

**WELCOME TO THE LOCKDOWN OLYMPICS | DAVE ZIRIN
THE INVISIBILITY OF CHARRED CHILDREN | HUGH GUSTERSON
THE AXIS OF INDIFFERENCE | DANNY SCHECHTER**

ColdType

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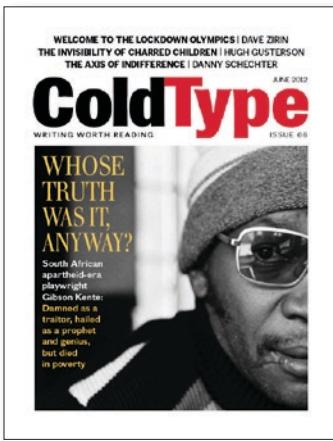
WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 66

**WHOSE
TRUTH
WAS IT,
ANYWAY?**

South African
apartheid-era
playwright
Gibson Kente:
**Damned as a
traitor, hailed
as a prophet
and genius,
but died
in poverty**





Cover Photo:
Stan Winer

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Watching TV one night recently, I was amazed and appalled by the sight of Hillary Clinton spluttering in red-faced fury over an attack that killed many women and children in the Syrian town of Houla. Of course we should be angered by the indiscriminate killing of innocents. And we should do all we can to prevent such atrocities. But howls of anguished outrage from Clinton and her President do little more than expose the hypocrisy of a nation that has rampaged through the Middle East for more than a decade, slaughtering untold numbers of women and children without reflection, apology, or censure.

She and her boss need to turn their rage inward. Does she really think the rest of the world is as ignorant, blind, and uncaring as the people of her own nation seem to be?

America, land of the dumb, home of the indifferent . . .

Tony Sutton, Editor
Editor@coldtype.net



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How the very rich didn't earn their money

Have the rich got richer through working harder or being smarter than the rest of us? No to both, says **Paul Buchheit**

The wealthiest Americans believe they've earned their money through hard work and innovation, and that they're the most productive members of society. For the most part they're wrong. As the facts below will show, they're not nearly as productive as middle-class workers. Yet they've taken almost all the new income over the past 30 years.

Any one of these five reasons should reinforce the belief that the rich should be paying a LOT more in taxes.

1. They've taken all the middle class wage increases

In 1980 the richest 1% of America took one of every fifteen post-tax income dollars. Now, according to IRS figures, they take THREE of every fifteen post-tax income dollars. They've tripled their cut of America's income pie. That's a trillion extra dollars a year.

For every dollar the richest 1% earned in 1980, they've added three more dollars. The poorest 90% have added ONE CENT. Yet the average American factory worker, according to Berkeley economist Enrico Moretti, produces \$180,000 worth of goods a year, more than three times what he or she produced in 1978, in inflation-adjusted dollars.

So workers have TRIPLED their productivity over 30 years while the richest 1% have

TRIPLED their share of income. Worker pay remained flat as the top 10% took almost all the productivity gains since 1980.

2. They've mismanaged key American industries

We have the most expensive health care system in the world. Failing banks have survived because of taxpayer bailouts. Management-approved shortcuts have led to workplace deaths and chemical leak disasters. Companies lobby for cap and trade laws so their profits can pay for their pollution.

Over twenty percent of Americans are unemployed or underemployed as big companies hoard \$2 trillion in cash. 93% of post-recession income (pdf) is going to the 1% "job-creators" with no appreciable increase in jobs.

Private tuition is skyrocketing, with student loans reaching the \$1 trillion mark. Bonuses continue for executives at Ford and Bank of America and Sirius and other companies who have underperformed and/or laid off workers. No, the captains of industry have not earned their money because of their top-notch management skills.

3. They've benefited from 50 years of public research

The very rich have made their fortunes in

Over twenty percent of Americans are unemployed or underemployed as big companies hoard \$2 trillion in cash

ECONOMIC FACTS

.....
For every dollar of workers' payroll tax paid in the 1950s, corporations paid three dollars. Now it's 16 cents
.....

good part because of taxpayer-funded research at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (the Internet), the National Institute of Health, the National Science Foundation, and numerous other government agencies.

Consider just a simple communications device. Computer chips and audio/video/voice technologies grew out of decades of funding at the Department of Defense, the Air Force, NASA, and public universities. The pieces of the device were put together by a procession of chemists, physicists, chip designers, programmers, engineers, production-line workers, market analysts, testers, troubleshooters, etc., etc.

They, in turn, couldn't have succeeded without another layer of people providing sustenance and medical support and security and administrative assistance and transportation and office maintenance for the technologists.

ALL of them contributed to the final product. But over the years private businesses have received government contracts to produce and market the results, and "entrepreneurs" have rearranged the pieces into products that seem to appear out of the magical world of a single individual.

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4. They've Increased their incomes by not paying taxes

The richest 10% own 80% of the stock market, providing billions in "unearned income" that is taxed at less than half the rate of income earned through real work. Hedge fund managers call their income "carried interest" instead of "income" to keep their tax rate at 15%. Even this small amount may not be paid. Hedge fund managers with incomes in the billions can pay ZERO income tax by deferring their profits through their companies indefinitely. Real tax rates for the richest Americans have gone way down over the last 30 years, from 34% in 1980 to 23% in 2006. Yet the 1% claim they pay most of the taxes. They don't, if all taxes are

considered. Based on recent data from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the total of all state and local taxes, social security taxes, and excise taxes (gasoline, alcohol, tobacco) consumes 22% of the annual incomes of the poorest quintile. For the top 1% of Americans, the same taxes consume less than 10% of their incomes.

In addition, most inherited wealth goes untaxed, with estates valued up to \$5 million exempt from federal taxes. The average tax rate on inheritance is less than 3 percent. It's no different for corporations. US Office of Management (OMB) figures show a gradual drop over the years in Corporate Income Tax as a Share of GDP, from 4% in the 1960s to 1.3% in 2010. That's ONE-THIRD of their previous share. From 2008 to 2010, the top 100 US corporations paid only 12.2% of their income in taxes, and thirty of them paid nothing at all.

The lack of SEC regulation has also allowed corporate America to seek tax dodges beyond our borders. Citizens for Tax Justice reports that the 280 most profitable US corporations sheltered half their profits from taxes – up to \$337 billion a year (pdf) – between 2008 and 2010.

Most shocking is the long-term shift in the tax burden from corporations to middle-class workers. For every dollar of workers' payroll tax paid in the 1950s, corporations paid three dollars. Now it's 16 cents.

.....
5. They've contributed little to society

The richest individuals and corporations have shown little regard for the majority of Americans who depend on sound financial management for their economic security.

According to sources such as the *New York Times* and ProPublica, Wall Street firms including JPMorgan, Citigroup, Bank of America, and Goldman Sachs have been repeatedly charged with fraud only to avoid punishment by paying a fraction of their profits in fines.

Financial insiders have figured out how

to cheat other investors by timing the purchase of a stock option to precede good corporate news, timing the sale of a stock option to precede bad corporate news, and changing the purchase date (pdf) on a stock option to a time when the price was lower.

One hedge fund manager, John Paulson, made \$4 billion by working with Goldman Sachs to create a financial product that would allow him to bet on the collapse of the housing market.

Other financial masterminds packaged toxic derivatives for sale to unknowing pension funds, as ratings agencies were paid to ensure the worthless packages received AAA ratings.

Meanwhile, the banks were roughing up the homeowners. Bank of America foreclosed on tens of thousands of Americans by using unverified evidence called “robo-signing.”

Disdain for average citizens goes way beyond fraud, and well outside our borders, into the areas of environmental and human rights abuses.

Computer and phone makers like Apple save money by obtaining their coltan from the Congo, where children dig it out of the mines. The “blood coltan” goes to China, where teenagers stand for 12 hours a day performing repetitive tasks for a few dollars.

Monsanto’s herbicides and pesticides cause biological damage, promote the

growth of ‘superbugs’ and ‘superweeds,’ and generally don’t outperform organic methods of farming.

Exxon is not only the biggest profitmaker and polluter, but the company has conducted a lengthy campaign to deceive the public about global warming. Corporate Accountability International named Monsanto, Exxon, Koch Industries, Chevron, Blackwater, and Halliburton to its Corporate Hall of Shame.

And finally, how well is society served when valuable resources are spent on a yacht complete with golf course, submarine, beach, and helicopter, and which qualified for a second-home mortgage deduction? Or on a \$250,000 playhouse for the kids? Studies show that increased wealth is correlated with a lesser degree of empathy for others. Despite their dependency on society for everything else, the super-rich have apparently earned the right to live in their own privileged world.

CT

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.....



Read the original tabloid editions of **ColdType**

www.coldtype.net/old.html

Welcome to the asylum

We're done for! Chris Hedges on the coming end of civilisation – well, American civilisation, that is – as we know it

When the most basic elements that sustain life are reduced to a cash product, life has no intrinsic value

When civilizations start to die they go insane. Let the ice sheets in the Arctic melt. Let the temperatures rise. Let the air, soil and water be poisoned. Let the forests die. Let the seas be emptied of life. Let one useless war after another be waged. Let the masses be thrust into extreme poverty and left without jobs while the elites, drunk on hedonism, accumulate vast fortunes through exploitation, speculation, fraud and theft. Reality, at the end, gets unplugged.

We live in an age when news consists of Snooki's pregnancy, Hulk Hogan's sex tape and Kim Kardashian's denial that she is the naked woman cooking eggs in a photo circulating on the Internet. Politicians, including presidents, appear on late night comedy shows to do gags and they campaign on issues such as creating a moon colony. "At times when the page is turning," Louis-Ferdinand Celine wrote in *Castle to Castle*, "when History brings all the nuts together, opens its Epic Dance Halls! hats and heads in the whirlwind! Panties overboard!"

The quest by a bankrupt elite in the final days of empire to accumulate greater and greater wealth, as Karl Marx observed, is modern society's version of primitive fetishism. This quest, as there is less and less to exploit, leads to mounting repression, increased human suffering, a collapse of infrastructure and, finally, collective death. It is the self-deluded, those on Wall Street or among the political

elite, those who entertain and inform us, those who lack the capacity to question the lusts that will ensure our self-annihilation, who are held up as exemplars of intelligence, success and progress. The World Health Organization calculates that one in four people in the United States suffers from chronic anxiety, a mood disorder or depression – which seems to me to be a normal reaction to our march toward collective suicide. Welcome to the asylum.

When the most basic elements that sustain life are reduced to a cash product, life has no intrinsic value. The extinguishing of "primitive" societies, those that were defined by animism and mysticism, those that celebrated ambiguity and mystery, those that respected the centrality of the human imagination, removed the only ideological counterweight to a self-devouring capitalist ideology. Those who held on to pre-modern beliefs, such as Native Americans, who structured themselves around a communal life and self-sacrifice rather than hoarding and wage exploitation, could not be accommodated within the ethic of capitalist exploitation, the cult of the self and the lust for imperial expansion. The prosaic was pitted against the allegorical. And as we race toward the collapse of the planet's ecosystem we must restore this older vision of life if we are to survive.

The war on the Native Americans, like the wars waged by colonialists around the globe, was waged to eradicate not only a people but a competing ethic. The older form of human

community was antithetical and hostile to capitalism, the primacy of the technological state and the demands of empire.

This struggle between belief systems was not lost on Marx. *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* is a series of observations derived from Marx's reading of works by historians and anthropologists. He took notes about the traditions, practices, social structure, economic systems and beliefs of numerous indigenous cultures targeted for destruction. Marx noted arcane details about the formation of Native American society, but also that "lands [were] owned by the tribes in common, while tenement-houses [were] owned jointly by their occupants." He wrote of the Aztecs, "Commune tenure of lands; Life in large households composed of a number of related families." He went on, "... reasons for believing they practiced communism in living in the household." Native Americans, especially the Iroquois, provided the governing model for the union of the American colonies, and also proved vital to Marx and Engel's vision of communism.

Marx, though he placed a naive faith in the power of the state to create his workers' utopia and discounted important social and cultural forces outside of economics, was acutely aware that something essential to human dignity and independence had been lost with the destruction of pre-modern societies. The Iroquois Council of the Gens, where Indians came together to be heard as ancient Athenians did, was, Marx noted, a "democratic assembly where every adult male and female member had a voice upon all questions brought before it." Marx lauded the active participation of women in tribal affairs, writing, "The women [were] allowed to express their wishes and opinions through an orator of their own election. Decision given by the Council. Unanimity was a fundamental law of its action among the Iroquois." European women on the Continent and in the colonies had no equivalent power.

Rebuilding this older vision of community, one based on cooperation rather than exploitation, will be as important to our survival as changing our patterns of consumption, grow-

ing food locally and ending our dependence on fossil fuels. The pre-modern societies of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse – although they were not always idyllic and performed acts of cruelty including the mutilation, torture and execution of captives – did not subordinate the sacred to the technical. The deities they worshipped were not outside of or separate from nature.

Seventeenth century European philosophy and the Enlightenment, meanwhile, exalted the separation of human beings from the natural world, a belief also embraced by the Bible. The natural world, along with those pre-modern cultures that lived in harmony with it, was seen by the industrial society of the Enlightenment as worthy only of exploitation. Descartes argued, for example, that the fullest exploitation of matter to any use was the duty of humankind. The wilderness became, in the religious language of the Puritans, satanic. It had to be Christianized and subdued. The implantation of the technical order resulted, as Richard Slotkin writes in *Regeneration Through Violence*, in the primacy of "the western man-on-the-make, the speculator, and the wildcat banker." Davy Crockett and, later, George Armstrong Custer, Slotkin notes, became "national heroes by defining national aspiration in terms of so many bears destroyed, so much land preempted, so many trees hacked down, so many Indians and Mexicans dead in the dust."

The demented project of endless capitalist expansion, profligate consumption, senseless exploitation and industrial growth is now imploding. Corporate hustlers are as blind to the ramifications of their self-destructive fury as were Custer, the gold speculators and the railroad magnates. They seized Indian land, killed off its inhabitants, slaughtered the buffalo herds and cut down the forests. Their heirs wage war throughout the Middle East, pollute the seas and water systems, foul the air and soil and gamble with commodities as half the globe sinks into abject poverty and misery. The Book of Revelation defines this single-minded drive for profit as handing over authority to the "beast."

The conflation of technological advance-

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THE END IS NIGH

**It is our souls
that the culture
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ment with human progress leads to self-worship. Reason makes possible the calculations, science and technological advances of industrial civilization, but reason does not connect us with the forces of life. A society that loses the capacity for the sacred, that lacks the power of human imagination, that cannot practice empathy, ultimately ensures its own destruction. The Native Americans understood there are powers and forces we can never control and must honor. They knew, as did the ancient Greeks, that hubris is the deadliest curse of the human race. This is a lesson that we will probably have to learn for ourselves at the cost of tremendous suffering.

In William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Prospero is stranded on an island where he becomes the undisputed lord and master. He enslaves the primitive "monster" Caliban. He employs the magical sources of power embodied in the spirit Ariel, who is of fire and air. The forces unleashed in the island's wilderness, Shakespeare knew, could prompt us to good if we had the capacity for self-control and reverence. But it also could push us toward monstrous evil since there are few constraints to thwart plunder, rape, murder, greed and power. Later, Joseph Conrad, in his portraits of the outposts of empire, also would expose the same intoxication with barbarity.

The anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, who in 1846 was "adopted" by the Seneca, one of the tribes belonging to the Iroquois confederation, wrote in *Ancient Society* about social evolution among American Indians. Marx noted approvingly, in his *Ethnological Notebooks*, Morgan's insistence on the historical and social importance of "imagination, that great faculty so largely contributing to the elevation of mankind." Imagination, as the Shakespearean scholar Harold C. Goddard pointed out, "is neither the language of nature nor the language of man, but both at once, the medium of communion between the two. ... Imagination is the elemental speech in all senses, the first and the last, of primitive man and of the poets."

All that concerns itself with beauty and truth, with those forces that have the power

to transform us, is being steadily extinguished by our corporate state. Art. Education. Literature. Music. Theater. Dance. Poetry. Philosophy. Religion. Journalism. None of these disciplines are worthy in the corporate state of support or compensation. These are pursuits that, even in our universities, are condemned as impractical. But it is only through the impractical, through that which can empower our imagination, that we will be rescued as a species. The prosaic world of news events, the collection of scientific and factual data, stock market statistics and the sterile recording of deeds as history do not permit us to understand the elemental speech of imagination. We will never penetrate the mystery of creation, or the meaning of existence, if we do not recover this older language. Poetry shows a man his soul, Goddard wrote, "as a looking glass does his face." And it is our souls that the culture of imperialism, business and technology seeks to crush.

Walter Benjamin argued that capitalism is not only a formation "conditioned by religion," but is an "essentially religious phenomenon," albeit one that no longer seeks to connect humans with the mysterious forces of life. Capitalism, as Benjamin observed, called on human societies to embark on a ceaseless and futile quest for money and goods. This quest, he warned, perpetuates a culture dominated by guilt, a sense of inadequacy and self-loathing. It enslaves nearly all its adherents through wages, subservience to the commodity culture and debt peonage. The suffering visited on Native Americans, once Western expansion was complete, was soon endured by others, in Cuba, the Philippines, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The final chapter of this sad experiment in human history will see us sacrificed as those on the outer reaches of empire were sacrificed. There is a kind of justice to this. We profited as a nation from this demented vision, we remained passive and silent when we should have denounced the crimes committed in our name, and now that the game is up we all go down together.

CT

Chris Hedges'
latest book is "The
World As It Is"
(Truthdig/Nation
Books, \$26,95)

The strange world of humanitarian awards

First Madeleine Albright, now Prince Harry. Felicity Arbuthnot wonders why we herald these people as heroes of democracy

*You fasten the triggers for others to fire,
Then you sit back and watch,
When the death count gets higher.
You hide in your mansion
As young people's blood
Flows out of their bodies
And is buried in mud.*

– Masters of War, Bob Dylan

Humanitarian Awards are surely taking on a whole new meaning. The end of April brought the obscenity of the announcement that Madeleine Albright, a woman prepared to sacrifice children by proxy(i) was to be awarded America's highest honour, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, for her role as a long time champion of democracy and human rights all over the world.

In the same twenty four hours, an announcement was made that Britain's Prince Harry is to receive a special award for his "humanitarian work."

The "Distinguished Humanitarian Leadership" award "recognizes outstanding achievement" and is presented annually by the Atlantic Council. Prince Harry and his brother, Prince William, have been jointly nominated, with Prince Harry traveling to Washington to accept on behalf of both, on May 7.

Madeleine Albright's latest honour for her services to humanity has been award-

ed to others who compete admirably with her dedication. They include such peerless war mongers as Henry Kissinger, Donald Rumsfeld, General Colin Powell, whose pack of lies to the United Nations (February 2003) initiated Iraq's destruction – and former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose offices and officers provided those lies.

That human dove of peace, Dick Cheney has been a recipient, as has his Israeli counterpart, Shimon Perez and General Norman "No one left to kill" Schatzkopf, to name a few.

Fellow recipient of the Award with Albright is Bob Dylan. Funny world.

'Cynical PR stunt'

Prince William and Harry are both in the armed forces (between social engagements.) In a career move that has been dubbed by many "a cynical PR stunt", William flies Naval Rescue helicopters. Seemingly it no longer looks good for a future king to kill people. Harry clearly faces no such trying constraints.

Deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan, in 2007, he reportedly lurked safely, deep in a bunker, out of harm's way, surrounded by a phalanx of armed Royal Protection Officers (ii) whilst playing at being a Forward Air Controller, who

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**That the two
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.....

remotely (in all senses of the word) guide in aircraft to attack the locals.

There is a terrible deviance about a supremely privileged young man, whose entire upbringing has been in palaces, castles and most elite of schools, calling in aircraft to destroy peasant farmers, along with their subsistence livelihood and simple adobe homes, in remote, poverty-stricken villages

There is a further irony in that his “child within” knows loss. At thirteen he walked behind the coffin of his mother, Princess Diana, as it was transported for her funeral, after her death in Paris in an appalling car crash that also killed her Muslim lover Dodi al Fayad.

Freud might have had something to say of his display of crusading contempt for the people of Afghanistan – 99% Muslim – just before he was hurriedly whisked out of the country for his safety in January 2008, once the media had exposed that he was there. If Albright sacrificed children by proxy, the Prince, arguably, killed them by proxy.

Back home he and his brother have their own households, with flunkies to provide, and an aristocratic titled adviser to oversee them all and their lives.

Now his delayed return to Afghanistan to hone his killing skills, is seeming more imminent. He will be more hands on, having been awarded his Apache Flying Badge, so he can return and dissect living beings from an airborne, mass human shredder of obscene and terrifying destructive power.

That the two Princes have established a charity to aid needy children in Africa, after being involved in orphaning, maiming and ending fledgling lives in Afghanistan, is a near schizophrenic perversity.

The Atlantic Council presentation for the pair’s humanitarian endeavors however is “for efforts in championing” other soldiers involved in invading and killing in two decimated lands which posed no

threat to anyone, yet alone far away Britain and America.

Prince Harry “is being recognized (with The Distinguished Humanitarian Leadership trinket) for support to Forces charities like Walking With The Wounded, ABF The Soldiers’ Charity and Help For Heroes.” All of which are funded with the sort of money that would help the maimed, destitute and traumatized in the countries the Charity’s beneficiaries have helped destroy, back to normality for many years. (eg: iii)

A St James’ Palace spokesperson said, “Prince Harry will use the award to pay tribute to British and American veterans’ charities for their achievements in helping to rehabilitate wounded servicemen and women, and to reintegrate those who have served in the armed forces into civilian life.”

No such helping and rehabilitation for their Afghan or Iraqi victims.

Welcome to the gang

The Prince, however is in good company. Previous presentations of the Awards have included Madeleine Albright’s philandering, Iraq strangulating boss, William Jefferson Clinton; President George W. “Crusader” Bush, wanted by many for Crimes Against the Peace; Tony Blair; Henry Kissinger, of course – and General Colin Powell (2005, just two years after his serial misleading of the UN.)

Blair’s acceptance speech air-brushed out “Shock and Awe”, destitute Iraqis and Afghans and blathered on about: “commitment to freedom ... economically, politically, culturally ...”

Brent Scowcroft, Former National Security Advisor and Atlantic Council Director lauded Colin Powell’s “wisdom, sagacity, integrity ...” Powell, of course, responded by talking of “Peace and freedom ... respect for human rights ...”

Sponsors of this peaceful and freedom loving establishment run to several pages

(iv) but include the US Departments of the Air Force, Navy, Defence and Energy, and Los Alamos National Laboratory which brought the world the atomic bombs, dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. In the October of that year the Laboratory received the “Army-Navy ‘E’ Award” for “excellence in production.” (v)

Another sponsor is the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory whose development aimed originally to “spur innovation and provide competition to nuclear weapons design at Los Alamos.” It also brought the world the Polaris nuclear armed submarine.

NATO and Lockheed Martin are on the roll of honour, as are Raytheon and SAIC (\$2.6 Billion in trade with the Department of Defence in 2003, year of the invasion of Iraq.) SAIC’s Management team include Bill Clinton, a clutch of former US Defence Secretaries and former UN Iraq Weapons Inspector David Kay, who continued his fruitless hunt for Iraq’s non-existent weapons of mass destruction after the Iraq invasion, when the US-UK coalition was using them.

General Dynamics is at the table, as are Boeing and Dow Chemical, which swallowed up Union Carbide, which brought the world the 1984 Bhopal disaster. Exact casualty numbers have never been established relating to Bhopal, but upper figures are fifteen thousand dead and over half a million medically affected, still ongoing. (vi)

The Atlantic Council lists its “Important contributions” including “The process of NATO transformation and enlargement” and “drafting roadmaps for US policy towards the Balkans, Africa, Cuba, Iraq, Iran and Libya.”

No “E” for Excellence Award for the Balkans and Iraq, watch out Africa and Cuba. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, under whose watch and UNSCR 1973 Libya was largely destroyed by NATO’s “Humanitarian Intervention”, is a fellow recipient of this year’s Distinguished Humanitarian

Leadership Awards.

It can only be hoped this joyous occasion is not sullied by the Prince’s lack of respect for cultural diversities and that he is sparing with the liquid refreshment. Hopefully he will also dress suitably.

One episode, when he dressed in a Nazi uniform complete with swastika arm band, caused royal photographer Arthur Edwards to write, “Where were his father and the highly-paid courtiers who advise this young man? Who let him drive out of Highgrove House, his father, Prince Charles’ Residence, dressed this way? Smoking cannabis, late-night drinking and brawling with paparazzi could be explained away as the errors of youth. But Harry, what must you have been thinking when you put on that armband?” (vii)

This was shortly before his uncle, Prince Edward, was to attend the commemorations of the liberation of Auschwitz, representing the Queen.

Incidentally, Prince Harry’s Award is to be presented by Colin Powell and Ban Ki-Moon’s by Henry Kissinger.

In all, mind stretching stuff. Oh to be a fly on the wall.

CT

Felicity Arbuthnot is a journalist and political activist based in London

Notes

- i. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=30612>
- ii. <http://www.eliteukforces.info/police/RDPD/>
- iii. http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/how_we_spend.html
- iv. <http://www.acus.org/about/sponsors>
- v. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence_Livermore_National_Labatory
- vi. <http://www.bhopal.org/what-happened/>
- vii. <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/101247/Prince-wears-Nazi-regalia.html>

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Five reasons drone killings are illegal

Bill Quigley asks why the public seems so unconcerned about the assassination of enemies and innocent civilians

The US government routinely refuses to provide any official information on local reports of civilian deaths or the identities of most of those killed

US civilian and military employees regularly target and fire lethal unmanned drone guided missiles at people across the world. Thousands of people have been assassinated. Hundreds of those killed were civilians. Some of those killed were rescuers and mourners.

These killings would be criminal acts if they occurred inside the US. Does it make legal sense that these killings would be legal outside the US?

The US has used drones to kill thousands of people in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. But the government routinely refuses to provide any official information on local reports of civilian deaths or the identities of most of those killed.

In Pakistan alone, the New America Foundation reports US forces have launched 297 drone strikes killing at least 1800 people, three to four hundred of whom were not even combatants. Other investigative journalists report four to eight hundred civilians killed by US drone strikes in Pakistan.

Very few of these drone strikes kill high level leaders of terror groups. A recent article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine estimated “only one out of every seven drone attacks in Pakistan kills a militant leader. The majority of those killed in such strikes are not important insurgent commanders but rather low level fighters, together with a small number of civilians.”

An investigation by the *Wall Street Journal* in November 2011 revealed that most of the time the US did not even know the identities of the people being killed by drones in Pakistan. The WSJ reported there are two types of drone strikes. Personality strikes target known terrorist leaders. Signature strikes target groups of men believed to be militants but are people whose identities are not known. Most of the drone strikes are signature strikes.

In Yemen, there have been at least 34 drone assassination attacks so far in 2012 alone, according to the London based Bureau of Investigative Journalism. Using drones against people in Yemen, who are thought to be militants but whose names are not even known, was authorized by the Obama administration in April 2012, according to the *Washington Post*. Somalia has been the site of ten drone attacks with a growing number in recent months.

Civilian deaths in drone strikes are regularly reported but more chilling is the practice of firing a second set of drone strikes at the scene once people have come to find out what happened or to give aid. Glen Greenwald of *Salon*, a leading critic of the increasing use of drones, recently pointed out that drones routinely kill civilians who are in the vicinity of people thought to be “militants” and are thus “incidental” killings. But also the US also frequently fires drones again at

people who show up at the scene of an attack, thus deliberately targeting rescuers and mourners.

Here are five reasons why these drone assassinations are illegal.

One. Assassination by the US government has been illegal since 1976

Drone killings are acts of premeditated murder. Premeditated murder is a crime in all fifty states and under federal criminal law. These murders are also the textbook definition of assassination, which is murder by sudden or secret attack for political reasons.

In 1976 US President Gerald Ford issued Executive Order 11905, Section 5(g), which states “No employee of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, political assassination.” President Reagan followed up to make the ban clearer in Executive Order 12333. Section 2.11 of that Order states “No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination.” Section 2.12 further says “Indirect participation. No agency of the Intelligence Community shall participate in or request any person to undertake activities forbidden by this Order.” This ban on assassination still stands.

The reason for the ban on assassinations was that the CIA was involved in attempts to assassinate national leaders opposed by the US. Among others, US forces sought to kill Fidel Castro of Cuba, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, and Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam.

Two. United Nations report directly questions the legality of US drone killings

The UN directly questioned the legality of US drone killings in a May 2010 report by NYU law professor Philip Alston. Alston, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, said

drone killings may be lawful in the context of authorized armed conflict (eg Afghanistan where the US sought and received international approval to invade and wage war on another country). However, the use of drones “far from the battle zone” is highly questionable legally. “Outside the context of armed conflict, the use of drones for targeted killing is almost never likely to be legal.” Can drone killings be justified as anticipatory self-defense? “Applying such a scenario to targeted killings threatens to eviscerate the human rights law prohibition against arbitrary deprivation of life.” Likewise, countries which engage in such killings must provide transparency and accountability, which no country has done. “The refusal by States who conduct targeted killings to provide transparency about their policies violates the international law framework that limits the unlawful use of lethal force against individuals.”

Three. International law experts condemn US drone killings

Richard Falk, professor emeritus of international affairs and politics at Princeton University thinks the widespread killing of civilians in drone strikes may well constitute war crimes. “There are two fundamental concerns. One is embarking on this sort of automated warfare in ways that further dehumanize the process of armed conflict in ways that I think have disturbing implications for the future,” Falk said. “Related to that are the concerns I’ve had recently with my preoccupation with the occupation of Gaza of a one-sided warfare where the high-tech side decides how to inflict pain and suffering on the other side that is, essentially, helpless.”

Human rights groups in Pakistan challenge the legality of US drone strikes there and assert that Pakistan can prosecute military and civilians involved for murder.

While stopping short of direct condemnation, international law expert Notre Dame Professor Mary Ellen O’Connell seriously

The reason for the ban on assassinations was that the CIA was involved in attempts to assassinate national leaders opposed by the US

The law of war allows killing only when consistent with four key principles: military necessity, distinction, proportionality, and humanity

questions the legality of drone attacks in Pakistan. In powerful testimony before Congress and in an article in America magazine she points out that under the charter of the United Nations, international law authorizes nations to kill people in other countries only in self-defense to an armed attack, if authorized by the UN, or is assisting another country in their lawful use of force. Outside of war, she writes, the full body of human rights applies, including the prohibition on killing without warning. Because the US is not at war with Pakistan, using the justification of war to authorize the killings is “to violate fundamental human rights principles.”

Four. Military law of war does not authorize drone killing of civilians

According to the current US Military Law of War Deskbook, the law of war allows killing only when consistent with four key principles: military necessity, distinction, proportionality, and humanity. These principles preclude both direct targeting of civilians and medical personnel but also set out how much “incidental” loss of civilian life is allowed. Some argue precision-guided weapons like drones can be used only when there is no probable cause of civilian deaths. But the US military disputes that burden and instead directs “all practicable precautions” be taken to weigh the anticipated loss of civilian life against the advantages expected to be gained by the strike.

Even using the more lenient standard, there is little legal justification of deliberately allowing the killing of civilians who are “incidental” to the killings of people whose identities are unknown.

Five. Retired high-ranking military and CIA veterans challenge the legality and efficacy of drone killings

Retired US Army Colonel Ann Wright squarely denies the legality of drone warfare, telling Democracy Now: “These drones,

you might as well just call them assassination machines. That is what these drones are used for: targeted assassination, extra-judicial ultimate death for people who have not been convicted of anything.”

Drone strikes are also counterproductive. Robert Grenier, recently retired Director of the CIA Counter-Terrorism Center, wrote, “One wonders how many Yemenis may be moved in the future to violent extremism in reaction to carelessly targeted missile strikes, and how many Yemeni militants with strictly local agendas will become dedicated enemies of the West in response to US military actions against them.”

Recent polls of the Pakistan people show high levels of anger in Pakistan at US military attacks there. This anger in turn leads to high support for suicide attacks against US military targets.

US defense of drone assassinations

US officials claim these drone killings are not assassinations because the US has the legal right to kill anyone considered a terrorist, anywhere, if they can argue it is in self-defense. Attorney General Holder and White House counterterrorism advisor John Brennan recently defended the legality of drone strikes and argued they are not assassinations because the killings are in response to the 9/11 attacks and are carried out in self-defense even when not in Afghanistan or Iraq. This argument is based on the highly criticized claim of anticipatory self-defense which justifies killings in a global war on terror when traditional self-defense would clearly not. The government refuses to provide copies of the legal opinions relied upon by the government.

In signs of hope, people in the US are resisting the increasing use of drones.

Codepink, the Center for Constitutional Rights and the London-based human rights group Reprieve co-sponsored an International Drone Summit in Washington DC to challenge drone assassinations. Investigative

journalist Jeremy Scahill noted that Congress only managed to scrape up six votes to oppose the assassination of US citizens abroad. “What is happening to this country? We have become a nation of assassins. We have become a nation that is somehow silent in the face of the idea that assassination should be one of the centerpieces of US policy.”

The American Society of International Law issued a report “Targeting Operations with Drone Technology: Humanitarian Law Implications” in March 2011. Concerned that drones may be the future of warfare, scholars examined three questions in the US use of drone technology: the scope of armed conflict (what is the battlefield upon which deadly force of drone killing is authorized); who may be targeted; and the legal implications of who conducts the targeting (since it is often not military but clandestine CIA agents who decide who dies). Concluding that the US may soon find itself “on the other end of the drone” as this technology expands, they criticize official US silence on these key legal questions.

Others are taking direct action. Select examples include: fourteen people arrested in April 2009 outside Creech Air Force base in Nevada in connection with a protest against drones by the Nevada Desert Experience; in January 2010 people protested drones outside the CIA headquarters in Langley Virginia; in April 2011, thirty-seven were arrested at Hancock Air Force base in upstate New York as part of a four hundred person protest against the use of drones; in October 2011, as part of the International Week of Protest to Stop the Militarization of Space there were protests outside of Raytheon Missile Systems plant in Tucson; in April 2012, twenty-eight people were pre-emptively arrested on their way to protest drones at Hancock Air Force Base.

There is a brilliant new book, *Drone Warfare*, by global activist Medea Benjamin which documents the nuts and bolts of the drone industry and the money involved in their production and operation. She collects many global media reports of innocent civil-

ian deaths, investigations into these deaths, and gives voice to international opposition groups like her own Codepink, Voices for Creative Nonviolence, Fellowship of Reconciliation, War Resisters International, Human Rights Watch, the Catholic Worker movement, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and others working against the drones.

As National Public Radio and the *New Republic* jointly editorialized, there is good reason to doubt the veracity of US claims that drone killings are even effective. Drone use has escalated and expanded the US global war on terror and thus should be subject to higher levels of scrutiny than it is now. As the use of drones escalates so too does the risk of killing innocents which produces “legitimate anti-American anger that terrorist recruiters can exploit.... Such a steady escalation of the drone war, and the inevitable increase in civilian casualties that will accompany it, could easily tip the delicate balance that assures we kill more terrorists than we produce.”

There is incredible danger in allowing US military and civilians to murder people anywhere in the world with no public or Congressional or judicial oversight. This authorizes the President and the executive branch, according to the ACLU and the Center for Constitutional Rights, to be prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner.

The use of drones to assassinate people violates US and international law in multiple ways. US military and civilian employees, who plan, target and execute people in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia are violating the law and, ultimately, risk prosecution. As the technology for drone attacks spreads, protests by the US that drone attacks by others are illegal will sound quite hollow. Continuation of flagrantly illegal drone attacks by the US also risks justifying the exact same actions, taken by others, against us.

CT

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Bill Quigley is a human rights lawyer who teaches law at Loyola University New Orleans and works with the Center for Constitutional Rights.

The invisibility of charred children

Hugh Gusterson wonders if Obama ever thinks about dead children

In Japan after World War II, the US occupying authorities made it illegal for Japanese citizens to own any pictures of the aftermath of Hiroshima or Nagasaki

I kept finding myself thinking about the lunchbox.

I was at the all-day Drone Summit in Washington DC organized by Codepink, the antiwar group whose mostly female members are famous for putting on theatrical protests while wearing bold pink. I spent the day listening to human rights activists talking about civilians killed by US drone strikes, lawyers who complained that the strikes violated international law, and scientists worried that the United States is on the brink of automating the use of lethal force by drones and killer robots.

And I kept thinking about the lunchbox.

The lunchbox belonged to a schoolgirl in Hiroshima. Her body was never found, but the rice and peas in her lunchbox were carbonized by the atomic bomb. The lunchbox, turned into an exhibition piece, became, in the words of historian Peter Stearns, “an intensely human atomic bomb icon.” The Smithsonian museum’s plans to exhibit the lunchbox as part of its 1995 exhibit for the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II enraged military veterans and conservative pundits, who eventually forced the exhibit’s cancellation.

Everyone knows, in the abstract at least, that the atom bomb killed thousands of children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But any visual representation of this fact – even if done obliquely, through a lunchbox, rather

than through actual pictures of charred children – was deemed out-of-bounds by defenders of the bombing.

I found myself thinking about the lunchbox while listening to a Drone Summit presentation by the Pakistani lawyer Shahzad Akbar of the Center for Fundamental Rights. Akbar is a Pakistani lawyer who represents civilian victims of US drone strikes in Waziristan (a tribal area on Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan). He has given Waziris cameras and trained them to take photographs of the aftermath of US drone strikes. Some activists have now begun pairing pictures of the wreckage of Hellfire missiles, made by Lockheed, with pictures of the children killed by that particular strike.

Illegal photographs

In Japan after World War II, the US occupying authorities made it illegal for Japanese citizens to own any pictures of the aftermath of Hiroshima or Nagasaki. In Japan, Akbar would have been locked up by General MacArthur.

Although Akbar has not been locked up, his Transparency Project has not been welcomed by the Obama administration. Akbar was invited to speak at Columbia University in May 2011; although he had visited the United States many times before and had even consulted for US agencies, he was not

given a visa. It looked as though he would not be allowed to speak at the Drone Summit either, but after months of pressure from human rights organizations, the State Department relented and, four days before he was due to take the podium, allowed Akbar a visa.

According to another speaker at the Drone Summit, Chris Woods of the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, while the CIA claims its drones only kill what US authorities refer to as "militants," US drone strikes have killed at least 174 children in Pakistan and somewhere between 479 and 811 civilians in all.

Akbar pointed out that, lacking air conditioning, Pakistanis often sleep outside, and children's bodies are particularly vulnerable to shrapnel. Akbar, who would like the CIA officials responsible for the strikes to stand trial for murder, showed the audience many heart-rending photographs of children in hospital or laid out for their funerals after drone strikes.

In an affecting statement after the shooting of Trayvon Martin by a Florida vigilante, President Obama said, that, if he had a son, he might have looked like Martin. One wonders if the president saw Akbar's photo-

graphs of dead brown-skinned girls whether he would find himself thinking that these could have been his daughters.

In a 1996 interview with "60 Minutes," Lesley Stahl asked Secretary of State Madeline Albright if US sanctions against Iraq were justified given that they were said to have killed half a million Iraqi children. "This is a very hard choice," she responded, "but we think the price is worth it." We can disagree with her answer, but at least she had the honesty to confront the question and give an honest answer. One wonders if Obama and the CIA officials responsible for the drone program ever think about the dead children that follow from their decisions. Do they have the honesty to look at the lunchbox?

CT

Hugh Gusterson is an anthropologist, Gusterson is a professor of anthropology and sociology at George Mason University. He is the author of "Nuclear Rites: A Weapons Laboratory at the End of the Cold War" (University of California Press, 1996) and "People of the Bomb: Portraits of America's Nuclear Complex" (University of Minnesota Press, 2004). This piece originally appeared at www.truthout.org

While the CIA claims its drones only kill what US authorities refer to as "militants," US drone strikes have killed at least 174 children in Pakistan and somewhere between 479 and 811 civilians in all

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Whose truth was it, anyway?

Stan Winer on the life and death of Gibson Kente, the South African playwright, who was damned as a traitor, hailed as a prophet and genius, but died in poverty

The play warned black people not to abandon the traditional form of African humanism known as *Ubuntu*, to be geared for the realities of the future, and not raise too high their hopes and faith in a black post-apartheid government



Gibson Kente: He could have made millions if he'd taken his anti-apartheid plays overseas.

Variously described as “the father of black theatre,” a “prophet”, a “visionary”, a “genius,” a “national icon” – and a “traitor”, playwright Gibson Kente’s name has all but disappeared from the collective South African memory. But Kente’s real-life story remains as remarkable – and more tragic – than anything he could ever have invented. Kente’s stage productions at the height of the apartheid

era were the very first ever crafted, directed, produced and scored by a black playwright in South Africa, using an all-black cast who dramatised their everyday experiences in terms of a developing urban black aesthetic. The sad thing is that the man who trained and inspired an entire generation of performing artists, and who became a household name in the black ghettos, died a pauper.

Kente’s 1987 play *Sekunjalo* provided a scathing and prophetic portrayal of life in a future black-ruled South Africa. *Sekunjalo* painted a picture of a revolution’s aftermath, vaguely reminiscent of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.

The play reprimanded black urban communities for what Kente saw as their negative social mores, against the background of tribal conflict, political violence and racial intolerance that wracked the country in the 1980s.

The play warned black people not to abandon the traditional form of African humanism known as *Ubuntu*, to be geared for the realities of the future, and not raise too high their hopes and faith in a black post-apartheid government.

Self-reliance

Kente stressed the need for black people to develop a spirit of self-reliance, rather than



Gibson Kente trained and mentored a whole generation of black South African actors including Sol Rachilo, pictured here in a 1975 Phoenix Players production of Athol Fugard's acclaimed drama *Boesman and Lena*

rely on expectations of automatic entitlement under a new political dispensation based on skin colour alone. Meritocracy and democracy were inseparable in Kente's view: "If we are to take up positions presently held by those in power", Kente warned, "we must be qualified and ready for leadership. Wishes and desires are not enough."

Above all, Kente urged his audiences to recognize "the truth about black people's self-defeating tendencies." This theme and his distance from the bombast and slogan-eering of institutionalized resistance politics did not endear Kente to the populist "revolutionaries" of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), who accused Kente of "not representing the truth about blacks". Kente's house in Soweto was petrol-

bombed. Valuable documentation of nearly all his prolific work over a period of 30 years – a total of 32 musical plays – were destroyed in the ensuing blaze, making it virtually impossible to secure his heritage for posterity. No corpus of scripts survived, nor are there any surviving scores to perpetuate his work as a composer and orchestrator.

The simplistic assumption that there is only one "truth", and that this "truth" was the exclusive preserve of student activists, never the less failed to diminish the importance of Kente's work.

It has left an indelible impression on South African cultural life whereas, ironically, many of the supposedly radical student activists who vigorously opposed him in the 1980s have today been assimilated

Kente's house in Soweto was petrol-bombed. Valuable documentation of nearly all his prolific work over a period of 30 years was destroyed in the ensuing blaze

The grim reality of life in South Africa today is that it lacks the capacity to connect people with one another and with society through a common set of worthwhile values and beliefs



A scene from Kente's 1973 anti-apartheid play *How Long?* which performed to packed audiences in dilapidated ghetto theatres.

into the mainstream of South African political life, characterized as it is by apathy and subservience to a corrupt and corruptible political elite while economic emancipation of the masses, for the most part, remains as distant today as it was under apartheid. Kente's precautionary vision of post-apartheid South Africa has become a political reality. History, sadly, has proved him right.

Post-apartheid South Africa, wracked as it is today by corruption, criminality and violent xenophobia, has failed to maintain the traditional values of African humanism that Kente espoused. Politicians have failed to reconcile the nation by uniting everybody around a common system of meaning.

The grim reality of life in South Africa today is that it lacks the capacity to connect people with one another and with society through a common set of worthwhile values and beliefs. The values that remain have become dangerously warped and the dignity of fellow human beings is not respected. Many of the ideals that people had fought and died for in the struggle for liberation have been betrayed.

The once prevalent idea that as partici-

pants in a collective struggle for freedom, people have a relationship with something bigger than themselves has been replaced by political disengagement and withdrawal into aggressive self-interest.

Three decades ago Kente had warned against all this, earning him the wrath of his "revolutionary" detractors and the scorn of not a few mainstream arts critics. A nuanced review of his work, however, did manage to see the light of day from a rather surprising direction, when the drama critic of the Johannesburg *Financial Mail* wrote in February 1980: "To what extent can any contemporary black South African play, even a musical, be non-political? It may well be argued that a studiedly non-political stance condones by default the racist essence of South African society."

On the other hand, it is certainly true that "political theatre", which limits itself to polemics and bald statements of fact, however sickening the facts may be, is rarely good theatre. Is a straight portrayal of township life, with its fractured families and constant hardship not in itself a political statement?"

Rather than political mobilization as such, Kente saw it as his personal artistic responsibility to give some measure of joy and relief to the impoverished and entertainment starved ghetto communities in the darkest years of apartheid.

The signature of a Kente production was the intuitive rapport between audiences and actors. A Kente audience threw itself wholeheartedly into their enjoyment of the occasion through ribald commentary, and cheering or booing, reminiscent of a Shakespearean mob in the pit in the world of the Elizabethan dramatists. Combine that with the influences of modern social realism that inspired much of Kente's work, and you had a blend entertainment in which the purposes were fused into something unique that was neither "commercial" nor "reactionary", as his detractors were prone to describe it.

Protest theatre

Kente made no secret of his disdain for practitioners of protest theatre, whom he was inclined to see as mere opportunists out to make money from the plight of black people, with no regard for artistic quality.

He could have made millions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, like some of his theatre colleagues, if he had exploited more fully the musical side of this talent and accepted invitations to take his anti-apartheid plays overseas, as his protégé Mbongeni Ngema did with the socio-pop "protest" musical show *Sarafina!*

The latter became a Broadway hit and was also adapted for a successful Hollywood style movie. But Kente refused to earn what he called "blood money" on the back of the supposed struggle against apartheid.

Kente's theatre captured its audience through sheer force of entertainment, not through the political sloganeering and heated rhetoric that characterized so-called protest theatre aimed at mainly white liberal audiences in the comfort of their bourgeois

surroundings.

The signature of Kente's theatre was in its music and choreography, and in the magic that can be created by people working collaboratively and in unison. In Kente's words, his work mirrored "the culture of our people. People must walk out of the theatre proud. Proud of what they see as truly theirs. Their stories. Their songs. Their dances. Their lives. Their mannerisms and their vitality."

From his precarious position between the apartheid censors on the one hand, and the savage criticism from the hard-core black political activists on the other, he managed to create his vibrant theater in the face of almost insurmountable odds. Without his pioneering vision, thousands of black South Africans would have been deprived of the magic of theatre and hundreds of actors and musicians would not have been trained or received public exposure.

After the firebombing of his home in 1989, the next blow for Kente came when he attempted to launch a film production company. The apartheid censors were quick to react by closing down the enterprise. Kente lost everything he had invested financially in the venture, and ended up owing the banks even more. He never did recover from the experience, but even in penury his voice was irrepressible.

The disclosure by Kente before he died in 2004 that he was HIV-positive marked a turning point for Aids awareness campaigning in South Africa. In much the same way that disclosures in the 1980s by actor Rock Hudson and, in the 1990s, by basketball star Magic Johnson broke down the HIV stigma in the United States, Kente's openness helped bring home to South Africans the reality that Aids could strike anyone. **CT**

Kente made no secret of his disdain for practitioners of protest theatre, whom he was inclined to see as mere opportunists out to make money from the plight of black people, with no regard for artistic quality

Stan Winer is a South African-based writer, researcher and journalist specializing in media monitoring and international military-political affairs. His website is www.truth-hertz.net

Kin hell

The history of family life has been wildly misrepresented by conservatives, writes **George Monbiot**

The unbiblical and ahistorical nature of the modern Christian cult of the nuclear family is a marvel rare to behold

Throughout history and in virtually all human societies marriage has always been the union of a man and a woman.” So says the Coalition for Marriage, whose petition against same-sex unions in the UK has so far attracted 500,000 signatures(1). It’s a familiar claim, and it is wrong. Dozens of societies, across many centuries, have recognised same-sex marriage(2,3,4). In a few cases, before the 14th Century, it was even celebrated in church.

This is an example of a widespread phenomenon: myth-making by cultural conservatives about past relationships. Scarcely challenged, family values campaigners have been able to construct a history that is almost entirely false.

The unbiblical and ahistorical nature of the modern Christian cult of the nuclear family is a marvel rare to behold. Those who promote it are followers of a man born out of wedlock and allegedly sired by someone other than his mother’s partner. Jesus insisted that “if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters … he cannot be my disciple”(5). He issued no such injunction against homosexuality: the threat he perceived was heterosexual and familial love, which competed with the love of God.

This theme was aggressively pursued by the church for some 1500 years. In his classic book *A World of Their Own Making*, Profes-

sor John Gillis points out that until the Reformation the state of holiness was not matrimony but lifelong chastity(6). There were no married saints in the early Mediaeval church. Godly families in this world were established not by men and women, united in bestial matrimony, but by the holy orders, whose members were the brothers or brides of Christ. Like most monotheistic religions (which developed among nomadic peoples(7)), Christianity placed little value on the home. A Christian’s true home belonged to another realm, and until he reached it, through death, he was considered an exile from the family of God.

The Reformation preachers created a new ideal of social organisation – the godly household – but this bore little relationship to the nuclear family.

By their mid-teens, often much earlier, Gillis tells us, “virtually all young people lived and worked in another dwelling for shorter or longer periods”. Across much of Europe, the majority belonged – as servants, apprentices and labourers – to houses other than those of their biological parents. The poor, by and large, did not form households; they joined them.

The father of the house, who described and treated his charges as his children, typically was unrelated to most of them. Family, prior to the nineteenth century, meant everyone who lived in the house. What the Reformation sanctified was the proto-industrial labour force, working

and sleeping under one roof(8).

The belief that sex outside marriage was rare in previous centuries is also unfounded. The majority, too poor to marry formally, Gillis writes, “could love as they liked as long as they were discreet about it”. Prior to the 19th Century, those who intended to marry began to sleep together as soon as they had made their spousals (declared their intentions). This practice was sanctioned on the grounds that it allowed couples to discover whether or not they were compatible: if they were not, they could break it off. Premarital pregnancy was common and often uncontroversial, as long as provision was made for the children(9).

The nuclear family, as idealised today, was an invention of the Victorians, but it bore little relationship to the family life we are told to emulate. Its development was driven by economic rather than spiritual needs, as the industrial revolution made manufacturing in the household inviable. Much as the Victorians might have extolled their families, “it was simply assumed that men would have their extramarital affairs and women would also find intimacy, even passion, outside marriage” (often with other women). Gillis links the 20th Century attempt to find intimacy and passion only within marriage – and the impossible expectations this raises – to the rise in the rate of divorce.

Children’s lives were characteristically wretched: farmed out to wet nurses, sometimes put to work in factories and mines, beaten, neglected, often abandoned as infants. In his book *A History of Childhood*, Colin Heywood reports that “the scale of abandonment in certain towns was simply staggering”: reaching one third or a half of all the children born in some European cities(10). Street gangs of feral youths caused as much moral panic in late 19th Century England as they do today.

Conservatives often hark back to the golden age of the 1950s. But in the 1950s, John Gillis shows, people of the same persuasion believed they had suffered a great moral decline since the early 20th Century. In the early 20th

Century, people fetishised the family lives of the Victorians. The Victorians invented this nostalgia, looking back with longing to imagined family lives before the Industrial Revolution.

In the *Telegraph*, Cristina Odone maintained that “anyone who wants to improve lives in this country knows that the traditional family is key.”(11) But the tradition she invokes is imaginary. Far from this being, as cultural conservatives assert, a period of unique moral depravity, family life and the raising of children is, for most people, now surely better in the West than at any time in the past 1,000 years.

The conservatives’ supposedly moral concerns turn out to be nothing but an example of the age-old custom of first idealising and then sanctifying one’s own culture. The past they invoke is fabricated from their own anxieties and obsessions. It has nothing to offer us.

CT

Notes

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The conservatives’ supposedly moral concerns turn out to be nothing but an example of the age-old custom of first idealising and then sanctifying one’s own culture

George Monbiot’s latest book is “*Bring On The Apocalypse*”. This piece first appeared in London’s *Guardian* newspaper.

Son of Frackenstein

Michael I. Niman on our scary solutions to the oil crisis

Rising prices mean that more expensive extraction technologies, not feasible in the days of \$40 barrels of oil, are now profitable

In a few short years the term “fracking” went from obscurity, mostly mistaken for an obscenity, to a household word, now often associated with flammable tap water. The technology is not new, but the market conditions that make such reckless forays deep into the earth’s crust profitable, are new. Welcome to the post peak oil energy economy. What’s online to follow fracking is even scarier.

The problem is we’re addicted to oil, and like most addicts, we can’t take that first step and admit our addiction. For over a century, we mostly glided, enjoying the high that cheap oil gave our economy and consumptive lifestyles, while not facing many consequences – at least none that we could yet recognize. But, like the meth-head whose body was rotting from the inside out, our addiction was poisoning our atmosphere, our oceans and in places, our land and fresh water. Now we’re seeing the results of that five generation-long binge. We’re also coming into a period that energy economists call “peak oil.”

As more and more people compete for the last reserves of cheap easy to get sweet crude oil, energy prices are rising. Rising prices mean that more expensive extraction technologies, not feasible in the days of \$40 barrels of oil, are now profitable. With natural gas easily able to replace oil in most applications, with minimal adaptation (it can

be used for heating, electric generation and even transportation), we’re seeing a new rush to tap this “clean energy” as well. But like oil, most of the easy to get natural gas is also already tapped out. Higher energy prices, however, allow aggressive technologies into this market. The result is fracking. Energy-wise, it represents an addict’s self-destructive drive to score – in this case, to risk even our drinking water in the quest to maintain our hydrocarbon dependent economy and lifestyles

Fracking could be the beginning of the end – the triumph of pathological greed over reason. But it’s also made some folks very rich, relatively quickly. The most famous of these shadowy fracking magnates, an avid hockey fan from Pennsylvania, recently put himself in the limelight by buying himself his favorite team – the Buffalo Sabres. He did this around the same time that, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, he sold his company to Royal Dutch Shell, “pocketing a \$3 billion check.” He also paved the way for fracking to continue in Pennsylvania by buying himself a governor – then he moved to Florida (In 2010, he was the largest contributor to the successful gubernatorial campaign of the pro-fracking Republican, Tom Corbett). It’s a feedback loop. Environmentally reckless greed enriches frackers, whose wealth clears the political path for more fracking. The 2010 Citizens United de-

cision by the US Supreme Court cleared the way for energy magnates and even energy corporations to buy politicians on the auction block.

As China and India develop as oil hungry consumer cultures, and as hydrocarbon addiction grows amid a growing global population, energy prices will continue to rise, opening the door of economic opportunity to a plethora of fracking-like energy extraction technologies. These are wildly irresponsible, terribly dangerous processes that only an addiction-maddened mind would contemplate, and only a greed-addled sociopath would execute. Think of this as taking fracking to the next level so that we can continue to speed along on our highway to hell – peak oil, and the earth, be damned.

The next frack-like rush is for “Light Tight Oil” (LTO), also known as “Tight Light Oil” and “Tight Shale Oil.” The extraction technology and the environmental problems it causes, are much the same as those we see with natural gas fracking. It is produced by the same hydraulic fracturing method employing horizontal bores at the ends of deep vertical wells that inject a plethora of toxic fluids and sand into deep shale formations, breaking up that shale and releasing embedded oil. Today’s high oil prices make this technology immediately profitable. In the US, the largest current threat is to Eastern Montana, Western North Dakota, and aquifers in South-East Texas. As with natural gas fracking, the process, by design, also produces billions of gallons of toxic waste water. The race to tap LTO has made the US the number one oil driller in the world, by some estimates, drilling more wells this year than the rest of the planet combined. As global oil prices rise, expect the drilling to move east into the Utica shale formations, starting in Ohio.

This technology is too new for its extraction industry to agree on a name for itself, so I’ll go with the easy to use, “Pre-Salt Oil,” or PSO. Costing slightly more than Light Tight, PSO is only now just enter-

ing the market, buoyed by the promise of continually rising oil prices. According the organizers of “Pre-Salt Tech 2012,” an upcoming industry conference in Brazil, PSO is currently “the most technically challenging ultra-deepwater oil recovery” process. It involves drilling in water that is over 8,000 feet deep, through another 5,000 or so feet of salt deposits at the bottom of the ocean, to finally hit oil. The only reserves currently tapped are off the coast of Brazil. Plugging a well blowout under these conditions would make dealing with the Deepwater Horizon disaster look like child’s play. According to Rio de Janeiro’s The Rio Times, the first PSO leak occurred in January of this year. Luck held out this time, preventing the pipe rupture from evolving into a full scale blowout. With perhaps 100 billion barrels of PSO off the coast of Brazil, expect rapid expansion of this gamble.

Oil sands and greenhouse gases

Add ten bucks a barrel to the cost of PSO and you can extract oil from a sandy mix reachable through massive surface-destroying open mines and sand-pumping wells. Currently exploitable Oil sand reserves are primarily in Alberta, Canada. Global Warming scientists and activists argue that extracting this brown gooey stuff is an end-game scenario for the climate, as the energy intensive extraction and refining processes adds up to 15 percent more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than we get from exploiting traditional oil reserves. The actual oil that is harvested is bitumen, which is risky to transport since when it spills into water, it sinks rather than floats, making clean-up and decontamination of water resources difficult or impossible. Oil-industry funded members of the US Congress are currently lobbying aggressively to fast-track construction of a pipeline across the US to bring this oil from Canada to ports in Texas, and onto the global market. Oil-connected media conglomerates are backing this play with oil

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PR-tainted “news” reports downplaying the risks while promising decades more of care-free motoring, if only we drink the brown Kool-Aid.

As both oil prices and global temperatures continue to rise over the next decade, expect to see a push for drilling in newly thawed areas of the Arctic Ocean. This is the ultimate climate feedback loop, with human greed and addiction proving as dependable as thawing bogs releasing methane. In this insanity, melting polar ice, while flooding coastal population centers, changing the salinity of the seas, and skewing climate patterns, also creates opportunities for end time oil plays. Yeah, try capping or cleaning up after a spill in this inaccessible inhospitable frigid wilderness. This is a move that only an addict would make – like smoking crack from a vile you find sticking out of a puddle of vomit. This threat circles the North Pole

Not to be confused with LTO, this “oil” is solid, and it’s embedded in shale, which is technically a rock. Think mining for gold. Only in this case, the riches embedded in rock come in the form of kerogen, which is converted to synthetic oil after the rock is mined and brought to a processing plant where it is cooked to almost 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

The extraction process is extraordinarily destructive and dirty, like coal mining on steroids, producing unfathomable quantities of toxic tailings while often destroying vast tracks of forest and pasture lands where it is mined. Proposed Shale Oil operations in northern Michigan pose a direct threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem. The processing, essentially melting rock, requires a remarkable amount of the fuel being harvested, making this one of the most greenhouse gas producing energy schemes ever devised. Again, this is an end-game scenario. An addict’s last hit before overdosing.

There are vested energy interests out there that would like all of this oily dooms-day talk to lead us to the dreamy la la land

of a “clean green carbon-free” nuclear future. But again, working off of the addiction metaphor, let’s not fall for more of the same insanity. There’s no use trading crystal meth for heroin – but that’s essentially the nuclear argument. The Nissan Leaf and plug-in Prius are now hitting the market all enshrined in Greenieness. The fantasy is that we can drive our cars and do all sorts of previously oily things with clean electricity. Of course, our clean electricity is only as clean as our toilets, which magically take our wastes to the enchanted land of “away.” Waste has to go somewhere. And energy has to come from somewhere. And that nice green electric car is more often than not powered by a dirty coal-fired electric plant. So why not a nice new nuclear plant?

Our risks, their profits

Lost in this story is the reality that of all of the dirty energy technologies that we are addicted to, nuclear power, whose wastes are easily spread in the atmosphere and are persistently toxic for millions of years, is the dirtiest. The very existence of this industry represents a reverse socialism, whereby only profit is privatized, with governments and publics assuming almost all of the risk. That’s because the risk is unfathomable, and hence, uninsurable.

Let’s look at the Fukushima disaster, one year later. Most folks think this is over, last year’s news, cleaned up, the scientists took care of it, nuclear power ain’t that dangerous after all. But, while we amuse ourselves discussing the season opener of *Mad Men*, the meltdown is continuing in all three General Electric-built Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors, apparently unabated, as we don’t seem to have the technology to contain it – only the technology to temporarily distract ourselves from it while we license the construction of new Fukushimas and relicense aging old plants such as Vermont’s 40-year-old Yankee reactor.

Public relations industry texts often

outline the importance of making bad stories go away, citing the tactic of convincing journalists “that bad news is old news and has already been covered.” The hope is that journalists, according to the text I just cited, “lose interest.” That certainly has been the case here.

Conditions, however, have recently got so bad at the plant, that the environment inside is too hot even for robots to operate in. With the growing possibility of a comprehensive containment breach at the Fukushima plant threatening to breathe new life, or more accurately, death, into this “old” story,” CBS News reported recently that damage to the #2 reactor is so severe that “the plant operator will have to develop special equipment and technology to tolerate the harsh environment and decommission the plant, a process expected to last decades.”

Get it? We don’t have the knowhow to deal with this, a year after the catastrophe began, yet we are relicensing identical plants, and building new plants. And, according to CBS, the other two Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors “could be in even worse shape,” but no one has been able to find out as our current technology limits our ability to see into a melting nuclear core.

Junichi Matsumoto, spokesman for Tokyo Electric Power Co., owner of the Fukushima plant, told CBS that in order to properly see into the reactor cores and locate and remove radioactive material, “We have to develop equipment that can tolerate high radiation.” Meanwhile, according to University of California Berkeley Department of Nuclear Engineering, radioactive Cesium levels in California’s milk has continued to rise since the disaster, and now exceed the EPA limit. Meanwhile in Japan, the government keeps raising the supposed “safe” level for radiation exposure, as the true level of radiation contamination comes to light. This story continues to unfold, as the nuclear industry continues to sell us dreams.

So yeah, fracking is bad. Very bad. But the

problem isn’t just fracking. Yes, we’ve got to fight against hydraulic fracturing because it threatens our most valuable resource – water. And, in the best case scenario, when we win, we need to understand that we won just one skirmish. The real battle, for sane sustainable safe energy policies, is just beginning, and it will never ever end. We can’t allow sociopaths to take the future of the planet and bet it on a roulette table. There are sustainable pathways. They are blocked, however, by vested interests that one way or another will have to get out of the way.

Environment pays the price

Each of the individual threats that I delineate above represents an industry – billions of dollars of investment and potentially trillions of dollars of profit. This profit, however, will come at an exponentially higher cost to the commons, with the ensuing environmental destruction occurring at a level the earth has not seen since before the advent of the age of human existence. Each of these industries has an extremely well-financed public relations machine, specifically tasked to spin lies into truths – to make the unpalatable appear inevitable. We need to speak truth to this power. We need to do it with great volume, and we must be prepared never to let up, as the stakes are too high.

There is hope, however. More than twice as many Americans now work green jobs in the solar and wind industries, as in the coal industry. But there are also great threats – those delineated above, and many more, including nightmares that haven’t yet been dreamed. So let’s be inspired by our hope and gain the strength to detox from our hydrocarbon addiction

CT

Dr. Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at Buffalo State College. His previous columns are archived at www.mediastudy.com

We don’t have the knowhow to deal with the Fukushima disaster, a year after the catastrophe began, yet we are relicensing identical plants, and building new plant

You are all suspects now

So, what are you going to do about it?, asks **John Pilger**

A state of permanent war has been launched by the United States and a police state is consuming Western democracy

You are all potential terrorists. It matters not that you live in Britain, the United States, Australia or the Middle East. Citizenship is effectively abolished. Turn on your computer and the US Department of Homeland Security's National Operations Center may monitor whether you are typing not merely "al-Qaeda," but "exercise," "drill," "wave," "initiative" and "organization": all proscribed words. The British government's announcement that it intends to spy on every email and phone call is old hat. The satellite vacuum cleaner known as Echelon has been doing this for years. What has changed is that a state of permanent war has been launched by the United States and a police state is consuming Western democracy.

What are you going to do about it?

In Britain, on instructions from the CIA, secret courts are to deal with "terror suspects." Habeas Corpus is dying. The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that five men, including three British citizens, can be extradited to the US even though only one has been charged with a crime. All have been imprisoned for years under the 2003 US/UK Extradition Treaty which was signed one month after the criminal invasion of Iraq. The European Court had condemned the treaty as likely to lead to "cruel and unusual punishment." One of the men,

Babar Ahmad, was awarded £63,000 compensation for 73 recorded injuries he sustained in the custody of the Metropolitan Police. Sexual abuse, the signature of fascism, was high on the list.

Another man is a schizophrenic, who has suffered a complete mental collapse and is in Broadmoor secure hospital; another is a suicide risk. To the Land of the Free they go – along with young Richard O'Dwyer, who faces ten years in shackles and an orange jump suit because he allegedly infringed US copyright on the Internet.

As the law is politicized and Americanized, these travesties are not untypical. In upholding the conviction of a London university student, Mohammed Gul, for disseminating "terrorism" on the Internet, appeal court judges in London ruled that "acts ... against the armed forces of a state anywhere in the world which sought to influence a government and were made for political purposes" were now crimes. Call to the dock Thomas Paine, Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela.

What are you going to do about it?

the right to assassinate

The prognosis is clear now: the malignancy that Norman Mailer called "pre fascist" has metastasized. The US Attorney General, Eric Holder, defends the "right" of his govern-

ment to assassinate American citizens. Israel, the protégé, is allowed to aim its nukes at nukeless Iran. In this looking glass world, the lying is panoramic.

The massacre of 17 Afghan civilians on March 11, including at least nine children and four women, is attributed to a “rogue” American soldier. The “authenticity” of this was vouched by President Obama himself, who had “seen a video” and regarded it as “conclusive proof.” An independent Afghan parliamentary investigation produced eyewitnesses who give detailed evidence of as many as 20 soldiers, aided by a helicopter, ravaging their villages, killing and raping: a standard, if marginally more murderous, US Special Forces “night raid.”

Take away the videogame technology of killing – America’s contribution to modernity – and the behavior is traditional. Immersed in comic-book righteousness, poorly or brutally trained, frequently racist, obese and led by a corrupt officer class, American forces transfer the homicide of home to far-away places whose impoverished struggles they cannot comprehend. A nation founded on the genocide of the native population never quite kicks the habit. Vietnam was “Indian country” and its “slits” and “gooks” were to be “blown away.”

The blowing away of hundreds of mostly women and children in the Vietnamese village of My Lai in 1968 was also a “rogue” incident and, profanely, an “American tragedy” (the cover headline of *Newsweek*). Only one of 26 men prosecuted was convicted and he was let go by President Richard Nixon. My Lai is in Quang Ngai Province where, as I learned as a reporter, an estimated 50,000 people were killed by American troops, mostly in what they called “free fire zones.” This was the model of modern warfare: industrial murder.

Permanent war

Like Iraq and Libya, Afghanistan is a theme park for the beneficiaries of America’s new

permanent war: NATO, the armaments and high-tech companies, the media and a “security” industry whose lucrative contamination is a contagion on everyday life. The conquest or “pacification” of territory is unimportant. What matters is the pacification of you, the cultivation of your indifference.

What are you going to do about it?

The descent into totalitarianism has landmarks. Any day now, the Supreme Court in London will decide whether WikiLeaks’ editor, Julian Assange, is to be extradited to Sweden. Should this final appeal fail, the facilitator of truth-telling on an epic scale, who is charged with no crime, faces solitary confinement and interrogation on ludicrous sex allegations.

Thanks to a secret deal between the US and Sweden, he can be “rendered” to the American gulag at any time. In his own country, Australia, Prime Minister Julia Gillard has conspired with those in Washington she calls her “true mates” to ensure her innocent fellow citizen is fitted for his orange jump suit just in case he should make it home.

In February, her government wrote a “WikiLeaks Amendment” to the extradition treaty between Australia and the US that makes it easier for her “mates” to get their hands on him. She has even given them the power of approval over Freedom of Information searches – so that the world outside can be lied to, as is customary.

What are you going to do about it? **CT**

John Pilger, Australian-born, London-based journalist, film-maker and author. For his foreign and war reporting, ranging from Vietnam and Cambodia to the Middle East, he has twice won Britain’s highest award for journalism. For his documentary films, he won a British Academy Award and an American Emmy. In 2009, he was awarded Australia’s human rights prize, the Sydney Peace Prize. His latest film is “The War on Democracy.”

A nation founded on the genocide of the native population never quite kicks the habit

Arrested development

John W. Whitehead on the criminalisation of America's children

In the past minor behavioral infractions at school such as shooting spitwads may have warranted a trip to the principal's office, detention or a phone call to one's parents, today they are elevated to the level of criminal behavior

[P]ublic school reform is now justified in the dehumanizing language of national security, which increasingly legitimates the transformation of schools into adjuncts of the surveillance and police state... students are increasingly subjected to disciplinary apparatuses which limit their capacity for critical thinking, mold them into consumers, test them into submission, strip them of any sense of social responsibility and convince large numbers of poor minority students that they are better off under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system than by being valued members of the public schools."

– Professor Henry Giroux

For those hoping to better understand how and why we arrived at this dismal point in our nation's history, where individual freedoms, privacy and human dignity have been sacrificed to the gods of security, expediency and corporocracy, look no farther than America's public schools.

Once looked to as the starting place for imparting principles of freedom and democracy to future generations, America's classrooms are becoming little more than breeding grounds for compliant citizens of the police state. In fact, as director Cevin Soling documents in his insightful, award-winning documentary *The War on Kids*, which recently aired on the Documentary

Channel, the moment young people walk into school, they increasingly find themselves under constant surveillance: they are photographed, fingerprinted, scanned, x-rayed, sniffed and snooped on. Between metal detectors at the entrances, drug-sniffing dogs in the hallways and surveillance cameras in the classrooms and elsewhere, many of America's schools look more like prisons than learning facilities.

Add to this the epidemic of arresting schoolchildren and treating them as if they are dangerous criminals, and you have the makings of a perfect citizenry for the Orwellian society – one that can be easily cowed, controlled, and directed. Indeed, what once was looked upon as classically childish behavior such as getting into food fights, playing tag, doodling, hugging, kicking and throwing temper tantrums is now being criminalized.

Whereas in the past minor behavioral infractions at school such as shooting spitwads may have warranted a trip to the principal's office, in-school detention or a phone call to one's parents, today they are elevated to the level of criminal behavior with all that implies. Consequently, young people are now being forcibly removed by police officers from the classroom, arrested, handcuffed, transported in the back of police squad cars, and placed in police holding cells until their frantic parents can get

them out. For those unlucky enough to be targeted for such punishment, the experience will stay with them long after they are allowed back at school. In fact, it will stay with them for the rest of their lives in the form of a criminal record.

For example, in November 2011, a 14-year-old student in Brevard County, Florida, was suspended for hugging a female friend, an act which even the principal acknowledged as innocent.

A 9-year-old in Charlotte, North Carolina, was suspended for sexual harassment after a substitute teacher overheard the child tell another student that the teacher was "cute."

A 6-year-old in Georgia was arrested, handcuffed and suspended for the remainder of the school year after throwing a temper tantrum in class. A 6-year-old boy in San Francisco was accused of sexual assault following a game of tag on the playground.

A 6-year-old in Indiana was arrested, handcuffed and charged with battery after kicking a school principal.

Twelve-year-old Alexa Gonzalez was arrested and handcuffed for doodling on a desk. Another student was expelled for speaking on a cell phone with his mother, to whom he hadn't spoken in a month because she was in Iraq on a military deployment.

Four high school students in Detroit were arrested and handcuffed for participating in a food fight and charged with a misdemeanor with the potential for a 90-day jail sentence and a \$500 fine. A high school student in Indiana was expelled after sending a profanity-laced tweet through his Twitter account after school hours. The school had been conducting their own surveillance by tracking the tweeting habits of all students.

These are not isolated incidents. In 2010, some 300,000 Texas schoolchildren received misdemeanor tickets from police officials. One 12-year-old Texas girl had the police called on her after she sprayed perfume on herself during class. In Albuquerque, New

Mexico, over 90,000 kids were entered into the criminal justice system during the 2009-2010 school year, and over 500 of those were arrested at school.

It is hard to believe that such things – children being handcuffed and carted off to jail for minor incidents – could take place in a so-called "free" country. However, since the introduction of police, high-tech surveillance systems and zero tolerance policies into the schools, this is the reality with which nearly 50 million students in America's elementary and secondary public schools must contend.

After Columbine

Many of these "say no to drugs/say no to violence"-type policies gained favor after the Columbine school shootings in 1999 and have continued to be adopted by school districts across the country, even in the wake of research indicating that zero tolerance neither makes schools safer nor discourages violence. "Ironically, the [Columbine] tragedy occurred as rates of school violence in general and shootings in particular were declining," writes author Annette Fuentes in *Lockdown High*.

Zero tolerance policies, the driving force behind the criminalization of schoolchildren, punish all offenses severely – no matter how minor.

Disproportionately levied against minority students and students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, these one-size-fits-all disciplinary procedures mandate suspension or expulsion for students who violate the rules, regardless of the student's intent or the nature of the violation.. School systems began adopting these tough codes after Congress passed the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act, which required a one-year expulsion for any child bringing a firearm or bomb to school.

Zero tolerance rules in many states also cover fighting, drug or alcohol use and gang activity, as well as relatively minor offenses

A 6-year-old in Georgia was arrested, handcuffed and suspended for the remainder of the school year after throwing a temper tantrum in class

If Americans have come to view freedom as expedient and expendable, it is only because that's what they've been taught in the schools, by government leaders and by the corporations who run the show

such as possessing over-the-counter medications and disrespect of authority. Nearly all American public schools have zero tolerance policies for firearms or other "weapons," and most have such policies for drugs and alcohol. In the wake of the Columbine school shootings, legislators and school boards further tightened their zero tolerance policies, creating what some critics call a national intolerance for childish behavior.

As a result, these policies are now interpreted so broadly as to crack down on spit wads, Tweetie Bird key chains and Certs breath mints – all of which constitute contraband of one kind or another. In some jurisdictions, carrying cough drops, wearing black lipstick or dying your hair blue are expellable offenses.

Unfortunately, while expulsion and suspension used to be the worst punishment to be rendered against a child who had run afoul of the system, school officials upped the ante by bringing the police into the picture.

As Judith Browne, co-director of the Advancement Project, notes, "Media hysteria really created this groundswell of support for zero tolerance and folks being scared that it could happen at their school. Now, we have police officers in every school. He's not there to be law enforcement. He's there to lock up kids."

To return to what I was saying about schools being breeding grounds for compliant citizens, if Americans have come to view freedom as expedient and expendable, it is only because that's what they've been taught in the schools, by government leaders and by the corporations who run the show.

More and more Americans are finding themselves institutionalized from cradle to grave, from government-run daycares and public schools to nursing homes. In be-

tween, they are fed a constant, mind-numbing diet of pablum consisting of entertainment news, mediocre leadership, and technological gadgetry, which keeps them sated and distracted and unwilling to challenge the status quo.

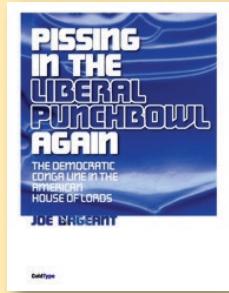
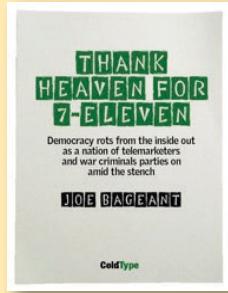
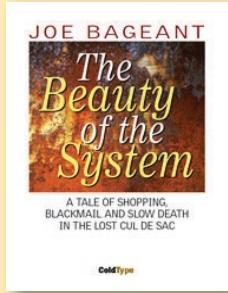
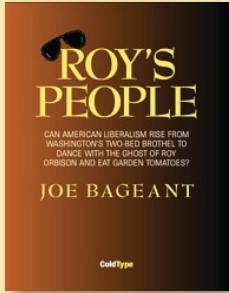
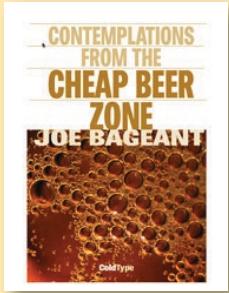
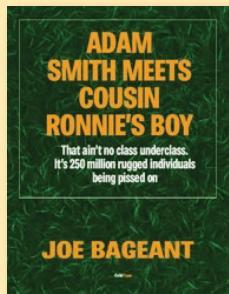
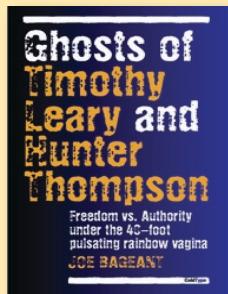
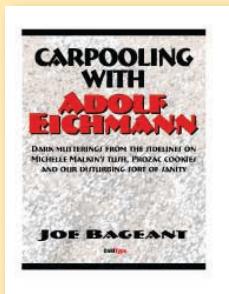
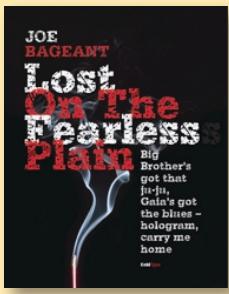
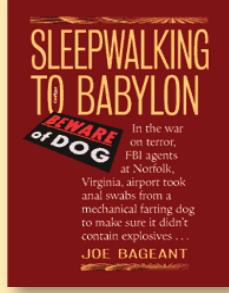
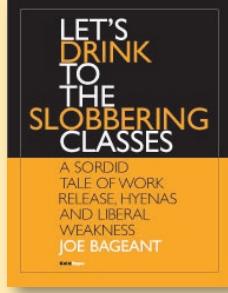
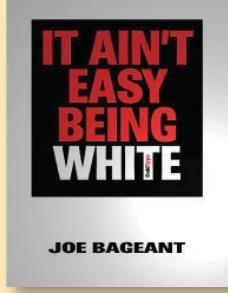
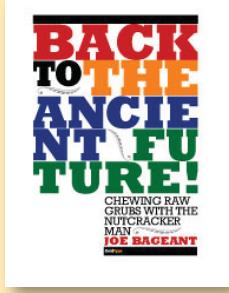
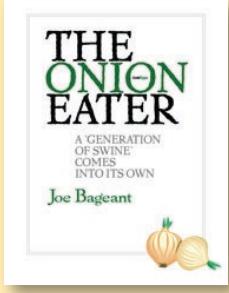
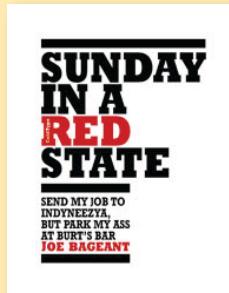
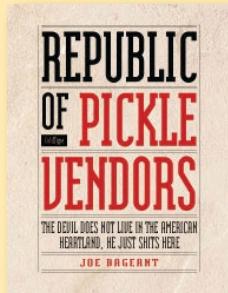
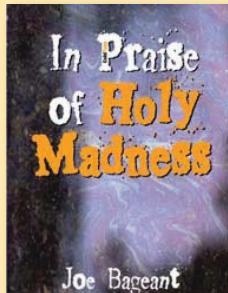
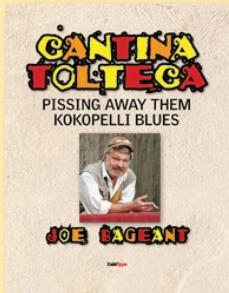
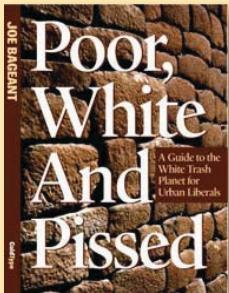
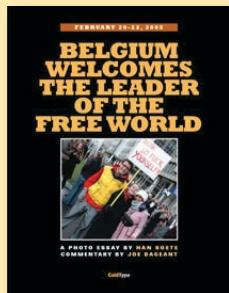
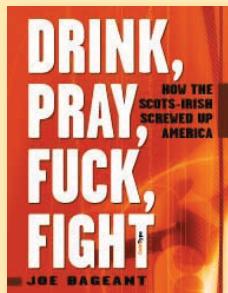
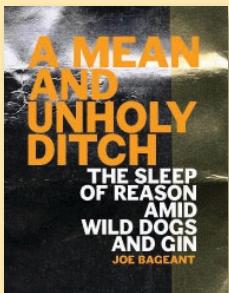
All the while, in the name of the greater good and in exchange for the phantom promise of security, the government strips away our rights one by one – monitoring our conversations, chilling our expression, searching our bodies and our possessions, doing away with our due process rights, reversing the burden of proof and rendering us suspects in a surveillance state, and on and on.

Whether or not the powers-that-be, by their actions, are consciously attempting to create a compliant citizenry, the result is the same nevertheless for young and old alike. As journalist Hunter S. Thompson observed in *Kingdom of Fear: Loathsome Secrets of a Star-crossed Child in the Final Days of the American Century*:

"Coming of age in a fascist police state will not be a barrel of fun for anybody, much less for people like me, who are not inclined to suffer Nazis gladly and feel only contempt for the cowardly flag-suckers who would gladly give up their outdated freedom to live for the mess of pottage they have been conned into believing will be freedom from fear. Ho ho ho. Let's not get carried away here. Freedom was yesterday in this country. Its value has been discounted. The only freedom we truly crave today is freedom from Dumbness. Nothing else matters."

CT

John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His new book "*The Freedom Wars*" (TRI Press) is available online at www.amazon.com. He can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org



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The axis of indifference

An excerpt from **Danny Schechter's** new book, *Blogathon*

The network challenge is how to appear to be covering the world without really covering it

Danny Schechter “dissects” media but he also makes independent documentaries and videos after years as a network producer. This is an essay about the difficulties of distributing content that challenges the mainstream narrative. It appears in his new book, *Blogathon* (Cosimo Books). It was originally given as a speech to a media conference and has been updated slightly

Foreign correspondents have always been revered within journalism. That’s why covering Iraq or other wars are assignments so many reporters cultivate. Many see them as a ticket up the media pecking order.

Being “under fire” promise excitement, danger and – let’s face it, on TV – precious “face time.” Going overseas is often a route to more visibility and better jobs at home on the strength of your “bravery” War reporting can be the macho oxygen of ambition.

Just as covering a turbulent world is attractive in the ranks, up in the suites of media power “foreign news” is, according to Michael Wolff, a ‘nostalgist’s beat’ set to turn off American audiences and tune them out. That’s why decision-makers shutter bureaus and redefine news of the world as news of American power in the world. (They also realize financial savings by doing so, of course.)

In an age of globalization, as global news

grows more important, it is covered less.

The network challenge is how to appear to be covering the world without really covering it. Fox created “the world in a minute;” CNN countered with “the global minute.”

For our company Globalvision, now in its 25th year, this downgrading of international reporting represents a threat to our *raison d'être* and very existence.

When two “network refugees,” Rory O’Connor (ex-PBS and CBS) and I (ex-CNN and ABC) launched our enterprise, we believed a changing world demanded more coverage beyond our borders. We saw it as a way to promote understanding, tolerance and peaceful change.

Our response to those who insist “Americans are not interested” was to demonstrate that audiences respond when programs are interesting.

We gambled our careers on the notion that world affairs could make for compelling television when produced another way – from the inside out, and the bottom up, by collaborating with colleagues in other countries. We were driven by a moral imperative to document the inspiring struggle for human rights in South Africa and an in other hotspots. We learned that telling untold stories moves audiences to care and to act.

We still believe that. And a world of journalists still knock on our door with fascinat-

ing stories we all need to know. Especially after the events of 9/11 demonstrated the consequences of ignoring grievances elsewhere on our planet. Why people hate us or love us or need us are still urgent themes.

Many polls show Americans want to know more about the world if only because, as a nation of immigrants, many have of us ties to other cultures or business entanglements overseas. Ask the producers of the popular TV newsmagazine 60 Minutes. They'll tell you that ratings do not dip when an international segment airs.

You would think that at a time like this, an experienced award-winning international media company like ours would be needed more than ever.

Think again.

Why?

We face a three-sided axis of indifference.

First, in an age of media consolidation and big media rule, there is less room for manoeuvre by small undercapitalized independents. Ventures like ours also find it harder to get our work seen because we're driven by values that question the 'bottom line is the only line' mentality of the cartels.

When the economy falters and foundations cut back, the whole indymedia sector hangs by a thread. We feel like ants in a field of elephants.

Second, despite proliferating media choices there has been a narrowing of diverse voices. Networks increasingly clone each others' conventional wisdom, and look-alike formats. When I worked at ABC, we used to joke there was a "homogenizer" in the basement. All too often, homogenized substance-free TV news programs defines us.

In our unbrave media world, critically inflected proposals do not encounter censorship, just respectful assurances that the ideas are good but they are just, sorry, "NFU—not for us." Sadly, journalism itself is branded as old-fashioned by brand-building

executives who insist on story-telling packaged in Hollywood-style narrative structure. For them, entertainment trumps information,

Third, when government and media marched in lockstep during the Iraq war, ideological diversity became conspicuous by its absence. On news program after news program, we heard and saw the same "experts," the same conservative pundits, and the same narrowing of story framing.

Suddenly an Amoeba-like "Fox effect" infected the entire broadcast spectrum. When Patriotic Correctness dominates, there is an unwelcoming environment for diverse global perspectives, alternative explanations and critical voices. When simplistic 'you're either with us or against us' formulations are in, more complex interpretations are out.

To survive you either dumb it down or get of town.

A decade ago, PBS told Globalvision that human rights is not a "sufficient organizing principle" for a TV series (unlike cooking!). We went on to produce four years of the hard-hitting series Rights & Wrongs anyway.

Recently, a PBS station that had been an ally told us that despite AIDS and SARS, a global health series is not a "sufficient organizing principle." The very same words! The world may change but institutional attitudes don't. Today we lack the resources to do it ourselves.

Blaming the People for the lack of world coverage is misplaced and easy; acknowledging responsibility demands self-examination and corrective action. (2005) **CT**

When I worked at ABC, we used to joke there was a "homogenizer" in the basement. All too often, homogenized substance-free TV news programs defines us

Danny Schechter blogs at *NewsDissector.net*. This is a selection from *Blogathon*, Schechter's new book – is fourteenth–featuring blogs and essays on key issues (Cosimo Books). He hosts *News Dissector Radio Hour* on Progressive Radio Network (PRN.fm) Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

Torture on trial

David Swanson discusses the legal and humane frameworks for opposing torture

Torture has gained dramatically greater, world-wide public acceptance during the past decade, and the United States has been the leader in promoting that greater acceptance.

Cases come in by the thousands from all over the world. A man was beaten and whipped. A woman was beaten and raped. A boy was hooded with three empty sand bags in 100-degree heat all day, starved, beaten, and kept in stress positions.

Alleged suicide victims had their hands tied behind their backs, had boot prints on their heads, or turned out to have been electrocuted. There are torture victims covered with cigarette burns, and torture victims with no visible injuries. They need the expert assistance of doctors and lawyers to heal, to win asylum, and to create any sort of accountability in courts of law.

I've participated in countless nonviolent protests of torture, including congressional lobbying, panels and seminars, online petition writing, bird-dogging of politicians and judges and professors.

I've met victims and told their stories and reviewed their books. But I had never spent a day with a crowd of lawyers and doctors who deal with the medical and court struggles arising out of torture cases, not until I attended a conference in February at American University in Washington, DC, entitled "Forensic Evidence in the Fight Against Torture."

The doctors, lawyers, and others attending and speaking at the conference were from the United States and many other

countries. It was not lost on them that they were addressing something different from a "natural" disaster.

In their public comments and private discussions I found universal agreement that torture has gained dramatically greater, world-wide public acceptance during the past decade, and that the United States has been the leader in promoting that greater acceptance.

While Juan Mendez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, pointed his finger at Hollywood movies and TV shows in which harsh interrogation techniques succeed in aiding crime solvers, several experts independently told me that by granting legal immunity to torturers, the United States has led by example.

It may be hard to recall that a mere decade ago torture was almost universally condemned here, and had been almost universally condemned in the Western world for centuries (racist exceptions for slavery excluded).

By 2004, 43 percent of US respondents to a Pew Research Center survey were saying that torture was often or sometimes justified to gain key information.

By 2009, 49 percent said so. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs found that public support for torture increased in the United States from 27 percent in 2004 to 42 percent in 2010. AP-GfK polling found US public

support for torture at 38 percent in 2005, increasing to 52 percent by 2009.

That was the society I left behind as I entered the conference rooms of AU's Washington College of Law to join an international gathering of professionals who still viewed torture as the evil it had been considered by the authors of the Eighth Amendment to the US Constitution, which included an absolute ban on "cruel and unusual punishment."

In broad historical terms, many forms of violence are being eliminated or are diminishing significantly in frequency, in the United States and abroad. But the flipside of recognizing that there is nothing "inevitable" or "natural" about cannibalism or infanticide or the burning of witches, or – for that matter – fist fights, spanking, child abuse, spousal abuse, or cruelty to animals, is that trends away from such practices can easily be reversed. We may be living through such a reversal on torture.

Some of the torture cases discussed at the conference involved US victims; most did not. Some implicated governments that receive support from the United States, such as that of Bahrain. So the United States is unable to advocate against torture from a persuasive position to governments it opposes, not only because of its own conduct but also because of the conduct of governments it supports, including the governments of Iraq and Afghanistan.

This problem was confirmed for me by various conference attendees, including US government grant recipients and some federal employees.

Our government helps fund support of torture victims, both through the Office of Refugee Resettlement and through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), both of which create grants to aid the victims of torture by any government other than the United States. The United Nations, partially funded by the United States, provides grants without that limitation. I spoke with participants at the conference

who worked at centers in the United States helping torture victims from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Fiji, and other countries. There is a National Consortium of Torture Treatment Programs that was holding its own meetings in DC around the same time.

While these groups were new to me, I had worked in the past with the Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition, an organization that seems to bridge the gap between treating victims and addressing the root problem of torture acceptance through political mobilization.

Examination of how individual cases of torture are being addressed suggests another trend of recent years. Even as torture has been gaining acceptance, a nonprofit complex of treatment centers and non-governmental organizations has been developing the tools with which to more expertly diagnose, document, and testify on torture, and to aid the victims.

While in the United States best-selling books by former president George W. Bush and former vice president Dick Cheney contain passages in which both openly admit to authorizing the waterboarding prisoners, numerous other nations have been codifying the procedures of the "Istanbul Protocol: Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment," published by the United Nations in 2004.

This conference, in fact, was the culmination of a three-year project funded by the European Union.

While both of these trends – the acceptance of torture and the development of a professional system of response to it – lead to greater public awareness of torture, they have opposite effects in terms of the amount of torture that occurs. It's not clear whether torture is on the rise or is declining in practice, but I heard at the conference many stories of systematic state torture and careful documentation thereof, and many

The United States is unable to advocate against torture from a persuasive position to governments it opposes, not only because of its own conduct but also because of the conduct of governments it supports

AMERICA'S SHAME

Bahrain has hired US police chief John Timoney, who made his name by infiltrating and brutalizing nonviolent protesters in Miami and Philadelphia, to lead the crackdown on protesters in Bahrain

stories of aid provided to victims including helping them to obtain asylum. I didn't hear any stories of top government officials being held seriously accountable for torture.

The possible exception to that rule is Hosni Mubarak, the former president of Egypt overthrown by nonviolent protest in 2011. Speaking at the conference, Mostafa Hussein of the El Nadim Center for Psychological Treatment and Rehabilitation in Egypt told the story of Khaled Mohamed Saeed, a young man who was beaten to death by Egyptian secret police in June 2010.

The police lied about the cause of death, but photos of their victim's horribly disfigured corpse went viral online, and public pressure grew. Experts from the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) produced a report. (The IRCT was a sponsor of the conference I attended.)

Eventually two low-ranking police officers were given seven-year prison sentences, an outcome widely seen as insufficient after decades of systematically torturing thousands. Saeed was seen as a martyr, and the resulting outrage was channeled into the movement that took over Tahrir Square in Cairo in January 2011 and drove Mubarak out of power. Protesters painted Saeed's portrait on the wall of the Ministry of the Interior.

But Hussein told me that the public prosecutor hasn't changed, and dictatorship hasn't been dismantled. Although activists entered the Ministry of the Interior in March 2011, he said, they brought away very few documents, destroying many more.

Omar Suleiman, the former head of Egyptian intelligence, is out of office and being sued by an Australian who says Suleiman oversaw his torture in Egypt on behalf of the United States prior to shipping him to the US detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Suleiman is also accused of having performed a key service for the United States by torturing Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi until he said

that Saddam Hussein was tied to al Qaeda, a statement al-Libi later recanted and which conflicts absurdly with the facts. Will Suleiman be brought to justice? Mostafa Hussein wasn't holding his breath. "Only the faces have changed," he said of the new Egyptian government.

After Tunisia and Egypt, the Arab Spring of 2011 emerged in the tiny Persian Gulf nation of Bahrain, a protectorate of the United States and Saudi Arabia, and the port where the US Navy keeps its Fifth Fleet. Bahrain has hired US police chief John Timoney, who made his name by infiltrating and brutalizing nonviolent protesters in Miami and Philadelphia, to lead the crackdown on protesters in Bahrain.

On the weekend of the conference on torture in DC, US friends and allies of mine were being tear-gassed, beaten, and arrested in the streets of Bahrain. Speaking at the conference was Dr. Ala'a Shehabi, a British-born Bahraini civil rights activist, economist, writer, and a founding member of the Bahrain Rehabilitation and Anti-Violence Organization (BRAVO) established in January 2012.

Shehabi said that, according to the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry established by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, 3,000 protesters have been arrested in the past year, 500 of whom are still in prison. 4,500 people have lost jobs. There has been systemic excessive force and torture, with over sixty documented deaths, according to Shehabi.

The commission's report finds that torture has been used systematically as a deliberate government policy both for compelling confessions and for retribution and punishment. The report also found a culture of impunity and recommended prosecutions.

But, said Shehabi, there hasn't been a single conviction, and torture continues, including at the National Security Agency, the basement of which the commissioners were not permitted to enter. The judicial system

in Bahrain still allows forced confessions as evidence and dismisses all allegations of torture.

A forensic doctor from Turkey, working for the IRCT, also attended the conference. She had produced expert opinions on torture cases in Bahrain that disproved claims made by the government, which routinely blames the deaths and scars of torture on responses to “resisting arrest.”

This is dangerous work in Bahrain, where doctors and lawyers who try to help are themselves targeted. Thus far, fifty doctors have been prosecuted for treating protesters. Some doctors, having lost their jobs and been tortured themselves, are helping out at the rehabilitation center. However, Bahraini doctors are not allowed to study, be licensed in, or practice forensic medicine. That’s a job for the government. Not one psychologist has been found willing and able to assist. And only a handful of lawyers are putting up a defense for those charged with crimes for nonviolent demonstrations.

The man sitting next to me during the discussion of Bahrain turned out to be Mohammed Isa Al-Tajer, a lawyer currently representing over 150 protesters in Bahrain. He was himself imprisoned for three and a half months, tortured, and kept in solitary confinement last year. When he was arrested on April 15, 2011, the government also seized his computers, documents, mobile phones, and office keys, compromising his clients’ confidentiality. He still faces charges.

At the conclusion of a discussion of all-too-similar torture practices in Mexico and Zimbabwe, someone asked about the value of offering training for police in the requirements of the Istanbul Protocol.

Exactly zero people in the room expressed a belief that such training would have much value in these countries. One person expressed the opinion that it would be of greater value to get these nations to ratify the optional protocol to the Convention Against Torture, which would allow monitoring of interrogation sites. Others re-

sponded to this with accounts of secret sites and even ad hoc torture sites, which in Zimbabwe have even included hospitals. Several people passionately declared that the only thing that would actually work to stop the torture would be to end impunity and hold individuals accountable, especially the most powerful individuals. Ala'a Shehabi said that what was needed was fundamental governmental change from dictatorship to democracy.

Of course, a government can call itself a democracy while treating torture as a legal policy option. On the Monday following the conference, the United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, in San Francisco, filed a ruling against a petitioner seeking asylum who claimed that he would likely be tortured if sent back to India.

Regardless of the merits of that ruling, it was made by Judge Jay Bybee, who had been appointed to his position by President George W. Bush after obediently signing off on memos legitimizing torture in the US Department of Justice.

The asylum process was a major topic at the conference. Doctors and lawyers from Germany, New Zealand, and the United States described their experiences providing expert reports and testimony for asylum seekers.

Roger Haines from New Zealand provided evidence that expert forensic reports detailing ingested substances, lesions found on the body, bone fissures or fractures indicating blunt force trauma, and so forth can make the difference in obtaining asylum. He also noted that an expectation has now developed that weighs against applicants lacking such reports.

One example he cited was a case from Canada decided against the applicant by the Convention Against Torture committee in 2010. This man had been arrested and tortured in 1995 in Uzbekistan, Haines said. He fled to the United Arab Emirates and then to Germany, where his request for asylum was rejected. He tried to seek asylum in Nor-

Some doctors, having lost their jobs and been tortured themselves, are helping out at the rehabilitation center

AMERICA'S SHAME

The UK has done everything in Iraq that the United States has, including hooding prisoners. But the UK judicial system allows torture cases to be brought to court

way, using a false name, and was rejected. He then tried Canada in September 2001 and was rejected “on credibility grounds.” Canada pointed out that he had no medical report from Uzbekistan.

The CAT committee also rejected his claim, pointing out that he had no medical report from 1995 in Uzbekistan or from 2001 in Canada. Haines pointed out that torturers don’t usually provide medical reports with their services and that a report from six years later might not have shown anything at all.

The truth is that many torture victims don’t have visible injuries. Mental injuries can be examined by experts, whose testimony can at least suggest the likelihood that someone has been tortured or not. Their testimony can also assist judges and officials in understanding why torture victims might have difficulty coherently retelling their entire experience.

Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur, described torture as prevalent and widespread: “Some time ago we thought abolition was around the corner.” But, he added, no one thinks that now. Instead, he said it will take much more work and imagination to eradicate it.

Mendez then proceeded to argue for an inclusive definition of the actions to be abolished. In Mendez’s view, solitary confinement and death row (for any period of time) meet the threshold of both “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment” and torture, both of which are illegal.

The United States has tens of thousands of people in solitary confinement, and still allows the death penalty. Mendez believes solitary confinement for over fifteen days should be absolutely forbidden. (Incidentally, following the conference Mendez formally accused the US government of cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment towards Bradley Manning, the US soldier who was held in solitary confinement for almost a year on suspicion of being a major source for WikiLeaks.)

Mendez argued for greater educational efforts by forensic scientists. “In daily life,” he said, “we talk about torture without the details. But it is the details that make a difference to our moral sense.”

He also proposed forensic science as an alternative to harsh interrogation in the task of solving crimes, a moral and legal but also more effective alternative. That may be a lesson that even Hollywood is learning to accept as it proliferates crime-solving dramas with forensic scientist heroes.

Mendez rejected the notion that torture can work. Of course, some confessions will be true, he said, but others won’t be, whether in the imaginary ticking time-bomb scenario or otherwise. Meanwhile, he added, societies pay a heavy price for engaging in torture, damaging innocents and their families but also the institutions that do the torturing.

Let me end on something of a positive note.

It comes from the remarks of Phil Shiner of Public Interest Lawyers in the UK. He has acted in significant recent human rights cases in the UK, including those of Al Skeini, Al-Jedda, and that of Rose Gentle, who sued Prime Minister Tony Blair for the death of her son as a soldier in Iraq. Shiner represents the family of Baha Mousa, an Iraqi man kicked and beaten to death while in British custody in 2003.

The UK, Shiner explained, has done everything in Iraq that the United States has, including hooding prisoners. But the UK judicial system allows torture cases to be brought to court.

Shiner and his colleagues argued that hooding qualifies as cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment, that it had been banned by the Ministry of Defense, and that all such policies of modern scar-free torture (hooding, stress positions, and deprivation of food, water, or sleep) had been banned by the UK in 1972. But British troops were hooding Iraqis, including Baha Mousa, with multiple sand bags in extreme heat

for many hours. In Baha Mousa's case and every other case known, Shiner said, the hooding was combined with other exacerbating factors creating medical risk. In this case, as well, the IRCT helped out with a statement pointing to numerous medical risks from hooding, including asphyxia and heat-related problems. Hooding also distances the torturer and thereby exacerbates torture, makes identification of the torturer by the victim more difficult, and spreads as a practice when photos are released, as in the case of the images of US Army torture from Abu Ghraib prison brought to public attention in 2004.

So, why was hooding standard practice in Iraq? Shiner answered his own question: The invasion was illegal. It was an invasion along with the United States. The United States does not respect international law. And records were not being kept.

Shiner and his colleagues compelled the government of the UK to hold an extensive inquiry on the case of Baha Mousa, which released a report in September 2011. On October 3, 2011, the High Court ruled on an-

other case brought by Shiner, that of Alaa' Nassif Jassim al-Bazzouni. The court ruled that hooding is always cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment. Shiner welcomed the decision, noting it means no UK forces anywhere may be associated with hooding and that any UK troop who thinks another state is hooding is required to report it.

I discussed the Baha Mousa case with a Professor Vivienne Nathanson, who was attending the conference from the British Medical Association. She pointed out that a doctor and a chaplain had witnessed hooding and beating but had done nothing, and that the report had recommended prosecution. "Sins of omission need to be prosecuted," she said, as the day's meetings wrapped up and the world went about its business.

CT

David Swanson is the author of *War Is A Lie and Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union*. This essay was first published in the May / June 2012 – <http://thehumanist.org/may-june-2012/torture-on-trial-legal-and-humane-frameworks-for-opposing-torture>

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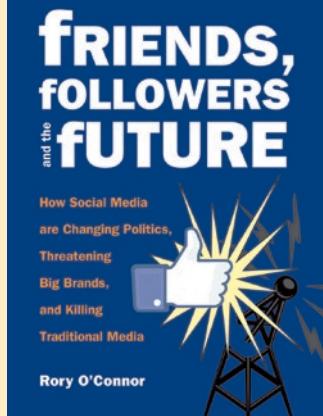
An excerpt from **Rory O'Connor's** new book,
Friends, Followers and the Future

Facebook also continues to infuriate large numbers of its users, as an unending series of poorly communicated changes to the site fuels further controversy

Social media now accounts for nearly one quarter of all the time Americans spend online – the leading category by far, compared with less than ten percent for online games or e-mail respectively. At the same time legacy media are still in steep decline, as measured by both audience reach and advertising revenue, and the sweeping technological shifts and the unprecedented rupture in the long partnership of news and advertising brands that have been roiling them for years continue unabated, with the disruption still most notable in print media such as newspapers and magazines.

Meanwhile the media brand Americans spend the most time with by far is Facebook, the Internet's most ambitious, technologically sophisticated, and fastest-moving company. Its eight hundred million users – one in every nine people on Earth – spend an average of fifteen and a half hours a month on the site. The monthly usage of all news media sites, by comparison, averages only five to twenty minutes per month, while the total digital advertising revenues of all American daily newspapers is just \$3 billion, compared to Facebook's individual share of \$2 billion.

For all its success, however, Facebook also continues to infuriate large numbers of its users, as an unending series of poor-



FRIENDS, FOLLOWERS AND THE FUTURE

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ly communicated changes to the site fuels further controversy. (The latest overhaul was announced at Facebook's fourth so-called "f8" event – its key gathering for developers, press, and the public – where Bret Taylor, Facebook's chief technology officer, proclaimed it "the biggest change we've made to our platform since we

launched it at the first f8.”) At the same time questions about the privacy implications of Facebook’s vast presence on the Web – executives were forced to defend their practice of tracking every page users visit even after they have logged out of Facebook – also dog the company.

Just five years after its public launch, Twitter continues to grow in both size and importance too, delivering 350 billion tweets and signing up more than 600,000 new users every day. For its part, YouTube is seeking new and better ways to serve its 490 million unique monthly users, who now spend a staggering total of 2.9 billion hours per month on the site. Still struggling not to be completely overwhelmed with unedited content, YouTube executives have recently partnered with a variety of outside entities to create and curate videos for one hundred new channels that will feature regularly scheduled programming on such broad themes as fashion, news and sports.

Legacy brands of all sorts continue to fragment and falter, particularly those of the news media, as the advertisers that once supported them increasingly decamp for social media in general and Facebook in particular, where the same recent changes that dismayed users are considered brand-friendly. And Google – once the leading global brand – continues to lose its buzz. A November 2011 front page story in the New York Times headlined, “Google’s Chief Works to Trim a Bloated Ship,” detailed how the company’s “midlife crisis...threatens to knock it off its perch as the coolest company in Silicon Valley.” Reporter Claire Cain Miller dismissed Google as “an aging giant ... being pushed around by government regulators and competitors like Facebook.” And as AP Technology Writer Michael Liedtke reported, even Google’s former CEO Eric Schmidt now admits, “I screwed up,” in not pressing the company to focus more on mounting a challenge to Facebook. “I

think the industry as a whole would benefit from an alternative,” Schmidt added.

On the political front, elections are breaking out all over as we head into another year of historic change. In the Middle East, the promise of the Arab Spring is being put to the test of ballots in lieu of bullets, as Facebook revolutionaries transform themselves into more traditional candidates for public office. Here in the United States, politicians from both major parties are embracing social media as never before. While Barack Obama tries to rebuild the grass-roots movement that propelled him to the White House in 2008 by employing everything from YouTube to Twitter, where he has over 10 million followers, to Facebook, where he boasts 19.3 million friends – chief among them Mark Zuckerberg, whom the president has assiduously courted – Republicans say they are better prepared than ever to compete online in the 2012 contest.

“The notion that the Internet was owned by liberals, owned by the left in the wake of the Obama victory, has been proven false,” says Republican political online strategist Patrick Ruffini, who points out that many Republicans in the House and Senate now use social media tools more than Democrats. “It is not necessarily that Democrats or young people or liberals have become less active,” notes Aaron Smith, the author of a study on the subject by the Pew Research Center for the Internet and Society. “It is more that older adults, conservative voters and Tea Party activists have come to join the party.” And Andrew Rasiej, co-founder of the influential TechPresident.com blog, says, “This will be the first election in modern history that both parties are understanding the potential of the technology to change the results of the election. Both Republicans and Democrats are ready to use online platforms and are no longer skeptical of its potential.”

Local media strategies will be key to

“The notion that the Internet was owned by liberals, owned by the left in the wake of the Obama victory, has been proven false”

The single most important new trend within the digital information revolution – the exponentially increasing amount of unvetted and unverified information now washing over us all – continues to flashflood forward at a frightening pace

both sides in America's 2012 national election. Social media will be the difference maker, since strategists have figured out how to harness the Internet for hyperlocal purposes. "With old media tools, local press, radio and TV, it was difficult for a candidate to wage a nationwide, local strategy," says one media analyst, Brooklyn Law School's Jonathan Askin. "The Internet finally makes local campaigning, with national themes and local messaging, effective for presidential politics." It may not matter, however, if we are entering a "period in politics that's sort of fact free," as former President Bill Clinton recently warned...

Meanwhile, the Occupy movement in the United States and its international counterparts all over the world continue to agitate, demonstrate, and aggregate in number and influence. They are not content simply with bypassing legacy media corporations to spread their message but have also begun developing new media tools for future use. Examples include the "I'm Getting Arrested" app, which alerts legal support and family via text messaging when a protester is getting arrested, Occupy The Hub, a website for aggregating video feeds, tweets and live chats to provide one-stop coverage of what's going on in the movement, and OccupySMS, a program that allows one person to send a text message quickly and easily to a huge mass of people. "With this sort of innovation, the Occupiers won't need major media companies to get the word out," as Benish A. Shah, vice-president of Strategic Digital Media at the Global Executive Board, told the Huffington Post. "The people following this are going to go online and find the information and find it from other sources."

Finally, the single most important new trend within the digital information revolution – the exponentially increasing amount of unvetted and unverified information now washing over us all – contin-

ues to flashflood forward at a frightening pace. What's worse, it's harder than ever to tell which waves in the torrent might carry relevant and trustworthy news and information.

A Pew report released in September 2011 showed that only one-quarter of those surveyed think news organizations get the facts right – a new low since the question was first asked in 1985. Two-thirds say stories are often inaccurate – a new high – and nearly three-quarters believe that journalists try to cover up their mistakes rather than admit them. For the first time in any such survey, as many people say that news organizations hurt democracy (42 percent) as protect democracy (42 percent). The situation is so dire that the MIT Center for Civic Media has begun to pursue the development of a "nutritional label for news," which would "semi-automate evaluating the quality of an article" and could be visualized "as easily as an FDA 'recommended daily amount' nutritional label for food."

Everyone Wants To Be a News Filter

All the while, the debate over the "Daily Me" vs. the "Daily We" still rages. As academic media researchers argue over how much they really know, our privacy continues to vanish, unwanted personalization thrives and disputes continue over how best to filter and sort through it all. What are the best means and mechanisms of dealing with the twin crises of too much information and credibility-and-trust: the old, time-tested brands? The new recommender systems and algorithms? Curators and influencers? Friends and followers? Or an adroit mix of all of the above?

"Everyone wants to be a news filter now," Mathew Ingram wrote in a post on GigaOm. "As the avalanche of information coming through social networks and real-time tools like Twitter continues to grow, the need for filters to make sense of

that tsunami of data also increases, and it seems as though everyone has a different way of trying to solve that problem.” As Ingram noted, however, “Relevance is a tricky problem to solve.” Many new apps and approaches suffer from similar problems: “Either they are filled with the same content I’ve have already seen in other places, or the links simply aren’t relevant.

“It’s good that plenty of services are trying to solve the news-filtering problem, and different users may choose different solutions,” Ingram concluded. “So far, no one seems to have come up with the one-size-fits-all solution to this modern dilemma.”

Leading communications researchers remain optimistic, however, particularly about the still-developing roles of both social media and algorithms and learning machines. The University of Michigan’s Paul Resnick is among those who remind us that we are still in an experimentation phase. “One key is to develop algorithms that give people what they really want and not the current naive version of it, i.e. what they ‘like,’” says Resnick. “Instead of just popularity, there is an opportunity to give people something that will take into account that we have preferences that are sets of items that will engage us the most.”

The machines must move away from measurements of mere popularity to

become more multidimensional, says Resnick, “to consider sets of items over individual items, and to offer us crossover, or ‘strange bedfellows’ items. We need more sophisticated models of why people want what they want – and we also need consciousness raising among developers.”

MIT’s Ethan Zuckerman agrees. “With machine learning, the problem now is it produces echo chambers, which are a comfortable filter but may lead to personalization and homophily,” he warns. “But in the future, we’ll get better systems. In addition, everyone is looking for curators now, and each has own pronounced point of view, so we’ll have to learn to ‘read the net.’”

Like Resnick, Zuckerman is ultimately hopeful that progress can and will be made in the ongoing effort to separate signal from noise in the crowded and chaotic news-and-information environment. “In diverse enough worlds, we will be able to triangulate our way to the truth,” he says. “The real question is how to rebuild institutions – gate keepers if you will – who can tell us the difference between what is credible, relevant and trustworthy and what is not.”

CT

Rory O’Connor is a writer and filmmaker. His previous book was “Shock Jocks: Hate Speech & Talk Radio”

“With machine learning, the problem now is it produces echo chambers, which are a comfortable filter but may lead to personalization and homophily”

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Broken shards of the heart

David Michael Green pens an elegy to a dying country

Our jaws dropped in the 1990s at the visage of New Gingrich as he was elevated to the highest position in the United States Congress, and pioneered the basest politics and the shattering of our government that remains our inheritance today

I could tell you that my heart was broken by what happened in Wisconsin early in June, but in truth that's not quite accurate. I grew into political awareness and maturity in the middle of the 1970s. For people my age, our entire adult lives have been one long witness to the dismantling of that which we grew up taking for granted as a foundation for any further progress that might come. We lived in the relatively egalitarian country of the New Deal and the Great Society, with its robust middle class and a measure of earnest compassion for the poor. Today, that seems like a foreign country, if not a remote planet.

Over the course of our adult lives:

We watched in shock and horror as the country turned to a Hollywood washout, who was literally a national joke candidate five years earlier, and made him president, following him down every path of joyful self-destruction and absurd deceit.

Our jaws dropped in the 1990s at the visage of New Gingrich, the most overtly petulant and destructive piece of self-loathing to ever occupy a human body, as he was elevated to the highest position in the United States Congress, and pioneered the basest politics and the shattering of our government that remains our inheritance today. As if that weren't shameful enough, at the same time Gingrich's buddy down at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue was destroying the meaning of the Democratic Party, aping the Republican sell-out to corpo-

rate thieves and the abandonment of the public interest – especially the poor, the first to be thrown under the bus.

And, despite the fact Bill Clinton deserves to rot in hell for the damage he did in exchange for his personal joyride in the White House, we were nevertheless forced to watch in horror the relentless and destructive lunacy of the president's impeachment for the high crime of lying about a blow-job.

We had to endure the travesty of Bush versus Gore, one of the most egregious trampings of democratic practice imaginable, then watch the sickening product of that judicial rape: the swaggering wars based on lies, the torture, the doubling of the national debt, the environmental depredations, the economic melt-down, and the *raison-d'être* for it all: the radical shifting of wealth from the 300 million of us to the one-tenth of one percent who own everything in sight.

Perhaps most emotionally devastating of all we've suffered the betrayal these last years of another Democratic sell-out, a supposedly liberal-if-not-socialist president actually so conservative and so sold-out that he couldn't even bear to pursue his own personal interest sufficiently to produce a successful presidency, but has rather continued and amplified the worst characteristics of the open sore that was the Bush presidency, even in the midst of crisis opportunities not seen since the 1930s.

So, no, by this time, my heart was not re-

ally broken when my former home-state, Wisconsin, voted emphatically to commit suicide this week. But only because there's so little of that heart left to break. Shards here and there were crushed and extinguished, to be sure, but I am becoming rapidly beyond caring about the country I live in, a place and a people so determined to get it wrong at every juncture imaginable. At some point, don't you just have to stop trying and let the substance-abuser finish the job on their own?

This country is dying, let's be clear. It may live yet. It may survive for decades in slow decline. It may find a way in utter crisis to throw off, before it is too late, the fat slimy boa which is squeezing every last cent of value out of it. Its political class may invent a devastating foreign crisis with massively grim consequences in order to deflect public attention from its manifest failings. Maybe it will even be some combination of all of the above.

Who knows? What we can be sure of, is that what was once a great and promising idea as much as a nation is now decrepit to the core, and rapidly rotting away, and that these wounds are entirely self-inflicted. That, for me, is the kicker. The Soviets didn't invade and take us over. We didn't succumb to some raging virus like the Black Plague. A meteor didn't blast a hole in the middle of North America.

We just killed the goose ourselves, through a toxic mix of greed, laziness and stupidity.

Imagine the conversation to be heard if nations like America were to go to the Pearly Gates when they die, seeking forgiveness, and anxiously awaiting their dispensation for the rest of eternity:

St. Peter: So, the Big Guy wants to know what the hell (get it?) you're doing here.

America: Um, well, we're dead.

Peter: Yeah, we get that. Even if we did create the Catholic Church, we're not complete idiots up here, you know. What he means is, how did a country like you, with all the tremendous advantages you were given, wind up so dead, so fast?

America: Well, uh, we made some bad choices, I guess.

Peter: Do you mean like when you traded George McGovern for Karl Rove, for example?

America: Well, I suppose. But McGovern...

Peter: Shut up, you insolent little turd. Do you mean like when you traded Franklin Roosevelt for Barack Obama or George Bush – sorry, I always get those two confused – is that what you mean?

America: Yeah, that was prolly not the smartest deal.

Peter: Or could it be when you swapped the First Amendment to get Citizens United instead?

America: Golly, you mean corporations really aren't people, after all?

Peter: It's really not looking too good for you lot, I'm afraid.

America: Listen, do you have to go to Hell for just being stupid, or is something worse like wholesale venality or mass murder required?

Peter: Dude, you're America! Isn't that question kinda moot?

America: What does moot mean? And what happened to the pearls that are supposed to be on the gates?

Peter: Koch Brothers got 'em.

America: Really?!

Peter: Jesus Christ, you're dumb. Maybe an exception could be made for you, come to think of it. After all, we don't send microbes or amoeba to Hell either, even when they're very bad.

America: Oh, thank you, Mr. Peter. You're very kind. Say, where do we sign-up for our choice of cable packages?

Though Wisconsin managed to only break the few shards of my unbroken heart still remaining, it's worth considering the details of the episode to get a sense of how truly wrecked we are as a people. Much like George W. Caligula, who campaigned as the compassionate conservative but governed as a Cheneybot monster, Scott Walker came to office without mentioning in the campaign any of the scorched earth policies he was actually hired by the Koch Brothers and their ilk to foist upon his hapless state. So the first thing he does after his inauguration is give away hundreds of mil-

.....
What was once a great and promising idea as much as a nation is now decrepit to the core, and rapidly rotting away, and that these wounds are entirely self-inflicted
.....

The real issue in Wisconsin was never the fiscal crisis, which was entirely fabricated, nor even finding a solution to it, which the already pathetic unions had readily agreed to

lions of dollars in tax breaks for the wealthy. Then, lo and behold, there appears a shortfall in the state's budget of precisely that amount – almost as if that whole math thing actually works, after all – and so he declares a crisis which can, of course, only be solved by draconian burdens being imposed upon non-one percenters.

That means that the public employee unions are called upon to bear the burden of massive givebacks of their salary and benefits. But then – this being America and the 21st century and all – the unions agree to one hundred percent of these demands. But Walker and his fellow Koch-class acolytes are not satisfied with having to take yes for an answer, because their real project is to crush the unions into political insignificance, if not to terminate them altogether. So the real issue was never the fiscal crisis, which was entirely fabricated, nor even finding a solution to it, which the already pathetic unions had readily agreed to. The real issue was to destroy the labor movement, and the political party it has (stupidly, in recent decades) supported for so long.

But when labor and some Democrats and a lot of courageous and determined ordinary Badgers decided that enough was finally enough, the question was ultimately presented to the public in the form of a recall election. Massive amounts of money (Walker outspent the other side by a ratio of about eight to one) paid for massive amounts of televised lies about how the brave governor was only fighting special interests on behalf of the people, and it worked. (Though, let's be honest here – lots of Wisconsin voters knew exactly the score, and stupidly and self-destructively decided to tear down teachers and nurses and park rangers and the like from their decent middle class living, instead of drawing a line in the sand demanding that everyone to rise up to that modest standard.)

That's the America of today, and it's a glimpse of the very near-term future. The formula is pretty simple, really. Wealthy elites who have spent the better part of a century chafing under the unbearable burdens of the New

Deal and Great Society (where they are rendered mere billionaires instead of zillionaires) have finally found a way to steal back 'their' money. Buy political parties, buy the media, buy the entire mindset of the country, buy the Supreme Court, dumb down education, especially the study of history, make college prohibitively expensive, repress dissent, create distracting enemies abroad (towelheads) and at home (fags), replace jobs with machines and cheap overseas workers, squeeze the economy so that money is scarce, and divide and conquer the 99 percent, so that those who miraculously still maintain a vestige of decent wages and benefits from an ancient civilization called 20th century America will be resented and torn-down by those already drowning.

You gotta hand it to them, it works pretty well. (Being a sociopath evidently does not correlate at all with poor planning skills. But who knew there were so many amongst us?) As a measure of the sheer success of this project, consider how there is nowhere on the horizon a politically viable alternative narrative about what ails the country and how to solve the problem. Sure, there is the odd Paul Krugman around, or Dennis Kucinich (whoops, never mind), but ask yourself this question: Can you name even a single prominent politician across the entire political landscape who is remotely telling the truth about the economic holocaust of American kleptocracy? Indeed, it is truly a measure of the stunning proportions of the overclass's victory that even a water-carrier as devoted as Barack Obama is labeled a socialist, and both he and the ideas he doesn't even remotely represent are thoroughly discredited. Even if the answers to the question of what would fix America weren't manifestly obvious (as in, just do what we used to do before the right came along and dismantled everything), this is a stunning achievement of truly Orwellian proportions: For vast numbers of Americans, real understanding of the problem and real consideration of the solution cannot even be thought of.

It will get far worse before it gets better, if it does. The Wisconsin election was widely and

correctly seen as a dry run for November, but in fact November is already as over as is May or April. The hapless Obama people may not have gotten the word, but they are as dead as the unions in Wisconsin that they didn't bother to support. And Obama will go down in near-term, right-wing renderings of history as another Jimmy Carter. Meanwhile, stupid liberals, who slavishly admired a decidedly right-wing, militarist, ultra-statist, corporate-serving Democratic president, will sit holding their heads in surprise at the damage wrought to the president himself, to his party, and to their cherished liberal principles. Um, sorry, but have y'all been snoozing through Afghanistan and Pakistan? Did you miss the whole presidential-ordered assassinations program? Have you not heard what has happened to whistleblowers? Did you forget the tax cuts and the offer to dismantle Medicare? Have you been watching Fox and not heard about the growth of military spending? Did you not know that the health care bill was co-authored by, and for the benefit of, insurance and pharmaceutical companies? Have you not heard that our ultra-progressive president has done nothing whatsoever about the planetary über-crisis of global warming, other than to open vast new oil drilling fields? Did you not see in action the joy and wonder of Obamaism in 2010, the most devastating election for a political party in half a century, and coming only two years after the meltdown of the GOP under Bush? Sorry, but this is the SOB you adored and went to the mat for?

This country's future looks grim in so many ways. You can just feel the doors and windows shutting, one by one. Are we really so far off, given the displays we've already seen, from being a corporate-owned polity, in which oceans of Citizens United sponsored propaganda limits the cognitive landscape of an entire country, sham elections and a steady stream of brain-numbing high-def television gruel satisfies most of the (obese) public enough to keep them stuck on their sofas, while a massive police state armed with domestic drone aircraft and angry cops deal swiftly with the few remaining malcontents stupid enough to

demand a return to the better country we once knew? You know, more or less a carbon copy of Putin's Russia, here in North America.

I have no interest in being a prophet of doom, but I ask you, is that really so far-fetched? If you look around you honestly today, is it not fair to say that we are pretty much already there? With the partial exception of social policy issues, do you really have any choice at the ballot box? Can anyone say that Democrats in Washington, including the sitting president and the astonishingly narcissistic whore that was Bill Clinton, represent corporate interests any less than Republicans, whatever their pathetic rhetoric? Has US foreign policy gotten even slightly more enlightened since Obama took over from the smirking troglodytes? Do Americans have any idea of what is truly happening to them, as opposed to being fixated on gays, immigrants, foreign bogeymen and spoon-fed celebrity drivel? And were not Occupy activists subjected to pepper spray, mass arrests and wholesale street clearings, even by supposedly liberal mayors and college presidents?

It's possible, of course, that the end is not nigh after all. Indeed, I see something of a great historical race transpiring in America. On the one hand, the powers of greed are rapidly filling in all the puzzle pieces of their sociopathic conspiracy to own everything, including – yes, really, I'm not kidding – food, water and our very genes. They are relentless, they are rich, and they are talented in ways that would awe and possibly even repulse Machiavelli himself. Oh, and by the way, they are winning, too. Big time. Even when they lose, they win.

On the other hand, demographics are not so favorable to the destruction of the nation. Young people are far more progressive than their scary-stupid and mega-mean grandparents. The good news is that the latter are dying, and the former are taking their place. Moreover, demographic trends are also shifting the racial composition of the electorate. For whatever reason, whites tend to have horrible politics, so the browning of America is also a very good thing. (If we could pull off the same stunt with gender, that would be great news,

Are we really so far off, given the displays we've already seen, from being a corporate-owned polity, in which oceans of Citizens United sponsored propaganda limits the cognitive landscape of an entire country

Those lovely pieties and viciously divisive tactics that are so successful at separating idiots from their votes on election day are rather less capable of doing magic tricks thereafter

too, since it indeed turns out that, that's right, the women are smarter. Better politics through bioengineering, maybe? Soon to come to your local supermarket. Or at least obstetrician.)

We have also seen displays across the globe of Basta!-ism which raise hope. From Russia to Egypt to Israel to Greece to Canada to Wall Street and Santa Monica College, people are standing up and saying Enough! And it works. These schoolyard bullies crushing us are like ... well, schoolyard bullies. Call them out on their blustery braggadocio and watch them fold in the face of real power. True, it doesn't always happen (see "Wisconsin, State of"), but it does often enough. And there is also the hope that as the plutocrats continue their insatiable campaign to impoverish the rest of us they will go a bridge too far, pushing by their own actions a squawking wholesale resistance out the proverbial birth canal and into being.

Indeed, if there is one bit of transcendent hope left it is that people in this country still seem non-comatose (or perhaps just self-interested) enough so as to make regressives their own worst enemy. Their shit sells well to dummies in campaigns, but it turns out that while you can lie about everything imaginable – right up to nice bearded people in the sky who control everything from war and peace to NFL touchdowns but somehow never seem to appear on Earth – the lies cannot ultimately withstand the laws of political physics. Those lovely pieties and viciously divisive tactics that are so successful at separating idiots from their votes on election day are rather less capable of doing magic tricks thereafter. Regressives may want very badly for Iraqis to lay down and accept American imperialism, but that doesn't make it happen, and no amount of arrogant bring-it-on blustery by Vietnam-avoiding chickenhawks can change that. They may want voodoo economics to balance the budget, but those pesky mathematical equations keep getting in the damn way. They may tell you that global warming is a hoax, but nevertheless every day the planet gets relentlessly hotter.

In short, time after time there is no better antidote for regressive government than

regressive government itself. That's why the right always and endlessly pays homage to a ridiculously distorted version of Saint Ronald of Reagan, a guy so long departed from the White House that he might as well be James Buchanan as far as most contemporary Americans are concerned. Hmmm. Why not talk about the joys and wonders of George W. Bush, instead, who after all, was far more Reagan than Reagan, and who happened only just yesterday? Perhaps for the same reason that governments pursuing austerity in Europe are falling like dominoes. And also for the same reason that the sweep of regressive state governors brought in by the Obama debacle of Election 2010 are proving so unpopular, including even Scott Walker, who, despite surviving the vote, is only the third governor in all of American history to be subjected to a recall.

Thus, as much as it sickens me to say it, perhaps the best thing that could happen to us could be the election of a Mitt Romney, especially one, as this one is, so completely straight-jacketed by the insane elements (that is to say, all of them) of his party. Unless Romney turns out to be very, very lucky, his policies will not only not turn the economy around, but they will saddle the country with vastly more debt than the right has managed to do so far already. It's possible this could be the tipping point, once and for all, in the race between good demographics and bad demographics, between sanity and insanity. Maybe people will finally get what they're buying, and start looking for a refund.

On the other hand – and be honest here – wasn't that just what you were thinking after eight years of Bush and Cheney, the entire last four of which spent with the president's job approval ratings in the toilet?

I sure as hell was, only to see Republicans (with a lot of help from Obama) win a crushing victory only a mere two years later.

In the end, there may be no bottom to the depths of self-destructive stupidity of which Homo Americanus is capable of stooping.

I'm pretty sure we're gonna be finding out here, real soon.

CT

David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. More of his work can be found at his website, www.regressiveantidote.net

Journalists complicit in sexual abuse

Catholic priests did some horrible things to young children over the years, but why did it take so long for the media to expose them?, asks **Tim Knight**

CBC News Network has just aired another in the long, sordid saga of rape of young boys by Roman Catholic priests.

Breaking the Silence tells the stories of five Canadians who went to boarding schools in England and Tanzania run by the church's Rosminian Order.

In it, the five, now grown men, make horrifyingly routine accusations of sexual, physical and mental abuse suffered at the hands of priests. Along with the even more routine charge that the Church, in its infinite blindness, covered up the abuse.

The men stayed silent for decades, each thinking he was the only one abused. When they finally got together and swapped stories they were joined by seventeen other men in legal proceedings against the Rosminians.

To this day the Order denies any liability.

Breaking the Silence is a powerful, often heart-breaking, indictment of those who abuse their godly power and, as a consequence, do appalling damage to innocent children.

Flashback -- 22 years ago, Christian Brothers of Ireland in Canada were forced to close their Mount Cashel Orphanage in Newfoundland and Labrador after charges that the Roman Catholic brothers sexually,

physically and emotionally abused some 300 boys in their care.

Shortly thereafter, I was in Dublin training senior journalists at Ireland's national broadcaster Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ), equivalent of the CBC.

During the workshop, I mentioned the Mount Cashel crimes and asked the assembled journalists if they were following up on the Canadian connection. Was it not likely that similarly horrific child abuse also happened in Ireland, home base of the Christian Brothers?

The journalists' response was that "everyone knew" of such atrocities but pious Irish culture and draconian libel laws made it impossible to report on Roman Catholic Church abuses, sexual or otherwise.

In sum, the church covered up its sins, protected its sinners and was simply too powerful for Irish journalists to dare challenge.

It took another ten years before RTÉ screwed up the courage to broadcast a TV documentary, *States of Fear*. It finally exposed Mount Cashel-like decades of pedophilia and sadism in Irish church-run and government-supported institutions for orphaned and abandoned children.

Since then, thousands of pedophilic and hebephilic (sexual preference for children in early puberty) priests have been accused of child abuse in Canada, the U.S., and doz-

.....
The church covered up its sins, protected its sinners and was simply too powerful for Irish journalists to dare challenge
.....

To my shame, it never occurred to me to investigate those rumours I'd heard whispered by friends so many years before

ens of other countries.

Let us never forget that journalists, traditional watchdogs of the powerful, went to school and grew up in those countries.

It's impossible to believe these journalists knew nothing of the church's crimes, going back so many decades. It's much easier to believe that they knew and did nothing -- out of fear of the awesome temporal and spiritual power of the church.

Mea Culpa -- I never went to a Roman Catholic school. Nor did I know a boy who did and was abused.

Even so, I remember schoolmates whispering about boys they knew at Catholic schools to whom "something awful" had happened. But that was it. No details. Certainly nothing became public.

So the abuse continued.

For years.

When I grew up I became a journalist myself. I investigated all sorts of stories about abuse of power in South Africa, the U.S., Canada and a few other countries. But, to my shame, it never occurred to me to investigate those rumours I'd heard whispered by friends so many years before.

In that sense I -- along with a great many of my journalistic colleagues -- am complicit in the terrible silence that so protected the guilty and harmed the innocent.

The multinational corporation which is the Roman Catholic Church has many sins to answer for when its leaders finally knock on St. Peter's gates.

As will my own beloved profession — journalism.

Postscript

There were a number of comments to my column. Not one of them denied my charges. What fascinated me most, however, was that no self-identified journalist responded. Either to support or deny.

So what does this mean?

Is it possible that an innate, tribal fear of

some awesome Almighty Being — whether actually believed in it or not — prevented me and my journalistic colleagues from responding to the rumours and asking hard questions of the men of God's church?

Or did my journalistic colleagues disdain to comment because I — and the documentary itself — are so obviously deluded? Or just plain wrong?

I haven't the foggiest idea!

Two "survivors" featured in the documentary did comment.

"As a survivor, and one of the individuals "featured" in the broadcast, I would like to congratulate you on your article. The fact that you have recognized the abuse that we have shared with you is only the beginnings of public awareness. As a victim, it has taken me 40 years, but now we as a group have spoken to YOU the public, and it can be stopped."

"I urge you and fellow journalists to continue to expose the truth."

Kindest regards,

Wayne Mollison

Dear Mr. Tim Knight.

"I really appreciated your article that I read on the Huffington Post.

"Watching the Watchdog: Journalism's Complicit Role in Sexual Abuse" and the acknowledgement you made in the article.

"I was one of the children at St Michaels school in Soni referred to in the documentary (there was not really that many of us in the 20 years that it operated). What the documentary Breaking The Silence did not really discuss was the terror that hour by hour we had to endure along with a starvation diet. Most of us have had our lives blighted by what went on.

"Your industry is the only way that the common people can draw attention to wrongs that has or is being done and then shame or compel the powers that govern our lives to act & do something about it."

Regards

Phil Jones

My own view, for what it's worth, is that the Roman Catholic Church is made up of two clashing and contradictory groups.

The first group is dedicated to acting as mediatory agents between believers and their god. And I have no doubt there remain in the church good men who perform this duty with diligence, piety and honour.

The second group is, in essence, a pedophilic club. Made up of men who joined the organization because it would give them easy access to boys they could then rape with – at least until very recently – absolute impunity.

Because of the second group, if the Church of Rome (motto “For God and Humanity”) were any other multinational organization, every country in the world would have long since closed it down.

Its priests would have been arrested and forced to defend themselves against — at

the very least — collusion and complicity in rapes of minors.

Its tax exempt status would have been cancelled.

But what to do with all those splendidly ostentatious cathedrals and churches?

Here in Canada, they would make excellent longhouses for aboriginal First Nations people.

CT

Tim Knight writes a regular column, *Watching the Watchdog*, for Huffington Post Canada. A version of this article column first appeared on HuffPost. Knight is an Emmy and Sigma Delta Chi award winner who's worked for newspapers, Zambia TV, ABC, NBC, PBS and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), where he produced its flagship news program, *The National*, and for 10 years headed its TV Journalism Training program.

The second group is, in essence, a pedophilic club. Made up of men who joined the organization because it would give them easy access to boys they could then rape with – at least until very recently – absolute impunity

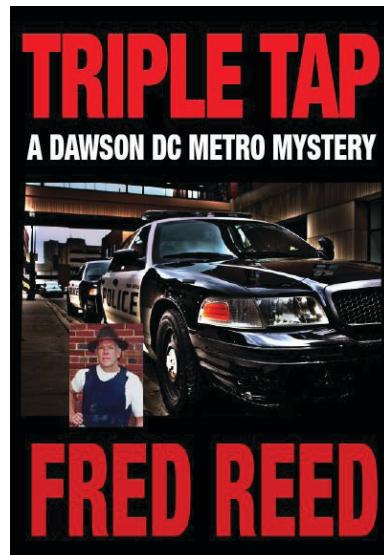
NEW FROM FRED REED

Tired of stories of sensitive detectives who drink white wine, whose authors have never been inside a police car? Ex-Marine Fred Reed spent eight years as police reporter for the *Washington (DC) Times*, in the bad places in the bad hours, and it shows. His protagonist, Robert Dawson, is, as Dawson puts it himself, “an ashen-souled news weasel for the *Washington Herald*. I don’t kid myself about what I do. Reporters are lower than winos, but don’t have to carry paper bags. I never liked carrying things.” On the night when Chiflado Gomez puts two Remington 870 rounds into the chest of young police officer Corrigan, you immediately get the feel of real police work. The murder isn’t what it seems.

TRIPLE TAP A Dawson DC Metro Mystery

Available from Amazon.com \$2.99

http://www.amazon.com/Triple-Dawson-Metro-Mysteries-ebook/dp/B007956J00/ref=sr_1_2?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1329926735&sr=1-2



Welcome to the world of thieving financiers

John Kozy on vendor arithmetic and underhanded capitalism

The Constitution contains nothing about Capitalism or any other economic ideology

"The world belongs to humanity, not this leader, that leader, kings or religious leaders. ... Each country belongs essentially to their own people." – Dalai Lama

At times, something seemingly insignificant, when thought about deeply, reveals truths that the establishment seeks to keep hidden, the most important of which is the real purpose of a nation's existence. Most Americans, for instance, believe that America exists for their benefit and they expect the nation's institutions to serve their needs. But astute observers know that history proves otherwise even though the Constitution clearly states what the nation was established to do.

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Notice that the phrases, "promote business" and "protect property" do not appear in this paragraph, but "promote the general Welfare" does.

In fact the Constitution to this day contains nothing about Capitalism or any other economic ideology. The document is com-

pletely neutral as Justice Holmes, dissenting in *Lochner v New York* writes:

"[A] Constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory, whether of paternalism and the organic relation of the citizen to the state or of laissez faire. It is made for people of fundamentally differing views, and the accident of our finding certain opinions natural and familiar, or novel, and even shocking, ought not to conclude our judgment upon the question whether statutes embodying them conflict with the Constitution of the United States."

Nevertheless, the Supreme Court has enshrined laissez-faire Capitalism in constitutional law for much of its history, and Justice Powell made it quite clear in his writing that he considered that to be the Court's primary function.

The disingenuousness of the practice has made obvious injustice legal and the American people into mere means to serve the system's nefarious goals. Whenever and wherever necessary, the people must suffer to preserve the system. The practice violates the Constitution on two accounts: it establishes injustice rather than justice and hinders rather than promotes the general welfare.

To see how this works, consider this simple business claim that most readers will have read numerous times in various forms: An executive of a local electricity provider

went on television recently complaining about people stealing electricity by tampering with meters. He said the theft costs honest customers thousands of dollars in higher electricity costs and should be stopped. The same claim is made by merchants about shoplifting and automobile insurance companies about insurance fraud. The claim is accepted silently; I have never heard of anyone questioning it. So let's look at it carefully to see what can be learned from it.

The electric company sells electricity at a published rate of usage. If honest customers are being charged for the losses the company experiences because of thieves, the company isn't losing any money. Why are they complaining? What's happening is that the company is charging honest people for the actions of the dishonest. That's neat for the company but it's hardly just. If a person's home is burglarized, the person can't get back the loss from those honest people who had nothing to do with the burglary. What companies are allowed to do is steal back what they have lost from honest people. If that were made into a general legal principle, it would read something like, you may steal from the innocent what others have stolen from you. Of course, the judicial system contains no such principle, but it acts as if it does when a business is involved.

Theft insurance

To protect ourselves from theft, ordinary people must buy theft insurance. Why aren't companies required to buy it or else tolerate the losses? Is it because the system exists to protect the property of businesses but not the property of ordinary people? How many people seeking office who flat out told their constituents that do you believe would be elected?

But it's even worse. Remember, the electric company has built the expected losses into its current rate. What do you believe happens when the expected losses fail to materialize? Does the electric company

rebate its customers the losses they have been charged for that didn't happen? Sure it does!

So this seemingly innocent story that everyone accepts silently hides two common vendor forms of theft that are protected by the legal system whose justices have enshrined an economic bias into law because they have subverted the Constitution from the goals the founding fathers wrote into it to the almost exclusive promotion of laissez-faire Capitalism. There are countless other similar unjust business practices that are similarly protected by the system.

Capitalist countries everywhere are similarly unjust and exploitative. The nations that make up the European Union are now twisting themselves into contortions so that creditors can be protected by inflicting actual physical and economic pain on their citizens. But when people must not only suffer but be sacrificed to preserve the system, the only moral conclusion is that the system does not deserve to be preserved.

Until the system is discarded, the Dalai Lama's claims are false. The world does not belong to humanity. It belongs to thieving Capitalists who are protected by biased legal systems. And because the legal systems embody thousands of these little seemingly obvious injustices, changing it is virtually impossible. Underhanded Capitalism picks the pockets of common people during every economic transaction. People, you cannot win! Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, the sixteenth century Dutch humanist, called lawyers jackals. Today these wolves are allowed to delineate right from wrong. Try calling that progress! **CT**

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If honest
customers are
being charged
for the losses
the company
experiences
because of thieves,
the company isn't
losing any money.
Why are they
complaining?

All you need is sincerity

Language is an invention that makes it possible for a president to deny what he is doing even as he does it, writes **William Blum**

Language is an invention that makes it possible for a person to deny what he is doing even as he does it

"A few months ago I told the American people that I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that is true, but the facts and evidence tell me it is not." – President Ronald Reagan, 1987

On April 23, speaking at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, President Barack Obama told his assembled audience that, as president, "I've done my utmost ... to prevent and end atrocities".

Do the facts and evidence tell him that his words are not true?

Well, let's see ... There's the multiple atrocities carried out in Iraq by American forces under President Obama. There's the multiple atrocities carried out in Afghanistan by American forces under Obama. There's the multiple atrocities carried out in Pakistan by American forces under Obama. There's the multiple atrocities carried out in Libya by American/NATO forces under Obama. There are also the hundreds of American drone attacks against people and homes in Somalia and in Yemen (including against American citizens in the latter). Might the friends and families of these victims regard the murder of their loved ones and the loss of their homes as atrocities?

Ronald Reagan was pre-Alzheimer's when he uttered the above. What excuse can be made for Barack Obama?

The president then continued in the same fashion by saying: "We possess many tools ... and using these tools over the past three years, I believe – I know – that we have saved countless lives." Obama pointed out that this includes Libya, where the United States, in conjunction with NATO, took part in seven months of almost daily bombing missions. We may never learn from the new pro-NATO Libyan government how many the bombs killed, or the extent of the damage to homes and infrastructure. But the President of the United States assured his Holocaust Museum audience that "today, the Libyan people are forging their own future, and the world can take pride in the innocent lives that we saved."

Language is an invention that makes it possible for a person to deny what he is doing even as he does it.

Mr. Obama closed with these stirring words, "It can be tempting to throw up our hands and resign ourselves to man's endless capacity for cruelty. It's tempting sometimes to believe that there is nothing we can do." But Barack Obama is not one of those doubters. He knows there is something he can do about man's endless capacity for cruelty. He can add to it. Greatly. And yet, I am certain that, with exceedingly few exceptions, those in his Holocaust audience left with no doubt that this was a man wholly deserving of his Nobel Peace Prize.

And future American history books may well certify the president's words as factual, his motivation sincere, for his talk indeed possessed the quality needed for schoolbooks.

The Israeli-American-Iranian-Holocaust-Nobel Peace Prize Circus

It's a textbook case of how the American media is at its worst when it comes to US foreign policy and particularly when an Officially Designated Enemy (ODE) is involved. I've discussed this case several times in this report in recent years. The ODE is Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The accusation has been that he had threatened violence against Israel, based on his 2005 remark calling for "wiping Israel off the map". Who can count the number of times this has been repeated in every kind of media, in every country of the world, without questioning the accuracy of what was reported? A Lexis-Nexis search of "All News (English)" for <Iran and Israel and "off the map"> for the past seven years produced the message: "This search has been interrupted because it will return more than 3000 results."

As I've pointed out, Ahmadinejad's "threat of violence" was a serious misinterpretation, one piece of evidence being that the following year he declared: "The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom." 2 Obviously, he was not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place remarkably peacefully. But the myth of course continued.

Now, finally, we have the following exchange from the radio-TV simulcast, Democracy Now!, of April 19:

"A top Israeli official has acknowledged that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad never said that Iran seeks to "wipe Israel off the face of the map." The falsely translated statement has been widely attributed to Ahmadinejad and used repeatedly by US

and Israeli government officials to back military action and sanctions against Iran. But speaking to Teymoor Nabil of the network Al Jazeera, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor admitted Ahmadinejad had been misquoted.

"Teymoor Nabil: 'As we know, Ahmadinejad didn't say that he plans to exterminate Israel, nor did he say that Iran policy is to exterminate Israel. Ahmadinejad's position and Iran's position always has been, and they've made this – they've said this as many times as Ahmadinejad has criticized Israel, he has said as many times that he has no plans to attack Israel. ...'

"Dan Meridor: 'Well, I have to disagree, with all due respect. You speak of Ahmadinejad. I speak of Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, Rafsanjani, Shamkhani. I give the names of all these people. They all come, basically ideologically, religiously, with the statement that Israel is an unnatural creature, it will not survive. They didn't say, "We'll wipe it out," you're right. But "It will not survive, it is a cancerous tumor that should be removed,' was said just two weeks ago again."

"Teymoor Nabil: 'Well, I'm glad you've acknowledged that they didn't say they will wipe it out.'"

So that's that. Right? Of course not. Fox News, NPR, CNN, NBC, et al. will likely continue to claim that Ahmadinejad threatened violence against Israel, threatened to "wipe it off the map".

And that's only Ahmadinejad the Israeli Killer. There's still Ahmadinejad the Holocaust Denier. So until a high Israeli official finally admits that that too is a lie, keep in mind that Ahmadinejad has never said simply, clearly, unambiguously, and unequivocally that he thinks that what we historically know as the Holocaust never happened. He has instead commented about the peculiarity and injustice of a Holocaust which took place in Europe resulting in a state for the Jews in the Middle East instead of in Europe. Why are the Palestinians paying a price for a German crime? he asks. And he has ques-

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tioned the figure of six million Jews killed by Nazi Germany, as have many other people of various political stripes. In a speech at Columbia University on September 24, 2007, in reply to a question about the Holocaust, the Iranian president declared: “I’m not saying that it didn’t happen at all. This is not the judgment that I’m passing here.”³

Let us now listen to Elie Wiesel, the simplistic, reactionary man who’s built a career around being a Holocaust survivor, introducing President Obama at the Holocaust Museum for the talk referred to above, some five days after the statement made by the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister:

“How is it that the Holocaust’s No. 1 denier, Ahmadinejad, is still a president? He who threatens to use nuclear weapons – to use nuclear weapons – to destroy the Jewish state. Have we not learned? We must. We must know that when evil has power, it is almost too late.”

“Nuclear weapons” is of course adding a new myth on the back of the old myth.

Wiesel, like Obama, is a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. As is Henry Kissinger and Menachim Begin. And several other such war-loving beauties. When will that monumental farce of a prize be put to sleep?

For the record, let it be noted that on March 4, speaking before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Obama said: “Let’s begin with a basic truth that you all understand: No Israeli government can tolerate a nuclear weapon in the hands of a regime that denies the Holocaust, threatens to wipe Israel off the map, and sponsors terrorist groups committed to Israel’s destruction.”⁴

Postscript: Each time I strongly criticize Barack Obama a few of my readers ask to unsubscribe. I’m really sorry to lose them but it’s important that those on the left rid themselves of their attachment to the Democratic Party. I’m not certain how best to institute revolutionary change in the United States, but I do know that it will not happen through the Democratic Party, and the soon-

er those on the left cut their umbilical cord to the Democrats, the sooner we can start to get more serious about this thing called revolution.

**Written on Earth Day,
Sunday, April 22, 2012**

Two simple suggestions as part of a plan to save the planet.

1. Population control: limit families to two children

All else being equal, a markedly reduced population count would have a markedly beneficial effect upon global warming, air pollution, and food and water availability; as well as finding a parking spot, getting a seat on the subway, getting on the flight you prefer, and much, much more. Some favor limiting families to one child. Still others, who spend a major part of each day digesting the awful news of the world, are calling for a limit of zero. (The Chinese government announced in 2008 that the country would have about 400 million more people if it wasn’t for its limit of one or two children per couple.⁵

But, within the environmental movement, there is still significant opposition to this. Part of the reason is fear of ethnic criticism inasmuch as population programs have traditionally been aimed at – or seen to be aimed at – primarily the poor, the weak, and various “outsiders”. There is also the fear of the religious right and its medieval views on birth control.

2. Eliminate the greatest consumer of energy in the world: The United States military.

Here’s Michael Klare, professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College, Mass. in 2007:

Sixteen gallons of oil. That’s how much the average American soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan consumes on a daily basis – either directly, through the use of Humvees, tanks,

trucks, and helicopters, or indirectly, by calling in air strikes. Multiply this figure by 162,000 soldiers in Iraq, 24,000 in Afghanistan, and 30,000 in the surrounding region (including sailors aboard US warships in the Persian Gulf) and you arrive at approximately 3.5 million gallons of oil: the daily petroleum tab for US combat operations in the Middle East war zone. Multiply that daily tab by 365 and you get 1.3 billion gallons: the estimated annual oil expenditure for US combat operations in Southwest Asia. That's greater than the total annual oil usage of Bangladesh, population 150 million – and yet it's a gross underestimate of the Pentagon's wartime consumption.⁶

The United States military, for decades, with its legion of bases and its numerous wars has also produced and left behind a deadly toxic legacy. From the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam in the 1960s to the open-air burn pits on US bases in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 21st century, countless local people have been sickened and killed; and in between those two periods we could read things such as this from a lengthy article on the subject in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1990:

"US military installations have polluted the drinking water of the Pacific island of Guam, poured tons of toxic chemicals into Subic Bay in the Philippines, leaked carcinogens into the water source of a German spa, spewed tons of sulfurous coal smoke into the skies of Central Europe and pumped millions of gallons of raw sewage into the oceans."⁷

The military has caused similar harm to the environment in the United States at a number of its installations. (Do a Google search for "US military bases toxic")

When I suggest eliminating the military I am usually rebuked for leaving "a defenseless America open to foreign military invasion". And I usually reply:

"Tell me who would invade us? Which country?"

"What do you mean which country? It could be any country."

"So then it should be easy to name one."

"Okay, any of the 200 members of the United Nations!"

"No, I'd like you to name a specific country that you think would invade the United States. Name just one."

"Okay, Paraguay. You happy now?"

"No, you have to tell me why Paraguay would invade the United States."

"How would I know?"

Etc., etc., and if this charming dialogue continues, I ask the person to tell me how many troops the invading country would have to have to occupy a country of more than 300 million people.

Yankee karma

The questions concerning immigration into the United States from south of the border go on year after year, with the same issues argued back and forth: What's the best way to block the flow into the country? How shall we punish those caught here illegally? Should we separate families, which happens when parents are deported but their American-born children remain? Should the police and various other institutions have the right to ask for proof of legal residence from anyone they suspect of being here illegally? Should we punish employers who hire illegal immigrants? Should we grant amnesty to at least some of the immigrants already here for years? ... on and on, round and round it goes, for decades. Every once in a while someone opposed to immigration will make it a point to declare that the United States does not have any moral obligation to take in these Latino immigrants.

But the counter-argument to the last is almost never mentioned: Yes, the United States does have a moral obligation because so many of the immigrants are escaping situations in their homelands made hopeless by American interventions and policy. In Guatemala and Nicaragua Washington overthrew progressive governments which were sincerely committed to fighting poverty. In El Salvador the US played a major role in sup-

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“**Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2**”; “**Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower**”; “**West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir**”; “**Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire**”

pressing a movement striving to install such a government, and to a lesser extent played such a role in Honduras. And in Mexico, although Washington has not intervened militarily in Mexico since 1919, over the years the US has been providing training, arms, and surveillance technology to Mexico’s police and armed forces to better their ability to suppress their own people’s aspirations, as in Chiapas, and this has added to the influx of the impoverished to the United States. Moreover, Washington’s North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has brought a flood of cheap, subsidized US agricultural products into Mexico and driven many Mexican farmers off the land.

The end result of all these policies has been an army of migrants heading north in search of a better life. It’s not that these people prefer to live in the United States. They’d

much rather remain with their families and friends, be able to speak their native language at all times, and avoid the hardships imposed on them by American police and right-wingers.

CT

Notes

1. Washington Post, March 5, 1987
2. Associated Press, December 12, 2006 3. President Ahmadinejad Delivers Remarks at Columbia University, Transcript, Washington Post, September 24, 2007
4. Remarks by the President at AIPAC Policy Conference, White House Office of the Press Secretary, March 4, 2012
5. Washington Post, March 3, 2008
6. The Pentagon v. Peak Oil, TomDispatch.com, June 14, 2007
7. Los Angeles Times, June 18, 1990

A great catastrophe, followed by years of illness, poverty and injustice can overwhelm and crush the human spirit, or can enable ordinary people to discover that they are extraordinary.



For almost 30 years, some of the poorest people on earth, sick, on the edge of hunger, with no allies or political influence, have been fighting for their lives against a multinational corporation that has it all – wealth, power, influence, lawyers, lobbyists and PR people, the ear of presidents and prime ministers - it can buy its way out of and into anything it likes.

The ‘nothing people’ have nothing. Their efforts to obtain medical care and justice in the courts are opposed and obstructed in every possible way by the corporation that gassed their families then poisoned their drinking water. Yet they don’t give up.

From this poorest of communities has come a flowering of art, political wit, law and medicine. They have opened two free award-winning clinics, out of horror bringing healing to 40,000 people, pioneering work that will help others all over the world.

Their tireless, peaceful struggle for justice is a legend and this story will not end until we enter and become part of it.

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City on the Ledge

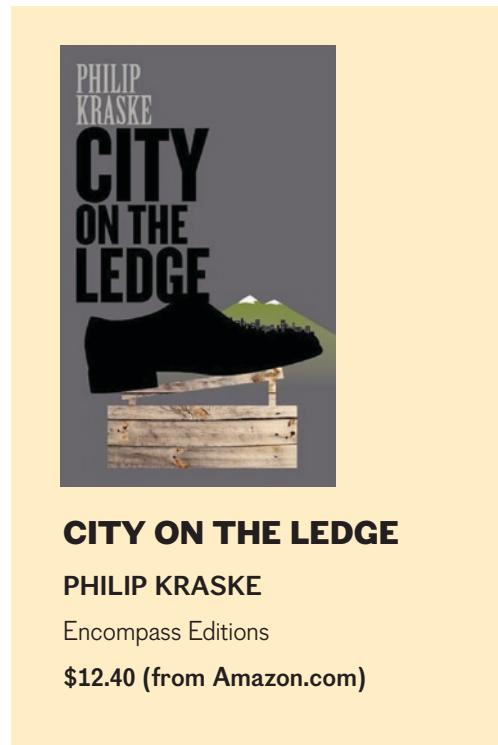
An excerpt from the new novel by **Philip Kraske**

Set against the emerald majesty of the Ecuadorian Andes, full of cultural and political detail, City on the Ledge witnesses the machinations of politicians, spies, diplomats, and lovers to pull off a revolution, or kill it before it can bloom.

PROLOGUE:

Quito, Ecuador, South America. Alvaro the shoeshine boy is running towards death. It is eight p.m. of an honest Thursday, and already colonial Quito has hunkered down for the night. The Indian traffic cops are hiking off home to see how their wives have eked the four hundred monthly dollars that the Force of Public Order pays its custodians. The beggars have tumbled into their doorways to nibble bread cached beneath the folds of their ponchos still stinking from the rain, and El Trole – the trolley – begins its night service that grants travelers one run an hour. The streets go still as a painting, as an unvisited museum.

Fog sits on the city. It coats in droplets every stop sign, every gate, bench, balcony and door; it turns the distant streetlamps into starbursts. All are silent, nothing drips. Tangled cables tacked along the cement facades calmly bear their burdens of power and data, and the national flag – red, blue



The shoeshine boy slaps through these streets tonight, slaps because his shoes are teenaged-sized and his feet are not; slaps because the wet sprawls everywhere, on stone and metal, clings to his ankles and probes his jacket

and yellow stripes flown everywhere with the hope of a crucifix – hangs heavy like dripping candle wax.

In all Latin America, only Quito can achieve a mood of Gothic. You hear it in the clump of its Indians' hammy feet along the brick sidewalks, feel it in the anger of the storms that rake its streets. You see it in the hulking gray of its churches, the grim consummation of its wrought-iron gates,

BOOK EXCERPT

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**He doesn't notice
– why should he?
– a car two blocks
up the steep hill
to his left, its
passenger window
rolled down, and
a man leaning well
over from the
driver's seat to
watch him through
the fog; and then
speed ahead**
.....

and the humorless stare of infants slung on their mothers' bent backs. Even the cobblestone streets, laid out by the Conquistadores centuries ago, lie in a gloomy grid, with no exceptions for the insufferable grades that mark the first upward jolt of the Pichinchas, the three green peaks that rise a mile over the city, witnesses to the itch-itch-itching of humanity bent on breaking its final limits.

Only Alvaro troubles this portrait.

The shoeshine boy slaps through these streets tonight, slaps because his shoes are teenaged-sized and his feet are not; slaps because the wet sprawls everywhere, on stone and metal, clings to his ankles and probes his jacket, seeks to root in his innocent heat. And Alvaro has heat to spare. The driving beat of his shoes – la plata, la plata, la plata – on the cobbles describes the importance, the sheer great sweet commercial bliss, of his mission: twenty dólares to bring the envelope to El Ejido Park! The man will wait for him at the start of Friends, and Alvaro knows that this is any minute now, even though he cannot read a watch.

He and his older brother Leopoldo, who is twelve, never miss Amigos reruns on the television at Televisiones Chimborazo, just off the Plaza Grande and a stone's throw from President Atahualpa Tingo's office, where they spend the mornings cadging for shoeshine clients. La Rachel, the blond Amiga, is the most beautiful woman ever born. Alvaro and his brother each have a sticker of La Rachel on the inside of their shoe-boxes, and they have cut their fingers and sworn on their blood that if La Rachel ever comes to Quito, they will shine her shoes for free, each one taking a shoe. And at the end, they will stand up and bow deeply and pronounce the phrase honed through many idle sidewalk hours: "It has been an honor – a great honor to the Ecuadoran nation – to clean your shoes, Señorita Rachel."

La plata, la plata, la plata – the silver, Latin America's ancient denominator of wealth. La plata, la plata, la plata. Alvaro's shoes sing, and the echo follows like a posse

amidst the flat-faced buildings, for every street in the colonial district is a canyon four floors deep.

La plata, la plata, la plata. Alvaro's pace does not vary, though Quito lies at 2,800 meters, more than a mile and a half, above sea level. He passes a dozen Indian women, each with an infant tied to her back, standing like statues in a line before a closed door with a light on in the transom. He pounds through another silent four-way intersection, ears looking both ways for him around the corners. He doesn't notice – why should he? – a car two blocks up the steep hill to his left, its passenger window rolled down, and a man leaning well over from the driver's seat to watch him through the fog; and then speed ahead.

La plata, la plata, la plata. Alvaro zigs left at the intersection, zags right at the next. He weaves through the cement balls along the sidewalk that keep cars from parking there, and he keeps his head carefully down as he passes the gargantuan Iglesia de la Merced with its stark stone doorway in the massive white wall. A zig, a zag. He turns another corner, and the grade is downhill now, the going easier. He shifts his filthy wooden shoeshine box, no longer than his forearm and which he grips by its footrest, to his other hand.

Up ahead, he sees two people spying round the corner of the building into the next street. One, a woman, turns at the sound of Alvaro's feet, and Alvaro instinctively swerves wide – and nearly cries out in surprise, for the other person, a man, has now turned too, his face lit by the tiny, bluish screen of a video camera. Alvaro has seen tourists using them, and even once saw his own image when a tourist took his picture with him. The two persons watch him pass – "Cállate, carajo!" the man hisses angrily – and Alvaro pushes yet more speed into his legs. La plata, la plata, la plata.

In the next street, he sees what the two are filming: a man, halfway down the next block, with hair as golden as La Rachel's. It

is short and forms a halo around his head. He is down on his haunches handing something to a man sitting in a doorway. Hearing Alvaro approach, he rises, and Alvaro hears the crackle of his knees; he recognizes this sound because he often hears it during his workday.

But this man is enormous, a giant! He carries a plastic bag and takes something out. And now he is moving into the street. Alvaro, now at full sprint – la plata, la plata, la plata, la plata! – barely gets past him. The man calls after him, but the words are truly those of a monster and echo over the wet walls like ghosts sent to pursue him. But they do not; they cannot. They fall behind. Alvaro is invincible!

He turns the corner. At the end of this street is Avenida de Guayaquil, a busy street because it soon merges with Avenida 10 de Agosto, which leads to the modern, northern section of Quito. After the daily afternoon rainstorm, he and Leopoldo always work this area, where there are men in business suits who want shines and tip well.

But now a broad figure – dark pants and windbreaker, white polo shirt – steps out of a double-parked car and hails him. Alvaro again swings wide, now as far as the opposite sidewalk. The man hurries across to intercept him. Alvaro puts on speed. The man is calling: Espera, espera. Te doy dinero. Wait, wait. I'll give you money. But Alvaro has been warned about maricones – homosexuals. One touch of their dicks with your bare hand, Leopoldo says, and you'll turn into one.

La plata, la plata, la plata.

La plata, la plata, la...

Jamming along the wall of a grocery store, Alvaro tries to slide past. But the man lunges and pins him with one huge foot, thumping his back against the bricks. His hand falls on Alvaro's arm like a shackle; the other snatches his shoeshine box, and Alvaro cannot leave it behind.

"Don't worry, kid," he says in a murky Spanish that slurs the Rs. He is kneeling

and opening the flaps of the shoebox. "I only want to look at your letter; I'll give it back."

"Por favor, señor," Alvaro squeaks, the breath knocked out of him.

Letting go of his arm, the man kneels and, careful not to upset Alvaro's three bottles of polish – red, black, and color café – takes out the half-sheet buff envelope that the other man, the one who spoke good Spanish, put in twenty minutes earlier. This man puts a small flashlight in his mouth, slides out the contents, and quickly flips through four photographs. The reflections from their glossy surfaces dapple the man's muscular face.

And now it goes stiff; whatever is in the photos displeases him. He has thick, fleshy lips, and these curl back from the flashlight like a dog's mouth, and a sound like a distant thunder simmers under his throat.

But Alvaro is not going to miss his money because of this maricón. Now catching his breath, he steals a hand under his woolen sweater and finds the knife in his belt. Very slowly he begins to draw it out. His thumb finds the button for the blade.

Still kneeling, the man taps the photos back into the envelope.

"Take that, maricón!" Alvaro cries. In one oiled movement, he jerks out the knife and swings at the man's face, the blade spitting out like a snake's tongue. The man jerks back just in time: only the very tip of the blade reaches him, tracing a finger-long gash under his ear. The man squawks and his light falls to the ground and goes out.

Alvaro grabs the footrest of his box. The man, who has fallen sideways, is leaning on one hand. He kicks at Alvaro, kicks hard because the boy has humiliated him, and his toe drives straight into Alvaro's right kidney. The boy staggers back against the wall, paralyzed with pain. He drops his knife and box, but can't bend down to pick them up.

Panting now, face tight, the man stands and presses a handkerchief against the wound and cocks his head against it to hold

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**Now catching his
breath, he steals
a hand under his
woolen sweater
and finds the knife
in his belt. Very
slowly he begins to
draw it out**
.....

BOOK EXCERPT

.....
**He wipes off
the blade on his
handkerchief,
pushes the button
a few times and
admires how
smoothly the
blade darts in and
out, and drops
the knife into the
shoeshine box**
.....

.....
Philip Kraske is an
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living in Madrid,
Spain

it in place. Alvaro in his breathless agony sees blood running over the white collar of his shirt and is glad.

"Who will you give the message to?" the man snarls in his pasty accent.

"A man is waiting for me at the Arch of Triumph in El Ejido Park," Alvaro manages to say. Even to breathe sends waves of pain through his back.

"Who? What man?"

"El Profesor." His back is aflame. "Don't hurt me any more, señor. Please."

"Okay, but don't tell him that I looked at the letter." He bends closer. "If you do, I will dump gasoline on you and burn you alive!"

"No, no, I won't tell anyone."

"I will find you if you do!"

"I won't tell anyone, not even my brother!" Alvaro pleads.

The man takes the envelope and tucks it into the shoeshine box. Then he bends down and picks up Alvaro's knife. For a terrifying moment, Alvaro waits for the stab, knowing that he is in too much pain to dodge. But the man looks down at him and nods.

"Good move. You almost got me."

He wipes off the blade on his handkerchief, pushes the button a few times and admires how smoothly the blade darts in and out, and drops the knife into the shoeshine box.

"Now go."

The weight of his whole body seems to crush directly on his wounded kidney, and Alvaro needs a great effort to walk. The effort will become ever greater over the following days, as the wound refuses to heal properly and gets infected. After several days he will die in Leopoldo's arms.

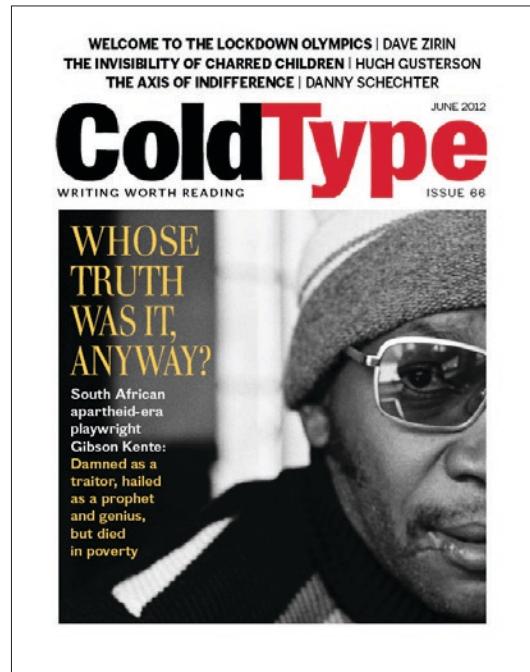
"Fast!" the man growls.

Alvaro makes a little jumping movement with his feet and shuffles them faster. After several steps, like an albatross trying to take flight, he finally works into a running stride, though it seems to split his torso down the middle. Turning onto Avenida de Guayaquil, he looks back. The man watches him flatly, pressing the handkerchief against his neck. Alvaro hopes it hurts like a sword run through his flesh, because that's how badly his side hurts.

CT

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The men who saved Zambia's cash

Kenneth Kaunda had a penchant for Christian/Socialist advisers during the build-up to Zambia's independence. Two of them helped save that copper-rich country a fortune the day it was born, reports **Trevor Grundy**

Historians examining the de-colonisation process have been disinclined to examine the motives and individual psychologies of the well-educated Europeans who attached themselves to African causes and leaders in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Dr Kenneth Kaunda, born in 1924 the son of a Presbyterian mission station worker and President of Zambia from 1964 to 1991, had a penchant for white advisers, especially when they reflected his own strong Christian/Socialist beliefs. Two well educated, upper class ex-public schoolboys who went on to play important roles during the early days of that copper rich but multi-national dominated country, were Robert Oakeshott and Mike Faber.

"Inspiring, infuriating, unworldly yet profoundly concerned about his fellow beings, Robert Oakeshott defied easy categorisation," said the writer of his obituary in the *Times* in July 2011. The other, Mike Faber, I met recently at his home in Sussex, England.

Now in his early 80s, Mike told me that some Europeans in Northern Rhodesia in the late 1950s and early 1960s regarded him and Oakeshott as a couple of Marxist revolutionaries. "They may have been surprised when they found out that Robert went to Tonbridge (an exclusive boys' public school in Kent, southern England) and that I went to Eton."

Mike's memories of his early days in Africa are sharp. "After Eton (England's most exclusive private school) I went to University and in 1956 visited Southern Rhodesia for the first time to visit my wife's brother. We stayed and loved the country but found some of the politicians a bit hard to tolerate. But there were great times. Doris Lessing (now in her 90s and one of the world's most respected novelists) came to some of the parties at Robert's house in Lusaka, a place called The Stoep. We were young and some of the parties were quite wild."

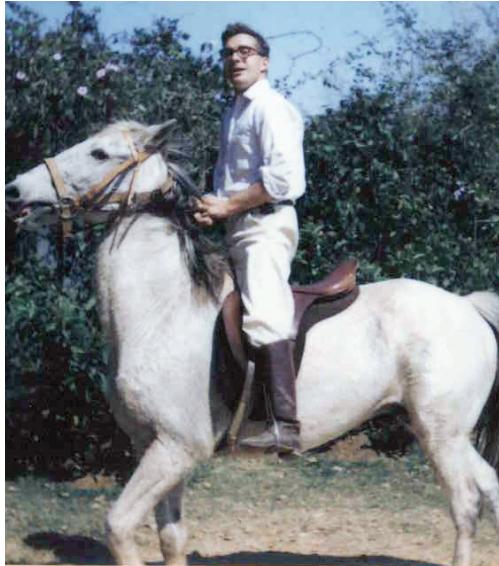
Public politics as well as private parties were wild in those days. In 1956, North and South Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively) were tied to Nyasaland (Malawi) in the British-inspired Central African Federation (CAF) which started in 1963 and ended in 1963.

Europeans in Southern Rhodesia were keen to draw closer to Northern Rhodesia because of that country's copper wealth. Blacks in Northern Rhodesia were nervous about economic union between three very different territories and feared the spread northwards of Southern Rhodesia's quasi-apartheid system. Whites who wanted to see a one-man one-vote system in the CAF were sometimes physically attacked, spat on in the street or dubbed Marxist, Leninist, Maoist or more frequently "members of the BBC – Bloody British Communists."

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CHANGING HISTORY

The two devised a scheme that allowed the new government to cheaply acquire the rights of nearly all mineral royalties that had previously belonged to the British South Africa Company (BSAC) which had expected to sell them to the new state of Zambia for about £35 million



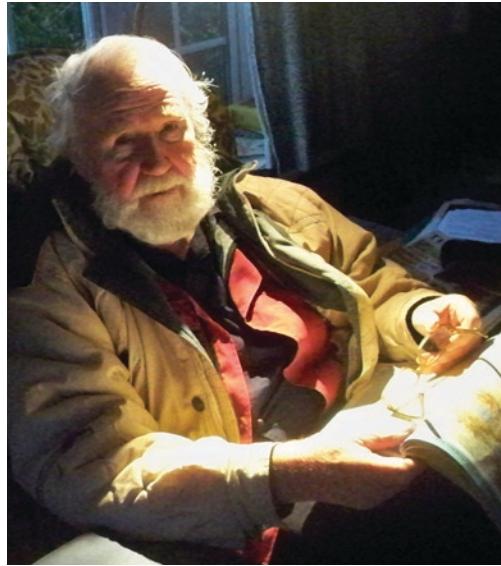
Robert Oakeshott (*Picture: Johnny Grimond*)

The respected Africanist Professor Terence Ranger of Oxford University was hurled into a swimming pool in Salisbury after expressing his concern about the future of the white race in Central and Southern Africa because of white arrogance and legalized racial discrimination.

Doris Lessing was a member of the Southern Rhodesia Communist Party, then the world's smallest. She says that she joined to feel free mentally and to meet interesting people, many of them Lithuanian Jews who were as different from average white settlers as chalk is from cheese.

ROBERT OAKESHOTT was the son of Sir Walter Oakeshott, a distinguished public school headmaster who became the rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. Robert cut a quintessentially eccentric English figure in Lusaka as the territory moved from colonial status towards independence almost immediately after the end of CAF.

After military service he went up to Balliol College, Oxford, where he read classics. After university, he became a journalist writing first for the provincial daily newspaper the *Sunderland Echo* in North-East England and then the *Financial Times*, serv-



Mike Faber (*Picture: Trevor Grundy*)

ing that important paper first in Paris and then Southern Rhodesia and later on South Africa.

Just before 1964, both Oakeshott and Faber went to work for Kenneth Kaunda who was then the undisputed leader of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and Prime Minister designate in the Ministries of Finance and the Office of Development Planning. The Minister for Finance was the well-educated, personable young African from the minority Lozi ethnic group in Western Northern Rhodesian, Arthur Wina. He had little no experience in the world of finance and all government departments were run by British colonial civil servants, who were scrupulously fair and but staggeringly unimaginative when it came to understanding nationalism.

Oakeshott and Faber – so sympathetic to the African cause – made enemies aplenty.

The two devised a scheme that allowed the new government to cheaply acquire the rights of nearly all mineral royalties that had previously belonged to the British South Africa Company (BSAC) which had expected to sell them to the new state of Zambia for about £35 million. After the implementation of the Oakeshott/Faber/Kaunda/Wina strat-



Andrew Sardanis

egy – it was supported by most of the British press, especially the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* – the BSA Company agreed to accept a mere £4million, half of which was contributed by the British Government.

AT THE END of Federation in December 1963, Northern Rhodesia's Ministry of Finance had significantly enhanced financial resources. All eyes were on Kaunda and his unknown and untested team in Lusaka. That was not because politicians, businessmen and international financiers in Washington or London had a soft spot for black nationalists. It was because this was the height of the Cold War. American and British politicians were anxious that the new men and women in Lusaka responsible for running the copper industry did not respond to siren voices from Moscow or Peking.

Just over a decade later in Lusaka in 1975 when I was the *Financial Times* correspondent in Zambia, a prominent American economist told me, “In those days, we didn't give a hoot what African leaders said about loving Marx and Lenin as long as they stayed within the West's economic magic circle. Almost to a man, they did.”

One of Mike Faber's first actions was to



Kenneth Kaunda

write a detailed, authoritative paper for the ministry arguing that the previous (colonial) Northern Rhodesian government's approach to recovering the mineral rights was entirely wrong.

Instead of estimating the present value of the royalties were they to be received for the balance of their life, the new policy Faber proposed was to question the legality of the rights and to criticize earlier British governments for allowing the BSA Company to pocket the royalties, even despite the fact that Colonial Office records showed that the British government knew that the mineral rights in question did not cover some of the most productive and profitable mines on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt.

Not only did some senior Colonial Official officials know this but they went out of their way to keep such information unavailable and unknown to the new Zambian Government.

It was this story of past lack of attention to detail about the activities of a vast multi-national company in Africa that gave power to a 33-page White Paper (written by Robert Oakshott) and published on the eve of the last round of negotiations on the terms of Zambia's Independence Constitution.

“In those days, we didn't give a hoot what African leaders said about loving Marx and Lenin as long as they stayed within the West's economic magic circle”

CHANGING HISTORY

Asked how much Zambia would now pay for the mineral rights – at this time they were providing the BSA Company with £1 million a month tax free and with over 20 more years to run – Wina replied, “Nothing!”

It won the support of the *Financial Times* and of other important opinion makers in Britain and eventually led to the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, instructing his Commonwealth Secretary that the BSA Company should be told that they would have to settle for what they could get.

A long-standing argument between Britain and UNIP about who should pay what to the BSA Company for the unexpired portion of that company's mineral rights was unresolved even as tea cups rattled as a garden party at Government House hours before Independence on the evening of 23 October 1964.

In 1962, the BSA Company had worldwide investments of around £55 million but only one sixth of that amount in Northern Rhodesia, where it earned very large and mainly untaxed royalties remitted every year to shareholders in London.

Economists attached to UNIP, and Arthur Wina's Ministry of Finance, estimated that the country could lose as much as £100 million over the next quarter century because, under the terms of long-standing contracts, the BSA Company would receive annual royalties until 1986.

Meanwhile, an internal minute prepared by Rab Butler, the Conservative Secretary of State at the Central Africa Office in London before the 1964 election in Britain, indicated British interest in discussions. It said that the British Government hoped that the Northern Rhodesian Government's aim would be to conclude an "honorary business transaction" which would launch Zambia's honesty and good name onto the international market place.

The memo added, "The more responsible UNIP leaders are anxious to avoid having to expropriate the mineral royalties as they realize the damage this could do to their reputation as a responsible government. On the other hand they have to reckon with their more militant rank and file, many of whom would favour outright seizure."

In his book *The High Price of Principles*,

Richard Hall (the first editor of the *Times of Zambia*, who was also the Zambian correspondent for the *London Observer*) tells how shortly before Independence, even Kaunda was prepared to pay the BSA Company £50 million spread over until 1986 in equal yearly payments of £2, 250,000 tax free a year in London. Some in UNIP believed that the entire £50 million should be raised immediately and paid to the BSA Company to settle the matter once and for all.

"At this point, a long and detailed study of the BSA Company was made available by a local journalist," Hall wrote.

Hall was close to Kaunda so no prizes for guessing who it was. He went on – "It was circulated around the Cabinet and the revelations about the frail foundations upon which the general rights had been based produced a dramatic change in attitudes. The idea of paying £50 million, or anything like it, was jettisoned."

Richard Hall, who went on to write an interesting book about the relationship between the giant conglomerate LONRHO and certain African politicians called *My Life with Tiny – a Biography of Tiny Rowland*, published by Faber & Faber, London, in 1987, said that in the late 1950s Arthur Wina had clustered around him several young white economists of radical tendencies. "They were overjoyed by the way events were turning out in this confrontation with a capitalist dinosaur (the BSA Company). It was the fulfillment of undergraduate dreams."

Asked in September 1963 how much Zambia would now pay for the mineral rights – at this time they were providing the BSA Company with £1 million a month tax free and with over 20 more years to run – Wina replied, "Nothing!"

Hall wrote, "The Zambians denied all responsibility and if Britain wanted to pay compensation that was her affair. After all, the British Treasury and the BSA Company shareholders had been the principal beneficiaries of the royalties. However, the Zambians were willing to make a gesture of good-

will. They would contribute £2 million. It was a drop of £48 million in two months.”

The Zambians, mainly through Mike Faber and Robert Oakeshott, piled on the pressure by releasing a White Paper, the result of months of research. Hall said, “Written in a style which contrived to be at once elegant and fierce by a former *Financial Times* staff man who was part of the Wina entourage, the document indicted both the BSA Company and Britain through a close examination of events from 1890 onwards.”

A spokesman for the BSA Company described the White Paper as “propaganda” which must have been music in the ears of both Faber and Oakeshott who went on to become influential economic advisers to Dr Kaunda after Independence.

Two former public schoolboys from the heart of the English establishment were close to the decision making process in a government about to become a leader of the Commonwealth, a prominent participant within the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and a key member of the African Frontline States in the war against white rule in Southern Rhodesia (under Ian Smith) and later on, the fight against the South African apartheid regime.

Of course, their loyalty to Zambia was never in doubt but it is only now that their value to Dr Kaunda and UNIP is being recognized – though their roles in the humiliation of the BSA Company in 1964 were touched upon in Andrew Sardanis’s *Africa – Another Side of the Coin* (I.B. Tauris, 2003).

AND SO IT WAS that Arthur Bottomley, Britain’s Commonwealth Secretary, took a plane to Lusaka accompanied by the BSA Company representative, Paul Emrys-Evans. Bottomley was delighted to be the first Labour minister to represent Britain at an African independence festival.

Legend has it that when he stepped down at Lusaka airport, Bottomley said to Dr Kaunda – “My word, Kenneth, it’s nice to be in Gambia.” That night a reader of the

news in the Kitwe studios of a local radio station referred to the arrival in Lusaka of “Mr Arthur Commonly, the Commonwealth Secretary.”

Britain offered £2 million to the BSA Company if Zambia would provide the other £2 million, making it all just a paltry £4 million compared to the original asking price of £50 million. But the Zambians would not accept Britain’s offer. They insisted – and Hall explains – that this would be contrary to their position that London must accept responsibility for payment and that their own £2 million was nothing more than a gift. Bottomley considered flying back to London to seek advice from Harold Wilson but was told over the phone to accept what the Zambians had proposed.

“Later that evening, as 1,200 tribal dancers were performing under arc-lights in the stadium, one of Wina’s radical economists arrived, bearded and wearing sandals. Beside the main stand he found a huddle of journalists discussing their stories for the next day’s papers.”

“The bearded economist (Richard Hall failed to say it was Mike Faber) drew from his pocket a piece of crumpled blue paper. On it, hand-written, were the terms of a statement prepared by a group of officials. ‘The basis of an agreement has been reached...’ A few more undramatic phrases pronounced the death warrant for the dreams of Cecil Rhodes (after whom the two Rhodesias had been named) for the company which had ruled a region seven times the size of Britain.

“Soon afterwards, Zambia was born. A flame was lit and £5,000 worth of fireworks were set-off. In the centre of the fireworks was a vast setpiece reading “Kaunda.”

Robert Oakeshott and Mike Faber looked on and, of course, joined in the applause.

Legend has it that when he stepped down at Lusaka airport, Bottomley said to Dr Kaunda – “My word, Kenneth, it’s nice to be in Gambia”

Trevor Grundy is a British based journalist, author and researcher who lived in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996

Welcome to the Lockdown Olympics

Drones, missiles and gunships, oh my, writes **Dave Zirin**

The number of troops in Lockdown London will exceed the forces the UK has had in Afghanistan

As many as 48,000 security forces, 13,500 troops. Surface to air missiles stationed on top of residential apartment buildings. A sonic weapon that disperses crowds by creating “head splitting pain.” Unmanned drones peering down from the skies. A safe-zone, cordoned off by an 11 mile, electrified fence, ringed with trained agents and 55 teams of attack dogs.

One would be forgiven for thinking that these were the counter-insurgency tactics used by US army bases in Iraq and Afghanistan, or perhaps the military methods taught to third world despots at the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning Georgia. But instead of being used in a war zone or the theater of occupation, they in fact make up the very visible security apparatus in London for the 2012 Summer Olympics.

London, which has the most street cameras per capita of any city on earth, has for the last seven years since the terror attacks of 7/7/05, been a city whose political leaders would spare no expense to monitor its own citizens. But the Olympic operation goes above and beyond anything we've ever seen when a Western democracy hosts the games. Not even China in 2008 used drone planes or ringed the proceedings with a massive, high-voltage fence. But here is London, preparing a counter insurgency, and parking an aircraft carrier right in the

Thames. Here is London adding “scanners, biometric ID cards, number-plate and facial-recognition CCTV systems, disease tracking systems, new police control centres and checkpoints.”

Stephen Graham at the *Guardian* refers to the entire state of affairs as “Lockdown London” as well as “the UK's biggest mobilisation of military and security forces since the second world war.” He is not exaggerating in the slightest. The number of troops will exceed the forces the UK has had in Afghanistan.

It's not just the costs or the incredible invasion into people's privacy. It's the powers being given to police under the 2006 “London Olympic Games Act” which empowers not only the army and police, but also private security forces to deal with “security issues” using physical force. These “security issues” have been broadly defined to include everything from “terrorism” to peaceful protesters, to labor unions, to people selling boot-leg Olympic products on the streets, to taking down any corporate presence that doesn't have the Olympic seal of approval. To help them with the last part, there will be “brand protection teams” set loose around the city. These “teams” will also operate inside Olympic venues to make sure no one “wears clothes or accessories with commercial messages other than the manufacturers’ who are official sponsors.

The security operation also means the kind of street harassment of working class youth that will sound familiar in the United States. As the *Guardian* reported, “Officers have powers to move on anyone considered to be engaged in antisocial behaviour, whether they are hanging around the train station, begging, soliciting, loitering in hoodies or deemed in any way to be causing a nuisance.”

Not to shock anyone, but there are no signs that any of the security apparatus will be dismantled once the Olympics are over. Local police forces have just been given an inordinate number of new toys and the boxes have been opened, the receipts tossed away.

London will be left with a high tech police force, terrible debt, higher taxes, with a camera around every corner. The only people who will leave this party enriched will be the private security industry who will tout “the peace” as their personal accomplishment, encouraging more of the global 1% to get more guards, more walls, and more separation from the great unwashed.

There is no reason that the Olympics have to be this way. There is no reason that an international celebration of sports – particularly sports more diverse than our typical high-carb diet of football, baseball, basketball, and more football – can’t take place without drones and aircraft carriers. There is no reason athletes from across the globe can’t join together and showcase their physical potential.

But the Olympics aren’t about sport any more than the Iraq War was about democracy. The Olympics are not about athletes. And they’re definitely not about bringing together “the community of Nations.” They are a neoliberal Trojan Horse aimed at bringing in business and rolling back the most basic civil liberties.

In many ways, this is what the games have always been. From Hitler’s Berlin Olympics in 1936, to the slaughter of stu-

dents in 1968 in Mexico City, to the Gang Sweeps in Los Angeles in 1984, to Beijing’s mass displacement of citizens in 2008, the “crackdown” has always been a part of the Olympic games. But in the post 9/11 world, the stakes are even higher to expose this for what it is. The Olympics have become the spoonful of sugar to help the medicine to down, and the medicine is that our elected leaders have seen the enemy, and it is all of us.

**The Olympics
aren’t about sport
any more than
the Iraq War was
about democracy.
The Olympics are
not about athletes**

Mind the Gap: London’s Olympic Games are Falling Down

Upon returning to the United States after two weeks amidst London’s pre-Olympic terrain, I have some final thoughts that I hope the International Olympic Committee and the UK’s Tory Prime Minister David Cameron take to heart. I also hope that the Olympics lead corporate sponsors, British Petroleum, Dow Chemical, and McDonalds take a time-out from devising the latest cutting edge trends in evil and listen as well. Your games are in trouble. Your games are in trouble because the people who actually have to live in London alongside the Olympiad are mad as hell. And it’s only May.

After two weeks of listening to everyone with an opinion about the Olympics – in other words, “everyone” – it’s clear the entire affair suffers from Annie Hall Syndrome. At the start of Woody Allen’s 1977 classic movie, Woody talks about the two elderly women at the Catskill resort who complain that the food is terrible while also adding, “And such small portions!” Londoners are annoyed at the inconvenience brought by the Olympics, incensed by the security crackdown... and outraged that there are no tickets available.

All Olympics produce debt like a cow produces methane. But this one happens in the context of a double-dip recession

This is hardly a petty complaint. Corporate partners have gobbled up the seats, leaving the overwhelming majority of the city with their nose pressed up against the glass. In London, where pubs dot every block and open onto the streets after work in a daily party open to all comers, this comprises a cardinal sin. As Neil, one of many bartenders I encountered said to me, “It’s like a big to-do that no one invited us to attend!”

The security crackdown and constant paranoia are discomfiting enough (fears are being disseminated about the Irish. Seriously.) But what singes the locals is the idea that the Olympics are a party that will stick them with the bill: a hangover from hell without the drunken rapture that by all rights should precede it.

All Olympics produce debt like a cow produces methane. But this one happens in the context of a double-dip recession. It happens with round-the-clock UK media coverage of the “Euro-panic”, as voters in Greece are threatening to tell Angela Merkel, David Cameron, and the European Union to take their austerity agenda and cram it sideways. The fears of crisis and debt surround even the cheeriest propaganda about the looming Games.

The BBC led every broadcast while I was there with these two separate stories. First, “Crisis in Greece” and then with a different anchor, reporters, and even music, “Getting Ready for the Olympics.”

Nowhere was any discussion that the 2004 Athens Olympics, came in at over 10 times the proposed budget. Those games aggravated the crisis Greece is currently slogging through, with the country’s homeless now even squatting in dilapidated, unused Olympic structures.

There is scant discussion that these London games could come in at 10 times their proposed 2005 budget as well, causing another “debt crisis” that will be taken from the hides – not to mention the pensions – of the UK’s workers. At several events involving trade union workers and bureaucrats,

the message was repeated to me over and over: “When the Olympics are over, the gloves will come off.

In other words, faced with the pressures of austerity and recession, Cameron and company are cooling their jets until the Olympics are over and then they will try to do their level best to disembowel the unions and further cut taxes for the wealthy. Why wait until after the Olympics? Because Cameron needs the unions cooperation to make sure that the games come off on time and on schedule. T

hey need to make sure the unions don’t take strike action or join the demonstrations planned for July 28th, the first Saturday of the Games.

This is why they agreed to sizable bonuses for London’s subway workers. Anything to make sure that the Olympics show London, and more critically David Cameron, in the best possible light.

I have no doubt that all the top sports reporters will write uxoriously about London and all its quaint customs, and the cameras will point at only those cheering the events on, waving the Union Jack.

But make no mistake: the Olympic Torch is not the most noteworthy thing passed from Greece to London. It’s the looming struggle against austerity. David Cameron might want to wait until after the Olympics to “take the gloves off” but he’s not the only one willing to go bare knuckles over the future of the UK.

Alexander Wolff, the great journalist from *Sports Illustrated* is stationed in London and wrote, “Every time I come to England I’m struck by how the lowbrow mingles with the high.” But in London the “lowbrow” are angry and the “highbrow” are scared. They mingle only in the shared sense that a storm is coming to the British Isles. The summer will be filled with games. But an epic fall awaits.”

CT

Dave Zirin is the author of “The John Carlos Story” (Haymarket).

Corporations out of control

Michael Meacher is shocked by the shenanigans at Glencore-Xstrata

The joint stock company, the foundation unit of modern capitalism, is dead. But corporate managerial capitalism is alive and kicking. Whatever the constitutional theory that shareholders are in ultimate control, this myth is daily confounded by repeated evidence of management takeover from the inside.

Shareholdings have become so remote and so fragmented, and the tentacles of the leviathan they purport to oversee so dissipated, that effective power has now long since settled firmly on the top management.

But the extremes to which this is now being taken are starkly illustrated by the most recent goings-on at the Glencore-Xstrata tie-up. The managements of the two giant companies have now fixed it so that they personally get £240m payouts, and further more they've fixed it so that the merger can't go ahead unless these colossal pay hefts are accepted. Game, set and match to the corporate fixers on their internal palace coup.

The details are eye-watering.

Mick Davis, Chief Executive of Xstrata, the Australian mining company, who will retain the same role in the merged company, apparently need a "retention package" of £29m to stay in the job!

Small inducement to stay

As a small further inducement he is being given shares worth some £6m plus have 2 million shares released to him early as a result of the deal, worth £23m at current prices. That's £58m being awarded to him to stay where he already is.

Aside from Davis, the Xstrata management, 73 of them, also have their snouts deeply into the trough. They will get retention packages amounting to a total of £172m, so they will have to make do with a mere £2.4m each. But since that's hardly enough to keep the wolf from the door, some managers are also getting £44m payoffs from their existing roles, plus a further premature long-term bonus scheme pay-out, plus another £25m share hand-out as part of new long-term incentive plans.

That's now the going thing about long-term incentive plans – you get the money at the outset!

This is the new quantitative easing for corporate welfare. It's not so much the inmates who've taken over the asylum as the barrow boys who've usurped the old traditional fuddy-duddy capitalists.

It's like Thatcher's hard-nosed ruthless asset-stripers dispossessing the old-style gentlemen yeomanry. It's pitiful how they're being led like lambs to the slaughter – it really couldn't have happened to a nicer set of people.

But it does leave open how this new breed of ultra-greed-driven mercenaries can be reined in. Shareholders will never do that.

Only a supervisory Enterprise Council, required as the centrepiece of new corporate legislation applying to all major companies, which awards voting rights equally between management and workforce representatives, will bring unlicensed gluttony back to earth. **CT**

Michael Meacher is the Labour Party Member of Parliament for Oldham West and Royton in England

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