

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE | JULIETTE VOLCLER
WHO'S REALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WAR DEATHS | EDWARD S. HERMAN
CITIES VERSUS WALL STREET | PETER DREIER

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WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 76



THE CITY THAT AMERICA FORGOT

LINH DINH VISITS CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY



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ColdType

ISSUE 76

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

Who's really responsible for war deaths?

Edward S. Herman says US political leaders are the ones who are at fault, not war protesters

It has long been a practice of members of the war party, including people like New York Congressman Peter King, to assail critics of ongoing wars for allegedly doing injury to our fighting men by their hostile, unpatriotic and even traitorous actions and statements. The targets of the anti-war protesters may be the killing or torturing of foreign soldiers and civilians by US military personnel, or telling lies about these and other actions, or questioning the military plans and intentions of US leaders. These hostile criticisms are said to jeopardize our troops by disclosing military secrets. They also purportedly undermine public support of the war effort at home by calling into question its effects and rationale.

One difficulty with these lines of attack on war critics is that they may be easily applied to any disclosure of military events, even pro-war propaganda. Reports of battle casualties, even if understated, may cause the public to react negatively to the war, and some war propagandists have assailed the media for reporting straightforward facts, including official reports. Peter Braestrup's *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington* (Westview: 1977), a Freedom House-sponsored study of media coverage of the Tet offensive during the Vietnam War, was notable for its accusations of excessive media negativism

and failure to actively support the war effort. Braestrup explicitly accused the media of responsibility for losing the war. In his view, a properly working media would suppress negative news, stress the positive, and serve as a propaganda arm of the military establishment. This book, highly regarded in the mainstream, would have made CBS's Walter Cronkite and many of his media associates traitorous for reporting discouraging Pentagon handouts. Logically the high level military personnel who provided these handouts, or made even more pessimistic assessments of the war's progress, should have kept quiet or lied, and they also should have been condemned and shared with the media the guilt of losing the war through failed news management. (For details on Braestrup's errors and contradictions, and the warm and uncritical reception given him by the pundits, see *Manufacturing Consent*, pp. 211-221 and Appendix 3.)

US governments have often lied about war casualties, underplaying both US casualties and, especially, the number of civilians killed in "collateral damage." If they do lie, the eventual uncovering of these lies may hurt the war effort, so that the lies themselves, likely to backfire, may possibly have been an antiwar move engineered by antiwar plotters intending to discredit government claims! In short, featuring the media's role in military failures opens a Pandora's

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box that can reach far into the media and military-political establishments.

Another difficulty with the claim that antiwar actions and disclosures are responsible for US military casualties is the regular failure to show any such effects. The military has not been able to supply a single piece of evidence that the massive disclosures of US diplomatic and military actions in its recent wars by WikiLeaks and Bradley Manning resulted in a single US casualty. Those documents described events of the past, and apparently disclosed no military plans that would be of logistical interest to enemy forces.

The most dramatic release in the WikiLeaks trove was a video showing a US helicopter marksman in Iraq machine-gunning civilians on the ground, and doing this gleefully. The war-makers would never have released and/or shown such a video, which displays the unpleasant reality of “collateral damage,” which in this case was clearly not very collateral (and Wikileaks gives it a more honest designation: “Collateral Murder,” April 5, 2010). This video would certainly not have enlightened the insurgents fighting US forces in Iraq, but it might well have affected the public at home. It is just such kinds of reality and truth hidden behind the war party’s and media’s filtered and vetted version of US wars that poses the real threat. Those hidden truths, if allowed to proliferate, might prevent, shorten, or terminate wars. But by the same token, if those hidden truths can be kept out of sight, wars can flourish.

So who was responsible for the 58,000 US soldiers’ deaths during the Vietnam war? Hardly the protesters, who if they had any affect on US casualties reduced them by their social disturbances and threats of greater disruption at home, which almost surely contributing to the decisions of the leaders to disengage (see Noam Chomsky, *For Reasons of State* [Vintage: 1973], chap. 5, “On the Limits of Civil Disobedience”; Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War* [Pantheon:

1985], chap. 25, “The Tet Offensive’s Impact on Washington”). The responsibility for the 58,000 US military deaths, as well as that of several million Vietnamese, clearly must be allocated to the US national leadership, from Truman to Johnson and Nixon and their top advisers and underlings like Walt Rostow and Robert McNamara. It was these men (and they were all men) who made the decisions to support the French reoccupation of Indochina after World War II, and then took over the task of imposing a minority government on that distant country by violence. These officials made up a substantial cohort of war criminals, if Nuremberg principles were universally applied, which they clearly are not.

This official cohort pursued a long war of aggression in Vietnam because the United States had great and superior military power and its leaders were determined to use it to prevent the spread of communism or any independent locus of power. They were (and remain) arrogant, ideological, and almost proudly ignorant, and they were (and remain) willing to expend very large resources and kill almost without limit in pursuit of domination. In their ideological system “communism” was an integrated global monolith seeking to control the world (a pretty case of transference). They underestimated the seriousness of the split between the Soviet Union and Communist China, as well as the strength of Vietnamese nationalism and distrust of China, points which they were prepared to recognize openly only after a long and costly war, the devastation and mass killing of Vietnamese, and the sacrifice of 58,000 Americans. (See David K. Shipler, “Robert McNamara and the Ghosts of Vietnam,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 10, 1997.)

While steadily escalating the violence in Vietnam, the US leaders pretended to offer negotiations for a compromise settlement, but they were unwilling to make serious concessions because of the domestic political costs of losing to Communists, the

weight they gave to “credibility,” and their belief that the enemy must eventually surrender to the vastly greater US military and killing capability. This was an illustration of the “perils of dominance,” which impels a dominant power to underestimate the willingness of a target to resist and accept devastation and death. (See Gareth Porter, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* [Univ. of California Press, 2006].) The US leadership marveled at the willingness of the Vietnamese leaders to absorb large casualties, regarding this as a moral failing on their part, while never recognizing that the willingness to kill and devastate to avoid loss of face and the power to control a distant land had a moral component.

It was also part of the genius of the managers of the US death machine, which included (and includes) a supportive mass media, that they were able to pretend that this country was combating North Vietnamese “aggression,” seeking to preserve an “independent South Vietnam,” and trying to allow the South Vietnamese populace “freedom of choice” and “self-determination.” They even coined the phrase “internal aggression,” that allowed the fact that South Vietnam and the South Vietnamese – the home and population base of the National Liberation Front, the main oppositional military force – were fighting the US and mercenary forces, to constitute aggressing against the invader of their own territory!

The most quoted phrase arising from the Vietnam war was possibly that “It became necessary to destroy the town [BenTre] in order to save it.” (See Peter Arnett, *Live From the Battlefield: From Vietnam to Baghdad, 35 Years in the World’s War Zones* [Touchstone: 1995], p. 255). Save it for what? Control of any remnants by the real aggressor and his imposed minority regime! The free elections on integration of the artificially divided North and South Vietnam called for by the 1954 Geneva Ac-

ords were not held because Ho Chi Minh would have won and ruled the integrated segments, as Eisenhower conceded in his autobiography. But this could be expunged in a Free Press and the true aggressor could be combating that internal aggression in the interest of free choice. We may note that back in 1966 the State Department stated as regards Vietnam that “We seek to insure that the South Vietnamese have the right and opportunity to control their own destiny,” which it announced in the same time frame as US forces helped crush Buddhist and other non-communist elements within South Vietnam that opposed the military puppets the US military had installed. [See George Kahin, *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* [Knopf: 1986], chap 16, “The Final Polarization”). And in the classic of Orwellian truth inversion, the *New York Times’s* James Reston could claim that we were in Vietnam to demonstrate “that no state [i.e., North Vietnam] shall use military force or the threat of military force to achieve its political objectives.” In fact, military force was all that the United States brought to that distant land in its pursuit of domination.

In the case of the Iraq invasion-occupation of 2003-2012, here again it was hardly the protesters who were responsible for the 4,488 US military deaths (let alone the million or so Iraqi deaths), it was George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, the politicians like Joseph Biden and Peter King who supported and voted for the war, and Bill Keller, Judith Miller, Rupert Murdoch and the rest of the media cohort that helped offset the opposition of the masses of protesters who didn’t want our boys to be sent abroad to participate in a war of aggression based on big lies, and get killed in the process. The weapons of mass destruction were not there, and the follow-up idea that the war was in the interest of Iraqi democracy was as laughably fraudulent as the US quest for self-determination in Vietnam.

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These issues have risen again with Edward Snowden's release of National Security Agency documents showing that organization's massive collection of electronic communications of US and foreign citizens as well as officials at home and abroad. The position of NSA and other officials is that the NSA information-gathering programs were an instrument of the war on terror and aimed at terrorists, so they were therefore legitimate and Snowden's action was not only illegal but traitorous. Secretary of State John Kerry said on CNN that "People may die as a consequence of what this man did. It is possible the United States will be attacked because terrorists may now know how to protect themselves, in some way or another, that they didn't know before." ("CNN Newsroom," June 25, 2013.) Kerry, of course, is familiar with deaths in war, having admittedly killed women and children during his stint as a soldier in Vietnam. He offers no evidence now that Snowden's released information is likely to aid the terrorists, and he does not discuss the possibility that what had been released might save lives by providing the public with war information that the war-makers try to keep under cover.

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Edward S. Herman is Professor Emeritus of Finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, an economist and media analyst. He is author of numerous books, including *Corporate Control*, *Corporate Power* (1981), *The Real Terror Network* (1982), *Manufacturing Consent* (1988, with Noam Chomsky)

Congressman Peter King has also come forward with assertions that not only Snowden but his media interrogator and information transmitter Glenn Greenwald have been "putting American lives at risk" and that Greenwald himself should very possibly be subject to legal charges. ("Anderson Cooper 360°," CNN, June 11, 2013.) King says that Greenwald has threatened to release the names of CIA agents abroad and "The last time that was done in this country, you saw a CIA station chief murdered in Greece."

In fact Greenwald has never made such a threat, and King is also wrong about the Greek killing of the CIA station chief, Richard Welch, which he attributes to the release of the victim's name by *Counterspy* magazine. But Welch's cover was blown

well before the *Counterspy* publication, among other reasons by his occupation of a residence well-known to be that of the CIA's station chief. ("CIA Press Exploitation Scored," Facts on File World News Digest, Jan. 13, 1978). But the *Counterspy*-Welch murder tie is a well-embedded patriotic untruth, and King can use it freely.

In sum, as with Vietnam and Iraq (among many others) those responsible for the deaths of American boys fighting wars in distant locales are not the protesters, whistleblowers, and journalists like Greenwald, who call attention to the bases of war decisions and the lies and suppressions that hide from the public the real reasons and results of those decisions. On the contrary, it is the decision-makers and their spokespersons and apologists who bear primary responsibility for American deaths.

Daniel Somers, a 30-year-old Iraq war veteran who committed suicide on June 10, 2013, was also very clear in his suicide note that the blame for his own death and the horrors that he helped inflict on Iraqis go to the government deciders, and nobody else. He says that his recollections of what he had done were unbearable; that to resume ordinary life after what he did "would be the mark of a sociopath....To force me to do these things and then participate in the ensuing coverup is more than any government has the right to demand. Then, the same government has turned around and abandoned me." He went on to write, "Any blame rests with them." ("I Am Sorry That It Has Come To This," Gawker, June 22, 2013.) Daniel Somers confirms that the mainstream has the villains and heroes upside down, **CT**

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Edward S. Herman is Professor Emeritus of Finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, an economist and media analyst. He is author of numerous books, including "Corporate Control, Corporate Power," "The Real Terror Network," "Manufacturing Consent" "with Noam Chomsky)

An act of piracy

John Pilger on the forcing down of the Bolivian president's plane

Imagine the aircraft of the President of France being forced down in Latin America on “suspicion” that it was carrying a political refugee to safety – and not just any refugee but someone who has provided the people of the world with proof of criminal activity on an epic scale.

Imagine the response from Paris, let alone the “international community”, as the governments of the West call themselves. To a chorus of baying indignation from Whitehall to Washington, Brussels to Madrid, heroic special forces would be dispatched to rescue their leader and, as sport, smash up the source of such flagrant international gangsterism. Editorials would cheer them on, perhaps reminding readers that this kind of piracy was exhibited by the German Reich in the 1930s.

The forcing down of Bolivian President Evo Morales's plane – denied air space by France, Spain and Portugal, followed by his 14-hour confinement while Austrian officials demanded to “inspect” his aircraft for the “fugitive” Edward Snowden – was an act of air piracy and state terrorism. It was a metaphor for the gangsterism that now rules the world and the cowardice and hypocrisy of bystanders who dare not speak its name.

In Moscow for a summit of gas-producing nations, Morales had been asked about Snowden who remains trapped in Moscow

airport. “If there were a request [for political asylum],” he said, “of course, we would be willing to debate and consider the idea.” That was clearly enough provocation for the Godfather. “We have been in touch with a range of countries that had a chance of having Snowden land or travel through their country,” said a US state department official.

The French – having squealed about Washington spying on their every move, as revealed by Snowden – were first off the mark, followed by the Portuguese. The Spanish then did their bit by enforcing a flight ban of their airspace, giving the Godfather's Viennese hirelings enough time to find out if Snowden was indeed invoking article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”

Those paid to keep the record straight have played their part with a cat-and-mouse media game that reinforces the Godfather's lie that this heroic young man is running from a system of justice, rather than pre-ordained, vindictive incarceration that amounts to torture: ask Bradley Manning and the living ghosts in Guantanamo.

Historians seem to agree that the rise of fascism in Europe might have been averted had the liberal or left political class understood the true nature of its enemy. The

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parallels today are very different; but the Damocles sword over Snowden, like the casual abduction of the Bolivian president, ought to stir us into recognising the true nature of the enemy.

Snowden's revelations are not merely about privacy, nor civil liberty, nor even mass spying. They are about the unmentionable: that the democratic facades of the United States now barely conceal a systematic gangsterism historically identified with if not necessarily the same as fascism. Soon after, a US drone killed 16 people in North Waziristan, "where many of the world's most dangerous militants live", said the few paragraphs I read.

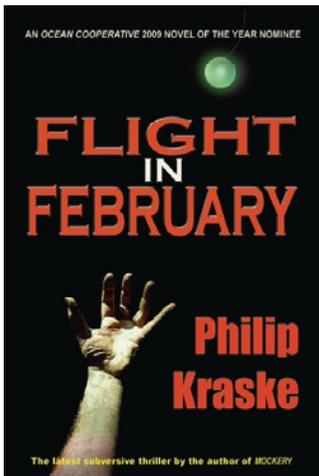
That by far the world's most dangerous militants had hurled the drones was not a consideration. President Obama personally sends them every Tuesday.

In his acceptance of the 2005 Nobel Prize in Literature, Harold Pinter referred to "a vast tapestry of lies, upon which we feed". He asked why "the systematic brutality, the widespread atrocities" of the Soviet Union were well known in the West while America's crimes were "superficially recorded, let alone documented, let alone acknowl-

edged". The most enduring silence of the modern era covered the extinction and dis-possession of countless human beings by a rampant America and its agents. "But you wouldn't know it," said Pinter. "It never happened. Even while it was happening it never happened. It didn't matter. It was of no interest."

This hidden history – not really hidden, of course, but excluded from the consciousness of societies drilled in American myths and priorities – has never been more vulnerable to exposure. Edward Snowden's whistleblowing, like that of Bradley Manning and Julian Assange and WikiLeaks, threatens to break the silence Pinter described. In revealing a vast Orwellian police state apparatus servicing history's greatest war-making machine, they illuminate the true extremism of the 21st century. Unprecedented, Germany's Der Spiegel has described the Obama administration as "soft totalitarianism". If the penny is finally falling, we might all look closer to home. **CT**

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John Pilger is a journalist, film maker and author. This piece originally appeared in London's Guardian newspaper.



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Whose side are they on?

If US mass media were state-controlled, would they look any different?
asks **Jeff Cohen**

The Edward Snowden leaks have revealed a US corporate media system at war with independent journalism. Many of the same outlets – especially TV news – that missed the Wall Street meltdown and cheer-led the Iraq invasion have come to resemble state-controlled media outlets in their near-total identification with the government as it pursues the now 30-year-old whistleblower.

While an independent journalism system would be dissecting the impacts of NSA surveillance on privacy rights, and separating fact from fiction, US news networks have obsessed on questions like: How much damage has Snowden caused? How can he be brought to justice?

Unfazed by polls showing that half of the American rabble – I mean, public – believe Snowden did a good thing by leaking documentation of NSA spying, TV news panels have usually excluded anyone who speaks for these millions of Americans. Although TV hosts and most panelists are not government officials, some have a penchant for speaking of the government with the pronoun “We.”

After Snowden made it out of Hong Kong to Russia, *New York Times* journalist and CNBC talking head Andrew Ross Sorkin expressed his frustration: “We’ve screwed this up, to even let him get to Russia.” By “we,” he meant the US government.

Last time I checked, Sorkin was working

for the *Times* and CNBC, not the CIA or FBI.

When a huge swath of the country is on the side of the guy-on-the-run and not the government, it’s much easier to see that there’s nothing “objective” or “neutral” about journalists who so closely identify with the spy agencies or Justice Department or White House.

The standard exclusion of dissenting views – panels often span from hawk (“he’s a traitor who needs to be jailed”) to dove (“he may have been well-intentioned but he needs to be jailed”) – offers yet another reason why young people, more libertarian in their views, have turned away from these outlets. Virtually no one speaks for them. While a TIME poll found 53 percent of respondents saying Snowden did “a good thing,” that was the sentiment of 70 percent of those age 18 to 34.

I teach college journalism classes about independent media. New developments like WikiLeaks and independent bloggers like Glenn Greenwald may scare the wits out of establishment media, but they sure don’t scare young people or journalism students.

As media employees at elite outlets have grown cozier with their government and corporate sources (Sorkin is famously close with Wall Street CEOs), they exhibit an almost instinctual antipathy toward those adversarial journalists who challenge powerful elites day after day.

Look at the reactions of some top mainstream journalists to Greenwald, who built up

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a big readership as a solo blogger before moving his blog to *Salon* and then the *Guardian*, where he broke the Snowden/NSA stories. I know several journalism professors who view Greenwald as one of the world's best journalists. He's known as accurate, thorough, well-documented and ethical.

It was Sorkin, the *New York Times* guy, who declared on CNBC that maybe Greenwald should be arrested: "I told you this in the green room – I would arrest him [Snowden] and now I'd almost arrest Glenn Greenwald, who's the journalist who seems to be out there, almost, he wants to help him get to Ecuador."

If it's strange for a journalist to suggest another journalist's arrest, it was almost as strange when Sorkin wrote in a *Times* column that he went down to check out the Occupy Wall Street encampment "after getting a call from the chief executive of a major bank." Sorkin concluded: "As I wandered around the park, it was clear to me that most bankers probably don't have to worry about being in imminent personal danger. This didn't seem like a brutal group – at least not yet."

Another mainstream media star is NBC's David Gregory (seen literally dancing with White House source Karl Rove in 2007). Since he interviewed Greenwald on "Meet the Press," there's been scrutiny of Gregory's factually-misleading question: "To the extent that you have aided and abetted Snowden, even in his current movements, why shouldn't you be charged with a crime?" And of Greenwald's response: "I think it's pretty extraordinary that anybody who would call themselves a journalist would publicly muse about whether or not other journalists should be charged with felonies."

But I'm just as bothered by Gregory's retort – "Well, the question of who's a journalist may be up to a debate with regards to what you're doing" – and the ensuing discussion in mainstream outlets questioning Greenwald's bona fides as a journalist.

A *Washington Post* article ("On NSA disclosures, has Glenn Greenwald become something other than a reporter?") questioned the

blogger's credentials as a journalist because he's also an advocate: "Greenwald has appeared frequently on TV to plead Snowden's case as a whistleblower – an advocacy role many mainstream journalists would be uncomfortable with."

The *Post* article spoke of "the line between journalism – traditionally, the dispassionate reporting of facts – and outright involvement in the news seems blurrier than ever." Libertarian journalist Matt Welch critiqued the article as "historically illiterate."

The truth is that many of the greatest journalists in our country's history – from Ida B. Wells to I.F. Stone – were accurate reporters of fact, but hardly dispassionate. And mainstream outlets have always had hybrid reporter/columnists offering both fact and advocacy; one of the most famous, David Broder, graced the pages of the *Washington Post* for years, including its front page.

Broder was a reporter, columnist and TV talking head – yet no one questioned whether Broder was a genuine journalist. That's because, unlike Greenwald, the reporting and opinions of a David Broder were militantly pro-establishment, pro-bipartisan consensus.

And Broder's not alone as a hybrid reporter/columnist in the mainstream. Let's not forget the delightful pundit who wanted to "almost arrest" Greenwald.

His official *Times* bio states: "Andrew Ross Sorkin is a columnist, chief mergers and acquisitions reporter, and editor of *Dealbook* for the *New York Times*."

The reason Glenn Greenwald's credentials as a journalist are being questioned by some mainstreamers is not that he blurs the line between journalist and advocate. It's because of the anti-establishment content of his journalism and advocacy. **CT**

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Jeff Cohen is an associate professor of journalism and the director of the Park Center for Independent Media at Ithaca College, an founder of the media watch group FAIR, He is the author of "Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media"

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The not-so-simple saga of Edward and Barack

Not to mention Ron Paul, the Saudis, the *New York Times*, and your grandma, writes **Michael I. Niman**

It reads like a political thriller. An NSA spook, Edward Snowden, meets his conscience, blows the whistle on a massive secret attack on the Fourth Amendment, and is pursued globally by an obsessed president. Spice things up with a bit of character development cross-pollinated with a history lesson.

First there's Darth President. His administration has earned the distinction of invoking the Espionage Act of 1917 (a constitutionally questionable World War One relic) more than all other presidents in the previous 96 years combined – by a factor of two. The Obama administration has charged eight people under the act. All previous administrations have charged three.

Then there's Snowden – the high school dropout who landed himself a high-paying spy job and donated 500 bucks to Ron Paul's last presidential campaign.

Add in a tinge of Bible and Snowden becomes a modern-day David taking on Goliath. For intrigue, let's start the story by routing our would-be hero's escape from the evil empire through China and Russia. Hide the whistleblower in the sprawling Moscow airport, play some cat-and-mouse, launch a few rumors as to his destination, then capture a presidential jet or two searching for him, and we've got a news story ready-made for a 24-hour infotainment cycle.

Only we don't really have much real news

here. In the hunt for Snowden, we seem to have missed the forest for the trees. The crime – the big crime with hundreds of millions of victims – is the crime that Snowden blew the whistle on. Someone – and I'm purposely vague here, so bear with me – is subverting all that Net 2.0 stuff we've come to love and upon which we've become dependent to violate our Fourth Amendment rights protecting our privacy.

Okay, many of us have long claimed to assume that the shadowy National Security Agency was always spying on us, but really, most of that was just the alcohol talking. We wish we were important enough for somebody, anybody, to give a damn about us.

Snowden documented that somebody actually does. They care very much about each and every one of us. It turns out the government spends tax money scanning your grandmother's telephone usage for anti-American calling patterns.

Aside from being one of the biggest blockbuster political exposés in our nation's history, this story will also fertilize every loony conspiracy theory that Internet trolls can cook up, further distracting us from the real threats we face, politically, environmentally, and economically. So the challenge is to keep our focus on the ball. Not the cue stick.

Notice I haven't said "the government is spying on us," nor have I identified Snowden

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Snowden is a
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A hired dick
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dope dealer, and,
apparently, you**
.....

as a “government whistleblower.” This is where the story, and the legal case against Snowden, both take a twist. Snowden, while sticking it to the NSA harder than anyone in history, putting the reclusive agency on front pages and computer screens around the world, didn’t actually work for the NSA. It turns out that out that in our corporatocracy, every government service is on the table to be transformed into a revenue-stream for Wall Street, the secret agent business included.

Technically, Snowden is a private eye. A hired dick snooping on your hairstylist, dope dealer, and, apparently, you. The spin doctors have settled on using the word “contractor,” a vague catch-all covering everything from mercenaries to cafeteria workers, to describe him. Sort of like “contract killer.” Snowden was a “contractor.” Technically, he was contracted by Booz Allen Hamilton Incorporated to spy on us. And Booz Allen was contracted by the NSA.

According to *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Booz Allen grosses \$5.76 billion in annual revenues, with 99 percent of that bounty coming from our tax dollars. They’re essentially a shadow government agency with no government oversight or control, as evidenced by their hiring patterns. And they’re not alone. Bloomberg reports that approximately 70 percent of the intelligence budget, which in and of itself is top secret, is handed over to private spook shops – or in Bloomberg’s lexicon, “contracted out.” Snowden is just one of an army of private dicks snooping on your grandparents.

Borrowing a concept and a warning from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, it’s apparent we now have ourselves a mega-billion-dollar, government-funded spook-industrial complex. Politically, this means we now have one more entrenched set of corporate interests who will use their economic power – which, according to the 2011 Supreme Court Citizens United ruling, can now translate directly to political power – to perpetuate their own unnecessary existence. I say

“unnecessary” not because spying is unnecessary, though spying on your grandmother probably is, but because government workers did it cheaper – about 40 percent cheaper, according to Bloomberg. And apparently with greater efficacy on the secrets front.

One advantage the spook-industrial complex has, even over the entrenched military-industrial and prison-industrial complexes, is that the secrecy surrounding the intelligence community and especially its budget isolates this sector from what little scrutiny other government contractors face. Tell the public about how their tax money is being squandered and you activate Darth President. The Obama Justice Department, for example, charged one former NSA executive, Thomas Drake, with violating the Espionage Act of 1917, just for speaking to a reporter about excessive money paid to contractors – essentially blowing the whistle on the private spook game. The non prima facie charges were eventually dropped, but the damage was done, with a clear message to other whistleblowers that this administration is in hunting mode.

This new private spook industry has a vested interest in making sure that the NSA continues to want everybody spied upon always. If this surveillance state slows down and the broad spectrum spying stops, so do the lucrative contracts, the fat executive bonuses, the payouts to Wall Street investors, and so on. Apparently, the need to spy has grown to take on a new dimension – it’s now entrenched in Wall Street’s economy. This, more than any perceived security need, will guarantee the continuing growth of the surveillance state and the incarceration state.

But the private spook twist in the story does undermine the “Edward Snowden, NSA leaker” meme. Snowden did not leak NSA secrets, allegedly blowing the whistle on a criminal conspiracy against the US Constitution. Someone else, as yet unnamed, leaked NSA secrets, to Booz Allen. And no one, not in government or in the press, is looking for that criminal – the one

who gave a private corporation access to our private data.

Snowden informed the press of this whole complex story. That's the second elephant in the closet. The cat-and-mouse game, like the conspiracy theories this whole episode will no doubt fuel, distracts us from the fact that private corporations, aided and abetted by the NSA, are spying on the American people. Where a cop can theoretically get a warrant to snoop, a corporation cannot. With corporate snooping, there is no pretense of oversight.

Corporations are essentially stateless, owing their allegiance only to their stockholders (Remember how Ford, GM, and IBM, for example, sold military and Gestapo equipment to the Third Reich.) Though Booz Allen currently derives almost all of its income from selling its spy services to the US government, it is still very much a multinational corporation, itself owned mostly by the creepy Carlyle Group.

The Carlyle Group is owned in part by the government of the United Arab Emirates and the Saudi royal family. (The bin Laden family divested their Carlyle holdings in October of 2001 after a relative soured the family name.) The group is powerful, with George Bush Senior serving as an advisor at the time George Bush Junior was ramping up the surveillance state Barack Obama now caretakes.

Also troubling, but predictable, is the corporate media response to this story. Snowden blew the whistle to journalist, Glenn Greenwald. Greenwald is a role model for aspiring journalism students. He began as an independent blogger with an impeccable record for accuracy (not shared by much of the mainstream corporate media). He eventually got picked up by the *Guardian* of the UK, one of the world's top news agencies. It's there where Snowden approached him with his blockbuster story, which Greenwald took to press.

Almost as frightening as Snowden's story is the corporate media's response. Not

only have they, for the most part, ignored the real story and focused instead on the whistleblower-on-the-run meme, but some so-called journalists have editorially called for the prosecution of both Snowden and Greenwald, whose crime was not covering up the story. Apparently they would have covered it up had Snowden approached them, in which case we'd have Snowden tucked away in a cage, and no story.

Andrew Ross Sorkin, for example, a *New York Times* reporter, speaking on CNBC, argued for the arrest of Greenwald, the journalist, for reporting the story. NBC's David Gregory, in an interview, suggested to Greenwald that maybe he should be charged with a crime. The *Washington Post's* Paul Farhi questions Greenwald's credentials as a journalist, insinuating that breaking such a daring story is "advocacy" – in this case, I'd say, for preserving the US Constitution, as if censoring the story wouldn't in and of itself be an act of advocacy for a police state.

This later form of advocacy though censorship isn't just acceptable in the mainstream corporate press – it's become the norm. If it wasn't for the cat-and-mouse aspect of this story, and the promise of an OJ-grade trial, it would probably be a non-starter. We've come a long way, in a bad direction, since the *New York Times* published the Pentagon Papers, making leaker Daniel Ellsberg, then facing 113 years in jail charged under the 1917 Espionage Act, into a hero.

I predict that in the long run, this whole affair won't have any real impact on the NSA and proxy spying on the American people. But I suspect it will liven up the conversation on government outsourcing. This is ironic, however, since such privatization of government is a libertarian mantra. And Snowden, the private contractor, is an avid libertarian.

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Dr. Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at SUNY Buffalo State. His previous columns are archived at <http://mediastudy.com>

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This later form of advocacy though censorship isn't just acceptable in the mainstream corporate press – it's become the norm

Snowden, surveillance and the secret state

First the whistleblowers, then the denunciations. **David Cromwell & David Edwards** discuss the changing media attitudes to whistleblowers

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Snowden was denounced by Dick Cheney, the warmongering former US vice-president, as a 'traitor' and a possible spy for China
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Reports of Washington's anger directed at surveillance whistleblower Edward Snowden indicate a basic truth about power. Noam Chomsky has expressed it as the underlying problem for genuine democracy, even in so-called 'free' societies: "Remember, any state, any state, has a primary enemy: its own population." (Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, edited by Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel, The New Press, 2002, p. 70.)

Anyone who steps out of line, especially if they defy authority's attempts to apprehend them, risks severe punishment. All the more so because it is important to publicly discipline miscreants, lest the threat of a 'bad' example become a contagion sweeping through society.

Snowden was denounced by Dick Cheney, the warmongering former US vice-president, as a 'traitor' and a possible spy for China. Senator Dianne Feinstein, chair of the US Senate intelligence committee, told reporters that Snowden had committed an 'act of treason'. There was 'undisguised fury' among many US politicians at Snowden's slipping away from Hong Kong and arriving at Moscow airport where he continued to evade detection.

General Keith Alexander, director of the National Security Agency, complained that Snowden 'is clearly an individual who's betrayed the trust and confidence we had in

him. This is an individual who is not acting, in my opinion, with noble intent.'

Given the source of such accusations – largely senior officials in the current and previous US administrations – rational observers will be unimpressed. As Norman Solomon correctly points out: 'The state of surveillance and perpetual war are one and the same. The US government's rationale for pervasive snooping is the "war on terror," the warfare state under whatever name.'

Solomon issues a warning: 'The central issue is our dire shortage of democracy. How can we have real consent of the governed when the government is entrenched with extreme secrecy, surveillance and contempt for privacy?'

Washington and its allies, sold to the public by the media as 'the international community', are well aware of the stakes. The general population must be subdued and kept in its place. Obama and his officials in the government, and the US intelligence community, need to assert strenuously that Snowden's exposure of the massive US secret surveillance programme aids and abets 'the enemy', and damages international relations.

Snowden's revelations were brought to light by US journalist Glenn Greenwald in the *Guardian*. He correctly noted that a campaign of demonisation would attempt to deflect attention from the substance of

Snowden's revelations, and focus instead on Snowden's personal background and any alleged character defects. Indeed, early reports relentlessly described Snowden as 'a high school dropout' or focused on his 'heartbroken' and 'abandoned' 'dancer girlfriend'. On June 24, the first edition of the *Independent* referred to 'fugitive Snowden' in the headline to an article by Shaun Walker and David Osborne. The 'impartial' BBC also referred to Snowden as a 'fugitive', when 'whistleblower' would be more accurate, and certainly less loaded. Even the *Guardian* has referred on several occasions to Snowden as a 'fugitive'.

Nick Cohen, a laptop war propagandist not known for any 'Fast and Furious'-style heroics, predictably smeared Snowden as 'a coward': 'If you run, you look like a coward. It may be that you have good reason to be cowardly. It may be that anyone else in your position would run as far and fast as you do. There is nothing wrong with taking the cowardly course, unless like Edward Snowden, you claim to be engaged in civil disobedience.'

Brave and decent

What Snowden did, in fact, was immensely brave and a decent journalist would welcome both his actions and his courage. Solomon put Cohen and his ilk to shame: 'Too rarely mentioned is the combination of nonviolence and idealism that has been integral to the courageous whistleblowing by Edward Snowden and Bradley Manning. Right now, one is on a perilous journey across the globe in search of political asylum, while the other is locked up in a prison and confined to a military trial excluding the human dimensions of the case.'

An admirable *Guardian* editorial also defended Snowden, saying: 'Those who leak official information will often be denounced, prosecuted or smeared. The more serious the leak, the fiercer the pursuit and the greater the punishment.'

More to the point, this applies to anyone who challenges power effectively. Ironically, the *Guardian* is describing exactly what it did to Noam Chomsky in 2005.

The editorial added: 'a debate is only possible because of the facts which have been put into the public domain, not by government but by a whistleblower and a still freeish press.'

True, although that passing reference to 'a still freeish press', where in times gone by it would surely have been simply 'free press', is an intriguing hint that the editors concede much of the public may have seen through the façade of the propaganda system.

Inevitably, attempts are now also being made to smear Greenwald, with both the *New York Daily News* and *New York Times* attempting to dredge up dirt on the journalist. In an ad hominem piece about Greenwald published on the BuzzFeed website, and illustrated by somewhat sinister-looking photographs, the journalist was cast as 'a figure long viewed even by many on the left as a difficult eccentric.' The article bizarrely carried a quote from someone who said Greenwald was: 'scary – but then I quickly realized that the scariness probably had to do with his short haircut and his intense stare.'

In a live television interview, Greenwald was even asked by NBC News host David Gregory: 'To the extent that you have aided and abetted Snowden, even in his current movements, why shouldn't you, Mr. Greenwald, be charged with a crime?'

Greenwald responded robustly: 'I think it's pretty extraordinary that anybody who would call themselves a journalist would publicly muse about whether or not other journalists should be charged with felonies. The assumption in your question, David, is completely without evidence, the idea that I've aided and abetted him in any way. [...] If you want to embrace that theory, it means that every investigative journalist in the United States who works with their sourc-

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The 'impartial' BBC also referred to Snowden as a 'fugitive', when 'whistleblower' would be more accurate, and certainly less loaded

“The tapping of our phone calls and internet activity is being used to ensure we remain either docile or intimidated as our political and financial elites grow ever more ostentatious in their depravity and corruption”

es, who receives classified information, is a criminal. And it’s precisely those theories and precisely that climate that has become so menacing in the United States. It’s why The New Yorker’s Jane Mayer said, “Investigative reporting has come to a standstill,” her word, as a result of the theories that you just referenced.’

Greenwald reports that his home was burgled and, oddly, only a laptop was stolen. As the journalist himself says:

‘I would be shocked if the US government were not trying to access the information on my computer.’

The Primary function of the State

As important as the revelations of Edward Snowden are, the bigger picture is the overwhelming drive by state power to pursue its own strategic designs, to promote the corporate and financial interests with which it is in league, and to protect itself from any threat from the general population to make government truly work for the public.

The independent journalist Jonathan Cook makes the same point (via Facebook, June 26, 2013) that this is the real significance of the recent shocking revelations about surveillance: ‘I’ve been saying since the first Snowden revelations about the NSA that the goal of all this mass surveillance is not to foil terrorism; it’s to prevent all challenges to, or efforts to hold accountable, the corporate elites who are plundering our communities and the planet to enrich themselves.’

Cook quotes from a *Guardian* article which reveals that a UK police unit called the National Domestic Extremism Unit is monitoring 9,000 political activists: ‘In recent years the unit is known to have focused its resources on spying on environmental campaigners, particularly those engaged in direct action and civil disobedience to protest against climate change.’

Cook concludes: ‘The tapping of our phone calls and internet activity is being

used for exactly the same nefarious purposes: to ensure we remain either docile or intimidated as our political and financial elites grow ever more ostentatious in their depravity and corruption.’

Historian Mark Curtis, who has extensively analysed formerly secret government records for several groundbreaking books, has noted that the primary function of the British state, ‘virtually its *raison d’être* for several centuries – is to aid British companies in getting their hands on other countries’ resources.’ The British security services have an important role to play in support of ‘the national interest’: ‘As Lord Mackay, then Lord Chancellor, revealed in the mid-1990s, the role of MI6 is to protect Britain’s “economic well-being” by keeping “a particular eye on Britain’s access to key commodities, like oil or metals [and] the profits of Britain’s myriad of international business interests”.’ (Mark Curtis, *Web of Deceit: Britain’s Real Role in the World*, Vintage, 2003, pp. 210-211.)

A similar picture could be painted of all the major ‘democracies’, not least the United States.

The shocking extent of the corruption of democracy by big business and its political allies remains mostly off the corporate media’s agenda. And corporate-employed reporters and commentators have mastered the art of not making painful connections; painful for powerful interests, that is. No wonder, too, that our major political parties offer no real choice: they all represent essentially the same interests crushing any moves towards meaningful public participation in the shaping of policy.

Making the planet uninhabitable

In the introduction of a new book, *Managing Democracy, Managing Dissent*, Rebecca Fisher outlines the stranglehold that corporate power, including its mass media sector and political accomplices, has on democracy. Fisher, an activist with Corporate Watch,

writes: ‘our legal avenues to hold our putative representatives to account, or to persuade them to take heed of our demands, are restricted to actions via pressure groups or tame and largely ineffectual protests about specific, isolated issues. This ensures that the capitalist system is able to reap catastrophic damage upon subject populations and the environment, even to the extent of threatening the habitability of the planet, while remaining, for the most part, insulated from public challenge.’ (Rebecca Fisher, editor, *Managing Democracy, Managing Dissent: Capitalism, Democracy and the Organisation of Consent*, Corporate Watch, London, 2013, p. 2)

The framework of global capitalism – its reigning institutions, policies and practices – tends to be taken for granted in the corporate media. Media academic and activist Robert McChesney points to the ‘persistent reluctance’ of commentators to ‘make a no-holds-barred assessment’ of capitalism. He makes a revealing comparison to illustrate this absurdity: ‘A scholar studying the Soviet Union would never discount the monopoly of economic and political power held by the Communist Party and the state and then focus on other matters. The political economy would be central to any credible analysis, or the scholar would be dismissed as a charlatan. The same is true of any academic study of any ancient civilization.’ (Robert McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning The Internet Against Democracy*, The New Press, New York, 2013, p. 17)

But on the rare occasion when the system is questioned, notes McChesney, even critical writers feel obliged to provide a ‘loyalty oath’ to capitalism:

‘whenever scholars examine their own society, it is generally taboo to challenge the prerogatives and privileges of those who stand atop it and benefit from the status quo, even in political democracies. This may be nearly as true of the United States as it was of the old Soviet Union.’ (Ibid., p. 17)

McChesney’s observations about ‘scholars’ extend to media professionals, as he makes clear in his book. As we have often said, one cannot expect a corporate media system to report honestly or accurately about the corporate world.

Fisher rightly warns that the corporate system ‘cannot co-exist with genuine democracy’, adding: ‘the emergence and predominance of the corporation has facilitated the emergence of a form of democracy – liberal democracy – which, by careful processes of management is made safe for corporations to dominate society, and for the capitalist system to reap enormous human and environmental damage.’

In other words, so-called ‘liberal democracy’ has become a lethal shield that protects capitalism from the threat of proper democracy based on meaningful participation by the general population. As we have explained in numerous books and media alerts, corporate power has for decades carried out huge campaigns of disinformation – called ‘public relations’ – and political lobbying to create the illusion of ‘consensus’ required to pursue its own selfish aims.

Fortunately, there is an inherent weakness here, because the system is maintained only so long as there is large-scale public acceptance of the status quo. Noam Chomsky puts it well when he says that: ‘even the most efficient propaganda system is unable to maintain the proper attitudes among the population for long. [...] fundamental social and economic problems cannot be swept under the rug for ever.’ (Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, Vintage, 1993, pp. 134-135)

There is thus plenty to be said about living under a giant system of government surveillance. Just don’t expect the corporate media to explore the full extent of what it really all means. **CT**

David Cromwell and David Edwards are co-editors of the British media watchdog Medialens – <http://medialens.org>

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On the rare occasion when the system is questioned, even critical writers feel obliged to provide a ‘loyalty oath’ to capitalism

A Portrait of the Leaker as a Young Man

Norman Solomon on a man who has taken idealism seriously enough to risk being in prison for the rest of his life

.....
Snowden's decision to resist any and all cynicism is gripping and unsettling
.....

Why have Edward Snowden's actions resonated so powerfully for so many people? The huge political impacts of the leaked NSA documents account for just part of the explanation. Snowden's choice was ultimately personal. He decided to take big risks on behalf of big truths; he showed how easy and hazardous such a step can be. He blew the whistle not only on the NSA's Big Brother surveillance but also on the fear, constantly in our midst, that routinely induces conformity.

Like Bradley Manning and other whistleblowers before him, Snowden has massively undermined the standard rationales for obedience to illegitimate authority. Few of us may be in a position to have such enormous impacts by opting for courage over fear and truth over secrecy – but we know that we could be doing more, taking more risks for good reasons – if only we were willing, if only fear of reprisals and other consequences didn't clear the way for the bandwagon of the military-industrial-surveillance state.

Near the end of Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, the man in a parable spends many years sitting outside an open door till, near death, after becoming too weak to possibly enter, he's told by the doorkeeper: "Nobody else could have got in this way, as this entrance was meant only for you. Now I'll go and close it."

That's what Martin Luther King Jr. was driving at when he said, in his first high-risk

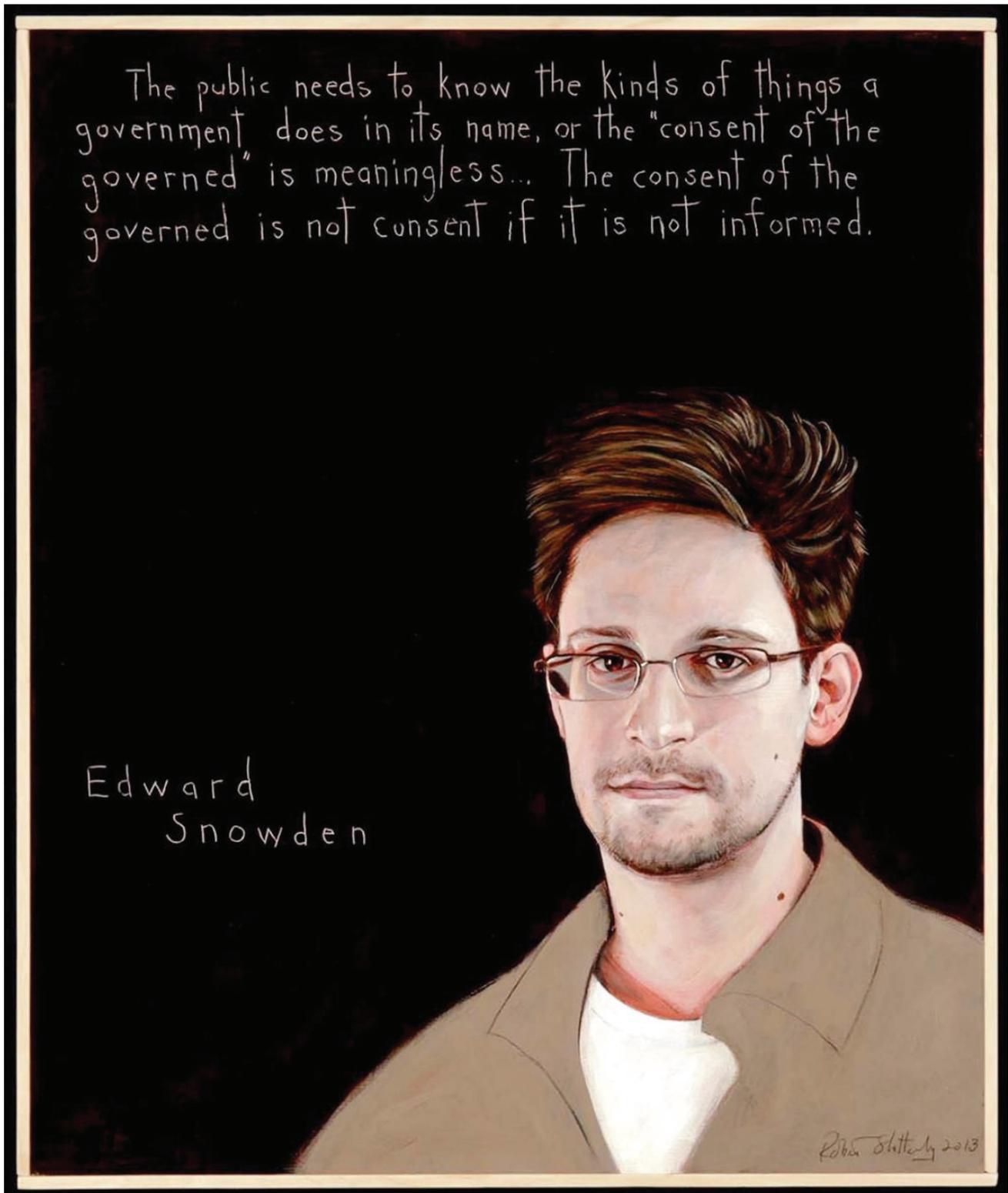
speech denouncing the Vietnam War: "In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity."

Edward Snowden was not too late. He walked through the entrance meant only for him. When people say "I am Bradley Manning," or "I am Edward Snowden," it can be more than an expression of solidarity. It can also be a statement of aspiration – to take ideals for democracy more seriously and to act on them with more courage.

The artist Robert Shetterly has combined his compelling new portrait of Edward Snowden with words from Snowden that are at the heart of what's at stake: "The public needs to know the kinds of things a government does in its name, or the 'consent of the governed' is meaningless. . . The consent of the governed is not consent if it is not informed." Like the painting of Snowden, the quote conveys a deep mix of idealism, vulnerability and determination.

Edward Snowden has taken idealism seriously enough to risk the rest of his life, a choice that is to his eternal credit and to the world's vast benefit. His decision to resist any and all cynicism is gripping and unsettling. It tells us, personally and politically, to raise our standards, lift our eyes and go higher into our better possibilities. **CT**

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Norman Solomon
is co-founder
of *RootsAction*.
org and founding
director of
*the Institute for
Public Accuracy*.
His books
include "War Made
Easy: How Presidents
and Pundits Keep
Spinning Us to
Death"



Painted by Robert Shetterly for his Americans Who Tell The Truth Project
<http://www.americanswhotellthetruth.org/>

Cities versus Wall Street

Peter Dreier tells how one US city is helping homeowners by seizing underwater mortgages through the power of eminent domain

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Since 2006, when the speculative housing bubble burst, home prices have plummeted; homeowners have lost more than \$6 trillion in household wealth
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In 2005, Rodney Conway and his wife, Vicki, paid \$340,000 for their 950-square-foot two-bedroom home in Richmond, California, a blue-collar city in the Bay Area. Today the home is worth about \$140,000. But the couple still owes \$320,000 and makes monthly mortgage payments to the Bank of America. “We’re basically renting this house for \$2,000 a month,” said the 52-year-old Conway, who was disabled while serving on a Navy ship in Lebanon in 1983.

With her office job and his disability income, the Conways can barely make ends meet. “We don’t take trips or go to restaurants. We just went to a movie for the first time in a year,” said Conway, who spent twenty-six years as a letter carrier before being laid off in 2009. “I’d like to be able to give my wife a nice birthday present, but I can’t afford it.”

In almost every part of the country, entire neighborhoods – and in some cases, whole cities – are underwater. They are not victims of natural disasters like Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. Like the Conways, they are drowning in debt, victims of Wall Street’s reckless and predatory lending practices.

Since 2006, when the speculative housing bubble burst, home prices have plummeted; homeowners have lost more than \$6 trillion in household wealth. Many now owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth. Despite rising home prices in some parts of

the country, more than 11 million American families – one-fifth of all homeowners with mortgages – are still underwater, through no fault of their own. If nothing is done, many will eventually join the more than 5 million American homeowners who have already lost their homes to foreclosure.

The nation’s worst underwater “hot spots” – disproportionately black and Latino areas – are places that banks targeted for predatory lending, often pushing borrowers into high-interest, risky loans, even when they were eligible for conventional mortgages. Many have lost their jobs or seen their incomes fall as a result of the recession and are having difficulty paying the bills.

Dallas, Las Vegas, Miami, Houston, San Bernardino, Tampa, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Atlanta, Orlando, Stockton, Reno, Modesto and Detroit are among the most troubled “hot spots,” but there are many other communities with huge inventories of underwater mortgages and where home prices are not participating in the recovery.

The problem is contagious. Communities with many underwater homes bring down the value of other houses in the area. Foreclosures alone have drained at \$2 trillion in property values from surrounding neighborhoods, according to a Center for Responsible Lending study. The resulting decline in property tax revenues has plunged some cities into near-bankruptcy, lay-offs and cuts to

vital public services.

Many economists, including Joseph Stiglitz and Mark Zandi, agree that the best solution is “principal reduction,” where banks lower the borrower’s mortgage principal. This is not an act of charity but a way to reverse the economy’s freefall. If underwater mortgages were reset to fair-market values of homes, it would help homeowners and communities alike, and pump about \$102 billion into the economy annually, according to a Home Defenders League report.

But homeowners who have asked banks to modify their mortgages typically get a cold shoulder or a bureaucratic runaround. So far, the Obama administration and Congress have been unwilling to require intransigent banks to reset loans.

Faced with this quagmire, a growing number of cities – with the support of community groups and unions – are taking things into their own hands. Thanks to a legal strategy initially formulated by Cornell University law professor Robert Hockett, city officials have discovered that they can use their eminent domain power – which they routinely use to purchase property for sidewalks, infrastructure, school construction and other projects – to buy underwater mortgages at their current market value and resell them to homeowners at reduced price and mortgage payments.

Richmond is the first city to pursue this strategy. Its city council – with the support of the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), which for years has organized homeowners against predatory banks – recently voted 6-0 (with one member absent) to make offers to buy underwater mortgages. If lenders refuse, the city will take them by eminent domain and work with a group of friendly investors (Mortgage Resolution Partners, or MRP) to refinance the loans with the Federal Housing Administration.

In this city of 103,000, dominated by a big Chevron oil refinery, home prices have plummeted by 58 percent since the 2007 peak. Homeowners lost over \$264 million in wealth

last year alone. Thousands of Richmond homeowners have lost their homes to foreclosure, and many others, like the Conways, are just hanging on. About 12,000 families – half of all homeowners with mortgages in the city – are underwater. The city government, which has lost millions of dollars in property tax revenues, has cut funds for road repairs and significantly reduced the number of municipal employees, including librarians. Meanwhile, it has had to spend scarce funds to deal with abandoned buildings, crime and drugs, and other problems caused by the foreclosure epidemic.

If banks reset Richmond’s underwater mortgages to fair market value, homeowners would save an average of over \$1,000 per month on their payments. If those savings were spent on local goods and services, it would generate about \$170 million in economic stimulus and create at least 2,500 jobs.

This situation is particularly bizarre for homeowners whose mortgages were sold by banks to pools of private investors – an industry gambit called “private label security” (PLS) mortgages. The trustees for these mortgages – owed by dozens or hundreds of distant investors as part of a pool – claim they lack the authority to modify them.

Richmond is initially targeting these PLS loans so they can get the homeowners into sustainable mortgages with reduced principal. MRP, Richmond’s funding partner, has agreed to a set of community-drafted principles to make sure that investors don’t exploit desperate cities and homeowners. It has pledged, for example, that the program won’t cost taxpayers a dime. MRP will earn a flat fee per mortgage. Homeowners can voluntarily opt out of the program.

Wall Street is up in arms. Since several cities began discussing this strategy last year, industry lobbyists have been fighting back. In a coordinated effort involving letters, phone calls and meetings, some of the nation’s most powerful lobby groups – including the National Association of Realtors, the

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The Wall Street lobbyists have threatened to mire local governments in expensive lawsuits if they use eminent domain to take troubled mortgages
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American Bankers Association, the National Association of Home Builders, American Securitization Forum, and the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA) – have tried to dissuade local officials from pursuing the eminent domain strategy.

In April, for example, SIFMA officials Kim Chamberlain and Tim Cameron traveled from New York to Richmond to persuade Mayor Gayle McLaughlin and her Council colleagues to back off.

“We’re not going to be intimidated by these Wall Street folks,” said McLaughlin, a former teacher who has been mayor since 2006. “It is pretty outrageous to hear them opposing this. They’re the ones who caused this crisis in the first place. And they don’t have a solution. The city has every right to do this.”

The Wall Street lobbyists have threatened to mire local governments in expensive lawsuits if they use eminent domain to take troubled mortgages. But MRP has agreed to cover the costs of any potential litigation, so most city officials recognize that this is mostly an empty threat. The lobbyists have also warned local officials that if they go through with these plans, banks will increase the cost of future borrowing or even shut down credit entirely. They couch these warnings as if they were mere predictions. But they’re threats – part of a coordinated, industry-wide credit boycott. This is another form of “redlining” (lending discrimination), which violates the nation’s fair lending and antitrust laws.

A recent editorial published by The Wall Street Journal echoed the industry line that the eminent domain strategy is both illegal and ill-advised. To pre-empt local governments, three Republican congressmen from California last month sent a letter to Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan on behalf of the industry, asking HUD to deny FHA financing from mortgages taken by eminent domain. Last year the financial, real estate and insurance industry topped the list of contributors to all three politicians – Gary Miller (\$366,000), John

Campbell (\$484,000), and Ed Royce (\$1 million) – according to OpenSecrets.org.

“We are concerned that the proposed use of eminent domain would slow the return of private capital to the housing finance system, and threaten our fragile housing recovery,” they wrote Donovan.

Sound familiar? Throughout the last century, business lobby groups have consistently warned that government action to protect consumers, communities and workers – mandatory seat belts, the minimum wage, consumer protection laws, workplace safety rules and others – are “job killers” and business destroyers. Their dire warnings were bogus, but they repeat them so often that they often sound convincing. Like their predecessors, the bank, securities and real estate lobby groups are crying wolf. They can file nuisance lawsuits, hire lobbyists and get the occasional hired-gun economist from a conservative think tank to peddle their propaganda, but cities have a legal right to use eminent domain to restore community wealth stripped by reckless banks.

Even so, Wall Street’s intimidation ploy has worked in a few places. Earlier this year, elected officials in San Bernardino—where half of all homeowners are underwater—backed down after industry lobbyists swooped down on that troubled community an hour from Los Angeles. But in Richmond, Seattle, Newark and other cities – where community groups and unions have mobilized angry homeowners and their neighbors– local officials are determined to move forward, aware that they have the law and economics on their side.

“Wall Street is scared and using all its political muscle to stop us, “ said Amy Schur, campaign director for ACCE, which is working on this strategy with homeowners and local officials in several cities, “but we know that David beat Goliath.”

“We hope our city provides a model for other cities,” said Richmond Mayor McLaughlin, “and that this becomes a national movement.”

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Peter Dreier
is professor of politics and chair of the Urban and Environmental Policy Department at Occidental College. His new book, “The 100 Greatest Americans of the 20th Century: A Social Justice Hall of Fame,” was published last year by Nation Books. This essay was originally published by The Nation magazine

Predistribute the wealth

The market has stopped working for working people, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

Sometimes we need new words to grasp new ideas. Frances O’Grady, Britain’s highest-ranking labor leader, has coined one of these handy new words: predistribution.

Why does O’Grady, the general secretary of the UK’s Trades Union Congress, want us talking “predistribution”? In our staggeringly unequal modern times, her union federation argues in a just-released research paper, redistribution has run its course.

The rich – on both sides of the Atlantic – have seen to that. Over recent years, they’ve systematically dismantled progressive tax systems, the traditional route to redistributing top-heavy concentrations of income and wealth.

Even worse, the rich and their cheerleaders have turned redistribution into a political four-letter word. They’ve branded anything that smacks of redistribution a dangerous assault on the “natural” wisdom of the market economy. We must let the market, their argument goes, reward the enterprising and punish the lazy. Or else risk eternal economic damnation.

In reality, of course, markets don’t just reward the enterprising. They reward price-fixers and union-busters, monopolists and folks who are just plain lucky. And if you inherit a grand fortune, the market will merrily heap rewards your way year after year, no matter how lazy you may be.

Markets, in short, don’t follow “natural” laws. They reflect existing power relationships. Those who hold power bend the rules, formal and informal, that determine how markets operate – and who profits the most from them.

Back in the mid-20th century, in both Britain and the United States, average citizens wielded enough power through trade unions and at the ballot box to impact those rules. But that power has ebbed. The rich have rewritten the rules – and lined their pockets.

How profoundly are the new rules – on everything from minimum wages to collective bargaining – depressing wages in Britain and the United States? In the UK today, 20.6 percent of employees work in jobs that rate as “low wage,” that is, pay less than two-thirds the nation’s median paycheck.

Only one other major developed nation in the world – the United States – has a higher share of workers in low-wage work. That US share: 24.8 percent.

Other nations are doing far better at making work pay. In France, only 11.1 percent of workers labor in low-wage jobs. In Norway, only 8 percent. More progressive taxes by themselves, British labor analysts argue, won’t be enough to undo the stark inequality the rule changes of recent years have created.

We can’t, in other words, just redistribute. We need to predistribute – end those marketplace practices that steer the wealth our

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Markets don’t just reward the enterprising. They reward price-fixers and union-busters, monopolists and folks who are just plain lucky

What if we continue to let the powerful and privileged grab with such unfettered abandon?

economy creates away from the people who actually create it.

The British Trades Union Congress is now advancing a game plan for forging “a more equal distribution of wages before taxes and benefits.”

The labor group’s new paper, *How to Boost the Wage Share*, explores a package of proposals that target “the root causes of rising inequality rather than concentrating on tackling the symptoms through redistribution.”

At the nuts-and-bolts level, these proposals range from hiking the minimum wage to placing worker representatives on the corporate boards that set executive pay.

Overall, many of these ideas mirror notions that also appear in *Prosperity Economics*, a paper by Yale University’s Jacob Hacker and Nathaniel Loewentheil, that American unions have enthusiastically embraced.

Both these American and British analyses stress the importance of “rebalancing the

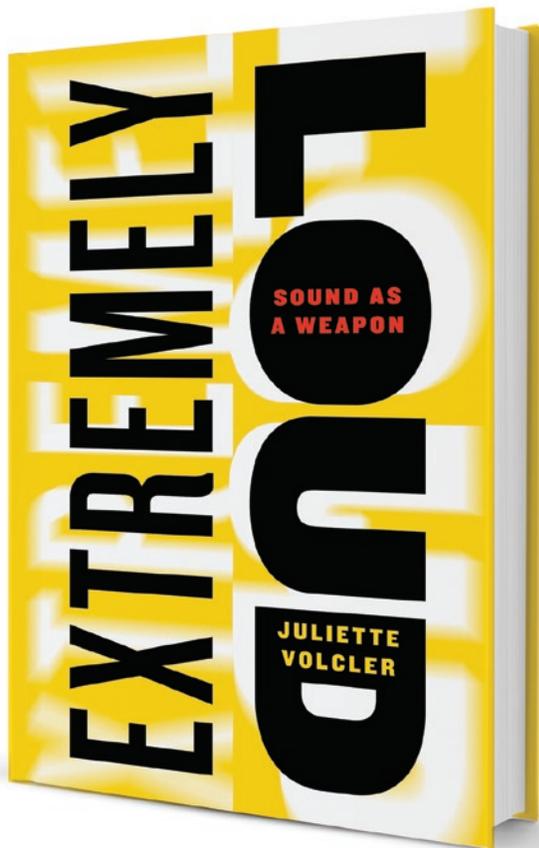
economy away from low-paid work.” And what if we don’t? What if we let the worker wage share continue to decrease? What if we continue to let the powerful and privileged grab with such unfettered abandon?

Without measures aimed at “raising the earnings floor” and “capping excessive rewards at the top,” the British Trades Union Congress argues, the “recovery” from the global economic collapse that began in 2007 will remain a nonstarter.

“Ultimately,” the British labor group concludes, “creating a lower gap will depend on a fundamental shift in the balance of economic and social power.”

In a word: predistribution. **CT**

Sam Pizzigati is an Institute for Policy Studies associate fellow. His latest book is “The Rich Don’t Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class”



EXTREMELY LOUD
by Juliette Volcley

A BOLD AND ORIGINAL LOOK AT THE INSIDIOUS AND GROWING USE OF ACOUSTICS BY ARMIES AND POLICE DEPARTMENTS AROUND THE GLOBE

“Everything you ever suspected or feared about music as a weapon, sound as torture and the expansion of the military-industrial complex to encompass entertainment. . . . Disturbingly illuminating.”

-KIRKUS

“A timely glimpse into the development of these revolutionary technologies and approaches.”

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Shame on Walmart

Ralph Nader has five questions for the world’s biggest company

When one considers Walmart’s company slogan – “Save money. Live better.” – it almost seems as if they are referring to their corporation’s big shareholders – the super-rich Walton family – rather than their employees or the communities they squeeze. After all, Walmart is the same company that has recently made headlines for firing workers for verbally protesting against unfair wages and lack of health care benefits. This situation forces Walmart employees to work second jobs or rely on government assistance to make ends meet.

According to a recent report from the US House Committee on Education and the Workforce, the low wages provided by a single Walmart store costs taxpayers upwards of \$1 million in governmental support for those workers and their dependents. “The report finds that a single 300-employee Walmart Supercenter in Wisconsin may cost taxpayers anywhere from \$904,542 to nearly \$1.75 million per year, or about \$5,815 per employee. Wisconsin has 100 Walmart stores, 75 that are Walmart Supercenters.”

Walmart’s most recent attempt to advance their bullying brand of profit-over-people hit a snag last month when the District of Columbia City Council voted to approve and send to the mayor a “living wage bill” which mandates that billion-dollar big box retailers must provide a \$12.50 “living

wage” in the District. According to a background briefing from the council, the cost of living in the District is 42 percent higher than the national average – meaning fairer salaries are a necessity for workers in the District just to meet their basic expenses.

A similar disagreement between Walmart and a city council occurred in Chicago several years ago, with Walmart ultimately prevailing when then-Mayor Richard Daley vetoed the city’s proposed living wage ordinance.

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“Discriminates against business”

In a preemptive op-ed in the *Washington Post*, Walmart executive Alex Barron described the DC Council’s pending decision on the living wage bill as one that “discriminates against business and threatens to undo all that we have accomplished together.” After the vote, Walmart issued a statement declaring that their stance had not changed and that they would “review the financial and legal implications” of the DC stores currently under construction. “This was a difficult decision for us and unfortunate news for most DC residents, but the council has forced our hand,” said Walmart’s spokesperson.

Mr. Barron and his fellow executives should be ashamed of themselves.

I sent DC Mayor Vincent Gray five ques-

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The low wages provided by a single Walmart store costs taxpayers upwards of \$1 million in governmental support for those workers and their dependents

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If, instead of transferring billions of dollars to the Walton family, Walmart had chosen to use the money to pay a more respectable wage, they could have given each of their 1.3 million workers a \$3.30 per hour raise
.....

tions to consider in deciding whether he would support or veto the bill passed by the city council. These questions should be answered by any community considering the value of a Walmart store.

1. If the 1968 minimum wage kept pace with inflation, it would be \$10.70 today. If it kept pace with worker productivity, it would be \$22 today. If it kept pace with the wealth of the top 1 percent of earners, it would be \$33 dollars today. In an April 4, 2013 letter to me, Walmart US CEO Bill Simon wrote that “in the US, Walmart’s full-time, average hourly wage is \$12.67 per hour.” Given these facts, shouldn’t Walmart be willing to pay workers in DC \$12.50 an hour minus benefits, which is how the bill is written?

2. Walmart’s top executives each make thousands of dollars an hour. Walmart CEO Mike Duke makes \$11,000 an hour plus great benefits and perks. During the length of a city council session, Mike Duke will make more than many Walmart employees working a full year! Clearly, he could afford a pay cut. Is it fair for Walmart to say it cannot afford to pay workers in DC \$12.50 an hour minus benefits?

3. Costco starts their workers at \$11.50 an hour plus benefits and is a profitable company. Walmart itself is profitable in Ontario, Canada, where it starts its workers at \$10.25 as well as providing them with two weeks paid vacation. What is stopping Walmart from treating Walmart workers in the District of Columbia with the same level of respect?

4. Walmart recently announced a new \$15 billion stock buyback. They have already used \$36 billion to buy back stock throughout the past four years, which averages out to \$9 billion a year. Since the billionaire Walton family owns over 50 percent of company stock, it is likely that they will be a beneficiary of most of these billions.

If, instead of transferring billions of dollars to the Walton family, Walmart had chosen to use the money to a pay a more re-

spectable wage, they could have given each of their 1.3 million workers a \$3.30 per hour raise.

Why does Walmart have another \$15 billion lying around to buy stock but empty pockets when it comes to paying \$12.50 an hour minus benefits to DC Workers?

5. A study from UC Berkeley’s Center for Labor Research and Education has shown that raising a Walmart wage floor to \$12 per hour would add – if all of the wage increase was absorbed by price increases – just \$0.46 per trip for the average Walmart customer. Again, this is the highest estimate, as portions of the raise could be absorbed through other mechanisms, including increased productivity or portions of the stock buyback being rolled back. How can Walmart claim a \$12.50 minimum wage minus benefits is untenable?

Back in 1968, Sam Walton – the founder of Walmart – had to pay his workers wages that were worth much more than wages today because the law required it of him. In that light, isn’t it hypocritical that Walmart’s official stance now, as articulated by Mr. Barron, is that providing workers a more livable wage in the District of Columbia in 2013 is “arbitrary and discriminatory” and “discourages investment”?

In the District of Columbia and other communities throughout the country, it’s time for Walmart bosses to acknowledge that supporting an increase in the minimum wage would help restore the income of 30 million hardpressed American workers – including Walmart employees – to the level of 1968, inflation-adjusted, and provide our floundering economy with a much needed jolt. (See *The Catching Up To 1968 Act of 2013* [H.R. 1346] introduced by Rep. Alan Grayson [D-FL] which, if passed, would raise the minimum wage to \$10.50.) **CT**

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Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author. His latest book is The Seventeen Solutions: Bold Ideas for Our American Future

The landed mafia

It's time Britain confronted the National Farmers' Union and the millionaires it works for, writes **George Monbiot**

Is there any organisation as selfish, grasping and antisocial as Britain's National Farmers' Union? Is there any organisation, except the banks, which secures so much public money while offering so little in return?

Here are some of the positions the NFU has taken over the past few months.

It demanded the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board. Farm workers are often extremely vulnerable, with low pay, long hours, dangerous working conditions and few opportunities for collective bargaining. The board offered them some defence against the worst forms of exploitation. The NFU, many of whose members receive hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money every year, has lobbied long and hard for the board to be abolished. With the help of its friends in this government it has won, and the AWB will go in October.

At the same time, it fought to ensure that there would be no cap on the amount of taxpayers' money a single farmer could receive. The European Commission had proposed a cap of €300,000 a year. But even this is not enough for the multi-millionaires scooping up public funds. The more land you own or rent, the more money you receive: some of these people take millions a year from taxpayers. The union boasts of how hard it fought to ensure that subsidies remain un-

capped. With the help of the landed mafia – otherwise known as the government of the United Kingdom – its wish was granted.

The National Farmers' Union has lamented the fact that young people trying to make a start in farming will receive more public funds. The EU has decided that governments will have to shift 2% of the money they currently dole out to those who own or rent farmland into a scheme for “new entrant young farmers”.

The NFU lists this as one of the oppressive measures representing a “bad deal” for farmers.

Nothing could better reinforce the suspicion, which I have often heard voiced by small farmers, that the NFU defends the interests of big, rich incumbents over small, struggling and hopeful farmers. Perhaps this is unsurprising, in view of who runs it. The president, Peter Kendall, is an arable baron who, with his brother, owns a 620-hectare farm in Bedfordshire, and rents land on four neighbouring farms.

The vice-president, Meurig Raymond, has a 1,300 hectare farm on prime land in Pembrokeshire, also owned with his brother. Given that farmers in this country receive an average of £197 a hectare in direct payments (and often a good deal more in public subsidies of other kinds), this suggests that he might take at least £250,000 a year from the

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The National Farmers' Union defends the interests of big, rich incumbents over small, struggling and hopeful farmers

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The NFU insisted upon “automatic entitlement” to money for protecting the environment, whether or not they are actually, er, protecting the environment
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taxpayer. How dare these people lament a transfer of 2% of this money to young people trying to break into farming?

Under the initial headline (since changed) of “NFU will continue fight on road safety rules”, this week it issued a press release showing how it has “worked hard” to exempt tractors and trailers from an annual road safety test. Remember that, next time someone is killed because a tractor’s brakes fail.

But this is only the start of it. Last month the National Farmers’ Union and its counterparts in other European countries succeeded in demolishing attempts to green the Common Agricultural Policy: the scheme through which over €50bn a year of our money is handed every year to landowners.

The stated purpose of the negotiations which will determine farm policy for the next seven years – was to make farming more compatible with protecting wildlife, water supplies, soil and carbon stocks. After being comprehensively gutted through lobbying by farmers’ organisations, the new Common Agricultural Policy is even worse than the last one.

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Something for nothing

The landowner’s lobbyists demanded something for nothing – and, by and large, they got it. We will continue, in this age of austerity, to slosh vast sums of public money into the arms of millionaires. In return they will continue to trash the living planet.

The NFU demanded that there should be no transfer of funds from the almost unconditional payments (Pillar 1 of the Common Agricultural Policy) that they receive for owning or renting land into Pillar 2. Pillar 2 agri-environment payments are supposed to be conditional on changes in the way that farmers treat the land and its wildlife.

The NFU insisted upon “automatic entitlement” to money for protecting the environment, whether or not they are actually, er, protecting the environment. It demanded

that farmers should be allowed to opt out of any schemes for improving their destructive practices. It fought against the proposal (called ecological focus areas) to devote some land on every farm to wildlife. It also announced that it would “seek to limit any penalties arising from a failure to implement the greening requirements as much as possible”. In other words, the NFU pressed for as few restrictions on how its members collect taxpayers’ money as it could get – and then to be able to break those restrictions with impunity. For the most part, it won.

The ecological focus areas originally envisaged were cut from 10% of farmland to 5%. Worse still, the rules have been watered down so far that they are now almost meaningless. The new regulations allow these areas – supposedly set aside for wildlife – to be intensively farmed.

While governments can transfer some money from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2, the measure remains voluntary. Already the NFU has been lobbying the Westminster government not to do it (so far the government has been holding out, but I wonder whether this will last).

Overall, the amount of money for Pillar 2 has been cut, and environmental schemes will now be seriously short of funds: a remarkable outcome when so much free money continues to be given to farmers.

Enforcement of the conditions attached to Pillar 1 payments will be so weak that farmers will have to break the rules for several years in a row to lose any money, and even then the most that can be docked – however destructive they have been – is 37.5% of what we’re paying them.

The condition that farmers must abide by the Birds Directive if they want this money has been dropped. Now they can kill protected species without jeopardising their payments. Just as outrageously, they have no need to comply with either the water or the pesticides directives to qualify for public money. Nor do they need to protect carbon-rich soils to receive Pillar 1 payments.

True to form, having obtained almost all

the destructive, regressive, lucrative measures it demanded, the NFU then complained bitterly about the outcome of the negotiations. This seems to be the tactic: whatever you get, always demand more. While income support for the very poor has been cut, the millionaire landowners keep raking in public money. Yet they also keep whinging. With the possible exception of the financial sector, nowhere will you encounter such a nest of ungrateful parasites.

Even some of the measures which have survived are both questionable and useless without enforcement. Some of the “greening” policies can actually do more harm than good.

For example, in England’s Peak District, grouse estates often receive agri-environment money because they maintain heather moorland. (Heather colonises deforested land and depleted soils, but for some reason we fetishise it in this country). In many cases they get the money to carry on doing what they were doing anyway – maintaining habitats which maximise the populations of red grouse (while minimising the populations of many other species). The “green” payments are free money, which some of these estates use to employ extra gamekeepers, who then kill the hen harriers and other wild animals. A great outcome for the natural world.

In both Wales and the Lake District I’ve heard how keeping sheep in unsuitable places – slopes subject to high levels of erosion, where grazing is extremely damaging to both water retention and wildlife – is sustained only as a result of the extra money the farmers there receive from Pillar 2 payments. Another splendid result for nature.

In fact, the less suitable for farming an area is, the more money you receive for farming there. Under the new rules, you can now receive an extra payment of €450 a hectare for keeping livestock (which mostly means sheep) on mountains. Goodbye watersheds, goodbye soil, goodbye wildlife.

And, in many places, enforcement is almost a dead letter. Farmers are paid extra

if they promise to keep their sheep out of the woods. But the sheep are still in the woods, wiping out the ground flora, ensuring that nothing survives except the old trees, that are dying without being replaced. Grouse moors are paid to burn the heather less frequently. But some of them burn just as often as before and still get their money.

Even the current pathetic level of enforcement is too much for the welfare kings. Peter Kendall, president of the NFU, has pledged that “I will also continue to fight for more proportionate penalties and risk-based inspections across the CAP.” Which is the code lobbyists now use for as little monitoring and enforcement as they can get away with.

When I spoke to the NFU about these issues, its spokesperson told me:

“We’re not behind a campaign for destruction of the greening of the Common Agricultural Policy. We want a fair deal for English and Welsh farmers. ... We’re looking to make some of the agreements more practical and simple to administer. We were always concerned at the level of ecological focus areas. We sought to have them reduced. But we also recognise that there should be smaller areas of land which are better managed, rather than whole fields set aside. ... What we were asking for is English farmers to be treated fairly.”

All over Europe, essential public services are being cut. All over Europe, the poor are being hammered by the loss of the benefits they need to sustain even the most basic quality of life. But the millionaire landowners continue to reel it in, while still destroying biodiversity, polluting water courses, squandering irrigation water, wiping out pollinators, killing birds of prey and accelerating climate change. Are there not better ways of spending public money?

CT

George Monbiot is an activist and columnist for the Guardian newspaper. His latest book is “Feral: Searching For Enchantment On The Frontiers Of rewilding”

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The less suitable for farming an area is, the more money you receive for farming there

Camden, New Jersey: The edge of civilisation

Linh Dinh visits a forgotten city that is struggling to survive

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The first time I entered, four years ago, I noticed “NO PROFANITIES” on the wall, yet the very stern barkeep had this T-shirt on, “PRACTICE SAFE SEX. GO FUCK YOURSELF”
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With 77,000 people, Camden, New Jersey, has one public library left, and in a city where Walt Whitman spent 19 years and is buried, there are exactly two bookstores, a Barnes and Noble serving Rutgers Camden students, and, not too far away, La Unique African American Books and Cultural Center, with *The Master Game*, *The New World Order*, *The Unseen Hand* and *Say It Like Obama* in its window. Camden has no hotel, and only one downtown bar, The Sixth Street Lounge. Hank’s closed in 2010 after half a century in business. Now, if you can barely drink in the heart of any American city, no matter how tiny, you know it’s seriously messed up.

Just off downtown, there’s also Off Broadway, however. The first time I entered, four years ago, I noticed “NO PROFANITIES” on the wall, yet the very stern barkeep had this T-shirt on, “PRACTICE SAFE SEX. GO FUCK YOURSELF.” You’re finally home, I thought. On that occasion, I was able to make the acquaintance of Jamaal, a 65-year-old former math teacher. A jazz lover, he told me his favorite concert ever was Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers at NYC’s Blue Note. We talked about Mickey Roker, who used to be the house drummer at Philly’s Ortlieb’s. I once had a cassette of Roker keeping time behind Dizzy and Ray Brown, but it was erased by an embittered, life-hating middle-aged Korean art student I had lent the tape to. I should be

awarded a peace prize, or some chintzy ribbon at least, for not strangling him. A bottle of Rolling Rock in Off Broadway was, and still is, only \$1.50. Jamaal informed me, “This place is all right. It has an older crowd. You can go home at the end of the night.”

“What’s the alternative?” I asked.

“Someone beats you up or shoots you.”

“I’d rather just go home.”

“Me too.”

In Camden, I had seen Wynton Marsalis at a free concert by the river. Like Baltimore, Camden has a safe tourist section, with a much smaller, grayer fish version of the celebrated aquarium. People who come to this protected enclave don’t need to see the real Camden, not that they want to. They can even arrive and leave via a ferry from Philly.

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The worst house

Lying outside Camden’s tiny bullet-free zone, the Walt Whitman House, on Martin Luther King Blvd, gets almost no visitors, not that Americans are flocking to pay homage to their writers. Even during its days, this “coop” or “shanty,” in Whitman’s own words, was called “the worst house and the worst situated,” and Camden was thriving back then, with its best decades still ahead. By the 1940’s, Camden would become an industrial powerhouse, with many factories employing blacks and whites, and the larg-

Photos by
Linh Dinh

Deserted home,
boarded up,
awaiting an
uncertain
future



.....
Some Camden folks will ask you for cash, but many will also offer you cigarettes, dope or sex. Here, illicit dealing is king
.....

est shipyard in the world.

“Yo, Chris Rock, I’m at the Walt Whitman House.”

“Run!”

In 2011, Ken Rose wanted to interview me by phone on July 4th, so I decided to do it in front of the Whitman House. On the day this country was born, I would not be in Philly, its birthplace, but Camden, its prototypical morgue. A habitually lawless government has no business celebrating the Constitution, and with this country being deliberately tortured and drowned by its rulers, accompanied by flag-waving acquiescence of deranged voters, each 4th of July has turned into a sick and sad spectacle. Across the street was the Camden County Jail, and on the next block, ABC Bails Bond. Before Ken called, some guy shuffled up and said he was the caretaker of the Whitman home, but as we chattered, I soon realized he didn’t even know who Walt Whitman was. He referred to Whitman in the present tense, as in, “He owns this entire row, including the parking lot right here.” Predictably, he wanted me to give him some change.

Yes, some Camden folks will ask you for cash, but many will also offer you cigarettes, dope or sex. Here, illicit dealing is king. Also in 2011, I met Abdul, who was selling body oils, perfumes, knit hats and boxer’s shorts from a table set up in front of a fried chicken joint. After peddling stuff for seven years, business was getting worse and worse, so Abdul was planning on moving to Senegal, where he had a wife. Years ago, he had been busted for drugs, a wrong conviction, he claimed, and locked up for three-and-a-half years. In prison, he converted to Islam. Released, he visited Senegal. As he walked into a Western Union, the lady behind the counter exclaimed, “You’re my husband! I saw you in a dream.”

His wife was 40-years old, and “doesn’t have a bad thought,” Abdul said. “She can’t be any better!” Since she didn’t want to come to the States, he would go to her. He was having a house built over there for \$20,000. He sent her boxes of old clothes to sell. “Ameri-

can clothes are popular in Senegal,” he explained. “Even used clothes.”

“Where do you get old clothes? Where do you buy them?”

“I don’t buy them. I get them from my relatives!”

.....
Camden is broke

In 2012, I met another Black Muslim man, 38-ish, who also sold on the sidewalk, in his case socks from a wheeled cart. Across the street was the ruins of the Carnegie Library, so I said, “That was a beautiful building once!”

“I hear they’re gonna fix it up.”

“Really?! But the city is broke. Camden is broke.”

“Camden is broke?”

“Yeah, man, Camden is broke. Philly is broke. The whole country is broke! Didn’t you hear about all the cops they laid off?”

“They got money.” He then read from the inscription on the building. “Nineteen-O-four. Man, that building is old. How old is that? Thirty, forty years?”

“It was built in nineteen-O-four, so it’s over a hundred-years-old.”

“Really?”

He told me about a cop who had given him a ticket for selling on the street, “The judge will throw it out, though, because I was sitting in a restaurant when he busted me.”

“Yeah, but you’ll still have to waste your time in court. What an asshole! Doesn’t he have better things to do than to bust people trying to make a living? This city is so fucked up and he’s busting you, and you’re not hurting anybody.”

“There is a lot of complaints about this guy.”

“Is he an older guy?”

“No, a young cop, a young, white cop.”

Whoever this cop was, he’s gone, because Camden has laid off its entire police force. That’s right, all 270 cops who survived previous layoffs were let go in April of 2013, though 50 were immediately hired by the



Frank's Deli, Camden

County Police that's now in charge of keeping Camden, um, safe. Announcing this restructuring, the mayor said, "We cannot sit back and allow our children and families to experience another 2012." Or another 2011, 2010 or 2009, etc., for year in, year out, this post-industrial city ranks as one of the deadliest in America. With its cops trimmed and shuffled, little has changed on Camden's streets, though there's a mobile observation tower across from the bus terminal. Inside that box is an anxious man with his head rotating nonstop, or a dozing schmuck, or no one at all, but you wouldn't know, would you? An instant panopticon, it is sprouting up everywhere, from theme park parking lots to your next mass protest. The Guardian Angels also made a cameo appearance in Camden, but have wisely disappeared. Unarmed, they'd stand an excellent chance of being peeled off the sidewalk, then rolled, posthaste, into Cooper Hospital, Camden's one world class institution. Come to Camden, where you can

be cut up or expire with distinction! World class hands will stitch you up!

"Work here. Play here. Live here," shout the LIVE CAMDEN billboards, but until recently Baltimore also declared itself, "The Greatest City in America," and Milpitas, whom most people have never heard of, drapes banners all over its blink-and-miss downtown, trumpeting, "MILPITAS A Great American City." Whatever. What is Juarez's slogan, I wonder? Or Kabul's? Speaking of Cooper, I must tell you about Paul Matthews Young, whom I met in 2012 at the Broadway train stop. On a plate glass window, this 50-ish man had taped his New Jersey ID, social security card and about eight sheets of paper showing his "Monetarial Earning Assessment." It wasn't clear what he was trying to convey, to whom, or if it was some kind of protest. When he told me had 18 children, I asked, "With how many women?"

"None."

"What do you mean none?!"

"I had them by myself."

.....
**Come to Camden,
 where you can be
 cut up or expire
 with distinction!
 World class hands
 will stitch you up!**

.....
Already a coke head, she got hooked on heroin at 19, thanks to her junkie uncle. Unable to pay for her daily treat, she started to trick
.....

He said his 18 kids were born microscopic from the tip of his penis. The doctors at Cooper had something to do with this, but I couldn't get him to explain fully the procedure beyond the fact that Paul had to pleasure himself quite energetically.

See her, that's Angela. She looks about 14, but she might be as old as 17. Walking unsteadily, her eyes are practically closed, but she can see enough to tell that you're not serious. She'll keep walking because she has no time to lose. Each day, she can easily go through five or six bags of dope, plus some powder for variety, plus she has to eat, too, and maybe down a few cans of Steel Reserve to flush that lousy Chinese food, bought from Yuk's, yes, that's really the name, at 827 S. Broadway. I'm not making anything up. Why would I? No one knows anything about Angela, not even her best friend. Thirty-three-year-old Michelle regularly gives Angela food and dope, but Angela still won't say nothing about herself, and don't you give me that shit about her being too drugged to remember, because on one level or another, none of us ever forgets anything.

.....
"My baby's daddy"

I won't forget walking with Michelle when she said, "That's my baby's daddy," and she pointed to some guy across the street. Squinting, the dude was probably thinking, "What's my side piece doing with that Chink (or fuckhead, or asshole)?" You know, anything but "gentleman" or "Asian American," per the *New York Times* stylistic guidelines. To think is already to compose, and thus to dissimulate and cover up, and to write is to further distort, nearly always, what we pretend to think, but writing, paradoxically, can be used to hint at the rawness beneath all this culture, this domestication, this farce, this composition. This half-assed expose almost never happens, however. Maybe it has never happened. Looking hazy, dude kept squinting as if he had a hard time recognizing his lay even.

"It's Rashid's birthday!" Michelle shouted. "Huh? What?"

"Rashid! It's Rashid's birthday today!"

Showing no emotion, no smile, no grimace, dude gave Michelle one final squint, then kept walking.

"He doesn't remember his son's name?" I chuckled.

"No, he remembers. Lamon's just a little out of it today."

"How old is Rashid?"

"Eight! He's eight-years-old!"

"And he stays with you?"

"No, with my mom."

"So your mom is not so bad after all."

"She might as well do something for him, since she didn't do shit for me!"

Though Michelle is one-quarter Okinawan, it's hard to see any Asianness on her white face. She was mostly raised by her Japanese grandma, but at 16, she moved to Camden. Already a coke head, she got hooked on heroin at 19, thanks to her junkie uncle. Unable to pay for her daily treat, she started to trick, "I've been raped and beaten. Look," she opened her mouth, "these are dentures. I don't like to go with young black guys. They're fucked up! There are, like, nine guys who go around beating up girls."

"Just for the hell of it?"

"Yeah, just for the hell of it. This is Camden!"

"So what are you going to do? What's your next move?"

"I'd like to get into rehab, maybe go to Florida."

"What's in Florida?"

"I dunno. There's a good rehab place in Florida. My sister told me about it. I need to get out of Camden, that's for sure."

Her pale arms showed purple needle marks, and so did the tops of her hands. Her veins have collapsed. A blue headed pin pierced her upper lip, a large hoop dangled from one ear, and her hair had been dyed a burnt sienna or, more likely, was just a red wig. It was a very hot day, yet she was draped in a charcoal colored hoodie, and her faded blue tank



Give peace a chance: Once Camden was a vibrant community; now it's a squalid eyesore

top had been rendered lumpy by a cheap, ill fitting bra. For someone living rough for so long, Michelle still appeared fresh, so I said, “You know, you don’t even look 33-years-old. You actually look younger!”

“You think so? I used to be beautiful.” She pulled two ID’s from her cloth sack, showed them to me.

Holding one up against her face, I pronounced, “No, I think you actually look better now, but you better get the fuck out of Camden soon.”

She smiled. Her dentures were newish, for they weren’t too yellow. Maybe she had just gotten punched? Michelle then volunteered that Lamon may be pissed because she had been seen with another guy.

“Some guy you like? Some guy you love?”

“It does get lonely out here... Hey, you want to hear something weird? Just last night, this one girl got so fucked up, she took her clothes off and ran down the street.”

The same night, 20-year-old De’quan

Rodgers was shot dead, and another young man, 19-years-old, was found with multiple bullet wounds. About three hours before I chatted with Michelle, three more men were perforated. Shootings are nearly daily occurrences here, but a young naked woman running down the street is goofy enough to be remarked upon, if only for the next 24 hours or so.

Messages on the walls

All over town, there are RIP messages spray-painted onto walls, near where a loved one has died, whether targeted or hit by stray slugs. Sunrise, sunset. Sunrise, sunset. You live and talk much shit until Jesus, Allah, Bruce Lee or Liberace texts you, “Kum home, losr.” You strut about and blather beaucoup merde until Glock, SKS or Bersa Thunger taps you on the shoulder and whispers, “Hiya!” Even as you crawl on all fours, sightless and toothless, with your liver,

.....
About three hours before I chatted with Michelle, three more men were perforated

Watching a news story of five guys stealing 17 Rolexes after smashing its display case, the barflies whoop with astonishment and delight, but they are blasé about a school shooting simulation

spleen and entrails hanging out, it's still too early to call it a night. Is it last call already? On a memorial for Izzy and Cunt, someone has scrawled, "Heaven is where we go but hell is where we live." On shop windows and doors are flyers begging for information on Camden's disappeared. Some have come to buy drugs, never to be seen again. Some were just strolling to the bodega or the Chinese joint's bulletproof window. Yuk's, it's so yummy!

Sorry, man, all you wanted was a beer and here I am dragging you down with talks of bullets, blood, gurneys, scalpels, needles and more blood, so much blood, blood geysers, showers of blood, so let's head straight into Off Broadway, without further delay. As if to negate the chaos outside, this dump has so many rules, dude, as in:

- NO T-SHIRTS OR VEST
- NO HATS TURNED AROUND BACKWARDS
- NO SCARVES
- NO HOODS OR SKI CAPS
- NO BAGGY PANTS

- ALL TEE-SHIRTS OF ANY COLOR
- MUST HAVE LOGO'S THAT ARE VISIBLE
- MUST BE NAVEL HIGH
- LOGO MUST BE ON YOUR CHEST OR BACK

- PLEASE DO NOT YELL OR SHOUT ACROSS THE BAR
- THANK YOU

- ATTENTION BAR PATRONS
- PLEASE DO NOT STAND ON CHAIR RAIL

- PLEASE PLEASE ANYONE CAUGHT TOUCHING
- TV WILL BAR YOURSELF PERMANENTLY
- ANYONE TOUCHING APPLIANCES BARRED
- YOURSELF NO EXCEPTIONS

EMPLOYEES HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHECK BATHROOMS AT ALL TIME

And, of course:

- BE AWARE
- THESE PREMISES ARE UNDER 24 HOUR VIDEO SURVEILLANCE INSIDE & OUT

Well, I'm glad I have a dress shirt on, and no pantaloons, and I'll do my best not to get touchy feely with that television. Watching a news story of five guys stealing 17 Rolexes after smashing its display case, the barflies whoop with astonishment and delight, but they are blasé about a school shooting simulation. As I eat a sad cheesesteak, with its dispirited meat, cheese and bread, bits of conversation drift to me.

"Yes, there was this girl born without a rectum, and she's alive still. They haven't fixed her yet, but they will."

"You never had possum hash?"

"No, I'm a city boy. I don't know nothing about that. My cousins in North Carolina might, though."

"Possum is sweet. It's an all right meat. And muskrat is OK too. You ought to know what's edible, and what's not, because it might come in handy one day."

"No, ma'am, I'm happy with my chicken and my steak, thank you. I don't need no squirrel, no rabbit, no raccoon, no possum. Why should I bother about any of that, when I can just go to the store?"

Surrounded by rules, we aren't any safer, for a dickhead or two can just come in to make everyone lie on the ground, then relieve us of wallets and purses. Most patrons are bunched up at the far end, however, so they'll have a better chance to see what should shit happens. (Sign on a Camden wall, "If you believe shit happens, park here.") Several of these luses are probably packing.

Three Beyonce tunes in a row tells me it's time to get the fuck home. Soon I'll stagger

into the dusk, into a half feral city of aimless men and women dwelling in rotting row houses, abandoned shells shrouded by vines and shrubs, or tents, like those clustering by the freeway, across from the long-shuttered Sears and beyond a billboard pitching \$5,000 Yurman watches to passing motorists. Living apart in a squalid tent down a dirt path blocked by plywood, branches and lumber, ex factory worker Beasto can choose between bacon, hot dog or pork chop, all stored unrefrigerated in a sack of rice, and all reeking, of course. Fifty-seven, he's been away from Puerto Rico 43 years. Meanwhile, junkie Tina has left her tent, cleaned herself up and reconciled with her mom, so of course, of course, a cheerful respite, or recovery, if you will, is temporarily possible, within the larger framework of tempered hope, outright disappoint-

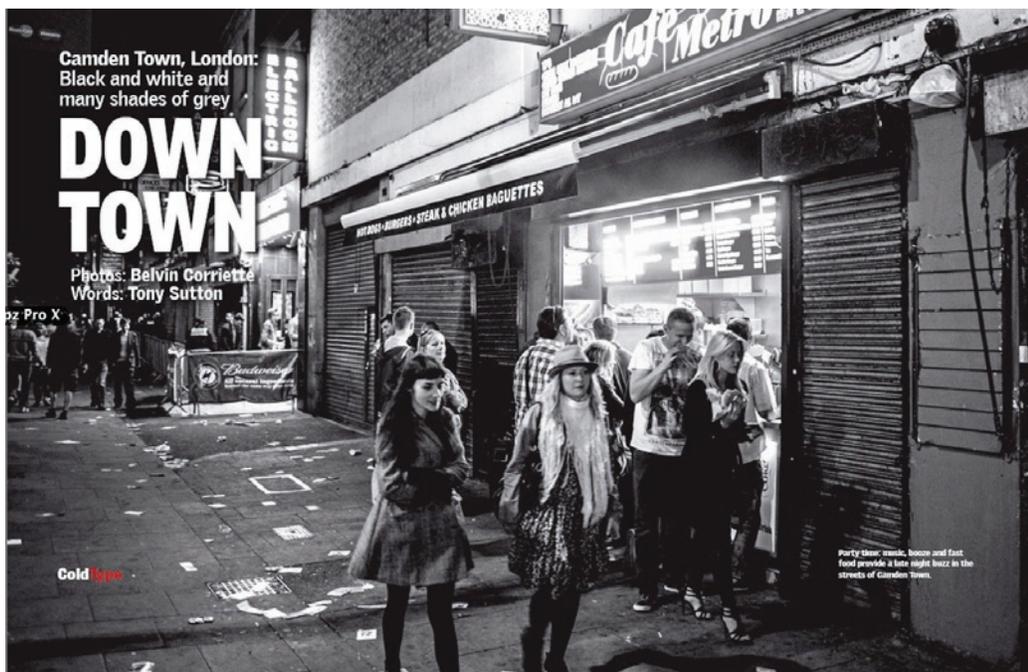
ment and, naturally, unmitigated horror. Staggering on, I will pass by Cooper, where wizardly doctors can give each of us a cleaner, fresher asshole, to pump up our always suspect vanity and confidence, or I might run into lovely Michelle or Angela, for they will still be out there. All night long, she'll sleepwalk from one john to another, just so she can score and score, until she finally disappears. **CT**

Junkie Tina has left her tent, cleaned herself up and reconciled with her mom, so of course, of course, a cheerful respite, or recovery, if you will, is temporarily possible

Linh Dinh is was born in Vietnam in 1963, came to the US in 1975, and has also lived in Italy and England. He is the author of two collections of stories, "Fake House" and "Blood and Soap", five books of poems, and a novel, "Love Like Hate". Read more of his writing at <http://linhdinhphotos.blogspot.ca>

NOW, TAKE A LOOK AT THE OTHER CAMDEN

<http://coldtype.net/photo.html>



London's Camden Town is renowned for its brash and lively 24-hour-a-day, 7-days-a-week lifestyle. And its famous markets are among the major attractions of Britain's capital city. See more pictures in **Belvin Corriette's** 18-page photoessay – with text by **Tony Sutton** – published with this issue of **ColdType** – <http://coldtype.net/photo.html>

The sounds of silence

An excerpt from the book, *Extremely Loud: Sound As A Weapon*, by Juliette Volcler

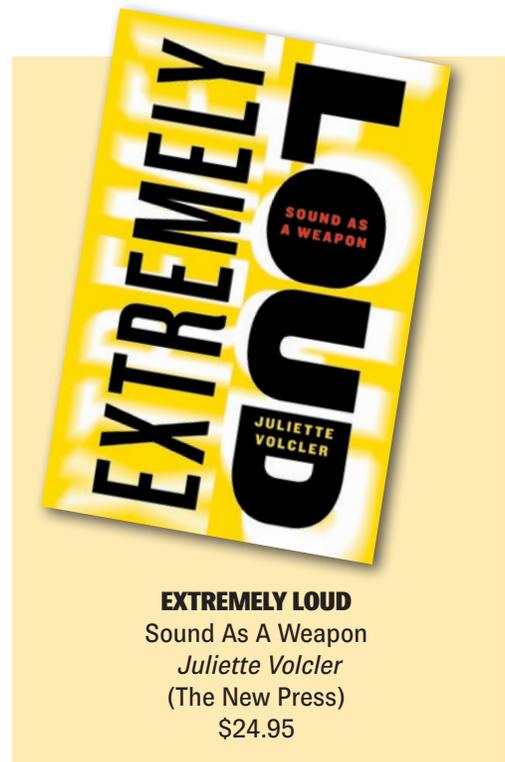
.....
Sound is no longer employed solely for its essentially organic effects, but also used for its psychological impact
.....

In a quirky and utterly compelling blend of journalism and military history, here is the little-known story of a shocking modern phenomenon: the use of sound as a weapon. Bringing to light a particularly insidious merger of technology, military oppression, and entertainment, EXTREMELY LOUD shows us how “non-lethal” sonic weapons have become the tools of choice not just as a form of torture at Guantanamo and elsewhere, but also for crowd control at major political demonstrations from Gaza to Wall Street ...

CHAPTER 4

“TOTALLY CUT OFF FROM THE KNOWN”: SILENCE AND SATURATION¹

When we go up a notch in the spectrum of frequencies, when we leave the strict territory of basses and shock waves to arrive at the domain of signifying sound (language, music), an entirely different story begins: it is no longer a matter of retracing the military-industrial genealogy of weapons systems but of delving into the “war of the mind,” which plays out starting in World War II and continues today in other forms.² Sound is no longer employed solely for its essentially organic effects, but



also used for its psychological impact; the distinction between the two, as we shall see, is not entirely clearly defined. Militaries and information services progressively institute what will become sensory deprivation techniques and develop new competencies to achieve this; psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, and other “mind doctors” become involved in war and police operations. Sound, “or in some cases its carefully calibrated absence,” becomes a weapon of

submission, torture, and destruction.

Sensory deprivation can function either by neutralizing the senses or by bombarding them. Whether pitch blackness or full sunlight, antiseptic or stench-filled, total silence or constant sound, the desired effect is the same: to deprive a person of the use of his or her senses. Manipulation of the sound environment is part of a broader picture, neither more important nor more terrifying than other practices used simultaneously. Subjecting a person to sensory deprivation implies in particular that the person is placed in isolation, in other words, kept in a cell in which he has no contact with the outside world, other than prison or military personnel. In 1988, Nathalie Menigon, who was incarcerated at the Fleur-Merogis prison for belonging to an armed revolutionary group, Action directe, spoke about it as a “modern dungeon”: “You find yourself in a void which, inevitably, gets inside of you.”³

As scientists and the military launched the first broad research into mental control, they developed an interest in sensory deprivation in the form of silence. In the mid-1970s, a former American diplomat, John Marks, invoked the Freedom of Information Act to gain access to CIA archives and was given sixteen thousand previously classified documents. In 1979, he published *The Search for the “Manchurian Candidate”*, a work that retraces the CIA’s history of experimentation in mind control.⁴ In it, we learn that in the late 1940s, the brand-new CIA developed an ambitious program to understand the mechanics of consciousness and to master “behavior modification” in order to keep from losing ground to the Soviets when it came to extracting confessions. A “genuine hysteria over Communist mind control” spread throughout the United States at the beginning of the Cold War.⁵ Chinese and Soviet methods, which were viewed as “the brainwashing equivalent of the atomic bomb,” would drive the research ordered by the CIA.⁶ Beginning in 1956, as it turned out, China and the USSR used “clas-

sic police tactics” that were no less violent: isolation, sleep and food deprivation, long periods of standing, and extreme temperatures.⁷

In *A Question of Torture*, historian Alfred McCoy analyzes the evolution of the CIA’s interrogation methods “from the Cold War to the War on Terror.” He indicates that at the beginning of the 1940s, the CIA was convinced that the communists were using drugs, electroshocks, or hypnosis, and believed that it was forced “to assume a more aggressive role in the development of these techniques.”⁸ Over the span of ten years, it would devote several billion dollars to testing “the mechanism of mass persuasion and the effects of coercion on individual consciousness”⁹ through Operations Blue Bird and Artichoke.¹⁰ In 1953, all of the programs were regrouped into Project MKUltra, under the direction of Dr. Sidney Gottlieb and counterespionage specialist Richard Helms. By 1963, MKUltra would invest \$25 million in nearly two hundred projects and subprojects, undertaken jointly with Great Britain and Canada, and led by 185 independent researchers at eighty institutions, including forty-four universities and twelve hospitals.¹¹ In short, it was a very large program that, after the failure of experiments with drugs, quickly reoriented toward behavioral research.

The CIA, the ONR, and professors in experimental psychology worked in close collaboration to cultivate this field of study and develop what would become “no-touch torture”: psychological torture.¹² In a similar vein to what happened later with the development of “non-lethal” weapons, the goal here was to make torture not less violent but less fatal, less visible, more effective, legally acceptable, and media friendly. Marks adds: “The intelligence community, including the CIA, changed the face of the scientific community during the 1950’s and early 1960’s by its interest in such experiments. Nearly every scientist on the frontiers of brain research found men from the

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.....
“One subject
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of a music box . . .”
.....

secret agencies looking over his shoulders, impinging on the research.”¹³

THE “ACOUSTIC NIGHT”: SILENCE¹⁴

Sensory deprivation was quickly placed at the heart of US doctrine in the domain of mental control. While later “interrogation” methods would give priority to the use of sound saturation, it was silence that first got the attention of scholars and their patrons.

The CIA and Experimental Deafness

Contract X-38 allowed the research council for the Canadian defense department to finance the first Canadian studies on manipulation of the senses.¹⁵ In an article entitled “Experimental Deafness,” which appeared in 1954, a psychologist at McGill University in Montreal, Dr. Donald O. Hebb, and two of his colleagues write about an experiment performed with six students who were paid to become deaf for three days.¹⁶ Their ear canals were “packed with cotton impregnated with petroleum jelly”; then they were left to their usual occupations while asked to “keep a diary recording anything out of the ordinary that they observed about themselves.” The results differed widely by subject, who, in addition to the physical discomfort, reported experiencing feelings of “inferiority, irritability, and tendency to avoid others.” The researchers conclude that “a sudden lowering of normal auditory input has shown clear evidence in this experiment . . . of a disturbance in behavior.”

That same year, Hebb’s students published “Effects of Decreased Variation of the Sensory Environment.”¹⁷ Starting with the hypothesis that “the maintenance of normal, intelligent, adaptive behavior probably requires a continually varied sensory input,” they intended “to examine cognitive functioning during prolonged perceptual isolation.” Twenty-two young men were paid “to lie on a comfortable bed in a lighted cubicle

24 hours a day” with all their senses blocked: they wore “translucent goggles which transmitted diffuse light but prevented pattern vision,” “gloves and cardboard cuffs.” They remained in a “partially sound-proof cubicle,” with “a U-shaped foam-rubber pillow in which the subject kept his head while in the cubicle,” while “the continuous hum provided by fans, air-conditioner, and the amplifier leading to earphones in the pillow produced fairly efficient masking noise.”

The result: “The subjects tended to spend the earlier part of the experimental session in sleep.” Then they grew bored and impatient: “They would sing, whistle, talk to themselves, tap the cuffs together, or explore the cubicle with them. . . . There seemed to be unusual emotional instability during the experimental period. When doing tests, for instance, the subjects would seem very pleased when they did well, and upset if they had difficulty.” On a cognitive level, “the subjects reported that they were unable to concentrate on any topic for long while in the cubicle.” They had “blank periods” and hallucinations: “The visual phenomena were actually quite similar to what have been described for mescal intoxication. . . . One subject could hear the people speaking in his visual hallucinations, and another repeatedly heard the playing of a music box. . . . They said it was as if there were two bodies side by side in the cubicle.” The students “also reported feelings of confusion, headaches, a mild nausea, and fatigue; these conditions persisted in some cases for 24 hours after the session.” Most of the volunteers left at the end of two to three days.¹⁸

In 1955 – 56, at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), near Washington, DC, Dr. John C. Lilly immersed two volunteers in water-filled tanks, their eyes covered and the sound level reduced to a minimum. After only a few hours, two people developed hallucinations as well as “reveries and fantasies of a highly personal and emotionally-charged nature.”¹⁹ Enthusiastic about

the experiment, the CIA sought to use this tank as a means to interrogate reticent subjects, in order to break them down “to the point where their belief systems or personalities could be altered.”²⁰ But Lilly made a point of not conducting any experiments that would involve anyone other than himself or his colleagues. Understanding that the CIA did not intend to use his research in a positive manner, and that he could no longer work as he pleased, he resigned from the NIMH in 1958.

In 1963, MKUltra was officially interrupted due to its mixed results and the ethical issues raised by experiments led on non-volunteer human subjects²¹ by doctors or even agents with insufficient scientific competency.²² But that same year, the CIA reported its conclusions in *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation*, a manual that outlined the agency’s interrogation methods.²³ Absolute silence along with “self inflicted pain” was one of the techniques of this new “no-touch” torture.²⁴ The manual indicated in particular that “the circumstances of detention are arranged to enhance within the subject his feelings of being cut off from the known and the reassuring, and of being plunged into the strange.” It goes on: “The chief effect of arrest and detention, and particularly of solitary confinement, is to deprive the subject of many or most of the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile sensations to which he has grown accustomed.”²⁵

The definition of sensory deprivation is based, notably, on Lilly’s analysis of the autobiographical stories of polar explorers and other solitary navigators. Quoting Lilly, the manual states that “the symptoms most commonly produced by isolation are superstition, intense love of any other human being, perceiving inanimate objects as alive, hallucinations, and delusions.”²⁶ The manual concludes:

The more completely the place of confinement eliminates sensory stimuli, the

more rapidly and deeply will the interrogatee be affected. Results produced only after weeks or months of imprisonment in an ordinary cell can be duplicated in hours or days in a cell which has no light (or weak artificial light which never varies), which is sound-proofed, in which odors are eliminated, etc. An environment still more subject to control, such as a water-tank or iron-lung, is even more effective.²⁷

The spread of these practices continued through several channels, primary among them Project X and the Phoenix Program: the former organized training in CIA counterinsurgency techniques for Central and South American soldiers and torturers, and the latter instituted the use of these same techniques in Vietnam in “terminal experiments” against Vietcong prisoners.²⁸ In 1966, the agency sent an electroshock machine and three psychiatrists to the psychiatric hospital at Bien Hoa, north of Saigon, to test the technique of “depatterning” developed by Dr. Donald Ewen Cameron (a technique we shall describe later) in real conditions, on prisoners of war.

The teaching of “no-touch torture” occurred mainly via institutions such as the army’s School of the Americas, which from 1966 to 1991 trained officers from Central and South America in military interrogation, and the Office of Public Safety, which from 1966 to 1974 taught CIA techniques to police from forty-seven countries, including Brazil, South Vietnam, Uruguay, Iran, and the Philippines.²⁹ Ultimately, the agency published seven new manuals, including the 1983 “Honduran Manual,” officially called the *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual*.³⁰ Domestically, the United States applies techniques from these manuals in high-security, twenty-first-century prisons, where prisoners on the highest watch are placed “in total isolation in soundproof cells with white walls.”³¹

.....
“The more completely the place of confinement eliminates sensory stimuli, the more rapidly and deeply will the interrogatee be affected”

.....
Ulrike Meinhof, for her part, would hang herself in her cell in May 1976, in “disturbing” conditions, according to the international commission of inquiry
.....

The Silent German Section

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the study of sensory deprivation began in 1971. Inspired by the work of Hebb and his students, experiments were performed “in the psychiatry and neurology clinic of Hamburg-Eppendorf [university hospital], under the direction of the Czech psychiatrist Jan Gross, who in the 1960s did similar experiments with Svab [a professor at the University of Hamburg].” The research program was cleverly labeled as an investigation of “psychosomatic, psychodiagnostic and therapeutic aspects of aggressivity” and was based on the “observation of human behaviour in situations of sensory deprivation.”³² A “silent chamber” was built within the university hospital for volunteers, recruited from among students and soldiers of the Bundeswehr. Reactions observed included fear and panic, distorted perception (hallucinations, autoscopy,³³ illusory manipulations), extreme hunger, troubled sleep patterns, chest pains, motor imbalances, shaking, and convulsions.³⁴

Starting in October 1970, the government established a special detention system for prisoners of the Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion or RAF) – also known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang – and other extreme left-wing activists.³⁵ In 1972, exceptional treatment was instituted for Astrid Proll and Gudrun Ensslin, and an especially lengthy treatment for Ulrike Meinhof, considered to be the group’s ideologue.³⁶ They were incarcerated separately in a “special part of the silent section” of the prison at Cologne-Ossendorf:

This wing is situated in one of the sections of the women’s psychiatric building of the prison, separated from the main building and specially outfitted to be acoustically isolated. . . . The cells situated above and on the sides of theirs were left empty during their detention, so that no external noise could reach them. The

walls and the furnishings of the cell were painted white and daylight penetrated into the cells only through a narrow slit covered with fine mesh. The prisoners from the special wing of Cologne-Ossendorf therefore lived twenty-four hours a day in no discernible setting.³⁷

Ulrike Meinhof writes:

Feeling your skull on the verge of breaking into pieces . . . feeling you cannot speak
Impossible to recall the meaning of words, except very vaguely
The whistling sounds – s, ss, tz, sch – , unbearable torture . . .
Feeling time and space irredeemably interwoven one with the other and feeling yourself waver, trapped in a labyrinth of distorted mirrors
And then: the terrible euphoria of hearing something
which differentiates day from the acoustic night.³⁸

In 1973, the prison psychologist, Professor Jarmer, noted about Ulrike Meinhof that “the psychic burden imposed on the prisoner goes well beyond the normally inevitable level for solitary confinement.”³⁹ Committees against torture via isolation protested outside, demanding in particular the elimination of Cologne-Ossendorf’s silent section. After five months in this section, Astrid Proll was returned to a normal cell in order to be fit enough to stand trial; “she finally had to be transferred to a sanatorium in 1975, her condition no longer allowing her to survive in detention.”⁴⁰ Between 1972 and 1975, the Baader-Meinhof prisoners would lead several hunger strikes, unto death for Holger Meins, in order to demand the cessation of “special treatment” (Sonderbehandlung). Ulrike Meinhof, for her part, would hang herself in her cell in May 1976, in “disturbing” conditions, according to the international commission of

inquiry.⁴¹

In an article entitled “The Silent Section, the Harshes Form of Solitary Confinement,” one of the committees against torture writes:

The same means of extermination are put in place and foreseen against political prisoners in other countries. A silent section is now under construction on the seventh floor of the Duivendrecht prison in the Netherlands. In Sweden, journalist Jan Guillou . . . was subject to similar torture in a silent section of the Stockholm prison. In the Portuguese colonies, the political prisoners are enclosed in cells made of tanks and immersed in water in order to cut off all noise and sensory stimulation.⁴²

The therapist Sjeff Teuns, insisting on the “key function” of “acoustic isolation,” concludes: “Used for months and years, sensory deprivation is the perfect murder for which no one – or everyone, except the victim – is responsible.”⁴³

“A GIANT TAPE RECORDER”: SATURATION⁴⁴

Although for many years CIA manuals favored silence as a means of achieving sensory deprivation, the agency also explored the potential of sound saturation beginning in the 1950s. Such saturation was studied in the context of the same research programs and by the same scientists.

The 1950s and 1960s: Dr. Cameron

In 1954, a member of the CIA produced a report in which he recalled a presentation made by Dr. Hebb at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association regarding a Canadian army experiment that aimed to “eliminate as much as possible all sensation”: the students, hands and feet

covered in thick gloves, were placed in a silent room in which they were read “childish rhymes.” The subjects “tended to lose their sense of time” and become “very irritable and requested time after time to hear the simple childish rhymes.” No one lasted more than a week.⁴⁵

The CIA also placed its hopes in Dr. Donald Ewen Cameron, president of the American Psychiatric Association, who was then the head of Allan Memorial, the psychiatric section of McGill University Health Center. There he developed research on “the effects upon human behavior of the repetition of verbal signals,” which, with the help of drugs, can achieve an effect “analogous to the breaking down of the individual under continuous interrogation.”⁴⁶ The agency “not only had a doctor willing to perform terminal experiments in sensory deprivation, but one with his own source of subjects.”⁴⁷ Between 1957 and 1963, one hundred patients residing at Allan Memorial for psychological problems became involuntary subjects under Subproject 68 of MKUltra, financed through the Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology.⁴⁸

Cameron used his patients – mainly women – to test a method of “depatterning”: a combination of induced coma, electroshocks, and forced listening to repetitive messages, at first negative (“You never stood up for yourself against your mother or father . . . they used to call you ‘crying Madeleine’”), then positive (“You will then be free to be a wife and mother just like other women”).⁴⁹ The cassettes were played in a loop, sixteen hours a day, through “a football helmet clamped to the head for up to twenty-one days”) or through loudspeakers placed beneath the pillow of patients in the “sleep room.”⁵⁰ “We made sure they heard it,” said a colleague of Cameron’s. Cameron’s primary assistant, Leonard Rubinstein, was an electronics technician who devised “a giant tape recorder that could play eight loops for eight patients at the same time.”⁵¹ The effect on the involuntary subjects was

.....
The cassettes were played in a loop, sixteen hours a day, through “a football helmet clamped to the head for up to twenty-one days”

.....
**Twenty volunteers
were paid to
remain in a
soundproof room,
glasses blurring
their vision, gloves
on their hands**
.....

disastrous: loss of memory and of all independence.⁵²

Cameron was satisfied with his findings and indicated that his methods of strict sensory isolation were “much more disturbing” than the voluntary deprivation Hebb’s students underwent.⁵³ But by 1963, the CIA had grown impatient with waiting for usable results, the Canadian Defense Research Board “would have no part in” his work, and Hebb called Cameron “criminally stupid.” It was not until 1988, when lawsuits were brought by former subjects, that the American Psychiatric Association expressed “our deep regret that psychiatric patients became unwitting participants in those experiments.” As for the Canadian Psychiatric Association, far from apologizing, it applauded Allan Memorial’s contribution to science.⁵⁴

Great Britain, which also collaborated with the United States on MKUltra, reproduced the Canadian tests to verify them. In 1959, the medical journal *The Lancet* published a report of an experiment conducted at Lancaster Moor Hospital, a psychiatric institution, with twenty volunteers paid to remain in a soundproof room, glasses blurring their vision, gloves on their hands. Fourteen left within the first forty-eight hours; all experienced states of agitation, sometimes reaching panic; and five dreamed of “drowning, suffocating, and killing people.”⁵⁵ The Royal Society of Medicine was split over a 1962 press review of past experiments – it described new ones, notably on schizophrenics placed in “a soundproof box belonging to the BBC,” which “schizophrenics tolerated . . . remarkably well . . . their hallucinations were less vivid.”⁵⁶ But as McCoy indicates: “Despite the surface legitimacy of its publication in *The Lancet*, the timing and cost of the experiment make it likely that this was military, not medical, research.”⁵⁷

**The 1970s and 1980s:
Britain’s “Five Techniques”**

During the same period, the brutal methods of the British armed forces in colonies fighting for their independence were condemned, and in 1965 a “joint directive on military interrogation” was adopted, forbidding all use of violence and promoting “psychological attack.” The military was officially trained in the new method, “offensively to conduct counterinsurgency, and defensively to survive the stress of capture.”⁵⁸ In 1972, the Parker Report analyzed British interrogation procedures of individuals “suspected of terrorism” and indicated that these techniques were progressively refined following World War II “to deal with a number of situations involving internal security.” It specifies:

Some or all have played an important part in counter insurgency operations in Palestine, Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus, and more recently in the British Cameroons (1960 – 61), Brunei (1963), British Guiana (1964), Aden (1964 – 67), Borneo/Malaysia (1965 – 66), the Persian Gulf (1970 – 71) and in Northern Ireland (1971).⁵⁹

In December 1971, Ireland filed suit in the European Court of Human Rights for violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. Judgment in *Ireland v. the United Kingdom* would be rendered on January 18, 1978. With the number of bombings and deaths linked to conflict in Northern Ireland surging in the early 1970s, we find that to remedy the situation the English Intelligence Centre gave a seminar in April 1971 to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (the police of Northern Ireland) teaching new methods of “psychological attack,” later known as the “five techniques.” On August 9 that same year, Great Britain launched Operation Demetrius, a campaign of massive arrests of alleged members and sympathizers of the Irish Republic Army (IRA) lasting several months, and created a special system of “extrajudicial deprivation of liberty” for them.

Twelve people arrested on August 9, 1971, and two others detained in October would receive special treatment: shortly after their incarceration in “unidentified interrogation centers, these fourteen detainees would be subjected for a week to “a form of ‘interrogation in depth’ which involved the combined application of five particular techniques . . . sometimes termed ‘disorientation’ or ‘sensory deprivation’ techniques.”⁶⁰ Other prisoners were threatened with the same treatment, this “interrogation in depth” serving both to break those who were subjected to it and to create a general climate of fear and intimidation.⁶¹ The “five techniques,” described by the European Court, were the following:

- (a) wall-standing: forcing the detainees to remain for periods of some hours in a “stress position” . . . ; (b) hooding: putting a black or navy colored bag over the detainees’ heads . . . ; (c) subjection to noise: pending their interrogations, holding the detainees in a room where there was a continuous loud and hissing noise; (d) deprivation of sleep: pending their interrogations . . . ; (e) deprivation of food and drink.⁶²

The European Commission would describe the third technique in a slightly different manner: subjecting the detainees to “continuous and monotonous noise . . . of a volume calculated to isolate them from communication.”⁶³ Other testimonies describe a sound “like the escaping of compressed air or the constant whirring of a helicopter blade.”⁶⁴

The commission noted that “the combined application of methods which prevent the use of the senses, especially the eyes and the ears, directly affects the personality physically and mentally. . . . Those most firmly resistant might give in at an early stage when subjected to this sophisticated method to break or even eliminate the will.”⁶⁵ It concluded that the use of

these “five techniques” constitutes a case “in breach of Article 3 of the Convention in the form not only of inhuman and degrading treatment but also of torture,”⁶⁶ and it spoke of a “modern system of torture.”⁶⁷ The European Court of Human Rights, arguing that there is a difference in intensity with respect to torture, also found a violation of the Human Rights Convention, but only for inhuman and degrading treatment.⁶⁸ Beginning in 1972, the British government agreed to stop using these techniques, whether individually or together. The fourteen detainees received between £10,000 and £25,000 each, as compared to a few hundred pounds for the detainees who were subjected to extrajudicial detention without application of the “five techniques.”⁶⁹ A university psychiatrist judged that three of the detainees had become “psychotic” in twenty-four hours and were suffering from symptoms ranging from hallucination to “profound apprehension and depression.”⁷⁰

In France, while the practice of isolation is common to break recalcitrant detainees, there are no documented occurrences with regard to the use of sensory deprivation. Hellyette Bess, imprisoned in 1974 at Fleury-Merogis for her involvement with the group Action directe, had to listen to a “broken radio” for days, which the penitentiary administration said it couldn’t turn off – but the episode remained an isolated one, according to Bess, an individual and “anecdotal” initiative.⁷¹

The 1990s and 2000s: Israel and China

In 1998, a report by the Israeli NGO B’Tselem entitled “Routine Torture: Interrogation Methods of the General Security Service [GSS]” describes the interrogation techniques used on Palestinian prisoners by the Israeli armed forces, notably by the GSS.⁷² The latter used a series of techniques called *shabeh*:⁷³

Shabeh is the combination of methods,

.....
A university psychiatrist judged that three of the detainees had become “psychotic” in twenty-four hours and were suffering from symptoms ranging from hallucination to “profound apprehension and depression.”

.....
In 1999, the Israeli High Court of Justice called them “unacceptable and prohibited,” but it invoked the “necessity clause,” which may absolve torturers in certain cases
.....

used for prolonged periods, entailing sensory isolation, sleep deprivation, and inflicting pain. Regular *shabeh* entails shackling the interrogee’s hands and legs to a small chair, angled to slant forward so that the interrogee cannot sit in a stable position. The interrogee’s head is covered with an often filthy sack and loud music is played non stop through loudspeakers. Detainees in *shabeh* are not authorized to sleep.⁷⁴

The state, according to its legal defenders, considered that these methods are at worst “unpleasant.”⁷⁵ They claimed that playing music at high volume “is not done to oppress . . . but to prevent interrogees from speaking with other detainees,”⁷⁶ and added: “If there would be a budget to build a separate cell for each [detainee], loud music would not be played.”⁷⁷

Nonetheless, the UN judged in 1997 that these procedures constituted torture, and demanded their cessation.⁷⁸ In 1999, the Israeli High Court of Justice called them “unacceptable and prohibited,” but it invoked the “necessity clause,” which may absolve torturers in certain cases.⁷⁹ In fact, in the 2000s, none of the charges of torture or inhuman and degrading treatment led to any condemnation of the security forces.⁸⁰ The practice therefore continued with variations that enabled international law to be violated with impunity. As far as sound goes, for example, music was replaced by anxiety-producing sounds, mainly shouting.⁸¹ A Palestinian testified in a 2007 report that “all the time there were noises in the cell – knocking at the door . . . and I would even hear my own screams during the interrogation, which they had apparently taped.”⁸² In the Petah Tikvah prison, “at least one of the cells is completely soundproof. In the other cells, the detainees could hear disturbing sounds, such as monotonous dripping of water on tin or the banging of metal doors.”⁸³ This special treatment was not applied to all the prisoners, but reserved for Palestinians

from the occupied territories.”⁸⁴

In China, a particular treatment was reserved for adherents of Falun Gong,⁸⁵ who were subjected to “audiovisual programs denouncing their movement” and forced “to listen to student music full blast if they won’t renounce their convictions.”⁸⁶ According to a 2010 humanitarian report by the French branch of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture, “any Chinese citizen arrested or detained runs a significant risk of torture” – especially if he or she is involved in a non-patriotic military, professional, religious, or political activity, or is part of an ethnic minority.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, “the torture takes place in police stations, detention and investigation centers, prisons (laogai and laoiao) and secret detention centers.⁸⁸ It includes forced committal to psychiatric hospitals (ankang), the incidence of which has increased in recent years.” Physical abuse was used along with techniques of sensory deprivation:

The most commonly used methods are exposure to extreme temperatures, the obligation to remain several hours in painful positions, the prolonged use of handcuffs or ankle chains, exposure to violent noises or to blinding light, the privation of food and water, of sleep, of hygiene, of sensory stimulation (use of blindfolds or hoods, detention in a dark room), isolation for prolonged periods that can last several years.⁸⁹

Moreover, while the law punishes the use of physical torture (kuxing) – to little effect, it seems – psychological torture is not recognized as such and therefore does not constitute an infraction of the law.⁹⁰

The United States: “Enhanced Interrogation”

In the 2000s, the United States put the earlier experiments in MKUltra to use, systematizing the use of sensory deprivation:

“The White House made torture its secret weapon in the war on terror.”⁹¹ In January 2002, John Yoo, an official at the Justice Department, circulated a memo affirming that the Geneva Conventions, which banned the use of torture, did not apply to the conflict in Afghanistan, which he labeled a “failed state,” or to “illegal enemy combatants.” In August of that year, in a second memo, Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee redefined torture in a more restrictive sense – the sensory deprivation formalized by the CIA no longer, in his eyes, constituted an act of torture. In October, in a third memo, General James T. Hill recommended new techniques to deal with certain detainees at the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, including “stress positions,” isolation, “deprivation of light and auditory stimuli,” hooding, use of twenty-hour interrogation, wet towels, and dripping water to induce a sense of suffocation. That same year, a Justice Department directive authorized the use of “waterboarding.”⁹²

In September 2003, in a fourth memo, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the commander in Iraq, authorized twelve interrogation techniques supplemental to those described in the official army manual, *Field Manual 34-52*, notably sleep deprivation, deception, the use of military dogs to scare detainees, and “yelling, loud music and light control.”⁹³ This memo would be considered so extreme that it would be revoked a month later – but it would leave its mark on military practices. “No-touch torture” under the euphemism of “enhanced interrogation techniques” was officially instituted in US prisons in Afghanistan, in Iraq, at Guantanamo, and in other countries to which the CIA delegated some of its activities and detainees, such as Morocco and Egypt. In 2006, after a virulent public debate on the use of torture, the Pentagon again pulled back on the authorized techniques.⁹⁴

The influence of the KUBARK *Counter-intelligence Interrogation* and of the “Hon-

duran Manual” is palpable in this rebirth of “no-touch torture” – but instead of utilizing total silence, sensory deprivation now relies on playing deafening music for the detainee, who is incarcerated in an extrajudicial framework and is usually “chained into a ‘stress position,’ in a pitch-black space made uncomfortably hot or cold.”⁹⁵ In 2005, *New Yorker* journalist Jane Mayer noted the presence at Guantanamo and in secret CIA prisons of BSCTs (Behavioral Science Consultation Teams), scientific successors to similar groups of the 1960s. General Geoffrey Miller, tired of what he deemed to be excessive moderation in interrogations at Guantanamo, introduced the first teams starting in 2003. These psychologists and psychiatrists were there not to help the detainees but to advise the military on interrogation techniques. To do this, they drew on training they had received through the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) program.⁹⁶

Instituted after the Korean War to prepare US personnel for the risk of capture in a “non-democratic” country, SERE involves training to resist torture. But some see it as an apprenticeship, spreading the most brutal techniques used at Guantanamo and in other prisons, notably “waterboarding,” sexual and religious humiliation, and “noise stress.” A representative of SERE told Mayer, “Trainees often think that the interrogation portion of the program will be the most grueling, but in fact for many trainees the worst moment is when they are made to listen to taped loops of cacophonous sounds. One of the most stress-inducing tapes is a recording of babies crying inconsolably. Another is a Yoko Ono album.”⁹⁷

That is how the detainees at Guantanamo, their eyes, hands, mouths, noses, and eyes covered, would come, strangely, to resemble the students of the late Dr. Hebb, finding themselves bombarded with very loud music and the sounds of crying babies and meowing cats, among other exceptional treatment. This uninterrupted sound offen-

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“Plenty lost their minds. I could hear people knocking their heads against the walls and the doors, screaming their heads off. . . . I call it brainwashing”
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sive in secret prisons could last days, weeks, even months at a time. Sometimes, notably in Morocco, the sound was played through a helmet that the detainee, who was handcuffed, was forced to wear. More often, it was played through loudspeakers in the cell, or, as in Mosul in Iraq, in a metal container transformed into an interrogation room, which soldiers renamed “the Disco.”⁹⁸ At another military base, near Al Qaim, a sergeant reported that the “the interrogation sound system . . . was so good they used it for the Fourth of July celebrations.”⁹⁹ It was the *Clockwork Orange* approach, as a former CIA advisor would term it.¹⁰⁰

Binyamin Mohamed, an Ethiopian suspected of belonging to Al Qaeda, who was incarcerated and tortured before being freed without charges, described his experience in “cell 17” of a Kabul prison:

It was pitch black no lights on in the rooms for most of the time. . . . They hung me up. I was allowed a few hours of sleep on the second day, then hung up again, this time for two days. My legs had swollen. My wrists and hands had gone numb. . . . There was loud music, [Eminem’s] “Slim Shady” and Dr. Dre for 20 days. . . . [Then] they changed the sounds to horrible ghost laughter and Halloween sounds. [At one point, I was] chained to the rails for a fortnight. . . . The CIA worked on people, including me, day and night. . . . Plenty lost their minds. I could hear people knocking their heads against the walls and the doors, screaming their heads off. . . . I call it brainwashing.¹⁰¹

The former detainee also mentions hearing sounds of “thunder, the sounds of planes taking off, cackling laughter and horror sounds.”¹⁰²

Other sounds used to break the “terrorists” include tapes of babies crying, the song “I Love You” from the children’s television show *Barney*, music by Christina Aguilera,

Britney Spears, Queen, Metallica, Drowning Pool, and Nine Inch Nails,¹⁰³ and more generally music that the prisoners, usually Muslims from Arab cultures, described as “unbearably loud,” “infidel,” or “Western.”¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Pieslak, an American academic who works on the relationship between music and the soldiers in Iraq, was told by one of the soldiers, C.J. Grisham, that

Metallica worked really well and really any kind of American music, except for the popular stuff. . . . You put on a Michael Jackson tape, which to me would make me talk, but you put it on those guys and like, “Oh, Michael Jackson,” and it doesn’t do anything for them. But you put on the hardcore, heavy metal American music from the Deep South or wherever. They don’t want to hear that stuff, they think it’s Satanic.¹⁰⁵

The children’s songs and the disco, pop, or sexually suggestive hits aim to harass, humiliate, or shock detainees. For Pieslak, who aims to preserve a position of “neutrality” on this use of music, it’s not by chance that heavy metal figures frequently in this type of plan: “the distorted guitar sound and vocal articulation appear to be the most significant in causing the reaction of frustration and irritation.”¹⁰⁶ And he quotes Sheila Whiteley, a British academic, who analyzed the physical specificities of the sounds produced by electric guitars in progressive rock: “Naturally produced sound waves have only a few harmonics, but these ‘clipped’ [distorted] waves have many, especially at a high level and this is what gives off the piercingly painful effect. Natural guitar sounds at loud volume are . . . far less aggressive.”¹⁰⁷ For Pieslak, rap and heavy metal share the common characteristic of expressing power, aggressiveness, and violence. In “Music as Torture/Music as Weapon,” the musicologist Suzanne Cusick, who takes a strong stance against torture and has contributed to bringing this use of music to

light, speaks of a “struggle of masculinities” and talks about the creation of a sound field composed of “musics that those who don’t identify with them often hear as embodying the sounds of masculine rage.”¹⁰⁸

In 2003, Sergeant Mark Hadsell explained that the objective was “to break a prisoner’s resistance through sleep deprivation and playing music that was culturally offensive to them. These people haven’t heard heavy metal. They can’t take it. If you play it for twenty-four hours, your brain and body functions start to slide, your train of thought slows down, and your will is broken. That’s when we come in and talk to them.”¹⁰⁹ As a former detainee at Guantanamo, Ruhul Ahmed, explains, the sound fills the spirit; it prevents a person from thinking freely, from pulling away and recuperating from other forms of torture:

I can bear being beaten up, it’s not a problem. Once you accept that you’re going to go into the interrogation room and be beaten up, it’s fine. You can prepare yourself mentally. But when you’re being psychologically tortured, you can’t. . . . You lose the plot, and it’s very scary to think that you might go crazy because of all the music, because of the loud noise, and because after a while you don’t hear the lyrics at all, all you hear is heavy banging.¹¹⁰

Donald Vance, a US citizen imprisoned at Camp Cropper in Baghdad, says the experience “sort of removes you from you. You can no longer formulate your own thoughts when you’re in an environment like that.”¹¹¹

The NGO Reprieve, which defends prisoners “from death row to Guantanamo Bay,” has abundantly documented the use of music in the “war on terror.” For Zero dB, a “silent protest” against the use of music as a means of torture, it has enlisted the musicians whose pieces were used as part of this torture.¹¹² In July 2009, Zero dB de-

manded an end to the practice in a letter to President Barack Obama.¹¹³ Two years later, no official prohibition had yet been formulated. Though it was alleged “that DoD [Department of Defense] interrogators improperly played loud music and yelled loudly at detainees,” it was determined that these techniques were authorized in *Field Manual 34-52* under the categories of “incentive” (granting a detainee request in exchange for information) and “futility” (convincing the detainee that resistance to questioning is futile).¹¹⁴ These techniques still figure in the revision of the manual released after the revelations of abuse, FM 2-22.3 (FM 34-52).¹¹⁵

As for the participation of psychiatrists and psychologists in the torture: as with Project MKUltra, such participation would get mixed reactions from the medical community. The NGO Physicians for Human Rights, surveying the question of psychological torture,¹¹⁶ published a white paper in 2010, “Human Subject Research and Experimentation in the ‘Enhanced’ Interrogation Program,” and denounced the role of health professionals in the development of more efficient and legally irreproachable torture methods.¹¹⁷ The American Medical Association advised its members to refrain from these practices, reminding them of the ethics of their profession. The American Psychiatric Association forbade its affiliates from having any “direct participation” in interrogation.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, the American Psychological Association, in recognition of the rights of its members to take part in “national security endeavors,” maintains, in McCoy’s words, “stricter, more specific standards for the treatment of laboratory animals than for human subjects.”¹¹⁹

Established during the fight against communism, the technique of sensory deprivation is today part of the arsenal deployed by the United States in the “war on terror,” by China against political and cultural dissidents, and by Israel against Palestinians. An exceptional treatment reserved for op-

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 “It’s very scary to think **that you might go crazy because of all the music, because of the loud noise, and because** after a while you don’t hear the lyrics at all, all you hear is heavy banging”

As it spreads, power is also less visible: the use of silence or music leaves no visible traces, and aims, as we shall see, to minimize public perception of torture and make it acceptable

ponents considered the most dangerous or most troublesome, sensory deprivation has an explicitly political character from the start: it selects and destroys. By enlisting “mind doctors” in military or law enforcement operations, this treatment profoundly influences the development of new weapons, notably those termed “non-lethal,” and the emergence of a behaviorist conception of law enforcement: it is no longer a matter of killing, but one of “modifying behavior.” Power no longer is applied solely to the outside but aims to punish the inside, to subjugate the spirit along with the body. And, as it spreads, power is also less visible: the use of silence or music leaves no visible traces, and aims, as we shall see, to minimize public perception of torture and make it acceptable.

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NOTES

1. Excerpt from the CIA’s KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation, July 1963, www.gwu.edu (accessed February 25, 2011) defining interrogation techniques via sensory deprivation.
2. John Marks, *The Search for the “Manchurian Candidate”: The CIA and Mind Control: The Secret History of the Behavioral Sciences* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 23.
3. “Depuis l’intérieur,” *L’Envol* ée, January 2002.
4. The book was initially published by Times Books. We are quoting from the reissue, published by W.W. Norton in 1991.
5. Alfred W. McCoy, *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Metropolitan, 2006), 25.
6. Marks, Search, 138.
7. Lawrence E. Hinkle Jr. and Harold G. Wolff,

- “Communist Interrogation and Indoctrination of ‘Enemies of the State’: Analysis of Methods Used by the Communist State Police (A Special Report),” *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*, no. 76 (1956), quoted in McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 45 – 46; Marks, Search, 136 – 38.
8. The director of the medical unit of the CIA in 1952, quoted in McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 23.
 9. *Ibid.*, 25.
 10. Marks, Search, 23 – 36; McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 26 – 27.
 11. McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 28 – 29, 33 – 34.
 12. *Ibid.*, 31.
 13. Marks, Search, 151.
 14. Excerpt from a letter by Ulrike Meinhof, member of the Red Army Faction, in 1972, when she was placed in isolation in the soundproof cell in the Cologne-Ossendorf prison in Germany; French translation available on the Marxiste-Leniniste-Maoïst website, www.contre-informations.fr/doc-inter/allemaigne/newallem3.html (accessed April 3, 2011).
 15. McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 32, 35.
 16. Donald O. Hebb, E.S. Heath, and E.A. Stuart, “Experimental Deafness,” *Canadian Journal of Psychology* 8, no. 3 (1954). All quotes in this paragraph are taken from this article.
 17. W.H. Bexton, W. Heron, and T.H. Scott, “Effects of Decreased Variation in the Sensory Environment,” *Canadian Journal of Psychology* 8, no. 2 (1954). All quotes in this paragraph are taken from this article.
 18. McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 35.
 19. John C. Lilly, “Mental Effects of Reduction of Ordinary Levels of Physical Stimuli on Intact, Healthy Persons,” *Psychiatric Research Reports* 5, no. 1 (1956), quoted in McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 39. Lilly envisaged sensory deprivation not as an instrument of torture but as a moment of relaxation and exploration of the frontiers of consciousness. He later published a work compiling his research: *The Deep Self: Profound Relaxation and the Isolation Tank Technique* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977).
 20. Marks, Search, 152.
 21. Patients in psychiatric hospitals, alleged double agents, prisoners, or even, for drug experiments, children at a summer camp or the

- clients of prostitutes. See McCoy, Question of Torture, 29, 44.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
23. CIA, KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation.
24. This technique, also called “stress postures,” constrains the detainee to hold uncomfortable positions for hours (arms outstretched, squatting, hands attached to a rail on the ceiling, standing on tiptoes) so that the body is in a state of permanent tension and imbalance and the detainee cannot rest or sleep.
25. *Ibid.*, 86 – 87.
26. Lilly, “Mental Effects,” quoted in CIA, KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation, 88.
27. *Ibid.*, 90.
28. So named by the CIA because they end only with the death of the guinea pig or his psychological destruction.
29. McCoy, Question of Torture, 60, 64, 65, 71, 88.
30. This manual was written to assist training of Honduran officers and includes passages from the KUBARK Manual almost verbatim. McCoy, Question of Torture, 86, 92 – 94.
31. Florence Hervey, ed., *Un monde tortionnaire* (Paris: ACAT-France, 2010), 278.
32. Anne Steiner and Loïc Debray, RAF: *Gu érilla urbaine en Europe occidentale* (Montreuil: L’Échappée, 2006), 42. The history of this research is developed in “Nouveaux perfectionnements scientifiques des techniciens de torture,” in *À propos du procès Baader-Meinhof, fraction armée rouge: De la torture dans les prisons de RFA*, ed. Klaus Croissant (Paris: Bourgois, 1975), 69 – 81.
33. A hallucination in which one sees one’s own body or body parts.
34. Sjeff Teuns, “La torture par privation sensorielle,” in Croissant, *À propos du procès Baader-Meinhof*, 65 – 66.
35. Members of the Movement 2 June and of the Socialist Patients’ Collective (in German Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv, also known as the SPK) were also subject to this treatment. The detainees were placed in isolation and regularly frisked, their visitors limited, and their mail censored.
36. Steiner and Debray, RAF, 39, 40, 44.
37. *Ibid.*, 40.
38. Excerpts from this letter are published in Croissant, *À propos du procès Baader-Meinhof*, 108 – 10. The author has worked from the translation “Lettre du couloir de la mort. 1972,” published on the Marxiste-Leniniste-Maoïst website, www.contre-informations.fr/doc-inter/allemande/new_alem3.html (accessed April 3, 2011).
39. Steiner and Debray, RAF, 40.
40. *Ibid.*, 42, 54.
41. *Ibid.*, 45.
42. Comité contre la torture des prisonniers politiques en RFA, “La section silencieuse, forme la plus dure de la torture par l’isolement,” in Croissant, *À propos du procès Baader-Meinhof*, 88.
43. Teuns, “La torture par privation sensorielle,” 63 – 64.
44. An invention of Leonard Rubinstein in the context of research on sensory deprivation for the project MKUltra, quoted by Marks, Search, 145.
45. McCoy, Question of Torture, 37 – 38.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
47. Marks, Search, 147.
48. McCoy, Question of Torture, 44.
49. Marks, Search, 145 – 46.
50. McCoy, Question of Torture, 44.
51. Marks, Search, 144.
52. *Ibid.*, 144, 149, 150.
53. Alfred McCoy, Question of Torture, 44.
54. *Ibid.*, 45.
55. S. Smith and W. Lewty, “Perceptual Isolation in a Silent Room,” *The Lancet*, September 12, 1959, quoted in McCoy, Question of Torture, 3.
56. S. Smith, J.C. Kenna, and G.F. Reed, “Effects of Sensory Deprivation,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 55 (December 1962): 1003 – 14.
57. McCoy, Question of Torture, 53 – 54.
58. *Ibid.*, 54.
59. “Report of the Committee of Privy Counsellors Appointed to Consider Authorised Procedures for the Interrogation of Persons Suspected of Terrorism” (Parker Report), *The Majority Report*, 3, quoted in European

- Commission, "Application no 5310/71. Ireland v. the United Kingdom. Report of the Commission," January 25, 1976, 393.
60. *Ibid.*, sec. III-B.
61. Carol Ackroyd, Karen Margolis, Jonathan Rosenhead, and Tim Shallice, *The Technology of Political Control* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1977), 34.
62. European Court of Human Rights, "Case of Ireland v. the United Kingdom (Application No. 5310/71), Judgment," Strasburg, January 18, 1978.
63. European Commission, "Application no 5310/71," 247.
64. Ackroyd et al., *Technology of Political Control*, 33.
65. European Commission, "Application no 5310/71," 402.
66. *Ibid.*
67. Ackroyd et al., *Technology of Political Control*, 35.
68. European Commission, "Application no 5310/71"; McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 57 – 58.
69. European Court of Human Rights, "Case of Ireland v. the United Kingdom," sec. III-B, C, G.
70. McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 58.
71. Author's interview with Hellyette Bess, February 7, 2011.
72. Also known as the Israeli Security Agency (ISA), Shabak, or the Shin Bet.
73. It should be noted that in recent reports we find the spellings shabah, shabak, or shabach, often referring specifically to the position of the detainee, handcuffed to a very low chair so that he is leaning forward.
74. Yuval Ginbar, "Routine Torture: Interrogation Methods of the General Security Service," B'Tselem, February 1998, 11.
75. Testimony of state defense attorneys before the Committee Against Torture, quoted in Ginbar, "Routine Torture," 24.
76. High Court of Justice 4025/96, "Bal'al Hanihan et al. v. General Security Service, Answer," July 2, 1996, quoted in Ginbar, "Routine Torture," 13.
77. High Court of Justice 2210/96, "Ziyad Mustafa a-Zaghel v. General Security Service," March 27, 1996, quoted in Ginbar, "Routine Torture," 13.
78. "Question of the Human Rights of All Persons Subjected to Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, in Particular: Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment," Report of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Nigel S. Rodley, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/37, UN Commission on Human Rights, January 1996, para. 121.
79. HaMoked, "Torture in Secret Facility 1391: HCJ 11447/ 04 – HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual v. State of Israel (judgment rendered June 14, 2006)," February 20, 2010.
80. Yossi Wolfson, "Kept in the Dark: Treatment of Palestinian Detainees in the Petah-Tikva Interrogation Facility of the Israel Security Agency," B'Tselem/HaMoked, October 2010, 45. Observations based on the 645 charges brought by B'Tselem between 2001 and 2009.
81. Hervey, *Un monde tortionnaire*, 171.
82. Testimony of Bahjat Yamen in Noam Hoffstater, "Ticking Bombs: Testimonies of Torture Victims in Israel," Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, May 2007, 14.
83. Wolfson, "Kept in the Dark," 17.
84. *Ibid.*, 49 – 50.
85. A spiritual movement that since 1999 has been considered a "heretical sect" by the Chinese government.
86. Hervey, *Un monde tortionnaire*, 125.
87. *Ibid.*, 122 – 23.
88. The laogai (reform through work) and the laojiao (reeducation through work) are detention centers and work camps.
89. Hervey, *Un monde tortionnaire*. These elements are corroborated by a UN report: Manfred Nowak, "Civil and Political Rights, Including the Question of Torture and Detention. Mission to China," Economic and Social Council, Human Rights Commission, March 10, 2006.
90. Hervey, *Un monde tortionnaire*, 128.
91. McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 108.
92. Also known as bathtub torture and practiced by the French military during the Algerian War of Independence.
93. Field Manual 34-52 describes interrogation techniques authorized by the US Army, in

keeping with international and domestic laws. In force since 1992, the manual was revised in 2006 following the abuses committed at the Abu Ghraib prison.

94. *Ibid.*, 113, 121 – 23, 127, 134, 135, 221; Jane Mayer, “The Black Sites,” *New Yorker*, August 13, 2007; Jane Mayer, “Outsourcing Torture,” *New Yorker*, February 14, 2005; Department of Defense, “Memorandums: Counter-Resistance Techniques. Legal Review of Aggressive Interrogation Techniques. Legal Brief on Proposed Counter-Resistance Strategies. Request for Approval of Counter-Resistance Strategies,” October 11, 2002, October 25, 2002, and November 27, 2002, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/documents/dodmemos.pdf (accessed March 1, 2011); Department of the Army, “Memorandum for Commander. Interrogation and Counter-Resistance Policy,” September 14, 2003, www.aclu.org (accessed March 1, 2011).
95. Suzanne G. Cusick, “Music as Torture/Music as Weapon,” *Transcultural Music Review*, 2006, www.sibetrans.com (accessed February 28, 2011).
96. Jane Mayer, “The Experiment,” *New Yorker*, July 11, 2005; McCoy, *Question of Torture*, 126 – 27.
97. Mayer, “Experiment.”
98. *Ibid.*; Mayer, “Black Sites”; Andy Worthington, “A History of Music Torture in the War on Terror,” *CounterPunch*, December 15, 2008; Suzanne G. Cusick, “‘You Are in a Place That Is Out of the World’: Music in the Detention Camps of the ‘Global War on Terror,’” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 1 (2008): 9 – 10.
99. Cusick, “‘You Are in a Place.’”
100. Mayer, “Black Sites.”
101. Worthington, “History of Music Torture”; Human Rights Watch, “US Operated Secret Dark Prison in Kabul,” December 19, 2005.
102. Reprieve, “Human Cargo: Binyam Mohamed and the Rendition Frequent Flyer Programme,” June 10, 2008, 36.
103. Cusick, “Music as Torture”; Jonathan Pieslak, *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 86, 88, 89; Worthington, “History of Music Torture.”
104. Cusick, “Music as Torture.”
105. Pieslak, *Sound Targets*, 89.
106. *Ibid.*, 169.
107. Sheila Whiteley, “Progressive Rock and Psychedelic Coding in the Work of Jimi Hendrix,” in *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, ed. Richard Middleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), quoted in Pieslak, *Sound Targets*.
108. Cusick, “Music as Torture.”
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Magazines. Books. More Books

Chellis Glendinning on reading, writing and the need for both

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From the swirl of words and images produced so long ago and, at the same time striking such contemporary cords, rises an impression of the Great Wheel of Destiny gyrating and gyrating again, through the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, of the moon – and of the essential affairs of our human life
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.....
I. Tattered Magazines

Nucchu, Bolivia

Here in Chuquisaca I am the privileged recipient of an invitation to stay at Kantu Nucchu, the ex-hacienda of President Don Gregorio Pacheco (1884-88) and the casita where Antonio José de Sucre, wounded in the coup d'état of 1828, wrote his last message to the nation: "Preservar la obra de mi creación: Bolivia."/*Preserve the work that I have created: Bolivia.*

Here – among arias sung by the Río Cachimayo, old mills, French Baroque chairs, trees bursting with lemons, and the incomparable hospitality of Ana Maria and Patricio Marion, I have discovered a pile of tattered magazines – *Cuadernos* – published by the Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura in Paris in the 1960's, with a focus on Latin American politics and cultura.

Ah, history! Ah, history-inside-of-history! And now, with my eyes in the game of observation in 2013, history-inside-of-history-inside-of-history.

I am happily poring over essays written by Jean Paul Sartre and Victoria Ocampo. The poetry of Octavio Paz and Carlos Castro Saavedra. Political commentary by Germán Arciniégas. Critiques of works by Ernest Hemingway, Miguel de Unamuno and

Miguel de Cervantes. I am treated to photos of the Eiffel Tower and of pre-Colombian art in Mexico.

One thought, written in 1965 by the Spanish journalist J. Garcia Pradas, jumps from the page: "Hay novedades muy antiguas."/*There are new things that are very old.*

For sure, through the must rising from the magazines, it is revealed that, just as controversy over the Cuban Revolution returns and returns again through the decades, I encounter a mountain of familiar themes: the dynamic between reason and faith; the destiny of the original communities in the face of modernism; the attitude of Latin America toward Europe and that of Europe toward Latin America; the integration of the continent. From the swirl of words and images produced so long ago and, at the same time striking such contemporary cords, rises an impression of the Great Wheel of Destiny gyrating and gyrating again, through the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, of the moon – and of the essential affairs of our human life.

The Colombian writer Hernando Téllez hits the nail on the head of our predicament in his timeless essay of 1965: "Por qué no aceptar que en el orden de las ideas políticas no es cierto que hayamos inventado nada que no estuviera ya inventado?"/*Why not accept that in the grand scheme of political ideas it is certain that we have invented noth-*

ing which has not already been invented?

The fine dust settled on the desk where Sucre penned his last proclamation – mixed with the odor of must from the open pages of *Cuadernos* and the mud encrusted on my blue jeans from the shores of the Cachimayo – presents an archetypal challenge: when all is said and done, we may realize that “all the world’s a stage” and we but “the actors.” But, with our indomitable spirit that rejects all limits, we are going to give this moment in the turn of the Wheel the same passion and intelligence that those of history gave it before us.

II. Books, Glorious Books

Chaupi Molino, Bolivia.

I have two pieces of art in my hands. One is a postcard of a painting by Bolivian artist Ricardo Pérez Alcalá. It shows a human skull morphed into a 1900’s Remington typewriter – keys as teeth; paper-turning roll, ears; inner mechanics, jaw bone. Surrounding this ominous cranium lies a scatter of papers boasting the flourishes of 19th-century penned script and a couple of snails rifling through the debris.

My immediate reaction is startle. Goodness! Here lies one potent commentary on the passing of typewritten words into post/postmodern cyber texting, I think. Yet, too, remains the possibility that the artist is remembering the transition from hand-written script to the typewriter – therefore proposing that human invention marches on through the ages.

Whatever one’s interpretation, the image irradiates a feeling of desolation.

The other item in my hands is Henry Miller’s 1951 *The Books in My Life*, a paperback I picked up on the English-language shelf of a bookstore in Cochabamba. Things are a little hit-and-miss here in the English-language department – tourists’ airport fare is most common – so when I saw it, a book by Henry Miller, I snatched it up. The cover offers a scrawled list of authors: Rimbaud, Powys,

Lao-Tse, Emerson; a pencil and ink-dip pen, paper clips, and the tricolors of Miller’s favored landscapes, France and the US

The volume is a trot through the author’s history of reading and most especially a celebration of books. It includes a letter, written from Big Sur in 1950, to book reviewer Pierre Lesdain. In it he reveals his “larval” thoughts on such topics as Dostoevsky’s spirituality vs. that of Whitman and regales the reader with the details of a typical writing day. The appendix boasts a list of Miller’s 100 most beloved tomes.

My favorite chapter explores the French “peasant-anarchist” Jean Giono. While Giono was extraordinarily prolific, perhaps his best known works are two: *The Song of the World* and *The Man Who Planted Trees*. His sensual reflection of color, taste, smell, and feel. His bond with people of the earth. His relationship with his cobbler father who encouraged his flowering. His gentle revelation of the truly important issues of life.

Ah ha! Herein lies Miller’s essential point.

“Each day,” he quotes Miguel de Unamuno, “I believe less and less in the social question, and in the political question, and in the moral question, and in all the other questions that people have invented in order that they shall not have to face resolutely the only real question that exists – the human question. “The task of the writer, then, is not to proselytize or thrust opinion, but to illuminate the experience of existence.

Writes Miller, Giono’s song of the world “is intimate, personal, cosmic, untrammled – and ceaseless. It contains the notes of the lark, the nightingale, the thrush; it contains the whir of the planets and the almost inaudible wheeling of the constellations; it contains the sobs, cries, shrieks and wails of wounded mortal souls as well as the laughter and ululations of the blessed; it contains the seraphic music of the angelic hosts and the howls of the damned.”

Needless to say, silence and spaciousness are required to contemplate such songs

.....
Surrounding this ominous cranium lies a scatter of papers boasting the flourishes of 19th-century penned script and a couple of snails rifling through the debris

.....
In what form will we remember, study, and pursue the questions of existence when Peak Oil, widespread electrical failure, and/or economic collapse kick in?
.....

– and these are qualities difficult to come upon while immersed in satellite-linked, electromagnetic-agitating, post/postmodern virtual realism.

Call me a dinosaur! I live in silence and spaciousness a few kilometers up the road from one of Bolivia’s most popular tourist spots: Sucre’s dinosaur-footprint Parque Cretácico. And let us not forget that said animal-kingdom antiquity remains the most favored in the intuitive world of children.

It is true: I have long since eschewed the conception that the technological expansion known as “progress” and the society it prefers stand taller than those seen in the rear view mirror. Along with the insistence that they do comes the proposition that to look upon previous eras with admiration springs from idiotic qualities such as “naiveté” or “nostalgia.” Far be it from me to reiterate such out-of-favor insights as that for some two million years humans evolved, and find our greatest fulfillment, as reflections of the natural world; that the two, and now three, major “advances” fueled by technological invention – the agricultural, industrial, and computer “revolutions” – are products of the technological fix whose incentive is not the glory of “human invention,” but a seat-of-the-pants sprint to solve problems caused by the previous technological fix; that the global society that is the consequence of this utopian grab has caused unfathomable suffering and now, for its denouement, is murdering the planet.

Yes, far be it from me for – with the longish memory of one born in 1947 – I can revisit the eras of my lifetime and report that, while the ravages of techno-imperialism were in full operation, the 1950’s and ‘60’s, even ‘70’s and ‘80’s, at least offered an existence slower, more rooted, and more allied with community, both natural and human, than what all these new-fangled devices are spawning. Too, I have found that contentment and creativity become available only when I am not chasing the imposed velocity of cyber-reality but am, as in a Zen medita-

tion, fully present in body and moment.

And when there are books, time to hold them in my hand – and to relish them.

Here in Bolivia books are still crafted as artifacts of beauty and newspapers still hawked on street corners – yet computerization’s ambush is astir like a rocket launch from Hal to the iPad in one fell swoop. I have taken some comfort from a curious source: a cadre of young Chuquisaceño poets who have decided that their writing would benefit from the use of quill pens. The steward of a hundred-year-old Royal, I have been scouring the antique stores for such an implement as well. How did Shakespeare, or Charlotte Bronte, do it? we might ask. Or, skipping to the other end of the stick: in what form will we remember, study, and pursue the questions of existence when Peak Oil, widespread electrical failure, and/or economic collapse kick in?

I say: let us tend to the works of art that remind us of how humans may live in synch with who humans are – and, along the way, cherish our pens, pencils, typewriters, and books.

.....
III. Alfred Kazin: Visionary of Words and Time

Chaupi Molino, Bolivia.

*We wonder whether the dream of American liberty
Was two hundred years of pine and hardwood
And three generations of the grass*

*And the generations are up: the years over
We don't know.*

– **Archibald MacLeish, *Land of the Free***

There come times when I wonder how one person can know, and synthesize, so much knowledge and wisdom. Edward Said was one of those people. A flaming mastermind! Lewis

Mumford was another. Pedro Susz Kohl of Bolivia, one more.

And Alfred Kazin.

Reading his 1942 treatise on American prose literature in the 20th century, *On Native Grounds*, I find myself incapable of making sense of the date of birth printed on the publisher's page. 1915 it says. I make a stab at math: 1915 plus 10 takes us to 1925, then 10 more to '35, and 7 equals...ah...27 years old. No. I must have it wrong, I need to write it down.

1942

-1915

27

(And pardon my lapse: he began writing the book not in 1942, but in 1938.)

I like to think that – by virtue of sweep of vision, knowledge, and lyrical style – such American prose as is offered in this volume can only be the result of more than half a century of lived experience, study, observation, and conversations with contemporaries, yet even then it would seem a miracle. Between the ages of 23 and 27, the accomplishment can only be the progeny of shamanistic channeling.

On Native Grounds reads like a blend of Lewis Mumford and Carl Sandburg, piercing analysis written with poetic fury. Its period of inquiry is 1890 through the Depression; its premise, that history is the author of literature, as Kazin puts it, "Our modern literature in America is at bottom only the expression of our modern life;" the point, that contemporary writing was not merely a retort to Victorian repression and propriety, but rather a reflection of a total makeover of post-Civil War society brought about by the forces of science, industrialization, and the amassing of power via rampant capitalism. The book is delivered by a young man who, spending endless evenings reading in the New York Public Library on 42nd Street, thought of himself – and indeed was – a "literary radical."

First, a display of that young man's chosen task:

"Our modern literature was rooted in

those dark and still little-understood years of the 1880's and 1890's when all America stood suddenly, as it were, between one society and another, one moral order and another, and the sense of impending change became almost oppressive in its vividness. It was rooted in the drift of the new world of factories and cities, with their dissolution of old standards and faiths; in the emergence of the metropolitan culture that was to dominate the literature of the period; in the Populists who raised their voices against the domineering new plutocracy in the East and gave so much of their bitterness to the literature of protest rising out of the West; in the sense of surprise and shock that led to the crudely expectant Utopian literature of the eighties and nineties, the largest body of Utopian writing in modern times, and the most transparent in its nostalgia. But above all it was rooted in the need to learn what the reality of life was in the modern era."

And:

"Modern American literature was born in protest, born in rebellion, born out of a sense of loss and indirection which was imposed upon the new generations out of a realization that the old formal culture – the "New England idea" – could no longer serve."

According to our author, 1890's literature set out as an expression of repressed romanticism of the bourgeoisie; then, as the push westward took command of the entire continent, the full ramifications of long-simmering industrialism were made manifest, and people needed to understand what had happened, it steeped itself in reality and wrestled with the problems of life. World War I's violence and disintegration of values produced a generation of "lost" writers who batted among hope for society through art, cynicism, and too-self-conscious frivolity, while the trauma of '29 and FDR's creative response to it gave us the sociological realism and documentary style of Depression Era writing. As Kazin put it: "Something happened in the thirties that was more than the sum of the sufferings inflicted, the billions lost, the institutions and people up-

.....
World War I's violence and disintegration of values produced a generation of "lost" writers who batted among hope for society through art, cynicism, and too-self-conscious frivolity

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The patriotic zeal of citizens like my grandparents, flinging themselves into World War II as they did, is a predictable outcome of the fabled “America! America!” patriotism that proliferated toward the close of the 1930’s
.....

rooted: it was an education by shock...The impact on American writing was obvious from the first, obvious as an earthquake, a breadline, or the living proof of Thoreau’s observation that one generation abandons the enterprises of the other like stranded vessels.” Then, by *On Native Grounds*’ pub date, that realist writing had mutated into unqualified celebration of land, people, and “democracy.”

One is left with a sense of continuity between what appear to be decades separated by sensibilities as distinct from one other as exultation is from suicide, and titles as divergent as “Age of Confidence,” “Roaring Twenties,” and the “the Depression.” Kazin helps us to see the flow from one generation to the next, and so a deeper understanding of the making of our own times is revealed.

So many of the cultural phenomena that I – born just five years after *On Native Grounds* was published – encountered were not just the “revolutionary innovations” that exploded via “the new American ingenuity;” they have roots that reach backwards through history only to emerge and re-emerge, without resolution because the same societal structures and means persist.

The patriotic zeal of citizens like my grandparents, flinging themselves into World War II as they did, is a predictable outcome of the fabled “America! America!” patriotism that proliferated toward the close of the 1930’s. Paul Bunyan, Davy Crockett, Johnny Appleseed, all invented or revitalized during the Depression, were the unforgettable figures of my elementary school education in the ‘50’s. And isn’t the 1960’s “Andy Griffith Show” a reiteration of an earlier turn away from the streamlined American Dream of the metropolis toward a revaluing of the traditional, the decentralized, the small-town folksy?

1950’s-60’s government and university administration attacks against radicalism in academia, perceived and real, can be tracked to the Progressive period when scholars like Thorstein Veblen set their minds as “disturber(s) of the intellectual peace” on

deconstructing the philosophic underpinnings of the social sciences and analyzing the socio-economic repercussions of the Civil War. Perhaps needless to say, Beat and New Left fascination with the café as center for radical expression finds its antecedent in Chicago’s Little Renaissance, Greenwich Village’s Bohemia, and Paris’ Left Bank – and earlier, back to America’s first literary society in Concord. (Could today’s Starbuck’s be the hollow shell of romanticism for same?)

The Smiling Yellow Face, self-help books, and New Age solipsism of the 1970’s reiterated long-celebrated myths of individualism, limitlessness, and self-improvement. 1990’s PBS docu-histories textured by nostalgic piano tones seem cinematic versions of the fact-based biography that flourished 60 years before. Today’s multiculturalism mirrors the appreciation of the folk cultures, from Appalachia to Cajun Louisiana and New Mexico Indo-Hispano, brought to light by the New Deal; bioregionalism is little different from the regionalism that rose up as the socio-political facet of that awareness.

By the same token, contemporary outrage about the US Constitution as institutionalization of the founding fathers’ class interests mirrors the insights of Charles Beard in 1913. The postmodern stampede to religious fundamentalism, obedience to global homogenization, and Taylorism in the form of computer programming (note that word in regard to cult initiation) are recaps of earlier lunges toward Fascism and ideological “party lines” that arose like desperate coping mechanisms before the suffering and uncertainties of the post-World War I period.

What remains as the bottom-line same-old-same-old are those forces Kazin identifies as the genesis of modern literature: science, industrialism, and the amassing of power via capitalism. The world of his cohort, and ours, was forged, architected, and textured by their insatiable reach, a development some 10,000 years and 333 generations in the making. And so from the early muckrakers and sociologists pushing their

way out of Victorian gentility, to the caustic intellectuals of the '20's and the hard-boiled detective writers of the '30's, to the renegade punk poets and slick bloggers of the iPad age, we go on striving for liberty, for justice, through words – yet always, inescapably, stamped by the numerical tattoo of “Progress.”

In his preface to the 40th anniversary edition, written in 1982, Kazin reflects on his experience of the evolution, thereby locating his own literary exploration in its moment in history:

“The “modern” spirit that was my subject, the “modern” hope in every field of intellectual endeavor from which my book had arisen, closed in on itself with the war (WWII), and after the war became an academic matter...But the young man who began it in 1938 was not interested in providing a history after the fact. He thought he was living in an age of hope – and he was.

“Who was to guess that in his hope-filled 1942, or up-against-the-nuclear-stockpile 1982, those dark forces would strive to command not merely all of Mongolia, the Mediterranean, or the Free World – but through technological adeptness every inch of every continent, this planet and any others that might be corralled; every drop of water; every culture; every thought, communiqué, and public act; every animal, plant, and burst of wind; every particle/wave; every molecule? Our era is an extension of forces that have been gathering for a long, long time. The main difference is that now – with satellite vision and supercomputer data ac-

cumulation, genetic piercing and molecular assault, ecological demise and weapons of mass destruction – we are more attuned to the possibility of a veritable End to Literature.”

In his own time Alfred Kazin went on to become one of the keenest social observers/literary celebrants of his generation, writing such books as *New York Jew* and *Contemporaries*, as well as editing anthologies about F. Scott Fitzgerald, Herman Melville, Henry James, and Walt Whitman and collections of the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Blake, and Anne Frank. If there is an author in the American tradition with a full sense of history, it is he.

I just ordered *Starting Out in the Thirties*. I'm still trying to get some perspective on the age conundrum. What bolt of lightning struck this lad during his infusion in New York's Bohemia that led to such brilliance-beyond-his-years? Here in the Bolivian campo, a person hit by lightning is recognized as a *curandero*, an amaúta, a visionary. **CT**

Chellis Glendinning (www.chellisglendinning.org) is the author of six books, including a book-blog luddite.com (www.ludditeluddite1812.blogspot.com). *Her Off the Map* and *Chiva* both won the National Federation of Press Women book award for nonfiction. She lives in Bolivia. Previously published as three essays at CounterPunch, www.counterpunch.org. “Tattered Magazines” originally came out in Spanish as “Revistas harapientas” in Los Tiempos

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From the early muckrakers and sociologists pushing their way out of Victorian gentility, to the caustic intellectuals of the '20's and the hard-boiled detective writers of the '30's, to the renegade punk poets and slick bloggers of the iPad age, we go on striving for liberty, for justice, through words

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How Egypt's revolution betrayed itself

How can a country abandon democracy and celebrate the return to repression? asks **Ramzy Baroud**

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he level of organization in which the coup conspirators operated left no doubt that the military was most insincere when two days earlier they had given the quarreling political parties 48 hours to resolve their disputes or else
.....

The revolution is dead. Long live the revolution,” wrote Eric Walberg, a Middle East political expert and author, shortly after the Egyptian military overthrew the country’s democratically elected President Mohammed Morsi on July 3. But more accurately, the revolution was killed in an agonizingly slow death, and the murders were too many to count.

Mohamed ElBaradei, a liberal elitist with a dismal track record in service of western powers during his glamorous career as the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is a stark example of the moral and political crisis that has befallen Egypt since the ouster of former President Hosni Mubarak.

ElBaradei played a most detrimental role in this sad saga, from his uneventful return to Egypt during the Jan. 2011 revolution – being casted as the sensible, western-educated liberator – to the ousting of the only democratically-elected president this popular Arab country has ever seen. His double-speak was a testament not only to his opportunistic nature as a politician and the head of the Dostour Party, but to the entire political philosophy of the National Salvation Front, the opposition umbrella group for which he served as a coordinator.

The soft-spoken man, who rarely objected to the unfair pressure imposed on Iraq during his services as the head of the UN nuclear watchdog, was miraculously transformed into a fierce politician with persisting demands and expectations. His party, like the rest of Egypt’s opposi-

tion, had performed poorly in every democratic election and referendum held since the ouster of Mubarak. Democracy proved him irrelevant. But after every failure he and the opposition managed to emerge even louder thanks to a huge media apparatus that operated around the clock in a collective, undying commitment in rearranging the country’s political scene in their favor, regardless of what the majority of Egyptians thought.

Soon after General Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi announced a military coup on July 4, in what was a clearly well-organized conspiracy involving the army, much of the media, the opposition and disaffected Mubarak-era judges, silencing the Muslim Brotherhood and their own media were paramount. The level of organization in which the coup conspirators operated left no doubt that the military was most insincere when two days earlier they had given the quarreling political parties 48 hours to resolve their disputes or else.

But of course there was no room for compromise as far as ElBaradei’s opposition was concerned, and the army knew that well. On June 30, one year since Morsi had taken office following transparent, albeit protracted elections, the opposition organized with the sinister goal of removing the president at any cost. Some called on the army, which has proven to be extremely devious and untrustworthy, to lead the ‘democratic’ transition. ElBaradei even invited supporters of the former regime to join his crusade

to oust the Brotherhood. The idea was simple: to gather as many people in the streets as possible, claiming a second revolution and calling on the military to intervene to save Egypt from Morsi and his supposed disregard of the will of the people. The military, with a repulsive show of orchestrated benevolence, came to the rescue, in the name of the people and democracy. They arrested the president, shut down Islamic TV stations, killed many and rounded up hundreds of people affiliated with the ruling party. Fireworks ensued, ElBaradei and his men gloated, for Egypt had supposedly been saved.

Except it was not.

“Mubarak-era media owners and key members of Egypt’s liberal and secular opposition have teamed up to create arguably one of the most effective propaganda campaigns in recent political history, to demonize Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood,” wrote Mohamad Elmasry of the American University in Cairo.

Much of the media in Egypt never truly shifted allegiances. It remained as dirty and corrupt as it was during the Mubarak regime. It was there to serve the interest of the powerful business and political elites. But, due to the changing political reality – three democratic elections and two referendums, all won by Islamic party supporters – it was impossible for them to operate using the same language. They too jumped on the revolution bandwagon using the same frame of references as if they were at the forefront of the fight for freedom, equality and democracy.

Egypt’s reactionary forces, not only in the media, but also the pro-Mubarak judges, the self-serving military, etc, managed to survive the political upheaval not for being particularly clever. They simply had too much room to regroup and maneuver since the desperate opposition, ElBaradie and company, put all of their focus on discounting Morsi, undermining the Muslim Brotherhood, and undercutting the democratic process that brought them to power. In their desperation and search for power, they lost sight of the revolution and its original goals, disowned democracy, but more importantly endangered the future of Egypt itself.

What took place in Egypt, starting with the orchestrated ‘revolution’ on June 30, from the army’s ultimatum, to the military coup, to the shameless reinvention of the old order – accompanied with repopulating the prisons and sending tanks to face unarmed civilians – was not only disheartening to the majority of Egyptians, but was a huge shock to many people around the world as well. Egypt, which once inspired the world, is now back to square one.

Since the onset of the so called Arab Spring, an intense debate of numerous dimensions has ensued. One of its aspects was concerned with the role of religion in a healthy democracy. Egypt, of course, was in the heart of that debate, and every time Egyptians went to the ballot box they seemed to concur with the fact that they wished to see some sort of marriage between Islam and democracy. It was hardly an easy question, and until now there have been no convincing answers. But, as in any healthy democracy, it was the people who were to have the final say. The fact that the choice of a poor peasant from a distant Egyptian village didn’t match ElBaradei’s elitist sensibility is of no consequence whatsoever.

It is unfortunate, but hardly surprising, that many of the idealists who took to Tahrir Square in January 2011 and spoke of equal rights for all couldn’t bear the outcome of that equality. Some complained that decades of marginalization under Mubarak didn’t qualify Egypt’s poor, uneducated and illiterate to make decisions on political representation and democratic constitution. And in a sad turn of events, these very forces were openly involved in toppling the democratically elected president and his party, as they happily celebrated the return to oppression as a glorious day of freedom. ElBaradie may now return to center stage, lecturing Egypt’s poor on what true democracy is all about – and why, in some way, the majority doesn’t matter at all.

CT

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Ramzy Baroud – <http://ramzybaroud.net>
 – is the editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*. His latest book is: “My Father was A Freedom Fighter: Gaza’s Untold Story” (Pluto Press)

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Much of the media in Egypt never truly shifted allegiances. It remained as dirty and corrupt as it was during the Mubarak regime

Let them eat F16s

American aid to Egypt's military is hardly going to help its people, writes **Barry Lando**

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By law, the Obama administration is supposed to cut off aid to regimes that seize power via military coups. But not this coup
.....

There is something almost obscene about the announcement out of Washington that the US is going ahead with plans to deliver more sophisticated military equipment to Egypt, despite the military coup that overthrew President Mohammed Morsi.

With Egypt in meltdown, its economy in tatters, food prices soaring, land and water resources disappearing, unemployment rampant, the government a shambles, what is the United States offering in the way of aid to this basket-case nation?

Four F-16 fighter jets.

This despite that fact that, by law, the Obama administration is supposed to cut off aid to regimes that seize power via military coups. But not this coup.

In the wake of the bloody shootings in Cairo, and even as the military continues to arrest hundreds of Moslem Brotherhood members, the Obama administration, in a hair-splitting fashion befitting a president who once headed the Harvard Law Review, has used every semantic trick in the book to avoid calling the coup that took place in Egypt – a coup.

The shipment of those F-16's is also justified as the continuation of an on-going program of 20 planes – eight of which were sent to Egypt in January. The final eight will be shipped later this year.

Who will benefit from that American

“aid”? Mostly, America's own Lockheed Martin, which sells those jets at \$15 million a copy. Add a few million more for spare parts, training, and ammunition, and you've got a half billion dollar deal.

Who will those jets be used to defend Egypt against? Years ago, the Egyptians might have said Israel. But you can be sure that there is no way the US would give F-16's to an Arab country unless Israel had already signed off on the deal – usually in return for assurances that US equipment furnished to Israel would be far superior.

In fact, those planes are part of a \$1.5 billion annual package of aid that the US began giving Egypt after President Sadat signed the Camp David Peace accords with Israel in 1974. By far the largest part of that aid – \$1.3 billion a year – has been going to the Egyptian military, in effect an on-going bribe to convince the generals not to ruffle waters with Israel.

What purpose that sophisticated American equipment serves Egypt – other than burnishing egos of the Egyptian military – is anyone's guess. Similarly, since the only ones with oversight over Egypt's military budget are Egypt's military, no one can really be sure exactly how and where all those billions have been spent.

But again, who really cares – as long as they don't rock the boat with Israel....

On the other hand, it's only natural that

America's largesse should take the form of military aid. So much of America's foreign policy over the past two decades – from Iraq to the Gulf to Afghanistan – has been defined in trillions of dollars in military equipment, sprawling bases and futile campaigns.

The other recent announcement of aid to Egypt, which dwarfs America's, is also laced with hypocrisy. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have pledged a massive package totaling 12 billion dollars.

That sum, of course, is vastly greater than any financial aid those Arab states actually delivered to the Palestinians over the past many decades, despite all their rhetoric about supporting the Palestinian cause.

Which makes sense: As the Arab leaders of those three Gulf states see it, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Arab Spring are a much greater existential threat to their corrupt regimes than Israel ever was. Indeed, they have long detested and feared the Muslim Broth-

erhood. Not so much the Brotherhood's religious fervor, as their calls for reform – for an end to the corrupt ruling cliques which have treated the vast natural resources of their states as their personal property.

Their current hope of the leaders of those three Gulf states is that, backed by their \$12 billion dollars, Egypt's generals will somehow be able to squelch the Muslim Brotherhood in what is by far the most important of Arab countries – and turn back the threat of the Arab Spring.

Finally, an intriguing question: Was that huge Arab aid package quickly cobbled together after the coup? Or Isn't it highly likely that, in the frantic maneuvering that preceded the military's move, the Gulf rulers were already dangling those billions as a carrot before Egypt's generals – to encourage them to overthrow Mohammed Morsi?

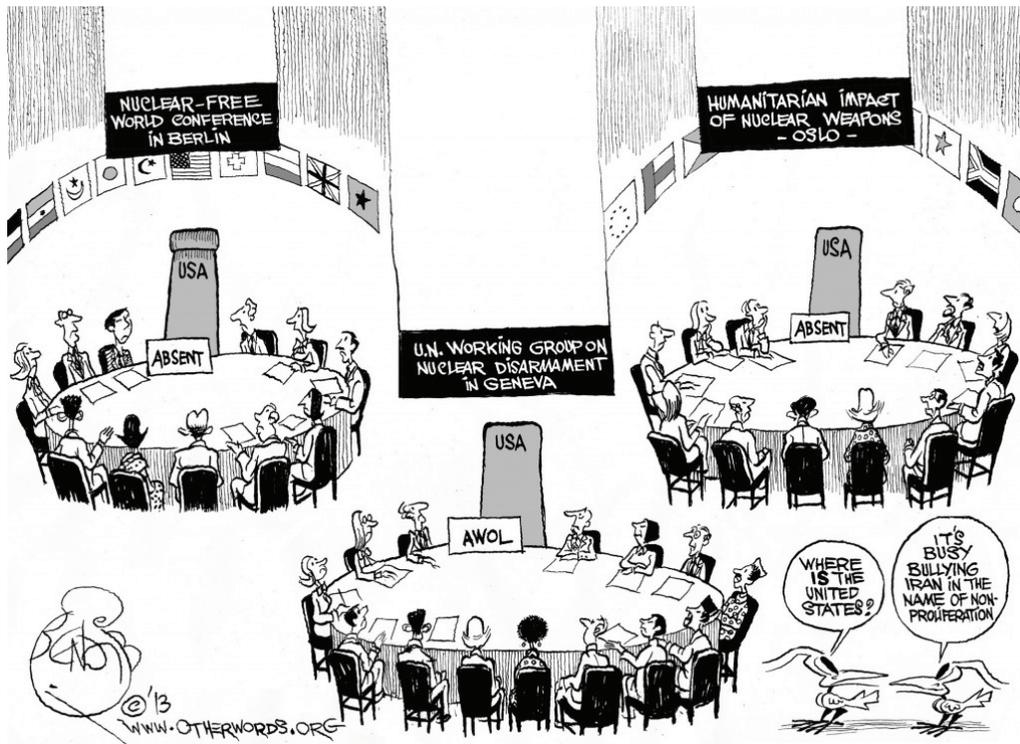
Probably with the knowledge – and approval? – of the United States. **CT**

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The Muslim Brotherhood and the Arab Spring are a much greater existential threat to their corrupt regimes than Israel ever was

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Barry Lando's
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BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib, OtherWords.org



Israel's ethnic cleansing zones

Jonathan Cook tells how Israel is still snatching land from Palestinians despite the provisions of international law

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Israeli human rights lawyers, tired of the international community's formulaic criticisms, call these "ethnic cleansing" zones
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Were it not for the razor wire, giant concrete blocks, steel gates, watchtower and standard-issue surly teenage soldier, it would be impossible to tell at what point the barren uplands of Israel's eastern Negev give way to the South Hebron Hills of the West Bank.

The military checkpoint of Shani vaguely marks the formal demarcation between Israel and occupied Palestinian territory, but in practical terms the distinction is meaningless. On either side of the Green Line, Israel is in charge. In recent weeks it has been intensifying a campaign to summarily evict Palestinian farming communities from their ancestral lands to replace them with Jewish newcomers.

Israeli human rights lawyers, tired of the international community's formulaic criticisms, say it is time to be more forthright. They call these "ethnic cleansing" zones – intended to drive off Palestinians irrespective of the provisions of international law and whether or not the Palestinians in question hold Israeli citizenship.

In the occupied South Hebron Hills, a dozen traditional communities – long ago denied by Israel the right to enjoy modern amenities such as electricity and running water – are struggling to remain in the cave-homes that sheltered them for centuries.

Israel has reclassified much of their land as a military firing range and demands that

they leave for their own safety. An appeal to the Israeli courts, the latest installment in a 14-year saga to avoid eviction, is awaited.

Israel's concern for the villagers' welfare might sound more convincing were it not encouraging Jews to live close by in illegal settlements.

Palestinians in other parts of the occupied territories coveted by Israel – such as villages next to Jerusalem and those in the fertile Jordan Valley, the territorial backbone of any future Palestinian state – are being squeezed too. Firing ranges, closed military zones and national parks are the pretexts for Israel to seize the farmland these rural communities need to survive. As a result, Palestinian life is withering in the nearly two-thirds of the West Bank Israel was temporarily entrusted with – the so-called Area C – under the Oslo Accords.

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West Bank sanctuary

Endlessly harassed Palestinians have sought sanctuary in West Bank cities under Palestinian Authority control. Today the remnants in Area C, a population of about 100,000, are outnumbered three to one by Jewish settlers.

A discomfited European Union, normally mealy-mouthed on Israel's occupation, has started to describe this as "forced transfer". The term may sound ominous and reprov- ing, but human rights groups say that, from

a legal perspective, the terminology obscures rather than illuminates what is taking place.

“Forced transfer”, observes Suhad Bishara, a lawyer with Adalah, a legal centre for Israel’s minority of 1.5 million Palestinian citizens, usually describes uncoordinated and unofficial incidents of population displacement, often as an outcome of war.

Bishara and others argue that Israel is carrying out a systematic and intentional policy to drive Palestinians off their land to replace them with Jewish communities. This, they say, should be identified as “ethnic cleansing”, a term first given legal and moral weight in the Balkans conflict in the early 1990s.

As evidence, the lawyers point to recent developments inside Israel. The treatment of tens of thousands of Bedouin in the Negev, all of them Israeli citizens, is virtually identical to that of Palestinians in the South Hebron Hills.

Campaign against Bedouin

The Bedouin too have faced a prolonged campaign to push them off their ancestral lands, where most live as pastoral farmers, and into a series of “townships”, forcibly urbanising them in the most deprived communities in Israel. In the disconcerting language of Israeli bureaucracy, the Bedouin need to be “concentrated”.

Israel has increased the pressure – as in the West Bank – by denying these Bedouin all public services, and demolishing any concrete homes they build. As with Palestinians under occupation, the Bedouin have found their communities reclassified as firing ranges, military zones or national forests.

The village of al-Araqib, near Beersheva, for example, has been demolished more than 50 times in recent years as Israel plants on its land – with a suitably sinister irony – the Ambassadors’ Forest, commemorating the help provided to Israel by the international community’s diplomatic corps.

Waiting in the wings are developers ready to build on the Bedouin’s land 10 towns for

Jews only. The rest of the territory is being eaten up by Jewish ranches, given swathes of land to create new tourism opportunities, such as vineyards with wine-tasting services, camel and horse riding centres and, in one case, a pet cemetery.

But, as in the West Bank, the Bedouin are refusing to budge, and pressing their historic land claims in the Israeli courts. Rather than wait for a verdict it may not like, the government of Benjamin Netanyahu is rewriting the Bedouin’s citizenship rights.

The Praver plan, which passed its first reading in parliament last month, will force 40,000 Bedouin off their land – the largest expulsions inside Israel for decades. Unlike Jewish citizens, they will have no say over where they live; they will be forcibly assigned to a township.

For the first time, Israeli citizens – the Bedouin – are to be deprived of any recourse to the courts as they are harried from their homes. Instead Israel will resort to administrative procedures more familiar from the occupied territories.

The policy is clear: Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line are to be treated like sheep, penned into ever-smaller areas, while Jews will have unrestrained access to a Greater Israel envisioned by Netanyahu.

The international community has long criticised Israel for the “discrimination” its Palestinian citizens face and for the “oppression” of Palestinians under occupation. This terminology needs overhauling too, say the human rights lawyers.

A political system that treats one ethnic group as less human than another already has a legal name: it is called apartheid. **CT**

Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are “Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East” (Pluto Press) and “Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair” (Zed Books). His new website is <http://www.jonathan-cook.net>

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The policy is clear: Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line are to be treated like sheep, penned into ever-smaller areas, while Jews will have unrestrained access to a Greater Israel envisioned by Netanyahu

The language of Power

Nima Shirazi on Samantha Power, Obama's 'humanitarian hawk' and Israel's new gladiator at the United Nations

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Power has already proven herself a loyal replacement, disavowing any semblance of past critical thinking when it comes to Israeli human rights abuses and abrogation of international law
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In her first appearance before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Samantha Power, Obama's pick for next U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, made clear that she will spend her time in the role much as her predecessor Susan Rice did: acting as Israel's consummate defender, fear-mongering about Iran, and opposing any move to champion Palestinian human rights or self-determination.

Rice, who has been appointed as Obama's National Security Adviser, has said repeatedly that the American delegation to the UN "often works in 'lockstep' with the Israeli delegation" and spends "an enormous amount of time defending Israel's right to defend itself and defending Israel's legitimacy."

"It's an issue of utmost and daily concern for the United States," she declared last year. A few months ago, she reiterated this point, insisting that her role as an apologist for the Israeli government is "a huge part of my work to the United Nations" and that the United States "will not rest in the crucial work of defending Israel's security and legitimacy every day at the United Nations."

Power has already proven herself a loyal replacement, disavowing any semblance of past critical thinking when it comes to Israeli human rights abuses and abrogation of international law and opposing fear-mongering about Iran's nuclear program. It is no

surprise Washington hawks, Zionist ideologues and even the Israeli government are falling over themselves to sing her praises.

In her confirmation hearing yesterday, Power revealed her adherence to AIPAC talking points, essentially working her way down the tried and true list of boilerplate phrases. "The United States has no greater friend in the world than the State of Israel," she said, adding, "Israel is a country with whom we share security interests and, even more fundamentally, with whom we share core values – the values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law."

"America has a special relationship with Israel," she stated, to the surprise of no one and the consternation of George Washington's ghost. "I will stand up for Israel and work tirelessly to defend it," she promised in her prepared statement.

She later reiterated her vow: "I commit to you wholeheartedly to go on offense as well as playing defense on the legitimization of Israel," she declared to the assembled U.S. Senators.

Perhaps her most disturbing comments, however, were about Iran. Shamelessly exploiting the horror of the Holocaust to fear-monger about the Islamic Republic, she declared:

"...within this organization built in the wake of the Holocaust – built in part in order to apply the lessons of the Holocaust –

we also see unacceptable bias and attacks against the State of Israel. We see the absurdity of Iran chairing the UN Conference on Disarmament, despite the fact that its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons is a grave threat to international peace and security.”

With this statement, Power, in her eagerness to check off all the buzzwords boxes prescribed by AIPAC, directly contradicts the consistent assessment of the United States’ own intelligence community, which has repeatedly concluded that Iran is, in fact, not pursuing a nuclear weapons as it has no nuclear weapons program.

Early last year, an unnamed U.S. intelligence official told the *Washington Post* that Iran has not decided to pursue nuclear weapons, explaining, “Our belief is that they are reserving judgment on whether to continue with key steps they haven’t taken regarding nuclear weapons.” At the time, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta affirmed this position, admitting, “Are they trying to develop a nuclear weapon? No.”

Soon thereafter, the *New York Times* reported, “Recent assessments by American spy agencies are broadly consistent with a 2007 intelligence finding that concluded that Iran had abandoned its nuclear weapons program years earlier.” This, the paper noted, “remains the consensus view of America’s 16 intelligence agencies.”

Either Samantha Power is an idiot or she’s lying.

In fact, there was a time when Power wasn’t so confident in making such a declarative statement. In a 2008 interview with Miller-McCune, Power noted that she was “not an expert on Iran,” but condemned the “American sabre-rattling” of the George W. Bush administration. “The threats – implicit and explicit – of U.S. military action have united very diverse secular, Islamist and nationalist strands,” she said, adding that American “belligerence” had “backfired.”

When asked specifically about whether she thought “Iran is trying to create nuclear

weapons,” Power replied, “It would surprise me if they weren’t, but I don’t know.”

Still, she disparaged the findings of the National Intelligence Estimate and simply assumed Iran “would see as in its interests to amass as much firepower as possible,” due to the foreign threats it faces. Nevertheless, she stated, “It does not seem as though the Iranian regime is close to possessing nuclear weapons” and said that “when U.S. leaders claim Iran poses an imminent threat, they are not currently heard as credible.”

Now, five years later, Power sounds exactly like Bush’s own UN Ambassador, perennial Iran hawk John Bolton, who in 2006, insisted to the UN Security Council that “Iran had defied the international community by continuing its pursuit of nuclear weapons” and that this “pursuit of nuclear weapons constituted a direct threat to international peace and security.”

Furthermore, Power’s incredulity regarding what she deems the “absurdity of Iran chairing the UN Conference on Disarmament,” betrays her own ignorance on Iran’s constantly repeated stance regarding nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.

Iran and nukes

Iran has long championed a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East and is a party to all disarmament treaties on weapons of mass destruction, including the Biological Weapons Convention, Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Israel, however, is not a member of any of them.

Last year, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi stated that Iran fully supports the establishment of a NWFZ, but that Israel, and its American backers, presented the “only obstacle to the creation of such a zone...due to its persistent refusal to join the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under the IAEA safeguards system.”

Earlier this month, at the “International Conference on Nuclear Security: Enhanc-

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The United States’ own intelligence community, has repeatedly concluded that Iran is, in fact, not pursuing a nuclear weapons as it has no nuclear weapons program

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The United States consistently blocks crucial international conferences dedicated to nuclear non-proliferation for the sole purpose of protecting Israel's massive nuclear arsenal from scrutiny
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ing Global Efforts” held in Vienna, Iran’s Ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh reiterated his nation’s commitment to universal nuclear disarmament. “The best guarantee for nuclear security is definitely a world free from nuclear weapons,” he said, “as a result of which nuclear disarmament process could reinforce nuclear security efforts.”

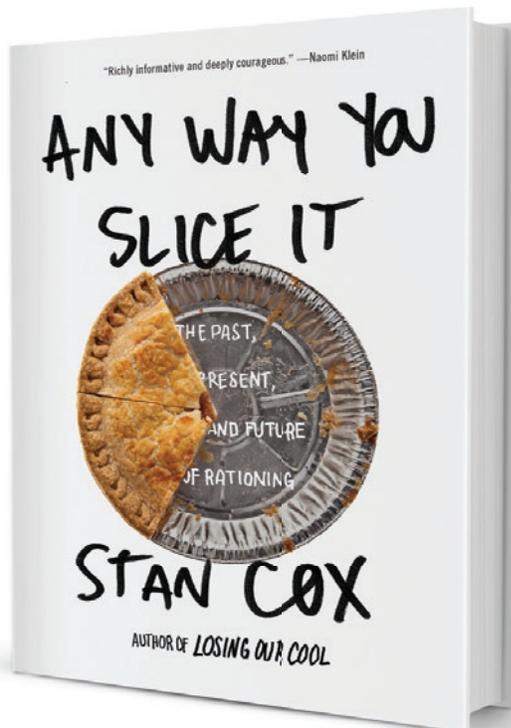
The United States consistently blocks crucial international conferences dedicated to nuclear non-proliferation for the sole purpose of protecting Israel’s massive nuclear arsenal from scrutiny.

Samantha Power has surely embraced her new role in Turtle Bay as Israel’s stalwart apologist, going to so far as to promise her Congressional interlocutors that she will push for Israel to gain a seat on the United Nations Security Council as a representative

of – get this – the Western European bloc of nations, despite being located in the Levant, which is indisputably in the continent of Asia and far to the East of even Eastern Europe from which it is separated by hundreds of miles of water.

Abe Foxman, the Anti-Defamation League’s hasbarist-in-chief, once called Susan Rice a “gladiator” fighting in the United Nations on behalf of Israel. There is no question Samantha Power will, for the sake of our “special relationship” and “shared values” with an aggressive, nuclear-armed, settler-colonial apartheid state, similarly take up the sword and continue to unleash hell on the entire Middle East. **CT**

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Nima Shirazi is an independent researcher and political analyst. He blogs at <http://wideasleepinamerica.com>



“Richly informative and deeply courageous.”
—*NAOMI KLEIN, author of [The Shock Doctrine](#)*

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Locking out the voices of dissent

If we permit the state to take away our right of political expression, we will have no legal protection of resistance when we will need it most, says **Chris Hedges**

The security and surveillance state, after crushing the Occupy movement and eradicating its encampments, has mounted a relentless and largely clandestine campaign to deny public space to any group or movement that might spawn another popular uprising.

The legal system has been grotesquely deformed in most cities to, in essence, shut public space to protesters, eradicating our right to free speech and peaceful assembly. The goal of the corporate state is to criminalize democratic, popular dissent before there is another popular eruption.

The vast state surveillance system, detailed in Edward Snowden's revelations to the British newspaper the *Guardian*, at the same time ensures that no action or protest can occur without the advanced knowledge of our internal security apparatus.

This foreknowledge has allowed the internal security systems to proactively block activists from public spaces as well as carry out pre-emptive harassment, interrogation, intimidation, detention and arrests before protests can begin. There is a word for this type of political system – tyranny.

If the state is ultimately successful in preventing us from mobilizing in public spaces, then dissent will mutate from nonviolent mass protests to clandestine and perhaps violent acts of resistance. Some demonstrators have already been branded “domestic

terrorists” under the law. The rear-guard effort by a handful of activists to protect our rights to be heard and peaceably assemble is perhaps the most crucial, though unseen, struggle we currently are engaged in with the corporate state.

It is a struggle to salvage what is left of our civil society and our right to nonviolent resistance against corporate tyranny.

This is why the New York City trial last month of members of Veterans for Peace, along with other activists, took on an importance that belied the simple trespassing charges against them.

The activists were arrested Oct. 7, 2012, while they were placing flowers in 11 vases and reading the names of the dead inscribed on the wall in New York's Vietnam Veterans Memorial Plaza after the official closing time, 10 p.m. The defiance of the plaza's official closing time – which appears to be enforced against political activists only – was spawned by a May 1, 2012, protest by Occupy Wall Street activists.

The Occupy activists had attempted to hold a meeting in the plaza and been driven out by police. A number of Veterans for Peace activists, most of them veterans of the Vietnam War, formed a line in front of the advancing police that May night and refused to move. They were arrested.

Many of these veterans came back to the plaza on a rainy, windy night in October to

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“The whole system is being flipped on its head. The judicial and law enforcement system should be protecting our rights. We have the right to dissent. It’s in the Bill of Rights”
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protest on the 11th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan and again assert their right to carry out nonviolent protests in public spaces. They included Jay Wenk, an 86-year-old combat veteran of World War II who served with Gen. George Patton’s Third Army in Europe. When he was arrested Wenk was beating a gong in the downpour as the names of the dead were read. During the October protest 25 people were seized by police for refusing to leave the park after 10 p.m. Twelve went to trial recently. Manhattan Criminal Court Judge Robert Mandelbaum on found the dozen activists guilty. The judge, however, quickly threw out his own verdict, calling the case a “unique circumstance.” “Justice,” he said, “cries out for a dismissal.” His dismissal shuts down the possibility of an appeal.

“The legislative system, the judicial system, the whole national security state that’s invading all of our privacy are taking away our right to dissent,” Dr. Margaret Flowers, one of the defendants, told me on a lunch break during the trial.

“But everything that’s happening is happening legally. It’s a slippery slope. People will look at this case and they’re going to say, ‘So what? They were in a park. There was a rule. It was closing. The police arrested them. That makes sense to me!’ And they don’t put it in the bigger context. That’s how all of this is happening. It’s all being justified. The whole system is being flipped on its head. The judicial and law enforcement system should be protecting our rights. We have the right to dissent. It’s in the Bill of Rights. The question is, can we halt that slide for a second, maybe even reverse it a little bit?”

The executive, legislative and judicial branches of government have been taken over by corporations and used to protect and promote the criminal activity of Wall Street, the destruction of the ecosystem by the fossil fuel industry, the looting of the US Treasury by the banking industry and

the corporate seizure of all major centers of power. The primacy of corporate profit trumps our right to a living wage, affordable and adequate health care, the regulation of industry and environmental controls, protection from corporate fraud and abuse, the right to a good and affordable public education, the ability to form labor unions, and having a government that serves the basic needs of ordinary citizens. Our voices, our rights and our aspirations are no longer of concern to the state. And if we try to assert them, the state now has mechanisms in place to shut us down.

Tarak Kauff, a 71-year-old veteran of the Army’s 111th Airborne and former professional boxer, was one of the organizers of the Oct. 7 protest. He has been on a hunger strike for more than a month to express solidarity with the hunger strikers at Guantanamo Bay and in the Pelican Bay prison in California. He was gaunt. His skin was ashen and his cheeks sunken. He consumes 300 liquid calories a day and has lost 24 pounds. He was arrested in May and again in October.

“I saw clearly that the purpose of the arrest was not merely enforcing the 10pm curfew,” he said of the May arrests, “but the purpose was very specific in restricting the right of assembly. We decided that October 7th would be a perfect day to do it. It was 11 years of war in Afghanistan. So when we came to the Vietnam Veterans Plaza that night we had four purposes. One was to call for an end to the war, the ongoing war in Afghanistan. The second was to call for an end to all US wars of empire. The third was to remember and lament those who had fallen and been wounded in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, including the civilians, including the 5 million civilians in Vietnam. The fourth was to affirm our right to assemble. If we lose the right to address these issues and to organize in public places, we have absolutely nothing.”

“I’m fasting because it’s a sacrifice,” he

said when I asked about his hunger strike. “I want to encourage other people in our movement of the necessity of sacrifice. If we want to establish anything, if we want to re-establish or ever establish any kind of democratic system, it’s not going to happen without sacrifice, some kind of sacrifice. And we have a choir. I want to see that choir inspired to start sacrificing more, to take risks. We have to be willing to put our bodies on the line in some way, shape, or form, nonviolently.”

According to several of the activists, some of the police officers said that they too were military veterans and disliked making the arrests but had been told by their superiors to take the demonstrators into custody to prevent another Occupy encampment.

“‘We can’t let you stay,’ ” Kauff said he was told by a police captain. “‘It sets a bad example for the Occupy movement.’ ”

“After the process of being arrested began, a police lieutenant told me the Occupy Wall Street people really screwed this up for you guys,” Sam Adams, who served in the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, said in his courtroom testimony. “You can thank them for this.”

The trial was a tiny window into how rattled the state was by Occupy, unfortunately now in disarray. The security organs

know that as conditions worsen for the majority of Americans, as austerity cuts and chronic unemployment and underemployment drive tens of millions of families into desperation, as climate change continues to produce extreme and dangerous weather, there remains the threat of another popular backlash. The problem lies not, of course, with the Occupy movement, but with the reconfiguration of the government into a handmaiden of corporations that seek to squeeze profits out of the dying carcass of empire.

The corporate state’s quest to control all power includes using the military to carry out domestic policing, which is why I sued the president over Section 1021 of the National Defense Authorization Act. It is imperative to defend, as the activists did in New York City, what freedoms and rights we have left. If we remain passive, if we permit the state to continue to use the law to take away our right of political expression, we will have no legal protection of resistance when we will need it most. **CT**

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter. His most recent book is “Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle.” This originally appeared at <http://truthdig.org>

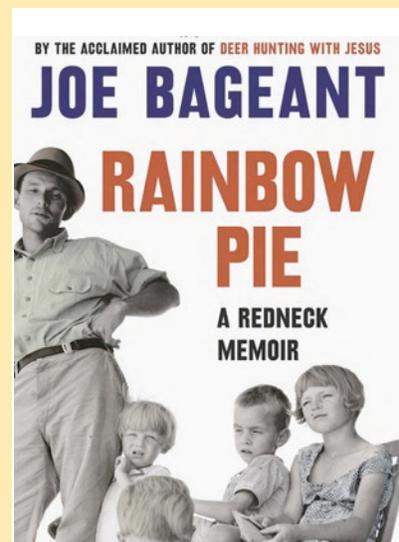
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JOE BAGEANT

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