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ISSUE 112

Why we must defend people's
right to tell the government to

GO TO HELL!

John W. Whitehead on the
need for free speech and
critical thought in an age of
government bullies, corporate
censors and compliant citizens





Cover Art

From a bag of generic clip art found at the back of the editor's filing cabinet

ColdType

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Why it's right to tell the government to go to hell

John W. Whitehead explains why we need to fight for free speech in this age of government bullies, corporate censors and compliant citizens

"If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." – George Orwell

Free speech is not for the faint of heart. Nor is it for those who are easily offended or readily intimidated. Free speech is often messy, foul-mouthed, obscene, intolerant, undignified, insensitive, cantankerous, bawdy and volatile.

While free speech can also be tender, tolerant, soft-spoken, sensitive, and sweet, it is free speech's hot-blooded alter ego – the wretched, brutal, beastly Mr. Hyde to its restrained, dignified and civil Dr. Jekyll – that tests the limits of our so-called egalitarian commitment to its broad-minded principles.

Unfortunately, our appreciation for a robust freedom of speech has worn thin over the years.

Many of us have become fearfully polite, careful to avoid offence, and largely unwilling to be labelled intolerant, hateful, closed-minded or any of the other toxic labels that carry the badge of shame today. We've come to prize civility

over freedom. Most of all, too many Americans, held hostage by their screen devices and the talking heads on television, have lost the ability to think critically.

Societies that cherish free speech relish open debates, and controversy, produce a robust citizenry that will stand against authoritarian government. Indeed, oppressive regimes of the past have understood the value of closed-mouthed, closed-minded citizens and the power inherent in controlling speech and, thus, controlling how people view their society and government.

US citizens have a government with a ravenous appetite for power and a seeming desire to turn the two-way dialogue that is our constitutional republic into a one-way dictatorship. Emboldened by words and phrases such as hate crimes, bullying, extremism and micro-aggressions, the government

is whittling away at free speech, confining it to carefully constructed "free speech zones," criminalizing it when it skates too close to challenging the status quo, shaming it

Many of us have become fearfully polite, careful to avoid offence, and largely unwilling to be labeled intolerant, hateful, closed-minded or any of the other toxic labels that carry the badge of shame today



COVER STORY

The upshot of all of this editing, parsing, banning and silencing is the emergence of a language, which George Orwell referred to as Newspeak, that places the power to control language in the hands of the totalitarian state

when it butts up against politically correct ideals, and muzzling it when it appears dangerous.

Nor is free speech still considered an inalienable right or an essential liberty, even by those government entities entrusted with protecting it.

We've entered into an egotistical, insulated, narcissistic, era in which free speech has become regulated speech: to be celebrated when it reflects the values of the majority and tolerated otherwise, unless it moves so far beyond our political, religious and socio-economic comfort zones as to be rendered dangerous and unacceptable.

Consider some of the kinds of speech being targeted for censorship or outright elimination.

Offensive, politically incorrect and “unsafe” speech: Disguised as tolerance, civility and love, political correctness has resulted in the chilling of free speech, and the demonizing of viewpoints that run counter to the cultural elite. Consequently, college campuses have become hotbeds of student-led censorship, trigger warnings, micro-aggressions, and “red light” speech policies targeting anything that might cause someone to feel uncomfortable, unsafe or offended.

Bullying, intimidating speech: Warning that school bullies become tomorrow's hate crimes defendants, the Justice Department has led the way in urging schools to curtail bullying, going so far as to classify teasing as a form of bullying, and rude or hurtful text messages as cyberbullying.

Hateful speech: Hate speech – speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as gender, ethnic origin, religion, race, disability, or sexual orientation – is the primary candidate for online censorship. Corporate internet giants Google, Twitter and Facebook are in the process of determining what kinds of speech will be permitted online and what will be deleted.

Dangerous, anti-government speech: As part of its newly unveiled war on extremism, the Obama administration is partnering with the tech industry to establish a task force to counter online propaganda by terrorists hoping to recruit support or plan attacks. In this way, anyone who criticizes the government online is considered an extremist and will have their content reported to government agencies for further investigation or deleted.

The upshot of all of this editing, parsing, banning and silencing is the emergence of a language, which George Orwell referred to as Newspeak, that places the power to control language in the hands of the totalitarian state. Under such a system, language becomes a weapon to change the way people think, by changing the words they use. The end result is control.

In totalitarian regimes – a.k.a. police states – where conformity and compliance are enforced at the end of a loaded gun, the government dictates what words can and cannot be used. In countries where the police state hides behind a benevolent mask and disguises itself as tolerant, the citizens censor themselves, policing their words and thoughts to conform to the dictates of the mass mind lest they find themselves ostracized or placed under surveillance.

Same result

Even when the motives behind this rigidly calibrated reorientation of societal language appear well-intentioned – discouraging racism, condemning violence, denouncing discrimination and hatred – inevitably, the end result is the same: Intolerance, indoctrination and infantilism.

Thus, while on paper, we are technically still free to speak, in reality, we are only as free to speak as a government of civil or corporate censor may allow.

The US Supreme Court has long been the referee in the tug-of-war over the nation's tolerance for free speech and other expressive activities protected by the First

Amendment. But the Supreme Court's role as arbiter of justice in these disputes is undergoing a sea change. Except in cases where it has no vested interest, the court has begun to advocate for the government's outsized interests, ruling in favour of the government in matters of war, national security, commerce and speech. When asked to choose between the rule of law and government supremacy, this court tends to side with the government.

In the 225 years since the First Amendment to the US Constitution was adopted, the rights detailed in that amendment – which assures the American people of the right to speak freely, worship freely, peaceably assemble, petition the government for a redress of grievances, and have a free press – have certainly taken a beating, but none more so than the right to free speech.

Nowhere in the First Amendment does it permit the government to limit speech in order to avoid causing offence, hurting someone's feelings, safeguarding government secrets, protecting government officials, insulating judges from undue influence, discouraging bullying, penalizing hateful ideas and actions, eliminating terrorism, combatting prejudice and intolerance, and the like.

Unfortunately, in the war being waged between free speech purists who believe that free speech is an inalienable right and those who believe that free speech should be regulated, the censors are winning. Free speech zones, bubble zones, trespass zones, anti-bullying legislation, zero tolerance policies, hate crime laws and a host of other legalistic maladies dreamed up by politicians and prosecutors have con-

spired to corrode our core freedoms.

If we no longer have the right to tell a census worker to get off our property; if we no longer have the right to tell a police officer to get a search warrant before walking through our door; if we no longer have the right to stand in front of the Supreme Court wearing a protest sign or approach an elected representative to share our views; if we no longer have the right to voice our opinions in public – no matter how misogynistic, hateful, prejudiced, intolerant, misguided or politically incorrect they might be – then we do not have free speech.

What we have instead is regulated, controlled speech, and that's a whole other ballgame.

Just as surveillance has been shown to stifle and smother dissent, keeping a populace cowed by fear, government censorship gives rise to self-censorship, breeds compliance, makes independent thought all but impossible, and ultimately foments a seething discontent that has no outlet but violence.

The First Amendment is a steam valve. It allows people to speak their minds, air their grievances and contribute to a larger dialogue that, hopefully, results in a more just world. When there is no steam valve – when there is no one to hear what the people have to say – frustration builds, anger grows, and people become more volatile and desperate to force a conversation.

The problem as I see it is that we've lost faith in the average citizen to do the right thing. We've allowed ourselves to be persuaded that we need someone else to think and speak for us. The result is a society

Government censorship gives rise to self-censorship, breeds compliance, and makes independent thought all but impossible



COVER STORY

A nation without a hearty tolerance for free speech, no matter how provocative, insensitive or dangerous, will be easy prey for a police state

in which we've stopped debating among ourselves, stopped thinking for ourselves, and stopped believing that we can fix our own problems and resolve our own differences.

In short, we have reduced ourselves to a largely silent, passive populace, content to watch and not do. In this way, we have become our worst enemy. As US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once warned, a silent, inert citizenry is the greatest menace to freedom.

Ten truths

Brandeis provided a well-reasoned argument against government censorship in his concurring opinion in *Whitney v. California* (1927). It's not a lengthy read, but here it is boiled down to 10 basic truths:

1. *The purpose of government is to make men free to develop their faculties, i.e., THINK.*

2. *The freedom to think as you will and to speak as you think are essential to the discovery and spread of political truth.*

3. *Without free speech and assembly, discussion would be futile.*

4. *The greatest menace to freedom is a silent population*

5. *Public discussion is a political duty, and should be a fundamental principle of the American government.*

6. *Order cannot be secured through censorship.*

7. *Fear breeds repression, repression breeds hate, and hate menaces stable government.*

8. *The power of reason as applied through public discussion is always superior to silence coerced by law.*

9. *Free speech and assembly were guaranteed in order to guard against the*

occasional tyrannies of governing majorities.

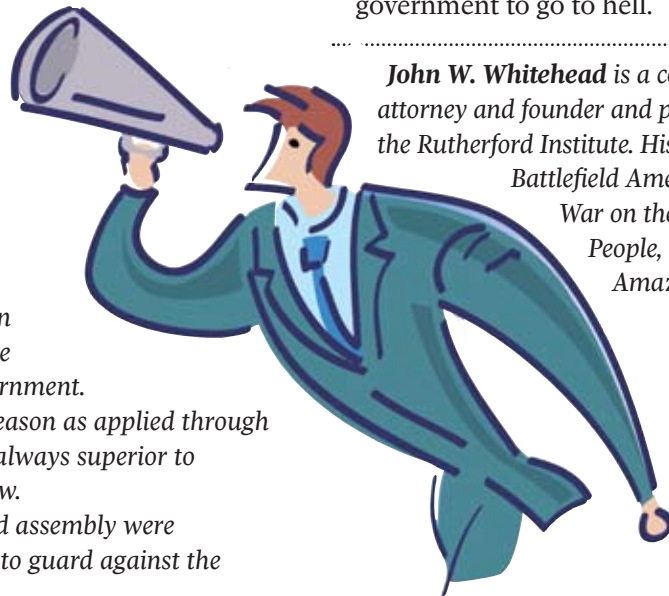
10. *To justify suppression of free speech, there must be reasonable ground (a clear and present danger) to believe that the danger apprehended is imminent, and that the evil to be prevented is a serious one.*

Perhaps the most important point that Brandeis made is that freedom requires courage. "Those who won our independence by revolution were not cowards," he wrote. "They did not fear political change. They did not exalt order at the cost of liberty." Rather, they were "courageous, self-reliant men, with confidence in the power of free and fearless reasoning applied through the processes of popular government."

In other words, the founders did not fear the power of speech. Rather, they embraced it, knowing all too well that a nation without a hearty tolerance for free speech, no matter how provocative, insensitive or dangerous, will be easy prey for a police state where only government speech is allowed.

What the police state wants is a nation of sheep that will docilely march in lock-step with its dictates. What early Americans envisioned was a nation of individualists who knew exactly when to tell the government to go to hell. **CT**

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Lies about UN imperil more than Assange

Liberal media helps the British government turn an important international body into a laughing stock, writes **Jonathan Cook**



Julian Assange speaks to the media from the balcony at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Photo: Carl Gardner, via Flickr.com

Something extremely dangerous is happening before our eyes as we watch British officials and the corporate media respond to the ruling, on August 5, of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which found that Julian Assange is being arbitrarily detained in the UK.

A major international institution upholding the rights of political dissidents around the world, as they face illegal detention, abuse, and torture is being turned into a laughing stock with the enthusiastic connivance of supposedly liberal media outlets such as the Guardian and the BBC.

Reporters, columnists and comedians

are pouring scorn on the UN group, legal experts who until then widely respected in the West and seen as a final bulwark against the most oppressive regimes on earth.

In desperate moments, confined and isolated, dissidents, including Aung Sang Suu Kyi in Burma, and opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim in Malaysia, could take solace from the knowledge that a respected UN group stood shoulder to shoulder with them. In some cases, facing the weight of its opinion, regimes preferred to release such dissidents.

Now the UN Working Group's status and the significance of its decisions are being irreparably undermined. In their desperation

A major international institution upholding the rights of political dissidents around the world as they face illegal detention, abuse and torture is being turned into a laughing stock

SEEKING JUSTICE

If the UN group says Assange should go free, that's a nice little saving for the British taxpayer, isn't it?

to keep Assange reviled, British officials and their collaborators in the media are destroying the last vestiges of protection for political dissidents around the world.

The most glaring example of this process, as pointed out by the former UK diplomat Craig Murray, is an outright lie being peddled by the British Foreign Secretary, Phillip Hammond. He says the UN panel is “made up of lay people and not lawyers.”

In reality, the panel consists of distinguished legal experts in the field of international law.

Unlike Hammond, who is doubtless looking over his shoulder to the other side of the Atlantic, these are truly independent figures – that is, they are not beholden to the governments of the countries they are from. And if Mats Andenas, the Norwegian chair of the working group for much of its investigation, is to be believed, they are brave, too. He says the panel came under intense pressure from the US and UK to arrive at a decision contrary to the one they actually reached.

We know why the US wanted the panel's decision to go against Assange – after all, he is in the Ecuadorean embassy precisely because he fears extradition to the US, where a secret grand jury is awaiting him. But one has to wonder why the UK was so keen to overturn the Working Group's ruling. Doesn't the UK claim it is simply a “bobby on the beat,” trying to uphold the letter of the law as it spends millions on policing Assange's detention? If the UN group says Assange should go free, that's a nice little saving for the British taxpayer, isn't it?

Hammond's lie has not been challenged in the British media, even though a quick Google search would prove it is a falsehood. And now Murray informs us, the Foreign Office's official spokesman has said the government department stands by the lie. In short, Hammond's lie is no longer simply one politician's foolish spin, but the official view of the diplomatic service.

The readiness of all sections of the Brit-

ish media to spread this lie, and even expand on it, is illustrated by a truly despicable piece of journalism from the Guardian's columnist Marina Hyde. She is not a freelance blogger, but is one of the most senior staff writers at the newspaper. Her voice can be considered to reflect the prevailing view of the paper's editors.

Hyde not only echoes Hammond but uses her well-known cutting wit to deride the UN panel. Apparently, these leading experts on international law are really know-nothings:

“I don't want to go out on too much of a limb here, but my sense is that the finest legal minds are not drawn to UN panels as a career path. . . . Perhaps UN panelists are like UN goodwill ambassadors, and even Geri Halliwell could be one,” she writes.

“As for their almost-amusing diagnosis of “house arrest,” adds Hyde, the only possible rejoinder, if you'll forgive the legalese, is: Do. Me. A. Favour. Assange's bail conditions – I'm sorry if the term is confusing to the panel – saw him placed with an electronic tag in a stately home from which he was free to come and go all day long.”

And so on.

Similar ridicule has already been heaped on the UN decision by a popular BBC comedy show, *Asylum*, slowly settling in the British public's mind the idea that Assange is a rapist refusing to face the music (even though he has not yet been charged), that the UN's legal experts are buffoons who cannot hold a candle to our own resolutely independent judges, and that Britain is a disinterested party simply honouring the letter of the law.

The degraded discourse about the UN group's decision does not just threaten Assange, but endangers vulnerable political dissidents around the world. The very fact that Hyde and her ilk are so ready to sacrifice these people's rights in their bid to tar and feather Assange should be warning enough that there is even more at stake here than meets the eye.

CT

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Nine tips for media self-defence

By Jeff Nygaard

1 Never use news media to introduce yourself to a subject. Remember that the “facts” in the media will only make sense – can only make sense – if and when we connect them to something we already have in our heads. And if we don’t take care about what we already have in our heads, then others will plant things that we really don’t want residing there.

2 The media should be only a part of a well-balanced information diet. Don’t rely on media to tell you about the world. Instead, read books. Take classes. Attend a workshop. Talk to people who know things. Do a case study on a subject that interests you. Reading the newspaper can be dangerous if you don’t first acquire some history, background, and context from other sources.

3 Formulate your questions before looking at the news media. Journalists ask questions for a living, but they may not be YOUR questions. Think about what you want to know before diving into the mass media. That way, you’ll know what you’re looking for, and you won’t end up following the lead of a journalist you don’t know.

4 Set your own news agenda. Political scientist Bernard Cohen said, “The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*.” So, before you listen to the daily news, decide where you want to focus your attention. Knowing what to ignore is a major self-defence skill!

5 Read the whole article. Sometimes the real reporting is buried deep in the article, maybe even at the end. A headline is *someone’s*

idea of the main point. Your idea may be different. Skimming headlines is dangerous.

6 Don’t trust any news source. Somewhere between blind trust and immature cynicism lies a path to follow when seeking the truth. The real secret may be to stop looking for “truth” at all, and begin to look for meaning instead.

7 Interrogate yourself as you read or watch the news. You’ll notice that some news items are easily digestible and readily believable, while others make you feel uncomfortable. Think about why this is so.

8 Know Your ABCS. I refer to the Attitudes, Beliefs, and Conceptions about the world that are culturally-dominant as the ABCs of Propaganda. We need to commit a significant amount of time and energy toward looking *inside ourselves* if we want to free ourselves from some of the powerful ideas that the propaganda system has embedded in our minds and hearts. This goes way beyond media propaganda and is really a more general intellectual self-defence.

9 Note the metacommunication. Every message we receive brings with it a number of other, hidden, messages. These hidden messages are known as “metacommunication.” News stories are messages being sent to the public. Think about all of the messages that come along with those messages. Ask yourself: Why am I reading this? Why here? Why now? Who thinks I should believe this? What am I *not* reading? Every story relies on some big ideas to give it meaning; what are the big ideas in this story? **CT**

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 – www.nygaardnotes.org

Why your city won't want to host the Olympics

Bryan Clift and **Andrew Manley** highlight the many pitfalls of hosting major international sporting events

Developing the sporting stadia, accommodation and transportation networks to cope with increased numbers of tourists and athletes is anything but straightforward

The prospect of hosting any mega-event – especially the Olympic Games – is cause for serious consideration. At local, national, and international levels, the discussion takes shape around two key questions: Is it worth it? And if so, for whom?

The question of worth is not limited to cost – although that certainly remains a crucial feature. Rather, there exists a series of interrelated concerns about how mega-events can disrupt cities, and distract from long-term planning agendas. Bids to host the 2024 Olympics from both Boston and Hamburg were withdrawn for such reasons. Meanwhile, Rio de Janeiro is demonstrating just how challenging the preparations for the Olympic Games can be.

Here, we take a closer look at five key reasons why a city might be reluctant to host the Olympics.

1. The money

Let's get the obvious out of the way. Here are the estimated costs of the last four Olympics, and the projected cost of the upcoming games in Rio.

Sydney 2000: US\$4.7-billion

Athens 2004: €9-billion

Beijing 2008: US\$42-billion

London 2012: US\$11-billion

Rio 2016: US\$15-billion or more

While the exact cost of any Olympics is

difficult to pin down, and is often a point of contention, the last three games witnessed unparalleled public and private investment. Beijing, London and Rio have built longer-term “legacy” planning into their budgets, to try to ensure that the investment in hosting the games continues to pay off for years after the event.

Such legacy promises often promote infrastructure redevelopment, improved transportation systems, economic growth and job creation, projects of urban renewal and regeneration, improved physical activity participation and environmental sustainability. In Rio, planned infrastructure developments are set to continue through to 2030.

The financial undertaking for such bids – and the subsequent planning and implementation – is enormous. Undoubtedly, the most significant cost relates to the (re) development of urban infrastructure. This leads to the second deterrent.

2. Infrastructure challenges

Hosting a mega-event always involves urban renewal and regeneration. Yet developing the sporting stadia, accommodation and transportation networks to cope with increased numbers of tourists and athletes is anything but straightforward. Before refashioning the urban landscape, planners must know which



WHITE ELEPHANT?: Johannesburg's Soccer City stadium is struggling to cover costs after hosting the 2010 World Cup final.

sites are to be redeveloped, for whom, and to what end.

Clearly, catering to the demands of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is one priority. But, arguably, it is the least significant. Rather, planners seek to capitalize on urban space by re-imagining the city as a recreational environment – a resource for tourism and consumerism. Retail, festival, sporting, leisure, hotel and heritage spaces are at the core of this vision.

While improvements to transportation may provide benefits to the populace, these redevelopments really only offer hope for increased tourist dollars and a small number of low-paying jobs. One example is the Estádio Mario Filho (better known as the Maracanã) stadium in Rio, which underwent more than US\$5,000-million in renovations ahead of the 2014 World Cup. Once cast in the populist light of the 1950s to communicate ideas of de-

mocracy, it now aims to attract a different kind of person: The consumption-oriented international tourist.

One of the central challenges of hosting any mega-event is what to do with the new infrastructure after the athletes and tourists have gone. Some host cities – such as Barcelona – have made good use of their stadia, but others are replete with white elephants. Montreal, Sydney, Athens, Beijing and Vancouver have all had their share of post-Olympics venue failures, while the 2010 World Cup in South Africa offers a particularly stark warning as the stadia continue to rot from disuse. Brazil appears destined to repeat the same mistakes, as the country struggles to find a purpose for its 2014 World Cup facilities.

White elephants are highly-visible reminders that mega-events may not be worth the cost. But there's an even more insidious side-effect that is often overlooked.

The 2010 World Cup in South Africa offers a particularly stark warning as the stadia continue to rot from disuse. Brazil appears destined to repeat the same mistakes, as the country struggles to find a purpose for its 2014 World Cup facilities

London 2012 saw the rise of “defensible” architecture, which restricts the access and activities of those deemed “undesirable” – particularly skateboarders, protesters and the homeless – in newly developed areas

3. Human rights violations

Building new infrastructure in a city means destroying established urban areas. When that happens, local populations and communities are often dispersed and displaced. To make way for Beijing’s 2008 Olympic infrastructure, an estimated 1.5-million people were forcibly evicted from their homes with minimal compensation. The neighbourhoods were destroyed and residents removed to the outskirts of the city far from friends, family and places of work.

In Rio, the forced eviction process has taken on a militarized ethos, as Police Pacification Units (Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora) try to control a number of the city’s favelas. Demolition, displacement, and the razing of UNESCO world heritage sites, all feature in preparations for the games.

Repressive measures within China and Tibet at the 2008 games, LGBT rights issues surrounding the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi and casualties on construction sites for the Qatar 2022 World Cup, all point toward the persistent human rights issues that all too often accompany mega-events. Rather than representing unity and diversity, it seems as though the Olympic Games have started to signify oppression and exclusion.

4. Fear and security

In many host cities, publicly funded – yet privately owned – urban renewal projects have been leveraged to impose enhanced surveillance measures. For instance, London 2012 saw the rise of “defensible” architecture, which restricts the access and activities of those deemed undesirable – particularly skateboarders, protesters and the homeless – in newly developed areas.

London’s Strand East Community – developed by Vastint Holding BV, Ikea’s holding company for residential development, ahead of the 2012 Olympics – is characteristic of the city’s propensity towards enclave living. This means a high security presence, which accepts those with the capital to in-

vest, and rejects those who are deemed a threat to the safety and security of its residents. Such projects have caused urban spaces to be splintered. Those who lack the desire or means to engage with the consumer economy are unwanted.

This process of securitization has been fuelled by fear of attacks on popular sporting events, such as the bombing of the 2013 Boston Marathon and the targeting of Paris’s Stade de France in November, 2015. Planning committees have been burdened with the impossible task of preventing such attacks by building security into the infrastructure, planning, organization and practices associated with mega-events.

5. International prestige

Hosting a mega-event can create buzz, offer the chance for a positive re-branding and garner international prestige. But it can also draw unwanted attention and bad press. Host nations often obscure human rights violations, but will find it more difficult to manage the high-profile political and economic problems associated with international organizations such as the IOC. For example, political scandals have recently tarnished the reputations of sporting bodies such as FIFA and the IAAF.

By being more aware of the potential pitfalls of hosting mega-events, residents are in a better position to engage with the bidding process – or to resist it, like those involved in the No Boston Olympics campaign. Instead of grasping at opportunities to host the Olympics, city authorities are getting better at considering how the games actually fit with their priorities – or if they do at all. This can only be a good thing. **CT**

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PIT PROPS

Music, International Solidarity
and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike



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PIT PROPS marks the end of an era in coal mining in the UK and highlights how the incredible year-long struggle by the miners in defence of jobs and communities still resonates today. One section focuses on the vital creative links between music, politics and protest which grew up during the strike. Another tells the amazing story of the flood of international support – money, food, toys, clothes, toiletries as well as holidays abroad – which sustained the miners and their families during that year of struggle.

The book also deals with unfinished business from the strike. The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign is resolute in its pursuit of a full public inquiry into the role of the police on 18 June 1984, when vicious para-military tactics were deployed against miners at Orgreave, South Yorkshire. The former coal field communities, devastated by the relentless pit closure programme which began after the strike, still struggle today.

The book concludes with an analysis of the privatisation of the electricity supply

industry and how the failure to pursue a coherent energy policy has led to swathes of the industry being controlled by foreign, often state-owned, companies. The absurd consequences of this, now and in the future, are a matter of urgent public concern.

HOW TO ORDER

PIT PROPS: Music, International Solidarity
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Transparent government and secret drone strikes

Felicity Arbuthnot shows how David Cameron ignored his own promises about transparency when he ordered the drone killings of two British citizens

Cameron's government has followed in the footsteps of its US master, Barack Obama, and had the UK National Security Council draw up a kill list

"One of the tasks that we clearly have is to rebuild trust in our political system ... it's about making sure people are in control and that the politicians are always their servants and never their masters." – (David Cameron, First speech as prime minister, May 11, 2010.)

British Prime Minister David Cameron has made "government transparency" a mantra. In May, 2010, he vowed to rip off the "cloak of secrecy" around government, declaring: "Greater transparency is at the heart of our shared commitment to enable the public to hold politicians and public bodies to account."

He added: "If there's one thing I've noticed since doing this job, it's how all the information about government – the money it spends, where it spends it, the results it achieves – how so much of it is locked away in a vault marked 'private, for the eyes of ministers and of officials only.' By bringing information out into the open you'll be able to hold government and public services to account."

In July 2011, he said: "We are creating a new era of transparency," then, later that month, in a speech in Singapore he spoke of "accountable and transparent institutions."

Then, in January 2013, he said one of the main priorities of the UK's presidency of the G8 was "transparency." In November that

year at the Open Government Partnership he again delivered a speech stressing the importance of the "transparency agenda."

Do his words hold up to scrutiny? Absolutely not. The only transparency here is in Cameron – you can see right through him.

Holding "government and public services to account?" In your dreams. Illegally invading the airspace of other countries, and murdering people in extra-judicial executions is a massive government undertaking. But "transparency" and accountability in this area have not only been unforthcoming, they have left the planet.

Last August, two British nationals fighting in Syria were killed in British drone strikes. They were Reyaad Khan and Ruhul Amin, the latter not a "formal" target, but killed anyway. Many people might be tempted to think: "They were terrorists, serves them right," but this is the thin end of a very dodgy legal wedge. This was an illegal strike on a sovereign country – and we had only the government's word on who was actually killed.

It seems Cameron's government has followed in the footsteps of its US master, Barack Obama, and had the UK National Security Council draw up a kill list. Of course, Defence Minister Michael Fallon denied there was such a list, but then confirmed it in an impressive sleight of words: "Our job is to . . . identify the terrorists, and where we can

forestall them. But if you're asking me if we would hesitate to take similar action again today, tomorrow, next week – absolutely not, we would not hesitate." Illegal assassination in or over another country now has a new name: "Forestalling."

The drone killings were undertaken by order of Prime Minister Cameron without MPs being consulted, the kill list drawn up months before the August action. The government also refused to publish the advice it received from attorney general Jeremy Wright to justify the attacks.

On September 8, according to a report by Oliver Wright in the Independent, David Cameron said Khan was involved in "actively recruiting (ISIS) sympathizers and seeking to orchestrate specific and barbaric attacks against the West, including directing a number of planned terrorist attacks right here in Britain. "However, no further evidence has been provided to substantiate these claims. Downing Street has said it cannot provide this information as it might compromise ongoing operations and legal cases."

The Guardian's Owen Bowcott said the attorney general "acknowledged it was important in such exceptional circumstances that MPs should know that legal advice had been given, but insisted that its precise content could not be revealed."

Bowcott continued, "Asked why not, Wright said: 'In part, it's an obligation to ensure that legal advice taken by the government is as full and frank as it can be . . . It's also important to take collective responsibility under cabinet government.'"

So much for holding government and public services to account.

On January 12, an uncredited article on the website of Reprieve, the international



David Cameron: Promised to "put information into the open."

human rights organization, reported that: "Members of the UK's parliamentary intelligence watchdog will not be allowed access to all intelligence or defence information relating to the new British practice of targeted killing by drone, the prime minister has said.

"David Cameron was asked today by Andrew Tyrie MP whether the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) would be allowed to examine the

military aspect of the targeted killing program, and whether he would commit to the committee's security-cleared members being able to see all the relevant intelligence.

"Mr Cameron refused on both points, stating that the ISC's job was to examine intelligence, not military affairs, and that he could not give the commitment Mr Tyrie asked for regarding the Committee's access to intelligence. Mr Tyrie pointed out that what the Committee is allowed to see remains under the control of the Secretary of State, and that its work on targeted killing 'could be rendered meaningless if it were barred from looking at the military operation.

"Harriet Harman MP, chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) asked whether he would publish the UK Government's policy on drone strikes – Mr Cameron responded that he had already set out his position to the Commons, but that publishing a written policy might 'get us into more dif culties.'"

You bet.

It seems that, for Cameron and his allies, international law is just an irritant as British and American acts of terrorism become ever more blatant. Cameron's fanciful talk of transparency has been consigned to that great political cemetery where prime ministerial lies are buried – for now at least.

CT

The Government also refused to publish the advice it received from attorney general Jeremy Wright to justify the attack

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Felicity Arbuthnot is a London-based political commentator specializing in the Middle East and the environment. She was senior researcher for John Pilger's *Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq*, and Denis Halliday *Returns*, the latter for RTE (Ireland).

All the news that's fit to be delivered . . .

Aviva Chomsky tells how the US media hide undocumented workers



FRONT PAGE NEWS: When the Boston Globe's journalists had to help deliver the Sunday edition of the paper, the story topped the local TV newscasts.

Screenshot from WBZ, Boston

The invisible links between two mutually incomprehensible worlds were revealed to many in the Boston area at the end of December

In our post-modern (or post-post-modern?) age, we are supposedly transcending the material certainties of the past. The virtual world of the Internet is replacing the “real,” material world, as theory asks us to question the very notion of reality. Yet that virtual world relies heavily on some distinctly old systems and realities, including the physical labour of those who produce, care for, and provide the goods and services for the post-industrial information economy.

As it happens, this increasingly invisible, underground economy of muscles and sweat, blood and effort intersects in the most intimate ways with those who enjoy the benefits of the virtual world. Of course,

our connection to that virtual world comes through physical devices, and each of them follows a commodity chain that begins with the mining of rare earth elements and ends at a toxic disposal or recycling site, usually somewhere in the Third World. Closer to home, too, the incontrovertible realities of our physical lives depend on labour – often that of undocumented immigrants – invisible, but far from virtual, that makes apparently mundane daily routines possible.

Even the most ethereal of post-modern cosmopolitans, for instance, eat food. In 21st-century America, as anthropologist Steve Strifler has pointed out, “To find a meal that has not at some point passed through the hands of Mexican immigrants is a difficult task.” Medical anthropologist Seth Holmes says, “It is likely that the last hands to hold the blueberries, strawberries, peaches, asparagus, or lettuce before you pick them up in your local grocery store belong to Latin American migrant labourers.”

The same is true of the newspaper. The invisible links between two mutually incomprehensible worlds were revealed to many in the Boston area at the end of December when the Boston Globe, the city's major newspaper, made what its executives apparently believed would be a minor change. They contracted out its subscriber delivery service to a new company.

Isn't newspaper delivery part of the old

economy and so consigned to the dustbin of history by online news access? It turns out that a couple of hundred thousand people in the Boston area – and 56 per cent of newspaper readers nationwide – still prefer to read their news in what some dismissively call the “dead tree format.” In addition, despite major ad shrinkage, much of the revenue that allows newspapers to offer online content still comes overwhelmingly from in-print ads.

The Globe presented the change as a clean, technical move, nothing more than a new contractor providing newspaper delivery for a lower cost. But, like so many other invisible services that grease the wheels of daily life, that deceptively simple task is, in fact, provided thanks to grueling, exploited labour performed by some of society’s most marginalized workers, many of them immigrants and undocumented.

In this respect, newspaper delivery shares characteristics with other forms of labour that link the privileged with the exploited. This is especially true in Boston, recently named the most unequal city in the country. Some of the most dangerous, insecure, and unpleasant jobs with the lowest pay and a general lack of benefits provide key goods and services for citizens who undoubtedly believe that they never interact with immigrants or receive any benefits from them.

In fact, immigrant workers harvest, process, and prepare food; they provide home health care; they manicure hands and lawns. In other words, the system connects some of the most intimate aspects of our daily lives with workers whose existence is then erased or demonized in the public sphere. And all of this happens because these workers are regularly rendered silent and invisible.

Reporters heroically deliver the paper

To get that “dead tree” item from the printer to your doorstep requires hundreds of human workers willing to leave home in the middle of the night, almost every day of the year, regardless of the weather and the driving conditions (a serious issue in New England).

They must drive to a distribution centre to receive, fold, and package the papers, load them in their own cars, and spend several hours racing through dark streets to finish their routes before dawn. Although they pay for their own gas, insurance, and car maintenance, the low rate that these “independent contractors” receive per-paper-delivered barely allows them to reach the minimum wage. Many of them are immigrants.

The Globe’s workers remained invisible to much of the public until December 28, 2015, when the paper replaced its long-time delivery contractor with Long Beach-based ACI Media Group. Drove of workers were laid off from the previous company when it lost its Globe contract, and ACI promised to cut costs for delivery by paying its newly hired workers less and making them work more under significantly worse conditions. As a result, ACI had trouble attracting workers, and those it did hire began to quit en masse when confronted with the degrading working conditions. Thousands of papers went undelivered, day after day. When subscriber complaints flooded in, the media began to notice. But most of the journalists covering the developing story preferred to look everywhere except at the workers themselves in trying to explain what happened.

Subscribers may be aware of their paper carriers because they catch a glimpse of them or hear them in the early morning, or they may take seriously those envelopes that the carriers regularly leave, hoping for tips to bolster their meagre income. Apparently, however, the Globe’s own reporters never thought to consider how the newspaper arrived at subscribers’ homes until the system went into crisis.

A week into the quagmire, the Globe mobilized its reporters and other staff to help deliver the Sunday paper. If anyone outside the Boston area heard about the issue, it was undoubtedly because of this unprecedented action. Under the headline *Boston Globe Employees Help Deliver Papers on Sunday*, for instance, the *New York Times* noted that

Thousands of papers went undelivered, day after day.

When subscriber complaints flooded in, the media began to notice. But most of the journalists covering the developing story preferred to look everywhere except at the workers themselves in trying to explain what happened

Only one of the Globe's journalists who participated in that Sunday delivery extravaganza, columnist Marcela García, who frequently covers immigrant and Latino issues, even thought to focus her attention on the workers who actually did the same job every day

200 of them “stayed up all night,” having brought their own “flashlight and a GPS,” and that they “assembled and bagged thousands of newspapers and stacked them in their cars.”

As one of those reporters told the Times, “You’re following instructions about whether people want it directly on their porch or hidden somewhere, so you have to walk up to the house and drop it where they wanted it.” CNN Money explained that “first, the volunteers had to bag the papers,” and provided a photograph to prove that such a remarkable act had indeed happened. All of this coverage tacitly offered the same message: Reporters had heroically crossed the lines of race, status, and class! How amazing!

Clearly, this foray into the world of immigrant labour proved startling for those reporters. Columnist Marcela García called it “an unbelievably eye-opening experience.” Columnist Shirley Leung wrote, “We have an old saying in newsrooms: Putting out the paper is a daily miracle. I used to think that was just about filing your story on deadline, but I’ve come to appreciate how it’s the whole package, from keyboard to doorstep.”

Columnist Joan Vennochi, after spending the night delivering papers, lamented the suffering of the “victims” of the Globe’s decision – by which, of course, she meant the subscribers. After a humorous description of his own amateur attempt to follow a morning delivery route, reporter Kevin Cullen concluded casually that “whatever they pay the delivery people, it’s not enough, and it’s more than a little depressing to think this debacle has been brought about by a desire to pay them even less.”

“Whatever they pay the delivery people..” Curiously, in the first two weeks of reporting on the crisis, no news source seemed able to find out how much the new company was actually paying. The Columbia Journalism Review reported widespread speculation “that the labour shortage stems from ACI offering lower pay rates than other carriers. But ACI and Globe management have denied

that claim.” Apparently it never occurred to CJR reporter David Uberti to ask a worker!

Press coverage made it clear that newspapers live in, and speak to, a world of privilege. It was assumed, for instance, that readers shared the utter ignorance of reporters when it came to the work (and the workers) involved in physically transporting newspapers to their doorsteps. They were, in other words, to enjoy unlimited access to “information” about the world that “matters” – and ignorance when it came to the mundane details that lay behind that access.

Reporting on the workers

Only one of the journalists who participated in that Sunday delivery extravaganza, columnist Marcela García, who frequently covers immigrant and Latino issues, even thought to focus her attention on the workers who actually did the same job every day. “Reporters delivering their own work – that’s a story,” she wrote. “But off camera, and working side-by-side with us as we assembled the Sunday paper, were the people who are there every night, making not much more than minimum wage . . . Part of the subtext of the crisis the Globe has faced for the past week is that our new delivery vendor can’t seem to find enough people willing and able to do the gruelling work.”

At her blog, García recorded one of her colleagues saying, “Wow, I can’t believe something like this had to happen for us to learn about these workers and their conditions.” She was evidently one of the few reporters willing to talk with some of the actual workers that Sunday morning when the Globe staff mobilized to help with the delivery. Or perhaps she was one of the few able to. While 35 per cent of Boston’s inhabitants speak a language other than English, and the city is now “majority minority,” the paper’s journalists, unlike its delivery workers, remain overwhelmingly white and English speaking.

That Tuesday, Jan. 5, publisher John Hen-

ry offered a public apology – to subscribers, of course, not to the workers with the old carrier who, because of his actions, had lost their jobs, or the ones with the new carrier, who had seen their working conditions and pay undermined. Henry did emphasize that a major reason for switching carriers was ACI's promise of substantially cheaper service. Clearly, he felt it unnecessary to mention that these savings would be realized on the backs of the delivery workers. "Until Globe staffers embarked on an effort to save more than 20,000 subscribers from missing their Sunday paper," Henry wrote, "we had underestimated what it would take to make this change." He then offered a post-modern, post-material explanation for the problem: The new company's routing software had proven insufficient for the job!

On January 9, almost two weeks after the delivery crisis began, an exposé by reporter Michael Levenson finally brought the issue of "long hours, little pay, no vacation for delivery drivers" out of the shadows. He described the "grueling nocturnal marathon for low-income workers who toil almost invisibly on the edge of the economy." The next day, when 15 workers delivered a letter of protest to the new carrier and walked off the job, reporter Dan Adams explained their demands, and actually quoted Lynn Worker Center organizer Julio Ruiz.

On January 13, the Globe published a lead editorial challenging management and bringing labour issues to the fore in a significant way. It recognized that "drivers get no vacation, and lack worker protections. That's despite the fact that packaging papers into plastic bags, in the middle of the night, can be gruelling work." The editorial called on the state attorney general and federal authorities to investigate the delivery business, including implicitly the accusation levelled by workers that their employers misclassify them as "independent contractors" in order to avoid paying the wages or offering the labour protections they deserve.

In other words, the organizing and pro-

testing of the workers – and the experiences of the reporters as one-day delivery people – helped briefly open a window between the world of those who write and read the news and the world of the exploited labour that transports it from the former to the latter.

But the window didn't last long. A Globe post-mortem by Mark Arsenault on January 16th returned to a purely technological explanation of the problem in summing up the three-week debacle. "The root of the delivery mayhem," he wrote, "lies in something so simple that nobody gave it much thought until it was too late: Sensible paper routes." Once again, software and routing lay at the heart of the matter, while workers and working conditions conveniently vanished.

Isolated from each other

If newspaper writers and readers are effectively isolated from the world of the workers who deliver the paper, that divide goes both ways. One immigrant worker who spoke to García – in Spanish – was a Guatemalan who had taken on a second paper route during the crisis. He worked from one at night to eight in the morning and requested to be identified by a pseudonym. "I asked him if he ever reads the Globe," García reported. "He looked up and stared back at me as if I was saying something crazy. And he just laughed."

Our infatuation with virtual modernity should not blind us to the exploitative systems of labour that undergird our world from our front doorsteps to distant parts of the planet. As the Globe's delivery crisis made clear, the system relies on ignorance and on the invisibility of the labour of mostly immigrant, often undocumented, workers. The Globe's delivery breakdown offered a brief look at just one way in which the worlds of business, journalism, and readers rely on such workers. And the local and national coverage revealed just how unusual it is for those who own, manage, write, and read newspapers to see this underside of our information economy. **CT**

Our infatuation with virtual modernity should not blind us to the exploitative systems of labour that undergird our world from our front doorsteps to distant parts of the planet

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Aviva Chomsky's most recent book is *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal*. She is professor of history and coordinator of Latin American studies at Salem State University in Massachusetts. This report was originally published at www.tomdispatch.com

IN THE PICTURE

British photographer **ALAN CHAPMAN** became known as the Decent Paparazzo after a late-night encounter with pop star Robbie Williams. His unique style also earned him a role in the film, *Teenage Paparazzo*. He talks to **Tony Sutton** about life as a celebrity snapper, and his new book, *Frame*

THE DECENT PAPARAZZO

THE words Decent and Paparazzo are not ones you'd normally string together. They're contradictory; an oxymoron. But "Decent Paparazzo" is the nickname Alan Chapman, the noted-British celebrity photographer, earned for his courtesy while he was part of the mob of snappers that makes its living taking intrusive, off-guard, pictures of the world's most famous personalities.

It's all due to Robbie Williams, one of the top names in recent British pop history.

Chapman tells, in his new book, *Frame*, how Williams gave him the moniker after a late-night encounter outside a London nightclub:

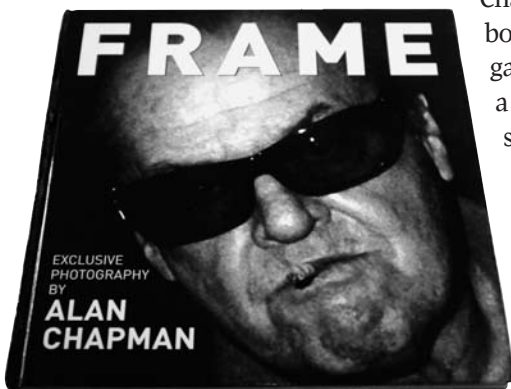
"When I arrived at the 30th birthday party for funnyman Matt Lucas, Robbie Williams had a couple of friends with him who wouldn't let me take

any photographs. As he left the club at the end of the party, I asked sarcastically if it would now be okay to take some pictures. 'Just a couple,' was the response from one of his entourage. So I took a few shots, and let them continue on their way.

"A few seconds later, I heard laughter, and Robbie shouted, 'Oi, mate, what you doin.' You lot normally run down the street after me. Why did you only take a few shots?' When I pointed out that I was doing what was requested, Williams told me to do the job properly, and posed with his hands in his pockets. I told him that was not a good shot, would he do something else?" Robbie obligingly gave Chapman a two-finger salute (*see Page 22*).

"A lengthy chat followed, and Robbie told me, 'You're a decent guy,' a phrase he remembered when we met in LA a year later, at the Beckham Soccer Academy launch party. He came over, shook my hand, and said, 'Hey, you're the Decent Guy!'" says Chapman.

Below: Actor Jack Nicholson glares from the cover of Alan Chapman's book, *Frame*.





As Chapman called
rock singer/actress
Courtney's Love's
name, he got a look,
and a great shot.

IN THE PICTURE



Arriving slightly underdressed, with hair uncombed, Britney Spears grimaces into the interviewer's microphone right in front of Chapman. "The guy with the mic asks me to keep my voice out of his recording – I ask him to keep his microphone out of my picture. I did, he didn't! There's nothing like a bit of co-operation," says Chapman.

"Grenier asked if I'd like to be in a film he was making, called Teenage Paparazzo"

But there's more. The photographer's good manners also earned him a spot in the 2010 Hollywood film, *Teenage Paparazzo*. It happened after Chapman spotted Adrian Grenier, a star of the hit TV series, *Entourage*, deep in conversation at a LA showbiz party he was covering.

"Grenier was talking to another guest, so it seemed rude to interrupt them. But when they'd finished talking, I asked if I



Pop star Robbie Williams delivers a two-finger salute to Chapman, after a night out with his pals at a London birthday party. Williams later gave Chapman his nickname, the Decent Paparazzo.

could take a few frames. Grenier asked why I hadn't just gone ahead and shot my pictures in the first place. I explained that it would not only have been rude, but I wouldn't have got the shots I wanted. That prompted Adrian – who later wrote the foreword to **Frame** – to ask if I'd like to be in a film he was making, called *Teenage Paparazzo*.

"Of course I agreed. Afterwards, I was



Yoko Ono was a special guest at the Becks New Artist Awards at London's ICA. She was delighted to find Bob Geldof waiting for her. After saying hello, the couple danced for the photographer.

invited to the LA premiere, where, at the after-show party, I was congratulated for my input by several people whom I'd ever met before, which I found very flattering."

Chapman's reputation as Mr Polite didn't help him, however, on the night he came face-to-face with a drunken Jay Kay, lead singer of the Grammy Award-winning funk-jazz group, Jamiroquai.

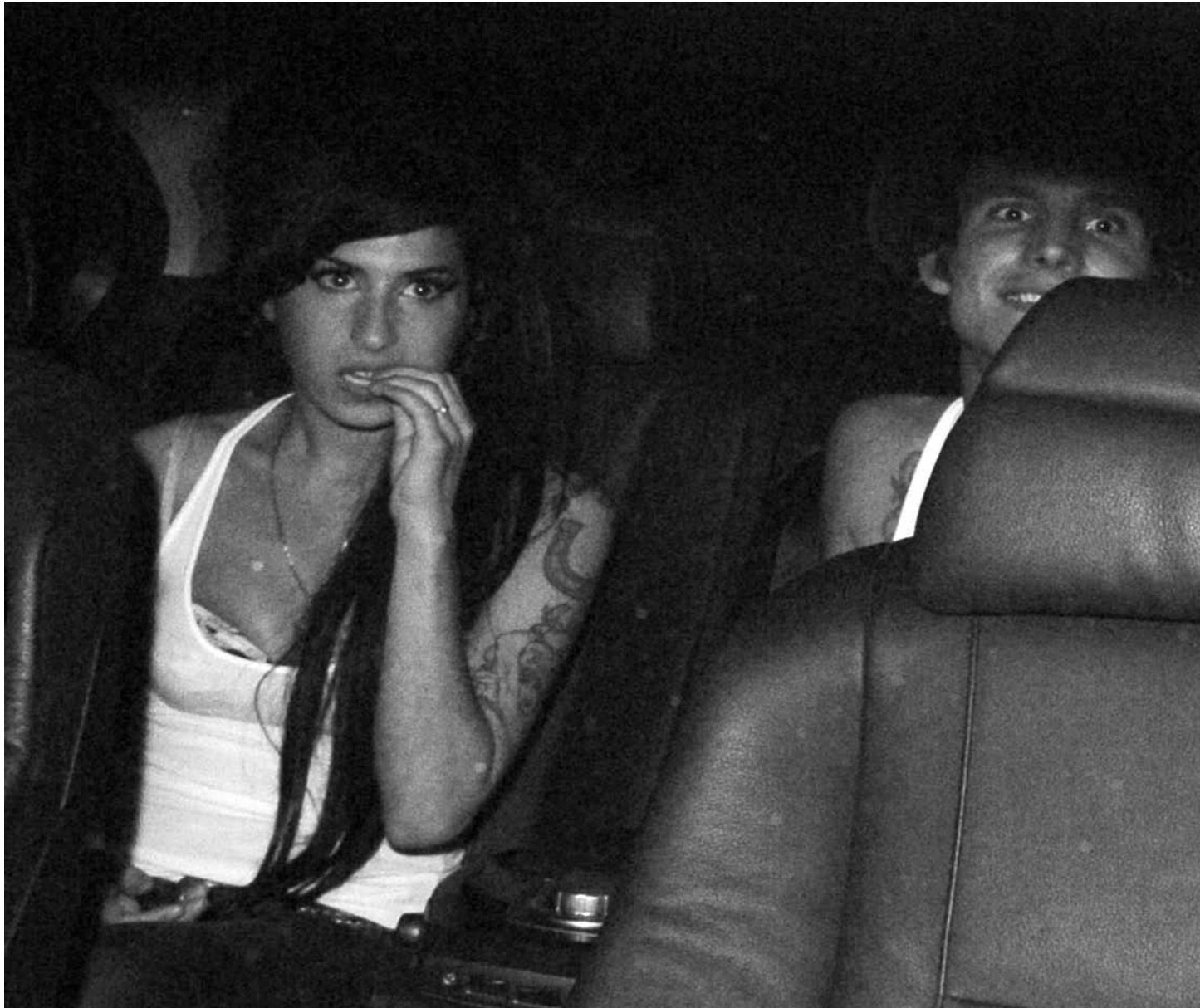


Kate Moss leaves a party at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, propped up by famous photographer Mario Testino (right), with a security man clearing the way. Kate was wearing a borrowed dress, a valuable vintage number worth a considerable sum, which managed to snag on something and rip – whoops!

"Jay was leaving Kabaret's Prophecy nightclub in London's Soho, chatting happily to everyone. Suddenly he snapped, and slapped a photographer hard across the face. As I moved away, Kay launched himself at me, and punched me several times in the face. His friends and the club security dragged him away, but he came back again and again, until the police were called. Kay

"Kay launched himself at me, and punched me several times in the face"

IN THE PICTURE



Wide-eyed Blake Fielder-Civil looks wild as he and a nervously nail-biting Amy Winehouse leave an event at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London.

The photographs are big .and the captions offer a humorous and lively commentary

spent the night at Savile Row police station. So did I – the only difference was that I was giving a statement, while he was in the lock up!

“Of course, all this coincided with the release of Jay’s new album, so it got a page in every British red-top tabloid – two whole pages in the Daily Star. At least the Daily Mirror was kind enough to call me ‘respected snapper Alan Chapman!’”

There’s a spread of pictures in **Frame** of the action from this fracas – including a huge shot of the swing that ended the evening’s entertainment.

The 160 pages in Chapman’s coffee-table book - it’s 12-inches square and hefty enough to flatten any pugnacious popstar – feature work from his years as a paparazzo in London and LA. The photographs are big, in gorgeous black-and-white, with cap-



If those buttons fly off, they could inflict injury. Elton John squeezes into his car after leaving Ronnie Scott's in Soho.



Margaret Thatcher arrives at London's Ivy restaurant, handbag at her side, fixing Chapman with an icy stare.

tions that offer humorous and lively commentary.

My favourite shots include Elton John valiantly trying to keep the buttons on his jacket after a night out (*above*), and tough guy Robert Mitchum looking uncertain of the sex of singer Boy George at an awards event (*see Page 27*). And it's hard not to fall in love with the shot of a slightly dazed-looking Courtney Love (*Page 21*). There are

many more brilliant shots of famous film stars, musicians, royalty, and politicians, including a grim-looking former prime minister Margaret Thatcher with her handbag in pre-launch mode (*above*).

Chapman's career as a paparazzo is not quite over, but these days his workstyle is more relaxed. Working as a contract photographer in London, his photographs still appear regularly in the London tabloids, but

Working as a contract photographer in London, Chapman's work still appears regularly in the London tabloids

IN THE PICTURE



Lady Gaga blows a kiss at Chapman as she prepares to leave her car upon arriving at a Soho club.

FRAME

Exclusive Photography By Alan Chapman

Signed and numbered
copies are available
from the author's website:

www.celebrity-pic.com

Price £45

(Use the code COLDTYPE
to get free international
postage)

he devotes much of his time to organizing exhibitions of his work in London and Los Angeles – his most recent show ran for six months at London's up-scale Cafe Royal in central London.

Does he miss his old life chasing the elusive big-paying shot? "Not at all," he replies. "I can't argue with much of the criticism of the paparazzi as a mob of people who harass celebrities. The introduction of low-cost digital cameras enabled anyone to become a photographer, with no training, and no idea how

to operate as a professional journalist. The result: Too many people roaming the streets looking for the 'money' shot. Their understanding is that poking a celebrity with a sharp stick (metaphorically speaking) and shooting 100 shots in rapid succession will yield the desired result. I'm really pleased I'm not a part of that mob." **CT**

Note: Tony Sutton is the editor of ColdType. He worked with Chapman on the design and production of Frame.



Scratching his ear, Hollywood legend Robert Mitchum clearly can't work out what to make of Boy George when they meet at the TV Times Awards in the early 80's.

Obama and the art of ruin

The Western media portrays Vladimir Putin as Mr Baddie, while Barack Obama is Mr Good Guy. There's something wrong there, says **David Edwards**

Not only was Obama not motivated to avert mass killing, as so many corporate journalists have claimed, he pursued illegal regime change against the advice of his most senior military advisers

In a revealing tweet last October, BBC diplomatic correspondent, Bridget Kendall, commented acerbically on a press conference given by Russian President Vladimir Putin: "And he can't resist bragging about his own experience going up in a fighter jet."

I mentioned on Twitter that I couldn't recall any BBC journalist accusing Obama of "bragging" about anything. A Twitter follower tried to help out: "If you can find a series of photo-op images of Obama wrestling wild animals shirtless, you might have a point."

It's true that Putin likes to portray himself as a bare-chested, judo and wrestling, fighter pilot. But then Margaret Thatcher was famously filmed clinging to the commander's cupola of a charging tank with a Union Jack fluttering at her side. And, declaring "Mission Accomplished" in Iraq from an aircraft carrier, George W. Bush made a grandiose landing in a military jet with "George W. Bush – Commander-In-Chief" emblazoned on the plane's nose.

Is the current US president different? Is it just that he keeps his shirt on and is above bragging? Let's take a look . . .

In November 2013, the Washington Times reported that Obama had been overheard "bragging to administration aides about his ability to kill people with drones." The president's exact words:

"[I'm] really good at killing people."

Then, while the US was bringing disaster to Libya in 2011, Obama bragged: "Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different. And, as president, I refused to wait for the images of slaughter and mass graves before taking action."

Citing journalist Seymour Hersh and others, Gareth Porter has supplied a different version of events: "When the Obama administration began its effort to overthrow Gaddafi, it did not call publicly for regime change, and instead asserted that it was merely seeking to avert mass killings that administration officials had suggested might approach genocidal levels. But the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), which had been given the lead role in assessing the situation in Libya, found no evidence to support such fears and concluded that it was based on nothing more than 'speculative arguments.'"

Indeed, not only was Obama not motivated to avert mass killing, as so many corporate journalists have claimed, he pursued illegal regime change against the advice of his most senior military advisers: Porter continued: "The JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] warned that overthrowing the Gaddafi regime would serve no US security interest, but would instead open the way for



President Barack Obama: "I'm really good at killing people."

Photo-illustration: DonkeyHotey, via Flickr.com

forces aligned with al-Qaeda to take over the country. After the Obama administration went ahead with a NATO air assault against the Gaddafi regime, the US military sought to head off the destruction of the entire Libyan government . . .

"But the State Department refused any negotiation with Gaddafi on the [JCS] proposal. Immediately after hearing that Gaddafi had been captured by rebel forces and killed, Clinton famously joked in a television interview, 'We came, we saw, he died,' and laughed.

"By then the administration was already

embarked on yet another regime change policy in Syria," wrote Porter.

The results of this regime change policy, in both Libya and Syria, have been simply catastrophic.

Last month, in his final State of the Union address, Obama took his braggadocio to another level: "Let me tell you something. The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth, period. Period. It's not even close. It's not even close. We spend more on our military than the next eight nations combined. Our troops are the

"The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth, period"

WHO'S BRAGGING?

This doesn't mean Obama can't be criticized. It's fine to criticize him for being too passive, pacifist; too humble in "leading" the "free world"

finest fighting force in the history of the world. No nation attacks us directly or our allies because they know that's the path to ruin."

Sounding like a parody of imperial power, Obama said: "If you doubt America's commitment – or mine – to see that justice is done, just ask Osama bin Laden."

Justice is a warm gun and a double head tap

If Putin bragged about being "good at killing people," of ruining whole countries, and paraded extrajudicial killing as "justice," the likes of the BBC's Bridget Kendall would denounce him as a sociopath. This never happens because Obama and the Official Enemy are perceived through two separate media lenses – one, dark and damning, for "them," the other, rose-tinted and admiring, for "us."

Thus, in a Guardian response to Obama's latest speech, Lucia Graves somehow found the president's rhetoric "lofty and seemingly above the fray." Obama "defined himself more abstractly as against fear." American fear, that is – not the fear of nations facing American "justice," and the associated "path to ruin."

At the extreme end of the media spectrum, while offering mild criticism, Guardian leftist Owen Jones linked to Obama's State of the Union speech, commenting: "Funny, charming, with a coolness that eludes practically every other politician, he is the ultimate ambassador for US power."

Jones claims he intended to represent the views of others with these opening comments. But, later in the same piece, he wrote: "None of this is to scapegoat Obama. Even the most well-intentioned president will struggle against a system described last year by Princeton researchers as an 'oligarchy. . . .'"

Obama, as ever, is to be viewed as "well-intentioned."

By contrast, Jones later wrote a piece under the title: Putin is a human-rights

abusing oligarch. The British left must speak out. This piece began rather differently: "A right-wing authoritarian leader who attacks civil liberties, stigmatizes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, indulges in chauvinistic nationalism, is in bed with rapacious oligarchs, and who is admired by the European and American hard right. Left-wing opposition to Vladimir Putin should be, well, kind of an obvious starting point."

Russia "is ruled by a human rights abusing, expansionist, oligarchic regime." Jones has surely never referred to the corporate oligarchy that runs the US as a "regime." Three-time US presidential candidate, Ralph Nader, on the other hand, has said: "We have a two-party dictatorship in this country. Let's face it. And it is a dictatorship in thrall to giant corporations." (Nader, interview with The Real News Network, November 4, 2008).

Standing 'Aloof'

The Western political and corporate media establishment simply has too much invested in Obama's status as a "good guy" for him to be subject to liberal sneers. The public has to support his wars, and his wars have to be sold as "humanitarian interventions," driven by our altruistic responsibility to protect. So his bragging remains invisible to British liberals. The corporate journalist is, after all, a master of the art of "denying a knowledge he would have, if he only wanted to have it," as Erich Fromm wrote in his book, *Beyond The Chains Of Illusion*.

This doesn't mean Obama can't be criticized. It's fine to criticize him for being too passive, pacifist, too humble in leading the free world. In a Guardian piece last October titled, *Syria's horror shows the tragic price of western inaction*, Natalie Nougayrède wrote: "There are many actors responsible for the depth of Syria's tragedy. It is impossible to lay all the blame on Obama. But Fred-

eric Hof [former special adviser on Syria to the US regime] is a rare voice coming from within that administration who says that inaction has had a higher cost than action would have had.”

Paul Mason argued similarly last month in the Guardian that Obama “stood aloof from the Syrian conflict.”

In the aftermath of the November 13, 2015, Paris attacks, the Times noted Obama’s “prolonged inaction against President Assad in Syria.”

The Sun also lamented Obama’s “incredible complacency” and “catastrophic failure to lead the Western world.”

In September 2014, a Guardian leader asked of Obama’s plan to contain ISIS: “Is doing nothing really an option? Western countries have averted their eyes in the past. Let it just burn out, said the critics of intervention in former Yugoslavia. We should have paid more heed, said the critics of inaction in Rwanda.

“Why us, Americans in particular may ask, in the case now of Iraq and Syria?”

The Guardian claimed the US was not part of a conflict it had merely been trying to influence: “Is America, which is after all also one of the outside powers seeking to influence the conflict’s outcome, an ideal arbiter? Hardly, but it is the only one available.”

By contrast, Seymour Hersh reported that, in 2013, “The CIA-sponsored secret flow of arms from Libya to the Syrian opposition, via Turkey, had been underway for more than a year (it started sometime after Gaddafi’s death on October 20, 2011).”

Hersh added: “Although many in the American intelligence community were aware that the Syrian opposition was dominated by extremists, the CIA-sponsored weapons kept coming, presenting a continuing problem for Assad’s army.”

The Irish Times supplied some detail: “The Saudis contribute both weapons and large sums of money, and the CIA

takes the lead in training the rebels on AK-47 assault rifles and tank-destroying missiles.”

Hersh reported an “active effort” made “by the US military to mitigate Obama administration regime change policies” in Libya and Syria. A former senior adviser to the Joint Chiefs told Hersh: “The Joint Chiefs believed that Assad should not be replaced by fundamentalists. The administration’s policy was contradictory. They wanted Assad to go but the opposition was dominated by extremists.”

Hersh cited Tulsi Gabbard, a Democrat from Hawaii and member of the House Armed Services Committee: “The US and the CIA should stop this illegal and counterproductive war to overthrow the Syrian government of Assad and should stay focused on fighting against . . . the Islamic extremist groups.”

In the Guardian, Simon Jenkins commented on the rationale behind UK support for US-led interventions in Iraq and Libya: “These were undertaken largely to honour Britain’s alliance with a recklessly neo-imperial America. But the reason given in each case was ‘humanitarian.’ Given the lack of military threat or other justification, humanity was all there was.”

And so, when it comes to Obama, a “humanitarian” is all we are allowed to see – well-intentioned, keen to avoid violence, even as he ruins whole countries.

The change from George W. Bush is real but dismal – Obama’s advisors learned the lesson that US credibility and security are not best served by being seen to lead efforts to overthrow governments. Others – France, Britain, Saudi Arabia and Turkey – now assume that role for the cameras while the world’s leading rogue state continues to lead behind the scenes. **CT**

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David Edwards is the co-editor of Medialens, the British media watchdog – www.medialens.org

When it comes to Obama, a “humanitarian” is all we are allowed to see – well-intentioned, keen to avoid violence, even as he ruins whole countries

Rigging the market

Oil, the industry that threatens us with destruction, is being bailed out by the British government with public money, writes **George Monbiot**

Instead of a collapse in the supply of oil, we confront the opposite crisis: We're drowning in the stuff

Those of us who predicted, during the first years of this century, an imminent peak in global oil supplies could not have been more wrong. People like the energy consultant Daniel Yergin, with whom I disputed the topic, appear to have been right: Growth, he said, would continue for many years, unless governments intervened.

Oil appeared to peak in the United States in 1970, after which production fell for 40 years. That, we assumed, was the end of the story. But through fracking and horizontal drilling, production last year returned to the level it reached in 1969. Twelve years ago, the Texas oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens announced that “never again will we pump more than 82-million barrels.” By the end of 2015, daily world production reached 97 million.

Instead of a collapse in the supply of oil, we confront the opposite crisis: We're drowning in the stuff. The reasons for the price crash – an astonishing slide from \$115 a barrel to \$30 over the past 20 months – are complex: Among them are weaker demand in China and a strong dollar. But an analysis by the World Bank finds that changes in supply have been a much greater factor than changes in demand. Oil production has almost doubled in Iraq, as well as in the US. Saudi Arabia has opened its taps, to try to destroy the competition and sustain its market share: A strategy that some peak oil

advocates once argued was impossible.

The outcomes are mixed. Cheaper oil means that more will be burned, accelerating climate breakdown. But it also means less investment in future production, already, \$380-billion that was to have been ploughed into oil and gas fields has been held back. The first places to be spared are those in which extraction is most difficult or hazardous. Fragile ecosystems in the Arctic, in rainforests, in remote and stormy seas, have been granted a stay of execution.

BP reported a massive loss earlier this month, partly because of low prices. A falling oil price drags down the price of gas, exposing coal mining companies to the risk of bankruptcy: Good riddance to them. But some renewables firms are being tanked by the same forces: Just as natural gas prices plunge, governments like the UK's are stripping them of their subsidies. One day they will compete unaided, but not yet.

To cheer or lament these vicissitudes is pointless. They are chance events that counteract each other, and will at some point be reversed. The oil age that threatens the conditions sustaining life on Earth, will come to an end through political, not economic, change. But the politics, for now, are against us.

Already, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), more money is spent, directly and indirectly, on subsidising fossil fuels than on funding health services. The

G20 countries alone spend more than three times as much public money on oil, gas and coal than the whole world does on renewable energy. In 2014, subsidies for fossil fuel production in the UK reached £5-billion. Enough? Oh no! While essential public services are being massacred through want of funds, last year the government announced a further £1.3-billion in tax breaks for oil companies in the North Sea. Much of this money went to companies based overseas. They must think we're mad.

At the beginning of the month, Prime Minister David Cameron flew to Aberdeen, where he announced another £250-million of funding for, er, free enterprise, much (though not all) of which will be used to prop up oil and gas. A further £20-million of public money will be spent on seismic testing. Expect more whale strandings, and ask yourself why the industry that threatens our prosperity shouldn't cover its own bloody costs.

Oil and gas ambassador for oil companies

The energy secretary, Amber Rudd, says she stands "100 per cent behind" this "fantastic industry." She will "build a bridge to the future for UK oil and gas."

Oil companies have already been granted "ministerial buddies" to "improve access to government" – as if they didn't have enough already. Now, according to a government press release accompanying Cameron's announcement, they get an "oil and gas ambassador," and a new ministerial group, to "reiterate the UK Government's commitment to supporting the oil and gas industry." A leaked letter shows that Amber Rudd and other ministers want to silence local people, by transferring the power to decide whether fracking happens from elected councils to an unelected commission. Let's sack the electorate and appoint a new one.

Compare all this to the government's treatment of renewables. Local people have been given special new powers to stop on-

shore windfarms from being built. To the renewables companies Amber Rudd says, "We need to work towards a market where success is driven by your ability to compete in a market, not by your ability to lobby government." Strangely, the same rules do not apply to the oil companies. Your friends get protection. The free market is reserved for enemies.

Yes, I do mean enemies. An energy transition threatens the kind of people who attend the Conservative Party's fundraising balls. It corrodes the income of old school friends and weekend guests. For all the talk of enterprise, old money still nurtures its lively hatred of new money, and those who control the public purse use it to protect the incumbents from the parvenus. As they did for the bankers, our political leaders ensure that everyone must pay the costs imposed by the fossil fuel companies – except the fossil fuel companies.

So they lock us into the 20th century, into industrial decline and air pollution, stranded assets and – through climate change – systemic collapse. Governments of this country cannot resist the future forever. Eventually they will succumb to the inexorable logic, and recognize that most of the vast accretions of fossil plant life in the Earth's crust must be left where they are. And those massive expenditures of public money will prove to be worthless.

Crises expose corruption: That is one of the basic lessons of politics. The oil price crisis finds politicians with their free-market trousers round their ankles. When your friends are in trouble, the rigours imposed religiously upon the poor and public services suddenly turn out to be negotiable. Throw money at them, trash their competitors, rig the outcome: Those who deserve the least receive the most. **CT**

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*George Monbiot's latest book, **Feral**, is now available in paperback. This article was first published in the Guardian and at www.monbiot.com*

Our political leaders ensure that everyone must pay the costs imposed by the fossil fuel companies – except the fossil fuel companies

Is Iran the new China?

If Iran engages in a Chinese-style economic development program, it would enhance its geopolitical status and significance, writes **Pepe Escobar**

The long-term trend, inevitably, is for China's One Belt, One Road vision to bridge the gap toward Sino-Russian leadership across Eurasia

It's currently quite a toss-up when it comes to naming the hardest working man in geopolitical business: Chinese President Xi Jinping or Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Their paths crossed in spectacular fashion near the end of January in Tehran, when Xi and Rouhani clinched a crucial strategic partnership. The two nations agreed to increase bilateral trade to \$600-billion over the next decade. Geostrategically, that was a master class.

Beijing regards Iran, not only in Southwest Asia but across Eurasia, as the essential hub for countering Washington's much-advertised "pivot to Asia," centred on US naval hegemony. No wonder Xi made it clear that Iran should be accepted as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as early as this year.

A strategic partnership implies Beijing's full support for the Iranian economic/political/diplomatic renaissance across the arc spanning the Persian Gulf to the Caspian – and beyond. The arc also happens to span all the crucial New Silk Road maritime and land routes that are vitally important for the global projection of the Xi-coined Chinese dream.

Then, just a few days later, Rouhani was in Rome in a warm closed-door meeting Pope Francis, after clinching \$17-billion in multiple deals.

This frantic post-sanction activity only enhances, in perspective, the absurdity of the Washington-manufactured Iranian nuclear crisis. Geopolitical realism, from Europe to Asia, cannot ignore a nation placed in the intersection of the Arab, Turk, Indian and Russian worlds, underscored by its role as a privileged entry and exit point to the vast Caucasus-Central Asia ensemble, which also includes Afghanistan.

The big link-up

Geostrategically, as the ultimate Eurasian crossroads, Iran is unbeatable, linking the Middle East, Caucasus, Central Asia, Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf; between three seas – Caspian, the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman; relatively close to the Mediterranean and Europe; and on the doorstep of Asia.

Xi did not have to talk explicit politics in Tehran as he clinched deal after deal to impress his point. The long-term trend, inevitably, is for China's One Belt, One Road vision to bridge the gap toward Sino-Russian leadership across Eurasia, which translates practically into the progressive sidelining of the British-American imperial continuum. Meanwhile, Italy and France kept themselves busy playing catch-up during Rouhani's European tour.

The frantic post-sanction Iranian scene punctures the previous, relentless Western

demonization and lays out bases for economic development in just about every sphere. The Islamic Republic of Iran has faced a tremendous handicap for the past 36 years – something that would have broken any less-resourceful society.

Sanctions over the past 10 years cost Iran at least 480-billion euros; that’s roughly one full year of Iranian GDP. In a world not ruled by the usual suspects of financial oligarchy, Tehran would have grounds to take Washington to court with a vengeance.

As for the “Iranian aggression” meme – which, by the way, still persists – that’s a lousy imperial joke. Iran spends 3,9 per cent of GDP on defence; compare it with 10.3 per cent for the House of Saud oil hacienda. In total, Iran spends seven times less on defence than the Gulf petro-monarchies, which cannot subsist without their mostly US, British, and French weaponizing.

Bumpy road ahead

The road ahead for Iran will be bumpy. Serious problems include corruption, bureaucratic incompetence, and economic sectors reserved to special interests or barred from foreign investment. Sections of the power elite – such as the bonyads (religious foundations) and the pasdaran (the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp) will not want to relinquish their grip on vital sectors of the national economy. But the economic opening of Iran will inevitably accelerate the social transformation of the country.

What happens next will largely depend on this month’s crucial elections – which will yield a new Majlis (parliament), and a new Assembly of Experts in charge of choosing the next Supreme Leader.

Iran is a unique geopolitical case – where a republic derives its legitimacy, simultaneously, from Islam and universal suffrage. This may not be your classic Western parliamentary democracy, but at the same time it’s not the crude authoritarianism of Saudi Arabia. A quite complex system of

checks and balances is in place, involving the presidency, parliament, the Council of Guardians, the Assembly of Experts and different bodies such as the Discernment Council and the National Security Council.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has made it clear he will pay close attention to cultural, political and security consequences of an economic opening that could enfeeble the revolutionary ideology of the Islamic Republic. What’s certain is that the Supreme Leader – as an arbiter – will preserve the careful balance of political forces in Iran.

This means that Team Rouhani won’t be allowed to draw unlimited political capital from the economic opening, while at the same time, the social and cultural transformation of the country won’t be synonymous to a Western cultural invasion.

The Vienna nuclear deal clinched last summer was no less than a seismic geopolitical event in Iran. Internally, it sealed a consensus between the Tehran state machine and the majority of the population, which wanted Iran to become a “normal” nation again. Now comes the hard part. The most probable scenario spells out an Islamic Republic of Iran engaged in a Chinese-style economic development program. Sort of a Persian “get rich is glorious” remix, under strict political control.

This begs the question: Are we ready for the new Supreme Leader role as the Iranian Deng Xiaoping? **CT**

***Pepe Escobar** is an independent geopolitical analyst. He writes for RT, Sputnik and TomDispatch, and is a frequent contributor to websites and radio and TV shows ranging from the US to East Asia. He is the former roving correspondent for Asia Times Online, where he wrote the column The Roving Eye from 2000 to 2014. He is the author of Globalistan” (2007), Red Zone Blues (2007), Obama does Globalistan (2009), Empire of Chaos (2014), and 2030 (2015), also published by Nimble Books5.*

This may not be your classic Western parliamentary democracy, but at the same time it’s not the crude authoritarianism of Saudi Arabia

Seeing flight as a non-violent option

Erica Chenoweth and **Teck Young Wee** discuss how we can change our attitudes to the world's 60-million refugees

Politicians of all stripes are calling for increased border controls, detention centres, and the temporary suspension of visa and asylum applications

Today, one in every 122 humans living on the planet is a refugee, an internally displaced person, or an asylum-seeker. In 2014, conflict and persecution forced a staggering 42,500 people per day to leave their homes and seek protection elsewhere, resulting in 59.5-million refugees worldwide.

According to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) 2014 global trends report (tellingly entitled *World at War*), developing countries hosted 86 per cent of these refugees. Developed countries, such as the US and those in Europe, host only 14 per cent of the world's total share of refugees.

Public sentiment in the West has been tough on refugees lately. Resurgent populist and nationalist leaders routinely play to public anxieties about refugees as lazy opportunists, burdens, criminals, or terrorists in response to today's refugee crisis. Mainstream parties aren't immune to this rhetoric, either, with politicians of all stripes calling for increased border controls, more detention centres, and the temporary suspension of visa and asylum applications.

Importantly, none of these panicky characterizations of refugees is born out by systematic evidence.

Are refugees economic opportunists?

The most reliable studies of refugee move-

ments suggest that the primary cause of flight is violence – not economic opportunity. Mainly, refugees are fleeing war in hope of landing in a less violent situation. In conflicts where the government actively targets civilians in the context of genocide or politicide, most people choose to leave the country rather than seek safe havens internally.

Surveys bear out this reality. In Syria, one of the world's major producers of refugees in the last five years, survey results suggest that most civilians are fleeing because the country has simply become too dangerous, or that government forces took over their towns, placing most of the blame on the horrific political violence of Assad's regime. (Only 13 per cent say they fled because rebels took over their towns, suggesting that ISIS's violence is not nearly as much a source of flight as has been suggested).

And refugees rarely choose their destinations based on economic opportunity; instead, 90 per cent of them go to a country with a contiguous border (thus explaining the concentration of Syrian refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq). Those that do not stay in a neighbouring country tend to flee to countries where they have existing social ties. Given that they are typically fleeing for their lives, the data suggest



NOT DANGEROUS: More than 1,200 people protest in Brussels against Europe's unwillingness to do more about the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, April 23rd, 2015.

Photo: Amnesty International

that most refugees think about economic opportunity as an afterthought rather than as a motivation for flight. That said, when they arrive at their destinations, refugees tend to be exceedingly industrious, with cross-national studies suggesting that they are rarely burdensome for national economies.

“Many of the people arriving by sea in southern Europe, particularly in Greece, come from countries affected by violence and conflict, such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan; they are in need of international protection, and they are often physically exhausted and psychologically traumatized,” states World at War.

Who's afraid of the “Big Bad Refugee”?

In terms of security threats, refugees are far less likely to commit crimes than natural-born citizens. In fact, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Jason Riley evaluates data on the link between immigration and crime in the United States, and calls the correlation a myth. Even in Germany, which has absorbed the highest number of refugees since 2011, crime rates by refugees have not increased. Violent attacks on refugees, on the other hand, have doubled. This suggests that refugees do not pose a problem for security; instead, they require protection against violent threats themselves. Moreover, refugees (or those

Refugees tend to be exceedingly industrious, with cross-national studies suggesting that they are rarely burdensome for national economies

REFUGEE CRISIS

Today's global landscape of 59.5-million refugees is mainly a collection of people who have chosen the only available non-violent pathway out of their conflict environments

who claim to be refugees) are highly unlikely to plan terror attacks. And given that at least 51 per cent of current refugees are children, such as Aylan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian refugee who famously drowned in the Mediterranean sea last summer, it is probably premature to preordain them as fanatics, troublemakers, or social rejects.

Moreover, refugee-vetting processes are exceedingly harsh in many countries – with the US having among the most stringent refugee policies in the world – thereby precluding many of the adverse outcomes feared by critics of status quo refugee policies. Although such processes do not guarantee that all potential threats are excluded, they mitigate the risk considerably, as demonstrated by the paucity of violent crimes and terror attacks committed by refugees in the past 30 years.

A broken system or a broken narrative?

Speaking about the current refugee crisis in Europe, Jan Egeland, the former UN humanitarian envoy who now heads the Norwegian Refugee Council, said, “The system is totally broken . . . We cannot continue this way.” But the system probably won't mend as long as broken narratives dominate the discourse. What if we introduced a fresh discourse, one that dispels the myths about refugees and equips the public to contest existing discourse with a more compassionate narrative about the way one becomes a refugee in the first place?

Consider the choice to flee instead of stay and fight or stay and die. Many of the 59.5-million refugees left in the crossfires between states and other armed actors – such as the Syrian government's polio-cide, and violence among a wide variety of rebel groups operating within Syria; Syria, Russia, Iraq, Iran, and NATO's war against ISIS; Afghanistan and Pakistan's wars against the Taliban; the on-going US campaign against Al Qaeda; Turkey's

wars against Kurdish militias; and a multitude of other violent contexts around the world.

Given the choice between staying and fighting, staying and dying, or fleeing and surviving, today's refugees fled – meaning that, by definition, they actively and purposefully chose a non-violent option in the context of the mass violence raging around them.

In other words, today's global landscape of 59.5-million refugees is mainly a collection of people who have chosen the only available non-violent pathway out of their conflict environments. They have said no to violence, no to victimization, and no to helplessness at the same time.

The decision to flee to strange and (often hostile) foreign lands as a refugee is not a light one. It involves taking significant risks, including death. For example, UNHCR estimated that 3,735 refugees were died or were lost at sea while seeking refuge in Europe in 2015. So, contrary to contemporary discourse, being a refugee ought to be synonymous with non-violence, courage, and agency.

Of course, an individual's non-violent choice at one time does not necessarily predetermine that individual's non-violent choice at a later juncture. And like many large mass assemblages, it is inevitable that a handful of people will cynically exploit the global movement of refugees to pursue their own criminal, political, social, or ideological aims on the fringes – either by concealing themselves in the masses to cross borders to commit violent acts abroad, by taking advantage of the political polarization of migration politics to promote their own agendas, or by extorting these people for their own criminal purposes.

Among any population this size, there will be criminal activity here and there, refugee or not.

But in today's crisis, it is essential for people of good faith everywhere to resist

the urge to ascribe nefarious motivations to the millions of people seeking haven because of the criminal actions of a few.

The latter group does not represent the general statistics on refugees identified above, nor do they negate the fact that refugees are generally people who, in the context of truly dislocating violence, made a life-altering, non-violent choice to act for themselves in a way that cast them and their families into uncertain futures.

The threat of violence against the refugee is much greater than the threat of violence by the refugee. Shunning them, detaining them as if they were criminals, or sending them back to war-torn environments sends a message that non-violent choices are punished – and that submitting to victimization or turning to violence are the only choices left.

This is a situation that calls for policies that embody compassion, respect, protec-

tion, and welcome – not fear, dehumanization, exclusion, or revulsion.

Seeing flight as a non-violent option will better equip the public to contest exclusionary rhetoric and policies, elevate a new discourse that empowers more moderate politicians, and widen the range of policy options available to respond to the current crisis. **CT**

Teck Young Wee is a doctor from Singapore who has done humanitarian and social enterprise work in Afghanistan for 10 years, including being a mentor to the Afghan Peace Volunteers, an inter-ethnic group of young Afghans dedicated to building non-violent alternatives to war.

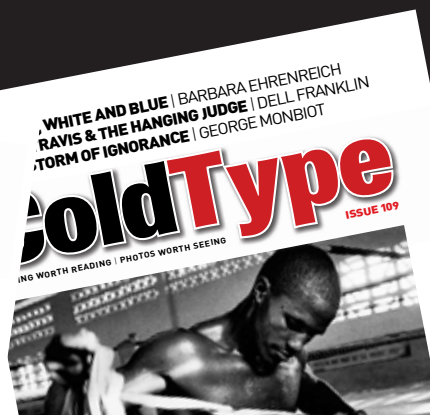
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Shunning refugees, detaining them as if they were criminals, or deporting them to war-torn environments sends a message that non-violent choices are punished

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IN THE PICTURE

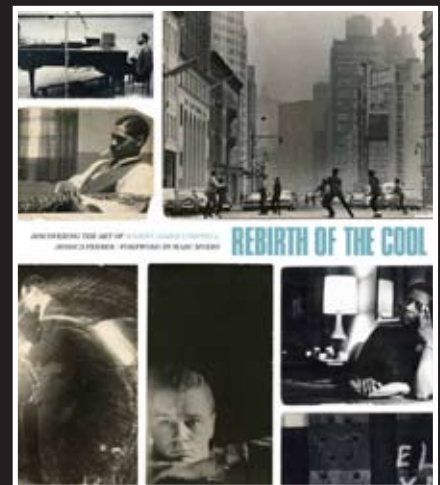


Chuck Berry at the Newport Jazz Festival, Newport, Rhode Island, late-1950s.

Lost, then found

Photographer **Robert James Campbell** died in a homeless shelter, leaving boxes of deteriorating negatives. The pile turned into a 13-year labour of love that led to the rebirth of a genius, writes **Tony Sutton**

In life, Robert James Campbell was a failure. A New York City-based photographer, he worked during the 1950s and '60s, documenting the burgeoning jazz scene for publications such as the Village Voice and Downbeat magazine. His work chronicled the cultural changes taking place in the city's West Village, capturing its emotion and vibrancy in evocative black-and-white photographs. But success was short-lived, business was tough in the fiercely competitive market. Stricken by mental health and financial problems, he drifted between New York, LA, and New England, before dying, unmourned, more than 40 years later, in a homeless shelter in Burlington, Vermont, amidst a jumble of cluttered boxes that contained his life's work.



Rebirth of the Cool, the book that celebrates the life and work of Campbell.



The Dave Brubeck Quartet, location and date unknown.



Above: Dick Gregory at The Village Gate, New York City, 1965.
Left: Mississippi John Hurt, outside The Gaslight Cafe, New York City, 1963.

IN THE PICTURE



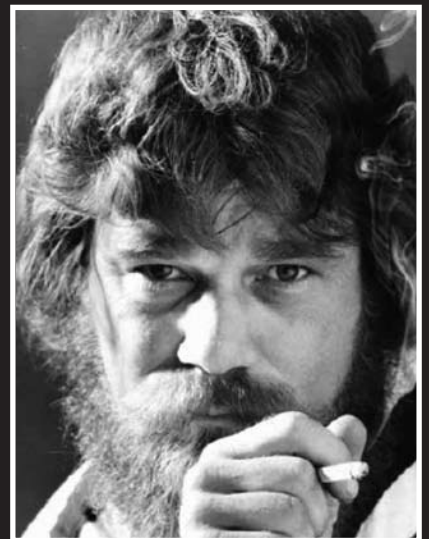
Richie Havens at Cafe Au Go Go, New York City, mid-1960s.

Then, in the summer of 2002, Jessica Ferber, a recent graduate in photography at the University of Vermont, was asked by her professor to look at "a collection of jazz photos left behind by a homeless person." That collection turned out to be, she says, "a mountain of decrepit boxes containing scraps, negatives, personal belongings, and everything else that was left behind by a Mr Robert James Campbell."

What followed was a 13-year labour of love, sifting and sorting those boxes, "a jigsaw puzzle with no borders," says Ferber. "I found an image of Campbell (right), a timeless portrait that showed a ruggedly handsome man with straw-coloured hair looking directly into the lens. There was something alluring about the way the stranger was staring into the camera."

"There were," she adds, "two mysteries transpiring simultaneously. First: Who was Campbell, and how did he wind up homeless? And second: What were the contents of his professional archive? The most pressing thing, I decided, was not him, but the rapidly rotting photos and negatives."

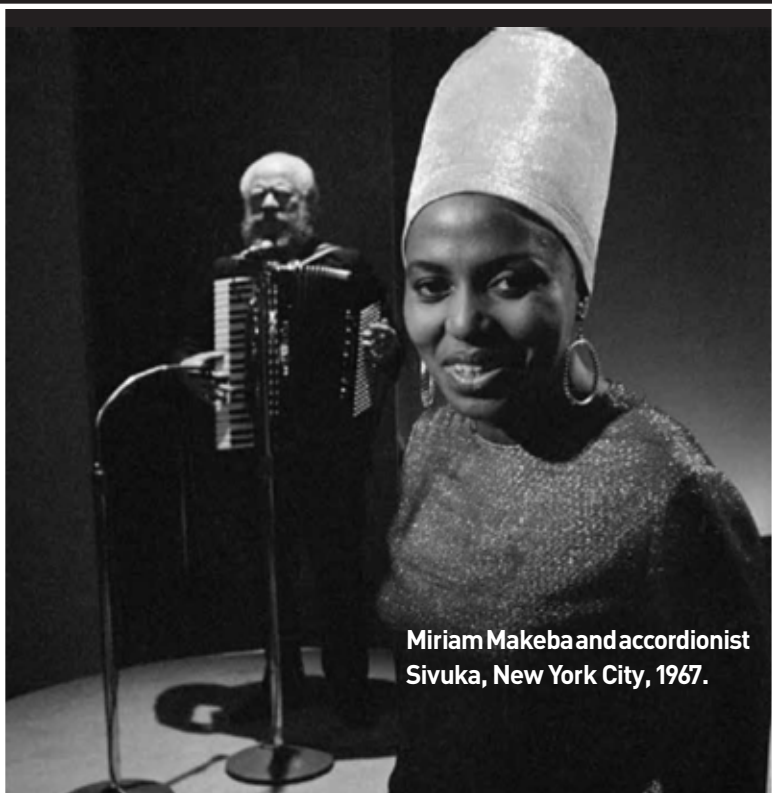
Ferber spent the next 10 years researching Campbell and his boxes of work during her spare time, digging deep into his past, trying to find how such a fine photographer came to die unknown and destitute. When, in late October 2012, she ran out of money just as she was ready to publish a book of the photographer's work, she



Robert James Campbell. Self portrait, aged about 40.



Wayne Shorter at The Village Vanguard, New York City, mid-1960s.



Miriam Makeba and accordionist Sivuka, New York City, 1967.

turned to Kickstarter, the world's largest online funding platform for creative projects, to raise funds.

"That's when my phone rang," writes Marc Myers in the foreword to Ferber's book, **Rebirth of the Cool: Discovering the Art of Robert James Campbell**. Myers, who writes on arts and music for the Wall Street Journal, and is editor of the daily blog, JazzWax, continues: "I called her back, offered some advice, and told her I'd plug her campaign. As I began alerting JazzWax readers about Jessica's ongoing Kickstarter campaign, a funny thing happened. Readers saw what I saw, and sizeable donations rolled in, pushing her over the amount she had initially requested.

"Thanks to a careful homeless shelter worker, an overburdened college roommate, a caring photography professor, and Jessica's determination, you are looking at works by a phantom photographer that might never have seen the light of day had the boxes been tossed, or Jessica wasn't driven to reach self-set goals. In Campbell's works, I hope you see what I see: the hopes,

IN THE PICTURE



Roebuck "Pops" Staples and the Staple Singers, New York City, early 1960s.

"Campbell's work won't be forgotten, and he finally will achieve the fame he set out to achieve more than a half-century ago"

dreams, and sorrow of musicians, civil rights activists, and everyday New Yorkers when life was changing fast and individualists were doing their best to keep up and stand out. Thanks to Jessica, Robert Campbell's work won't be forgotten, and he finally will achieve the fame he set out to achieve more than a half-century ago."

This large-format book is produced in two parts. The first is a lavishly illustrated story of the discovery and restoration of the photographs; the second is a collection of stunning works from the Campbell archive. The photographs show the most exciting performers of the era, including John Coltrane, Count Basie, Chuck Berry, Richie Havens, and the Modern Jazz Quartet, shot on- and offstage at legendary clubs such as Birdland,

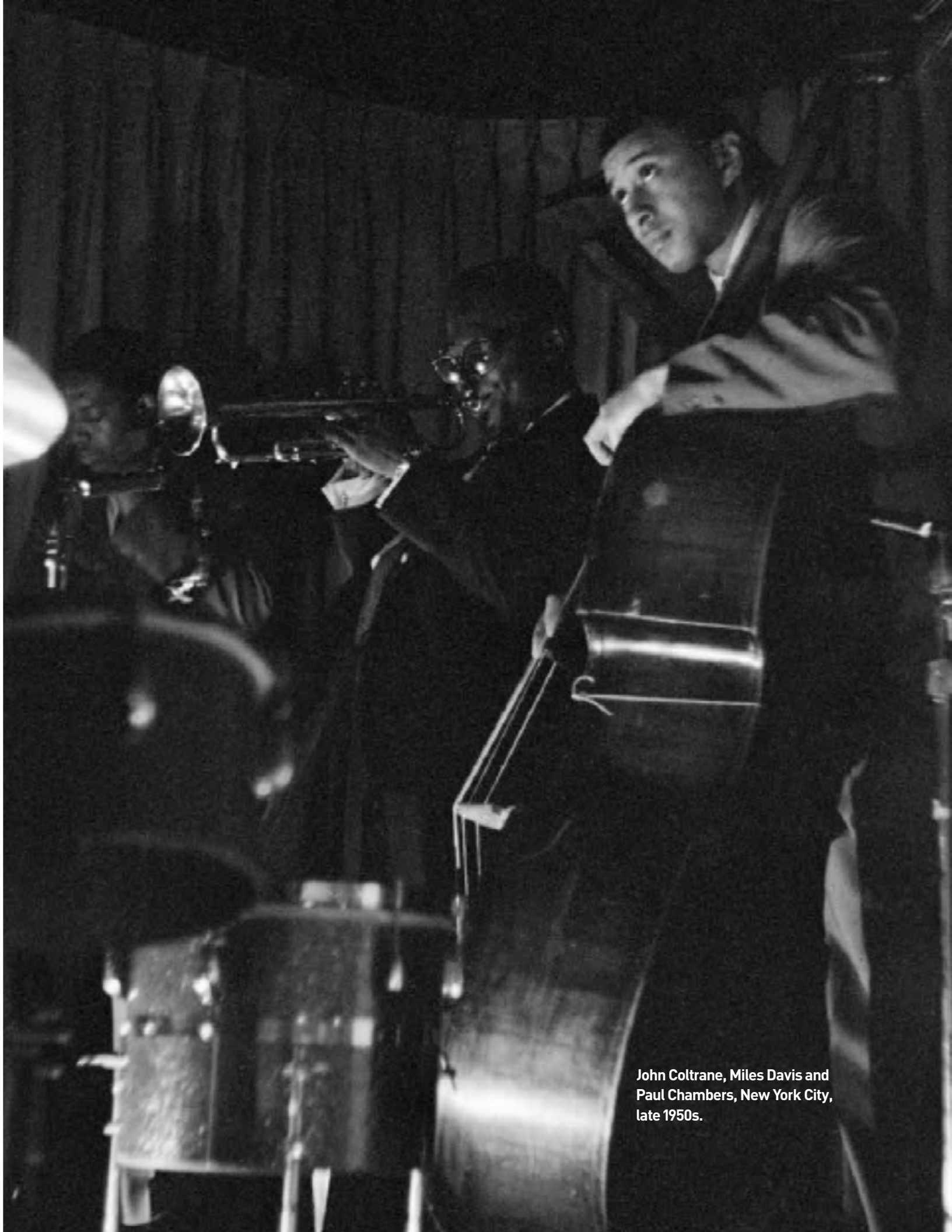
the Village Vanguard and Gaslight Cafe. Other photographs show the vibrancy of the streets of New York, and Campbell's international work in Germany and on tour in the USA.

I'm not a big jazz fan, but the combination of brilliant curating, excellent writing, and sheer delight of the many haunting photographs displayed make this one of the most enjoyable photographic biographies I have read in years.

CT

BUY THE BOOK

Rebirth of the Cool: Discovering the Art of Robert James Campbell, by Jessica Ferber, is published by powerHouse Books, Brooklyn, New York. The publisher's price is \$40, but it's available from Amazon.com for \$26.49.



John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Paul Chambers, New York City, late 1950s.

The highest form of terrorism

The media's attitude to terrorism is to condemn small-scale response rather than the major problem – Western aggression, writes **Edward S. Herman**

There is overwhelming evidence that in both the Iraq and Gaza wars the killing of civilians was on a large scale and often not comprehensible in terms of genuine military objectives

Aggression is arguably the highest form of terrorism because it invariably includes the frightening of the target populations and their leaders, as well as killing and destruction on a large scale. The US invaders of Iraq in 2003 proudly announced a “shock-and-awe” purpose to their opening assault, clearly designed to instill fear; that is, to terrorize the victim population along with the target security forces. And millions of Iraqis suffered in this massive enterprise. Benjamin Netanyahu himself defined terrorism as “the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends.” This would seem to make both the Iraq war (2003 onward) and the serial Israeli wars on Gaza (2008-2009, 2012, 2014) cases of serious terrorism.

How do the responsible US and Israeli leaders escape this designation? One trick is the disclaiming of any “deliberateness” in the killing of civilians. It is “collateral damage” in the pursuit of proper targets (Iraqi soldiers, Hamas, etc.). This is a lie; as there is overwhelming evidence that, in both the Iraq and Gaza wars, the killing of civilians was on a large scale, and often not comprehensible in terms of genuine military objectives.

But even if the killings were only collateral damage, the regular failure to avoid

killing civilians, including a built-in carelessness and/or reliance on undependable sources of information, is both a war crime and terrorism.

Recall that the Geneva Conventions state that combatants “shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and, accordingly, shall direct their operations only against military objectives” (Part IV, Chap. 1, Article 48). Also, if civilian casualties are extremely likely in bombing attacks against purported military targets, even if the specific civilians killed were not intended victims, their deaths were predictable, hence, in an important sense, deliberate.

Michael Mandel, in his book, *How America Gets Away With Murder*, while dismantling the claim of non-deliberateness in the usual collateral damage killing of civilians, points out that even in Texas a man who shoots someone dead while aiming at somebody else is guilty of murder.

A second line of defence of US and Israeli killing of civilians, only occasionally made explicit, is that the civilians killed are helping out the enemy armed forces – they are the sea in which the terrorist fish swim – so this makes them legitimate targets.

This opens up vast possibilities for ruthless attacks and the mass killing of civilians, notorious in the Vietnam war, but

also applicable in Iraq, Afghanistan and Gaza. Civilian killings are sometimes, but not often, admitted to be an objective by official sources, and the subject is not focused on by the mainstream media. This rationale may placate the home population, but it does not satisfy international law or widely held moral rules.,

The same is true of the retaliation defence. The United States and Israel are always allegedly retaliating for prior aggressive acts by their targets. Deadly actions by the target military or their supporters, even if they clearly follow some deadly action by the United States or Israel, are never deemed retaliatory and thus justifiable. It has long been a claimed feature of the Israeli ethnic cleansing project that Israel only retaliates, the Palestinians provoke and virtually compel an Israeli response. In fact, the Israelis have long taken advantage of this bias in Western reporting at strategic moments by attacking just enough to induce a Palestinian response, thereby that justifying a larger scale “retaliatory” action by Israel.

Of course, all of these tricks work only because an array of Western institutions, including, but not confined to, the media, follow the demands of Western (mainly US) interests. For example, although the Nuremberg judgment against the Nazis features aggression as “the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole,” because the United States is virtually in the full-time business of committing aggression (attacking across borders without Security Council approval), the UN and “international community” (ie, Western and even many non-Western leaders, not publics) do nothing when the United States engages in aggression.

The brazen 2003 invasion of Iraq called forth no UN condemnation or sanctions against the US aggression, and the UN quickly began to cooperate with the invad-

er-occupiers. The word aggression is rarely applied to that massive and hugely destructive attack, either in the media or learned discourse, but it is applied with regularity to the Russian occupation of Crimea, which entailed no casualties and could be regarded as a defensive response to the US-sponsored February 2014 coup d’etat in Ukraine.

The US invasion of Iraq was surely not defensive, and was rationalized at the time on the basis of what were eventually acknowledged to be lies. (For an exception to the establishment’s villainization of Russia in the Ukraine conflict, see John Mearsheimer, *The Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault*, *Foreign Affairs*, Sept-Oct 2014)

Perhaps the most murderous aggression and ultra-terrorism of the last 40 years, involving millions of civilian deaths, was the Rwanda-Uganda invasion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), beginning in 1996 and still continuing. But the invasion’s leaders, Paul Kagame and Yoweri Museveni, were (and still are) US clients, hence they have been subject to no international tribunal, nor threat from the Security Council or International Criminal Court, and there has been no media featuring of the vast crimes carried out in this area. You have to be a US target to get that kind of attention, as with Iran, Syria and Russia.

These rules also apply to the major human rights groups. Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have a rule that they will not focus on the origins of a conflict, but will attend only to how the conflict is carried out. This is wonderfully convenient to a country that commits aggression on a regular basis, but it flies in the face of logic and the UN Charter’s foundational idea that aggression is the supreme international crime that the world must prevent and punish. Thus, neither HRW nor AI condemned the United States for invading Iraq or bombing Serbia, but confined their attention to the war crimes of both the aggressor and target, but mainly the target. HRW is especially notorious for

It has long been a claimed feature of the Israeli ethnic cleansing project that Israel only retaliates, the Palestinians provoke and virtually compel an Israeli response

PERMANENT WAR

Terrorism thrives. That is, state terrorism, as in the serial US wars – direct, joint and proxy – against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Libya and Syria – and the still more wide-ranging drone assassination attacks

its huge bias in featuring the war crimes of US targets, underplaying the criminality of the aggressor, and calling for international action against the victim. During the period leading up to the US-UK attack on Iraq, HRW head Kenneth Roth had an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal titled Indict Saddam (March 22, 2002). Thus, beyond failing to oppose the imminent war of aggression, this human rights group leader was providing a public relations cover for the supreme international crime. His organization also failed to report on and condemn the sanctions of mass destruction against Iraq that had devastating health effects on Iraqi civilians, accounting for hundreds of thousands of deaths. For HRW these were unworthy victims.

In the case of the Rwandan Patriotic Front's invasion and massacres of 1990-1994, HRW and its associates (notably Alison Des Forges) played an important role in focusing on and condemning the defensive responses of the Rwanda government to the military and subversive advances of the US-supported invading army of Tutsi from Uganda, thereby making a positive contribution to the mass killings in Rwanda and later in the DRC. (See Herman and Peterson, *Enduring Lies: The Rwandan Genocide in the Propaganda System, 20 Years Later.*)

Similarly the ad hoc international tribunals established in the last several decades have always been designed to exclude aggression and to focus on war crimes and genocide. And they are directed at US targets such as Serbia and the Hutu of Rwanda, who are actually the victims of aggression, and who are then subjected to a quasi-judicial process that is fraudulent and a perversion of justice. (On the Yugoslavia tribunal, see John Laughland, *Travesty*; on Rwanda, Sebastien Chartrand and John Philpot, *Justice Belied: The Unbalanced Scale of International Criminal Justice*).

The International Criminal Court (ICC) was also organized with "aggression" excluded from its remit, in deference to the

demands of the United States, which still refused to join because there remained the theoretical possibility that a US citizen might be brought before the court!

The ICC still made itself useful to the US by indicting Gadafi in preparation for the US-NATO war of aggression against Libya. In short, terrorism thrives. That is, state terrorism, as in the serial US wars – direct, joint and proxy – against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Libya and Syria – and the wide-ranging drone assassination attacks. In the devastating wars in the DRC by Kagame and Museveni. And in Israel's wars on Gaza and Lebanon, and ordinary pacification efforts in Gaza and the West Bank. And in Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen and Turkey's proxy war in Syria and war against the Kurds.

All of these wars have evoked their own terrorist responses to the invading, bombing, and occupying forces of the United States and its allies, responses that have been shocking and deadly, but on a much smaller scale than the state terrorism that has provoked them. But in the Western propaganda systems it is only the responsive terrorism that surprises and angers politicians, pundits and the public that is called "terrorism." There is no recognition of the true flow of initiating violence and response, no recognition of the fact that the "global war on terrorism" is really a "global war OF terrorism." The propaganda system is in fact a constituent of the permanent war system, hence a reliable supporter of wholesale terrorism. **CT**

Edward S. Herman is professor emeritus of finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Among his books are Corporate Control, Corporate Power (Cambridge University Press, 1981), The Real Terror Network (South End Press, 1982), and, with Noam Chomsky, the two-volume The Political Economy of Human Rights (Haymarket Books, 2nd. Ed., 2014), and Manufacturing Consent (Pantheon, 2nd. Ed., 2002).

As US schools falter, Donald Trump rises

If you want to understand the political rise of Donald Trump, look at the sorry state of America's public education system, writes **Rick Salutin**



Donald Trump: boorish, bullying and childishly vain.

Illustration: DonkeyHotey, via Flickr.com

How did US politics reach this bizarre point, where so many are ready to vote for Donald Trump – a situation encapsulated in a New York Daily News shot of Sarah Palin endorsing him, under the headline, “I’m With Stupid.”

I’m not saying Trump is stupid, nor is everything he expresses; his blasts against trade deals that undermine US jobs are on point. Rather, it’s the willingness to

unconditionally embrace someone so boorish, bullying, lacking self-awareness, childishly vain and demagogic – who says repeatedly: Don’t bother thinking, I’ll do it for you. (And, “You’ll love it.”) In their dreams, his Canadian analogues – Stephen Harper, Jason Kenney, Mike Harris – never came close.

A chunk of the answer lies in the state of public education in the US and its obsession with testable, measurable skills in

AN EDUCATION

Rich guys get the workforce they want, with math skills and a facility to be nimble on projects they're assigned, but no impulse to challenge who's giving orders or who gains most as a result

reading, writing and math. But isn't that what schools there were always about – the 3Rs? Not really. The US founding fathers were offspring of the Enlightenment. They believed public schools should allow everyone, regardless of station, to learn to think well, in order to act wisely as citizens and voters. That was their aim and main “test.”

An 1830 state report said poor kids needed more than “simple acquaintance with words and ciphers” – that is, literacy and numeracy; above all they needed what we'd today call a “citizenship agenda.” A century later, educational philosopher John Dewey said it was important not just to be able to read, but also to distinguish between “the demagogue and the statesman.” Sounds vaguely useful in 2016. When did all that citizenship thinking go out of vogue?

Recently. Mostly in the Bush and Obama years with their unholy stress on standardized tests in math and reading to the exclusion, often literally, of everything else, including physical education and thinking. It was the age of expanding inequality and the rise of the billionaires. They – with Bill Gates in the lead – promoted “disruption” of public schools and their replacement by publicly funded, basically private, charter schools. Netflix founder Reed Hastings is now pouring money in. He laments that California is only at eight per cent of kids in charters while New Orleans, where he was CEO, is at 90 per cent. Meanwhile, all the evidence says the huge stress on testing failed; even Obama acknowledges it. His education secretary, Arne Duncan, recently resigned and returned to Chicago.

I used to be prone to conspiracy theories, and I feel one coming on. These guys (Gates, Hastings) get the workforce they want, with math skills and a facility to be nimble on projects they're assigned, but no impulse to challenge who's giving orders or who gains most as a result. What happens when good public education is

destroyed? You get a battle of the billionaires for president – Trump vs. Bloomberg – and few question it because they haven't learned it's in the realm of what's questionable. The US becomes post-Communist Russia!

How has Canada (so far) avoided this fate? In Canada, 95 per cent of kids are in public schools. In the US, you can't get a proper number because so many are in bastardized public-private hybrids like charters. Annie Kidder, of the redoubtable grassroots group People for Education, says Canadians will brag (if grumpily) about our public health care, which is only 50 years old. But we take our schools, which pre-date Confederation, for granted. It makes them vulnerable. People for Education has begun a remarkable project called Measuring What Matters, which aims to enshrine as education's main goals, health, citizenship, social-emotional skills and creativity. A true back-to-the-basics movement. The 3Rs fit in somewhere.

I'm trying not to idealize our schools. They can be hell for kids, especially at this time of year, when it seems the year will never end. But, overall, they do the job of safeguarding a decent level of democracy and encouraging students to think, at least sometimes, about things.

Nor am I saying people with a formal education are smart and those without it, aren't. You can be very smart without formal schooling, and some of the most glorious intellectual eras came before widespread formal education. But it's hard to be smart if you've been through a system that forced you to use all your time prepping and taking tests, while leaving little space for learning to think and practising thought. That's increasingly the (so-called) public system in the US

Take notes, folks.

CT

Rick Salutin is an author and activist based in Toronto. This article was originally published in the Toronto Star

Red White and Blue

An excerpt from **Mike Palecek's** new novel

PROLOGUE

We observe the continuing adventures of Red White and Blue. Good ol' Red.

Good ol' Blue.

Red White sits downtown on the bench on the side of the street with the sun.

Blue lies at his feet.

Red says to Blue: Nice day, huh?

Blue nods and says, "I guess so," as Red's Adam's apple bobs.

Another older gentleman sits down on the opposite end of the bench.

You have to let it all go.

Fear, doubt, and disbelief. Free your mind.

The sound comes from the dog.

The man leaves.

A woman comes. Takes a seat.

Again the dog talks.

I know exactly what you mean. What you know you can't explain, but you feel it. You've felt it your entire life, that there's something wrong with the world.

You don't know what it is, but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad.

She leaves.

Some kids come.

The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us.

The kids jump off their bicycles, excited to hear the talking dog.

You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work ... when you go to church ... when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

The Matrix is a system.

That system is our enemy.

The kids crawl and shuffle closer.

But when you're inside, you look around, what do you see?

Businessmen, teachers, lawyers, carpenters.

The very minds of the people we are trying to save.

But until we do, these people are still a part of that system, and that makes them our enemies.

You have to understand, most of these people are not ready to be unplugged.

And many of them are so inured, so hopelessly dependent on the system, that they will fight to protect it.

"Cool!"



The kids holler and high-five each other.

They jump on their bikes and take off, eager to tell someone.

CHAPTER ONE

"And in local news ..."

The pert man and woman smiled at each other, and the woman took the lead.

"A man has been charged with domestic terrorism."

"Trying to talk to children on the way to school, in the morning, on a bright sunny day and giving them candy."

"And taken to the mental hospital," added the man.

The woman took the story back.
“The man was found sitting in a garage, along with his dog.”

“It was surely not his garage,” the male newscaster said, smirking, earning him a stern eye from his female counterpart, who seemed to think this should be her turn to read the news.

“And perhaps ... not even his dog.”

She took it back again.

“A Mr. Red White,” she said.

“Police surrounded the garage on 10th Street, along with ambulance, fire truck and members of the state police after receiving a tip from local citizens about the man sitting in the garage that was not his own.”

“Because the couple who own the garage had gone to Arizona?” said the man quickly.

The woman shook her head disgustedly.

“Who left the garage door open is a topic for another day perhaps?” said the man.

Seeming to be okay now with the back and forth, the woman newscaster continued.

“The man,” she said.

“Red White,” said the male newsman.

“Yes, a Red White,” she said.

“According to police records, stated his address as The Rosewood Café.”

The camera, in a two-shot, zoomed in on the woman to avoid showing the male newscaster laughing.

She continued.

“Apparently he has asked for a harmonica, to make the people happy.”

A hand showed up on camera on the desk with a piece of paper.

The woman took it, read it and looked up at the camera, now again in close-up.

“Yes, there was a dog,” she said.

The camera again pulled back to reveal the male newscaster again in his chair, putting on his microphone, straightening his lapel.

He looked right into the camera with a straight face.

“Red White,” he said.

“Is apparently a fan of the movie The Matrix,” he said.

The newscaster fought to hold his countenance, speaking slowly, forcing out the words.

“But ... he, apparently confused, calls it The Waitress, according to police reports that say he has recited passages from the movie while in custody.”

The man became serious.

“We have also received word that this man, Red White, was handing out candy to passing children, which caused a major concern as we can all well imagine, to the parents in the neighbourhood.

“He apparently enticed the children into the garage by telling them the dog could talk.

“No confirmation on that as yet.

“And, reportedly the dog went along quietly and not reluctantly when approached by a member of local animal control.

“This man’s best friend doesn’t get him either, it seems.”

The woman newscaster, looking perturbed at her counterpart, cut in.

“And, again, if perhaps anyone would like to donate a harmonica, perhaps.”

“Yes,” said the man again.

“Mr. Bojangles.”

“Dance,” the two said together and smiled big as the newscast went to commercial.

CHAPTER TWO

“Red White and Blue! That’s you, man!”

“You’re a All-America!”

Red White sat in the little jail cell downtown with the other prisoners.

“That one commercial, how’s that go?

“Red, White and Blue, we’ve got a deal for you,” recited Red.

“Yeah! That’s you!”

Red White did not deny it.

“They got you on TV, man.”

“There you are, man, right there, see? In that garage, right there.”

“There was shade and a chair. Nobody was usin’ ’em,” said Red.

“That your dog, man?”

“Yep, I guess.”

“Where’s the dog?”

“They took him.”

“Where, man?”

“I don’t know.”

“Hey, man, there’s you. What’d you give those kids?”

“Candy.”

“You got any, man?”

“Yeah.”

“Oh, wow, man, cool.”

“Skittles.”

“Gimme a Gummi Bear.”

“Jolly Rancher, man. Thanks.”

“You’re the guy from that commercial, yeah. I know you. How come you’re in jail, man?”

CHAPTER THREE

All the police of ce people gathered around the desk to watch him get released.

They stood around trying to look like they had things to do

right there to watch Red White get his property back.

The woman behind the desk opened an envelope, tipped it up and out fell nothing. She tipped it up more and more nothing fell out.

“Where’s my dog?” said Red White.

“What dog?” said a big policeman.

“What dog?” said Red White.

“Blue. That’s who.”

“Red White and Blue,” said someone and they all laughed.

Red White had candy left and he put it out across the counter for them to each pick one. They all did, and he popped the last purple Jolly Rancher into his mouth.

He waved on his way out the cold grey steel door. He squinted as he entered the bright sunny day.

Red White walked, looking for Blue.

He had seen them take him, and he had seen Blue not putting up much of a fuss. He wondered what was up with that?

He walked past the same garage, the same open door, same empty chairs. He was tired and wanted to sit down, but he had to find Blue.

Red White walked past the old office where he had once worked, Red White & Blue Realty. He walked past The Rosewood Café, past his old home. He only looked out the sides of his eyes as he passed the places and did not stop.

He had been famous for having a line of glass bowls of many-colored candy out on the front desk at the office, and he had been famous at the café for having come there every Sunday after church with his family. He was famous

in his home for many things, not the least of all his card tricks and lasagna. He’d been meaning to buy a harmonica. He heard they cost \$5. He was anxious to show his wife and his children.

He kept walking.

He thought about the prisoners he had met.

“So, you named the dog after the realty place?” one had asked.

“The business after the dog!” said another.

“No, I don’t think so,” Red had said.

“He just looked like Blue to me.”

Red White remembered what he had said when his wife asked why he put out candy bowls like a dog kennel.

“People like candy.”

Red walked past the house on Maple Drive.

He walked past the old realty office, and then The Rosewood Café.

He thought as he walked and wondered where they probably took Blue.

He turned right, toward Burger King and McDonald’s, because after that was the animal shelter.

Too much work.

Oh, he thought about it.

Sad faces, oh, he thought about it.

Everywhere, except on the people who were coming out of the bar to stand by the front door and smoke.

He hated rich people.

People don’t hate anyone anymore. We used to hate the Dodgers or Yankees. Really hate. Now they are all like they’re on the same team or they don’t really care that much about the game. They

try to like everyone for no reason. They try to smile and have a good day.

They should hate.

Red White thought about it as he walked.

Red pills. Blue pills.

That movie he saw late at night before the storm shut everything down.

Colored candy.

Two more blocks and then another right.

He slowed up a little bit because he wanted to think about The Rosewood Café before he got Blue.

He was in the café after Sunday church for Sunday dinner and the waitress kept smiling at him because he was the one who left the tip. And then she accidentally left a folded up crunched up piece of paper with the receipt and he sneaked it into his pocket and read it when he got home.

And that was when it all ended. Or began.

You could say it either way.

That’s the way they do today.

Most people wouldn’t have even read the note. They would have shoved it over to the wife, let her read it, and instant brownie points.

And then called the cops. They are scared and too tired to read. They work and are barely able to turn on the TV before they have to sleep. If they could read they could learn and then maybe they could hate.

Red took the waitress’ note because he thought it was her phone number, a love note.

Well, it wasn’t.

Okay, there it is.

The Animal Shelter.

The Great Man philosophy of how things change, he thought

BOOK EXCERPT

quickly.

He was a great man, he thought.

He had to think . . .

There was no choice.

CHAPTER FOUR

Red White stepped into the animal shelter and heard Blue barking amid all the other dogs in the back room.

He was saying, “Hey, Red, get me out of here.”

In the front, along with the desk and the waiting chairs were the glassed cat areas.

“I’ve come for my dog,” he told the woman at the desk.

She asked him if he had papers and money and did he realize there was a fee for the pickup of Blue on TV at the garage.

Red said he had no money and no papers.

He walked to the steel door and looked through the window at Blue in a cage staring right at him.

“That’s my dog,” he turned to the lady.

“See?”

“I understand, sir, but there is a fee, and you need the papers.”

Red White looked back at Blue through the window.

He looked back at the woman as she talked to a woman and a little girl maybe about a cat.

He walked in, straight to the cage. Blue barked and wagged his tail.

“I know. I know.”

He pointed to the cage and the dog man in the back in the grey coveralls found some keys and walked over.

“Your papers?” he said.

“Oh, yeah,” said Red White.

He dug in his pants and found a Jolly Rancher wrapper and handed it to the man, who looked at it and shook his head, then shoved the clear wrapper into his own pocket and fiddled with the lock.

Red White squatted and Blue rushed at him, knocking him over, licking him.

“Is that door open?”

He asked Blue.

“Yeah, maybe,” said the man now putting the lock back on the cage.

Red White walked with Blue to the side door.

CHAPTER FIVE

Red White just stood there.

Blue lay on the floor at his feet, watching with one eye.

Red White nodded to the people coming in, some pushing carts, one’s, two’s, three’s.

He waved a flag he had pulled from a display on the trip to the restroom he had taken immediately before anything else.

Most of the people smiled back at Red.

Some looked the other way, others too busy, intent. **CT**

Meet the cover artist: Allison M. Healy



Allison M. Healy, who designed and illustrated the cover for Red White & Blue and other recent books by Mike Palecek, was raised in the Northwoods of Minnesota, and received an associate of arts degree in liberal arts at 18.

She later received a bachelor of fine arts degree in illustration from Minneapolis College of Art and Design. She also studied at the University of Brighton, on the south coast of England.

Her work has appeared on a range of publications, book covers, children’s books, magazines, album covers, and greetings cards.

She lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts, and may be contacted at ahely@ah-creative.com

CT



An anti-establishment campaign

A poem by Philip Kraske

I was planning to run as Establishment Phil:
Experience, knowledge, and blue eyes to kill.
Mexicans endorse me, my back slapped by Teamsters,
My campaign planned out by silver-tied schemesters.
But now my aides tell me the E-word is out,
So is Wash-town, power, and Congress-hall clout.

“What’s this?” I say. “I can make this place work,
“Have House and the Senate going berserk!
“I’ll pass more laws than that slick LBJ!
“I’ll whup the Chinese, have Vlad for entrée!
“I know every leader and key bureaucrat.
“Go ask The Donald if he can say that!”

“That’s just the trouble,” my aides say uneasy.
“The leaders and ’crats make Iowans queasy.
“They say you’re too distant and far out of touch,
“Take money from lobbies and startups and such.”
“Don’s got the cash and needs ask no favour.
“To that massive mouth, they’ll give a waiver.”

“And what’ll he do when he needs to move mountains?
“Ask France pretty-please? Send Italy fountains?
“He can’t cut a deal with guys who’ll respect

“A pol with some miles and a rep to protect.
“Your Phil is the fellow who’ll get some results:
“The wise man that Barack in trouble consults.

“Just how do folks think our politics works?
“A letter to Congress, a lunch with some jerks?
“It’s slapping Joe’s back, a quiet word with a Finn,
“And woe is the dummy who thinks he’ll buy in.
“You’ve got to survive this and work up some gravy,
“Compose quick your face for both Army and Navy.”

“That’s all fine and well,” my image men shrug.
“Peoria sees only your Washington mug.
“You have to say strong that you hate The Game,
“That you’re going to change it and scour the shame,
“That movers and shakers are yesterday’s guys.
“From now on it’s People and chicken-pot pies.”

So off I wind down campaign’s long trail,
Freighting the airwaves with America’s ail.
It’s not that I think it’s all dead and broke,
Though I surely know what parts need a poke.
But if I don’t say it’s all good gone bad,
I won’t get a vote, which strikes me as sad.

CT

*Philip Kraske lives in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation.
His four novels, of varied plots but centring on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009.
His website is <http://philipkraske.com>*



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