up into groups of five and brainstormed about priority work. The group I was in mirrored the other groups. The general consensus was that the first six months should be a time of internal education and training. The only memorable deviation came from this super articulate brother who was very well known in Bay Area activist circles. He thought we should be looking at campaigns and figuring out where we can plug in even if that meant playing just a supportive role at first.

He was right. Momentum is everything when an organization is just starting out. Taking action, getting noticed, building visibility is the most effective guard against the tendency among political groups to stall over process conflicts or ideological differences. Groups learn and grow by doing, not by talking in meetings. People didn't disagree, they side stepped.

Things were coming to a close when I threw a monkey wrench. I asked for the hands of all of the core organizers. They were, predictably, all white. I made the point that the closed invite policy ensured the reproduction of the race exclusive patterns that white anarchists claim to be against. Organizers invited who they knew. Who they knew were other white people.

I said this was problematic for an organization that saw race as strategically central to the struggle against authority.

The response from the core organizers was muted, not defensive. One of them brought up the fact that although the core organizing group was all white now it hadn't always been, which, of course, made me wonder why the people of color who were initially involved with the group dropped off. Another claimed that the core wasn't closed and that if people of color were interested in being a part of it, they could talk to one of them. Another basically acknowledged that there was a problem and then asked who wanted to work on dealing with it by recruiting more people of color into the group. The room fell silent. A young white woman proposed to start a committee dedicated to recruiting more people of color into the group.

No one spoke against it except for a San Francisco anarchist connected to the punk scene over there. But people weren't falling over themselves to sign up either. Of course I offered to be on the committee. Both of my interviewers volunteered as well, partly because of genuine interest and partly to keep a lid on the whole thing and watch me and the woman who spoke out of turn. (She apparently was one of the few folks who wasn't properly screened.) The new committee of six met for a few minutes after the meeting to plan our own.

The end of this meeting spotlighted the deep ambiguity around the developing identity of Group X. Although all of the members of the core organizing group took the issue of race seriously and struggled with its many complexities, it was clear that there had been no unified commitment among the founding members towards a multiracial anarchist organization. It later

came out in a subsequent meeting that all options on this question had been discussed, including Group X being a white solidarity anarchist organization. Resolution of the matter was to be put off for later. The most important thing to get out of the way was agreement on the structure of the organization. Or so they thought. This, in my mind, was the biggest mistake the core made on this issue. Whatever the decision, there should have been clarity and commitment on this from the very beginning.

## **The Organizing Weekend**

The weekend was all planned out. The idea was to gain consensus on how to build the organization around three predetermined “structural points” that, theoretically, everyone had seen and agreed upon beforehand. They included; a two tiered membership, guidelines on decision-making procedure and the authority of working groups in relation to the plenary.

A long-time Bay Area activist from the core organizing group and I were the first to show up on Saturday morning at the South San Francisco site. We spent a few minutes talking about where we grew up and our politics. He struck me as one of the most grounded and genuine folks I had met since being involved in the project. Although he was white, he wasn’t from America. His demeanor was open and calming without all of the defensive niceness that many white American activists project in relation to colored people.

After an introduction from the core organizers we broke into groups of ten to talk about the structural points. My group was facilitated by a black woman. Her style was direct and, at times, abrasive, and it shifted the energy of the group. Since that session she and I have had conversations about the culture of whiteness and how it demands that non-whites “speak its language.” In Disneyland middle class America where denial is the glue that holds together any number of personal, social, and professional relationships, people who don’t use euphemism, irony and obfuscation are often avoided and rejected as confrontational. That race/ culture clash played itself out in our group.

But that wasn’t the only source of friction. I clashed with the black woman’s partner- a self-identified Native American male with white skin. The issue was next to meaningless- how much autonomy working groups should have in relation to the larger organization. It’s the kind of question you can argue about for hours but can’t really work out until you’re doing campaigns and have to deal with real situations and power conflicts.

When it came time to pick a spokesperson for the report back, the white-skinned, part Native American said he didn’t trust me to do the report back because (after knowing me for all of 30 minutes) he thought I wouldn’t honestly portray his views to the larger group. After about 20 minutes of nervous back and forth about which three of us should do the report backs, a team was chosen. The whole experience made me more suspicious of activists with white skin privilege who claim non- white racial identities and politically align themselves with activists of color (which the person in question did shortly after the demise of Group X.) In a white supremacist society, people who have white skin but self identify with another race still receive the same social preferences and immunities that people who self-identify as white do. There is no difference between having white skin privilege and being white.

By the end of the first day there were already rumors circulating that a few Latino participants had felt alienated by the “cold and impersonal” process and hurried schedule. There were also



language issues. The translators were being forced to fast forward conversations. By the time translations were complete the English speakers were off to the next issue. The Spanish speakers felt left out, rushed and ignored because not enough time had been set aside for meaningful translation. This, along with the perception that everyone was just too busy to stop and get to know the people of color who weren't in the various white social cliques, led three of the Spanishspeaking Latino participants to drop out after the first day.

A less ambitious schedule, more time for social activities and more attention to translation issues on the part of the facilitators might have prevented the defections.

The diversity committee that came out of the second prep meeting didn't do much. Our task was to recruit activists of color for the organizing weekend and we had about ten days to do it. I failed to get anyone to the weekend and felt bad about raising an issue without having either a plan or the pull to remedy the situation. But what I really wanted to see was an organizational commitment to bringing in more people of color. This job was obviously too big for five people with a week and a half to work with.

I had heard that one of the Latino participants who left had proposed a six-week recruitment drive aimed at activists of color to begin right after the weekend. Although the core organizers had brought about nine people of color out of about 43 to the weekend (not bad considering what most anarchist meetings and affinity groups look like) there was general agreement that given the demographics of the East Bay the group could do better (particularly after the departure of the three Latino Spanish speakers).

I took up the six week recruitment proposal and spoke in favor of it on Sunday morning. I argued that having more people of color in the organizing project should have been a priority from day one and that if Group X moved forward towards developing its politics without more voices of color in the mix that our politics and our strategic vision would be impoverished.

The group was resistant. Some asked what was so special about race? The group also needed more women and queers too. Why not have a recruitment committee for all "under-represented" groups? A few said that a special recruitment of anarchists of color amounted to tokenism and would give guilty whites an easy out from dealing with their own racism. These comments came mainly from the other people of color in the group. The white anarchists just sorta sat back and took it all in.

During a break one of the most well-known young Latino intellectuals in the Bay Area recognized the need for some unity from the people of color on the issue. He called for a caucus of color. We gathered in the front hall right next to the main door and started talking about the recruitment plan pro and con. White participants, obviously interested in the conversation, kept coming up, listening for a minute and adding their two cents to the debate. At one point the organizer of the caucus ordered all the whites to "back off!" This didn't sit too well. A white guy stepped up and challenged his right to tell them to leave and suggested there were better places to have a closed caucus than in the middle of a hall. After an eerie pause everyone realized just how close we super politically advanced Bay Area anarchists had come to a race war. Folks started to disperse. It was the tensest moment I witnessed all weekend.

For the most part the white activists were afraid to commit to something that would push them out of their comfort zones and force them to talk to people who weren't like them. It wasn't made clear to them how the recruitment "plan" would work, how the outreach would be done or whether they would have to go into black neighborhoods after dark to talk to strangers about joining a majority white anarchist organization. It's also true that some participants rejected

the very notion of “recruiting” people of color into anarchist groups, preferring instead to think about ways in which Group X could support the ongoing struggles against social authority and capitalism in communities of color. This view was held mainly by the older white activists who came out of the third world solidarity struggles of the early 1980’s. The flip side of this view is that the attempts at multiracial organizing on the radical left in the 60s’s failed (SNCC being the most famous example) and that the role of white anarchists is to organize their “own people.”

I had no plan. I was asking for a commitment to multiracialism before anyone saw how the group could get from point A to point B. In characteristic form the proposal wasn’t voted down. It was put off until the first Group X meeting six weeks later.

## **My Last Meeting**

In the first meeting after the organizing weekend in Berkeley there was more racial bloodletting. The activist/ scholar who called for the caucus of color over the organizing weekend quit the group saying that he was too busy to spend a lot of time getting white anarchists “up to speed” on racial politics and that their ambiguity on how to move forward was frustrating. The sister who facilitated in my group over the organizing weekend stayed but told the core organizers of the group that it was naive of them to think that something as huge as the organizational strategy of Group X in relation to race could be “put off” until later or that it would just work itself out. I said that it seemed as if the group had decided to drop the idea of putting time and resources into bringing in more people of color altogether and that it looked as if folks in the group were fine with the racial makeup. (By then the number of colored people had dropped off to about four.) The core organizers were visibly tried, and at a loss for “solutions.” The woman who interviewed me at the very beginning was withdrawn and silent. That night they took it from all sides. Folks started whispering about Group X in the past tense.

After the Berkeley meeting I went to visit my female interviewer. We had a relaxed and long conversation about stuff both personal and political. I had grown to like her and felt a special connection. But after talking for a while it became clear to me that we weren’t just shootin’ the breeze. She was interested in me organizing other people of color into a new group. I was interested too, but I also wanted to see through the Group X project. This might have been her way of showing me the door or her way of telling me to jump ship before Group X sank. In retrospect she did me a favor. After “getting it,” I went to the next meeting of Group X two weeks later and quit the group, stating that I had decided to start an anarchist of color group with another Oakland activist. We started that organization a few weeks later. Group X folded soon thereafter.

# The Political Ghetto of Whiteness: Race and anarchist organization

Political and organizational cultures have a way of reproducing and perpetuating themselves unless directly challenged. What this means for white anarchist groups is clear. If they do not make organized efforts to include people of color in their affinity groups then their struggles in North America will remain an overwhelmingly white, youth orientated, scene-based, political phenomenon. Unless anarchism is a white solution to uniquely white political dilemmas, we should be concerned about the dissemination of its critiques, and praxis to everyone, especially those of us who have born the brunt of state repression, and capital exploitation. In North America that means, among other groups, people of color.

Respecting the fact that people in communities of color have been fighting against the state and imperialism before anarchism even developed as a distinct ideological trend, doesn't mean that anarchists can ignore their responsibility to relate the many visions of society without authority to non-whites. This doesn't mean arguing against APOC groups because they're divisive. If people of color want to organize with one another whites should support those efforts. But they should also make efforts to reach out to and work with everyone regardless of color. There are a few activists and organizers of color who don't agree with the idea of excluding whites from their political work as anarchists. There should be a place for these people in the movement as well.

Anarchist groups that are 95% white don't (and shouldn't) lead campaigns in communities of color. And those white groups who would use the few people of color in its ranks as ambassadors to dark skinned neighborhoods should be called out for tokenism. Not only is this an expression of organizational racism, it fails as an organizing model. But it's not as if it hasn't been tried.

The populist left Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) often places white organizers in black and brown neighborhoods to find out about issues in the community and to facilitate action geared towards fixing them while building power and a sense of civic ownership among members in the neighborhood. ACORN portrays its largely white organizing staff as behind the scenes trainers of indigenous community leaders, and membership and in a number of cities they've done a good job of leadership development in communities of color. But the fact that the white organizers often make the vast majority of the organizational, strategic, and tactical campaign decisions contributes to the widespread conviction in communities of color that when white politicians come into the hood or the barrio they come with a hidden agenda. The distrust this approach (and others) has left makes leaving the task of spreading anarchist principles in communities of color to white radicals an insurmountable one. To its credit, ACORN has at least realized that communities of color need to be engaged and has done something about it. Anarchists have yet to reach that consensus on any level.

People with the most at stake in the struggle for liberation must be at the center of the struggles for that liberation. It's this ideal that should influence white activists most heavily with regard

to the campaigns they chose to work on. Organizationally it also means that anarchist groups must develop the internal capacity to organize in communities of color. They need to multiply the number of organizers of color with an explicitly anti-authoritarian analysis to make that happen. This should be in addition to anarchists of color organizing ourselves into groups and campaigns that are for activists of color only. It's not enough to claim to be "open" to participation from people of color. White anarchists must develop plans to build coalitions with other groups of color working on similar issues that engage people of color in anarchist struggle directly.

Concerns about the workability and ultimate aims of organizational multiracialism have also been raised. The most persistent one is that if white organizations affirmatively take on the challenge of including people of color that will somehow lead to tokenism. They say we must wait until groups have dealt with internal racism. To do otherwise will just lead to a revolving door of members of color who join, become disillusioned, then quit, full of resentment. In order to bring in people of color successfully groups must be ready to assimilate them into white anarchist organizations that have already figured out how not to be racist through discussion, and training.

Not only does the above approach further exacerbate the perennial problem of anarchist groups not having enough direct input and engagement from people of color in the struggle, it also has tokenism backward. Groups shouldn't focus their membership efforts on activists of color just to make "the meeting room darker." They should do it to listen to what activists of color have to say about the anarchist vision, political direction, and tactics. Yes. Being an oppressed minority in North America gives one a unique perspective on struggle that white anarchists need to take seriously. The fewer members of color the group has, the greater temptation there will be to point to the three or four members of color as "proof" that the organization is not segregated. It will also increase the likelihood that whites in the group will begin to look to the few colored people at meetings to speak for their racial, or ethnic group. These are the real symptoms of tokenism.

Another related concern is that radical pluralism does not prescribe a numeric formula for inclusion. This leads to the question, how is it defined? This should be determined by the nature and goals of the campaign. Anarchist organizations should be concentrating lots of efforts on campaigns that have the potential to destabilize and challenge social hierarchy. Because the contradictions of state/ capital serfdom are greatest in non- white, poor communities much of the work will be done in those neighborhoods. Organizers of color should be at the center of these campaigns.

Groups should think in terms of making organizations as hassle-free as possible to join for those people of color who are interested. For instance membership working groups could do away with interview or "screen" requirements for potential members of color. Another model includes freezing membership for whites at a ratio to non-whites. A good test of whether an organization is being effective at including enough people of color in its group is its ability to develop campaigns in neighborhoods of color. Another test is the ability of anarchist organizations to attract and keep members of color. If the numbers of people of color in the movement are growing over a measurable period of time that's probably a sign the group is doing something right. Those that suggest that anarchist politics would be watered down or somehow less anarchist if more people of color became involved should stop.

The rhetorical demeanor of some on this issue seems to project a dour realism that seeks to convince us of how difficult, and thorny race is. But it's not true that race plural radical orga-

nizations have never existed. CORE in the 1960's fit that description. Its freedom riders were a multi-racial group of young activists who struggled together, bled together and died together in the South. Today socialist Bay Area groups like Storm, and Critical Resistance have taken this issue seriously enough to create their own models for inclusion. Anarchists can and should do the same.

I should also note some differences between liberal multiculturalism and radical pluralism. Multiculturalism is the social descendant of integration- the belief that prejudice was based on ignorance and if blacks and whites worked, lived, and went to school together, people of color would become assimilated, we would realize that "were all the same inside" and bigotry would end. Today multiculturalism functions as an attempt to absorb the novelties and "folk wisdom" of various racial groups so long as these cultural artifacts run consistent with the prevailing imperatives of the liberal elite in the academy, and the corporate press. Diversity, within this context, is promoted primarily to assuage white guilt and to convince youth of color that if they just follow the law and work hard enough, there's a place in this society for them too.

Radical pluralism at least recognizes that there is a cultural war taking place and responds by opposing white supremacy, and white cultural homogenization. Radical pluralists defend indigenous cultures not so we can have safe flirtations with native lifestyles but so we can survive the onslaught of the total corporate state with its culture of repression and commerce. This is one of the reasons we smash Starbucks and struggle against gentrification.

Inclusion is a tall order because it means more than just openness. It means devising strategies that will make it happen. And when those fail we'll have to devise new plans. Such is the work of liberation.

# How can we dance? A brief look at Post Left Anarchism

As far as I can tell the most recent calls for anarchists to leave their leftist associations in the past have come almost exclusively from the professional primitivist scribes and their fellow travelers in our mist. This makes sense. One of the few things that these post-left anarchists are clear about is their disdain for organizations as such. The reason? Well, anarchist organizations haven't "worked" in the past, particularly in North America. In organizations "the means tend to displace the ends" and "the division of labor engenders inequality of power." (Bob Black, *Anarchy After Leftism* Cal Press 1997 P.61) We should be talking more, writing more, listening to each other talk more, reading more about who's a real anarchist and who isn't and why. You get the picture.

If you never intend to change anything, then organizations are indeed worse than useless. Creating propaganda is a lot easier than organizing people and trying to convince them that taking action against illegitimate authority and social hierarchy will bring more results than spending time engaging in the type of internecine warfare that anarchist intellectuals are infamous for. The large scale anarchist organizations of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe certainly weren't perfect. But due in part to their efforts European workers get six to eight week vacations, free health care, have real rights to organize, and generally work less hours than American workers do. If the anti-organizational bias of post left anarchism isn't yet another capitulation to liberal market individualism and its on going campaign to keep people from coming together to struggle against social domination, what is it?

Whatever it is it ain't revolutionary. And that's just fine with them. According to Hakim Bey we must not only give up "waiting for 'the revolution'" but we must also "give up wanting it" (Hakim Bey "T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism," *Autonomea*, 1985 P.101) Maybe a riot here, a Burning Man art gathering there, ya know, "cultural terrorism." Do I have to write that this is about as relevant to communities of color fighting against police repression and for economic survival as Grateful Dead jam sessions were to the black liberation movement of the 1960's? I don't, but I did just in case anyone needed to read it.

The post left anarchists don't seem to mind that their notions are of little use to the struggles of people of color in the Americas. Their support for "Zero Work" is an example. John Zerzan's critique of the work demands that production requires in technical society, though by no means original, is certainly worth a look. But to insist that the most plausible anarchist reply to capital over production lays in an attempt to reestablish hunter and gatherer, or forage/ scavenger societies with dreams of their "primitive affluence" not only makes the real substance of anti-authoritarian thought all but inaudible to communities of color (who don't have the class luxury of rejecting either work or technology on philosophical grounds) but also to about 98 percent of the rest of the population as well. Go up to a day laborer who gets up at 5:00 a.m. every morning

to find work to feed his family talking about the “Abolition of Work” and you might find yourself in the hospital. Ahhh. Could this be the reason the post leftists don’t want to organize?

Perhaps the split has already taken place. The post left anarchists have already rejected feminism (Black P.150) and the vast majority of third world liberation struggles against white neo-colonialism (Internationalist Anarchist News, *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* Fall/Winter 2001–2 P.27.)

In short just about every major struggle against white, male world domination. Before anti-authoritarians of color hop on the post- leftist wagon we should not only ask where is it taking us from, but also where is it leading us to. If there’s no social justice at the revolution how can we dance?

# Roots and White Supremacy

For too long anarchists have relied on old marxists explanations of the roots of racism to guide their thinking on the issue. Even some anarchists of color have viewed white supremacy as a symptom of capitalism rather than a social system with its own dynamics and causes that stand outside of (though not independent of) the class struggle. Lucy Parsons fell into this camp. Lorenzo Ervin wrote in his ground breaking work *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* that the “invention of the white race” was a capitalist “scam” to pit black workers against white workers to prevent a united front against its rule. (Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* Self Published 1993 P3) This sounds plausible enough. But it fails to get at the real internal logic of white supremacy.

It’s one thing to point out how capitalists have used race as a way to divide working people in our struggle against their oppression. It’s quite another to claim that capitalists invented race in order to further their goal of global economic domination. Capitalism as a coherent set of economic practices and principals didn’t emerge on the world stage until the latter part of the 1600’s. And it wasn’t until Adam Smith published the *Wealth of Nations* a hundred years later that a definitive exposition of its ideas was published. White colonialism began three centuries before the development of European capitalism. While this imperialism obviously had economic rationales (the “explorers” of Europe were merely state sponsored looters), that’s not the whole story.

Liberal European colonialism always understood its mission in the global south as tutelary. Whites were bringing civilization to the dark natives- Christianity, law, “democracy.” Often times these people weren’t ruling class capitalists but missionaries, school teachers and civil development workers. It was their duty to help the darkies out of their darkness. Most of these people never got rich. In fact colonialism as an economic prospect was a loser for Europe. After the devastation of world war II Europeans started to pull out of the South.

The modern tendency has been to see all social relationships in material terms- particularly in the information/ industrial societies of the white world. No matter what new horror communities of color are subjected to, it must trace back to a capitalist looking for more profits. Neo-marxism is the most clear expression of this tendency. But the sickness of white supremacy is fundamentally a psychological one. As the psychologist Dr. Francis Cress Welsing pointed out in her book *The Isis Papers*, white supremacy is a reaction- formation, an overcompensation for feelings of genetic inferiority. (Dr. Francis Cress Welsing, *The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors* Third World Press 1995) Ultimately whites oppress people of color not to steal our resources, but to kill us. Their deepest fear is “the fear of a black planet.”

Any study of white supremacy that relies exclusively or even predominately on marxist class analysis is limited at best. White supremacy may be pathological but its not irrational. White male control over resources and female reproduction gives them options, tools and time in their struggle for race survival. This, in part, helps us to understand the deepseated drives for world economic hegemony, patriarchy, and heterosexism. These oppressions are not rooted in white



supremacy but are connected to it in ways that must be better understood by all of us. The argument here isn't that race is more primary an oppression than class or gender or any other historical relationship of social domination. It's that the attempts to subsume one oppression under another devalues those real life experiences of marginalization and exploitation that makes each encounter with social domination unique.

The continuing relevance of Marx can be attributed to the way he crystallized a fundamental truth of the social condition. The struggle for human survival and dignity is inextricably tied to our capacity to secure the material basics of life: food, shelter, health- all those things that make life livable. To the extent that those things are denied to the masses of people through the rule of a small class of elites who happen to have all the above in abundance, we are at war. But Abner Louima wasn't forcibly sodomized with a night-stick and beaten by the NYPD because he was poor. Wen Ho Lee wasn't singled out as a "trader" and jailed because he didn't make enough money. The 1996 California Proposition 187 didn't make income distinctions between undocumented immigrants when it decreed a cut off of all social services to them. It was the color of their skin that got them into trouble.

If colored anarchists expect to do any better than the marxists at building a multiracial movement against authority in North America we must put down their tired class analysis of racism and develop a different one that rejects the temptation to consume the various experiences of marginalization under one, all encompassing oppression. Race does burn class, except for when class burns race, except for when gender burns class, except for when sex burns...

# The Struggle Against Immigrant Prisons

By now many of us have heard the stories about the scores of immigrants who have been tracked, spied on, questioned, held against their will and imprisoned by the Justice Department since September 11. In many ways agencies like the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) were fully prepared to take advantage of the regulatory blank check that the attacks on the Pentagon and the Trade Towers gave them. Since the early eighties the INS has been slowly shedding its role as a social service agency while it has adopted a law enforcement posture with immigrants inside the U.S. and a para- military one along the southwest border for migrants coming from Mexico, Central/ South America and the Caribbean. The FBOP has steadily been expanding its number of beds since the early eighties to accommodate the explosion in the number of drug war prisoners, many of whom are non-citizens. Because this directly involves state repression targeted at non- white people, anarchists of color should be particular concerned about these shifts in priorities.

In 2002 it's safe to say that the central mission of the INS no longer involves helping immigrants through the long and increasingly cumbersome and expensive process of become visa holders, legal residents, or citizens. Its main mission has become investigating, tracking down, imprisoning and deporting immigrants. In the same vein, the FBOP has dropped any pretense of rehabilitation and has focused its resources on expanding its ability to incarcerate ever larger numbers of people of color.

## Criminalizing Immigrants

Even before the September 11 attacks the INS and FBOP were struggling with capacity problems. The passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (The Immigration Reform Act of 1996) and the Anti- Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (the Anti- Terrorism Act of 1996) greatly accelerated the numbers of immigrants locked up. From the mid 1990's to the present the average number of INS prisoners detained on any given day has tripled from 5,532 to 19,533. (Joseph Greene, Deputy Executive for Field Operations Congressional Testimony December 19, 2000)

The INS budget has increased from 3.1 billion in 1997 to 5.3 billion in early 2002. (INS Budget Increases, Washington Post June 8, 1997) Many of these prisoners are seeking asylum or waiting to be deported. During that same period the number of immigrants in federal prison serving criminal sentences rose from 18,929 to 35, 629. (Judith Greene, Bailing Out Private Jails The American Prospect Vol. 12 Issue 16 September 10, 2001) The FBOP has doubled its staff over the last six years to keep up.

In the Immigration Reform Act of 1996 a mandatory detention provision was passed that requires confinement for all lawful permanent residents ever convicted in the U.S. of most major and minor crimes. It also expanded the definition of "aggravated felony." Now the term includes

minor offenses like shoplifting and check kiting. The aggravated felony provision runs retroactively so a theft charge that was cleared up years ago can be used as a basis for deportation. The AntiTerrorism Act of 1996 includes a provision that allows for the use of secret evidence in deportation hearings against non citizens accused of being a terrorist.

The dramatic increase in the number of immigrant prisoners under the authority of the FBOP has led government officials to reach out to the private prison industry for a helping hand. The timing couldn't have been better. The private prison industry was also in need of a helping hand. As the incarceration rate increase began to slow in 2000–01 some private companies found themselves with empty cells and falling profits. According to Judith Greene, a private prisons expert. Corrections Corporation of America stock “lost 93 percent of its value in 2000” and the company “reported a fourth quarter loss of more than a third of a billion dollars.” (Ibid.) The Sarasota, Florida based Correctional Services had combined losses of \$600,000 in the third quarter of last year. Just when the free market was about to flush this industry out of its system the federal government stepped in with a plan.

## **The C.A.R. Bailout**

Since 1999 private contractors have been bidding on prison sites in accordance with federal “Criminal Alien Requirements” (C.A.R.) that spell out to what extent private companies and counties can lower the floor with respect to education, training and counseling opportunities inside of the purposed sites.

Three FBOP Criminal Alien Requirement prison solicitations have been issued since 1999 with a fourth solicitation for bids due to open in the near future. Over 10,500 beds have been requested by the FBOP through C.A.R. The CAR system of proposal requests are organized by region and are numbered accordingly. In 1999 the CAR 1 proposal called for 7500 beds to “serve” California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma. Corrections Corporation of America won two contracts with the FBOP to house 2,304 in California City, California, and another 1012 beds at the Cibola prison in Milan, New Mexico. These contracts are worth over 760 million.

## **Communities Fighting Back**

These new immigrant prisons haven't been a slam dunk in every case. Corrections Corporation of America yanked a CAR II prison proposal after an unexpected visit from the Georgia Department of Corrections found that its Wheeler Correctional Facility in Alamo had “inadequate” medical facilities and that the prison had a poor inmate tracking system. (Prisons Company Blasted, Chattanooga Times May 23, 2000) The system failure led to a two hour search for a prisoner. Cornell Corporations was stopped cold due to stiff local opposition to its CAR 1 proposal to house 2,000 prisoners on the outskirts of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Local immigrant rights groups and prison reform activists forced Cornell to withdraw its proposal.

The organization Southwest Alliance to Resist Militarization (SWARM) has been active in its opposition to the criminalization of immigrants. Their organizing against the FBOP Car III request for proposals (three 1,500 bed prisons in Arizona and California) in Arizona has received attention not only from the press but from lawmakers as well. In Cochise County the group was

able to convince one of the three Board of Supervisors to oppose a plan in November of 2001 that would have rezoned land to make way for a proposed CAR prison.

SWARM has been able to engage people and policy makers in the ongoing struggle against over-incarceration and its real effects on communities. While the rezoning ordinance passed anyway, the vote switch demonstrates that there are some legislators who can be reached with solid organizing and good information.

Because over 20 sites have been proposed, Jennifer Allen, a lead activist in SWARM has said the campaign against the prisons won't really get off the ground until the number of sites are narrowed. Until then much of her work has involved talking with INS prison survivors and documenting their stories for an upcoming report. Her long-term vision for the campaign is to "build a state wide network of community groups to push for a prison moratorium." With this vision in mind SWARM helped to organize a new group called the Arizona Prison Moratorium Coalition a year ago. Allen said the idea was to create a coalition between people working on immigrants rights and people doing prisoner's rights work.

In the Bay Area, groups like Prison Moratorium Project have been organizing against prisons in rural parts of California and, with groups like Critical Resistance, have been forging coalitions between immigrant rights groups and prison activist organizations. Prisoner support groups like Anarchist Black Cross are well positioned to contribute to the struggle by adding an anti-authoritarian analysis of state repression and capital exploitation while engaging with various communities of color fighting against prisons. Developing new alliances will be the seed work for any successful challenge to the prison industrial complex in the U.S.

# The Voting Anarchist

A main staple of anarchism has always been its rejection of politics. The only form of social organization that truly maintains participatory decision making and non-hierarchical community organization is direct democracy. A big part of anarchist localism is based on the diminished workability of direct decision making in large scale systems of social organization.

While the marxists were busy touting the need for workers parties a century ago, Mikhail Bakunin was declaring “the system of democratic representation” a “system of hypocrisy and perpetual lies.” (Mikhail Bakunin *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* Ed. G.P. Maximoff The Free Press NY. 1953 P.220) When the marxists were spending time and resources organizing central committees, anarchists like Emma Goldman were denouncing the growing tendencies in industrial society towards bureaucracy and rejecting the political vanguardism of the American socialists. (Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks* Ed. Alix Kates Shulman Vintage Books NY. 1972 P. 30)

In North America there has always been a strict interpretation of anarchist anti-politics. Today not only is there a rejection of party building, there’s also an across the board rejection of voting. This makes sense on the nation- state level. But even Bakunin recognized that on the local level political participation was more effective.

“They [the people] know more or less the affairs of their municipality, they take a great deal of interest in those matters, and they know how to choose from their midst men who are the most capable of conducting those affairs. In these matters control by the people is quite possible, for they take place under the very eyes of the electors and touch upon the most intimate interests of their daily existence. That is why municipal elections are always and everywhere the best.” (Bakunin *Ibid.* P. 220)

This insight has largely been lost. Admitting that you vote in anarchist circles is like admitting you like Nirvana in a room full of punks. You’ve been took, had, hoodwinked. You’re either super gullible or a closet liberal. Ideologues like to make the perfect the enemy of the better. So any political activism (voting, campaign work, community service) that is not immediately aimed at the complete overthrow of the state is seen as either diversionary or helping to prop up the capitalist system by taking the edges off its exploitation and oppression.

The Black Panthers taught us that a revolutionary organization can’t just pop up in the neighborhood talking about a bunch of isms and expect anyone to listen. We must make ourselves useful and help to provide for our communities if we want to be taken seriously by anyone. This is not liberalism. This is mutual aid and it happens to be sound revolutionary strategy as well.

The past reluctance to engage in reformist movements in coalition with liberals and progressives has led to a disinclination to develop campaigns in general. When anarchists have involved themselves in strategic political actions, they have been reactive (freeing political prisoners) efforts in which victory is defined by our ability to fend off state/ corporate attacks.

This view is too narrow. A rejection of the legitimacy of the state should not lead anarchists of color into thinking that we can afford to ignore or passively critique the states actions without doing anything about them. A better approach to power recognizes that our very social presence as political subjects implicates us in the struggle over state domination and human agency. Refusing to pro-actively demand freedom and justice from state structures out of some fear of legitimating them is a meaningless gesture. Governments are a reality. They wield real power. Communities of color don't have the privilege of pretending otherwise. This is why black people were in the streets being hit with Billy clubs and sprayed with fire hoses 35 years ago just to get the right to vote. If anarchists of color are serious about bringing our analysis to more people living in our communities, we should know that we don't have that privilege either.

This is not a call for some anarchist party of color.

Political engagement should be looked at as an opportunity to build our movement. Voting on and organizing around initiatives, referendum, and recall campaigns could add any number of folks to our affinity groups, and organizations and introduce them to anarchist ideas. Supporting voting rights for the District of Columbia and other U.S. territories will help them fight for more self-determination in their neighborhoods. Developing campaigns that have real and winnable demands that seek to roll back state repression and capital domination not only will give us an opportunity to apply anarchist principals to real life problems and act on them, it will be a way to shake off the biggest obstacle to the realization of our goals, our own irrelevancy.

Our Own Traditions : anti-authoritarianism in our histories of struggle

Although many non- white anti- authoritarian traditions never self-identified as anarchist (many were in existence before the word was invented), their social practices and formations demonstrate to us the rich history out of which our own movement comes. There's no need to impose the term anarchist on descriptions of the history of non-white societies and their struggles against authority and capital to validate our own identification with the term. The history of resistance against illegitimate authority by people of color speaks for itself.

But the problem of tracing and remembering the whole antiauthoritarian tradition does turn on the axis of language and the power to name and exclude through naming. If the substance of anarchism is communal economics, mutual aid, local autonomy and the free federation of communities, then the obvious first place to look at is the continent of Africa. Long before the Paris commune or the Spanish Civil War, African tribes and clans were practicing self-sustaining modes of living that did not require political authority or static structures of social hierarchy.

The Igbo tribe, which settled in the Awka and Orlu areas of West/ Central Africa in what is now Nigeria arranged "village' political units without kings or chiefs ruling over them or administering their affairs." (Sam Mbah and I.E. Igariwey, *African Anarchism: The History of a Movement* See Sharp Press Az. 1997 P.35) The fact that Igboland was a large scale society (at one point over 4 million organized into 2000 separate villages) demonstrates the capacity of whole societies to organize themselves along autonomous and communal principals successfully. (John Gunther, *Inside Africa* Harper and Brothers NY. 1953 P. 760.) "Igbo enwegh eze" "we have no kings" is a central creed of the Igbo. Other African tribes with anti-authoritarian traditions include the Shona of modern day Zimbabwe, the Mano of modern day Ivory Coast and the Kusaasi of Ghana. These tribes and clans along with numerous indigenous tribes in the Americas including the Hopi, Adena, and the Zuni, constitute real examples of stateless social formations that existed long before European political theorists discovered the horrors of the nation- state and labeled the resistance to them anarchist.

In the history of anarchism the above tribes and clans are not mentioned much. Instead we're invited to study the intellectual progression of the social ideal from William Godwin's Political Justice to Murry Bookchin's Post Scarcity Anarchism and a handful of losing confrontations between the forces of state hegemony and anti-authoritarians. People of color who self-identify as anarchist are caught in strange place. How do we reconcile with the term anarchist when its history excludes the explicitly anti-authoritarian struggles of Kikuyus in Kenya against the English Empire's unsuccessful attempts to impose centralized government structures on a stateless people, or the anti-emperor traditions in various Asian societies that challenged modern 20<sup>th</sup> century political structures that sought to impose central rule on villages that had been self governing for thousands of years.

An obvious place to begin the reconciliation is with writing the history and doing the public education. Frank Fernandez's

Cuban Anarchism: the History of a Movement published in 2001 traces the resistance to both the U.S. puppet regimes of the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Castro dictatorship up to the present. Black Rose Books has published Land and Liberty: Anarchist influences in the Mexican Revolution by the late Ricardo Flores Magon. In it the author details the struggles of Emiliano Zapata and the development of the "village anarchist" movement within the context of the Mexican civil war of the 1910's. Y. Mihara's 1993 piece "On the Present Situation of Anarchism in Japan" in Anarchist Studies is a great review of modern anarchism in a country that has been a hub of anti-authoritarian activity and thinking in East Asia. Sam Mbah and I.E. Igariwey's African Anarchism: The History of a Movement concisely lays out the real roots of stateless society without all the romantic nonsense that comes out of primitivist anthropology these days.

A large part of building the movement against authority and capital in communities of color will be reconstructing and popularizing our history so young people can see the tradition and relate it to their everyday lives. If this is the only thing that the current generation of colored anarchists accomplished it would be an important achievement in the struggle for liberation.

# Goodbye, you ain't all that

The above title is a take off from Robin Morgan's famous 1970's essay "Goodbye to All That," in which she details the reasons why more and more women were leaving the ranks of anti-war, and other new left, male dominated, organizations and starting their own collectives and groups to work on their own liberation struggles. (Robin Morgan, "Goodbye to All That," *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade*, ed. Judith Clavir and Edward Albert NY: Praeger 1984 509–16)

It was a declaration of independence, an emancipation from the shit work, the sex, and gender harassment and the second class status of "movement" women on the left.

Anti- authoritarians of color involved in the anarchist movement suffer through different marginalizations. Instead of being harassed we're ignored. Instead of being assigned to lick envelopes and clean up after the boys, we're patronized and put in the spotlight as tokens of diversity. This type of stuff is usually just annoying, sometimes it can be more than that.

If the tensions were only inter-organizational, my guess is that most people of color with anarchist tendencies would simply call out racist bullshit when it happens and demand that white anarchists do the same. The stereotypes of activists of color, from the hyper- sensitive complainer who sees everything in racial terms to the Mau Mau militant who joins majority white groups on the left just to give long lectures on the evils of white supremacy at meetings, are just that- stereotypes. If activists of color challenged every comment, every "joke," every dirty look or strange gesture we couldn't function as members of any majority white group. Any person of color who has worked with white activists on the left can tell you. For every exhale there's a hundred suck ups .

There is more to the developing divergence between anarchist of color and Anglo anarchists. By claiming the term anarchist, people of color not only declare their belief in a certain set of principals and ideas, we also implicitly seek to be included in its history, its culture and its future direction. But while there's enough similarity between the two camps for both to claim the term anarchist, there are also real differences in substance and emphasis.

## Social Liberation vs. Social Revolution

Anarchists have always been better at defining what we're against rather than what we're for. Maybe this is because there's more consensus about who our enemies are than what kind of society we would like to see develop after our liberation. This has given the struggle for local control a defensive posture. Our "victories" are too often underscored by what we prevent, destroy, disrupt, not what we create. A part of this tradition comes from the residue of European nihilism that saw destruction as some sort of social catharsis. This nihilism is alien to the non-European anti-authoritarian traditions. Anti-authoritarian indigenous struggles today are not about "smashing the state." They're about self-determination, land reform and control over their own economies



and culture. To the extent that people in these struggles find that they can't have the latter without doing the former, the tasks become clearer. From MOVE to the ELZN our goals always have been defensive in nature. Our tradition focused on resisting land confiscation schemes by national states. Their wars against the City of Philadelphia and Mexican Government were wars of resistance not meaningless gestures of violence isolated from any real strategy (propaganda of the deed) or "symbolic" acts of property destruction.

Non- state anarchism rejects blanket condemnations of state action. The overthrow of the American super- state would, among other positive things, leave tens of millions of poor and working class people without social security, medicare, medicaid, SSI, free lunch programs, head start and what's left of welfare. Mutual aid societies and churches could only pick up a fraction of the pieces. Regional workers councils could take on the task of redistribution of wealth from the workers to the non- working, and working poor, but the voluntary nature of communal federalism would leave the richer communities an easy out.

Left anti- statist have done precious little work on the problems of contemporary poverty and how poor people would fair under anarchist social conditions. The most recent work to address the issue cogently was Colin Ward's *Social Policy: An Anarchist Approach*. (London School of Economics 1997) His arguments describing how mutual aid societies could replace state systems hold together, but the British context is not wholly applicable to the much larger Americas. Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* pretty much rejected distributive justice all together and argued that in anarchist societies poor folk would just have to fend for themselves. (Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* Basic Books NY. 1974) Despite vague allusions to solidarity and the laudable work of groups like Food Not Bombs, it's still unclear in what ways social anarchists differ and to what degree.

Anti-state dogma has also left anarchists of color who support the anti-colonial struggles in Africa, Asia, and central/South America and the Caribbean without a home. Anti- state purists support anti- colonial struggles so long as they aren't tainted by national liberation organizations. Alfredo M Bonanno's statement in *Anarchism and the National Liberation Struggle* that anarchists "refuse to participate in national liberation fronts" (Bantam Edition Catania 1981. P.12) is a declaration that anarchist revolutionaries of color must subordinate the war against white imperialism to the war against the nation- state. Like the marxists, who tell us that the class oppression is "primary" and race is secondary, the anarchists tell us that the war against the state must come first and if that means colored anarchists have to sit out of the struggle against white neo-colonialism until a movement that is sufficiently anti- statist comes along, well no one said being an intellectual slave is easy.

Kuwasi Balagoon tells us in "Anarchy Can't Fight Alone" that

"It is beside the point whether Black, Puerto Rican, Native American, and Chicano-Mexicano people endorse nationalism as a vehicle for self determination or agree with anarchism as being the only road to self determination. It is not only racism but compliance with the enemy to stand outside of the social arena and permit America to continue to practice genocide against the third world captive colonies because although they resist, they don't agree with us." (Kuwasi Balagoon, *Kuwasi Balagoon: A Soldier's Story*, Solidarity Publishing 2001 P.76)

What the anarchists need on the question of national liberation is nuance. It is true that nationalist causes are often exploited by elites to take power from external agents of oppression

only to use that authority to solidify class, ethnic, religious and gender domination once the war against the settlers is over. But this is a generalization. Not all fights for colonial liberation end in internal bloodbaths perpetrated by military or capitalist elites. After gaining independence from Britain in 1966, Botswana resumed its decentralized, communal system of social organization. Since then hunger has been reduced, villages maintain relative autonomy, and elections are about as free as they are in the U.S.

Whether we're talking about the best anti- authoritarian response to disproportionate poverty in communities of color or supporting struggles against white neo-colonialism that have nationalist elements or aspirations, anti- state dogma ties our hands and leaves us with limited responses to complex social problems. Attributing all of our woes to "the state" or to corporations is reductionist and creates fetishes where power analysis should be. A Palestinian state with borders and a uniform means of self- defense may very well be the only thing that stands between survival and genocide in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Anarchists of color can't afford to be silent on things like this.

Non- state anarchism advocates that we work towards dismantling the many layers of illegitimate authority in ways that don't exacerbate the very social ills that anarchists claim to stand against- poverty and oppression. This means supporting the efforts of anti- poverty workers to gain more money from the state for social services and universal health care and ignoring the anarchist purists who label advocacy work as liberal because it demands something from the state rather than demanding its immediate abolition. We can do this work while we develop more wide spread experiments with mutual aid models that are reliable and self-sustaining.

Likewise, anarchists of color should not be intimidated into abandoning the struggles against colonialism in places like Puerto Rico because the guardians of anarchy will claim we're not real anarchists if we don't. The right of the people to decide for themselves how to arrange their own communitieslocal autonomy- should weight just as heavily in anarchist analysis as the demand to eradicate state capitalist structures. If we want the latter, we must engage in debate, advocacy, and organize the people- not sit back and petulantly demand that the people become anarchists before we support their battles against white supremacy.

Like most anarchists I have warm spot in my heart for revolution. But anti- authoritarian communities of color have rarely seen overthrowing the state as their main priority. They've fought to get free from its grasp and control. When you're being mugged you may fight with the mugger not in order to beat him down, but just enough to get away and liberate yourself. When liberation from State jurisdiction is only possible by making war with the government until it doesn't have the capacity to dominate you, then revolution by any means necessary is justified. But the goal isn't to take over the state, the factory, the church, or the bank or any other institution of their world order. The goal is to liberate ourselves from these institutions and return to ones or develop new ones that reflect our values and our social principles. The revolutionist is one who seeks to overthrow, abolish, and reconstitute society in their own image. The liberationist seeks to be left alone by all of the coercive institutions of modern society so they're free to choose which communities to belong to and which ones to reject. The revolutionary wants power to reshape the social order according to a certain program. The liberationist wants autonomy so she can share her ideas about how things should be organized and administered with others in the community. Through this senetic process new ways of being evolve and grow- freer, more equal, more compassionate.

## **Idealism vs. Materialism**

At the core of the marxist creed is the belief that material conditions and the allocation of resources determine human consciousness and history. The class war between the proletariat and the ruling class is the central struggle for humanity. There's no question that this view is culturally situated in the struggles of the industrial working classes of Europe from about the late 1700's to 1989.

Cultures from the southern cradle of the world have a different tradition. To the extent that any one phenomena "determines" consciousness or history it is ideation, usually through the forms of religion and/ or ancestral or nature based spiritualism, but also through cultural traditions, myths, and community customs. Reality is. But it is our response to the material that determines the course of history and, ultimately, our consciousness. The germs of that response are our ideas and thoughts, not "objective" facts.

This idealism is in opposition to the economic determinism of Marx and the idea that the course of evolutionary human development is scientifically pre-ordained complete with various stages and the like. Instead it places agency and responsibility within the individual it looks to human ideas as the wellspring of creativity and construction.

In this light, the blanket condemnation of religion and spirituality by the materialists as just ideology put in place by the ruling class to pacify the stupid masses becomes itself an ideology. Science is the god of materialism. And for every liberation from disease and toil it has produced it has also brought bigger death tolls in the ever growing industry of high tech weaponry.

Organized religion generally, and monotheistic fundamentalism more specifically, has played a big part in the construction of social hierarchy and oppression throughout history. For this reason many colored anarchists reject them as dogma traps that discourage critical thinking in favor of blind obedience and submission. But the idea that there are energies in the universe that provide spiritual nourishment to our souls but can't be quantified by science is a strong one particularly in peoples that have been the targets of oppression throughout history. The rituals, celebrations and ceremonies that native peoples have created to acknowledge those energies can be powerful aspects of a liberatory community and its culture.

## **Organizing vs. Mobilizing**

Anarchists were pretty proud of themselves after Seattle. We should have been. Finally we were the decisive component of a coalition that was able to shut down the WTO and raise issues about its practices and the role it plays in the global corporate takeover of communities. It is widely regarded as a victory.

But successful mobilizations and demonstrations aren't ends in themselves. After Seattle anarchists jumped from Philadelphia, to Los Angeles to Washington D.C. to protest various things. But rather than building on Seattle, these subsequent mobilizations had diminishing returns. The reason? The groups there were spending so much time, resources and energy preparing for confrontations with pigs that they had little time left over for organizing and growing their base of support in communities. Some of this did take place, but not nearly enough.

Activists are not necessarily organizers. It is organizers who grow organizations and movements by making the point of their activities bringing in new folks and introducing them to ideas and people. This is what sustains struggles over the long haul- new people with new ideas.

With the exception of Love and Rage, there hasn't been a national anarchist organization committed to organizing over the past 20 years that has lasted for any length of time. Anarchists of color have just begun to organize. There are anarchist scenes of color in Los Angeles, New York, Texas and in pockets in the South. Long ago, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, the former Black Panther and political prisoner, was imploring us to "get organized" and developing his own groups including what is today called the Black Autonomy International.

Anarchists of color should be committed to organizing due to the stark reality that there are more people of color in America who are republican than there are who identify as anarchist. If we want to survive as a counter to the endless varieties of authoritarianism in communities of color, we must grow. Mobilizations are only opportunities to build our movement. Spending more time and resources directly organizing people through strategic campaigns that challenge power may not make front page news like Seattle did, but it will create a more sustainable movement for freedom and social justice.

# **No Second Chance: How Crime-Free Multi-Housing Programs are Unfair to Ex-Prisoners**

Finding adequate housing is a struggle for most working people. Security deposits, credit checks, and sky rocketing rents are just a few of the roadblocks that contribute to the ongoing crisis in housing and homelessness in cities and towns across the U.S. But for ex-prisoners there are additional obstacles in their search for long-term shelter. An increasingly popular one being promoted by some local police departments is “Crime-Free Multi-Housing.”

Started in Mesa Arizona in 1992, these crime-free housing initiatives are ‘partnerships’ between police forces and private apartment complex owners that seek to reduce criminal activity in and around apartment buildings. Typically, local police representatives team up with apartment owners to implement crime-free programs which require owners to screen out ex-prisoners from the application process, add addendums to their tenant leases that authorize immediate evictions for alleged criminal activity and put in ‘environmental crime deterrence’ fixtures on their property. In return, the apartment owners receive a ‘crime-free certificate’ that supposedly certifies the safety of the complex. According to the International Crime Free Association, Crime-Free MultiHousing programs are in over 1700 cities. In Southern California alone there are over 1000 apartment complexes with these programs in effect. (International Crime free Association [www.crime-freeassociation.org/](http://www.crime-freeassociation.org/) 2001) .

## **Crime Free Leases**

Renters are familiar with the regular credit check process required by most rental management companies. Increasingly these outfits are requiring broader background checks that include the criminal histories of applicants. This additional screening process tries to weed out ex-prisoners from the applicant pool. For someone trying to come back into a community after being incarcerated, this adds an additional burden to the task of finding a place to stay.

Now not only do ex-prisoners have to save enough money to afford rent and a security deposit, but they also have to find a complex that doesn’t screen them out due to past felony convictions. In the report “from locked Up to locked Out” Kristina Hals, a housing justice researcher, writes “Those who once had a home can be un-welcomed in the homes of family members, as a result of whatever they did to get lock-up.”

This along with “special exclusions in much of public housing...become a ball and chain, sinking efforts to get a room or apartment.” (Kristina Hals. “From locked Up to locked Out: Creating and Implementing Post-release Housing for Exprisoners” AIDS Housing of Washington 2003. Note:

There are a many jurisdictions that classify relatively low level, non-violent crimes as felonies like petty theft, or check fraud. Disqualifying someone from housing based on these types of crimes is particularly unfair). Add these facts to the growing Crime-Free Lease phenomenon, and you have a recipe for more homeless, more recidivism, more despair.

## **Screening Prisoners Out**

From August 2002 to November 2002, Jim Bowman of the Criminal Justice program of the American Friends Service Committee of Tucson, Arizona, spoke with 36 rental property representatives whose information was available to the public through the LowCost Housing List Supplement distributed by Pima County. (Jim Bowman. "Rental Property Survey" American Friends Services Committee Criminal Justice Program 2002) The purpose was to better understand attitudes and policies about renting units to ex-prisoners.

According to the data, over twice as many landlords surveyed would never rent a unit to an ex-prisoner than would and over 80 percent indicated that those ex-prisoners who had been locked up for drug, sex or violent offenses would not be welcomed in their complexes. As more and more ex-prisoners are released from incarceration for these types of crimes, they too will need places to stay. Their inability to find shelter could lead many into dangerous environments that put them and others at risk.

Those applicants who make it past the criminal record screen are required to sign a Crime-Free Lease Addendum to the regular lease. The addendum generally gives the property owners the explicit authority to terminate the lease agreement if management suspects the tenant of engaging in illegal activities. In most all addendums drug use, possession, distribution, and manufacture are specifically mentioned as lease breakers. No official finding of guilt by a criminal court is necessary. On this point the Modesto California Police Department's Crime Free Lease template represents typical language. "Proof of violation shall not require criminal conviction, but shall be by a preponderance of the evidence." (City of Modesto Police Department. Crime Free Lease Addendum [www.modestopolice.com/cfmh/Lease.html](http://www.modestopolice.com/cfmh/Lease.html) 2004)

In other words, hearsay, rumors, and anonymous tips can all be used to evict a family from their home. This brings private apartment complexes into line with the one- strike drug policies of local public housing authorities under the federal Department of Health and Human Services guidelines. Because ex-prisoners are not a protected class under federal or state laws and receive no shield from local housing ordinances or policies, it is perfectly legal to discriminate against them.

Some cities have taken crime free leases a step further. In Cincinnati, Ohio City Council member David Pepper introduced and passed a motion called 'rapid dealer eviction' that enables landlords to evict anyone charged with a drug crime (not just dealing drugs) within three days of the charge. This effectively denies tenants their due process rights until after they've been evicted. In the Spring of 2004 the Oakland California City Council passed an ordinance that would authorize the City to force landlords to evict tenants accused of drug or gang activity and provides for City enforced evictions, and apartment owner fines if the landlord doesn't act. This law was modeled after a similar one passed in Los Angeles a few years earlier.

While police representatives and complex owners claim they're just keeping their neighborhoods safe, the data shows that most ex-prisoners upon release wind up back in their old

neighborhoods- where their family and friends are. Prisoners that are unable to find stable housing often wind up either back in prison or homeless. The Kristina Hals report pointed out that “[a] recent survey of homeless service providers by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that 54 percent of currently homeless clients had experienced incarceration.” (Kristina Hals P. 13)

Ultimately the question isn’t whether ex-prisoners will be a part of our communities. It is whether they will be provided the opportunities and tools to re-integrate successfully, or whether a punitive and discriminatory definition of community safety will prevail—making our communities less stable and less safe.

## **Protecting Tenants**

Despite the increasing appeal of co- joining local law enforcement with tenant screening, and ‘rapid eviction’ policies, some protections do exist. In New York, landlords cannot reject an application based on a previous arrest unless the arrest resulted in a criminal conviction. They also cannot deny an applicant due to a previous drug conviction. There are also places where Crime Free Multi- Housing eviction legislation has been beat back. In Omaha, Nebraska the city council re- worked legislation that would have implemented zero- tolerance eviction policies for alleged drug activity. Council member Chad Primmer raised concerns over the severity of the remedy and the potential for abuse by landlords. (Dave Morantz. Eviction Plan to be Softened. Omaha World- Herald. April 23, 2002) This demonstrates that criminal justice reformers and fair housing advocates can reach law- makers with reasonable arguments based on fairness and nondiscrimination .

But real progress in securing housing for ex-prisoners won’t happen until our society once again embraces the idea that once someone has done their time that they should be welcomed back into the communities from where they came and given a second chance. That’s precisely what so- called crime-free leases take from ex- prisoners.

## A Note on the Guardians of Anarchy

As Noam Chomsky has indicated in the past, anarchism is more of an historical political tendency than a static set of postulates and rules. This is what has maintained anarchism as a relevant critique (if not movement) against power and social hierarchy long after other political movements have dried up from their own inability to grow and interest new generations in its ideals.

But we have our fundamentalists too. They spend a lot of time “defining” anarchism and telling folks what it is and what it isn’t. They also love telling us who is a real anarchist and who isn’t. For them, anarchism is like a high school club, an intellectual refuge from the jock bullies in the locker room and the laughter of the upper middle preppies who never invited them to any of their parties. The guardians of anarchy are mainly just geeks. Anarchism is theirs.

As a result they’re not too interested in growing the movement or organizing. They’re mainly interested in the stuff high school clubs are interested in- arguing over arcane points of process and philosophy, being the gatekeepers to outsiders who want in the club, arranging functions where other like-minded folks can let their hair down and socialize, perhaps even get laid.

It’s a mistake to think that these people who have fallen in love with their own marginalization, and anarchism’s as well, can just be ignored. They have chosen to guard a tradition that is 95% white and 90% male. Their purist approach to anarchism will ensure that it remains the purview of white middle class misfits and fails to grow beyond what it has been. Those of us who care about making anarchism relevant to communities of color must find the voice to challenge anarchist dogma and force it to open up to new ideas. The guardians of anarchy will redouble their efforts to protect and defend the old anarchist tradition. Our task is to create the new one.



# Drugs

## Where are the Grassroots in the Movement?

For too long the fight to end the drug war has been led by people of relative privilege who don't have to bear the brunt of the endless indignities, brutality and death the war has brought to communities of color. Many of these folks are good people- smart, progressive, committed, and compassionate. Others are Libertarians. But both have failed to grasp the central importance of engaging the prime victims of the war on drugs in the struggle to end it. They work on changing laws and public education. Most know very little about grassroots organizing or building resistance through militant direct action.

As a result the anti- drug war movement has had numerous electoral victories but our ability to mobilize local resistance to the almost daily drug war outrages that take place in colored communities is still almost non-existent. The Drop the Rock campaign in many ways represents an exception to this but the campaigns coalition building proved to be effective then its legislative expertise. From the massive Tulia, Texas drug sting that wiped out 10% of that town's black population to the dog drug searches of Native American kindergarteners in Wagner, South Dakota, we have failed to build the kind of broad based movement that would deter the drug warriors from committing these offensives. Having the ACLU file lawsuits after each drug war abomination is no strategy for peace.

This problem is not a piece of cake. There is a deep strand of social conservatism in communities of color that's rooted in respect for tradition and authority. This coupled with the deep wounds that crack cocaine and heroine have left in so many neighborhoods over the last 20 years, has made any talk about ending the drug crackdown a tough sell.

What has made the problem worse is a lack of recognition on the part of the movement of the very real evidence of government agents bringing drugs into Black and Brown neighborhoods in an effort to disrupt our liberation struggles. The anti- drug war movement should learn from the pro- choice one. There should be an affirmation of the right of individuals to control their own bodies and to ingest whatever substance they like so long as they don't harm anyone else in that process. But just like the pro-choice movement had to come to terms with its eugenics-associated past and reject forced sterilization we must recognize that drugs have been used by white elites in the past to subdue people of color (the British in China, the CIA in LA) and must stand against chemical warfare in all of its guises. This will give the movement more credibility and will help to counter the image of anti — drug war activist as being a bunch of pot heads who just want to be able to smoke in public — legally.

These essays on the drug war are more of a short chronicle of the latest offensives that have been executed by the state than anything else. I also try to mention what folks and organizations are doing in retaliation to the endless harassment, propaganda and coercion that's taking place in the war. The anti-drug war movement clearly is in need of grassroots organizers. Anarchists of color are uniquely situated to play a major role in this fight because we believe in bodily autonomy and come from the communities that have been the hardest hit in the drug war.

# Sloppy Justice in Oakland Car Seizure Programs

Oakland motorists have no rights that the Oakland Police Department are bound to respect. The latest outrage took place over the last weekend in June 2003 when over 100 cars were confiscated by the OPD and the California Highway Patrol.

While the latest wave of municipal car-jackings have taken place in response to so-called “side shows,” the practice of confiscating vehicles first and asking questions later began earlier.

In 1997 Oakland introduced Beat Feet, a drug war inspired OPD program that allows cops to seize cars based on the suspicion that the driver is soliciting for drugs or prostitution. Of course the key word here is “suspicion.” There was a time when even suspects were presumed innocent until they were proven guilty. But with programs like Beat Feet, the cops get to play judge and jury at the alleged scene of the crime. There’s a term for places that allow their cops to try and punish suspects in the street- a police state.

According to the OPD, car confiscation is just another “tool” they use to keep our communities safe, but there’s no evidence that the practice has had any impact on crime reduction or neighborhood safety. On the other hand, there are hundreds of victims who have had their most valuable asset taken from them without a trial or even a hearing. If you get your car taken from you in Oakland and you don’t have a few thousand dollars laying around to get it back within a few days of the seizure, you can kiss it goodbye regardless if you’re proven innocent in subsequent court proceedings. Under Beat Feet, the OPD auctions off the cars and keeps half the money. The other half goes to the City Attorney’s Office.

The majority of the cars that get confiscated by the City belong to innocent owners, not the actual motorist. (City Attorney’s Office- Beat Feet Report, City of Oakland August 2002) Despite what confiscation boosters insist, the targets for seizure are not rich, suburban, out-of-towners who come to Oakland looking for kicks. According to a San Francisco Chronicle survey done in 2000, the average value of the cars seized is \$1210.00. (Operation: Beat Up On Civil Rights, San Francisco Chronicle May 24, 2002) The targets are the usual ones, mainly low income, black and brown motorists who more than likely share their vehicle with other members of their family and rely on it to get to work and school. Not only do these car seizure schemes encourage racial profiling, they’re yet another offensive in Jerry Brown’s class warfare against working people in Oakland.

A more constructive response to rowdy East Bay youth who drive around at night is to give them more destinations- community centers, concerts, arcades, pool halls. Teenagers cruise because they have nothing better to do. And as for folks who ride around Oakland looking for drugs maybe some of them need help. The 1.2 million Oakland spends annually on police overtime to seize peoples cars could be spent constructing new treatment centers and teen centers. If the last 20 years of the drug war has taught us anything, it’s that the endless crackdown in poor neighborhoods of color don’t eliminate drug dealers or users. They just shuffle them from one block

to another. The passage of Prop. 36 demonstrated that most California voters get it. When will the City of Oakland?

# One Strike Public Housing Policy Unfair

We can thank the drug war for a number of horrendous developments in law and social policy- the death of the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the proliferation of mandatory minimum sentencing laws that have led to a four-fold increase in U.S. incarceration rates since the early 80's, the tying of drug law violations to access to education loans and welfare assistance. One of the broader shifts has been the appearance of collective punishment. Today if someone in your family or a friend happens to be involved with illegal drugs, you could wide up paying for it.

This is the case with the 'one strike' public housing policy of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This allows local housing authorities to throw whole families out of housing projects if one member of the family is 'caught' with drugs. I put the word caught in quotes because an arrest or conviction is not even necessary under the provision. Security guard reports, tenant rumors and anonymous complains are all fair game.

Given Oakland's commitment to the failed war on drugs its not surprising that the Housing Authority seized upon the opportunity to evict elderly tenants in the name of fighting it. In 1998 the Oakland Housing Authority sent eviction notices to four tenants due to the drug use of a family member or caretaker. After an April 2002 Supreme Court ruling upholding the evictions, the housing authority was gracious enough to allow three of the four tenants to stay. The fourth one, Herman Walker, a 75 year old disabled resident whose caretaker had been seen with a crack-pipe, was thrown out with no place to go. In that case, as with others around the country, the caretaker wasn't even related to the tenant. But never mind. Guilt by association is more than enough evidence to prove that you're an enemy when you're fighting a war. In the drug war no one is innocent.

This willingness to make innocents pay for the indiscretions of others has made authoritarians very happy. They know that notions of self autonomy and individual responsibility run so deep in the American psyche that the only way to counter our 'live and let live' attitude is to collectivize the punishment associated with illegal drugs to the point where everyone has something to lose by ignoring or tolerating their use. This not only strikes at the drug user but at the culture that allows the use. People become anti-drug because they have a direct stake in being on the 'right' side of the drug war.

The problem with this is that it's wrong to punish someone for the crimes of another. The guiding presumption of collective punishment is that individuals have control over others and should be held responsible for their actions. A case can perhaps be made for this point of view with regard to parentchild relations (although I'd disagree with it). But the HUD one strike policy makes no distinction between minors and adults. Herman Walker's caretaker was not a minor and wasn't subject to his commands. Nor does it take into account the fact that many families in public housing are made up of elderly grandparents and teenagers in their most rebellious and difficult years. To expect a 75 year old grandmother to chase after and credibly threaten an irreverent 15 year old teenager is unfair.

A more plausible approach would be to create treatment options for those family members who need measures that pull families apart it and to end the punitive and land them on the street.

# Oakland's Lip Service to Needle Exchange

Ask any elected official in Oakland about needle exchange and they're likely to claim they support it. They're familiar with the endless studies that demonstrate that needle programs slow the spread of HIV transmission among intravenous drug users without increasing drug abuse. They know that needle exchange organizations provide other support programs that contribute to the prevention of other communicable diseases like hepatitis C. They're aware that these programs help get chronic drug users into treatment programs where some of them are able to turn their lives around. But ask them about Casa Segura and you're likely to get buck passing and double talk. In theory the City of Oakland supports needle exchange. In practice they've found every excuse to block it.

Casa Segura is a mobile Oakland based health clinic that helps provide a wide range of services to addicts who otherwise would fall through the huge cracks that our for-profit health care system creates. But instead of supporting the work of Casa Segura, members of the Oakland Council have done everything in their power to stymie its mission.

Since 1998 the clinic has been searching for an East Oakland home. They first were interested in settling in the Fruitvale area, but Ignacio De La Fuentes, the current president of the city council, did everything he could to prevent that. He argued that a needle exchange program would put kids in harms way and tried to get the program to locate in an industrial area of the district far removed from the population that the clinic needed to serve. A mysterious and, to this day, unsolved December 2000 arson of the group's temporary offices in Fruitvale put a temporary halt to their work and forced them to look for another space.

They thought they had found that space in the Melrose neighborhood a few blocks east of Fruitvale. They had meetings with Moses Mayne the now former City Council Representative for the 6<sup>th</sup> District and believed they had a commitment from him to support their clinic. Pro-cop community activists who controlled the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council in the area came out against the facility.

Their main argument was that the area had more than its share of halfway houses, rehabs and treatment centers. But needle exchange programs don't just set up shop anywhere. They go where they're needed. Blacks make up almost 60 percent of the AIDS cases, and most of them are located in East and West Oakland. It was the combination of fear, denial and classism that mobilized a handful of folks in the 6<sup>th</sup> District against the clinic. Mayne, being a political novice, went where he thought the wind was blowing and flipped his support for the clinic. He lost his election bid in 2001 to Desley Brooks- a supporter of Casa Segura.

Casa Segura has been a pawn in Oakland politics. But the real victims have been the politically powerless addicts and their loved ones who have contracted HIV as a result of the Council's actions against Casa Segura.

# Gramm Amendment to Welfare Reform Targets Women

Since the Gramm Amendment to the 1996 Welfare Reform Act has been in effect over 92,000 public assistance applicants and recipients have been denied or cut off from aid due to prior drug convictions. (“Life Sentences: Denying Welfare Benefits to Women Convicted of Drug Offenses,” The Sentencing Project , February 2002 P.I) Since nearly all of these victims are vulnerable, poor women with children, some of whom have drug addiction problems, we’re justified in asking what possible policy goal was this provision enacted to produce and whether its been successful.

The sponsor of the amendment. Republican Senator Phil Gramm gave a characteristically stupid response to this question.

“If we are serious about our drug laws we ought not to give people welfare benefits who are violating them.” (“Senate Approves Welfare Reform,” Los Angeles Times July 24, 1996)

Does the fact that convicted murderers are eligible for benefits mean that we don’t take the federal criminal code “seriously”?

Despite Gramm’s inability to articulate it, the policy goal of the welfare reform drug ban is no secret. Right- wing culture war intellectuals have always viewed welfare as more of a problem than a solution. To them welfare has been responsible for spawning other social pathologies-out-of-wedlock births, teen pregnancy, violent crime, etc... After years of focused propaganda directed at the political class, they were able to convince policy makers that it wasn’t a lack of money that made people poor it was a lack of “family values” that did. Public assistance did nothing but enable a culture of dependence among recipients and sap their initiative. The overriding policy goal of welfare reform became counting how many people were cut from the rolls, not how many people were able to get out of poverty through assistance.

By this measure the drug ban has been a stunning success. In California alone 37, 825 women have been slashed from the rolls due to drug convictions. (Sentencing Project P.5) When State Senator Cathie Wright submitted opt-out legislation from the federal drug ban provision in 1998, Governor Davis vetoed the bill, claiming “convicted felons do not deserve the same treatment as law abiding citizens especially those that manufacture, transport or distribute drugs.” (Food Stamps Become a Weapon in the War on Drugs, Contra Costa Times June, 3 2001) Since the vast majority of the women effected by the ban in California are convicted for drug possession and not the manufacture, transport or distribution of them, we might have expected the Governor to gladly sign Jackie Goldberg’s revised 2000 opt-out bill that only exempted those welfare applicants who’ve been convicted of drug possession from the ban. Not so. The second time around Davis blamed “economic uncertainty” for his continued support for the ban.



Not everyone agrees with the prevailing definition of welfare reform success. The main opponents have been the women impacted by the ban. A Pennsylvania woman who was cut off explained.

“I have no income what so ever right now and I need something. Now it matters because I’m trying to do the right thing. They [drug treatment counselors] tell you not to go get a job the first six months to focus on your recovery. What are you suppose to do if you can’t get welfare? The children are going to suffer.” (Sentencing Project P.8)

With little or no family support network, no public assistance, waiting lines for drug treatment, inadequate child care and no federal aid for school due to the drug ban on that as well, the real impact of the Gramm provision is clear- more female headed, single parent families on the street, more drug addicted mothers with nowhere to turn and no way out of substance abuse, and (something that might register with the politicians) more tax dollars being spent on social services, state run foster care programs, homeless shelters and other ‘back end’ fixes to clean up the social mess.

Of course we’ll also need more cops and prisons to put away those women (the fastest growing population of inmates in the U.S.) who turn to crime in their desperation. Maybe this is the real policy goal behind the 1996 Gramm Amendment.

## Feds Call off the Party

Drug warriors salivate over the chance to unleash their ever growing apparatus of repression on young people. Up until recently, the raids, shakedowns, and swat team killings of innocents have mostly been aimed at urban youth of color in the U.S. and suspected traffickers south of the border and in Asia. But recent drug war salvos from the Feds indicate that the drag net is growing even wider. Now more middle class white kids who get caught dabbling in recreational drugs can look forward to draconian punishments, degrading searches, and long prison terms. This may look like racial fairness to the Charlie Ragels of the liberal establishment who have been pointing to uneven enforcement of drug laws for sometime. But the problem isn't racism in the drug war. The problem is that the drug war is racist. The only way to eradicate the disproportionate effects of drug enforcement on youth of color is to end the war.

In 1998 the Congress passed an amendment to the Higher Education Act that has denied over 87,000 federal school loan applicants access to financial help due to previous drug convictions. (Drugs Cost Student Aid Money, The Orion September 18, 2002) In June of 2002 the Supreme Court gave the green light to expanded random, suspicion-less drug testing for public school students engaged in extracurricular activities. ( Board of Education of Independent School District No. 92 of Pottawatomie County vs. Earls , 01-332. 2002) Only a month later the U.S. Senate was poised to pass S.2633 the so-called RAVE Act. This would hold party promoters, hosts, property managers and owners criminally liable for the drug possession and use of anyone at their events.

Like the Federal Housing and Urban Development one strike eviction policy that throws whole families out of public housing if one member is caught with illegal drugs, the RAVE Act would hold party organizers responsible for the actions of others whether they knew about them or not. The idea that a Rave promoter can somehow monitor the drug use or abstinence of thousands of party goers is ridiculous on its face and reveals the real motive behind S. 2633. After a handful of high profile DEA Ecstasy 'club drug' raids, promoters and club managers will be much less likely to host techno gatherings and other big parties where lots of young people are likely to attend. This is particularly the case if the harsh penalties (up to \$250,000 in fines and 20 years in prison) remain intact as the bill makes its way through Congress. Their goal is to kill the whole sub-culture.

They won't succeed. State repression may be effective at destroying political movements but sub-cultures are harder to smash because they revolve around attitudes, symbols, rituals, and social behavioral patterns- not leaders or formal organizations. As William D. McColl from the Drug Policy Alliance said, "raves and other musical events [will] go further underground and away from emergency care and hospitals." (Ill- Informed Bill to Counter Ecstasy Use in Clubs is Nothing to Rave About, Los Angeles Times July 29, 2002) Venue owners will be less likely to make sure that harm reduction measures like "cool off" rooms and bottled water are available to patrons if those safety precautions could be used by federal prosecutors as evidence that organizers and hosts knew about and facilitated drug use at an event.

These recent drug war offensives will surely create less politically appealing victims. The DEA has spent resources over the years chasing after Dead Heads for LSD and infiltrating motorcycle clubs on the West Coast in anti-meth operations. But the broad support for the war on drugs has always been based on the tacit understanding by white Americans that the enemy was the black male standing on the corner, or the Mexican “drug lord” shipping cocaine into the U.S. Once the enemy becomes their next door neighbor’s kid who was busted at a Rave for being in same bathroom with drug users or their cousin who was denied a federal school loan due to a marijuana conviction, the enthusiasm for a zero tolerance war against the youth may dissipate very quickly. Ironically the racism that made black and brown youth the prime targets in the drug war might be the same racism that demands an end to the war when more white youth start feeling the heat of the domestic drug war machine.

## Oakland Parolees Targeted by OPD

Since the defeat of a series of tax measures put on the ballot by the Oakland City Council to fund the salaries of 100 new cops in November 2002, the Brown administration has been scrambling to address the rising homicide rate. According to the Oakland Tribune, 54 percent of the City's 113 homicide victims in 2002 were either on parole or probation. (Cecily Burt, "Officials study curbs on parolees," Oakland Tribune, January 3, 2003) The vast majority of the assailants and victims were from East or West Oakland.

Chief Word of the Oakland Police Department has beefed up a three year-old project called the Police and Corrections Team (PACT) to address the recent surge. It calls for stepped up surveillance, visits, drug testing, house and body searches, home monitoring and use of tracking bracelets- in short a program of 24/7 snooping on and harassment of parolees and probationers.

By threatening to lock parolees back up based on real or made up violations of their parole terms the OPD hopes to intimidate ex- prisoners into community re-entry programs that many ex-prisoners say are a waste of their time. This so-called 'preventative' strategy may appeal to some in the law and order crowd and some East and West Oakland residents who want the cops to do something- anything to stop the killing. A dour prediction. It will have little if any effect on the Oakland murder rate.

California has the most aggressive parolee harassment system in the country. The result? More than two-thirds of all

California prisoners are behind bars for parole violations compared to about one third for the rest of the country according to the Urban Institute, a Washington D.C. based think tank. And since the State of California declared that its prisons were for punishment not rehabilitation in the early 1980's and began eliminating programs for prisoners, many inmates don't have access to education, training or counseling while they're locked up. This continues the proverbial revolving door of inmates.

The fact that it is cruel and inhuman to create a penal system to neutralize a whole population of people, mainly poor, black and brown youth, certainly by itself hasn't been enough to give pause to decision makers around law enforcement and corrections. Even the fact that the parolee harassment model for violent crime reduction hasn't worked doesn't count for much in a political world dominated by unions like California Correctional Peace Officers Association. But one thing that politicians have to pay attention to is money.

Currently states and cities all over the country are beginning to take a second look at their law enforcement and corrections budgets as hard economic times continue. In Kentucky, Governor Paul Patton released over 500 non- violent offenders due to a tight budget claiming the state's prisons were "just as full as they can be." (Philip Smith. Pressure on Prisons. DRCNet December 6 2002. <http://www.alternet.org>) The Oklahoma governor has recommended that over 1000 prisoners be released. Other states like Hawaii are also looking into early release programs.

But in California, Governor Davis's 2003 budget proposed cuts to every department, including education and health, except for corrections. Legislators in Sacramento subsequently proposed

a reinstatement of the vehicle registration tax to fund more cops on the local level. The state would rather close hospitals or schools instead of stop construction on a new prison in Delano even when the number of inmates coming into the state prison system is not projected to increase for the first time in decades.

Oakland itself is facing a budget deficit. This may force it to rethink its strategies around reducing the murder rate. Instead of spending resources spying on parolees and probationers and violating their Fourth Amendment rights to privacy, maybe the City will focus on proven crime reduction efforts- creating jobs, investing in education and expanding voluntary drug and alcohol treatment programs for those who need them. These efforts might not make front page news but they might lead to the long term reduction in Oakland homicides we'd all like to see.

## DEA Pot Raids Reveal Real Face of Drug War

If any recent actions by Asa Huchenson's DEA encapsulate the real nature of America's war against drugs it's the medical marijuana raids that have taken place in California since a May 2002 Supreme Court ruling encouraged federal law enforcement to step up its repression on sick and dying patients who use pot to gain some relief from pain. In Santa Rosa DEA agents arrested Edward Bierling and Dan Nelson a few days after the decision at the Aiko Cannabis Club after rolling up in dark colored SUV'S and blocking the front door SWAT team style. ("Pot Clubs Find a New Venue," The Recorder June 7, 2002) In West Hollywood federal pigs seized computers, financial documents, 400 marijuana plants and the medical records of 900 patients. ("The Ultimate Bohemian," LA Weekly December 14, 2001) Their latest hit (as of mid September 2002) was in Santa Cruz at the WAMM pot collective. ("Medicinal Pot Issue is About the Sick, Dying," The Mercury News September 20, 2002)

There are lots of reasons to be against this kind of authoritarian bullshit. But the most compelling argument has nothing to do with diverted resources from the "war on terrorism" or states rights. People are overwhelmingly against this kind of heavy-handed domestic militarism because the DEA has chosen to target the sick and dying in their war.

Despite national surveys indicating upwards of 75% approval for medical marijuana, the drug warriors just don't get it.

For them maintaining a rigid, zero tolerance stance against pot use is a symbolic gesture in their never-ending battle against the social residue of the counterculture. They ignore the thousands of ill AIDS and cancer patients who say that smoking marijuana helps to relieve excruciating pain, nausea, and loss of appetite.

This particularly arrogant brand of cultural fascism plays well in many white, upper middle, suburban districts where drug war politics performs a key role in the psychology of social denial. The kids binge drink in high school and stay high their first two years of college. Some go on to other stuff. A few disappear for a few months and come back all better. A handful disappear forever. No news. But it's not the kids who need the drug war. It's their parents who need it. It's a great proxy for being a part of their kids' lives.

So we all suffer the political consequences. But a growing number of people refuse to suffer quietly. On June of 2002 there were nationwide protests against the DEA pot raids, calling on them to "cease and desist" in their war against the sick and dying, (o.k., so maybe lawyers were overrepresented). Folks from the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), the Marijuana Policy Project and other groups chained themselves outside of DEA offices and were arrested.

On the legal front the California Supreme court strongly reaffirmed Proposition 215 in a July 19<sup>th</sup> 2002 ruling which secured the right of patients to seek summary judgment dismissal of charges brought against them by demonstrating serious illness and having a doctor's recommendation. The May Supreme Court ruling sought to halt cannabis clubs from distributing pot, but

in California high court justices maintained that individuals still have limited immunity from prosecution if they decide to grow marijuana themselves for personal use.

Mark Leno, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, has just introduced a bill that would allow the city to grow and dispense its own pot to ill patients who have a doctor's recommendation. According to him, "If the federal government is going to continue to harass and shut down these clubs, then I think it's the City's responsibility to take action...If 60 or 70 percent of voters say 'yes' the supervisors would be on very solid ground knowing that voters would be with us." ("S.F. Considers Growing Own Medical Marijuana," Contra Costa Times July 24, 2002)

In the Fall of 2002 Montana and (maybe) the District of Columbia will vote on medical marijuana measures. If recent electoral history is any indication, we can count on one state and one colony to join Alaska, California, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, Oregon and Washington State in protecting the right of their sick residents to use marijuana to help ease their pain.

# Ethnic Cleansing in Tulia

What happened in Tulia, Texas in the summer of 1999 when over ten percent of the towns Black population was arrested and convicted in an undercover drug sting was not altogether an anomaly. Each year thousands of Black and Brown drug defendants wind up behind bars because nice trustworthy police officers falsify police reports, plant evidence, lie on the stand, and fail to do even cursory investigations. Real evidence like corroborating witnesses, non-coerced confessions, and physical proof are always nice to have around. But Tom Coleman, the undercover drug war cowboy for hire who ran the 43-person Tulia sting knew he wouldn't need them. He had his white skin and his police uniform. For most juries in America that's all you need.

What's most striking (if not surprising) in the Tulia episode is the almost universal racial united front that whites in the town forged after questions over the targeting of Blacks (40 out of the 43 arrested were Black) and sloppy or non-existent evidence gathering led to civil lawsuits by the NAACP and the ACLU. ("Department Probes Texas Drug Bust," WashingtonPost.Com October 26, 2000)

The local media took the lead. The Tulia Sentinel Newspaper characterized the suspects as "drug traffickers" and "known dealers" before anyone was even convicted. ("ACLU Sues, Claims Drug Sting Was Racially Motivated," Contra Costa Times October 7, 2000) According to the Dallas Morning News, the local network t.v. station "tipped by the sheriff, had filmed the suspects as they were brought to jail after the sunrise arrests." ("Town Still Deep in Racial Divide," Dallas Morning

News June 30, 2002) Gary Gardner one of the few outspoken white critics of the racist drug sting described how the Swisher County Sheriff Larry Steward "paraded those people before the cameras with their skivvies and their hair uncombed like they had caught animals." ("The Heat is on a Texas Town After the Arrest of 40 Blacks," New York Times October 7,

2000) The establishment media knew the role they had to play to solidify white opinion against the Black defendants and they played it well.

Business and church leaders chimed in too. Their sentiments read like a high school social psychology textbook case study in denial. Lana Barnett, the Executive Director of the Tulia Chamber of Commerce claimed "this was never a racial problem. These are problem kids and the truth is they're guilty." (Dallas Morning News June 30, 2002)

Well not quite, Lana. Two people got their charges dropped after trial evidence contradicted Coleman's testimony as to their whereabouts during alleged drug buys. Scores of other defendants took plea bargains after a string of seven all white jury convictions of blacks took place. One Black defendant received a 300 year sentence. Others got 10-20 years for drug crimes that would have gotten them supervised probation in other cities. The aunt of one of the victims stated "when the defendants started seeing those big sentences, they realized it didn't matter what they had done. Whether they had used drugs or not, they were going to pay a price." (Dallas Morning News June 30, 2002)



Other whites in the town had opinions similar to Lana's. A fundamentalist "elder" with the local Central Church of Christ, Bob Colson, declared "we don't want drugs in our community. The jurors believed those people were guilty and I have to agree. I don't have any doubts." When someone asked Tom Coleman himself about the controversial sting, rather than address the obvious racial issues involved, he simply stated,

" I hate dope, and I hate dope dealers. I figured that this, I could maybe put a few dealers in jail before they came across the path of somebody's kid." (Contra Costa Times, October 7, 2000)

The lesson is old but clear. The best way to deny racism is not refutation, but oblivion. Just pretend it doesn't exist. White Americans are especially adept at make-believe. They invented disneyland after all...

# Oakland Anti-loitering Bill a Step in the Wrong Direction

The Oakland Police Department is in search of yet another “tool” to combat violent crime in the City. The City Council has voted up an anti-loitering law that will allow cops to hand out citations to people who decide to stand around in the wrong places. A first offense gets you a \$100 fine. A fourth can land you in jail for up to six months. In 1998 a similar bill was put before the Council in an attempt to crack down on youth gangs and drugs. It failed. This time we weren’t as lucky.

Since their inception U.S. anti-loitering laws have been associated with racist social policy. Historically, they first appeared in the south as a way to keep blacks out of white neighborhoods. In 1965 the Supreme Court struck down those laws as unconstitutional. Anti-loitering laws started popping up again in the late eighties in big and medium sized cities as violent crime continued to increase due in large part to the illegal crack trade.

The main difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of antiloitering laws is that the laws tend to be short-lived. Typically, a city will pass an ordinance against loitering and a few years later it will be struck down as unconstitutional by either state or federal courts. Meanwhile the courts reviewing the statute will commonly order an injunction on enforcement of the ordinance until its constitutionality can be adjudicated.

There is evidence that, at best, anti-loitering laws have no effect on crime rates. Tampa, Florida passed an anti-loitering ordinance in 1989 as a response to a growing problem with open air drug markets in certain neighborhoods. During the three years it was in existence the crime rate increased. In 1993 the Florida Supreme Court struck the ordinance down because it was too vague.

In 1992 the Chicago City Council passed an anti-loitering ordinance aimed at curbing gang violence. According to the LA Times, “by 1995 Chicago police had issued 89,000 dispersal orders under the ordinance and made 42,000 arrests. Most of the arrests were Black or Latino.” A state court ordered the police department to halt enforcement in 1995 and sent the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which struck down the ordinance in 1999. From 1995 to 1998 the murder rate continued to decline even after the City was forced to stop enforcement of the anti-loitering law. This suggests that the law itself had little to do with falling homicide rates during the 1990’s in Chicago.

But focusing too long on the effectiveness of anti-loitering laws misses the point. The Oakland Police Department could (and has) come up with any number of enforcement tactics that “work,” including beating up suspects and lying in court. The basic problem with anti-loitering statutes is that they encourage police to harass certain groups of people based not on any suspicion of criminal activity but on the mere fact that they’re hanging out on the streets, have on certain ‘profile’ cloths and happen to be Black or Brown. Even the conservative Supreme Court has

said this gives cops too much discretion and violates the First Amendment right to freedom of assembly and association.

But some in Oakland don't seem to mind the prospect of tying up City Attorney staff time and resources to defend the proposed law and exposing the City to more police harassment and brutality suits. Council member Larry Reid, the main sponsor of the anti-loitering bill called on the American Civil Liberties Union to "move to Dowling Street and 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue for a couple a months" to see firsthand what people in one of the neighborhoods that he represents have to live through each day. If the Council member isn't too busy he might have a talk with some of the victims of the OPD "Riders" who are currently on trail for regularly beating, planting evidence, and kidnapping Oakland residents. This new antiloitering law will no doubt produce more victims for Council Member Reid to talk to.

# Drug Warriors Target Native American Kids for Dog Searches

It might be tempting to chalk up the May 2002 police dog searches of Native American kindergarten students in Wagner, South Dakota as 'bad judgment' on the part of the principal, the local police department, the school board and federal (yes, federal) agents. But we shouldn't let the authoritarians off so easy.

In an effort to crackdown on drugs in the small town 85 miles southeast of Sioux Falls, local Wagner school officials and law enforcement agents decided to do a drug sweep of the Wagner Community School. According to a New York Times report "Wagner police and federal officers took [a] dog into classes...frightening some students so badly that they cried and at least one urinated involuntarily." ("Drug Dogs Sniff Even 6-Year-Olds; Parents Sue," New York Times July 26, 2002) An American Civil Liberties Union suit filed on behalf of 17 Native American students claims one dog ran wild after pulling loose from an officer. It apparently chased after students in the classroom and hopped up on desks. The students were warned that any sudden moves might make the dog attack.

If this wasn't so horrific, it would just be sick. But this is exactly the kind of local favored fascism you get when the government creates "drug exceptions" to the constitution. Judges weren't listening to Througood Marshall when he tried to remind them in *Skinner v. Railway Labor Executives Assn*, that there was no such animal.

This is also the logical result of a steady stream of opinions from the Supreme Court that have stripped privacy rights away from students. Both *Board of Education of Independent School District No. 92 v. Earls* and *Verononia School District v.*

Acton greatly expanded the ability of school districts to engage in suspicion-less searches and drug testing of students. Private bags, lockers, cars parked in school lots and even strip searches are all fair game. This by itself is enough to make parents concerned about civil liberties to seriously consider home schooling.

As fucked up as the above developments are, the most tragic aspect of the Wagner dog searches is the racial dimension. The question of whether white kindergarten kids from a middle class school district would be susceptible to this type of police state nonsense is almost beside the point. The real outrage is the process by which state authorities are targeting youth of color for humiliation, violence and confinement at earlier, and earlier ages. The ugliest example is the state murder of minors who've been sentenced to death. Cops teach children fear and deep resentment while prompting youth of color to internalize a suspect mentality. These native children will always remember 'the drug dogs' and for many of them it will leave the lasting impression that cops don't respect them, that they don't recognize their dignity, that they are the enemy.

Which in the end may not be all bad. It's important that young people know the truth about the cops- what they stand for and represent, as well as why they should never trust them. It's

just a shame that sometimes it takes deeply traumatic experiences with police to make this clear to children of color.

## **The Royal Thai Massacres : Bush Complicity in Drug War Atrocities in Thailand**

Hauy Khieng Sang natives in the north western region of Thailand marched from their village to Phrao government district offices 300 miles north of Bangkok to perform a cursing ritual on the 70 National Thailand Police Officers who raided their village in May of 2003 and arrested four community leaders on drug trafficking charges. Once the 200 Hauy Khieng Sang inhabitants arrived at the Phrao offices they set up a bamboo table, killed a pig and a few chickens and smeared the blood on two straw effigies representing the drug police. "We want the people in Phrao district to witness our cursing ceremony against the police, who have labeled innocent people as guilty." ("Thai Villagers Place Traditional Curse on Thai Police Over Drug War," Agence France Presse, May 8, 2003)

The four village leaders are in the company of thousands of dead and imprisoned Thai Landers who've been accused of drug related crimes in a political climate where a government accusation is as good as a guilty verdict.

The village raid was part of a three-month Thai government crackdown on drugs that killed over 2,275 up to mid 2003 (the Thaksin Administration stopped publicizing the number of casualties after Human Rights groups started paying attention to the body count) and incarcerated over 6,700 suspects. (ibid.) The police campaign was largely "extra judicial" meaning cops shot suspects on sight, jailed them without trials and framed many innocents who were on a government "blacklist" of alleged drug traffickers, dealers, and users.

To some who had been following Thailand's human rights record the drug war killings came as some what of a surprise.

Thailand had a history of post World War II dictatorships up through the 1990's. But after a deadly 1992 crackdown on pro democracy demonstrators in Bangkok, pressure from human rights advocates lead to the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission and the adoption of the Rome Treaty in October of 2001 .

But closer observers were aware of serious and continuing abuses by national police forces in its drug war. According to one June 2002 Amnesty International brief

"The military and army use torture and illtreatment in detention, shortly after arrest, during transport of detainees, and in military drug treatment camps. Poor Thai people, migrants, and members of ethnic groups are particularly vulnerable." (Thailand: Widespread Use of Torture From Policing to Prisons. Amnesty International Press Release June 11, 2002)

Amnesty went on to describe two Akha tribesmen who were seized by government agents in Chiang Rai Province for opium detoxification. The men were dropped in a ground hole. "Soldiers then poured water, coal, and ashes" on them. Hours later they were questioned, and beaten. One man died from the beatings, the other was hospitalized with a ruptured lung. A year later no investigation had been done. A few years earlier in the Suphanburi Province police were implicated in the deaths of three drug suspects in their custody. No charges were filed by the Attorney

General in the deaths. These two examples don't exhaust the number of cases of drug war police crimes by any stretch.

Throughout the nineties and up to the present, the Drug Enforcement Agency has been partners with their Thai counterparts in the drug war. This partnership developed out of U.S. concerns about heroine trafficking in the Golden Triangle in the 1970's. Since then the U.S. has provided training, intelligence and money to the Thai military and police for drug war interdiction along their northern border with Burma and internal drug enforcement.

As the U.S. interdiction budget grew in the late eighties and nineties so did the scope of drug operations in foreign countries. Thailand was no exception. In 1994 the DEA and Thai police started "Operation Tiger Trap" a joint anti-narcotics investigation that brought down Yang Wan-Hsuan, a major drug dealer in 2001. U.S. and Thailand government officials started the International Law Enforcement Academy in 1998 to "enhance the effectiveness of regional cooperation against transnational crime in Southeast Asia." Today the official U.S./ Thailand Embassy website states "The U.S. contributed 4.5 million in 1998 and 1999 and now provides over 1.5 million annually in operating funds." (U.S. Embassy, Bangkok Thailand Narcotics Assistance Fact Sheet, [www.usa.or.th/service/docs/report/narcotics.pdf](http://www.usa.or.th/service/docs/report/narcotics.pdf))

All of the above was fairly uncontroversial before February of 2003. If the Bush Administration had pulled all of its material support from the Thai police and military after reports of drug blacklists, imprisonment without trials, and mass police killings of drug suspects, the Justice Department would still would be guilty of gross negligence in its failure to heed human rights reports of ongoing police abuse and demand real reforms before providing them with money and equipment to carry out their repression.

But not only did the Bush Administration continue to fund the Royal Thai police before, during and after its vicious drug war crackdown, it praised the campaign and proceeded to intensify relations with the Thaksin government as the atrocities were being committed by police. It's fair to ask whether any U.S. resources were used to slaughter thousands of drug suspects and whether this slaughter took place with the aid and approval of the Bush Administration. According to the DEA'S own documents the U.S. has spent tens of millions of dollars training, equipping, and funding domestic Thailand drug enforcement. Its hard to imagine that the Thaksin administration would have had the "intelligence" or the resources to embark on such an ambitious or brutal crackdown without that support.

## **The Thaksin Record**

Prime Minister Thaksin, one of the richest men in Thailand and a former police officer, was elected to office in 2001 as a benevolent populist, tough but fair. His dominance of Thai media made it hard for his opponents to counter this portrayal. But soon after his election he began to show his true colors. He immediately supported and cooperated with the brutal Burmese military government and ramped up the murderous repression of Burmese refugees and migrants along Thailand's northern border (He's quoted as saying "they must stay in their places and must be controlled") (Yumadee Tunyasiri. P.M. Takes a Whack at UNHCR, Bangkok Post June 28, 2003) His police forces had bloody clashes with protesters in Hat Yai Sangkhla

Province on December 20 2002 over the environmentally disastrous Thai/ Malaysian gas pipeline project leaving over 100 demonstrators injured. He's also encouraged a climate of

fear among press and human rights workers who dare to speak out against his policies. Pradit Charoenthaitawee a Thai National Human Rights Commissioner received death threats after speaking out against Thaksin's drug war and was warned by Suranand Vejajiva a ruling party spokesman not to accuse Thaksin of being a dictator. In a March 2003 radio address Thaksin himself claimed Dr. Pradit's comments were "sickening" and that the human rights commissioner was a "non-patriot" and "whistleblower." (Asia-Pacific Human Rights Network, HYPERLINK "<http://www.hrdc.net/sahrdc>" [www.hrdc.net/sahrdc](http://www.hrdc.net/sahrdc) ) Bad things happen to those who speak the truth.

Nothing in Thaksin's first two years in office approached the level of barbarity of the drug police massacres.

According to Thailand's National Human Rights Commission,

"On the first day of the "war" four suspects were shot dead, 264 were taken into custody and 727 met amphetamine tablets...were seized...On 4 March 2003, nearly a month after the anti-drug operations began; the death toll had exceeded 1,100. Among those killed were an eight-month pregnant woman, a nine-year-old boy and a 75-year-old woman — all of whom had been unarmed." (ibid)

Reports of drug suspects who turned themselves into police who were shot in custody or, after going to police in an effort to clear their name from drug blacklists, were shot in the back after leaving police stations, were frequent. Attempts to launch an independent investigation into the 'extra judicial killings' have been thwarted by Thaksin government officials who refuse to provide documents, be interviewed, or testify about the campaign. The chair of the Commission, Charan Dithapichai has condemned the intransigence and intimidation coming from the Thaksin government, but his protests have fallen on deaf ears in Thailand and in the rest of the world.

## **A deafening silence**

It's not as if the Bush Administration didn't know what was going down in Thailand. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights special rapporteur Asma Jahangir expressed "deep concern" about the "extra-judicial executions" in the spring of 2003. Before Prime Minister Thaksin came to the U.S. for the first time as a head of state in June 2003, Human Rights Watch sent the White House a letter detailing the drug war atrocities taking place. The June 9<sup>th</sup> letter mentioned the over "2000 killings" and quoted Thai government officials including Thaksin himself on the drug crackdown. "In this war drug dealers must die." (Letter to U.S. President George Bush: Press Thaksin on Extra-judicial Executions, Burma, Human Rights Watch, June 9, 2003). It also quoted Interior Minister Wan Muhamad Nor Matha referring to the drug crackdown. "They will be put behind bars or even vanish without a trace...who cares?" (ibid) The Human Rights Watch report politely mentioned that the U.S. reputation may be "sullied by association with a bloody and murderous campaign in the name of the war on drugs" due to our on going anti- narcotics training and money to the Thai police, (ibid)

The Bush Administration chose to ignore these letters and other numerous press reports documenting the scope of the Thaksin slaughter in Thailand. In fact after the first phase of the crack-down ended in May, Thaksin thought he'd take a vacation to Washington D.C. to meet with Bush and tell him about all the hard work he'd been doing fighting drugs. His visit to the U.S.

was upgraded from unofficial to “working” in early June by the State Department, and the Thai delegation secured a meeting with the president for June 12. At the meeting the two talked about the war on terrorism, and Bush offered to upgrade the formal security relationship with Thailand to “non- NATO ally,” giving the regime more access to weaponry and capital. (“Thaksin in U.S.: Thailand to Become a major non-NATO ally,” *The Nation* (Thailand), June 12, 2003). According to Thai government spokesman Sita Divari, Bush also praised Thaksin’s war on drugs claiming he was surprised at Thailand’s success in drug eradication. The spokesmen also noted with pride “the president did not voice his concern or complain about extra-judicial killings and silencings during the three month campaign” in a dig at local press for negative portrayals of the campaign, (ibid)

A couple of weeks after the meeting, the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Darryl Johnson presided over a groundbreaking ceremony for the opening of the new International Law Enforcement Academy building in Bangkok to train a new generation of drug warriors for the Royal Thai National Police. “I would like to express my respect and appreciation for the outstanding resourcefulness and support of our Thai colleagues in this joint undertaking...Together, working through and supporting institutions such as ILEA Bangkok, we can bring about real change and improve the lives of our fellow citizens.” (Embassy of the United States of America, Press Release June 27, 2003) Note: Apparently Ambassador Johnson recently chastised the Thaskin Administration for not reigning in his drug police. Too little too late.

Currently, estimates are that over 3,000 drug suspects have been killed in Thaksin’s campaign to make Thailand “drug-free by December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2003,” the Birthday of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Tens of millions of U.S. dollars continue to help fund and train Thai national police forces in their continued crackdown on drug users, traffickers, and dealers. The Bush Administration’s support for the Thaksin regime in the face of this brutal crackdown is an accomplice crime in itself and should be investigated by Congress. Attorney General Ashcroft could also do some digging himself to find out if any domestic laws might have been broken, but he might be too busy eagerly studying how the Thaksin regime got away with its drug war massacre to do much probing into White House complicity in the Thaksin atrocities.



**Sex**

# Bodily Autonomy and Liberation

It's long past the time for anarchists to take back sexual liberation from the capitalists and to reclaim the struggle for free bodies and sex-positive exhibition. For many sex liberation means Playboy magazine, phone sex, 24/7 internet porn, and Sex in the City reruns. In other words, the commercial exploitation of women to sell production.

There is a different and more meaningful definition of sexual liberation that came out of the free love movement of the late 1800's and was heavily influenced by anarchist feminists. This movement never preached libertinism as an end in itself but argued that women and men should be free from the social constraints of sexism and Puritanism and be allowed to love as they see fit. But this was about more than just sex. The free love movement also demanded an end to restrictive dress codes for women, talked about the degradations of marriage for women and brought out the sexual hypocrisies and pretensions of "Victorian" America.

Today the terrain is considerably different. The Trans, Bi, Lesbian and Gay liberation struggle has won some victories and has done an incredible amount of public education work in a relatively short span of time (30 years). Sex-positive performance art has combined social commentary with erotic themes in an attempt to re-politicize sexual discourse. Of course AIDS has changed everything, and the fight against it has spawned some of the most important and innovative grassroots, direct action groups since the early seventies like the group ACT-UP.

But the AIDS crisis has also left thousands of people dead, millions more sick and has changed the terms of the dialogue regarding bodily liberation and its consequences. By the mid80's, sex was once again spoken of in terms of fear, silence, shame. Even some campus feminists sought to reintroduce female sexual danger into the center of debate around sexual relations and power. At the same time the culture industry was successful at blurring the lines between revolutionary sexual liberation and capitalist "free" sexuality while the rightwing was able to reestablish an abstinence-only atmosphere in its attempt to desexualize society. All the while laws against sex offenders have grown more punitive, and harsh. Over the last 15 years we've lost more ground than we've gained.

These essays suggest and comment on how we might gain back the lost ground. We're fighting on many fronts. Against the corporate exploiters of the female body for profit, against the right-wing Christian fanatics who seek to reestablish sexual shame and guilt and against those feminist authoritarians from within the movement against patriarchy who advocate the curtailment of sexual speech in the name of protecting women and girls from men. We're also living through a black-lash against the LGBT and Queer youth community. The successful attempts to ban same sex marriage on the state level has given the right wing momentum to try an even larger roll back of rights. The good news is that people and organizations continue to stir the pot, and challenge orthodoxies in the face of vicious attacks. They demonstrate that sexual liberation is not hostile to radical feminism; it's essential to it.

# Sexual Liberation and Anarchism: Unfinished Business

Prominent anarchists spend considerable time in their books justifying social policy structures that would allow democratic majorities to deny personal freedoms to individuals in the name of “public administration.” Libertarian feminists who have pointed this out in the recent past like Susan L. Brown have been labeled as “lifestyle’ anarchists for their commitment to self-autonomy. But each year in America cops arrest hundreds of thousands of people for exercising selfdetermination over their bodies in ways that don’t square with straight society. What interest do the powerful have in suppressing consensual, victimless, domestic and sexual arrangements and activity? Beyond the right -wing rhetorical bullshit about protecting public morals, there is a more plausible set of considerations involved.

It is in the very nature of states (and large social institutions generally) to expand, and usurp authority over progressively greater areas of personal and social life. For authoritarians, the old fascist adage ‘war is the health of the state’ rings true. If a state is not expanding its territorial, cultural, and economic control, it is in decline. As the prolific 20<sup>th</sup> century anarchist activist and writer Emma Goldman put it,

“The psychology of government demands that its influence and prestige constantly grow, at home and abroad, and it exploits every opportunity to increase it. This tendency is motivated by the financial and commercial interest back of the government, represented and served by it.” (Red Emma, Vintage Books 1972 P.92)

She went on to underline the exclusivity of this tendency with expressive selfhood.

“Our political and social scheme can not afford to tolerate the individual and his constant quest for innovation. In ‘self defense’ the state therefore suppresses, persecutes, punishes and even deprives the individual of life. It is aided in this by every institution that stands for preservation of the existing order.”(Ibid.)

Not only does the state make sexual and domestic relations a part of its sphere of domination because of its organizational imperative to control ever-increasing facets of social life, it also is contributing to the maintenance of a particular social order that’s ‘capital friendly.’ This job is way too big for the state alone, however. The state uses its guns when it has too. But in liberal society the preference is towards more subtle ways of controlling the people.

A well run liberal market society is a society where people are investing, producing, servicing, consuming and not destroying property in the interim. The corporate culture industry does its part to keep the public consciousness in tune with the needs of capital by providing the required social diversions. Without these diversions cultural vacuums develop that allow for all manner of ideas in conflict with the priorities of capital to gain currency in the public mind. These diversions

usually take the form of entertainmentsports, tabloid news, pop music etc.. Our masters even provide political theater for those so inclined; the Democrat liberals vs. the Republican right and so on. All of this media 'noise' works towards a pacification of the people that so formats our consciousness, our values, what we think of as important, and how we understand our own needs and desires, that dangerous agendas connected to the rearrangement of power relations rarely hit the radar screen.

It is within this context of social domination through the apparatuses of culture that bodily and sex repression gain their significance in the struggle for liberation from state/capital hegemony. Demands for sex liberation and selfautonomy are not in and of themselves understood as a direct threat to the structure of privilege and repression. We are familiar with the almost limitless ability of the market to absorb and exploit sexuality for profit. But to the extent that it can not do this, to the extent sex and the body are consciously deployed as weapons in the service of liberation from capital exploitation, they become a threat to the cultural stability of market society.

The exercise of influence over sexual mores creates opportunities for the powerful to condition people towards 'functional' expressions of bodily, and sexual freedom. What is functional is determined by whatever serves the interest of current social hierarchies and the institutions that stabilize them- patriarchal marriage, compulsory heterosexuality, even the very notion of gender itself. Sex co modification , for example, emphasizes personal ecstasy and immediate male orgasmic gratification over mutuality and fore/ after-play. This trend seems to be in line with market societies tendencies toward 'alienated pleasure.' Sex individualism keeps people isolated with phone sex, computer porn, sex videos, blow-up dolls, and other toys. The political promise of the sex instinct- ever greater social unites, is diminished before an ever expanding menu of auto-erotic phantasmagoria for profit. Why brother with real people when you can surround yourself with sexual chimeras, have your orgasm, and go to bed early so you can get up for work in the morning.

Sex attraction represents one of the most powerful forces towards unity, mutuality, and pleasure. If Eros were liberated, it perhaps would provide the social space for the development of different visions of culture. Our instincts towards touch, play and connectivity would contradict the work demands of production (which is why Sigmund Freud insisted that there was an 'inverse relation' between sex repression and the level of 'civilization' [read production]in society. (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, Sigmund Freud, New York: Basic Books, 1975 P. 16) It would also create a counter social aesthetic against social conformity, abstinence, and shame. While cops whirled their billy clubs and soldiers had their death parades, we'd be fucking in the streets inviting people to join us instead of them.

This would not be 'functional' for their social order. It would invite a type of radical freedom that would represent a more spontaneous expression of organic society. This random interplay of life systems would encourage more variability, diversity, higher capacities for adaptability and greater freedom and autonomy for living things. The Belgian chemist Ilya Prigogine labeled this phenomenon as 'self organization' in his description of what is common referred to as chaos theory. (Order out of Chaos, Ilya Prigogine 1984) But market society needs just the opposite- easily molded, predictable, docile, organization men who don't ask too many questions beginning with the word why. In her essay "The Individual, Society and the State," Goldman pointed out that "the strongest bulwark of authority is uniformity" and went on to implicate industrial capitalism's division of labor, what Georg Lukacs identified as reification, as the main factor in the "wholesale mechanization of modern life...present in habits tastes, dress, thoughts and ideas." (Red Emma

Speaks, Vintage Books 1972 P.93) The point is clear. Social regimentation (what the corporate press calls social 'stability') is a central factor to the capitalist class and must be maintained in the interest of profits.

Of course the idea that bodily and sexual liberation is a revolutionary issue that is a central part of antiauthoritarian analysis is not new. This distinctly feminist approach to libertarian cultural theory was first expressed by thinkers, and activists like Victoria Woodhull, Voltairine De Cleyre, and Emma Goldman. They protested compulsory marriage, restrictive dress codes, and embraced female sex pleasure and choice as things women have a right to. Today this position implicates a long list of crimes and legal prohibitions including sodomy, homosexual marriage, polygamy, and polyandry, age of consent prohibitions, indecent exposure, lewd behavior and laws against prostitution. The struggle for these freedoms represent a continuation of the earlier battles against sex repression fought by feminist anti- authoritarians a century ago. In the recent past pro-sex porn activists like Karen Finley, Frank Moore, and Annie Sprinkel have been transforming erotic performance from commodity, male centered exploitation to a space for the celebration of the body, and an opportunity to challenge authoritarian patriarchal culture in public.

Future sex performance activism could provide anarchist praxis with a model of social confrontation that challenges the aesthetics of straight society with the violence of our beautiful liberated bodies.

# Don't Ask Don't Tell: Willful Ignorance in U.S. sexual politics

The current Catholic Church pedophile scandals have given those of us who care about the ways in which our attitudes about sex effects the culture an opportunity to ask some fundamental questions about childhood and adolescent sexuality, consent, and coercion. Sad thing, not much fundamental questioning has been taking place. The “story” is the ongoing cover-up, the hypocrisy, and the arrogance of the church hierarchy. Not exactly news.

Some folks have taken the opportunity to challenge assumptions about what constitutes socially legitimate sexual relationships. The author Judith Levine wrote the book *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex* as a way to broach the issue in a way that would introduce some nuance into the discussion. Not surprisingly she's been accused of justifying child molestation and of providing “cover” for pedophiles.

She contends that demonstrable harm should be the measure by which we determine whether sexual encounters between minors and adults should be criminally prosecuted.

“How do we know what's harmful to kids? I think a good start would be to ask them what their experiences feel like, instead of always assuming we know. There's almost no research that asks kids what they do, what they feel, or what they think. We must help kids when they're hurt sexually. But it does a child no good to be told she's been terribly victimized when she may have undergone a merely unpleasant experience.”  
(University of Minnesota Press Interview with Judith Levine April 2002)

She describes the Dutch “child welfare” model where officials talk to the parents, the minor, the adult, and then decide whether the case is criminal or not and suggests that that's a better approach to the issue than the America's criminal justice model. In the U.S., state statutory rape laws presume that anyone under a certain age is incapable of sexual consent with someone who is over a particular age. This arbitrary, one size fits all justice discounts not only the specific circumstances of the relationship in question, it also ignores the minor's experience and emotions. Even when a youth does report feeling victimized, it is often after scores of authority figures (prosecutors, judges, counselors, parents) have insisted to them that they've been traumatized, and exploited by the adult.

The problem is that one can't even introduce these points in polite society without being charged with supporting child molestation. Even though Levine has been clear, (“Should people be punished for molesting children? Absolutely. Anyone who forces sex on any person of any age should be punished”) her ideas have been roundly misrepresented by the right- wing. Robert Knight, executive director of the Culture and Family Institute (a front group for Concerned Women for America) claimed Levine's book was “the latest academic cover for child molesters.” (Bryan Robinson. *A Harmful Message: A new book on child sex sparks uproar.* ABCNEWS.com April 2002) Other conservatives like state Representative Tim Pawlenty, the majority leader of

Minnesota's House legislature called for University of Minnesota Press to stop release of the book.

While there's no question that intergenerational sex, particularly between male adults and their own children, often is an expression of America's rape culture and exemplifies the most conspicuous type of patriarchal domination, it is also true that an awful lot of sexual relationships between adults and minors are much grayer than the above category. Is it true that all relationships between 15 year olds and 21 year-olds are exploitative and based on coercion? Is it possible that a minor may prefer to learn about sexual pleasure from someone who is older and has more experience? Why is it legal for 15 year-olds to drive but not to consent to having sexual relations with a 24 year-old? The fact that these questions are offensive to so many people indicates the impoverished state of the current American discussion on sexuality.

## A Dissent from Decency

Some Supreme Court decisions deserve to be unanimous. Like *Brown v. Board of Education*, the case that invalidated the separate but equal doctrine from *Plessy v. Ferguson* or the unanimous court decision in 1973 that forced Nixon to hand over the Watergate tapes to a special prosecutor investigating his attempt to cover up a pretty larceny. The Summer 2003 case *Lawrence v. Texas* is another one that should have been decided unanimously. Unfortunately with right-wing freaks like Scalia, Thomas, and Rehnquist on the bench even the most powerful court in the land can't speak with one voice on sexual privacy rights.

John Lawrence and Tyron Garner were at Lawrence's apartment in September 1998 when Houston police broke into his place in response to a false report of an armed intruder. Once inside they found Lawrence having sex with Tyron Garner and jailed both men under a state law banning sex between consenting adults of the same gender. The case went up to the Texas Supreme Court which relied on *Bowers v. Hardwick*, a 1986 Supreme Court decision that upheld an anti-sodomy law in Georgia, to justify sustaining the sodomy convictions. If this all sounds pretty fascist you have good ears.

But apparently Antonia Scalia has no problem giving due deference to Texas fascists so long as their fascism is "reasonably related" to a legitimate state interest- in this case punishing interracial queer couples with fines and jail time. In his dissent from the six to three decision in favor of Lawrence he claimed that the overturning of *Bowers*'s was a "massive disruption of the current social order." Why? Well, because a whole bunch of states have relied on the 1986

*Bowers*'s decision to codify anti-homosexual bigotry and now all those laws have been invalidated.

Scalia believes that as long as a state can demonstrate that a law banning consensual sexual activity is reasonably related to a legitimate state interest, a less exacting Equal Protection test than the "strict scrutiny" criterion, than it passes constitutional muster. For him it is clear enough. "Certain sexual behavior is 'immoral and unacceptable'" and in his mind and the minds of thousands of state and local authoritarians the country over this fact alone "constitutes a rational basis for regulation."

But he has it backward. Even with the "rationally related" test the burden is on the State to demonstrate why it's singling out a particular class of people for punishment. Absent this demonstration the presumption is that the State does not have the authority to single out one class of people for punishment and repression. In this case we start with the assumption that what consenting adults do sexual in the privacy of their own home is their own business. The State simply does not have a legitimate state interest in preventing two consenting adults of the same sex from engaging in sexual contact in their own homes. The desire to enforce a strict code of Christian morality on the whole community, many of whom may not be Christian, the court found, was not a legitimate state interest. The question isn't whether there is some constitutional right to engage in homosexual activity. It is what legitimate authority does the State have to forbid same sex activity in the absence of any evidence that the prohibition is even remotely related to



anything that resembles a “legitimate” state function or responsibility. The court answer? Zero. I agree.

# Anorexia Nervosa and White Supremacy

Some work has been done on the relation that the commodification of the female body has (both as product and to sell products) to eating disorders. The ubiquitous projection of the pale waif as the epitome of western beauty introjects an insidious self contempt in girls and women who don't match the body type of desire. This self contempt, particularly when absorbed by insecure adolescent females, can be fatal in its effects. Not eating or, in the case of bulimia, bingeing and purging, becomes a ritual of self denial and slow selfdestruction. Eating is always accompanied by shame, and afterward guilt.

Another aspect of eating disorders that has received no attention to my knowledge is the role that race or, more specifically, white supremacy, plays in the development of eating disorders. White male supremacists standards of beauty are so narrow that girls are literally dying to meet them.

Statistics show that in the U.S. the vast majority of eating disorder cases happen among fairly well off, educated, young, white girls. This is no accident. They self identify with the "Aryan princess" iconography of desire because they are disproportionately used as its personification to sell production. White standards of beauty still dominate our society's popular culture from magazines, to prime time t.v. It's only to the extent that people of color approximate Aryan features- light skin, straight hair, pointed nose, thin lips that we too are protected as exemplars of beauty by the various industries of culture.

In communities of color there is less contempt and scorn thrown at full-figured females. In fact, in many cases fullbodied women are considered more attractive than there skinnier counter-parts (remember the video "Baby got Back"?). Obviously females of color still feel social pressures to be slim. But because there's generally more acceptance of flesh in black and brown cultures, the internalization of societal fat intolerance is somewhat less.

White men seem to have the least amount of tolerance for flesh, and white women respond to this intolerance by buying all those diet pills, bingeing and purging and compulsive exercise. This also could account for fetishization of Asian females by some white males. (See A Bachelor's Japan by Boye de Mente]) Because white men overwhelmingly control the levers of cultural production, their tastes, prejudices, and assumptions about beauty pervade capital media and entertainment. This is yet another reason (in a long list of them) for people of color to demand fair access to the media and decision making authority within its many outlets.

The old notion that eating disorders could be blamed on teenage stress or anxiety should be discarded. In too many cases these disorders are provoked by the twin external social oppressions of patriarchy and white supremacy. The first objectifies the female body through commodification, while the second excludes women of color from its definitions of beauty and uses popular media to stigmatize white girls into conformity with its impossible ideals of body type.

Until we win the culture war our aesthetic rebellion against patriarchy and white supremacy should focus on reinventing beauty, knocking over boundaries, and celebrating our bodies.

# Sexual danger and the Sex Positive Movement

In the early 1990's there was a resurgence of feminist activity on college campuses. Some of this was spawned by a spate of Supreme Court rulings that put *Roe v. Wade* in jeopardy and aggressive anti-choice thuggery at reproductive health clinics all over the country. Some of the activity was the result of coalition building between women's rights organizations and gay, lesbian, trans, and bi groups around AIDS and anti-gay/lesbian harassment, discrimination and violence.

Much of the activity was generated by a renewed sense of outrage over violence against women and girls. Take Back the Night marches seemed bigger, louder and more defiant. A new consensus among third wave campus feminists at elite universities appeared to be taking hold. The sexual liberation movement of the 60's had accomplished little for women and girls and had brought them much trouble- a whole generation of date rapers and sexual assaulters not to mention the multitude of pseudo-feminist "sensitive males" who watched Michael on "Thirty Something" to pick up all the right mannerisms and political gestures.

This consensus couldn't have been solidified without the direction of a number of feminist professors who made the deconstruction of rape culture the center of women's studies classes. Two of them, Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, caused a storm when they suggested that pornography was violence against women and that women should be able to sue the manufacturers of it under certain circumstances. Although they didn't call for outright government censorship, many free speech advocates believed that the civil remedy would have a chilling effect on all sexually explicit speech, not just obscenity. Nadine Strossen of the American Civil Liberties Union worried that the proposed tort would

"suppress a new and broader category of sexually oriented expression, distinct from the speech that is targeted under the obscenity laws- namely, the ill-defined category for which they have appropriated the term 'pornography'" (Nadine Strossen, *Defending Pornography Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* Simon and Schuster 1995 P.59)

The focus on rape and sexual coercion as the effect of sexual representation led to a discourse that emphasized the victimization of women and devalued the whole history of sexual liberation, going back to the feminist anarchists of a hundred years ago, not to mention the 1960's. After fighting long and hard for decades to gain a semblance of sexual agency and bodily self determination much of the 1990's campus feminist movement retreated from this struggle and decided to put faith in more paternal answers to sexual danger (more security guards, escorts, cop patrols etc.).

Free love anarchist advocates argued for free self-expression as an avenue for women to shake off the social expectations of passivity and modesty. Radical feminists in the 1960's sought to liberate themselves from the strictures of law and regulation that inscribed sexual submission

into the fabric of society. Lesbian and Bi feminists like the editors of *On Our Backs* and *Anything That Moves* celebrated sex- positive lifestyles, not the archetype of the sexless celibate as feminist hero. But victim-identified feminists have little time to celebrate sex. In MacKinnon's view, rape and sex

"look a lot alike... [T] he major distinction between intercourse(normal) and rape (abnormal) is that the normal happens so often that one cannot get anyone to see anything wrong with it." (Ibid. P. 108)

According to Dworkin any woman or girl who claims to like heterosexual sex is a victim of, you guessed it, "false consciousness." The very notion of sexual agency is a denial of the "unspeakable humiliation" of being 'cajoled, pressured, tricked, blackmailed, or outright forced into sex." (Ibid. P.111) Once again those who don't agree with the narrow antisex attitude of the northeastern, upper-middle, academic, feminist set (don't forget white) are poor and misguided and need to be saved from themselves.

Lucky for the women's movement, the anti- sex voices have quieted their protest for now. After episodes that included requiring explicit verbal approval of every progressive step of intimate contact between dating mates (Antioch College) and randomly picking male names out of a phone book and posting their names as "potential rapists" all over campus bulletin boards (University of Maryland) less one- dimensional heads have intervened in the debate.

Despite her insufferable shock jock intellectual persona and right wing politics, Camille Paglia has combated the notion that women and girls should retreat from the dangers of sexual agency into a world of paternal state protection and personal modesty. In 1993 at the apex of third wave campus activism, Katie Roiphe's book *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus* criticized victim feminism and its attendant extremes. Much of bell hooks' work has stressed how one sided the anti- sex view is in its inability to wholly understand how the absence of true sexual liberation entraps women and men

"Feminist activists who see male sexuality as inherently despicable have been those most willing to de-emphasize issues of sexual freedom. Focusing solely on those aspects of male sexual expression that have to do with reinforcing male domination of women, they are reluctant and downright unwilling to acknowledge that sexuality as it is constructed in sexist society is no more "liberating" for men than it is for women." (Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory* P.149)

So while those of us who are focused on sexual liberation must acknowledge the reality of male sexual violence and exploitation against women if we're serious about working towards a truly liberatory Eros, feminists who concern themselves primarily with the dangers of sexual encounter should also reject the shame and guilt-based female sexuality of the past (and present) and support sexual choice and empowerment. No society can be sexually liberated if women and girls are being hunted, raped, assaulted and, finally, killed by scorned boyfriends, husbands and strangers. No society can be truly sexually liberated if old notions of gender enclose women into passive, sexual subjects without the means to give voice to their sexual desires and interests.

# Culture

# The Punk Scapegoat: Why punk rock is not an anarchist albatross

Punk anarchists have taken quite a beating. In the broader anarchist press their almost always portrayed as the dumb fucks of the movement- drunk, sexist, and unable to see how their leather boots contribute to the suffering of animals. The punks get blamed for just about everything that's wrong with North American anarchism. Punk is suppose to be the reason people of color don't want anything to do with anarchism although a lot of the people of color who identify with it came out of punk scenes. To Chaz Bufe many punks are actually "fashion anarchist" that use anarchism as a way to add philosophical justification to their "anti-social" behavior. (Chaz Bufe, Listen Anarchist See Sharp Press 1985 P.1)

Otto Nomous in his great essay "Race, Anarchy and Punk Rock" rightly points out that punks sometimes seem oblivious to the cultural boundaries that keep people of color from exploring anarchism but doesn't differentiate between scenes or suggest ways to deal with those boundaries beyond punk introspection. (Otto Nomous, Race, Anarchy and Punk Rock Pamphlet 2000) For example there are many punks of color in the larger cities of North America (like LA) who share the same cultural trappings that the wider punk community has. Are they part of the solution or part of the problem? What about how punks of color are received, or rejected, in our own neighborhoods? An honest look may reveal that all white anarchists have work to do around issues of culture and inclusion- not just punks.

Why has punk become the whipping boy? Well its not like it doesn't deserve a few lashes. The words are right (most of the time) but the music is off. Punk has always been the most politically conscious of all of rocks genres but its scenes, which revolve around shows, have always been exclusionary and culturally narrow. This is mostly youth just being cliquish but it's also racial. In this context looking like you belong is everything. If you're a person of color and you happen to be alone at a show you can bet that you'll stay alone, polite smiles not withstanding.

Class also plays a role. Within scenes there's always been tensions between suburban punks who tend to be drawn by the personal angst of the sub- culture and the more working class and poor urban punks who have generally been more political. But to most middle class activists involved in radical politics it all looks the same- loud, angry, obnoxious. Nice, college educated left activists with good class politics and straight teeth find it easy to point the finger at punks because everyone knows they smell, don't comb their hair and don't have any friends of color. If they would just get a little hygiene and be more, ya know... multicultural, anti authoritarian politics would just take off.

But punk's an easy target because in many ways it's the biggest. Today Punk is anarchist culture. Before punk, anarchism was defined by the idioms and causes of the old left- labor solidarity, songs of revolutionary martyrdom, hand me down realist art from the marxists. The cultural explorations of the 1960's were certainly influenced by anarchism but the revolutionary organizations that came out of that era choose marxism over anti- authoritarian ideals. As soon

as punk found its political voice in the working class neighborhoods of Britain in the late 1970's it was explicitly anarchist. Since then it has given the world DIY zines and music (a renewal of direct action), it has spawned a number of organizations including Anti- Racist Action, Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice and Girl Army, a riot grrrl group that does female self defense classes, skill shares and other work.. And lets not forget punk rock's tireless benefit work on behalf of anarchist and progressive organizations worldwide.

The problem of anarchism's inability to reach and interest more people of color with its message is too serious an issue to scapegoat one sub- culture. In the end the real reason why more people of color aren't involved in the anarchist movement is because anarchists are not talking to them about their lives, their concerns, their hopes and fears. If the Democrat Party can do it why can't anarchists?

# The Feminist Roots of Punk

Despite the efforts of legions of anarchist intellectuals in the struggle against authority only a hand full of movements have been successful in providing the social/ political framework for a whole subculture. Punk has always been animated by both a commitment to self-autonomy and a communal ethic exemplified by collectives like DC 'S Positive Force and music groups like Fuguzi. The synthesis of these two tendencies first developed with the feminist anarchists late in the 19th century. Victoria Woodhull was among the first anarchists to argue for personal freedom and an end to capitalist, for profit, exploitation. (She later went on to become a stockbroker).

Emma Goldman wrote about how social conformity served the cultural needs of capital stability at a time when many other anti-authoritarians dismissed these type of concerns as bourgeois or liberal. She emphasized the importance of individuality to combat the growth of "mass society."

"The wholesale mechanization of modern life has increased uniformity a thousand fold. It is everywhere present, in habits, tastes, dress, thoughts and ideas. Its most concentrated dullness is a "public opinion.' Few have the courage to stand out against it. He who refuses to submit is at once labeled "queer ," different and decried as a disturbing element in the comfortable stagnancy of modern life." (P.93 Red Emma Speaks)

Marginals can relate to the above passage. We've had fight for the right to express ourselves in our own way and think for ourselves. The attempts by school administrators and bosses to force us to conform is what has fed our resentment of authority and desire to smash it.

Punks have also rejected corporate capitalism and its exploitation and oppression of women, workers, and people of color. Social hierarchies are built into the very dynamics of liberal market society and serves to perpetuate economic and social inequality. Craig O'Hare, author of the Philosophy of Punk put it this way "capitalism, as far as its basis lies in the dehumanization and exploitation of people (animals/plants) for wealth, can not be accepted by anarchists."

The sad irony about the development of punk is that although much of its 'philosophy' was created in the early days of feminist anarchist agitation the movement has also produced overtly misogynistic shit in the past. Records like the 1986 Black Flag release "Slip it in" instructed boys to "slip it on in" after the girls "say they don't want it." And how many girls and women have stayed away from shows because of jocks with mohawks who enjoy knocking people on their asses who are smaller than they are?

The upshot of this is that it was this sexism in punk that helped to spawn the riot grrrl movement which, in a very real way, is in the process of reclaim punk's feminist, antiauthoritarian roots. Spawned out of the vibrant punk rock scenes of Washington D.C. and Washington State, this loosely knit band of rockers, zine writers, sex workers, and activists were the real rebellion that everyone was waiting to come from the academy. But unlike the women studies majors



who stayed up late studying abstruse “post” feminist French theories, these women and girls were busy creating a new sub-culture that stressed the importance of developing spaces where females could perform, and share their experiences with each other without the muscle flexing mosh pit atmosphere of traditional punk shows.

But these spaces weren’t the sentimental consciousness rising gatherings of the 70’s post counter-culture either. The music and writing that the movement has produced is often angry, direct, viscerally expressive. Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth provided much of the initial inspiration for the Riot Grrrl movement with her pale, sharp, screech and sex positive feminism. Lyrics like “support the power of women, use the power of men, use the word fuck, the word is love” off the 1983 album *Confusion is Sex* created a whirlwind in punk scenes across the U.S. Gordon was later instrumental in starting and promoting other Riot Grrrl bands like the Lunachicks and Hole.

Riot Grrrl bands like Babes in Toyland promoted Girl Power (in all of its appropriated current pink disney pop manifestations) with Cinderella big shoes, exaggerated make-up and puff dress. It challenged the gender association of femininity with weakness and modesty. You didn’t have to copy the drab, understated, unisex look of the Ivy league seven sister feminists to be one. You could wear a dress, put lipstick on, put on combat boots and be just as powerful as any boy or man on the planet. It was also about the reclamation of girlhood. In the winter 2000 issue of *Bust* magazine, the former lead singer for Bikini Kill Kathleen Hanana talked with Gloria Steinem and Celina Hex about the politics of the aesthetic.

“For me some of the youth oriented stuff of dressing like a little girl, was also about women who had to numb out most of their childhood due to sexual abuse...and saying ‘I deserve to have a childhood and I didn’t have it.’ It was also just about being freaks, being punk rockers, being people who are oppositional to the whole American system, and not wanting to look like adults and our parents who we saw fucking up the world.” Celina Hex, “Fierce Funny, Feminists” *Bust* (Winter 2000 ) Vol.16 P. 52

Hanna described her vision of feminism as a “broad- based political movement that’s bent on challenging hierarchies of all kinds in our society, including racism, and classism, and able-body-ism. (Ibid.) She spoke out against some in the feminist establishment for their stand against porn and their alleged collusion with police and state agents who harass sex workers. Of course Steinem defended the anti-porn stance and claimed Andrea Dworkin was “misunderstood.”

The Riot Grrrl emphasis on bodily autonomy was apparent from its earliest inception. A 1991 quote by Ne Tantillo from the Washington D.C. zine *Riot Grrl* explained

“I should feel comfortable to carry myself as I please, where I please, and when I please...I will project the strength and anger I feel...I am not pleased to have my sex ridiculed, to be seen as an item, not a free thinking being. I am not ‘asking for it’ by existing in a space that is rightfully mine, the world.” (Ne Tantillo, *Riot Grrrl*, (1991)

This brings us back to an issue larger than sexual liberation. Its bodily self- determination and having the social power to make choices about how you live your life that’s the fundamental basis of selfhood. This is the autonomy that Riot Girl punk and the broader feminist anarchist movement have embraced.

Despite rumors of the “dissipation” of the Riot Grrrl movement (the authors of the third wave feminist primer *Manifests* got that wrong) it keeps producing bands, literature, and activism.

After a flurry of national mainstream press in the early 1990's many of its adherents decided to remain independent and underground instead of turning into media darlings of the corporate press. The U.S. continues to have a vibrant Riot Grrrl scene with bands Bratmobile, Sleater Kinney and festivals like Ladyfest, a five day Riot Grrrl art and music gathering.

# This Time the Revolution Will be Televised

It's an old debate but an important one. I was reminded of it again while reading the book *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*. In it the authors traced the back and forth between factions of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers about the role of popular media in revolutionary struggle. Some in the League thought that leader John Watson and his focus on mass media projects like the film company Black Star Productions took too much attention away from organizing- the real work of revolution. Others believed that the development of a mass based movement needed a mass based communications strategy to reach people who otherwise wouldn't be reached.

Both points are right. Organizing is the real work of revolution. But media can be a very effective organizing tool. The conflict over primacy arises out of the attempt to make the two exclusive of one another. Just about everyone can agree that mass movements need some strategy to reach the people with their message. But beyond that the disagreement over the kind of media strategy liberation movements should have goes to the core of the importance of how we make radical change and what that says about our principals.

If it's true that any mass based movement for radical change needs projects that reach mass numbers of people with it's message then the question of using institutions that have the capacity to reach large numbers of people becomes central. Media corporations. Indie purists argue that any use of corporate manufacturing, distribution, marketing, or sponsoring of movement messages automatically render that message non- liberatory. They point to indie successes like Fugazi and

Alternative Tenancies as proof that we can create and sustain dual cultural and media power.

Fair enough. But what about the kid that has some talent and a conscious message that doesn't have access to \$10,000 dollar loans to create independent distribution networks and buy manufacturing equipment. The internet is promising but to many poor folks who are the main victims of state repression and capitalism ownership of a computer with internet access is a rarity. Pointing the finger (or giving it) to young people who choose to use corporate means to get paid and get heard does nothing but estrange cultural workers who could be valuable in our struggle to reach people with conscious messages.

What about the sell out. Maybe an overused pejorative. The definition of a sell out is someone who declares certain beliefs and values and chucks them when they get in the way of "moving up." But many bands do the opposite. Bruce Springsteen started out as an urban troubadour singing songs about broken dreams and neighborhood romance. He became more political over the years not less. Ministry started off as a mediocre white funk dance group and developed into one of the most influential political industrial bands of the 1990 's. Both were on major labels. Sure, self professed revolutionaries sell out. But just as often they grow and develop in their consciousness regardless of the business side of things. To the extent that corporate pressures force cultural and political workers to alter their messages they should refuse. Maybe this happens less than we think it does.

The most salient argument questioning the strategy of using corporate tools to popularize revolutionary messages is the Lourdian 'can't use the masters tools to dismantle the masters

house' contention. Don't we make the very institutions we wish to abolish stronger by using them to get our message out? Don't we play into the commodification of culture and its illusion of liberal tolerance of "free speech" by submitting our messages and images of revolt for their manipulation and profit?

Well, yes. But its important to remember that the point to social liberation is not necessarily to abolish all social institutions but to change their constitution and the way they are run. There is nothing inherently exploitative about businesses that produce things and trade with other businesses. The exploitation comes in when workers are not co-owners and lack decision making authority. In the Spanish civil war the anarchists didn't shut down the factories they took them over. The idea is to abolish capitalism not the useful social operations it performs.

As for allowing our revolutionary messages to be manipulated by the corporate system as an example of the liberal tolerance of market society, it is true. Our task is to push the envelope when we can and continue to build independent structures that allow us to point to the contradictions and oppressions that are inherent in the state capitalist system and use that to organize people.

We should use the enemies resources to defeat the enemy. Pop will eat itself. As the neo- con cultural critic Daniel Bell pointed out in his book "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism", in the absence of a religious buffer market commodification amplifies all of the cultures most nihilist tendencies including those which serve to undermine the very values that support its existence "work, delayed gratification, career orientation, devotion to the enterprise." (Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism Basic Books 1976 P.xxv.) Included in his definition of nihilism are both radical political currents and hedonismour friends. Our task? To figure out ways to use the masters tools to club the master over the head.

## **Odds and Ends**

# Impeaching Clinton

The impeachment of Bill Clinton was the right thing to do. Problem is, it was done by the wrong people for all the wrong reasons. When Bill Clinton decided to bomb Belgrade for 79 days without the approval of the Security Council he was in direct violation of the United Nations Charter. This treaty provides two avenues to the lawful use of force. Article 51 allows member states to use force in self-defense and Article 42 permits the use of force pursuant to a unanimous vote of the Security Council. Bill Clinton was in direct violation of the Constitution of the United States as well which requires that the president get a declaration of war from the Congress before going to war with another country. He was also in direct violation of the War Powers Act of 1973 which directs the president to obtain statutory approval for U.S. troop involvement in a conflict if the engagement lasts over 60 days .

This is an impeachable offense. There is no power that is more important than the power to make war. This is why the framers of the Constitution wanted that power in the hands of the most democratic branch of the government- the Congress. In 1793 James Madison wrote that it's the "fundamental doctrine of the Constitution that the power to declare war is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature." (James Madison, Letters of Helvidius, nos. 1–4 24 Aug. – 14 Sept. 1793 Writings 6:138–77) George Mason of Virginia claimed that the president "is not safely to be entrusted with" war powers. (The Founders' Constitution Volume 3, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 11, Document, The University of Chicago Press) Today the U.S. goes to war in the same manner that a fascist state does. A dictator decides to go to war and his lieutenants carry out his commands. Substitute the word President for dictator and you have the current process for war making in the U.S.

The problem is that the right-wing in this country is much more outraged over adultery than killing innocent people in wars of aggression. And so we must witness a parade of conservative hypocrites- Bob Livingston, Henry Hyde, Newt Gingrich, moralize about Bill Clinton's character flaws and sexual indiscretions rather than holding him accountable for his immoral and illegal war mongering. Technically, Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives for perjury and obstruction of justice. He lied about and tried to cover up getting his dick sucked in the White House by an intern. High Crimes and Misdemeanors? Their can be no doubt that impeaching a president for something as ridiculous as this is a reconfirmation of just how narcissistic the baby boomer generation really is. Shutting down the government (man I wish I had thought of that), peace making in the Middle East that has lead to more war, impeachment... These folks will do just about anything to make it into the history books.

Clinton will go down in history as a President that slowed the rise of post cold war conservatism. He was able to make a right- wing agenda- welfare "reform", the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Crime Bill, the Immigration Reform Act, the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization slightly less right wing. He will be remembered for the quiet genocide he coordinated in Iraq that killed over one million innocent people through sanctions. He might

be remembered as the president that didn't inhale, or a president that had the best economic record of any administration since the Kennedy/

Johnson years. But his impeachment will be looked upon as a desperate gesture by an obsessive special prosecutor conservative establishment that was hell bent on pay Nixon. Clinton was lucky. The last time these forces someone out of office they just assassinated him. and a back for wanted

# The 2000 Election Debacle

The December 2000 Supreme Court decision in *Gore v. Bush* that anointed George W. Bush president is yet another reminder of just how easy it is in this country for the right wing to commit and get away with one coup de- tat after another without getting even a speck of blood on their nice white collared shirts. Just because people can vote doesn't mean they live in a democracy. Democracy is, fundamentally, about the people deciding for themselves who will carry out the functions of government. If one believes in government (I don't) it's the most participatory form of rule there is. If a majority of voters decide they want candidate A for an elective office and candidate B somehow ends up taking the oath of office on inauguration day your democracy isn't broke you simply don't have one.

We don't have a democracy for a lot of reasons- prohibitive ballot access laws, single member districts, two party collusion to exclude third parties from debates, scant media coverage of third party movements and candidates, corporate political domination, the electoral college, good old fashioned Jim Crow racism etc. All of these deficits of democracy were evident in 2000 (particularly the last one)

More generally, in a country this large its hard to imagine a workable system of popular sovereignty. But in 2000 it was that great liberal menace of judicial supremacy that blocked the people's will. In *Gore v. Bush* five Supreme Court judges decided the will of the people had to take a back seat to the will of the philosopher kings. King George the II is the result.

The facts. Bush was projected the winner in Florida around 2:30 a.m. November 8<sup>th</sup> by a number of networks who had projected Gore the winner earlier in the night. A number of canvassing boards in heavily Democrat counties decide to do manual re-counts of the ballots in the weeks following the election. Florida's Secretary of State, Katherine Harris, went to state court to block the canvassing board decisions and prevent all the votes from being counted. On November 21<sup>st</sup> the Florida Supreme Court handed down a ruling that permitted these counties to continue their recounts and stipulated that the results be included in the final vote count. George Bush filed a case with the U.S. Supreme Court in an attempt to stop the recounts in Florida. On November 26, 2000 Katherine Harris certified Republican George W. Bush the winner in Florida by 537 votes out of over 6 million cast. She refused to wait for Palm Beach County to finish its vote count leaving 1000 votes uncounted. (They finished 90 minutes after the 5:00 deadline.) The next day Gore filed suit in Florida claiming all the votes had not been counted in three counties (Dade, Nassau, Palm Beach) and on December 8 the Florida Supreme Court voted 4-3 to order a statewide manual recount of all under votes. On December 12<sup>th</sup> the U.S. Supreme Court ordered an end to all Florida recounts "because it is evident that any recount seeking to meet the Dec. 12 date will be unconstitutional ... we reverse the judgment of the Supreme Court of Florida ordering the recount to proceed." (*Bush v. Gore* (00-949) December 12, 2000) Gore conceded the next day.

What the Supreme Court didn't address was its own competency to hear the case in the first place. The Rehnquist Court had always emphasized federalism and the prerogative of states to resist federal mandates. In fact, it was this states rights posture that was partially responsible for



the 2000 voting debacle. In all 50 states there are 50 sets of rules and regulations around voting standards, equipment and law. It's ironic in the extreme that the Supreme Court would choose the closest election in the history of the country to become nationalists with respect to election law.

But the farce still leaves a bad taste in your mouth. In a country that loves to send representatives all around the world to lecture other people about democracy one would think that little things like making sure that all the votes are counted before a state can certify a winner in a presidential election would be more important than meeting arbitrary deadlines. But then you would also have to assume that everyone in the process wanted all the votes to be counted. In this country that assumption would have no basis in evidence.

## Spook in the Spotlight

The current UN Security Council standoff over a possible second resolution green lighting the use of force in Iraq is easily the most conspicuous foreign policy failure for the U.S. since the 1981 bombing in Beirut. U.S. diplomacy has certainly suffered set backs over the last quarter century. These set backs are cheered by anarchists and other antiimperialists world- wide. But nothing is more vicious than a wounded beast. The man currently in charge of representing this beast to the world happens to be white America's favorite soul brother- Colin Powell.

No Secretary of State has ever presided over such a sloppy and inept war propaganda campaign. Henry Kissinger made have committed war crimes in Chile. He may have coordinated illegal and immoral bombings in Cambodia and Laos. But at least he knew how to lie, spin and conceal effectively in the service of Nixon's Southeast Asian war aims. By contrast, Powell and his team at the State Department apparently lack even the most basic strategic finesse and geo- political skill. Powell has destroyed the little credibility he had by insisting on a link between Iraq and Al-Quaida. The proof? Unnamed Al Qaeda operatives told unnamed U.S. intelligence agents that unnamed Iraqis with "ties" to the ruling Baath party were involved at some point in the last half century in chemical weapons training with Al Qaeda members. No verifiable sources, no physical evidence, no witnesses.

It doesn't stop there. Powell also asserted in a March 7 th 2004 speech that Iraq officials had tried to purchase high strength aluminum tubes to use in centrifuges for uranium enrichment two years ago. The documents that Secretary Powell pointed to as proof were determined to be forged documents by Mohamed ElBaradei the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency and current weapons inspector in Iraq. It wasn't made clear whether U.S. or British officials were directly involved in the creation of the criminal documents. When CBS news was caught using fake documents to support a true story about Bush's National Guard record the Network's long time anchor, Dan Rather, stepped down and four people were fired after an internal investigation. Don't count on any investigation or firings connected to this forgery any time soon.

Where lies and misrepresentations have failed the war propaganda team have turned to strong-arm tactics. The Washington Post reported in a February 16 th 2003 article that even foreign allies of the Bush Administration's position on Iraq feel "the U.S. team often acts like thugs. People feel bullied and that can affect the way you respond when someone makes a request." (Glenn Kessler. "Forceful Tactics Catch Up with U.S." Washington Post, February 16, 2003) When you're the most powerful gangster on the block you don't have to explain yourself or say please. Its this arrogance of power and contempt for democracy that has lead Powell's crowd to ignore the need to develop logical, plausible arguments for military force (are there any?) and to respect differences of opinion and circumstance by trying to find common ground.

Instead U.S. 'diplomacy' has been heavy handed at best. Bush National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice flew to New York on the 14 th of January to punk Hans Blix and pressure him not to hold a February 27 briefing that the Bush Administration felt was going to report Iraqi progress towards 1441 compliance.

Her meeting was unscheduled and was a clear attempt to intimidate the chief weapons inspector into muzzling any news on the search for weapons of mass destruction that didn't support the U.S. push for war.

There has also been bribes and threats. Political bribes happen everyday. Smart people try to keep their bribes quite at least until they get what they want for the money they spend. Powell's crowd wasn't that slick. Secretary Powell talked to Prime Minister of Turkey, Abdullah Gul on February the 27 th a few days before a vote to allow 20,000 U.S. troops to use Turkish bases to attack Iraq from the north. (CNN: Showdown IRAQ February, 2003) He dropped him a line just to reassure the Prime Minister that a vote for landing rights would secure a six billion dollar payoff along with access to thirty billion more in commercial loans. The U.S. corporate press all through out the negotiations over the use of Turkish bases kept insisting that what looked like principled opposition to war in Turkey was just a good old fashion shakedown for more money from the U.S. This insult fueled resentment on the part of Turkish lawmakers and helped to sink the deal.

The U.S. is using threats as well. Bush administration officials have continuously implied that once the U.S. overthrows the Iraqi government access to oil production contracts would be determined by which countries were willing to support Bush's war. Since France has numerous contracts with the current government this would mean French based companies would take a huge financial hit if they were locked out of the Post Hussein Iraqi oil market. Of course "unnamed sources" in the State Department were quoted in the establishment press suggesting that this fact alone would force Prime Minister Chirac to let Bush get his war on and abstain in any Security Council vote on the issue. When France decided to take a strong stand against the war many American observers were surprised to learn that the French weren't as craven and money obsessed as they would be if faced with the same situation.

There are numerous reasons why Secretary Powell should step down. The lies before the Security Council, the open political bribes and threats to allies and other countries in the UN, the inept and unpersuasive 'arguments' for a war that the world has consistently said no to. But the most compelling reason Powell should resign is because he's been a willing participant in the construction of the U.N. sanctions regime that has caused the genocide of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians since the 1991 Gulf War and has advocated going through with a second war against the people of Iraq even if the Security Council refuses to authorize it. Both are war crimes. They, not the 'liberation' of Iraq, will be Secretary Powell's legacy.

## Recall Fiasco?

We have a long month and a half to go before the October 2003 recall but the jokes, jabs and sophomoric civic lessons to Californians on the differences between a direct democracy (bad) and a constitutional republic (for the temperate and discriminating polity) have already grown tiresome.

The problem? We suffer from an “excess of democracy” that, according to Joe Klein in the August 11 issue of Time Magazine, lead to a “slew of myopic, half-witted ballot initiatives that have pretty much paralyzed the political process.” (Joe Klein. “California’s Bad Karma” Time Magazine, August 11, 2003) Blaming the current budget crisis in California on the initiative process is like blaming high school drop out rates on rap lyrics. Sounds good. But what about all those 15 year olds riding around during school hours in their pick up trucks listening to Clint Black? We don’t have national referendums so you can’t blame the government shut down of 1995 on an “excess of democracy.” Ten years ago during an oil price slump Texas had a similar budget crisis that lead to a drop in tax revenue and a long legislative deadlock. They have no mechanism for direct popular participation in their legislative process. Turns out that legislators and professional politicians do a fine job of causing political paralysis all by themselves.

Some have even gone further. David Broder of the Washington Post called initiatives, referendums, and recalls “perversions of democracy” and warned other states to heed the lessons of California’s recall “fiasco.” (David Broder. “A Warning We Ignore at Our Peril” Biloxi Sun Herald, July 30,

2003). In truth, Americans don’t utilize these progressive era options enough (Two governors have been recalled in the last 100 hundred years.) There’s too much stability in our system. Inept and corrupt politicians rarely are held accountable and have little to worry about. They know once they’ve won election they are protected from the wrath of the people no matter how they behave until the next election.

Apparently California is setting a bad example of what can happen when democracy breaks out. The untutored rabble actually get to directly decide on state laws that effect them and vote out politicians and laws when they choose to. Imagine the horror. Candidates being taken seriously by voters who haven’t been given the corporate media seal of approval.

People getting on to ballots who aren’t rich or haven’t gone to the right schools. And how will we ever choose from all those candidates...It’s all so confusing.

Sure. California’s electoral system is far from perfect. I’ve been against many ballot measures that have passed in the golden state- the affirmative action ban 209, Proposition 13 (the law that capped property taxes), and the anti immigrant initiative 187, just to name a few. More democracy doesn’t necessarily mean more progressive policies. And it certainly isn’t the most efficient or tidy of political set-ups. In the words of Winston Churchill, democracy’s the worst form of government, except for all the rest.

Instead of arguing for specific reforms to popular democratic systems like having individual and corporate contribution limits for ballot measures, we get imperious sermons from, of all

Americans, editorial writers like those from the Orlando Sentinel about how “recall votes” are “bad for democracy.” (Mark Silva. “California Circus is Cue for Florida” Orlando Sentinel, August 17 2003) Wrong. Recalls happen to be the essence of democracy. Its not only good for voters to remind their officials of who’s in charge, it is necessary in order to keep the arrogance of power in check.

# The Authority State and personal freedom in Market Society

For sometime now the conservative establishment has been telling the American people they're against "big government." But our on going culture war has drawn the bigots and law and order fascists out of their churches, think tanks and government offices into the public arena. Many of them, once there, openly advocate for big government round ups and domestic wars. Their hypocrisy reveals itself in the demand for more cops, more prisons and more state control over our personal lives while claiming to be advocates for smaller government.

Their on going campaign against civil liberties, privacy and human rights in the name of the war on terrorism and the drug war are not mere historical accidents in our political march towards greater freedom. These campaigns of repression are the expressions of a cohesive political tradition that looks to the state to step in when the exercise of personal freedom begins to interfere with the freedom of property owners to sell, consume and invest.

Modern conservatives generally trace their political lineage from two sources. Edmund Burke, the 18 th century British parliamentarian is cited by social traditionalists as the wellspring of their views on civil society. Market materialists erroneously point to the Scottish moral philosopher Adam Smith as the patriarch of their faith. The latter have enthusiastically embraced the corporatization of the of the market place, and with it, the centralization of social power, ownership and economic decision making to the exchange houses and banks of a few major international cities. While Smith was against state interventionist polices in the market he also recognized that the state wasn't the only threat to the system of free exchange.

David Korten explained in his book *When Corporations Rule the World* "Adam Smith's ideal was a market composed of small buyers and sellers... Smith saw corporations, as much as governments, as instruments for suppressing the competitive forces of the market." David Korten *When Corporations Rule the World* (p.55) In his classic *The Wealth of Nations* Smith points out the monopolistic purpose of corporations in the market.

"It is to prevent this reduction of price, and consequently of wages and profit, by restraining that free competition which would most certainly occasion it that all corporations and the greater part of corporation laws have been established." (Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* New York Mod. Library 1937 P. 123)

Because corporations have assumed such a dominate role in the marketplace since the time of Adam Smith, the conservative complicity in their growing hegemony puts them outside of Smith's liberal market decentralism.

In reality Thomas Hobbes is closer ancestor of today's market materialists than Adam Smith. Hobbes understood pre-civil society as a state of nature of "all against all." Individuals handed over their absolute freedom in the state of nature to the sovereign in return for security against

violent death and protection of property. The social contract is born of fear and the authority state is the only institution that can secure the individual and his property in society. The forfeiture of freedom for security is at the base of what the late University of Toronto professor C.B. Macpherson called “possessive market society.”

In his book *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* he wrote “There is in Hobbes’s model no measure of merit other than the actual market assessment of a man’s merit.” For Hobbes “the modal of the self-moving, appetitive, possessive individual [was] a sufficient source of political obligation” for humans. “Possessive market society also implies that where labor has become a market commodity, market relations so shape all social relations that it may properly be called a market society, not merely a market economy.”(ibid.P.48) This market society is not Adam Smith’s society of free, rational, selfinterested, industrious equals engaged in exchange for mutual benefit. It’s the Hobbesian world of fearful, avaricious, irrational, egoists all in competition with one another. This society mirrors the market materialism of the compulsive, hyper-ambitious, amoral yuppie in Oliver Stone’s *Wall Street*.

The internal dynamic of market society pre-supposes the Hobbesian model of humans in a “perpetuall and restlesse desire of power after power.” This dark view of human nature as almost exclusively driven by the irrational, negative, passions is characteristic of both strains of modern conservatism. For Hobbes “the laws of nature... without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions.” A century later Edmund Burke, in rejection of the French Revolution and its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, agreed

“Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass body as well as in the individual, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled and their passions brought into subjection. This can only done by a power outside of themselves.” (p. 151 *Reflections on the Revolution*). ”

The running theme is clear. The two main progenitors of the modern conservative establishment both share the same distrust of the “subjects.” If we the people are left alone to pursue our own personal freedom we’ll be carried away by our passions. Therefore we need what Hobbes called a “Leviathan” or monster state to keep us in line.

As the exponential economic growth of repressive East Asian countries like Singapore, and China demonstrates, the authority state is the optimal governing regime in a market society. The state need not concern itself with the poor and disadvantaged as it must in a welfare state. Its energies and resources are almost exclusively focused on monitoring, interrogating, searching, seizing, fining, prosecuting, imprisoning, bankrupting and killing its subjects and enemies. Not only has the U.S. government cut back on public assistance in the name ‘welfare reform’ it has also stepped up its attack on the civil rights and liberties of the people since 9/11. With the Patriot Act, the Airline Security Act, military orders that allow military tribunals to hold and try citizens and non-citizens based on national origin and ethnicity in detention camps and a new department that institutionalizes Co-Intel-Pro, the U.S. has entered a dangerous phase of its history that resembles an empire abroad and a police state at home. Of course liberals have done next to nothing to stop this and in many cases have lent their support. The hand full of liberals who have spoken up, Barbara Lee, and Cynthia McKinney to name two, have been vilified and targeted for electoral defeat. McKinney lost her congressional electoral bid in a 2002 Georgia Congressional primary.

At every level the conservative establishment has been successful at using fear as a tool to further their agenda. They have been able to convince many that the biggest threat to their freedom comes from each other rather than from the state's inexorable appetite for "power after power" over our personal lives. The challenge is to demonstrate how seemingly little things like piss tests and traffic light cameras are manifestations not of a benevolent state concerned for our well being, but of the growing authority state driven by a fundamentally pessimistic view of the capacity of human beings to make our own life choices.



## Sometimes Solidarity is Hard to Do

Sometimes solidarity is hard. Case and point- the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, and the demand by the state legislature to rescind the five- year 37% pay increase that the union bargained for (and the legislature passed) under the Davis administration. (Don Morain. "Guards Union Spreads its Wealth " Los Angeles Times, May 20, 2004) A lot of ugly things can and have been said about the CCPOA. They're a union who's growth depends on the expansion of prisons and other "correctional" infrastructures of repression. Their unofficial motto "build them and they will come" reflects a callous indifference to the social effects of paying off state politicians to invest more and more public resources in caging Californians at the expense of education, health care, jobs, and other investments. We know who "they" are. They are poor black and brown people with limited education, and hope. Once in the system, these folks often end up being brutalized by guards that have histories of abuse but are shielded from accountability by their union. There are all sorts of reasons for labor advocates to walk away from the workers CCPOA represent.

We shouldn't. Allowing the State to unilaterally void a labor contract bargained for in good faith would set a horrible precedent. Today the Legislature decides that it made a mistake by approving the ridiculously high 37% pay raise a year ago. Which set of workers are next? State health care workers? Cal-works case workers? If we don't stand against the state taking back this contract what kind of credibility will we have when they really come after workers that share our progressive vision?

A tip off to the larger implications that this contract revocation could have on all of labor is apparent in the way that some state legislators have talked about the role back. Some of the 17 lawmakers in Sacramento who signed on to the push to force the CCPOA back to the table to renegotiate often have objected to the union due to its power. This sentiment should give pro-union folks pause. Isn't the point of unionism to takeover the workplace? In order to make the workplace democratic we need to get rid of the bosses and professional administrators and turn the decisions that were once made by them over to the workers. We can certainly question how much internal democracy the CCPOA has pushed for in the workplace. But the fact that they're workers can't be ignored by Sacramento is a good thing. As State Senator Jackie Speier said "I don't fault them [the Union] I fault the administration that negotiated the contract for doing a lousy job." (Don Thompson. "Prison Guards' Union Faces Sea Change in Lawmaker Support " Associated Press State & Local Wire May 24, 2004) .

In fact, labor has already begun to slip down the slippery Schwarzenegger slop. His administration has been clear about its larger goal. He's seeking 465 million in union give backs, 300 million of which he wants to come from the CCPOA. This could be the beginning shot of an across the board assault on public sector unions in California- a plan that the corporateright has been busy pushing since the late IQ's. Of course, all of this is suppose to be in the name of "shared sacrifice" to pull the state out of insolvency. But the Chronicle released an article that revealed that Schwarzenegger's executive staff is actually more expensive than his predecessors. If cut

backs are good enough for state workers laboring in prisons and hospitals why aren't they good enough for his Republican advisors, speech writers, and spin mangers? Instead of forcing state workers to give up they're hard won piece of the pie why don't we expand the pie by making wealthy Californians pay their fair share in corporate, and state income taxes. Perhaps we could also "take back" Proposition 13 instead of forcing workers to give back raises.

# The Politics of Brutality

There's a good reason for preserving the separation between the administration of justice and the pressures and promises that characterize popular elections. Officials in the justice system need to be about protecting rights not popularity contests or political posturing and paybacks. When justice officials become politicians you get outrages like Attorney General Bill Lockyer's decision to not file criminal charges against the California Youth Authority guards caught on video tape beating and kicking two wards in April 2002.

Locker's main rational for declining to press charges against the three guards was that there was no abuse of discretion on the part of the San Joaquin County prosecutors who reviewed the case and decided not to file criminal charges against the guards. ("AG'S Decision not to Prosecute in CYA Beating is a Bad Move" (editorial) Modesto Bee May 3, 2004) The problem with this excuse is that the CYA is a State of California Institution- its not run by the county of San Joaquin. If we can't count on the state attorney general to hold state corrections officers who get their pay checks from the State of California accountable for criminal assault we need to get a new attorney general.

We will get our wish soon enough. Bill Locker has been planning to run for governor since the beginning of Gray Davis's second term. Cruz Bustamante's ill fated run in the recall blocked Locker in late 2003 (the reason why Locker made a point of announcing that he voted for Arnold to the media after the election) but all indications point to a Locker run in 2006.

In this political context his choice not to prosecute these guards makes more sense. Looking the other way when CO's in San Joaquin rough up wards might help him pick up votes in the center-right central valley- a place any Democrat who aspires to state wide office must win. If a jury would be unlikely to convict (another reason San Joaquin County prosecutors and Locker declined to press charges against the CYA guards) there's a good chance that these are the kind of good law and order folks that helped Davis get elected twice. Lockyer wants to keep these voters inside the Democrat fold when he runs in 2006 .

Of course this was a fight Lockyer wanted no parts of. His plan was to ignore the beatings and the San Joaquin prosecutor's office failure to do their job until the controversy died down. It was State Senator Gloria Romero that forced his hand by releasing the beating video to news outlets and showing it to Senate colleagues after Lockyer warned her not to. In the end Locker may have just decided that settling political scores was more important than pressing charges against criminals.

Currently Bay Area criminal justice reform groups like Books not Bars and Lets Get Free are confronting Bill Lockyer on the issue of CYA brutality and are demanding that the state just scrap the CYA all together and begin studying the way in which other states like Missouri (which has lower recidivism and less brutality complains) are operating their juvenile justice systems. With fresh video accounts of more brutality at a CYA prison in Stockton against a ward involving the use of attack dogs, and another unexplained death in September 2004, lets hope the people in Sacramento are listening to them.

## Senator's Racist Death Penalty Standard

The controversy surrounding Kamala Harris's decision not to pursue the death penalty in the shooting death of Officer Isaac Espinosa is an important reminder of the second-class status of blacks in San Francisco. Once again death penalty supporters have demonstrated their contempt for black life by elevating the killing of a cop above the scores of blacks who've lost their lives due to gun violence. As long as niggers are killing niggers a new crime task force will do. But let a black person kill a non- Black cop and its time to hold press conferences, speechify at funerals, plug in the killing chair.

The death penalty has always disproportionately been applied to poor black and brown people in the U.S. Blacks and Latinos make up over half of all inmates on death row today although we only account for a quarter of the U.S. population. The human rights group Campaign to end the Death Penalty states that "over 90 percent of defendants charged with capital crimes are indigent and cannot afford to hire an experienced criminal defense attorney to represent them. They are forced to use inexperienced, underpaid court-appointed attorneys." (Death Penalty Information Center <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/article.php?scid=5&did=184> , ) Spring 2004)

If general support for the death penalty based on who gets killed isn't a reliable enough indicator of deep seeded class subjugation and racism, a look at the way juries respond to the victim's race is even more revealing. According to the United States General Accounting Office, "In 82% of the studies [reviewed], the race of the victim was found to influence the likelihood of being charged with capital murder or receiving the death penalty, i.e., those who murdered whites were found more likely to be sentenced to death than those who murdered blacks." (United States General Accounting Office, Death Penalty Sentencing, February 1990)

It might be easy to dismiss Diane Feinstein's (aka Lady Die) pro-death penalty out burst at Officer Espinosa's funeral or Barbara Boxer's gratuitous me tooism as crass political posturing (Boxer's in a November 2004 Senate race against Republican Bill. Jones) But it's more than that. Our two U.S. Senator's think that Chris Johnson's killer doesn't deserve the same punishment as the alleged killer of Officer Espinosa because one of the victims is Black and the other isn't and happens to be a cop. (Chris Johnson was a 26 year old Black resident of the Western Addition who was shot in July 2004,) The answer isn't to put to death more murderers of blacks, or to put to death more rich, white men. The answer is to end the death penalty (like the vast majority of the rest of the world). Before that happens a consolation prize would be for California political leaders to start showing some consistency with regard for their support for capital punishment. A cops life is not worth more than anyone else's life. They consensual do a dangerous job (made all the more so by the way cops act in certain neighborhoods) and get paid very well for it. But until Lady Die and Senator Boxer hold a press conference announcing more federal dollars for things that reduce crime like living wage jobs, youth programs and treatment on demand they should leave local law criminal justice administration to the locally elected criminal justice administrators.

# Nothing New About NEO

The Oakland City Council's passage of the Nuisance Eviction Ordinance (NEO) in April of 2004 was just the latest offensive in its five year assault on civil liberties. The arguments that were used to pass Beat Feat (the 1997 law that allowed cops to seize cars based on alleged suspicious drug or prostitution related activity) and the 2003 Anti- Loitering law are the same. The police need more tools in order to crack down on drug related violence. The people who live in high crime neighborhoods want more aggressive policing and don't care about civil rights. And a perennial favorite of municipal fascists the world over- we know who the bad guys are. If you're not one of them you have nothing to worry about. We should all feel better.

This time the Oakland Council decided that renters in the city who are determined by the City Attorney's office (not the courts) of being involved in drug or gang activity within 'close' proximity of their rental unit must be evicted by their landlords. If these private landlords refuse the city order the landlord can be fined and held liable for all eviction related costs incurred by the City of Oakland.

Governments are always eager to nullify civil liberties when faced with rising violent crime rates. But in Oakland what often gets forgotten in the rush to embrace repression for security is the fact that repression hasn't worked. In 1998, a year after Beat Feat was introduced there were 81 homicides. After five years of enforcement the number of murder victims in Oakland In 2003 was 114. (Oakland Police Department Website <http://www.oaklandpolice.com/> ) It's too soon to tell what effect anti-loitering law enforcement will have on the murder rate in Oakland but in The City of Tampa, Florida the Council enacted an anti-loitering ordinance in 1989 as a response to a growing problem with open air drug markets. During the three years it was in existence the crime rate increased. Giving the cops more power to ignore civil and human rights doesn't always make us safer.

Now NEO can be added to the list of laws that diminish our civil rights without necessarily making us safer. No conviction or even arrest is needed for the City Attorney's office to order a landlord to evict. The NEO complaint process can be initiated by disgruntled neighbors, anonymous snitches, or the police department. Once a tenant has been given an eviction notice they have a right to request a meeting with a city attorney to challenge the order. If the Attorney's Office is not too busy writing briefs defending the City from police misconduct suits, the tenant might be invited to come in and prove that their not a drug dealer or a gang member. Its hard to imagine too many people taking part in the charade. They will go quietly, stay with family, friends or on the street. They won't just disappear from Oakland despite the wishes of Jerry Brown's land developer friends. They will remain and some will be homeless, unemployed, and desperate. As West Oakland Council member Nancy Nadel put it "It [NEO] creates a class of outcasts with no way for society to integrate them." (Bruce Gerstman. "Council ordinance aims to evict problem tenants" Contra Costa Times March 19, 2004) This is not a recipe for reducing violent crime.

The recipe for reducing violent crime is the same as it's always been. Educational opportunities that encourage young people to pursue their talents and develop their interests.

Good jobs that pay a living wage. After school programs, drug treatment for those who choose it and equal access to public assistance. The recipe doesn't include yet another initiative in November 2004 to pay for an increase in the number of Oakland cops. Oakland voters have twice rejected similar "we need more police" solutions to the problem of violent crime. We've sent a clear message that more police repression and fascist laws are not the direction we wish to go in. The passage of NEO is an indication that the Oakland Council is not listening.

# Oakland Peace and Justice Summit a Huge Success

After months of planning, meeting, and getting the word out. All of Us or None, an ex-prisoner's rights Bay Area organization, had their first of three "Peace and Justice Summits" in Oakland on July 31<sup>st</sup>. 2004. It couldn't have come at a better time. Today in California probation departments and state prisons release over 160,000 people from probation and 125,000 from state prisons each year. Once released many in this population find it next to impossible to secure housing, find a job, get drug treatment, or access public assistance. For folks with felony records legal discrimination is a wide-spread, day to day reality that they face in their attempts to re-enter their communities.

Over 400 people from all over the Bay came to the First Unitarian Church to hear personal testimony from formerly incarcerated people and their families about one-strike evictions from public housing, the lifetime welfare and foodstamp ban that drug felons face in California, fast-track adoptions and barriers to family reunification, discrimination in public and private employment, deportations of immigrants and how deportations tear families apart, and the impact of youth incarceration and felony convictions.

The speakers addressed themselves to an "Action Panel" of community leaders that included Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, a main co-sponsor of the event, Nancy Nadel, a member of the Oakland City Council, and Berkeley School Board member Terry Doran, among others. Emani Davis, the daughter of an incarcerated parent and activist for prisoner's rights explained "Visiting our parents who are incarcerated is not a privilege but a right." Elder Freeman, a Black Panther, and ex-prisoner talked about the connection between incarceration, homelessness, and the failure of the re-entry system in California. "I was released from San Quentin in 1979 and got \$200 dollars gate money. Now in 2004, they are still releasing you with 200...When folks come out with no family or friends or support they end up in the streets, they end up homeless." Each testimony was an impassioned, first hand account of the ways in which discrimination and lack of resources had put up road-blocks to successful community reentry.

The organizers of the summit brought five demands to the Action Panel. 1) End discrimination against people with criminal records. 2) Have California opt out of the Federal lifetime welfare and food-stamp ban against people with felony convictions. 3) Implement the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents. 4) Ban the box on public employment applications that ask about prior felony convictions. 5) Increase funding for support services for people coming out of prison. The Data Center, All of Us or None and the East Bay Community Law Center in Berkeley produced a demand research briefing packet for the event that provided supporting data and analysis for the demands.

The event ended with inspired spoken word performances from Colored Ink, the Black Dot Collective and other community members. The Action Panel agreed to work with All of Us or None. Some officials agreed to put the list of demands on their respective legislative agendas,

and hold hearings in Sacramento on re-entry issues that were state- wide. Some on the panel endorsed the idea of taking a portion of the money that's confiscated in drug busts and using it to fund re-entry programs. The next step- hold them accountable.



## 9/ 11 and Submission to the Will of America

In a country where the masses of people are used to the imperial privilege of not knowing or caring about the death and destruction that is being done in their name around the world, it's not surprising that 9/11 caught Americans by surprise. Any nation of people would have been shocked and horrified by the site of bodies jumping to their death from high rise buildings. But after the initial jolt of 9/11 many walked around in a "why do they hate us" state of bewilderment for months. It was the pathetic pretense of innocence rooted in willful ignorance of the bloody trail of American imperialism that made this question so contemptible to so many around the world and here at home.

But it didn't take long for the wide-eyed puzzlement over the attacks to turn into calls for revenge. Americans weren't that concerned about the details and the Bush administration used this to its advantage to execute an illegal war against a country who had nothing to do with 9/11. It didn't matter whether America went after Osama Bin Laden or Saddam Hussein, whether we went to war with Iraq or Al-Qaeda or the Taliban or some other "new Hitler" in the Middle East. And once we started bombing it didn't much matter whether the pretext was 9/11 or weapons of mass destruction or freedom and democracy. Americans just wanted to see Arab and South Asia looking Muslims in submission. This is what they got.

In what may go down as one of the most indiscriminate round ups in American history, thousands of Middle Eastern nationals and some Arab American citizens were put into concentration camps at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba after 9/11 where they were stripped of all their rights under international law and U.S. law. After the war with Iraq began more concentration camps went up in that country including the notorious Abu Ghraib center. Many of these detainees were subjected to run of the mill brutality during war type stuff- indiscriminate killings, beatings, sensory deprivation, pain holds etc. But this was incidental. The kind of stuff a young soldier from Nebraska might do just because he can. What wasn't incidental was the sexual humiliation and the sadomasochistic homoerotic torture, rape and assault. This isn't the kind of stuff a young soldier from Nebraska would do just because he could. It's the kind of stuff that people who are familiar with the social and sexual psychology of a culture, like say, psychological operations folks in the Pentagon, would cook up. The wide spread nature of this mode of treatment and the ubiquitous picture taking by the troops involved suggests that there was a plan to use this type of domination to demoralize the detainees- spiritually. When someone is not afraid of death their spirit is the only thing that is left to conquer.

Well, the Military needed a fall guy. They chose Army Reserve Spc. Charles Graner who was being described as the "ring leader" of the Abu Ghraib sex/ torture scandal by the establishment media. He got 10 years. Pfc. Lynndie England, who had said that she "was instructed by persons in higher rank" and that she was told that the pictures she took with the detainees were being used "for psyop reasons" will also take a fall. (Brian Maass, interview, Denver CBS station KCNC-TV May 13, 2004)

As the global nightmare of illegal Bush wars continue to unfold Americans will no doubt get new opportunities to witness the humiliation of more brown people from the Middle

East. The Bush Administration knows a lot about marketing wars. Not only do they know when to start them (never offer up a new war during the summer months says presidential advisor Andrew Card) they also know that if you want the people to buy a war you've got to give them what they want to get out of it. Submission to America.

## Weak Kneed Progressives Buckle Under Democrat Pressure

Ralph Nader has managed to call the bluff of progressives who've made a habit of walking around moaning about corporate control of the two party system in the U.S., and it's narrow ideological scope. His sin? He made the Green Party relevant in the 2000 elections. All of a sudden the party and its coalition of social justice and environmental organizations were being covered by the national media and examined by hundreds of thousands of voters who had never heard of the Greens before. For a moment they weren't just a bunch of fringe environmentalists and ageing hippies. They mattered.

For this Nader has been vilified, mocked and ostracized. The saddest part of this is that progressives are leading the charge.

The group United Progressives for Victory is an organization that was formed for the explicit purpose of discrediting Ralph Nader and his 2004 presidential campaign. The group includes Toby Moffett, a former congressman from Connecticut and Roy Neel, a former Gore aide. The goal of the group is to keep Nader off the ballot in as many states as possible and to target Nader voters with direct mail in key states that assail him for his "big ego" and reiterate the lesser of two evils argument of the liberal establishment. According to Moffett they seek "to drain him of resources and force him to spend his time and money."

This and similar efforts to "stop Nader" by folks like filmmaker Michael Moore, comedian Bill Maher, and other progressives who supported Nader in 2000 reveals a sad lack of conviction and spine. It appears that what many U.S. progressives wanted wasn't a viable third party but just some attention. After they got some they decided protesting, writing letters to the editor that never get published, and going to seven person meetings to plan more seven person meetings- in short being irrelevant- is preferable to being hated by the liberal establishment. Never mind that liberals and progressives have real differences on real issues (corporate globalization, electoral reform, the war on drugs, same sex marriage, single payer universal health care etc..) More specifically, never mind that John Kerry has said he wants to send more troops to Iraq (he has also said he wants to bring troops home), double the CIA budget, cut corporate taxes, continue the ban against same sex marriage, and appoint anti- abortion judges to lower level federal benches. The important thing for progressives after 2000 was to apologize to the Democrats for not being team players and promise to be more responsible next time around.

The Green Party decision not to run a real campaign in 2004 is the fruit of this contrition. At their party convention in Summer 2004 they declined to endorse Ralph Nader's campaign and instead nominated a no name California lawyer, David Cobb, to carry the Green mantle. He vowed to run a "safe states" strategy to make sure the Greens didn't take votes away from Democrats. For this concession the Green Party got nothing from the Democrats but a pat on the head. The Kerry Campaign didn't even have to meet with them. They're intimidation of Green party leaders and activists worked.

The truth about electoral politics is that it's a zero sum game (particularly with single member districts- something neither the Democrats or the Republicans are going to change)

For the Greens to win. Democrats must lose. And the more the Greens cause the Democrats to lose the more serious the Democrats have to take the Greens. When the Democrats start calling Greens about making compromises and adopting planks that's when the Greens can reasonably think about safe states strategies and similar concessions. If a political party is not building power by forcing its rival parties to the table it's wasting the time and money of its members. Better that the cowardly Greens go back to the Democrats and map out a 30 year plan for a progressive take over (the way conservatives did in the Republican Party) then to continue the third party farce in the hopes that someday its very existence will compel Democrats to legislate into existence all those reforms that will make third parties viable in the U.S. Message to weakkneed progressives: don't hold your breath.

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