

FEAR WEARS A BLACK MAN'S FACE | GILLIAN SCHUTTE  
WHY FALKLANDS WAR COULDN'T HAPPEN TODAY | IAN JACK  
TASTE OF FREE MARKET MEDICINE | MICHAEL PARENTI

APRIL 2012

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 65



Zach D. Roberts

## THE GIRL ON THE BUS

**ZACH D. ROBERTS** ON PROTESTS, BAGPIPES AND POLICE BRUTALITY



Cover Photo:  
Zach D. Roberts

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APRIL 2012 / ISSUE 65

## EDITOR'S NOTE

In this issue, Michael Parenti tells the all-too-common tale of hospitals in the United States where doctors spend more time dealing with avaricious insurance companies than treating patients (Page 58).

There's something terribly wrong with a society that can't – or won't – look after its citizens when they're ill, allowing number-crunchers, rather than doctors, to allocate access to medical care according to wealth rather than need.

This dreadful inequity is compounded by the absurd and deceitful political brainwashing that results in the nation's voters rejecting the idea of a universal single-payer system, while Members of Congress get free health coverage for themselves.

Socialist medicine, it seems is fine for the rulers, but not for the ruled.

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3. **COVER STORY – THE GIRL ON THE BUS** *Zach D. Roberts*
6. **ROBOTS KILL, BUT THE BLOOD IS ON OUR HANDS** *David Swanson*
9. **OBAMA'S WAR ON WHISTLEBLOWERS** *Chris Hedges*
12. **WAR ON WIKILEAKS IS NOW TRIAL BY MEDIA** *John Pilger*
14. **WRONG MAN ON TRIAL** *William Blum*
19. **EVERYONE'S A TARGET IN THE SURVEILLANCE STATE** *John W. Whitehead*
22. **I DON'T WANT TO SEE THEIR FACES** *Christopher Cooper*
- 26.. **WHY THE FALKLANDS WAR COULDN'T HAPPEN TODAY** *Ian Jack*
28. **THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT THAT LED TO MAY DAY** *Elizabeth Schulte*
31. **THIS WORLD (1)** *Monkus*
32. **PUTIN'S BACK** *Philip Kraske*
33. **HURWITT'S EYE** *Mark Hurwitt*
34. **A MANIFESTO FOR PSYCHOPATHS** *George Monbiot*
36. **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN'S CALL TO BATTLE** *Richard Pithouse*
39. **DICING IN THE STREET** *PuzzleMonkey*
45. **REMEMBERING JOE** *Ken Smith*
50. **BIBI STIRS UP TROUBLE** *Ramzy Baroud*
52. **IRAQ: 21 YEARS OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY** *Felicity Arbuthnot*
56. **THIRD WORLD BLUES** *Fred Reed*
58. **THE BITTER TASTE OF FREE MARKET MEDICINE** *Michael Parenti*
64. **A VERY SICK COUNTRY** *David Michael Green*
69. **THIS WORLD (2)** *Mark Hurwitt*
70. **FEAR WEARS A BLACK MAN'S FACE** *Gillian Schutte*
73. **THIS WORLD (3)** *Toronto Star*
74. **ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE FAMILY** *Alison Weir*
79. **WHEN POPULISM IS DANGEROUS TO DEMOCRACY**

*David Cromwell & David Edwards*

# The girl on the bus

Photographer **Zach D. Roberts** gets beaten by New York cops, but he is more shocked by what happened to a young girl dressed in green

**T**hree months after being arrested during an Occupy Wall St. protest on December 17 and two days before my meeting with the Assistant DA about that arrest – I got beaten just outside of Zuccotti Park. I wasn't the only one, and I have no doubt I won't be the last. Unlike the #D17 protest, this time I had press credentials. It still didn't matter.

The New York Police Department has complete authority in this town – I hate using the word police state, but when I saw a girl (23-year-old Cecily McMillan) thrown from a bus, in handcuffs having a seizure, tossed to the ground – I really am at a loss for any other words.

Six months ago, I was standing by the Wall Street Bull talking with journalist Allison Kilkenny complaining that this 'Occupy Wall Street thing' wasn't going to last. I mean they were doing yoga in the park. It made for some great photos, but not the best images for the start of a serious movement. Now, six months later, I'm standing on the top of Zuccotti Park looking down at over 500 protesters as they started stringing up a bright yellow banner that reads "OCCUPY WALL ST."

Well, fuck. I was wrong. Never happier to be so.

The past six months, I've been thrown in front of a moving police car, threatened with arrest, told to go fuck off by police, threatened by black bloc and then arrested, thrown in jail

and charged with criminal trespassing.

After ten years of covering well organized protests by the corporate entities of Moveon.org and United For Peace and Justice (UFJP) – a rag tag group of kids called Occupy Wall St. has made me lose my cynicism. Maybe one day I'll sit down and write about how it changed me as a journalist, a photographer and as a person who gives a shit, but those things are meant to be written about long after the movement is dead. OWS is alive and well.

But the "law enforcement" that transpired as crowd gathered at Zuccotti Park on the evening of Saturday March 17 – a significant date since it marked the six month anniversary of the start of the movement's flagship Wall Street-adjacent occupation – was different even from that of December 17 (the NYPD aren't big on anniversaries it seems!).

This was pure brutality. And it was all started by a bagpipe troupe. Man, I wish I was kidding.

Out of the blue a goddamn bagpipe troupe appears at the bottom of the park, to be exact, a French bagpipe troupe from Brittany. (Yeah, I know, WTF?) The moment we see this – we all converge them – the photographers (of course) leading the way. But it seems that the police were already on to the sneaky terrorist bagpipers and had tried to put a stop to their activities. According to one officer that I asked, they objected to the rather competent public

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bagpipe playing due to some unspecified and vague “safety concern.” Well, like most things at OWS – the NYPD made it a safety concern – ripping the lead bagpipers instrument from his hands and breaking it.

The kid whose pipe got broke, no more than 19-years old, ran away from the crowd distraught and afraid. He had no fucking clue what was happening – he didn't speak English. The police decided not to let it rest and continued to try to push the troupe out of the park, nicer than they would with OWS, but still with a heartlessness that only seems to live in the chest of the NYPD.

Then suddenly, fellow shooter CS Muncy and I turn around at the same moment to see what the plan was. The police were coming in from the other side of the park – barricades were being brought in and dozens of officers were preparing to descend. protesters who'd been preparing all night for this eventuality were ready though, and looking for a fight. And by “looking for a fight” I mean they were peacefully sitting down, arms locked in the middle of the park singing and chanting, clearly, asking for a beating. And that's what many of them got.

A dozen of so of the more enterprising and courageous occupiers had rolled out their secret weapon, orange netting with #OWS printed on it. They were prepared to kettle themselves. This sly mocking of police tactics commonly used against occupiers seemed to arouse contempt and the jackbooted thugs moved forward en masse, batons in hand. They were going to have this park cleared for their corporate betters; the owners of Zuccotti Park, Brookfield Asset Management, had sent them their orders.

The park must be cleaned. Yes, it must be cleaned on St. Patrick's Day in the dark. No doubt an annual tradition. (Many an online wag noted that if the protesters had been puking drunk, brawling, and wearing green, the police would have let them stay all night.)

Technically still out on my own recognition from my previous arrest, my plan was to

not do anything stupid. Well, that was before my fight or flight adrenaline started to kick in. If you follow me on twitter (@zdroberts) you know nine times out of ten I put my head down and rush in, camera in hand.

This small park made of marble and brick, once named Liberty, which has become a symbol for free speech amongst the occupiers and amongst many of us in the press, once again became “Zuccotti.” From here, it's all downhill.

The occupiers scattered, the now zip-tied protesters who refused to leave or failed to escape lay face down on the cold brick, waiting to be dragged, walked or carried towards the top of the square where an MTA bus was waiting to carry them away (which puts a whole new spin on the phrase ‘public transit’). It would be a while before it departed though. More than enough time for those on board to see more abject cruelty and disdain on behalf of the NYPD for the pain of the arrested protesters.

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**The girl in green**

I saw a protester, no more than 115 pounds picked up by two cops and chucked face down into a pile of other arrestees – she was four feet in the air when they launched her. I saw two officers, one female, pick up a metal barricade and slam it into a crowd of people that included protesters, myself and the *Guardian's* Laurie Penny (a.k.a. @PennyRed). I saw several protesters who dared to stand up, quickly tackled and kneed in the back – many of them women half the size of the officers kneeling on their spines.

I saw a girl in green tossed, then dropped out of the doorway of the bus that they'd tried to place her on, until she started having a seizure. Cameras and livestreamers documented it. There wasn't a single police officer with a look of concern on their face as she continued having a seizure on the cold pavement of Broadway. It took 15 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. I'm told five minutes is the usual response time in this part of town.



Sometimes I forget, this is Commissioner Ray Kelly's city, we're just tenants here. There was no ambulance needed for me. I was lucky... or maybe just stupid.

After the second cleansing of Zuccotti Park, the police continued their pushback under the guise of 'safety concerns' – basically a standard fallback excuse/tactic to keep protesters and journalists from being allowed to witness brutality and arrests, which also provides the NYPD with a premise (however flimsy) to disperse a law abiding crowd from places in which they should be within their rights to gather.

It works quite well, that is until it doesn't. The thing is, when you're pushing back with billy clubs and metal barricades, sometimes people can't move back quick enough. Or sometimes, people refuse to move from a public sidewalk. Well, as a photographer, I get caught in the middle quite often – usually I'm deft enough to get out of the way – this time I wasn't.

I fell back, and while trying to get up there was another push from the police. They saw me fall, mind you. Just didn't care.

Two or three people made it over me without falling as well, using me as their sidewalk (they didn't have any other choice). Then came the rush and four or five people fell on top of me. The police kept pushing. Then came the batons. I couldn't see if the people on top of me previously got hit at all, but I certainly did – twice to the back and once on the head.

I'm not quite sure what the logic is of literally beating a man when he's down. But once he saw that his baton beating wasn't getting me going he decided to try to pick me up by my hair. That didn't work either – but by then I was up enough to get my footing under me as I continued screaming "PRESS!!! PRESS!!!" That was enough to get the beating to stop – but I still was pushed/thrown back into the crowd, again almost losing my footing as I had to leap over a pile of garbage into the street. Being in the street was of course a crime itself, so I was once again thrown back

on the sidewalk.

Press tags nearly torn off, bag strap messed up, I staggered out of the crowd towards the stoop of a building (somewhat ironically a Starbucks). Checking my bag and camera for any serious damage and not finding any, I then looked over myself. No visible bruises, it seemed to be a miracle I came out somehow unscathed. It wasn't until I got back to the office that I found the growing welt on the side of my head like some Looney Toons character that had just been hit by an anvil.

Once I caught my breath, I called my office, reported in, told them what happened. My boss, investigative journalist Greg Palast, and his chief investigatrix Badpenny tried to get me to come in and file the photos. I told them, no, I had to see this out to the end. I was pissed and I wasn't going to let them get away with anything else; it was nearing the time when the press goes home to file before the papers are put to bed, a phenomenon the NYPD is all too familiar with since they know at this point any action is done out of the glare of the bulk of the mainstream media. Also I knew that the occupiers wouldn't let this rest, this night wasn't over just because they lost the park.

This is New York City, there are many parks – Union Square in fact was only a quick 20 blocks away. It was 3 am, the weather was nice, the streets were clear from traffic and the cops were busy elsewhere. Perfect time for a run straight up Broadway. And so we did running on the sidewalk and running in the street.

"WHO'S STREET??!!! OUR STREET!!!  
OFF THE SIDEWALKS AND INTO THE  
STREET!!!"

**CT**

*Zach D Roberts is a photo-journalist for SuicideGirls.com, TheMudFlats.net and for GregPalast.com. He is currently working on a photo-essay book with an intro by Greg Palast which can be pre-ordered here which compiles the photos/stories seen on SuicideGirls, TheMudflats, GregPalast.com – and much more.*

**The police kept pushing. Then came the batons. I couldn't see if the people on top of me previously got hit at all, but I certainly did – twice to the back and once on the head**

# Robots kill, but the blood is on our hands

David Swanson reads a new book which warns that the assassinations carried out by unmanned drones will one day come back to haunt America

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Through an alchemical combination of law enforcement and war it is perfectly OK for a president to kill anyone anywhere  
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In her spare time, between non-stop peace activism and leading international exchanges, Medea Benjamin has somehow managed to write the best book yet on the most inhuman form of war yet. The book is called *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control*, published by OR Books (\$16).

Even if you've been reading everything you could about drones, attending peace conferences, and protesting in the lobbies of drone companies like General Atomics, you will learn a great deal from this book. In fact, I'm willing to bet that even if you "pilot" drones from a desk for a living, you will learn a great deal from this book. And if you have not been paying attention to drones, then you really need to read this book.

Many Americans first heard about "unmanned aerial vehicles" as weapons when Colin Powell told the United Nations in 2003 that Iraq might use them to attack the United States. This turned out to be a projection as well as a lie. It was, of course, the United States that used drones, among other weapons, to attack Iraq for nine years, and the US drones are still in the skies of Iraq today, as well in the skies of many other countries.

Killing individuals (and whoever is near them) has become the primary substitute in US public policy for capture/imprisonment/torture. Torturing someone to death is not what former CIA General Counsel John Rizzo calls "clean." Blowing them and anyone

near them into little bits is "clean." As Medea Benjamin documents, the United States has avoided detaining people, only to murder them with a drone days later. And, as with other innovations in lawlessness, it didn't take long for this one to come back and bite US citizens. Obama has now used drones to kill Americans in Yemen, including a drone strike on Anwar al-Awlaki, and a later strike that killed his teenage son. Neither of them was ever charged with a crime, and neither was holding a weapon on a battlefield. Yet, somehow, as Eric Holder explained at Northwestern University Law School this month, through an alchemical combination of law enforcement and war it is perfectly OK for a president to kill anyone anywhere. And drones allow a president to do this without any supposed risk to what US newspapers treat as constituting the complete category of human beings; namely, members of the US military. Benjamin's book establishes that drones do not live up to their advertising.

Drones turn out to have been falsely marketed as a humanly cheap way to make war. In February 2002, a drone pilot thought he'd killed Osama bin Laden, but it turned out to be an innocent man. Expert observers, including Shahzad Akbar, a Pakistani lawyer representing drone victims, believe the vast majority of drone victims are not the individuals who were targeted – which is not to suggest any moral or legal case for killing those who

are targeted. Often victims are not counted as “civilians” because they were carrying guns, but in some areas all men carry guns. Noor Behram, who photographs drone victims, says, “For every 10 to 15 people, maybe they get one militant.” Benjamin tells some of the stories of the families shattered by drones and the hatred created by the constant buzzing sound that the drones make in the skies above the homes of people who know that at any instant they can be killed.

President Obama has instructed the government of Yemen to keep a reporter locked up whose crime appears to be having reported on the victims of a US drone strike. When the drones strike in Pakistan, local death squads swoop down on the area to grab anyone whom they suspect of having collaborated with the Americans. Families live in fear of both the drones and the raids that follow. Over a million people, by Amnesty International’s estimate, have fled the areas of heavy drone bombing.

Drones have killed Americans in “friendly fire,” including on April 6, 2011, in Afghanistan. Afghans have killed CIA drone pilots and other US officials inside their offices. Even drone “pilots” working in the United States can commit suicide. They are suffering extremely high rates of stress and burnout, according to the Air Force. Pilots who actually fly in planes often do not see what they kill. Drone pilots sometimes watch a family for days, feel like they’ve gotten to know the people, and then blow them all up, and watch the suffering. A Pakistani who tried to blow up a car in Times Square in 2010 said it was revenge for drone attacks. In the fall of 2011, a Massachusetts man, Rezwan Ferdaus, was arrested and accused of plotting to attack the Pentagon and the US Capitol with drones that would crash themselves into the buildings.

The Obama Administration claims to have limited its drone strikes in Somalia so as to avoid turning a regional threat into a group with the determination to attack the United States. As Benjamin points out, this shows awareness that there is not a current threat

to the United States. Ironically, such a threat could come from drones. US companies sell drones to democracies and dictatorships alike. Al Qaeda stole a crashed US drone from Yemeni police in February 2011. And in December 2011, Iran captured a US drone a decade after the CIA had given Iran plans to build a nuclear bomb, any possible progress on which the drone was no doubt supposed to be spying on.

Drones turn out to have been falsely marketed as a financially cheap way to make war. While initially cheaper than manned planes, unmanned drones of the sort used now tend to require many more personnel: 168 people to keep a Predator drone in the air for 24 hours, plus 19 analysts to process the videos created by a drone. Drones and their related technologies are increasing in price rapidly. And to make matters worse, they tend to crash. They even “go rogue,” lose contact with their “pilots” and fly off on their own. The US Navy has a drone that self-destructs if you accidentally touch the space bar on the computer keyboard. Drones also tend to supply so-called enemies with information, including the endless hours of video they record, and to infect US military computers with viruses. But these are the sorts of SNAFUs that come with any project lacking oversight, accountability, or cost controls. The companies with the biggest drone contracts did not invest in developing the best technologies but in paying off the most Congress members.

Drones turn out to have the power to eliminate the Fourth Amendment. The way this works, of course, is that first people who don’t look or talk like us lose their rights, and then we do too. “From 8,000 miles away in Nevada,” writes Benjamin, “a drone pilot can watch an Afghan as he lights up cigarettes, sits talking to friends on a park bench, or goes to the bathroom, never imagining that anyone is watching him.” Meanwhile, Congress has approved 30,000 drones for US skies. So, we’ll be able to hide inside as the NSA records our phone calls and emails, or get offline but have our ac-

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**Pilots who actually fly in planes often do not see what they kill. Drone pilots sometimes watch a family for days, feel like they’ve gotten to know the people, and then blow them all up, and watch the suffering**

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**Benjamin also points out that the majority of strikes are not even meant to be targeted at known individuals. Rather, they are targeted at unknown people whose “pattern of life” appears to fit that of “militants” in the eyes of the drone operator**

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tions videotaped by drones. What a choice!

Drones turn out to be very costly to the rule of law. My only quibble with Medea’s book, other than an occasional use of the term “defense” for things that aren’t defensive, is the sort of language used in the early chapters to distinguish between targeted victims of drones and victims who were in the wrong place: “[W]hen the target is falsely identified, even the most accurate bombs will result in tragedy.” Only when the target is falsely identified? Of course, not. Killing is always a tragedy, even if the victim is guilty of something. But none of these victims are being given trials. The person choosing to use the drone is judge, jury, and executioner. As Benjamin points out, just two months before September 11, 2001, the US ambassador to Israel said, “The United States government is very clearly on record against targeted assassinations. They are extrajudicial killings, and we do not support that.” Benjamin also points out that the majority of strikes are not even meant to be targeted at known individuals. Rather, they are targeted at unknown people whose “pattern of life” appears to fit that of “militants” in the eyes of the drone operator. And, as Benjamin further notes, even actual militants are usually trying to drive foreign forces out of their countries, not launching attacks abroad.

Obama claimed that air war on Libya was not war, and was not even “hostilities,” because US troops were not on the ground in large numbers. But murder on a larger and more haphazard scale is not more legal than “targeted” killings. The CIA, the Joint Special Operations Command, and Blackwater (or whatever that mercenary company calls itself this month) are used to keep drone wars more secretive and less accountable. But do we really need all the details to know that wars are illegal? War violates Kellogg-Briand, in most cases the UN Charter, and when not declared by Congress the US Constitution. War is not made legal by making it resemble assassination. And assassination is not made legal by calling it war. Nor is killing a legal alternative to law enforcement. Should we ban, as some

propose be done before it’s too late, the creation or use of automated drones that kill on their own without human interference? Or should we ban all drones that kill? Or should we ban all drones that kill or spy? Should we seek to treat drones that kill as a particularly offensive and unfair type of weapon, along the lines of land mines or cluster bombs? But the rest of the world has banned those weapons; the United States has not. The United States has also refused to ban weapons in space or to work for the elimination of its nuclear arsenal. How far does getting the rest of the world to turn against a type of weaponry get us?

I think what’s needed is a campaign that seizes on the particular horror of life under a sky of drones and pivots from there to enforcing the ban on war that was put in place among mostly wealthy nations in 1928 and violated by World War II. That ban needs to be applied to wars waged against poor nations. As long as it is not, we go on losing morality, becoming less human, less empathetic, more violent, and more bigoted. Back on September 4, 1804, as John Feffer points out in his excellent new book *Crusade 2.0*, suicide bombing was introduced to the world of warfare, and it was the United States that came up with it.

Commodore Edward Preble sent the USS *Intrepid* into the bay at Tripoli with 10,000 pounds of gunpowder, 150 shells, and US sailors who died in the explosion. Now the US military is busy creating suicide-bombing drones, with full awareness that people enraged by the crimes of the US military will inevitably possess that same technology shortly after the United States does.

The cycle of violence can become a spiral of violence. As Dr. King said, there is such a thing as being too late. There is an urgency to acting now. Medea’s book documents the activism that is underway. Join it. **CT**

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*David Swanson is the author of “When the World Outlawed War,” “War Is A Lie” and “Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union”*



# Obama's war on whistleblowers

We're on the road to totalitarianism, writes **Chris Hedges**

**T**otalitarian systems disempower an unsuspecting population by gradually making legal what was once illegal. They incrementally corrupt and distort law to exclusively serve the goals of the inner sanctums of power and strip protection from the citizen. Law soon becomes the primary tool to advance the crimes of the elite and punish those who tell the truth. The state saturates the airwaves with official propaganda to replace news. Fear, and finally terror, creates an intellectual and moral void.

We have very little space left to maneuver. The iron doors of the corporate state are slamming shut. And a conviction of Bradley Manning, or any of the five others charged by the Obama administration under the Espionage Act of 1917 with passing on government secrets to the press, would effectively terminate public knowledge of the internal workings of the corporate state.

What we live under cannot be called democracy. What we will live under if the Supreme Court upholds the use of the Espionage Act to punish those who expose war crimes and state lies will be a species of corporate fascism. And this closed society is, perhaps, only a few weeks or months away.

Few other Americans are as acutely aware of our descent into corporate totali-

tarianism as Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971 to the *New York Times* and is one of Manning's most ardent and vocal defenders.

Ellsberg, who was charged under the Espionage Act, faced 12 felony counts and a possible sentence of 115 years. He says that if he provided the Pentagon Papers today to news organizations, he would most likely never see his case dismissed on grounds of government misconduct against him as it was in 1973.

The government tactics employed to discredit Ellsberg, which included burglarizing his psychoanalyst's office and illegal wiretaps, were subjects of the impeachment hearings against President Richard Nixon. But that was then.

"Everything that Richard Nixon did to me, for which he faced impeachment and prosecution, which led to his resignation, is now legal under the Patriot Act, the FISA [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] amendment act, the National Defense Authorization Act," Ellsberg told me when we met recently in Princeton, NJ.

Manning, whose trial is likely to begin in early August, is being held in a medium-security facility at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. He allegedly gave WikiLeaks more than 700,000 documents and video clips. One clip showed the 2007 Apache helicopter attack in which US military personnel

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killed more than a dozen people in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad, including a Reuters news photographer and driver.

Manning faces 22 charges under the Espionage Act, including aiding the enemy, wrongfully causing intelligence to be published on the Internet, theft of public property or records, transmitting defense information, and fraud and related activity in connection with computers. If he is found guilty he could spend the rest of his life in prison without the possibility of parole. Juan Ernesto Mendez, the UN torture rapporteur, has described Manning's treatment by the US government as "cruel, inhuman and degrading," especially "the excessive and prolonged isolation he was put in during the eight months he was in Quantico."

The Espionage Act was used only three times before President Barack Obama took office. Ellsberg's case was dismissed. The second use of the act saw Alfred Zehe, a German physicist, plead guilty to giving US information to East Germany.

The third case saw Samuel Morison, a onetime US intelligence professional, convicted in federal court on two counts of espionage and two counts of theft of government property. He was sentenced to two years in prison on Dec. 4, 1985, for giving classified information to the press, and in 1988 the Supreme Court declined to hear his appeal. President Bill Clinton pardoned Morison on the last day of his presidency.

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**More fervour than Bush**

Obama, who serves the interests of the surveillance and security state with even more fervour than did George W. Bush, has used the Espionage Act to charge suspected leakers six times since he took office. The latest to be charged by the Obama administration under the act is John Kiriakou, a former CIA officer accused of disclosing classified information to journalists about

the interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, an al-Qaida suspect. Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, which published the cables and video clips allegedly provided by Manning, is expected to be the seventh charged under the act.

The Supreme Court has yet to hear a case involving the Espionage Act. But one of these six cases will probably soon reach the court.

If it, as expected, rules that the government is permitted to use the Espionage Act against whistle-blowers, the United States will have a de facto official secrets act. A ruling in favor of the government would instantly criminalize all disclosures of classified information to the public. It would shut down one of the most important functions of the press. And at that point any challenges to the official versions of events would dry up.

The Obama administration, to make matters worse, has mounted a war not only against those who leak information but those who publish it, including Assange. The Obama administration is attempting to force *New York Times* reporter James Risen to name the source, or sources, that told him about a failed effort by the Central Intelligence Agency to sabotage Iran's nuclear program.

Jeffrey Sterling, a former CIA officer, is charged under the Espionage Act for allegedly leaking information about the program to Risen. If Risen confirms in court that Sterling was his source, Sterling probably will be convicted. A Supreme Court ruling in favor of the Espionage Act would also remove the legal protection that traditionally allows journalists to refuse to reveal their sources.

"Unauthorized disclosures are the lifeblood of the republic," Ellsberg said. "You cannot have a meaningful democracy where the public only has authorized disclosures from the government. If they [officials] get control, if they can prosecute anybody who violates that, you are kidding

yourself if you think you have any kind of democratic control over foreign policy, national security and homeland security. We don't have a democracy now in foreign affairs and national security. We have a monarchy tempered by leaks. Cut off the leaks and we don't even have that."

The WikiLeaks disclosures – the first in 40 years to approach the scale of the Pentagon Papers – may, if Obama has his way, be our last look into the corrupt heart of empire. Those who have access to information that exposes the lies of the state will, if the Espionage Act becomes the vehicle to halt unauthorized disclosures, not only risk their careers by providing information that challenges the official version of events but almost certainly be assured of life sentences in prison.

#### Exposing the lie

Ellsberg has called on those with security clearances to release the modern version of the Pentagon Papers about the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. He said his only regret was that he did not leak the Pentagon Papers earlier. If the documents had been published in August 1964, he said, rather than 1971, he would have exposed the lie that the North Vietnamese had made an "unequivocal, unprovoked" attack on US destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf. The fabricated attack was used by President Lyndon Johnson to get Congress to pass the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which authorized the administration to escalate the war.

Ellsberg said that there were intelligence officials who in 2002 could have exposed the lies used by the Bush administration to plunge us into a war with Iraq. The failure of these officials to release this evidence has resulted in the deaths of, and injury to, thousands of US soldiers and Marines, along with hundreds of thousands of civilians.

"Don't do what I did," he cautioned. "Don't wait until a new war has started

in Iran, until more bombs have fallen in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, Libya, Iraq or Yemen. Don't wait until thousands more have died, before you go to the press and to Congress to tell the truth with documents that reveal lies or crimes or internal projections of costs and dangers. Don't wait 40 years for it to be declassified, or seven years as I did for you or someone else to leak it."

The courage of an Ellsberg or a Manning is rare. It will become even more so in a state where the law is used as a vehicle to protect those who carry out war crimes and to imprison patriots for life. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of the government on any of these six cases it will invert the law and plunge us into totalitarian darkness.

Obama, a constitutional lawyer, has a far better grasp of the dramatic erosion of civil liberties his administration is cementing into place than his hapless predecessor. Obama, however, dissembles with an icy cynicism.

He assured the public in January that the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) would not be used to detain and hold American citizens without due process, although the act's latest version, which became law last month, clearly states the opposite. And Ellsberg, along with Noam Chomsky and other activists, has joined me as a plaintiff in suing the president and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta over the NDAA. When Obama was questioned in 2011 about the difference between the release of the Pentagon Papers and the cables turned over to WikiLeaks he answered: "Ellsberg's material was classified on a different basis."

"That's true," Ellsberg said ruefully in our conversation last week. "Mine were top secret. The cables released in WikiLeaks were secret."

**CT**

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

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**Ellsberg said that there were intelligence officials who in 2002 could have exposed the lies used by the Bush administration to plunge us into a war with Iraq**  
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# War on Wikileaks is now trial by media in Sweden

Police feed latest smear campaign on Julian Assange, says John Pilger

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**Assange's trial by media has been a campaign of character assassination, often cowardly and inhuman, reeking of jealousy of the courageous outsider**  
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**W**ar by media, says current military doctrine, is as important as the battlefield. This is because the real enemy is the public at home, whose manipulation and deception are essential for starting an unpopular colonial war. Like the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, attacks on Iran and Syria require a steady drip-effect on readers' and viewers' consciousness. This is the essence of a propaganda that rarely speaks its name.

To the chagrin of many in authority and the media, WikiLeaks has torn down the façade behind which rapacious western power and journalism collude. This was an enduring taboo; the BBC could claim impartiality and expect people to believe it. Today, war by media is increasingly understood by the public, as is the trial by media of WikiLeaks' founder, and editor Julian Assange.

Assange will soon know if the Supreme Court in London is to allow his appeal against extradition to Sweden, where he faces allegations of sexual misconduct, most of which were dismissed by a senior prosecutor in Stockholm and do not constitute a crime in Britain. On bail for 16 months, tagged and effectively under house arrest, he has been charged with nothing. His "crime" has been an epic form of investigative journalism: revealing to millions of people the lies and machinations of their

politicians and officials and the barbarism of criminal war conducted in their name. For this, as the American historian William Blum points out, "dozens of members of the American media and public officials have called for [his] execution or assassination". If he is passed from Sweden to the US, an orange jump suit, shackles and a fabricated unconstitutional indictment await him. And there go all who dare challenge rogue America.

In Britain, Assange's trial by media has been a campaign of character assassination, often cowardly and inhuman, reeking of jealousy of the courageous outsider, while books of perfidious hearsay have been published, movie deals struck and media careers launched or resuscitated on the assumption that he is too poor to sue. In Sweden, this trial by media has become, according to one observer there, "a full-on mobbing campaign with the victim denied a voice". For more than 18 months, the salacious *Expressen*, Sweden's equivalent of the Sun, has been fed the ingredients of a smear by Stockholm police.

*Expressen* is the megaphone of the Swedish right, including the Conservative Party which dominates the governing coalition. Its latest "scoop" is an unsubstantiated story about "the great WikiLeaks war against Sweden". On 6 March, *Expressen* claimed, with no evidence, that WikiLeaks was run-



ning a conspiracy against Sweden and its foreign minister Carl Bildt. The pique is understandable. In a 2009 US embassy cable obtained by WikiLeaks, the Swedish elite's vaunted reputation for neutrality is exposed as sham. (Cable title: "Sweden puts neutrality in the Dustbin of History.") Another US diplomatic cable reveals that "the extent of [Sweden's military and intelligence] cooperation [with Nato] is not widely known" and unless kept secret "would open up the government to domestic criticism".

Swedish foreign policy is largely controlled by Bildt, whose obeisance to the US goes back to his defence of the Vietnam war and includes his leading role in George W. Bush's Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. He retains close ties to Republican Party extreme right figures such as the disgraced Bush spin doctor, Karl Rove. It is known that his government has "informally" discussed Assange's onward extradition to Washington, which has made its position clear. A secret Pentagon document describes US intelligence plans to destroy WikiLeaks' "centre of gravity" with "threats of exposure [and] criminal prosecution".

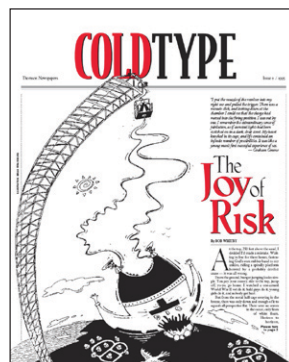
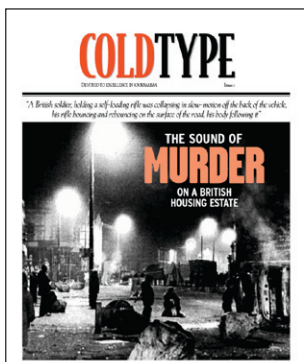
In much of the Swedish media, proper journalistic scepticism about the allegations against Assange is overwhelmed by a defensive jingoism, as if the nation's honour is defiled by revelations about dodgy cop-

pers and politicians, a universal breed. On Swedish Public TV "experts" debate not the country's deepening militarist state, and its service to Nato and Washington, but the state of Assange's mind and his "paranoia". A headline in a recent issue of *Aftonbladet* declared: "Assange's moral collapse". The article by Dan Josefsson suggests Bradley Manning, WikiLeaks' alleged source, may not be sane and attacks Assange for not protecting Manning from himself. That the source was anonymous and no connection has been demonstrated between Assange and Manning and that *Aftonbladet*, WikiLeaks' Swedish partner, had published the same leaks undeterred, was not mentioned – censorship by omission.

Ironically, this circus has performed under cover of some of the world's most enlightened laws protecting journalists, which attracted Assange to Sweden in 2010 to establish a base for WikiLeaks. Should his extradition be allowed, and with Damocles swords of malice and a vengeful Washington hanging over his head, who will protect him and provide the justice to which we all have a right? **CT**

*John Pilger* recently received the top prize in the annual awards, presented in London, of the British Grierson Trust for his documentary films

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**Swedish foreign policy is largely controlled by Bildt, whose obeisance to the US goes back to his defence of the Vietnam war and includes his leading role in George W. Bush's Committee for the Liberation of Iraq**  
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# Wrong man on trial

William Blum points out that if he had committed war crimes, instead of exposing them, Bradley Manning would now be a free man

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**Under the new National Defense Authorization Act, Assange could well be kidnapped or assassinated. What century are we living in? What world?**  
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*“Defense lawyers say Manning was clearly a troubled young soldier whom the Army should never have deployed to Iraq or given access to classified material while he was stationed there ... They say he was in emotional turmoil, partly because he was a gay soldier at a time when homosexuals were barred from serving openly in the US armed forces.” (Associated Press, February 3)*

**I**t's unfortunate and disturbing that Bradley Manning's attorneys have chosen to consistently base his legal defense upon the premise that personal problems and shortcomings are what motivated the young man to turn over hundreds of thousands of classified government files to Wikileaks. They should not be presenting him that way any more than Bradley should be tried as a criminal or traitor. He should be hailed as a national hero. Yes, even when the lawyers are talking to the military mind. May as well try to penetrate that mind and find the freest and best person living there. Bradley also wears a military uniform.

Here are Manning's own words from an online chat: "If you had free reign over classified networks ... and you saw incredible things, awful things ... things that belonged in the public domain, and not on some server stored in a dark room in Washington DC ... what would you do? ... God knows what happens now. Hopefully worldwide discus-

sion, debates, and reforms. ... I want people to see the truth ... because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public."

Is the world to believe that these are the words of a disturbed and irrational person? Do not the Nuremberg Tribunal and the Geneva Conventions speak of a higher duty than blind loyalty to one's government, a duty to report the war crimes of that government?

Below is a listing of some of the things revealed in the State Department cables and Defense Department files and videos. For exposing such embarrassing and less-than-honorable behavior, Bradley Manning of the United States Army and Julian Assange of Wikileaks may spend most of their remaining days in a modern dungeon, much of it while undergoing that particular form of torture known as "solitary confinement". Indeed, it has been suggested that the mistreatment of Manning has been for the purpose of making him testify against and implicating Assange. Dozens of members of the American media and public officials have called for Julian Assange's execution or assassination. Under the new National Defense Authorization Act, Assange could well be kidnapped or assassinated. What century are we living in? What world?

It was after seeing American war crimes such as those depicted in the video *Collat-*

eral Murder and documented in the *Iraq War Logs*, made public by Manning and Wikileaks, that the Iraqis refused to exempt US forces from prosecution for future crimes. The video depicts an American helicopter indiscriminately murdering several non-combatants in addition to two Reuters journalists, and the wounding of two little children, while the helicopter pilots cheer the attacks in a Baghdad suburb like it was the Army-Navy game in Philadelphia.

The insistence of the Iraqi government on legal jurisdiction over American soldiers for violations of Iraqi law – something the United States rarely, if ever, accepts in any of the many countries where its military is stationed – forced the Obama administration to pull the remaining American troops from the country.

If Manning had committed war crimes in Iraq instead of exposing them, he would be a free man today, as are the many hundreds/thousands of American soldiers guilty of truly loathsome crimes in cities like Haditha, Fallujah, and other places whose names will live in infamy in the land of ancient Mesopotamia.

Besides playing a role in writing finis to the awful Iraq war, the Wikileaks disclosures helped to spark the Arab Spring, beginning in Tunisia.

When people in Tunisia read or heard of US Embassy cables revealing the extensive corruption and decadence of the extended ruling family there – one long and detailed cable being titled: “CORRUPTION IN TUNISIA: WHAT’S YOURS IS MINE” – how Washington’s support of Tunisian President Ben Ali was not really strong, and that the US would not support the regime in the event of a popular uprising, they took to the streets.

Here is a sample of some of the other Wikileaks revelations that make the people of the world wiser:

- In 2009 Japanese diplomat Yukiya Amano became the new head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which plays the leading role in the investigation

of whether Iran is developing nuclear weapons or is working only on peaceful civilian nuclear energy projects. A US embassy cable of October 2009 said Amano “took pains to emphasize his support for US strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded the [American] ambassador on several occasions that ... he was solidly in the US court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program.”

- Russia refuted US claims that Iran has missiles that could target Europe.

- The British government’s official inquiry into how it got involved in the Iraq War was deeply compromised by the government’s pledge to protect the Bush administration in the course of the inquiry.

- A discussion between Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh and American Gen. David H. Petraeus in which Saleh indicated he would cover up the US role in missile strikes against al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Yemen. “We’ll continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours,” Saleh told Petraeus.

- The US embassy in Madrid has had serious points of friction with the Spanish government and civil society: a) trying to get the criminal case dropped against three US soldiers accused of killing a Spanish television cameraman in Baghdad during a 2003 unprovoked US tank shelling of the hotel where he and other journalists were staying; b) torture cases brought by a Spanish NGO against six senior Bush administration officials, including former attorney general Alberto Gonzales; c) a Spanish government investigation into the torture of Spanish subjects held at Guantánamo; d) a probe by a Spanish court into the use of Spanish bases and airfields for American extraordinary rendition (= torture) flights; e) continual criticism of the Iraq war by Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero, who eventually withdrew Spanish troops.

- State Department officials at the United Nations, as well as US diplomats in various embassies, were assigned to gather as

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**If Manning had committed war crimes in Iraq instead of exposing them, he would be a free man today, as are many hundreds/thousands of American soldiers guilty of truly loathsome crimes**  
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**The leadership of the Swedish Social Democratic Party – neutral, pacifist, and liberal Sweden, – visited the US embassy in Stockholm and asked how to sell the war in Afghanistan to a skeptical Swedish public**  
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much of the following information as possible about UN officials, including Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, permanent security council representatives, senior UN staff, and foreign diplomats: e-mail and website addresses, internet user names and passwords, personal encryption keys, credit card numbers, frequent flyer account numbers, work schedules, and biometric data. US diplomats at the embassy in Asunción, Paraguay were asked to obtain dates, times and telephone numbers of calls received and placed by foreign diplomats from China, Iran and the Latin American leftist states of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia. US diplomats in Romania, Hungary and Slovenia were instructed to provide biometric information on “current and emerging leaders and advisers” as well as information about “corruption” and information about leaders’ health and “vulnerability”. The UN directive also specifically asked for “biometric information on ranking North Korean diplomats”. A similar cable to embassies in the Great Lakes region of Africa said biometric data included DNA, as well as iris scans and fingerprints.

- A special “Iran observer” in the Azerbaijan capital of Baku reported on a dispute that played out during a meeting of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council. An enraged Revolutionary Guard Chief of Staff, Mohammed Ali Jafari, allegedly got into a heated argument with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and slapped him in the face because the generally conservative president had, surprisingly, advocated freedom of the press.

- The State Department, virtually alone in the Western Hemisphere, did not unequivocally condemn a June 28, 2009 military coup in Honduras, even though an embassy cable declared: “there is no doubt that the military, Supreme Court and National Congress conspired on June 28 in what constituted an illegal and unconstitutional coup against the Executive Branch”. US support of the coup government has been unwavering ever

since.

- The leadership of the Swedish Social Democratic Party – neutral, pacifist, and liberal Sweden, so the long-standing myth goes – visited the US embassy in Stockholm and asked for advice on how best to sell the war in Afghanistan to a skeptical Swedish public, asking if the US could arrange for a member of the Afghan government to come visit Sweden and talk up NATO’s humanitarian efforts on behalf of Afghan children, and so forth. [For some years now Sweden has been, in all but name, a member of NATO and the persecutor of Julian Assange, the latter to please a certain Western power.]

- The US pushed to influence Swedish wiretapping laws so communication passing through the Scandinavian country could be intercepted. The American interest was clear: Eighty per cent of all the internet traffic from Russia travels through Sweden.

- President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy told US embassy officials in Brussels in January 2010 that no one in Europe believed in Afghanistan anymore. He said Europe was going along in deference to the United States and that there must be results in 2010, or “Afghanistan is over for Europe.”

- Iraqi officials saw Saudi Arabia, not Iran, as the biggest threat to the integrity and cohesion of their fledgling democratic state. The Iraqi leaders were keen to assure their American patrons that they could easily “manage” the Iranians, who wanted stability; but that the Saudis wanted a “weak and fractured” Iraq, and were even “fomenting terrorism that would destabilize the government”. The Saudi King, moreover, wanted a US military strike on Iran.

- Saudi Arabia in 2007 threatened to pull out of a Texas oil refinery investment unless the US government intervened to stop Saudi Aramco from being sued in US courts for alleged oil price fixing. The deputy Saudi oil minister said that he wanted the US to grant Saudi Arabia sovereign immunity from lawsuits



- Saudi donors were the chief financiers of Sunni militant groups like Al Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, and Lashkar-e-Taiba, which carried out the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

- Pfizer, the world's largest pharmaceutical company, hired investigators to unearth evidence of corruption against the Nigerian attorney general in order to persuade him to drop legal action over a controversial 1996 drug trial involving children with meningitis.

- Oil giant Shell claimed to have "inserted staff" and fully infiltrated Nigeria's government.

- The Obama administration renewed military ties with Indonesia in spite of serious concerns expressed by American diplomats about the Indonesian military's activities in the province of West Papua, expressing fears that the Indonesian government's neglect, rampant corruption and human rights abuses were stoking unrest in the region.

- US officials collaborated with Lebanon's defense minister to spy on, and allow Israel to potentially attack, Hezbollah in the weeks that preceded a violent May 2008 military confrontation in Beirut.

- Gabon president Omar Bongo allegedly pocketed millions in embezzled funds from central African states, channeling some of it to French political parties in support of Nicolas Sarkozy.

- Cables from the US embassy in Caracas in 2006 asked the US Secretary of State to warn President Hugo Chávez against a Venezuelan military intervention to defend the Cuban revolution in the eventuality of an American invasion after Castro's death.

- The United States was concerned that the leftist Latin American television network, Telesur, headquartered in Venezuela, would collaborate with al Jazeera of Qatar, whose coverage of the Iraq War had gotten under the skin of the Bush administration.

- The Vatican told the United States it wanted to undermine the influence of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez in Latin

America because of concerns about the deterioration of Catholic power there. It feared that Chávez was seriously damaging relations between the Catholic church and the state by identifying the church hierarchy in Venezuela as part of the privileged class.

- The Holy See welcomed President Obama's new outreach to Cuba and hoped for further steps soon, perhaps to include prison visits for the wives of the Cuban Five. Better US-Cuba ties would deprive Hugo Chávez of one of his favorite screeds and could help restrain him in the region.

- The wonderful world of diplomats: In 2010, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown raised with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton the question of visas for two wives of members of the "Cuban Five". "Brown requested that the wives (who have previously been refused visas to visit the US) be granted visas so that they could visit their husbands in prison. ... Our subsequent queries to Number 10 indicate that Brown made this request as a result of a commitment that he had made to UK trade unionists, who form part of the Labour Party's core constituency. Now that the request has been made, Brown does not intend to pursue this matter further. There is no USG action required."

- UK Officials concealed from Parliament how the US was allowed to bring cluster bombs onto British soil in defiance of a treaty banning the housing of such weapons.

- A cable was sent by an official at the US Interests Section in Havana in July 2006, during the runup to the Non-Aligned Movement conference. He noted that he was actively looking for "human interest stories and other news that shatters the myth of Cuban medical prowess". [Presumably to be used to weaken support for Cuba amongst the member nations at the conference.]

- Most of the men sent to Guantánamo prison were innocent people or low-level operatives; many of the innocent individuals were sold to the US for bounty.

- DynCorp, a powerful American defense contracting firm that claims almost \$2 bil-

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**Pfizer, the world's largest pharmaceutical company, hired investigators to unearth evidence of corruption against the Nigerian attorney general in order to persuade him to drop legal action**

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**In 2009, the State Department backed American corporate opposition to an increase in the minimum wage for Haitian workers, the poorest paid in the Western Hemisphere**  
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lion per year in revenue from US tax dollars, threw a “boy-play” party for Afghan police recruits. (Yes, it’s what you think.)

- Even though the Bush and Obama Administrations repeatedly maintained publicly that there was no official count of civilian casualties, the Iraq and Afghanistan War Logs showed that this claim was untrue.

- Known Egyptian torturers received training at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

- The United States put great pressure on the Haitian government to not go ahead with various projects, with no regard for the welfare of the Haitian people. A 2005 cable stressed continued US insistence that all efforts must be made to keep former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whom the United States had overthrown the previous year, from returning to Haiti or influencing the political process. In 2006, Washington’s target was President René Préval for his agreeing to a deal with Venezuela to join Caracas’s Caribbean oil alliance, PetroCaribe, under which Haiti would buy oil from Venezuela, paying only 60 percent up front with the remainder payable over twenty-five years at 1 percent interest. And in 2009, the State Department backed American corporate opposition to an increase in the minimum wage for Haitian workers, the poorest paid in the Western Hemisphere.

- The United States used threats, spying, and more to try to get its way at the crucial 2009 climate conference in Copenhagen.

- Mahmoud Abbas, president of The Palestinian National Authority, and head of the Fatah movement, turned to Israel for help in attacking Hamas in Gaza in 2007.

- The British government trained a Bangladeshi paramilitary force condemned by human rights organisations as a “government death squad”.

- A US military order directed American forces not to investigate cases of torture of detainees by Iraqis.

- The US was involved in the Australian government’s 2006 campaign to oust Solo-

mon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare.

- A 2009 US cable said that police brutality in Egypt against common criminals was routine and pervasive, the police using force to extract confessions from criminals on a daily basis.

- US diplomats pressured the German government to stifle the prosecution of CIA operatives who abducted and tortured Khalid El-Masri, a German citizen. [El-Masri was kidnaped by the CIA while on vacation in Macedonia on December 31, 2003. He was flown to a torture center in Afghanistan, where he was beaten, starved, and sodomized. The US government released him on a hilltop in Albania five months later without money or the means to go home.]

- 2005 cable re “widespread severe torture” by India, the widely-renowned “world’s largest democracy”: The International Committee of the Red Cross reported: “The continued ill-treatment of detainees, despite longstanding ICRC-GOI [Government of India] dialogue, have led the ICRC to conclude that New Delhi condones torture.” Washington was briefed on this matter by the ICRC years ago. What did the United States, one of the world’s leading practitioners and teachers of torture in the past century, do about it? American leaders, including the present ones, continued to speak warmly of “the world’s largest democracy”; as if torture and one of the worst rates of poverty and child malnutrition in the world do not contradict the very idea of democracy.

- The United States overturned a ban on training the Indonesian Kopassus army special forces – despite the Kopassus’s long history of arbitrary detention, torture and murder – after the Indonesian President threatened to derail President Obama’s trip to the country in November 2010.

- Since at least 2006 the United States has been funding political opposition groups in Syria, including a satellite TV channel that beams anti-government programming into the country.

**CT**

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**William Blum**  
*is the author of:*  
**“Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2”; “Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower”; “West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir”; “Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire”**  
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# Everyone's a target in the surveillance state

**John W. Whitehead** on the final chain in an electronic concentration camp

*"Everybody's a target; everybody with communication is a target." – A senior intelligence official previously involved with the Utah Data Center*

In the small town of Bluffdale, Utah, not far from bustling Salt Lake City, the federal government is quietly erecting what will be the crown jewel of its surveillance empire. Rising up out of the desert landscape, the Utah Data Center (UDC) – a \$2 billion behemoth designed to house a network of computers, satellites, and phone lines that stretches across the world – is intended to serve as the central hub of the National Security Agency's vast spying infrastructure. Once complete (the UDC is expected to be fully operational by September 2013), the last link in the chain of the electronic concentration camp that surrounds us will be complete, and privacy, as we have known it, will be extinct.

At five times the size of the US Capitol, the UDC will be a clearinghouse and a depository for every imaginable kind of information – whether innocent or not, private or public – including communications, transactions and the like. Anything and everything you've ever said or done, from the trivial to the damning – phone calls, Facebook posts, Twitter tweets, Google searches, emails, bookstore and grocery purchases, bank statements, commuter toll records,

etc. – will be tracked, collected, catalogued and analyzed by the UDC's supercomputers and teams of government agents. In this way, by sifting through the detritus of your once-private life, the government will come to its own conclusions about who you are, where you fit in, and how best to deal with you should the need arise.

What little we know about this highly classified spy center – which will be operated by the National Security Agency (NSA) – comes from James Bamford, a former intelligence analyst and an expert on the highly secretive government agency. Bamford's expose in *Wired* (March 15, 2012), a must-read for anyone concerned about the loss of our freedoms in a technological age, provides a chilling glimpse into the government's plans for total control, a.k.a., total information awareness. As Bamford notes, the NSA "has transformed itself into the largest, most covert, and potentially most intrusive intelligence agency ever created. In the process – and for the first time since Watergate and the other scandals of the Nixon administration – the NSA has turned its surveillance apparatus on the US and its citizens."

Supposedly created by the NSA in order to track foreign threats to America, as well as to shore up cybersecurity and battle hackers, the UDC's technological capabilities are astounding. As the central depository

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**Even in post-withdrawal Iraq, the Pentagon is negotiating for a new long-term defense agreement that might include getting a little of its former base space back**  
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**The US now has drone bases across the planet, 60 at last count. Increasingly, the long-range reach of its drone program means that those robotic planes can penetrate just about any nation's air space**  
.....

tory for all of the information gathered by the NSA's vast spy centers, the UDC's supercomputers will be capable of downloading data amounting to the entire contents of the Library of Congress every six hours. However, the data being targeted goes far beyond the scope of terrorist threats. In fact, as Bamford points out, the NSA is interested in nothing less than the "so-called invisible web, also known as the deep web or deepnet – data beyond the reach of the public. This includes password-protected data, US and foreign government communications, and noncommercial file-sharing between trusted peers."

The loss of privacy resulting from such aggressive surveillance systems highlights very dramatically the growing problem of large public and private institutions in relation to the individual citizen. What we are witnessing, in the so-called name of security and efficiency, is the creation of a new class system comprised of the watched (average Americans such as you and me) and the watchers (government bureaucrats, technicians and private corporations). The growing need for technicians necessitates the bureaucracy. The massive bureaucracies – now computerized – that administer governmental policy are a permanent form of government. Presidents come and go, but the nonelected bureaucrats remain.

The question looms before us. Can freedom in the United States continue to flourish and grow in an age when the physical movements, individual purchases, conversations, and meetings of every citizen are constantly under surveillance by private companies and government agencies?

Whether or not the surveillance is undertaken for "innocent" reasons, does not surveillance of all citizens, even the innocent sort, gradually poison the soul of a nation? Does not surveillance limit personal options – deny freedom of choice – for many individuals? Does not surveillance increase the powers of those who are in a position to enjoy the fruits of this activity? Is not con-

trol the name of the game?

We are all becoming data collected in government files. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who suffered under the secret police in the Soviet Union, wrote about this process some years ago:

"As every man goes through life he fills in a number of forms for the record, each containing a number of questions....There are thus hundreds of little threads radiating from every man, millions of threads in all. If these threads were suddenly to become visible, the whole sky would look like a spider's web, and if they materialized like rubber bands, buses and trams and even people would lose the ability to move and the wind would be unable to carry torn-up newspapers or autumn leaves along the streets of the city."

Thus, we come back to the NSA's spy center. That the NSA, which has shown itself to care little for constitutional limits or privacy, is the driving force behind this spy center is no surprise. The agency, which is three times the size of the CIA, consumes one third of the intelligence budget and has a global spy network, has a long history of spying on Americans – whether or not it has always had the authorization to do so. Take, for instance, the warrantless wiretapping program conducted during the Bush years, which resulted in the NSA monitoring the private communications of millions of Americans – a program that continues unabated today, with help from private telecommunications companies such as AT&T. The program recorded 320 million phone calls a day when it first started. It is estimated that the NSA has intercepted 15 to 20 trillion communications of American citizens since 9/11.

What has proven to be surprising to some is that the Obama White House has proven to be just as bad, if not worse, than the Bush White House when it comes to invading the privacy rights of Americans. As Yale law professor Jack Balkin notes, "We are witnessing the bipartisan normalization



and legitimization of a national-surveillance state. [Obama has] systematically adopted policies consistent with the second term of the Bush Administration.” Unfortunately, whereas those on the Left raised a hue and cry over the Bush administration’s constant encroachments on Americans’ privacy rights, it appears that the political leanings of those on the Left have held greater sway than their principles. Consequently, the Obama administration has faced much less criticism for its blatant efforts to reinforce the surveillance state.

Clearly, the age of privacy in America is coming to a close. We have moved into a new paradigm in which surveillance technology which renders everyone a suspect is driving the bureaucratic ship that once was our democratic republic. By the time this UDC spy center is fully operational, no phone call, no email, no Tweet, no web search is safe from the prying eyes and ears of the government. People going about their daily business will no longer be assured that they are not being spied upon by federal agents and other government bureaucrats.

While the responses to the news of the Bluffdale facility have been varied, with some Americans cleaving to the over-used government line “if you have nothing to hide, you have no need to worry,” more and more people are starting to feel like Mike Newell, a *Wired* reader who had this to say about the UDC:

“Not very long ago..... I actually believed that I would be willing to sacrifice a bit of freedom for security. I believed that a guard or cop at the entrance to my community,

checking I.D. would be better than car loads of gang members roaming through creating havoc. I once laughed at those who mistrusted the government and prepared for survival, should things go sideways. I supported efforts by our so called “leaders” to monitor society, in search for the ever present evil. Not long ago..... I slept.

“I just finished building my fourth M-4. I just finished loading my 3rd case of 5.56. Today my Saiga 12 arrives. My wife has canned enough food to feed a city. I have taken great steps at a great cost to ensure that I am fully self reliant under any circumstance. I am awake.

“Anyone who really believes that the simple act of discussing this on the internet, has not steered electronic ears in your direction.... is sound asleep and I understand that. Someone eluded to it and I repeat this truth. In 1935 Germany... many citizens felt uneasy and sensed that doom was on the way. More laughed such talk off and continued to find reasons to smile and enjoy the day. We all know the end of that story.

“The new iPad was released!!!! Snooky had a meltdown! My Mac Pro is awesome!!! These trinkets that keep us giggling and focused on nothing.... this addiction to instant gratification..... this will be our downfall.

“There’s a storm brewing.” **CT**

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

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**With the US military working to roboticize the future battlefield, the American way of war is destined to be imbued with Terminator-style terror**  
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# I don't want to see their faces

**Christopher Cooper reacts upon hearing the news that an American soldier has murdered 17 civilians in Afghanistan**

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**Compensation will be paid. You betcha. We have a formula. I don't know, fifteen hunnerd bucks or so. Each!**  
.....

**T**he whole thing is regrettable, really. Shocking, truth to tell. And so sad, I'm sure, for those people, those blanket-wearing, beard-growing, false-god-worshiping, probably-related-to-terrorists, citizens of Afghanistan whose wives and children and babies were gunned down in their beds, shot, murdered, slaughtered, and then burned by one of America's finest early last month. But hey, what are ya gonna do? These things happen.

It seems the soldier in question was not, in fact, representative of our brave fighting men and women. He was just another in the continuing series of lone gunmen who have been shooting up the world here and overseas for as long as any of us have been reading the newspapers. David Cortright, the director of policy studies at Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, tells us "This may have been the act of a lone, deranged soldier." I saw a headline that said he was a rogue. OK; rogues do as often as not, "go rogue" as no less an authority than Sarah Palin would have us know. So given time to reflect a bit, I guess I'm sorry I impugned our noble troops.

President Barack Obama summed it up as succinctly and as eloquently as only a man of his unflappably cool reserve could, I suppose: "This incident is tragic

and shocking, and does not represent the exceptional character of our military and the respect that the United States has for the people of Afghanistan." Well there. And yer goddamn right, Mr. President. Our boys kick butt! We take it to 'em! We light up the friggin sky! They don't mess with the USA. and get away with it. You don't kill three thousand brave American heroes on September the eleventh, ten years ago, and expect your four year-old-girl to sleep in her own bed unmolested. Unkilled. Unburned. We do what needs to be done to keep America free, and sometimes along the way an enlisted man goes a little nuts. Just one. Just every little once in a while.

Mr. Obama got right on the telephone and called up our "partner" in this whole great reworking of Afghanistan, Mr. Hamid Karzai, and told him we were sorry. Or something like that. He expressed condolences. So did Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta. I'm sure those were awkward conversations, but you know, the buck does stop there, and that's why we pay those boys the long dollar. Speaking of which, compensation will be paid. You betcha. We have a formula. I don't know, fifteen hunnerd bucks or so. Each!

And we're even-handed and generous in spraying our condolences and compensations. When we kill civilians as a part

of our regularly scheduled, officially sanctioned, presidentially authorized drone strikes, it makes Mr. Obama sad, too. It is regrettable, of course, that so many children will insist on living in the same hovels as the alleged terrorists we need to kill, or with somebody who kind of looks like one of them or who might once have been associated with them in some way. We were attacked, you know, and candidate Obama said his predecessor wasn't prosecuting the Afghanistan adventure vigorously enough, but he would, and he for sure, by God has, hasn't he?

**Is there a difference?**

Does it feel different to be dead by drone than dead by M-1? Does Obama have nightmares? Did Bush? Do they wash their hands, trying to scrub off the blood? We do not doubt this particular atrocity was perpetrated by a young man gone leave of his senses, but we are not encouraged that he will be tried in a military court, found crazy, demoted, dismissed, given cursory mental health treatment and some time in an institution. We wonder if our Congress and our President should be pronounced crazy, too. Or maybe just criminal. And what about us, neighbor, in our complicity? We who elected them and will re-elect them or others just as cold and cruel and as able to calculate that the life of an Afghan child is not worth much compared to our unending and unyielding compulsion to exercise extreme power in pursuit of God only knows what.

Has anybody thought to ask Barbara Bush about this situation? You'll remember she said the victims of Hurricane Katrina the New Orleans cops herded into the Superdome (those they didn't shoot) so they could sweat and starve and suffer among piles of shit and debris for several days, had a pretty good deal: "And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so

this – this [chuckle] is working very well for them."

OK! You're way ahead of me here, aren't ya buddy? Take Mr. Samad Khan, a farmer who lost all 11 members of his family: wife, kids, maybe an old mom or a crippled dad, for all I know. Eleven times even a thousand dollars each will net him eleven grand. And I'll bet Afghanistan doesn't even tax dead baby compensation income. Do we pro-rate babies and old people?

Hell, old Mrs. Bush wouldn't really have any problem with the midnight murder run itself (yeah, I know, it was three a.m., but I can't pass a chance at a cheap alliteration without hooking it any more than Lieutenant Calley could leave a peasant hut un-incinerated). Sure, she was talking about her boy's Iraq adventure, but the emotion is surely transferable: "Why should we hear about body bags and deaths? Oh, I mean, it's not relevant. So why should I waste my beautiful mind on something like that?" A precious thing for sure, you bloated old bag; don't waste it. Aw, Jesus! That wasn't nice. I'm sorry, Mrs. Bush. My deepest condolences over the condition of your mind. Fuck, I'm sorry about your whole stupid family.

But I'm not here to "look backward." President Obama told us years ago there'd be none of that. And I'm not going to beat up Republicans. Why no less a liberal figure than Bill Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, said that, while it did seem a hard choice to make, she believed the deaths of half a million children in Iraq was a worthwhile price to pay to get old Saddam. So five hundred thousand, compared to a dozen or so....

And it's Monday, anyhow, and back to work, you know, and the weather looks good and the economy is incrementally better (experts say) and the job creators are working darned hard to create jobs for bums like you and me; gas isn't as expensive as it might be, all things considered,

.....  
**Does it feel different to be dead by drone than dead by M-1? Does Obama have nightmares? Did Bush? Do they wash their hands, trying to scrub off the blood?**  
 .....

.....  
**Say Sam Knox is missing his wife and kids and Anne Greene sits there numb and devastated as she looks at the blanket her child is wrapped in. Does that feel any different?**  
.....

and President Obama will probably get those lunatic Israelis to hold off bombing Iran until after he's re-elected (they can kill all the Palestinians they like, of course, because they're just, well, Palestinians for Christ's sake.) So this will fade away about as fast as that Koran burning did, don't you think?

But before we move on, why don't you do what I did this evening? Google around the WWW and stir up some photographs. Do it on your desktop if you still own one – the portables, the notebooks, the smart phones the cool kids all flash just don't give you the big picture. You might find the AP photo captioned "Anar Gul points to the body of her grandchild." You could see eight pictures the *New York Times* has assembled into a little slideshow.

Let Google Images round up whatever it can find (36,100,000 results in .19 seconds) under the search terms Afghanistan shootings. You'll see the bodies. The babies. And the faces of their families. We caption them, "the bereaved." These images should haunt you. Someday somebody related to some of these sufferers, these victims, these collaterally damaged souls, may try to kill you. And I have to tell you, I think you'll have it coming.

.....  
**If we were the victims**

Suppose a foreign army had been rummaging around the United States for a decade. They'd have built us some concrete-block elementary schools of course and drilled a few water wells. And their president or premier or prime minister would have secretly flown in under elaborate and expensive secrecy and security to shake hands with the soldiers and tell them what a good job they were doing bringing peace and stabilization to our misguided land, and who among us would not be grateful for that?

But then suppose, just occasionally, at intervals, one or several of those soldiers

or pilots or special forces teams or secret espionage units burned a bunch of civilians for no good reason any of us could see? Mowed 'em down. Ran 'em over with a tank. Busted in the door in the nighttime and gutshot somebody's old grandfather. Would that begin to take the glow off our gratitude?

OK, let's be specific. Forget the aforementioned Samad Khan and the grieving Anar Gul. Don't trouble yourself about the names of their children. (Do they even name their children like we do, these Muslims?) Pick any names that come to mind – good, honest, American names. Say Sam Knox is missing his wife and kids and Anne Greene sits there numb and devastated as she looks at the blanket her child is wrapped in. Does that feel any different? How much compensation would it take to make them get over it?

Come on, you cowardly bastard – look at those pictures! I know we don't read so much these days, but you might have run across the term empathy during some mandatory literature course back in high school or college. So. How does it feel?

My kid has annoyed me a time or two today. Loud, wild, antagonistic here and there. (He's seven.) I told him to stay off the rotten ice on the pond inlet stream while I was cutting bushes, but there he was, "I'm cold!", up to his knees in slush and muck and icewater, and we quit early and repaired to the woodstove to dry him out. (He did agree he ought have listened to my wise counsel.) Then again, he told me a dozen times he loved me. And when he just couldn't possibly get to sleep on his own, he had not the slightest trouble when I let him lie on the couch in my office as I wrote my little letter to you all out there.

And there he sleeps. And you could bomb my house and blow up my car and take away a leg and an arm and I might take your compensation check and relocate and regroup and nurse my grievances



in the barroom. But if you or you or you or anybody came in here and killed him, I don't care if you're Christian or Jew or Mohammedan or a pagan suckled in some creed outworn, if you hurt him accidentally or on purpose, under orders or because you snapped under the pressure of your third deployment. I'd just want to kill you. And I don't doubt I might kill you slowly and abuse your damned corpse in some ugly way. You and the guy behind you and the army that comes after that. I'd open you up and I'd nail you to the porch floor.

Oh, I'd be a bad person for doing so. Why, you might even say I'd become a terrorist, I suppose. And killing you wouldn't bring back my wonderful boy, because whatever God you might pray to or believe in only ever made one of him, and you killed him, and there could be no joy, no purpose, no happiness in my life after that other than getting to you and grinding you up and making you pay. You'd compensate me with your flesh for forty-two pounds and forty-four inches of boy. And if I went crazy enough (and I might, and anybody might), I might need to kill a whole lot more who seemed to me to be pretty much like you. And there we would be.

I'm done. The snow is almost gone, and

the pond will open up next week and the turtles come out of the mud, and Karter and I may just hatch some frog eggs in a tank in our kitchen. Because he won't be a pile of bones and guts soaking into a blanket in the back of a truck, you see. I'll gather him up now and dump him where I want him to sleep, and he'll wake in the morning to defy me and argue with me and disobey my firm instructions to do this or that, and to love me as I'll love him because that is how we evolved, and we do what we must do. As it is in Afghanistan and all over this world the United States of America thinks it owns.

Beware the rogue soldier, the corrupt government and the corporate press and the easy justification.

Come on. Just one more time. Look at their faces!

**CT**

*Christopher Cooper lives in Alna, Maine. He writes seldom, these days, because, really, what good does it do? He expects never again to vote for a Democrat or a Republican. He thinks everything will get much worse. Still, there's that boy, and if only for his sake he does sometimes, late at night, alone, erupt again in one of these little essays. Write him if you must at coop@tidewater.net. This essay first appeared at commondreams.org*

I went crazy enough (and I might, and anybody might), I might need to kill a whole lot more who seemed to me to be pretty much like you

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# Why the Falklands war couldn't happen today

The Britain that built the fleet of ships that sailed to the Falklands seems remote to us now, writes **Ian Jack**

.....  
"I'd let the Argies have this place tomorrow," a shepherd told me, "if they would just send over a couple of planeloads of women"  
.....

The beer of choice in the Falklands is Budweiser, or so I read in the *Guardian*, in Andy Beckett's account of life on the islands as we approach the 30th anniversary of the war. Beckett had travelled to the settlements of Goose Green and Darwin to see their annual sports week – horse racing, dog trials and sheep-shearing competitions – and there the Budweiser had been especially noticeable, drunk from cans by “heavy-set men in boiler suits, deeply tanned from the neck up”. Some things never change, I thought, because I too had been to the same sports week and seen the same kind of men standing next to the same ramshackle grandstand similarly swigging beer.

That was 34 years ago. In March 1978, the Darwin and Goose Green Sports Association held their centenary meeting, and I travelled with the islands' governor and his wife in a seaplane from Stanley. There were then no roads beyond the capital; the horses at Goose Green's races had been bred from pack animals, which, until the Land Rover arrived, were the Falklands' only land transport. But Land Rovers could take the best part of a day to cover a dozen trackless miles, and a pair of old De Havilland Beaver seaplanes remained the best way to get around.

The governor wore a deerstalker (this was an informal visit; a formal one required a cocked hat) and the pilot was a gruff old Scotsman, perhaps called “Mac”. He took the

plane over sparkling blue inlets and empty moorland until a few white houses with red roofs came into view at the edge of the sea. When we came ashore, I began to notice the unusual number of empty beer cans that had been tossed into the grass. Later, at a dance, entire tables were densely packed with filled ones. When the men had drunk enough to be reckless, they approached the women, who'd ranged themselves down one wall, and asked them for the pleasure of the next slow foxtrot or samba. Men outnumbered women two to one. “I'd let the Argies have this place tomorrow,” a shepherd told me, “if they would just send over a couple of planeloads of women.”

The beer then wasn't American. It was Tennent's lager. All across the Falklands, the models on empty Tennent's tins smiled up at you from beach and bog. An off-the-shoulder blouse or a negligee surmounted by a perm, and perfect teeth: Pat Lying Low, Linda in Dreamland, Penny at Night. These were Tennent's lovelies, photographed under the aegis of a Glasgow brewery and now abandoned 7,000 miles from home, too decorous even in 1978, and even in such a womanless place, to beguile anything other than a curious penguin. But at least the beer had been British, drunk by islanders who insisted on their Britishness.

The war four years later upheld that right. In the process, Goose Green got a bloodier

name than mutton canning had ever given it, and 255 men serving with the British forces died. The present government's official view is that we would do it all again if we had to. Retired admirals and generals doubt that we could – the question being, what would we do it with? The size of the taskforce that sailed to the South Atlantic 30 years ago could never be assembled now: where would Britain find 42 warships, 22 Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, 62 merchant ships? The taskforce had two aircraft carriers. Today there is none. And more than British sea power has passed away. To inspect the fleet list that shows where each ship was built and by which builder is to remind oneself of an industrial civilisation that now lies beneath the sea like Atlantis.

HMS Fearless, for example: built by Harland and Wolff, Belfast, steam turbines by English Electric. Or HMS Bristol: built by Swan Hunter, Newcastle. Or ill-fated HMS Coventry: built by Cammell Laird in Birkenhead. Or the Glamorgan (Vickers-Armstrong, Newcastle) or the Antrim (Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, Glasgow) or the Argonaut (Hawthorn Leslie, Hebburn on Tyne) or the Yarmouth (John Brown, Clydebank) or the Leeds Castle (Hall Russell, Aberdeen) or the tragic Sir Galahad (Alexander Stephen at Linthouse, Glasgow). Harland's in Belfast and Brown's in Clydebank also supplied the two big liners that were requisitioned as troopships, the Canberra and the QE2, while Barclay Curle in Glasgow built the Uganda that became the hospital ship.

This list could go on. Blythswood, Henry Robb, Yarrow, Scott Lithgow, Vosper's: obscure names today, but generations of workers once knew them. And now, apart from a few sites taken over by BAE Systems, almost all this marine manufacturing has gone. Towns on the old industrial estuaries and rivers still wonder what to do with the wasteland that tilts towards the water: the old slipways. Further back, a heap of brick indicates the ruins of a drawing office or engine house. A local paper headline holds out what

passes for hope: "Plans for new superstore."

In the coming weeks, whenever TV documentaries show that fleet of 30 years ago, we might think about the country that built these ships and how remote it now seems to us. It had a far stronger connection to what went before than what has happened since. The keel of the flagship, the carrier Hermes, had been laid down in Barrow in 1944; the design of the torpedoes that sank the Belgrano dated from around the same time. In 1982, it was just possible not to be surprised by these things. Veterans of the second world war were also still a part of the working world, to be found in suits and overalls anywhere from boardrooms to steel mills. The paradox of Mrs Thatcher is that while proclaiming a certain kind of Britishness, built around notions of its unconquerable self, she was destroying the basis of it. Even before the Falklands war was won, there had begun that quick march to industrial dereliction.

At Stanley in 1978 I visited the radio station, and found two versions of the national anthem, one labelled "solemn" and the other "triumphant". I wondered, in the piece I wrote at the time, which version the station would play "when and if the problem of the Falklands is eventually solved". This was too black and white a view. Two years later, Britain and Argentina came up with the solution known as leaseback, which, if it had worked, would have needed a third version of God Save the Queen, one marked "reasonably jolly".

Under leaseback, sovereignty went to Argentina but Britain retained possession under a long lease. The islanders rejected it as an ambiguous and sinister imposition from Whitehall, but we have all learned to live with equally porous notions of nationhood since. What will it mean, for example, if we lease our roads to a Chinese company – perhaps even to China itself – while retaining our "sovereignty" over them? Utilities, transport systems and factories are already substantially owned abroad. If the citizens of a nation state feel they have so little to protect, what then is the point of the navy and the flag? **CT**

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**The paradox of Mrs Thatcher is that while proclaiming a certain kind of Britishness, built around notions of its unconquerable self, she was destroying the basis of it**  
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**Ian Jack's latest book is "The Country Formerly Known as Great Britain, Selected Writings 1989-2009" (Vintage, £9.99) This essay was originally published in the guardian and is reprinted by permission of the author**  
 .....

# The workers' movement that led to May Day

Is the call for a general strike on May Day in keeping with the traditions of the working-class holiday? **Elizabeth Schulte** has the answer

.....  
**Many of the activists leading the call for a general strike explicitly view unions as the preserve of "privileged" workers**  
.....

**M**ay day is an international working-class holiday that originated in the US, but until recently was celebrated by few people in this country.

That changed starting in 2006, when a mass immigrant rights movement used May 1 as a national day of action to demonstrate for justice.

This year, May Day has a further resonance, coming after the rise of the Occupy movement that galvanized anger at the greed and power of the 1 percent. Activities this year can seek to draw in the people brought into political activity by Occupy and to deepen the renewed interest in the rich tradition of working-class struggle in the US

But among activists, there are different ideas about what May Day should mean. Some local movements are organizing around a call for a "general strike" on May 1. In reality, this won't be an actual general strike – a coordinated action by workers to stop production – but individual acts of protest, ranging from calling in sick at work to boycotting stores and other businesses.

This risks making the idea of strike action less meaningful, at a time when labor activists should be trying to revive the concept as a weapon in the struggle against the employers. Worse still, some anarchist ac-

tivists are planning confrontational direct actions that seem designed to emphasize their distance from wider layers of people.

The debate over a "general strike" on May Day is bound up with a broader issue of the relationship of the Occupy movement to traditional working-class organizations – most importantly, unions.

Many of the activists leading the call for a general strike explicitly view unions as the preserve of "privileged" workers. This is exemplified by a slogan adopted by some West Coast radicals that the Occupy movement represents not the 99 percent, but the 89 percent – that is, the "non-privileged" workers who are not organized into unions.

.....  
**Privileged elite?**

Both the broader conception that unions represent a "privileged elite" and the specific calls for a general strike will make it harder for the Occupy movement to use May Day as an opportunity to build a stronger connection to workers and labor. If these ideas prevail, May Day will be relegated to the actions of a self-selected few.

This whole approach neglects the actual history of May Day. May 1 is the anniversary of a real general strike for the eight-hour day in 1886, involving hundreds of thousands of workers across the US And



the Haymarket Martyrs, who were framed and sentenced to death following the general strike, were anarchists and socialists who were intimately involved in the labor movement of their time, as part of the larger working-class struggle for a just society.

**Massive organizing campaign**

The first May Day in 1886 was the culmination of a massive organizing campaign for a concrete demand that won the backing of tens of thousands of workers. The demand for the eight-hour day emerged from the factories, packinghouses and rail yards where workers regularly suffered through workdays longer than 14 hours.

The demand wasn't a new one – there had been an eight-hour campaign 20 years before. Actually, many states had eight-hour day laws on the books, but they weren't enforced, and bosses could use various loopholes to avoid adhering to them. Politicians, even some who claimed support for the eight-hour demand, looked the other way.

It was becoming clear that workers would have to organize themselves to make the eight-hour demand a reality in their workplaces.

There were debates among radicals at the time about whether the eight-hour demand even deserved their support – some thought it didn't go far enough or get at the heart of the real problem of capitalism. But many other socialists and anarchists, like Haymarket Martyrs Albert Parsons and August Spies, threw themselves into the demand for the eight-hour day and pulled other radicals behind them. They helped make Chicago the epicenter of the struggle.

Along with Spies, Parsons – who described himself as an anarchist, communist and socialist – helped found the International Working People's Association (IWPA) in Chicago, which gained a significant base in the city's radical immigrant

communities.

The Chicago group diverged from other such clubs around the country because – while agreeing that political action was futile and seeing the value in the use of force – it recognized the importance of trade union organization. This combination of anarchist principles and trade union activity became known as the "Chicago idea."

At first, the IWPA didn't support the eight-hour demand, declaring in its newspaper the *Alarm*, "To accede the point that capitalists have the right to eight hours of our labor is more than a compromise, it is a virtual concession that the wage system is right."

But when IWPA leaders saw how it inspired workers to take action, they changed their mind. Parsons explained that the group endorsed the eight-hour demand, "first, because it was a class movement against domination, therefore historical, and evolutionary, and necessary; and secondly, because we did not choose to stand aloof and be misunderstood by our fellow workers."

There were also debates among leaders of organized labor at the time over the eight-hour demand how to achieve it. The leaders of the largest working-class organization at the time, the Knights of Labor, supported the demand, but refused to back more militant methods of organizing for it, like striking – favoring instead methods such as letter-writing campaigns.

Despite this, however, members of the Knights of Labor – many of whom had joined during a huge rail strike the year before – organized walkouts and other local actions to press for the eight-hour day.

The spreading workers' sentiment compelled a smaller union organization, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions – which would later become the American Federation of Labor – to not only endorse the movement but call for a general strike on May 1.

In preparation for the May 1 general

**The demand for the eight-hour day emerged from the factories, packinghouses and rail yards where workers regularly suffered through workdays longer than 14 hours**

The Haymarket Martyrs didn't view themselves as enlightened activists whose individual actions would set workers in motion

strike, organizers reached out to workplaces everywhere. Workers could show what side they were on by wearing "eight-hour shoes," smoking "eight-hour tobacco" and singing the "eight-hour song."

As labor historian Philip Foner writes: "[T]housands of workers, skilled and unskilled, men and women, Negro and white, native and immigrant, were drawn into the struggle for the shorter workweek." By mid-April 1886, Foner wrote, "Almost a quarter of a million industrial workers were involved in the movement, and so powerful was the upsurge that about 30,000 workers had already been granted a nine- or eight-hour day."

Workers organized in their workplaces to prepare for the coming strike, and on that day, some 190,000 workers walked out around the country. The preparation for a walkout was so great that the threat of the strike won the eight-hour demand for tens of thousands of workers before it even began.

Brutally crushed

The incident in Chicago's Haymarket Square represented a recognition by the bosses and the government that the workers' movement had to be crushed, brutally and decisively.

Police had led an attack on strikers on a picket line on the city's South Side, and a rally was called for Haymarket to protest the attack. The demonstration was nearly over when police started advancing on the crowd. A bomb was thrown into the ranks of the police - it is still unknown by who.

Leaders of the Chicago labor movement were blamed for the death of police, even though the state never connected any of the

eight to the bombing. Prosecutors played on the image of the bomb-throwing anarchist to vilify the working-class leaders and win death sentences against seven of them. On November 11, 1887, Parsons, Spies and two others were hung. Louis Lingg cheated the hangman by committing suicide the night before.

The Haymarket Martyrs are part of the rich tradition of the US working-class movement. In looking back on their history, it's important to recognize that these leaders of the eight-hour movement didn't view themselves as enlightened activists whose individual actions would set workers in motion. They involved themselves in a mass working-class movement, whose united action on May 1, 1886, showed the power workers have when they organize to struggle collectively.

May Day 2012 is an opportunity to strengthen the connections between unions and Occupy, and help rebuild some of the power demonstrated last fall, especially in New York City, when the labor movement called out its forces to defend Occupy Wall Street.

As a call by Occupy Chicago puts forward, May Day should be a day of action for the 99 percent - in which activists continue the concrete struggles taking place in every city, against foreclosures, police brutality, school privatizations and much more.

And May Day should be used to recapture the lessons of the struggles of the past - for a new generation of activists to put them to use in a movement for a better future.

CT

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## This World (1)

**It seems to me to be a wholly consistent cock-up for Edinburgh to have a no ball games sign above a set of goals painted onto someone's wall – great excuse for a quick game, though – Monkus, Edinburgh, Scotland**

Polis: Ye cannae play fitba' here, lads

Player 1: Why no'?

Polis: Causey the sign there

Player 2: What dis it say?

Polis: Nae ba' games, that means nae fitba'. Can ye no read?

Player 1: Naw ah cannae, ahm only four years auld. If we arnae allowed tae play here why did yes paint goalposts?

Polis: It wis the cooncil's idea, that's art that is

Player 2: Is the cooncil daft? Why wid they dae something like that

## Send us your Photos

*This World is a new feature in ColdType in which we invite readers to send photographs that capture a slice of the world in which we live. Please send photographs, which should be 240dpi (jpeg format, black/white or colour) to: [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)*

# Putin returns

He'll prevent some of the West's worst excesses, writes **Philip Kraske**

.....  
**While Clinton never really had much of a foreign policy, he did have enough sense to stay out of trouble**  
.....

**J**ohn le Carré, that sage Solzenitsyn of the West, was right when he wrote, “There were even voices – mine was one – that suggested Mr. Putin join Slobodan Milosevic on trial in The Hague. Let’s do them both together.”

But since Vladimir Putin has returned to centre stage in Russia again, having re-taken the presidency, let’s look at the silver lining of this political cloud. Of course, to do so, we’ll need to look beyond what Pepe Escobar calls, “the relentless demonization of Putin and the myriad attempts to delegitimize Russia’s presidential elections,” which he says come from the mouthpieces of “some very angry and powerful sections of Washington and Anglo-American elites.

What silver lining? The possibility that the neocon agenda, started under George W. and continued vigorously under Barack, might be blunted for a few years.

Putin has twice been suckered by tricky language in the United Nations, once to allow an invasion of Iraq and second to allow “humanitarian intervention” in Libya to turn into the resistance-movement’s air force and special-ops teams. Well, good-bye to all that. As Russia’s veto on Syria showed, there will be no more monkey business at the UN.

In a sense, Putin and the Cold War are the political equivalent of the Glass-Steagall Act. This law, which separated normal

banking operations from investment business, allowed a half-century of smoothly functioning financial markets. But it was repealed, and the financial barons soon made a hash of things.

Similarly in the political realm, when the Cold War ended, the little Napoleon neocons that populate America’s foreign-, security-, and military-policy circles, joyfully proclaimed America “the world’s only superpower.”

But with Bill Clinton in the White House, the 90s were a seething, frothing, bitter decade for neocons, desperate to take the only superpowderdom out on the open road and let it run.

And while Clinton never really had much of a foreign policy, he did have enough sense to stay out of trouble. So he allowed bombing runs over Iraq for years after the first war there ended, but resisted the many calls from the right to go back to Iraq and finish Saddam off.

This period ended with 9-11, which was the foreign-policy equivalent of the dismissal of Glass-Steagall. If 9-11 hadn’t come along, the neocons would have had to invent it, and they probably did.

We now know how these ambitions, political and financial, have ended: disaster for the planet, with those responsible tiptoeing away from the mess – fortunes and reputations intact – all screaming defenses of the



indefensible.

How I wish the guys who made the movie *Inside Job* would do a similar film on that inside job at the World Trade Center.

So the return of Vladimir Putin to the Kremlin is not all bad. There will be no more cynical R2P, no more nonsense about protecting Europe from Iranian missiles, no more American bases on Russia's southern flank, no more chipping away at China's resource bases because Russia will happily make up whatever Libyas the Americans take away. Countries under stiff pressure from America, like Pakistan and Iran, will find a little relief in Putin's sniper eyes.

Yes, the neocons and their buddies in the media will rail and rant against him, just as

the financial boys rail and rant still – still, if you can believe it – against regulation. But with Putin giving back snarl for snarl, for the first time in years the neocons may have to scale back their ambitions. If the result is a nice, boring, Cold War-type stasis, so much the better. The world could use a break from a decade of America's Napoleonic tantrums..

But it's a funny world when you have to count on the likes of Vladimir Putin, and perhaps the Chinese, to keep the world on an even keel. **CT**

*Philip Kraske is an American author living in Madrid, Spain. His latest book, "Flight in February", is now available at Amazon.com*

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**Countries under stiff pressure from America, like Pakistan and Iran, will find a little relief in Putin's sniper eyes**  
 .....

## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt





# A manifesto for psychopaths

George Monbiot refutes the ideas that transformed Ayn Rand into the Karl Marx of the new right

.....  
Rand's is the philosophy of the psychopath, a misanthropic fantasy of cruelty, revenge and greed  
.....

**I**t has a fair claim to be the ugliest philosophy the post-war world has produced. Selfishness, it contends, is good, altruism evil, empathy and compassion are irrational and destructive. The poor deserve to die; the rich deserve unmediated power. It has already been tested, and has failed spectacularly and catastrophically. Yet the belief system constructed by Ayn Rand, who died 30 years ago last month, has never been more popular or influential.

Rand was a Russian from a prosperous family who emigrated to the United States. Through her novels (such as *Atlas Shrugged*) and her non-fiction (such as *The Virtue of Selfishness*) she explained a philosophy she called Objectivism. This holds that the only moral course is pure self-interest. We owe nothing, she insists, to anyone, even to members of our own families. She described the poor and weak as “refuse” and “parasites”, and excoriated anyone seeking to assist them. Apart from the police, the courts and the armed forces, there should be no role for government: no social security, no public health or education, no public infrastructure or transport, no fire service, no regulations, no income tax.

*Atlas Shrugged*, published in 1957, depicts a United States crippled by government intervention, in which heroic millionaires struggle against a nation of spongers. The millionaires, whom she portrays as Atlas

holding the world aloft, withdraw their labour, with the result that the nation collapses. It is rescued, through unregulated greed and selfishness, by one of the heroic plutocrats, John Galt.

The poor die like flies as a result of government programmes and their own sloth and fecklessness. Those who try to help them are gassed. In a notorious passage, she argues that all the passengers in a train filled with poisoned fumes deserved their fate. One, for example, was a teacher who taught children to be team players; one was a mother married to a civil servant, who cared for her children; one was a housewife “who believed that she had the right to elect politicians, of whom she knew nothing”.

.....  
**Philosophy of the psychopath**

Rand's is the philosophy of the psychopath, a misanthropic fantasy of cruelty, revenge and greed. Yet, as Gary Weiss shows in his new book *Ayn Rand Nation*, she has become to the new right what Karl Marx once was to the left: a demi-god at the head of a chiliastic cult. Almost one-third of Americans, according to a recent poll, have read *Atlas Shrugged*, and it now sells hundreds of thousands of copies every year.

Ignoring Rand's evangelical atheism, the Tea Party movement has taken her to its heart. No rally of theirs is complete without

placards reading “Who is John Galt?” and “Rand was right”. Ayn Rand, Weiss argues, provides the unifying ideology which has “distilled vague anger and unhappiness into a sense of purpose.” She is energetically promoted by the broadcasters Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh and Rick Santelli. She is the guiding spirit of the Republicans in Congress.

Like all philosophies, Objectivism is absorbed second-hand by people who have never read it. I believe it is making itself felt on this side of the Atlantic: in the clamorous new demands to remove the 50p tax band for the very rich, for example, or among the sneering, jeering bloggers who write for the *Telegraph* and the *Spectator*, mocking compassion and empathy, attacking efforts to make the world a kinder place.

It is not hard to see why Rand appeals to billionaires. She offers them something that is crucial to every successful political movement: a sense of victimhood. She tells them that they are parasitised by the ungrateful poor and oppressed by intrusive, controlling governments.

It is harder to see what it gives the ordinary teabaggers, who would suffer grievously from a withdrawal of government. But such is the degree of misinformation which saturates this movement and so prevalent in the US is Willy Loman Syndrome (the gulf between reality and expectations) that millions blithely volunteer themselves as billionaires’ doormats.

I wonder how many would continue to worship at the shrine of Ayn Rand if they knew that towards the end of her life she signed on for both Medicare and Social Security. She had railed furiously against both programmes, as they represented everything she despised about the intrusive state. Her belief system was no match for the realities of age and ill-health.

But they have a still more powerful reason to reject her philosophy: as Adam Curtis’s documentary showed last year, the most devoted member of her inner circle was Alan

Greenspan. Among the essays he wrote for Ayn Rand were those published in a book he co-edited with her called *Capitalism: the Unknown Ideal*. Here, starkly explained, you’ll find the philosophy he brought into government. There is no need for the regulation of business – even builders or Big Pharma – he argued, as “the ‘greed’ of the businessman or, more appropriately, his profit-seeking ... is the unexcelled protector of the consumer.” As for bankers, their need to win the trust of their clients guarantees that they will act with honour and integrity. Unregulated capitalism, he maintains, is a “superlatively moral system”.

Once in government, Greenspan applied his guru’s philosophy to the letter, lobbying to cut taxes for the rich and repeal the laws constraining the banks, refusing to regulate the predatory lending and the derivatives trading which eventually brought the system down. Much of this is already documented, but Weiss shows that in the US Greenspan has successfully airbrushed this history.

Despite the many years he spent at her side, despite his previous admission that it was Rand who persuaded him that “capitalism is not only efficient and practical but also moral,” he mentioned her in his memoirs only to suggest that it was a youthful indiscretion, and this, it seems, is now the official version.

Weiss presents powerful evidence that even today Greenspan remains her loyal disciple, having renounced his partial admission of failure to Congress.

Saturated in her philosophy, the new right on both sides of the Atlantic continues to demand the rollback of the state, even as the wreckage of that policy lies all around. The poor go down, the ultra-rich survive and prosper. Ayn Rand would have approved. **CT**

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**I wonder how many would continue to worship at the shrine of Ayn Rand if they knew that towards the end of her life she signed on for both Medicare and Social Security**  
 .....

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

# Bruce Springsteen's call to battle

The Boss has returned with a battle cry for the 99 per cent,  
says **Richard Pithouse**

.....  
**His abundance of  
albums and songs  
have often allowed  
audiences to feel  
that the music  
is about them  
and for them**  
.....

**I**n 1975 *Born to Run*, Bruce Springsteen's magnificent third album, crashed on to American radio with a dramatic lyrical intensity riding a rushing wall of rock and soul. *Time* and *Newsweek* put him on their covers in the same week and at 26 he found himself, along with Bob Dylan, as the newest avatar in the tradition of popular artists that, beginning with Walt Whitman and rolling on through Woody Guthrie, Lead Belly and John Steinbeck have brought a sympathetic poetic attention to the lives and struggles of ordinary Americans.

Springsteen has redeemed that promise for almost 40 years with a rare ability to match artistic integrity with popular success. He's brought an astonishing commitment to three hour long shows that offer audiences a sense of community and solidarity rather than the spectacle into which popular music has often descended.

And his abundance of albums and songs have often allowed audiences to feel that the music is about them and for them, or about people who may seem different but are ultimately like them, rather than an invitation to worship at the alter of celebrity. Springsteen is cited as an influence by filmmakers, writers, actors and musicians from Run-D.M.C. to Ani diFranco.

Springsteen has twice recorded albums that have become part of the collective experience and memory of a generation.

In 1984 *Born in the USA*, with the rousing chorus of the title track famously misunderstood by Ronald Reagan, became a national soundtrack to a moment.

And in 2002 *The Rising*, drawing on Sufi devotional music and informed by conversations with families who had lost relatives to the attacks on the World Trade Centre, became the definitive popular attempt to make sense of 9/11.

Springsteen has also recorded albums that were never designed for the charts but have an integrity and creative intensity that gives them a slow burning power that inspires people, and all kinds of new artistic work, year after year.

*Nebraska*, released in 1982 is a lyrically and sonically stark take on the underside of Reagan's America. In 1995 *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, an exquisite album initially inspired by John Ford's classic cinematic interpretation of John Steinbeck's great novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, marked a shift in the staging of Springsteen's characters from the streets of New Jersey to Southern California. The Marys gave way to Marias and the strategy for getting out changed from a fast car out of small town New Jersey to a slow walk across the desert from Mexico into California.

Springsteen has become more politically committed as he got older. His 2006 album, *The Seeger Sessions*, a rambunctious

foot stomping collection of old folk songs that had been recorded by the communist folk singer Pete Seeger, was an important moment in that trajectory. Forging a direct connection to the popular radicalism of the folk tradition, often linked to the labour and communist movements, has enabled Springsteen to, like all the figures in the tradition stretching back to Whitman, develop a vision of America that is inclusive and directly committed to the struggles of ordinary women and men to win and hold a place in America.

This willingness to contest the meaning of the American promise is critically important in a time when conservative elites are, in a manner that has collapsed into straight-up lunacy in the Republican Party, trying to tie patriotism into militarism, war, religious fundamentalism and the vicious scapegoating of blacks, gay people, migrants, single mothers and anyone else on to whom they can deflect popular anger.

But Springsteen's new album, *Wrecking Ball*, marks a decisive shift in his public politics. It includes elements that have long marked his work – laments for stillborn dreams and lives that haven't been able to come to bloom as well as hymns to endurance and solidarity. But there are also striking differences with his earlier work. For one thing the musical pallet that he draws on in this album – which includes gospel, country, Irish jigs, hip-hop, drum loops and samples from Alan Lomax's recordings of American roots music – is broader than on any previous album.

And this album, which is largely about men and work, is also a straightforward call to battle in the tradition of the radical popular culture of the 1930s. Springsteen has written martial calls to overcome before but they've taken the form of a call to personal escape or perseverance and community in difficult times. Here he issues a direct call to arms against a system where 'The gambling man rolls the dice/Working man pays the bills':

*Send the robber barons straight to hell  
The greedy thieves who came around  
And ate the flesh of everything they found  
Whose crimes have gone unpunished now*

In *Jack of All Trades*, he sings to keep up the faith of a man willing to do anything for a buck while 'The banker man grows fat, the working man grows thin'. But there's also a new and more directly confrontational sentiment:

*So you use what you've got and you learn to make do  
You take the old, you make it new  
If I had me a gun, I'd find the bastards and shoot 'em on sight*

Springsteen's work has been preoccupied with war since the drummer in his first band was sent to Vietnam and didn't come back. He's often contrasted the prospects of returning veterans with the promise of America to implicitly raise the question of exactly who is fighting for what and for whom. In *Youngstown*, a lament to the world lost with the deindustrialisation of America on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* album, he had observed that 'Them big boys did what Hitler couldn't do'. On *Wrecking Ball* this idea is fleshed out. He returns to his song *My Hometown*, another lament, this time off the *Born in the USA* album in which he sang that:

*They're closing down the textile mill across the railroad tracks  
Foreman says these jobs are going boys and they ain't coming back  
This time around, in *Death to My Hometown*, the lament has turned into an Irish rebel song, a war song backed by Tom Morello of *Rage Against the Machine* on guitar that declares that:  
No shells ripped the evening sky, no cities burning down  
No army stormed the shores for which we'd die, no dictators were crowned*

.....

**This willingness to contest the meaning of the American promise is critically important when conservative elites are trying to tie patriotism into militarism, war, religious fundamentalism and the vicious scapegoating of blacks, gay people, migrants, single mothers and anyone else on to whom they can deflect popular anger**

.....

Bankers are starting to show some signs of panic and must be starting to get the sense that the tide is turning against the lie that we all have a stake in their wealth

*I awoke from a quiet night, I never heard a sound  
The marauders raided in the dark and brought death to my hometown, boys  
Death to my hometown  
They destroyed our families, factories, and they took our homes  
They left our bodies on the plains, the vultures picked our bones*

But while this album is a call to arms its militant will to confrontation, to ensure that ‘the money changers in this temple will not stand’, is also, in some respects, a symptom of regression. In *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, Springsteen’s sublime fourth album released in 1978, dreams and desires for a better life are posed against work. Factory, based on his father’s experience of factory work, gives, in a little over two minutes, a searing critique of alienated labour:

*End of the day, factory whistle cries,  
Men walk through these gates with death in their eyes.  
And you just better believe, boy,  
Somebody’s gonna get hurt tonight,  
It’s the working, the working, just the working life.  
Just over thirty years later Springsteen is singing that:  
Freedom, son, is a dirty shirt  
The sun on my face and my shovel in the dirt...  
Pick up the rock, son, carry it on  
What’s a poor boy to do but keep singing his song*

He’s not alone in this nostalgia for work as it used to be for people in union jobs before capital extracted itself from social obligation by stepping into a global arena while

unions and elected representatives were left, at best, on a national stage. He used to lament exploitation and drudgery. Now he sings a lament to the lives lost to the monster whose taste for flesh has no regard to skills or faith:

*We’ve been swallowed up  
Disappeared from this world*

In the face of social abandonment exploitation often seems attractive and Springsteen’s nostalgia is certainly not his alone. But this nostalgia is a mark of how much has been lost to the marauding alliance of politicians and capitalists that promised a brave new world for everyone and left devastation for the majority while they grew fabulously rich behind botox, designer labels, high walls and increasingly brutal police.

Springsteen supported the Obama campaign in 2008. He’s indicated that he’s unlikely to do the same this year and has made it clear that this album is both inspired by and for the Occupy movement. It’s too early to say whether or not *Wrecking Ball* will become one of the Springsteen albums that marks a moment in time. But the first performance of some of the new songs at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem was received with rapturous acclaim. The bankers, who are still taking their bonuses but are starting to show some signs of panic – such as paying universities to tell students that Ayn Rand is a philosopher and an important contributor to American literature – must be starting to get the sense that the tide is turning against the lie that we all have a stake in their wealth. **CT**

*John Pithouse teaches politics at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.*

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# Dicing in the street

Inspired by Bruce Springsteen, a short story from **PuzzleMonkey**

*This story was inspired by the dark, magnificent and criminally forgotten Bruce Springsteen album, **Darkness on the Edge of Town** ...*

## 1. Something in the Night

Those who know where to park on the edges of Cape Town on a Saturday night can taste the adrenalin in the wind. It hangs low above Cravenby, or Langa, or Strandfontein, in the sting of petrol fumes in the eyes and the growl of bored-out and kitted cylinders. It is a voice of blackness and night.

For those who know how to smell it soaks through the air.

It is in Bruce's swagger as he walks out of the Seven Eleven, two Red Bulls in his hand. His little joke is that their car is so pumped up it gives Red Bull wings.

A Datsun broadsides into the parking lot, almost over Bruce's feet, but he doesn't flinch. A Datsun with an engine pumping the growl of an animal too big to fit properly under the raised bonnet, but he doesn't care. They can put a Mirage engine in it, and he will still piss on it in a straight heat.

He walks up to a metallic maroon Chevy, old but immaculate, where Sonny is tinkering under the bonnet and nudges the mechanic with one of the drinks. They have been on the scene for years, since they were lighties too young to even buy driver's li-

censes. The Chev is their masterpiece, a 4.1 litre Kommando that hums with perfection. He found it, busted, waiting on its bricks, next to a conked in tumble dryer in the back yard of a Muslim shop. The owner was selling his house in order to move to some fancy renovated place in the Bo-Kaap where a wreck on blocks was a badge of failure.

He sat and haggled all day, out waited the old Muslim till the Chev was his. That night they carted it away on a flatbed trailer, him and Sonny. They built it up piece by carefully searched, sanded and handfitted piece over two years and every cent they had. Sonny overbored, carb-kitted and fuel-injected the engine while Bruce scoured the whole of Cape Town for every missing part, every bit of original styling.

Now they are the terror of Saturday night. Sonny sets them up and then Bruce just mows them down on the highway.

Sonny closes the bonnet and grins. Bruce hands him a Bull and they clink. Tonight, thinks Bruce, tonight. He's going to shut them down from the first heat, starting with the windbag in the Datsun.

He grins at Sonny.

## 2. Adam Raised a Cain

Sunday morning.

Bruce is in a battle with his bladder. He grins, thinking of how Sonny must be feeling, or will feel when he eventually wakes

.....  
**A Datsun broadsides into the parking lot, almost over Bruce's feet, but he doesn't flinch. A Datsun with an engine pumping the growl of an animal too big to fit properly under the raised bonnet, but he doesn't care**  
 .....

.....  
**A Camaro hangs low on its fat rear tires, chassis inches above the tar. It is racing blue with a silver lightning bolt along each side, a scooped air vent and a spoiler on its boot. Left hand drive. At the bottom of the blue and white number plate is tiny lettering that reads "Los Angeles"**  
.....

up and the backfire of twelve whiskies hits him. But hey, they had a lot to celebrate.

He can hear his parents in the lounge of the tiny Silvertown house, getting ready to go to church. They snap and snipe at each other over this and that, but bugger it. If they want to fight, let them. He's feeling way too good for that shit. If only his bladder wasn't pushing him out the door this minute....

At least he doesn't have a hangover. That's one consolation of being a non-drinker. But hey, when you're celebrating blowing off the Datsun so that it didn't even make it into your rear view mirror, then crushing the usual Sierra brigade, and celebrating in the company of drunks, you end up drinking ginger beer like a bored-out, souped-up Ford. And then your bladder gets to know all about it.

Pinching, squeezing, he gets up and inches crablike to the door. God, why can't they just bloody go to church? Do they *have* to perform? He breathes deep to hold back the flood, but it's no good. He pulls on his gown and rushes into the passage. There is almost enough space to squeeze past his mother as she bends into the mirror, adjusting her hat and her lipstick and her coat and her handbag and God knows what.

Long sleeves. One of those nights.

His father lays in with the sarcasm as soon as he gets to the lounge. Bruce points at the toilet and shoves past into the little room.

He sighs, eyes closed, as the tension arcs out of him. A white guy, in a BMW, last night, hadn't been there before, no one knew him and the car didn't look like it had been modified. Once Bruce had demolished all the others the guy asked him to dice. He nearly just laughed, but hey.

And that straight looking BM, with its driver who could have been a salesman in his father's office, that BM nearly beat him. So nearly. It screamed away with such a speed that he only managed, just, to haul

it in moments before they went under the bridge.

After the finishing line it became a matter of pride. Bruce couldn't shake him, even when hitting 240, 260, way, way down the road. The guy just wouldn't let up until Bruce swerved down the Eerste River offramp and the BM just howled down the highway into the night.

Bruce leans back, sighing with relief.

More relief, it's quiet in the lounge.

He heads out, almost straight into his father. The man's obviously decided to make his wife wait in the car, be late for church and fret for the rest of the day, just so that he can carry on and on again. Bruce is wasting his life, isn't good for anything, he could have gone to any college he wanted to. At the very least he could have had a decent job at Old Mutual Insurance where his father works. Maybe, just this once, if he doesn't want to think about getting a proper job with some kind of future, then he could go to church at least. This one time. For his mother.

Bruce has learnt that there is no answer to this. He just shuts his bedroom door in the old man's face.

### 3. I met her on the Strip Three Years Ago

The next Saturday, there is something new in the air, a tension Bruce can almost touch as he slowly circles into the parking lot.

A Camaro hangs low on its fat rear tires, chassis inches above the tar. It is racing blue with a silver lightning bolt along each side, a scooped air vent and a spoiler on its boot. Left hand drive. At the bottom of the blue and white number plate is tiny lettering that reads "Los Angeles". The oh-so-slight summer's breeze does nothing to cool the night down.

She stands with a group of the usual misfits, *moegoes* and *malletjies* by the same Datsun that isn't quite a Datsun. A vision in a long red dress, high-heeled boots, a Spanish jacket with thin tassles and a cascading honey blonde mane. She flirts with

the group, laughing, floating on the extraordinary energy of the night. Or, perhaps, the source of it.

They park and Sonny's moth draws straight to the red dressed flame. Bruce ignores the pull. He saunters into the Seven Eleven instead. He doesn't have to look to know that she is looking, asking the group oh-so-casually cool who he is, and them forced to answer, downplaying it but having to admit that he is the Boss of this highway.

He is so busy not looking that he almost walks straight into the chunk of a man strolling out of the shop. The man's arms are full, counting his change, trying to get his head straight around this 7/11 Rand/Dollar/Pound thing. The hulking leather jacket shouts and swerves just before he and Bruce bash into each other. He struggles to keep hold of his change, two drinks, a box of chocolates and several small packets with pies, rolls and such, but it's too much for his coordination.

Bruce ducks the man, scoops the flying chocolate box and hands it to him, apologising with a hint of a smile.

The man glares at him, snatches the box, says something in a strong American accent and stomps off to the group. He hands the chocolates and a drink to the girl. When he says the word *Candy*, it isn't entirely clear if he means the sweets, or if that's her name. Bruce decides that the name suits her, but more in the sense of chilli sherbert, spicy, a little dangerous and very, very sweet. Candy tosses her hair back, laughs loudly with the American, hooks her arm in his and steers him towards the Camero with just the slightest half-glance in Bruce's direction.

#### 4. Prove it All Night

At the highway there is a whole extra blanket of tension cooking on top of the Saturday excitement.

Bruce cleans up his heats as usual. The Camaro messes the Datsun, laughs at Mailie's souped-up, fat-wheeled triple-carb

Mustang and a couple of others. After every dice Sonny is straight under the bonnet of the Chev, tweaking this and adjusting that, all to coax a last handful of revs out of the already purring machine.

Candy thrills to it all. She shrieks like a deranged soccer fan when the Camaro screams away in smoke and burning rubber, cheers the drivers in other dices and makes all the guys crazy with her laugh and those magnificent eyes. Bruce manages a couple of short chats with her. This riles the American and adds another dimension to their inevitable race.

Waiting for this gets everyone in a buzz. The losers he blew off earlier, or in the past weeks, are raving that he is finally going to get his.

There is really only one person who can drop the scarf to start the last dice. She sits in the open window of the Mustang, one hand on the roof, the other waving her scarf high above her head as the engines shriek. Bruce sweetly hits his stride exactly as she lets it drop, enough of a split second to leave the Camaro in his smoke. The bigger car fills his mirror, almost blotting out the Mustang trundling behind. Candy leans high up out of the window, shouting, waving them on. For a few seconds it looks as if the American is going to close in on him but the Kommando hits the magical 200 moments before going under the bridge, lengths ahead.

Sonny is going ballistic when Bruce coasts back to the finish line. All the guys, even the ones who were calling for his ass to get kicked, mob Bruce for having kept the Cape in shape against the American. The whitey has just kept running, probably all the way to Macassar before turning around. Eventually he crawls in, almost inch by inch, just in time to see Candy giving Bruce a big winner's kiss. He screams at Candy that she dropped the hanky too quickly, demands a re-race, makes excuses, yells that they're leaving.

She refuses to get in the Camaro, saying the evening isn't finished yet and that

.....

**She sits in the open window of the Mustang, one hand on the roof, the other waving her scarf high above her head as the engines shriek**

.....

.....  
**Staying up too late dicing, then coming home to a silence is a terrible way to get ready for this early in the morning. The worst is the silence of someone who won't admit that she isn't asleep**  
.....

he shouldn't be an asshole just for losing. He gets out and marches up to her. Bruce steps in between, warning him. The American starts stripping off his leather jacket. He hesitates, sleeve halfway down his arm, when he sees Sonny hefting a shifting spanner the size of a baseball bat. Several of the crowd edge closer, fingers lightly running around their back pockets or inside their jackets.

He orders Candy to get in the car, and when she refuses he spins round with a set of choice words for them all, along with her and this goddam country.

### 5. In Candy's Room

Candy lives in a tiny two bedroomed house in Salt River. Posters of Mandela and Marilyn Manson face each other. On the left of the Father of the Nation is Ulrike Meinhoff in red beret, holding an Uzi. On his right is the Virgin Mary, serene in a neon-coloured Liverpool shawl.

It's four thirty in the morning. They've driven round half the Peninsula, but now Bruce and Candy talk, play, laugh, and flirt. Pulling close and then finding an excuse to break away. Going outside to show him the mini cactuses she grows, or changing the record, or making another cup of tea that goes cold on the side table.

They scoff the box of chocolates, feeding, teasing each other. Later they dance, slow caressing to some old Jazz tune and a Beethoven record. He doesn't care, because the kiss, when it happens, easily, naturally sweeps him away as he knew it would, swirling, completely light headedly, gonad tighteningly, skin tinglingly, so totally opposite to, yet exactly that moment when there's only the flattened throttle and the roar of the engine.

\*\*\*\*\*

### 6. The Working Life

Candy's Room, three years later.

Morning. A factory whistle screams

somewhere down the road.

Bruce struggles to get up. His fingers stutter on buttons as he dresses in a daze. Candy pulls the blankets over her head. Bruce stumbles from the bathroom to the kitchen, shaking the water out of his eyes. Staying up too late dicing, then coming home to a silence is a terrible way to get ready for this early in the morning. The worst is the silence of someone who won't admit that she isn't asleep. He roots through the sink for a clean cup, then gives up and opens the fridge.

Sandwiches. Well, that's good. He takes the bag, heads out the door and gets in his Chev.

On the way to Epping he drives past Old Mutual. Every day he tries not to, and every day he thinks of the last time he saw the man.

Two years ago he moved the last of his things from the parents' house to Candy's. The old man still wouldn't stop his moaning about his job and his dicing and his friends and his uselessness. He had come *that* close to finally *moering* him and only his mother's pleading stopped a really ugly thing. If he had started punching him, he doesn't know if he would have stopped. He walked out of that house knowing the bastard was going to take it out on her, trembling almost too much to carry the last of his boxes.

Now his mother tells him the old man's liver is about to give in. Funny, that a man who only ever drank a thimble of communion wine can have a liver collapse. And after so many years of breaking paper on the insurance rock-face his pension is too piss little to let him off work. So he shuffles into the gulag day after day, staring out of his window, wondering what it was for.

Blaming his son, most likely.

Epping fits his mood like a winter's coat with its grey factories and sea of concrete. He works his sheet cutter mechanically the whole day long. Sheet up, sheet on, handle down, engage twenty-five seconds for the cut, release, handle up, press the drop lever,

hear the cut forms drop into the collector trays, blanks out and onto the junk trolley, sheet up, sheet on and on and on.

Sonny works a drill press on a bench diagonally opposite. He and Bruce don't talk. Have hardly talked at all for some months. No reason, it's just worked that way. As Bruce and Candy became more and more a couple he and Sonny had less and less to say. Candy came to racing less often until she stopped altogether. Bruce would arrive later and leave earlier, making up for this by getting more intense in the racing itself.

Sonny has a bottle of Klipdrift brandy in the casing of his press. One shot every twenty minutes. The bottle is finished by the time the five o'clock siren goes, though he never slips once in his work. Only his eyes get blearier as the hands creep their way inch by agonising inch along the face of the fly-shit spattered clock.

### 7. Streets of Fire

Tonight it's a different highway, out in the darkness past Somerset. There's a smaller group of cars and no hangers-on or girl friends. The Cravenby scene became too much of a party for Bruce, with too few people serious about the dicing.

Out here it is different. It is really dark, except for the car lights and small groups huddled with torches. Hands clutch, count and pass wads of notes in a steady storm of betting. Even without Sonny's touch on the engine, Bruce wins more than he loses, and many of the regulars won't take him on.

He sees Candy's face in the reflections in tinted windows and in the dipped headlights. Her eyes look at him from the black sky, even when he's roaring past the parked Cruiser that marks the finish.

The yellow Sierra has been trying too hard for the last few weeks but it's never been tuned quite right. Tonight it runs off the road, flips over and before they can get to it to pull the driver free it bursts into flame. Moments later the fuel tank explodes, light-

ing up the whole night.

The cars scatter, stunned, sobered. Bruce takes the pass into and over the mountains. All the way up he can see a pinpoint of blazing orange in his mirrors. In the flat stretch of countryside winding down to Riverdale he shrieks into the darkness as fast as the road will take him.

"Candy!"

"CANDY!"

"CANDYYYYYYYYY!!!!!"

### 8. Promised Land

In the dark house Candy lies in her bed in the house with the dark windows, softly crying for something that's been lost and that she doesn't know where to look for.

The Chev crawls up the road like some overgrown, forgotten Jurassic tortoise with a fading paint job. Bruce parks outside the house and sits in his car, the fireball still boiling in front of his eyes. He gets out of the car, slams his hand on the roof and howls into the night.

A dog answers him, then another. Far away a car screams drunkenly on its way home from the last late night party.

### 9. Independence Day

Days later, Candy sits on the stoep of her house. Her eyes are hollow in the late afternoon shadows, ringed with wrinkles. The Chev trundles around the corner. Bruce parks, leans on the wheel. The tinny television sound of the president's voice drifts down from someone's window.

*Freedom. Unity. Celebration.*

*Duty of the citizen to preserve.*

He gets out and walks up to her. He squats by her chair, talks quietly to her. She stares across the road at the washing hanging on an upstairs balcony.

Jeans. Red shirt, blue shirt.

He takes her limp hand, begs her. A tear works its way into his one eye. He bites against it, but it spills out onto his cheek. Another wells up.

She gently lifts her free hand to his hair.

.....  
**The Chev crawls up the road like some overgrown, forgotten Jurassic tortoise with a fading paint job**  
 .....



.....  
**The cars pull next to each other. Each speeds up, and it rapidly turns into an all out dice with Bruce in the wrong lane**  
.....

### 10. Badlands

Strandfontein Road, the deserted road that runs for miles next to the expanses of beach below the Cape Flats. They are riding, staring out of the windows. He looks to the right, at glimpses of the sea that flash where the fynbos dips away for a moment or two. She stares at the dunes on the left of the road. The tips of her right hand rest on his knee in the slightest of touches. They have talked so very little, but they can feel that they've finally started to say something again.

A Hyundai, dark silver with black tinted windows, appears behind them. Bruce slows to let him pass while thinking where the best place is to get down to the sea. The other car overtakes, then gradually slows down. Bruce wants to get past, but the car swerves over the road, blocking him. Bruce can feel the old rage starting to fire up in him.

Candy puts her hand on his arm. He slows down, and so does the other driver. Bruce picks up speed and the other blocks him again, until Bruce uses an approaching truck, timing it exactly right. He slips next to the other car in the split moment the tail of the truck opens a gap behind the Hyundai. The other car goes into his side. Candy screams, but the other driver left it too late.

The cars pull next to each other. Each speeds up, and it rapidly turns into an all out dice with Bruce in the wrong lane. Once he is forced to drop behind to let an approaching car past. At that speed, though, the Hyundai has to either let him in on the right again, or risk ending in the right lane himself if he fails to shut Bruce out quickly enough.

Candy is shrieking at him and hammer-

ing his shoulder, but little can stop him or the blood racing through his head. Little, except that eventually it is all too much and the Chev can't quite keep to the bend they're screaming around. He goes careening up the dunes, ploughing through the fynbos, shredding the plants and shrubs, bashing against rocks and skidding to a halt with one wheel ripped off. Bruce's head bloods against the steering and steam rises from the bonnet. Candy's hand tries four times before it finds the door handle, then fumbles before she gets it open. She tries to get out but can't.

The Hyundai stops on the side of the road, and the dark glassed door opens. The driver strides up to the Chev. He unclips Candy's seat belt. He glances at Bruce struggling almost comatose to sit up, and helps Candy out of the car towards his.

It is Sonny.

### 11. Darkness on the Edge of Town

Bruce sits deep in thought next to the burnt out Sierra, his orange flecked Cortina parked next to him. It is moonless dark by the Somerset highway. Cars rev and someone shouts through the dark. One of the drivers walks up with a pen and a notebook. Bruce's hand automatically goes to his wallet.

The cut running from his forehead down to his cheek has almost healed. The cold makes it throb. **CT**

.....  
*PuzzleMonkey is perpetually perplexed by the behaviour patterns of the hairless apes, and tries to work through this by writing odd pieces of short and longer fiction. For light relief he shoots and edits video, and has recently started a blog at [www.pzmk.co.za](http://www.pzmk.co.za)*

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# Remembering Joe

Ken Smith's introduction to *Waltzing At The Doomsday Ball*, a new book containing 25 of Joe Bageant's best essays

"I'm so damn average that what I write resonates with people", Joe Bageant once told an interviewer in explaining how he had gained a global following for his essays published on the web. In 2004, at the age of 58, Joe sensed that the Internet could give him editorial freedom. Without gatekeepers, he began writing about what he was really thinking, and then submitted his essays to left-of-center websites.

Joe Bageant died in March 2011, having written two books, and 78 essays that were posted on his own website and also on many other sites. The 25 essays reproduced in this book were first published on the web. I've selected them based on many emails from readers, web traffic counts, and specific suggestions from his online colleagues. They appear here as Joe wrote them, apart from copyediting and light corrections agreed between me and his book editor, Henry Rosenbloom, the publisher at Australia's Scribe Publications.

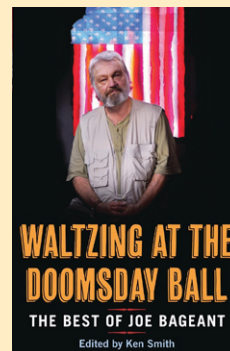
Joe began writing for various publications in his twenties. He once told me how happy and proud he was when he sold his first article to the *Colorado Daily*, unashamedly recalling how he got tears in his eyes as he looked at a check for \$5. It was only five dollars, but it was proof that he had become a professional writer. Joe freelanced articles for a dozen years, mostly writing about music, but also writing profiles of people such

## WALTZING AT THE DOOMSDAY BALL

THE BEST OF JOE BAGEANT

Scribe Publications

\$13.57 via  
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Without gatekeepers, Joe began writing about what he was really thinking, and then submitted his essays to left-of-center websites

as Hunter S. Thompson, Timothy Leary, and G. Gordon Liddy. With a family to support, Joe found work as a reporter and columnist for small daily newspapers. Then, for two decades, Joe submerged his rage and natural writing style while working at various hard-labor jobs, before working again as a newspaper reporter, and then as an editor of magazines – one in military history and before that a magazine that promoted agricultural chemicals.

At the age of 17, Joe enlisted in the US Navy, serving on an aircraft carrier. Joe had farmed with horses for several years, tended bar, and considered himself at times to be a “Marxist and a half-assed Buddhist.” Always wanting to escape, he embarked on a life-long voyage of discovery that included living in a commune and on an Indian res-

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**There were more than a few letters from elderly women who wrote to Joe to say that they respected and appreciated his writing, but “please don’t use so much profanity”**  
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ervation and, later in life, in Belize and in Mexico.

Joe often said that the Internet allowed him to find his voice. But I would argue that Joe always had his voice, and that what the Internet did for him was to permit him to find a readership. Once his essays started appearing on various websites, Joe soon gained a wide following for his forceful style, his sense of humor, and his willingness to discuss the American white underclass, a taboo topic for the mainstream media. Joe called himself a “redneck socialist,” and he initially thought most of his readers would be very much like himself – working class from the southern section of the USA. So he was pleasantly surprised when emails started filling his in-box.

There were indeed many letters from men about Joe’s age who had also escaped rural poverty. But there were also emails from younger men and women readers, from affluent people who agreed that the political and economic system needed an overhaul, from readers in dozens of countries expressing thanks for an alternative view of American life, from working-class Americans in all parts of the country, and more than a few from elderly women who wrote to Joe to say that they respected and appreciated his writing, but “please don’t use so much profanity”.

The central subject of Joe’s writing was the class system in the United States, and the tens of millions of whites ignored by coastal liberals in New York, Washington, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. In his online essays and books, and also in conversations over beer or bourbon, Joe would rail against the elite class who looked down on his people – poor whites, the underclass, rednecks. Joe was amused that a New York book editor once said to him, “It’s as if your people were some sort of exotic and foreign culture, as if you were from Yemen or something.”

Joe spent almost as much time answering emails as he did writing essays. Often a re-

sponse to an email would be rewritten and included in his next essay, and Joe would send thanks to the reader for providing the spark. In the six years that Joe was writing for publication on the web, he answered thousands of emails from readers – sometimes with just one sentence, but often churning out a thousand words or more.

He and I would talk about the response he was getting to his writing. His explanation was that he was the same as his reader friends, ordinary and fearful. “I don’t write to them,” Joe said in an email to one of his readers. “I don’t write for them. And I don’t write at them. We merely live on the same planet watching the unnerving events around us, things the majority does not seem to see. So I write about that. And maybe for just a moment, a few friends I’ve never met do not feel so alone. Nor do I.”

I first met Joe only seven years before he died, but it seems as though I had known him all of my life. I learned later that there were many people who had similarly become friends of Joe, meeting first by email, then by phone, and then often making personal visits to his home in Virginia, or Belize, or Mexico.

In 2004, I was living in Nice, France and had read one of Joe’s online essays. I sent him an email praising his style and ideas. He replied with a thank-you note, asking if I were wealthy and why I, an American, was living in France. I explained that I lived frugally in a working-class neighborhood of Nice, eating and shopping where the locals did. That started an email exchange and then many phone calls. In one conversation, he said he was bone tired from a daily three-hour commute to a job he didn’t really like. I told him that he should take a couple of weeks off and come to France. He did just that.

Joe arrived at the Nice airport with a back-pack and his guitar. We went on daily walking tours of Nice, to my favorite bistros and some historical spots, and I introduced Joe to many of my friends. Joe had been

there about a week when he said he wanted to explore the city on his own – my tour-guide services were not needed. I reminded Joe that he didn't speak a word of French and he might get lost, so I gave him a note to show a taxi driver how to get back to my apartment. Joe had said he would be gone about two hours, but it was eight hours later that he returned. He had somehow found a beer bar where French taxi drivers met after work, and had spent the day arguing about politics and the global economy. Joe explained that one of the taxi drivers spoke English and had served as a translator. I like this anecdote because it illustrates how comfortable Joe was with working people, no matter what language they spoke. This ease of meeting and befriending working people was repeated in Mexico, where shopkeepers, gardeners, and taxi drivers would soon treat Joe as a long-lost brother.

It was during this visit to France that I convinced Joe he needed his own website, if for no other reason than to serve as an archive for his essays, which were then scattered all over the web. I told him that I would get it started and teach him how to post to it. But in seven years Joe did not post anything, never once logged onto the server, and kept asking me to do it. He would rarely look at his own website, even when I asked how him he liked changes I had made. It was not that Joe was a Luddite, ignoring the Internet. He spent hours every day reading other websites and answering emails. But when it came to his own site he was humble, almost embarrassed, by the focus on him personally. "I hate this me-me-me stuff," he would say. He was reluctant to have news about himself posted, dragging his feet whenever I suggested that news about his books be posted. He finally agreed that I could write about him and put my name as a tag at the bottom of a post.

I left France five years ago when the dollar/euro exchange rate made it too expensive for me. Eventually, I moved to Mexico. Joe came to visit, and he liked the lifestyle,

the Mexican people, and the low cost of living. He stayed in my second bedroom for a couple of months, then got his own place. Joe's wife visited several times a year, and had discussed moving to Mexico when she retired.

While living in Mexico, Joe wrote his second book, *Rainbow Pie: A Redneck Memoir*, which was released in the US just four days after his death. I wish there were a video of Joe writing this book. He worked on a three-quarter-size notebook, typing fast and furiously with two index fingers, with a burning but unsmoked cigarette in a nearby ashtray. Between France and Mexico, I had stayed with Joe and his wife, Barbara, in Winchester for a couple of months to help with the editing and proofing of the final manuscript of *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War*. While in Winchester, I met many of Joe's old friends, some of whom had known him since childhood.

This helped me gain an additional understanding of the scorn and condescension of the town's elites toward Joe and his underclass, the poor whites. In addition to his friends, I also met more than a few people who knew Joe but had few kind words to say about him because of his left-wing politics and what they felt was the negative picture he painted of the town. Not only was he rejected by the affluent class, but also by some of the very people he was trying to help – including some people he had grown up with.

The fact that Joe was gaining recognition in other countries did not register with the locals in Winchester. Joe did not consider himself a Christian, so he might object to my citing Jesus's saying that a prophet is not recognized in his own land. While declaring that such a lofty Biblical aphorism would not apply to a redneck, Joe might also have cited the reference in its entirety, chapter and verse.

The sad fact is that Joe was not recognized in his own small home-town of Win-

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**The sad fact is that Joe was not recognized in his own small home-town of Winchester, Virginia, with its population of 25,000, even though he was certainly the area's most widely published contemporary writer**  
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**I feel guilty about having pushed a sick and dying man to be creative, even though neither Joe nor anybody else knew how ill he really was**  
.....

chester, Virginia, with its population of 25,000, even though he was certainly the area's most widely published contemporary writer. His hometown newspaper, the *Winchester Star*, never mentioned his name – not even when he was signed by Random House for his first book, *Deer Hunting with Jesus*, nor when the book was getting rave reviews in other countries. Joe would never admit to being bothered by the local newspaper ignoring him and his success, but it was obvious to those who knew him that he would have appreciated some local recognition. He dismissed this slight by explaining that the newspaper's publisher was still angry from decades before when Joe worked briefly as a reporter for the *Star* and tried to organize a union for the editorial staff.

Even though neither Joe's hometown newspaper nor any mainstream US newspaper or news service noticed his death, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation replayed an interview from his book tour a year before. And *La Stampa*, one of the largest and most prestigious newspapers in Italy, published an obituary and another glowing review of the Italian edition of *Deer Hunting with Jesus*.

Looking back now, it is clear that Joe's energy was being sapped in the months before his cancer was diagnosed. Just three days before a massive and inoperable abdominal tumor was discovered, Joe had spent the day riding a horse with Mexican cowboys. But, for a month or two before this, he was finding it increasingly difficult to concentrate sufficiently to finish an essay. I didn't see it at the time. His last essay, "AMERICA: Y UR PEEPS B SO DUM", took Joe more than a month to write, in fits and starts. He emailed me a draft of this essay, which was more than 8,000 words – long even for Joe. I cut about 3,000 words from the draft, re-arranged chunks of text, and sent it back to Joe with a note that the draft could potentially be one of his best essays, but that it was a jumble of thoughts and he needed to sweat blood while re-writing it.

Rather than coming back with a typically argumentative response, Joe agreed and replied that he would do more work on it. Now I feel guilty about having pushed a sick and dying man to be creative, even though neither Joe nor anybody else knew how ill he really was. But I try not to feel too bad about it, because I think it is indeed one of his best essays.

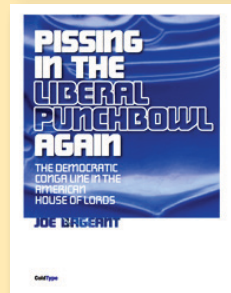
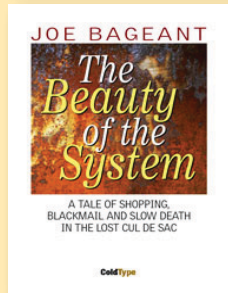
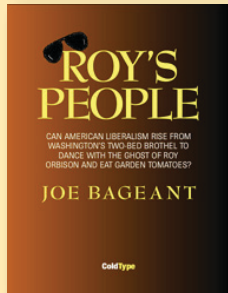
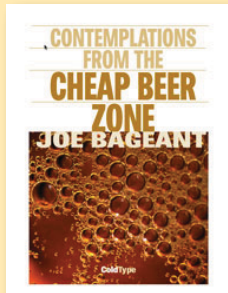
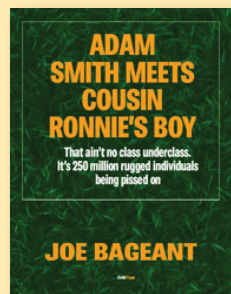
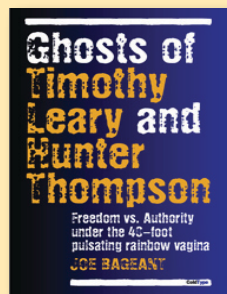
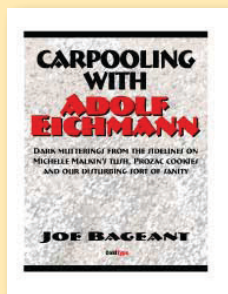
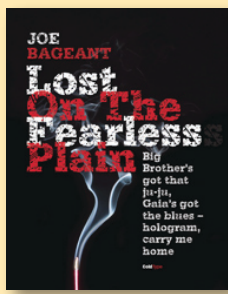
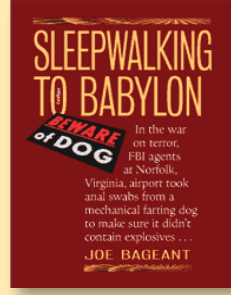
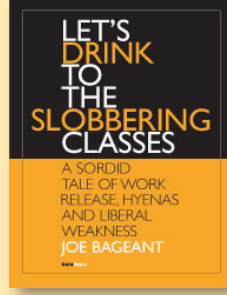
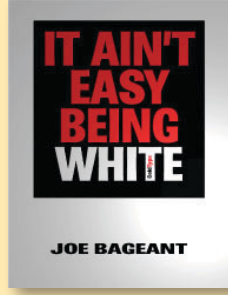
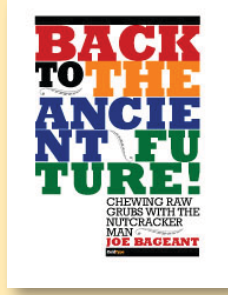
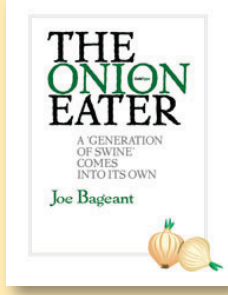
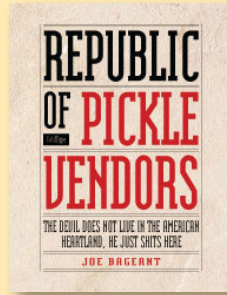
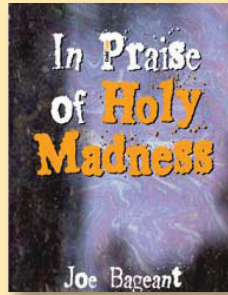
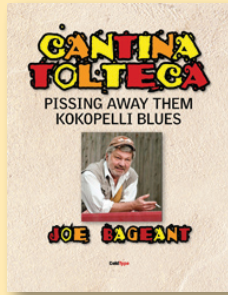
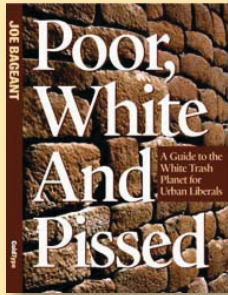
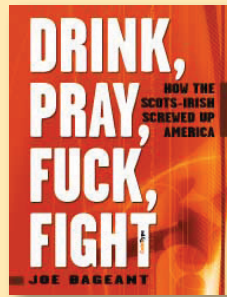
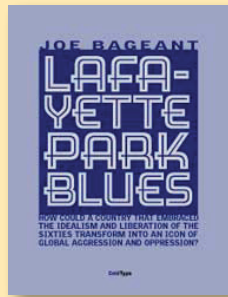
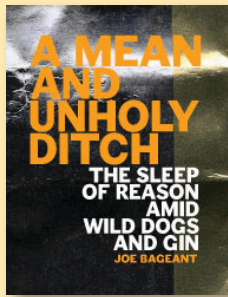
Things are often more clear in retrospect. One book that Joe often referred to in conversations was *Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire*, by Morris Berman. As it happened, Joe and I had both independently been corresponding with Berman, and we learned that Berman was also a sixtyish American expat living in Mexico, just a mountain range to the east of us. Joe and I had been planning to invite ourselves to visit Berman, but it didn't happen. Berman wrote a review of *Rainbow Pie*, and he summed up Joe with a phrase that had never occurred to me, nor probably to Joe either. Berman wrote that the source of Joe's frustration was "extreme isolation", adding that Joe realized the US was the greatest snow job of all time, likening the country to a hologram, "in which everyone in the country was trapped inside, with no knowledge that the world (US included) was not what US government propaganda, or just everyday cultural propaganda, said it was. He watched his kinfolk and neighbors vote repeatedly against their own interests, and there was little he could do about it."

On his last day, with his family gathered around his bed, Joe said: "Dying isn't as bad as I thought it was going be. I'm just going into this blank space where there's nothing."

That's not quite true, Joe. Your books and essays remain with us, and through them you are still alive. Goodbye, good friend.**CT**

.....  
**Ken Smith** was a friend of Joe Bageant and managed his website since its launch. Ken currently lives in Ajijic, Jalisco, Mexico. He can be reached at [ken@kvsmith.com](mailto:ken@kvsmith.com).





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# Bibi stirs up trouble

Ramzy Baroud tells why the Israelis launched their latest attacks on Gaza

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**Palestinians know that Israeli provocations are often, if not always, politically motivated**  
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**T**he first Israel missile sped down to its target, scorching the Gaza earth and everything in between. Palestinians collected the body parts of two new martyrs, while Israeli media celebrated the demise of two terrorists.

Zuhair Qasis was the head of the Popular Resistance Committee. He was killed with a Palestinian prisoner from Nablus, who had recently been freed and deported to Gaza.

Then, another set of missiles rained down, this time taking Obeid al-Ghirbali and Muhammad Harara. Then, a third, and a fourth, and so on. The death count began on March 9 and escalated through the day. The Hamas government urged the international community to take action. Factions vowed to retaliate. In these situations, Western media is usually clueless or complicit. Sometimes it's both. The Israeli army was cited readily by many media outlets without challenge.

The first round of attacks was justified based on a claim that Qasis was involved in the planning of an attack that killed seven Israelis last year. The Israel army didn't even bother to upgrade that claim – which already resulted in the killing and wounding of many Palestinians. Even Israeli media had drawn the conclusion that the attack had originated from Egypt, and no Palestinian was involved.

Al Jazeera reported that some of the victims were decapitated, a familiar scene in most of Israel's unforgiving atrocities.

Expectedly, Palestinians fired back. "The national resistance brigades, the DFLP's armed wing, the Al-Aqsa brigades, and the armed wing of the PRC, the An-Nasser Salah Ad-Din brigades, have all claimed responsibility for rocket fire," reported Maan news agency.

The incessant Israeli provocations would not have been enough to end the months-long truce. Palestinians know that Israeli provocations are often, if not always, politically motivated. This time however, the people killed were leaders in al-Muqawama, the local resistance parties. Neither Hamas's might nor diplomacy could persuade Gaza's many factions to hold their fire. Israel knows this fact more than any other party. This is why it sent such unmistakably bloody messages. Israeli needed Palestinians to respond, and urgently.

But why did Israel decide to ignite trouble again? To answer the question, one needs to make a quick stop in Washington. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had recently tried to articulate a case for war against Iran there. Unlike the successful effort to isolate and strike and invade Iraq in 2003, the Iran war campaign is not going according to plan.

The Israelis are desperate to see Iran's nuclear facilities bombed by American bunker buster bombs – some of which weigh up to 13600 kg. Israel's former head of military intelligence, Amos Yadlin, assured the 'free world' – a term often manipulated by Netan-

yahu – that a bombing campaign can succeed if it's followed by the right measures. "Iran, like Iraq and Syria before it, will have to recognize that the precedent for military action has been set, and can be repeated," he wrote (as cited in CNN, March 9).

There is growing consensus in Israel that 'something has to be done' – at least to set back Iran's uranium enrichment by few years, per the assurances of deputy director of the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies, Ephraim Kam. Republican candidates in the US, and even President Obama himself, agree. But Obama, despite his groveling at the recent AIPAC conference, dared to question the timing and the way in which Iran must be brought to its knees. The US president is becoming increasingly isolated within Washington because of his stance on Iran.

It is election year, and Israel knows that a window of opportunity will not be open for long. "Netanyahu won a crucial battle in Washington this past week. No one brought up the Palestinians. Netanyahu has quite masterfully shifted the conversation to the subject of Iran," wrote Jeffrey Goldberg in the Atlantic (March 9). He is right, of course, but only within the context of 'peace process' and conflict resolution.

The Palestinians were mentioned in a different context, and repeatedly so. Ephraim Kam, for example, expected that thousands of rockets would rain on Israel from Hizbollah, Hamas and Iran itself. The Associated Press quoted Vice Prime Minister Dan Meridor as saying, "The whole of Israel (is vulnerable to) tens of thousands of missiles and rockets from neighboring countries. If there is a war...they are not just going to hit Israeli soldiers. The main aim is at civilian populations" (Feb 20).

Using this logic, the only way to prevent rockets from reaching Israel is by attacking Iran. An independent Israeli commentator, Yossi Melman predicted that a weakened Iran "would undoubtedly have an impact on Hamas and Hezbollah" (CNN, March 9).

Yes, the Palestinians were infused plenty in Israeli war rhetoric. They were liberally pre-

sented as the jackals who would pounce on vulnerable Israel. Who would dare challenge this tired victimization narrative? Who would have the audacity to point out the fact that Israel has the region's strongest army, equipped with hundreds of fully-functioning nuclear heads, while Palestinians fighters – who had until recently respected the truce, although Gaza's siege was never lifted – are armed with light weapons?

No one in the mainstream media, of course. But then, as the supposed threat has reached an all time high, Hamas spokesperson in Gaza, Fawzi Barhoum told AP: "Hamas weapons and the weapons of the Palestinian resistance, in general, are humble weapons that aim to defend and not to attack, and they are to defend the Palestinian people...that does not give us the ability to be part of any regional war."

Hamas has its own calculations independent of Israel's war momentum. But losing Hamas would jeopardize the very equation Israel has been constructing for years. The 'radical camp' must remain intact, as far as Israel is concerned.

No political polarization caused by the so-called Arab Spring will be allowed to endanger the Israeli narrative: the radicals, the evil alliance, the threat facing the 'free world' and all the rest. Great resources were spent on spinning the perfect story to justify a preemptive war.

Then, on Friday, March 2, less than two days after Barhoum made his comments of 'humble weapons', heads began to roll in Gaza. Literally. And the media machine resumed its work unabashed. "Gaza Rockets fire disrupts life in Israeli south," read a headline in Israel's *Haaretz*. "IDF strikes Gaza terror targets following rocket barrage," declared another in the *Jerusalem Post*. It's war all over again. Israeli civilians run to shelters. Sirens blare. US media reports the fate of 'besieged' Israelis and Palestinian 'terrorists'.

It matters little to them that it was Israel itself that stirred the trouble, broke the truce, and fanned the flames. **CT**

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**Obama, despite his groveling at the recent AIPAC conference, dared to question the timing and the way in which Iran must be brought to its knees**  
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.....  
**Ramzy Baroud** ([www.ramzybaroud.net](http://www.ramzybaroud.net)) is an internationally-syndicated columnist and the editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*. His latest book is *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story* (Pluto Press, London)



# Iraq: 21 years of crimes against humanity

The words of Nuha al-Radi provide a vivid indictment of the West on the anniversary of its war on Iraq, writes **Felicity Arbuthnot**

.....  
**Surviving babies, born in 1990, the year of the embargo's imposition, turn the milestone 21 this year, have known nothing but deprivation and constant terror**  
.....

*"These diaries are dedicated to the people of Iraq and to all others who have suffered the crippling effect of sanctions. ("Baghdad Diary", Nuha al-Radi, 1941-2004.)*

**W**ith current US-led plans to remodel (read annihilate) the remaining Middle East, the 1991, 28-country attack on Iraq's just 27 million people, where, arguably it all started, has largely dropped from Western consciousness.

As the first wave of missiles erased 30 years of a progress, which had made Iraq a largely modern, prosperous nation – and Cruise missiles rained down from US war ships in the Indian Ocean – on 16th January 1991, President George H.W. Bush told America: "We have no argument with the people of Iraq. Indeed, for the innocents caught in this conflict, we pray for their safety ... But even as planes of the multinational forces attack Iraq, I prefer to think of peace, not war."

Last month marked the 21st anniversary of the end of the 42-day apocalyptic pulverization, in which over 80 million pounds of explosives were dropped. The: "whole country became collateral damage."

The ceasefire was signed 28th February – after which the US 24th Light Infantry Brigade celebrated the cessation of hostilities, by massacring retreating Iraqi soldiers and

fleeing families, in their "turkey shoot" on the Basra Road, beginning 2nd March.

"We can see a new world order coming in to view ... a very real prospect of a new world order ...", was the response of President George H.W. Bush to Congress, on 6th March 1991.

It was indeed a sign of things to come – and an Iraq war which was unending for just under 21 years. Decimating sanctions, ceaseless bombings, invasion, occupation, torture, mass murders, destruction – and a further eight years of bombing.

.....  
**Nothing but deprivation**

Surviving babies, born in 1990, the year of the embargo's imposition, turn the milestone 21 this year, have known nothing but deprivation and constant terror throughout their entire lives, from US-led malevolence.

As George H.W. Bush was praying for innocents and thinking of "peace", ninety percent of Iraq's electricity was destroyed, in the first hours, along with the water supply – deliberately targeted, with, it transpired, the intention of never allowing replacement of either,

In Baghdad, Nuha al-Radi decided to keep a diary. As "Desert Storm" engulfed the nation, she recorded the horror, the humour, some extraordinary, accurate premonitions, the indomitable, and the inventive

ingenuity with which every Iraqi seems to be born.

Nuha al-Radi, painter, ceramist and sculptor, was a true internationalist, as at home in the US, UK, Beirut, across Europe and much of the world, as in her beloved home in Baghdad. Trained at London's Byam Shaw School of Art, her work was exhibited across the Arab world, in Berlin, London and Washington.

As the bombs fell, she wrote, "I've always wanted to write a book starting with this sentence: 'I live in an orchard with 66 palm trees and 161 orange trees. Three male palms face my bedroom window, reminding me of their potency – the only males in residence."

"My first anemones have come out. I bought the seeds last year in the US. They are white. Could it be a sign of peace? Anyway, something good from the US has grown here." That was "Day 36."

#### **Destructive instincts of man**

For the six months prior to the war she was one of the few who reassured all that it could not happen, "Perhaps I couldn't believe, in this day and age, leaders could be so childish and/or plain stupid as to think war could solve any issue. I underestimated the destructive instincts of man and the agenda of the forces allied against us. Not that we are angels, we did the first wrong. But one cannot rectify one wrong by another of even bigger proportions."

On the first day, she woke, "... the sky lit up – the noise beyond description", the electricity and the 'phone went off, and for the forty two days: "days and nights became one long day."

Sanity became clinging to normality. The second day, risking the bombs, a friend drove her and her sister to a lunch party. "Kebab and beer, delicious." Government trucks were driving Baghdad's streets: "throwing bread to the thronging crowds", the majority for whom the embargo had al-

ready impoverished to breaking point.

The following day Nuha and her sister Suha, painted her studio, with the "war going on full blast outside. "A SAM missile exploded nearby, and a dear friend, Mundher Beig, rode his grandchild's tricycle, "his legs all scrunched up ... he misses his grandchildren and is convinced he won't see them again."

The last of the water ran out.

Four days in, "... mod cons seem alien ... cooked potatoes in the fireplace ... continuous explosions ... made a dynamic punch, Aquavit, vodka and fresh orange juice." They are: "going to the loo in the orchard ... fertilizing it", and figuring ways to: "haul water from the river (Tigris.)"

By day six: "The entire country has collapsed and disintegrated ... I wonder how long we can survive this kind of bombardment." On day seven: "The worst has happened – beer without ice ...rumour has it we are going to have a difficult night ... the seventh night, maybe Bush thinks he is God."

"I finished Mundher (Beig's) painting ... We opened a bottle of champagne."

The following day: "Depression has hit me (realizing) that the whole world hates us and is really glad to ruin us." She dreamed that Americans in battle fatigues were jogging down central Baghdad's Haifa Street – as they now have – and that she was alone, with dry earth, which would not grow anything (which happened after the war, near nothing began to grow for over five years.)

She determined to "build and plant the most beautiful garden. Am I going to be the only survivor?"

Day ten, "I don't think I could set foot in the West again. If someone like myself, who is Western educated, feels like this, how do the rest of the country feel?"

Three days later, the great Southgate Bridge was bombed and the nearby beautiful, golden, ancient buildings were damaged, all the windows blown out. Mundher Beig went to check the damage and "just

.....  
**"Depression has hit me (realizing) that the whole world hates us and is really glad to ruin us"**  
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## BLOODY ANNIVERSARY

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**“All the caged love-birds have died from the shock of the blasts, wild birds fly upside down and do crazy somersaults”**  
.....

stood there and cried.” The country would be rebuilt, he was reassured. “I’ll not see it”, he said.

“I could understand Kuwait doing this, but not the whole world. Why do they hate us so much?” ponders Nuha

Day 14: “Mundher Beig died in his sleep early this morning ... he really died of sorrow. He could not comprehend that they world wanted to destroy us – the people. The city. (Yesterday) he kept asking, ‘why are they doing this to us?’ ”

Nuha had hurried to finish his painting, unable to dismiss a feeling of dread and “unveiled it in my house, even before the paint was dry. He was not made for dying, so full of laughter, kindness ...”

The house was full of people, staying in mutual support, until the bombardment ended. “Sirens, going off, rockets and bombs falling”, they divided the city and drove to tell friends and relatives of the death and arrangements. Mundher, they learned, had spent the previous week, traveling the city, had visited them all as the bombs fell. His “goodbye” at the end of each visit, now seemed like another premonition.

Day 18: “All the caged love-birds have died from the shock of the blasts, wild birds fly upside down and do crazy somersaults. Hundreds, if not thousands, have died in the orchard.” The neighbourhood dogs, “ ... actually cry with fear, making the most awful and pathetic sounds. (They) pile up together for comfort”, during air raids. Chickens stopped laying.

Day 22: “I saw the Jumhuriya Bridge today. It is very sad to see a bombed bridge ... (people) cram along the sides, peering in to the craters and crying.” Two more landmark bridges were hit. “I feel very bitter towards the West.”

Day 29: “They hit a shelter, the one in Ameriyah, whole families were wiped out. The Americans insist that women and children were put there on purpose ... is that logical (a conversation) and Command Headquarters deciding, ‘Well, I think the

Americans will hit the Ameriyah Shelter next, let’s fill it with women and children.”

“I wish I could see in to the future.- what is in store for us?”

Day 31: “The score today is 76,000 Allied air raids, versus sixty seven Scuds.”

Day 34: “Mr Bush said ‘no’ to the overtures of (former Foreign Minister) Tareq Aziz ... while he plays golf, his forces are annihilating us ...Mrs Bush had the gall to say to a group of school kids, ‘Don’t worry, it’s far away and it wont affect you.’ What about the children here? What double standards. What hypocrisy. Where’s justice?”

Day 42: “This morning the war stopped. They kept us (up) all night ... just in case we had a couple of gasps left, the worst night of bombing of the whole war, relentless ...”

3rd March: “Even the high ranking officers are walking back from the south, total breakdown of the system, it takes (up to) ten days to walk from Kuwait to Baghdad, all the time dodging Allied ‘planes ... trying to pick off stragglers ...” The British flying their Jaguars. “All the wounded who could not run away fast enough, got killed. The others walk with no food or water and simply collapse ...”

9th March: “I hope everyone who had a hand in this disastrous mess falls in to the burning oil wells.”

10th March: “No petrol, no electricity, no running water and no telephone ... I have five candles burning in my room, what an extravagance.

“My first Iris opened today.”

The daily diary ended on 15th April 1991, observations continue until 1995. An undated postscript added: “After the war ended, the allies spent all day and night, flying over our heads, breaking the sound barrier. Our torture went on for months ... horrific deafening noise, swooping down ..”

On 31st March, a yellow love bird flew through her window, they ail outside, so she found her a white mate, in the pet shop: “They immediately began to coo happily at each other”, and made their home in a large

wooden cage, where they could fly in and out of the open door. Iraqis have a consuming passion for birds.

Twelve days later, the bees “have gone crazy in the garden ... five or six a poppy, drinking the nectar ... five white butterflies are dancing in front of me. The garden is so beautiful now ... my white Irises are out.” She had made the dead earth blossom, as her dream, cultivating the poisoned earth, which blighted near the country.

By the 6th June, Nuha was catching up on friends, to find: “People are dying like flies ... there is such a high mortality rate of babies ... The UN will keep the embargo on till all Iraqis are dead.” There was a cancer epidemic.

In June 1995, she left for Amman, Jordan, combining a major exhibition, “Embargo”, with endless visits to doctors for chronically low platelets. Iraqis were leaving their country in droves to earn harder currency to keep their families. She found a surgeon cutting meat in a butcher, and an aeronautical engineer serving coffee in an art gallery.

Nuha went to Beirut, where she also still had a home. Her health was still plaguing her and Iraq no longer had the facilities to treat anything very much, between the destruction and embargo. Another friend died of cancer – he tried to get a visa for

treatment in America, it took so long that he died within three days of arriving. The daughter of a friend died from lack of an asthma inhaler. Vetoed by the UN Sanctions Committee.

And the vibrant artistic community left in droves – and despair. How did he feel about exile, she asked another friend, now in Amman, “I’m lost”, he said. Iraqis lived and breathed their country, for all its complexities. “There is a purpose and a pride you lose, when you don’t have your country”, said another.

Nuha spent the next nine years working, exhibiting and fighting the cancer which was finally diagnosed, with characteristic humour and optimism. I remember one of her last writings, for Middle East International. The heading was: “Letter from Limbo.”

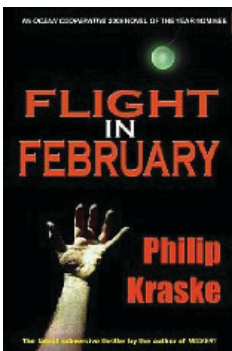
She died in Beirut on 30th August 2004, a victim of the first Gulf war, witness to the second and the occupation. A vibrant lost metaphor for the tragedy of Western beligerence and crimes against humanity, as the same plight, short of miracles, looms for embargoed Syria and Iran.

She was buried in Beirut’s pine forest, lying in a bed of jasmine, with flowers, her favourite adornment, in her irrepressible hair.

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**“People are dying like flies ... there is such a high mortality rate of babies ... The UN will keep the embargo on till all Iraqis are dead”**  
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.....  
**Felicity Arbuthnot**  
*is a journalist and political activist based in London*  
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CT



## FLIGHT IN FEBRUARY

Did drug-trafficker Marcus Strenk escape from Minnesota’s maximum-security prison during a blizzard – or die trying? Deputy Marshal Henry Scott believes that Strenk found a way past the highly sophisticated security system and made it to freedom. But the search Scott puts into gear is quickly spiked by Alec Barkley, the very FBI agent who had put Strenk in jail – spiked, that is, until Strenk’s cheery note from outside arrives at the prison. Barkley puts every available agent on the manhunt. Henry Scott meanwhile examines Barkley’s earlier espionage operation against Strenk’s Mexican connections – and ends up stepping through the looking glass. ( Read the first chapter at <http://www.philipkraske.com/index.php?id=63> )

**BUY IT AT AMAZON.COM \$11.55 (PRINT) OR \$6.99 (KINDLE)**

# Third World blues

Fred Reed on corruption – ours and theirs

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**In Mexico, corruption relies on individual initiative. By contrast, in America, corruption is a class-action industry**  
.....

Several things characterize countries of the Third World, whatever precisely “Third World” means. The first is corruption. America is rotten with it, but American corruption is distinct from corruption in, say, Guatemala or Thailand, being less visible and better organized.

Several major differences exist between the usual corruption in the Third World and that in America. In most of the Third World, corruption exists from top to bottom. Bribery amounts to an economic system, like capitalism or socialism. In the United States, graft flourishes mostly at the level of government and commerce. You don’t (I think) slip an admissions official at Harvard twenty grand to accept your shiftless and dull-witted slug of a misbegotten offspring. Nor do you pay a local judge to drop dope charges against your teenager. And in the Guatemalas and Egypts of the planet, corruption tends to be personal. The briber and the bribed act as individuals.

In the United States, corruption occurs at the level of policy and contracts, between corporations, special interests, and Congress. It is done gracefully and usually legally. For example, Big Pharma pays Congress to insert, in some voluminous bill that almost no one will read, a clause saying that the government will pay list price for drugs instead of negotiating for a better price. Over time, this is worth hundreds of millions, paid by you. Yet the clause is legal. Or military industry pays Congress to

buy an enormously expensive and unneeded airplane. It’s legal. Read the bill. Or agribusiness pays Congress to cough up large subsidies. Also legal.

In Mexico you pay your useless daughter’s useless teacher to give her grades she didn’t earn so that she can get into university. Corruption relies on individual initiative. In America, corruption is a class-action industry.

**First, large groups – blacks, women, Indians, unions – bribe or intimidate Congress into giving them privilege:** affirmative action, racial and gender set-asides, casinos, loans and preferences from the Small Business Administration according to sex and ethnicity. Corruption, plain and simple. But legal.

**Second, unaccountable and often intrusive police are not subject to control by the public.** In America formal police departments rapidly grow more militarized, jack-booted, swatted-out, and their powers grow. A law-abiding citizen should never be afraid of the police, and a misbehaving cop should worry intensely when said law-abiding citizen records his badge number with intent to call the chief. Those days are over. Today the cops can bully, threaten, and harass, and there is precious little you can do about it. The proliferating laws against filming the police can have only one purpose, to prevent exposure of misbehavior. Third World.

Any organization involved in controlling a population is a de facto police outfit, as are

TSA, “Homeland Security,” the FBI, NSA, ICE, and so on. Against none of these does the citizen have any recourse. In principle, yes, but in practice, no. Third World, but more efficient.

**Third, lack of constitutional government.** This is not the same as the lack of a constitution. The Soviet Union had an admirable constitution, and paid no attention to it. America heads rapidly in the same direction.

In America, the Constitution is largely and increasingly ignored by the government. Constitutionally the three branches of government are co-equal, but in practice the Supreme Court is of little consequence and Congress is the action arm of a corporate oligarchy. Constitutionally Congress must declare war, but now the president sends combat troops wherever he pleases and Congress reads about it in the *Washington Post*. The president can order citizens murdered, ignore habeas corpus, monitor and store email. The government can search you at will with no pretense of probable cause. Third World.

**Fourth, impunity. In the bush world, the rich and powerful are never brought to trail regardless of their crimes.** We are there. Wall Street runs a clear and thoroughly documented scam, the subprime-loan racket, doing immense damage to the country. How many went to jail? How many were tried? How many now have high positions in the federal government? Third World.

**Fifth, a yawning gap between rich and poor.** As the American economy declines, the middle class sags into the lower middle class. The sag takes many forms. Prices rise but incomes don’t. Houses go into foreclosure. Student loans tied to the houses of parents become backbreaking. Businesses hire people as individual contractors, with no benefits. Increasingly the young live with their parents. The ship is taking water.

Yet the rich prosper. In America they carefully remain inconspicuous, not flaunting their money. But they have it. Third World.

**Sixth, a controlled press.** Many Americans I suspect will insist that the press is free, because they are repeatedly told that it is, be-

cause they have nothing to which to compare it, and because the control is most adroitly managed. But it exists.

In America control does not work as it did in the USSR, by savagely punishing the least expression of undesired ideas; this would be obvious and arouse opposition. American control works on the principle of fooling enough of the people, enough of the time.

Strictly speaking, the US does have a free press. You can easily buy the books of David Duke, Karl Marx, Hitler, or Malcolm X. The trick is that few read. Television and newspapers rule, and they are owned by large corporations concerned with furthering the interests of large corporations.

Those interests are maximizing the viewership for advertising, which is where the money comes from; keeping the lid on in a country in which various groups would be at each other’s throats if demagogues were allowed to provide the spark; keeping corporations from suffering any sort of control, and furthering the political agendas of the media.

Thus you never, ever, allow serious criticism of Israel, and you never, ever, allow an articulate Palestinian to offer his views. You do not allow any coverage of crime by blacks, which might lead to social upheaval. You do not allow distressing reportage of the wars – a little girl looking in puzzlement at her bowels hanging out thanks to shrapnel. You do not do any serious investigative reporting of corporate corruption. And so on. Keep it bland. Keep it reassuring.

Don’t let, say, a cop talk about what really goes on, or a GI to talk about what soldiers really do in Afghanistan, and don’t let political debates touch on substance. Don’t allow, for example, unrehearsed questions: “Mr. Santorum, can you name in order the countries that border on Iran?” Oh no. One mustn’t reveal to the voters that neither they nor the candidates know what they are talking about. Better to maintain the illusion of Informed Citizens Engaging in Democracy.

Mexicans know what kind of government they have. Americans do not. **CT**

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*Fred Reed has worked on for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is [www.fredoneverything.net](http://www.fredoneverything.net)*  
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# The bitter taste of free market medicine

A recent spell in hospital brought **Michael Parenti** face to face with the financial tribulations of the US medical system

.....  
**I kept thinking, what happens to those unfortunates who have no one to bundle them away? Do they languish endlessly in the hospital driveway until the nasty weather finishes them off?**  
.....

**W**hen I recently went to California's Alta Bates hospital for surgery, I discovered that legal procedures take precedence over medical ones. I had to sign intimidating statements about financial counseling, indemnity, patient responsibilities, consent to treatment, use of electronic technologies, and the like.

One of these documents committed me to the following: "The hospital pathologist is hereby authorized to use his/her discretion in disposing of any member, organ, or other tissue removed from my person during the procedure." *Any member? Any organ?*

The next day I returned for the actual operation. While playing Frank Sinatra recordings, the surgeon went to work cutting open several layers of my abdomen in order to secure my intestines with a permanent mesh implant. Afterward I spent two hours in the recovery room. "I feel like I've been in a knife fight," I told one nurse. "It's called surgery," she explained.

Then, while still pumped up with anesthetics and medications, I was rolled out into the street. The street? Yes, some few hours after surgery they send you home. In countries that have socialized medicine (there I said it), a van might be waiting with trained personnel to help you to your abode.

Not so in free-market America. Your presurgery agreement specifies in boldface that you must have "a responsible adult acquaintance" (as opposed to an irresponsible teenage stranger) take you home in a private vehicle. I kept thinking, what happens to those unfortunates who have no one to bundle them away? Do they languish endlessly in the hospital driveway until the nasty weather finishes them off?

You are not allowed to call a taxi. Were a taxi driver to cause you any harm, you could hold the hospital legally responsible. Again it's a matter of liability and lawyers, not health and doctors.

One of the two friends who helped me up the steps to my house then went off to Walgreen's to buy the powerful antibiotics I had to take every four hours for two days. I dislike how antibiotics destroy the "good bacteria" that our bodies produce, and how they help create dangerous strains of super-resistant bacteria. I kept thinking of a recent finding: excessive reliance on medical drugs kills more Americans than all illegal narcotics combined.

So why did I have to take antibiotics? Because, as everyone kept telling me, hospitals are seriously unsafe places overrun with Staph infections and other super bugs. It's a matter of self-protection.

Two days after surgery I noticed a dark red discoloration on my lower abdomen in-



dicating internal bleeding. I was supposed to get a follow-up call from a nurse who would check on how I was doing. But the call might never come because the staff was planning a walkout. “We have no contract,” one of them had told me when I was in the recovery room. So now the nurses are on strike – and I’m left on my own to divine what my internal bleeding is all about. What fun.

Fortunately, it didn’t turn out that way. A nurse did call me despite the walkout. Yes, she said, it was internal bleeding, but it was to be expected. My surgeon called later in the day to confirm this opinion. Death was not yet knocking.

A few days later, there were massive nurses strikes on both coasts. Among other things, the nurses were complaining about “being disrespected by a corporate hospital culture that demands sacrifices from patients and those who provide their care, but pays executives millions of dollars.” (*New York Times*, 16 December 2011). One cold-blooded management negotiator was quoted as saying, “We have the money. We just don’t have the will to give it to you” (*ibid.*).

As for the doctors, both my surgeon and my general practitioner (GP) are among the victims, not the perpetrators, of today’s corporate medical system. My GP explained that it is an endless fight to get insurance companies to pay for services they supposedly cover. Feeling less like a doctor and more like a bill collector, my GP found he could no longer engage in endless telephone struggles with insurance companies.

There are 1,500 medical insurance companies in America, all madly dedicated to maximizing profits by increasing premiums and withholding payments. The medical industry in toto is the nation’s largest and most profitable business, with an annual health bill of about \$1 trillion.

Along with the giant insurance and giant pharmaceutical companies, the greatest profiteers are the Health Maintenance

Organizations (HMOs), notorious for charging steep monthly payments while underpaying their staffs and requiring their doctors to spend less time with each patient, sometimes even withholding necessary treatment.

I am without private insurance. And my Medicare goes just so far. Like many other doctors, my GP no longer accepts Medicare. For a number of years now, Medicare payments to physicians have remained relatively unchanged while costs of running a practice (staff, office space, insurance) have steadily increased. So now my GP’s patients have to pay in full upon every visit – which is not always easy to do.

Our health system mirrors our class system. At the base of the pyramid are the very poor. Many of them suffer through long hours in emergency rooms only to be turned away with a useless or harmful prescription. No wonder “the United States has the worst record among industrialized nations in treating preventable deaths” (*Healthcare-NOW!* 1 December 2011).

Too often the very poor get no care at all. They simply die of whatever illness assails them because they cannot afford treatment. An acquaintance of mine told me how her mother died of AIDS because she could not afford the medications that might have kept her alive.

In Houston I once got talking with a limousine driver, a young African-American man, who remarked that both his parents had died of cancer without ever receiving any treatment. “They just died,” he said with a pain in his voice that I can still hear.

Living just above the poor in the class pyramid are the embattled middle class. They watch medical coverage disappear while paying out costly amounts to the profit-driven insurance companies. I was able to get surgery at Alta Bates only because I am old enough to have Medicare and have enough disposable income to meet the co-payment.

For my out-patient operation, the hospi-

.....  
**Feeling less like  
 a doctor and  
 more like a bill  
 collector, my GP  
 found he could no  
 longer engage in  
 endless telephone  
 struggles with  
 insurance  
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 .....

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**Among the medically privileged are members of Congress and the US president. They pay nothing. They are treated at top-grade facilities. They enjoy, how shall we put it, socialized medicine**  
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tal charged Medicare \$19,466. Of this, Medicare paid \$2,527. And I was billed \$644. The hospital then writes off the unpaid balance thus saving considerable sums in taxes (amounting to an indirect subsidy from the rest of us taxpayers). Had I no Medicare coverage, I would have had to pay the entire \$19,466.

I was informed by the hospital that the \$19,466 charge covers only hospital costs for equipment, technicians, supplies, and room. So besides the \$644, I will have to pay for any pathologists, surgical assistants, and anesthesiologists who performed additional services. I am waiting for the other shoe to drop.

How much does my surgeon earn? Not much at all. He gets about \$400 to \$500 for everything, including my pre-op and post-op visits and the surgery itself, an exacting undertaking that requires skills of the highest sort. He also has to maintain insurance, an office, an assistant, and an increasing load of paperwork.

My surgeon pointed out to me, "If you ask people how much I make on an operation like yours, they will say \$4,000 to \$5,000, and be wrong by a factor of ten." He noted that in a recent speech President Obama criticized a surgeon for charging \$30,000 to replace a knee cap. "The surgeon gets a minute fraction of that amount," my doctor pointed out.

To make matters worse, there is talk about cutting Medicare payments to physicians by 27 percent. If this happens, it is going to be increasingly difficult to find a surgeon who will take Medicare. Still worse, the private insurance companies will join in squeezing the physicians for still more profits.

I was able to meet my payment (\$644) not only because my operation was heavily subsidized by Medicare but because it was a one-day "ambulatory surgery." I don't know how I would fare if I had to undergo prolonged and extremely costly treatment.

So much for life in the middle class. At

the very top of the class pyramid are the 1%, those who don't have to worry about any of this, the superrich who have money enough for all kinds of state-of-the-art treatments at the very finest therapeutic centers around the world, complete with luxury suites with gourmet menus.

Among the medically privileged are members of Congress and the US president. They pay nothing. They are treated at top-grade facilities. They enjoy, how shall we put it, socialized medicine. No conservative lawmakers have held fast to their free-market principles by refusing to accept this publicly funded, medical treatment.

John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods, cheerfully announced that medical care is not a human right; it should be "market determined just like food and shelter." Nobody has a higher opinion of John Mackey than I, and I think he is a greed-driven, union-busting bloodsucker. Nevertheless I will give him credit for candidly admitting his dedication to a dehumanized profit pathology.

The US medical system costs many times more than what is spent in socialized systems, but it delivers much less in the way of quality care and cure. That's the way it is intended to be. The goal of any free-market service – be it utilities, housing, transportation, education, or health care – is not to maximize performance but to maximize profits often at the expense of performance.

If profits are high, then the system is working just fine – for the 1%. But for us 99%, the profit lust is itself the heart of the problem.

## More stories from the real world of hospitals in the USA

**A**fter publishing this article about my personal experiences in dealing with the medical system while undergoing surgery ("Free Market Medicine: A Personal Account"). In

response, a number of readers sent me accounts of their own experiences trying to get well in America.

Health care in this country is hailed by conservative boosters as “the best medical system in the world.” It certainly is the most expensive, most profitable, and most complicated system in the world, leaving millions of Americans in shock. None of the people who wrote to me had anything positive to say about the US health system. Below are some of the responses to my article. (Several of the senders requested that their real names not be used).

**This first email, in a few words, contains one of the more familiar stories:**

“In the mid-90s I had an attack of sciatica while visiting my wife’s daughter in the Bay Area. I went to Alta Bates Emergency. After I waited three hours, a doctor stopped by, saw me for two minutes, gave me a pain prescription & sent me home. Total bill was over \$1,000.” – **John Steinbach**

**Price gouging is the name of the game:**

“I had a kidney stone which was causing me great pain. I drove myself to the emergency ward where I was told the kidney stone was so large that it had to be ‘shattered.’ I spent one night in the hospital. The operation was performed early the next morning. My family had to come pick me up which they did by noon that same day. I wasn’t even in the hospital for 24 hours. Imagine my shock when the bill came. It was \$57,000, not including the doctor’s bill! I actually thought it was a typo. I thought they had put the comma in the wrong place. Blue Cross paid it, except for \$2,500 which I had to pay. Then Blue Cross promptly dumped me.” – **Angel Ewing**

**In my original article, I did not have much to say about pharmaceutical costs, but this next reader does:**

“Medicare cannot negotiate drug prices, which means that the one Rx I take costs

over \$700 every three months, of which I pay \$90 until I reach the ‘doughnut hole,’ which happens with just this one drug. When I first started on this medication, the cost was about \$350, so it has doubled in just three years. No improvements, it’s the same exact drug and there are no generics. The only change is the higher price! Speaking of higher prices, I just renewed my prescription and the three month cost has increased again, from \$718 to \$781. My doctor at Kaiser said that should I get into the ‘doughnut hole’ she would give me a prescription I can use at a Canadian pharmacy. It’s crazy that, even with a drug coverage plan, I’ll eventually have to buy from a Canadian pharmacy!” – **Joan Leslie Taylor**

**Another subject deserving of more attention, iatrogenic disaster:**

“The US medical/hospital/industrial system as it has developed is horrifying to me. I went through the hospital and nursing home process with my late parents in the 90s up through 2000 when my mother died from an infection from an antibiotic resistant strain of bacteria, Mercer, caught in the hospital. At least you were not subject to staying overnight and having to endure a hospital food system which is criminally poor in nutritional value. . . . Plus the added risk of infection.” – **Dennis Goldstein**

**Here is another reported tragic mishap:**

“When the nurses went on strike at Alta Bates, a friend of mine was being treated for her uterine cancer, which was finally in remission. The replacement nurse misdiagnosed the treatment and connected a tube in an erroneous way. My friend tragically died from the mishap. Such a sweet, wonderful person taken by medical error. So, my friend, you were basically lucky that you got out with your life. [My wife] recently had a small procedure and she is still getting bills from the treatment – six

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**“I wasn’t even in the hospital for 24 hours. Imagine my shock when the bill came. It was \$57,000, not including the doctor’s bill!”**  
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"No way would I ever live in the US again. It's too cruel. I do carry insurance that, if I were in the US and I get sick, I get air 'freighted' back to a civilized society' "  
.....

months later. In other words, you are right, be prepared for the other shoe to drop." – **Roberto Ronaldi**

**Medical care in America for the longest time has been all about owing, billing, and paying. This letter deals with events from fifteen years ago. (The writer is herself an M.D. who is on disability):**

"I have had my own disastrous hospitalization. In 1997, I had private insurance that left a lot unpaid. The hospital ate some of the uncovered costs as a one-time only concession, but the 'extras' (anesthesiologist, radiologists, etc.) insisted on full payment. I went over the supplies billing and was shocked at the repetitions and also waste. . . . At that time almost all my income from Workman's Comp went to pay my insurance coverage. Within a couple of years I was unable to continue to afford being insured due to pre-existing conditions. The whole thing was so traumatic, I couldn't even write about it, though I wanted to! And I signed myself out a day early because I felt unsafe due to the many errors of omission or neglect made in my 3 days there. A problem which I could not prove was surgical or due to post-op neglect left me with one-and-a-half years of rehab, a limp, and continued hip pain which, by the way, was not the area that was to be addressed by the surgery – it was my neck! But they took some bone from my hip to fix the neck . . . and apparently, the hip ended up being less well connected to the rest of me afterwards. And that was Free Market Medicine and workers' protection health benefits 15 years ago." – **Deb Rosen**

**Among the hardest hit are the homeless. Here is a report from the field, from someone who works for Task Force for the Homeless:**

"Every day we 'house' 500-700 homeless Atlantans [Georgia], who are men, mostly. We distribute mail daily as well, and the bulk of the mail is hospital bills from our

former 'charity' hospital which is now a private hospital. Homeless men who owe that hospital for treatment are often denied jobs and housing because of their credit problems. We are in the process of fighting those bills. All too often, our friends don't even seek treatment because they know they cannot pay. The prescriptions at that same hospital cost \$10 each, and so people who take more than one medication often go without, as in the case of one man who has heart failure [and needed] life-saving medication." – **Anita Beaty**

**A reader offers a look at the Swiss system:**

"Last year I had four eye surgeries and breast cancer and the maximum I paid was 7000 CHF for it all. I had to fight to get out of the hospital after five days because they wanted to make absolutely sure I had no problem with drainage. I was able to walk out (no wheelchairs). A portion of my insurance payment does go to cover people who can't afford insurance. I'm fine with that. I had a team that still keeps tabs on me and a lead nurse who is there 24/7 (she does have off time with a substitute who is there for whatever I need.). No way would I ever live in the US again. It's too cruel. I do carry insurance that, if I were in the US and I get sick, I get air 'freighted' back to a civilized society." – **Dora Philips**

**From a friend in Canada:**

"I am just appalled reading your account – although our Conservative government is trying very hard to destroy our cherished health care system these days. But to give you a personal example, my husband just had a total hip replacement and is due for another one this summer. Five years ago he had a serious bowel operation which required a nine-day stay at the hospital. NO bills were sent to us for either of these operations. It is all included in our health care system OHIP for Ontario. Ontario Health Insurance Plan. The only cost this time is

for buying a commode chair, a bath bench and a walker (which we could have rented). And we will be able to deduct these expenses on our income taxes. We also have a \$100.00 deductible yearly for our medications so it cost us about \$6 to \$8 for each prescription.” – **Madeleine Gilchrist**

**From another friend in Canada; after giving a detailed account of the excellent free treatment accorded her mother, she added:**

“Far too many Americans accept an utterly depraved and bizarre system of health-care-for-profit. The health system in the USA is an aberration. Many Americans have been led to think that we Canadians pay a fortune for our health care in taxes. But Americans already pay more per capita in taxes for health care (that most of you don’t receive) than do Canadians. We get full, FREE coverage, no questions asked. Our system is under attack by the Conservatives. But so far, only free prescription drugs have been taken away from my Mum’s coverage. She now pays about 20% of the cost of her heart medications. Until about a decade ago they were totally free of charge. Meanwhile, my fellow Canadians are being lied to, and many are being hoodwinked. They look at the TV commercials for American for-profit health care, and listen to Fox television and its Canadian counterpart, Sun television, and the ranting of Prime Minister Steven Harper, and conclude that we have an inferior system.” – **Amanda Bellerby**

**These observations from a friend in England:**

“I just read your article – a lot of it left me speechless. Some I am not surprised by; my friends in California have told me about their own horror stories when it comes to accessing health care. The National Health Service [in the U.K.] is far from perfect but we had peace of mind when a family friend had surgery recently and was taken to and

from the hospital by mini-bus – so different from your experience. . . . I noticed when interviewing some of my refugee/asylum-seeking clients that a huge percentage of them are given anti-depressants. Doctors readily hand out prescription drugs rather than referring to other services (which are more costly). I can now easily spot when someone is taking them as their memory is often bad and they have delayed responses to my questions. One man I was talking to the other day from Zimbabwe has been taking anti-depressants for seven years and was prescribed them after just one meeting with his doctor. We used to have an NHS service in Nottingham where I live called Health In Mind who were great with supporting refugees suffering post-traumatic stress, but it’s been scrapped now. Companies who supply anti-depressants must be making a fortune here.” – **Sharon Walia**

In sum, readers found the conditions I described in my earlier article to be quite unsettling. But the above comments indicate that many people in the USA have a story of their own to tell about the heartless medical industry. And people abroad make clear to us that their “socialized” medical systems are more humane and less cruel than ours – even if they too sometimes suffer from faulty practices.

The corporate goal in the United States and elsewhere is to treat medical care not as a human right but as a market-determined profit-driven service. We should unequivocally demand socialized medicine, that is, a publicly funded and publicly administered system whose purpose is human care rather than profit accumulation. It will cost so much less and serve us so much better.

**CT**

*Michael Parenti received his Ph.D. in political science from Yale University. He has taught at a number of colleges and universities, in the United States and abroad. He is the author of twenty-three books*

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 .....



# A very sick country

David Michael Green is angry with Obama and his opponents as the health care bill lurches towards a disastrous defeat

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**We pay more than half-again per capita above the cost of the next most expensive health system in the world, and still one-sixth of our population remains completely uninsured**  
.....

**S**o. It looks now like the regressive majority on the Supreme Court is poised to overturn Barack Obama's signature legislative achievement, his health care bill. That is so fitting.

More than that, it is also a reminder of just how sick this country truly is. Imagine that the lab returned the results from your battery of blood work tests, and all the indicators were screaming out "Danger!" and "Broken!". That's us, baby. Get this patient to the ER!

What a total disaster.

The first indicator of how unhealthy we are as a country – literally and figuratively – is the fact that we still don't have universal health care here in the wealthiest place on Earth. It's been more than century since the welfare state – a system in which the national government assumes responsibility, as an agent of the national will, for guaranteeing certain benefits and protections to its citizenry – was invented, and, unlike every other developed country in the world, the richest one still doesn't come close to having universal care for our public, including millions of children. It's a crime – there's no other word for it – of astonishing proportions. But it gets worse. We pay more than half-again per capita above the cost of the next most expensive system in the world, and still one-sixth of our population remains completely uninsured, with many more poorly insured. Nice.

By the way, it's worth noting that the guy

who originally launched the welfare state was none other than the regressive and aggressive old Prussian chancellor himself, Otto von Bismarck. Golly, I don't mean to be critical or anything, but you know you're hurting when your country's politics are to the right of the "blood and iron" father of the German Empire. Just saying.

I'll hold my gauze-packed nose in a vise-grip and give Obama a little bit of credit for addressing the issue. But the way he went about it constitutes the original sin that will have brought us to the place of almost complete disaster after the rump Court finishes its ideological hijack. To begin with, Obama looked at the existing disaster of regressive health care policy – the joys of commercializing and profitizing the public's need for medicine – and then decided to promulgate the next most conservative option he could come up with, one which commercializes and profitizes medicine even more.

.....  
**Obama's mistake**

He could have gone for single payer – that is, Medicare for all – which is only the system employed by just about every other developed country in the world, all of whom, naturally, are more highly ranked by the World Health Organization on delivery of health care. Yes, yes, I know. All the Obama apologists out there say this was politically impossible. May-

be that's true. But maybe it's not. The presidency is all about persuasion. If the punk Bush could sell the insane Iraq war, which in fact he did to an originally skeptical public, perhaps Obama could have talked sense to America about health care, and moved people enough to force action out of Congress. Or, short of that, he might at least have demanded that the public option be part of the legislation, the next best choice. What he did instead was to pretend to care about a public option, in order to keep stupid liberals on board, while he cut a secret deal with the parasitic insurance industry guaranteeing their profits and promising there would be no public option in the bill. That isn't reckless surmise. Tom Daschle, Obama's political mentor and health care point man, wrote that the president did just that. Then he adopted a model for his plan that was so conservative it had originally been put forth by the Heritage Foundation, was a plank in Bob Dole's 1996 presidential campaign, and had already been implemented by Mitt Romney (who, in case you hadn't heard, is a Republican – though he can be whatever you need him to be, as long as you make him president) in Massachusetts, in addition to being blessed by that bastion of progressivism, the insurance industry. Hey, what's that old line about reposing with canines...?

#### What about the ninety-nine percent?

Obama compounded his sell-out to the one percent by not selling his legislation to the ninety-nine percent. Polls show that most Americans don't understand the legislation – today, three years after the extended sausage-making process that produced it – and most favor repeal. What's astonishing about that latter fact is that, even though the bill is deeply flawed, it provides pretty much nothing but good news for American citizens. Opposing it – unless you're opposed to the 99 percent getting a fair shake (hmmm?, who could those opponents be?) or you're just dead-set on seeing this president fail (hmmm? again) – is like opposing free chocolate sundaes or bonus

checks from your employer. When you can't sell Christmas to a six year-old, maybe you should get out of the Santa business, eh?

Obama appears to have also been the last person in America to understand the vicious nature of today's so-called conservatives. Generally, I think his incompetence as president is overstated. Too often, it's the excuse suckered liberals give themselves for the cognitive dissonance they experience when they look at how corporate and conservative and militant and statist their hero's actual policies are. But health care may be a case where this is an accurate portrait. I suspect he was actually dumb enough – as if he, like Sarah Palin, had simply not been paying the remotest attention to the government shutdowns, the impeachment of Clinton, the 2000 election, the Swiftboating of John Kerry and Max Cleland, and the rest of American history these last thirty years – to believe that he could find some moderate Republicans, compromise with them and get their vote. And I also think he is the most inept owner of the bully pulpit since George III. All during the year (year!) of legislating health care, this administration completely ceded the high ground, low ground, and everything in-between ground to the bellowing, foaming-at-the-mouth, blatantly lying (remember death panels?), corporate-sponsored, Koch Brothers-funded, Tea Party idiot right.

And all during this last year they've done exactly the same thing while the four or six or ten Republican presidential candidates running at any given time have trashed the bill relentlessly, with nary a counter peep from Barack and his communications wizards. Gee, is it shocking under those conditions that the American public doesn't understand the bill, or that they oppose it? Is it such a leap to imagine that such public sentiments have given license (as if they needed it) to the same five hacks-in-black-robos who gave us *Bush v. Gore* and Citizens United to legislate from the bench as the most activist court in perhaps all of American history and strike down the legislation wholesale?

Which brings us to even deeper maladies

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being suffered by the body politic. This debacle demonstrates in full the degree to which the American political system is completely broken. But, alas, not in the way people think, which leads to the possibility (and, given the events of the last thirty years, the likelihood) that in the coming years we will simply compound our problems in response to these indicators, by simply going further in the direction of our systemic carnage, rather than running as fast as we can the other way. There are four main issues here, and none of them are peripheral or symptomatic – each of these go to the core dysfunctionality of the American political system. They are: the American presidential system, its electoral system, the extensive use of judicial review, and the kleptocratic ownership of the state.

Americans revere their Constitution, but they mostly don't know why. Just as we grow up Catholics or Mets fans or anti-communists, we just by-and-large think what we're told to think and do what we're told to do, never stopping to ask the big Why? questions. As a political scientist, I do admire certain feats of engineering embodied in the Constitution, and the clever solutions these provided to otherwise intractable problems at the time of the Founders. And as a citizen, I admire parts of the document – such as the Bill of Rights – very much, especially given the era from which they emerged.

However, one of the handful of most salient ideas of the Constitution is a bad one, as has become increasingly evident in our time for anyone who cares to look. This is the notion of separation of powers, along with the twin concept of checks and balances. I suspect most Americans don't even realize that you don't have to structure your political regime this way in order to have a democracy, and in fact, most democracies don't. They use a parliamentary system instead, rather than our model, which is referred to as a presidential system. What's the difference? Well, in a parliamentary system, you have one singular government responsible for governing. The executive function (prime minister and cabinet)

emerges directly out of the legislative function (parliament) to which it is permanently fused, and, meanwhile, there typically is no judiciary with the power to speak to legislative matters. That means, quite simply, that the undivided government governs, unimpeded by anything other than the criticisms of the media and the opposition, and how its work plays with public opinion. It gets things done – none of the divided government plaguing the American system so badly today – and if the public approves, it gets another term. If not, it doesn't.

It's a simple straightforward concept that fully embodies the notion of responsible government, thus permitting accountability and, ultimately, real functioning democracy. Contrast that with the American system. Is there anybody in the US who isn't unhappy with the current government? Maybe that one guy in Nebraska, but he's been off his meds for years now. Or the woman in Florida with the sixty-seven cats. Otherwise, though, the remaining three hundred million of us are pretty much sickened by Washington. So what do we do? Well, throw the bums out, of course, and replace them with some new bums. But think about what that would mean today. We would be replacing a Republican House with a Democratic one, a Democratic Senate (with an insufficiently large enough majority to do anything) with a Republican Senate of the same gridlocked structure, and a right-wing Democratic president with a Republican president. Wow! That'd be a relief, eh?! What a difference that would make! What a prescription for boldly launching the future!

We are, of course, a million miles away from shredding the worshiped Constitution (and a change of this magnitude to such a core item would indeed represent something of a shred, starting with Articles One, Two and Three), and even further from possibly imagining that foreign people – let alone those squishy European bastards who inconveniently live healthier, happier and longer lives – could teach us anything about anything. But, that said – since we're just talking among friends here – one of the greatest gifts we could give ourselves at

this point would be a parliamentary system and the gift of responsible government. Then, when we're not happy with any particular government we've got, we can make a change at the ballot box which might actually result in a genuine change of direction.

Assuming, that is, that there is an alternative to be chosen. If, on the other hand, you have an electoral system like ours, you can have parliamentary government and yet may still be left with only two parties to pick from. Worse still, on fundamental issues like foreign policy and the distribution of wealth in the society, the parties may be identical enough (or just owned enough) so as to offer no real choice at all. Hello! Can you say "America 2012"? There are a lot of systemic reasons for this duopoly we've produced in American politics, but the chief one is our use of the winner-take-all district model electoral system – which will tend to produce two dominant parties over the long-haul wherever it is employed – instead of a proportional representation system, which does not. Again, god forbid Americans should learn anything from anyone else, but if we did stoop that low, we might want to think about revising our electoral system (which would not require Constitutional amendment). It would do us a world of good, not only by giving us multiple and genuine choices at the ballot box, but also by injecting alternative ideas into our poverty-stricken political discourse.

#### Judicial review

Meanwhile, if we return to the separation of powers problem again for a moment, we encounter another severe problem which is a natural artifact of that system. If you're going to have separate branches of government, each with the capacity to check and balance against each other, that means your judiciary pretty much needs to have the power known as judicial review in order to be a meaningful player in that contest. This term refers to the capacity to strike down legislation produced by the other two branches. Again, this is – especially to

the degree with which it is practiced here – a fairly peculiarly American idea. In most other democracies, parliament rules. Period, full stop. Not here.

Does judicial review makes sense? I can see two domains where it does, though often (like now) only in a theoretical sense: civil rights and civil liberties. Stupid and angry politicians, often reacting to the stupid and angry sentiments of the public, almost never fail to relieve minorities of their rights and deny individuals the human rights (little things like due process, and so on) they are otherwise entitled to possess. All too often, in short, it's just plain politically popular to be mean and bigoted and 'legally' violent, and democratically elected governments will readily oblige a lathered up public (when politicians aren't in fact whipping up voters themselves – remember McCarthyism? the war on drugs? gay marriage?). Who will stop them from doing this? Theoretically (meaning, only if they happen to be so disposed – just the opposite of our condition today with the regressive majority on the Supreme Court), courts populated by justice-seeking and principle-protecting judges will do so, judges who also happen to be insulated from the public wrath by lifetime terms. They can afford to stand on lofty principles when the political branches are assembled into a lynch party. There is definite wisdom to this concept, though no guarantees. Do you see Justice Scalia, for example, slapping down Congress for depriving African Americans or women of their Constitutionally-guaranteed rights? I rest my case.

Apart from those two areas, however, I would argue that the very notion of judicial review is a disaster, because it is profoundly undemocratic. That was perhaps never more evident than it is now, as the rump majority of this extremely activist Court is preparing to fully legislate from the bench – in full contradiction of their own fervently argued 'principles' of federalism and judicial restraint from previous cases no less – by overturning not just the individual mandate part of Obama's bill, but all of it. And apparently – judging from

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**Stupid and angry politicians, often reacting to the stupid and angry sentiments of the public, almost never fail to relieve minorities of their rights and deny individuals the human rights they are otherwise entitled to possess**  
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**We will end up with a health care system whose purpose is not to provide health, but rather to enrich insurance and pharmaceutical corporations**  
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Scalia’s comments – they’ll be doing so without even reading the legislation, and certainly without understanding it. I see little difference between such a governing structure and the essence of monarchy. In both cases you have political decision-makers who have not been chosen by the public, serving life terms, making legislative decisions in secret, unaccountable and nonreplacable, making policy on high and dictating it to the masses without fear of consequence. What possible relationship does that bear to anything one could plausibly label as democracy? The question answers itself. It also therefore reminds us that the third major political malady infecting our system is the expanded and profoundly undemocratic notion of judicial review.

Notwithstanding these structural handicaps, the American political system has nevertheless been moderately successful at negotiating the rocky shoals of policy-making over the last two-plus centuries. There have been, to be sure, some glaring inadequacies and the occasional near-fatal meltdown. But people ultimately vote with their feet, and something chronically broken would ultimately be unlikely to have seen that many candles on its birthday cake. In that same two hundred year-plus time period, for example, the French have had five republics (along with several iterations of empires and monarchies). But after one false start (the Articles of Confederation), the American regime has remained more or less intact for more than twenty decades, though it is manifestly broken today. Calling the federal government dysfunctional would be an act of charity.

But there is one last peril that threatens American democracy today, to a degree not seen for at least a century, and to the extent that the term democracy itself becomes a rather dubious appellation for the system we live under. Let’s just be honest, shall we? – if for no other reason than the refreshing novelty of doing so: Fundamentally, the representatives in our ‘representative government’ don’t represent you and me. They represent the one percent. You can play all the games you want

about how campaigns are funded, and spin all the tall tales you need to about how money ‘only’ buys access, not Congressional votes, but the real system of pay-to-play is transparently obvious to anyone willing to risk even a sidelong glance at the emperor’s new clothes. It’s just that simple and just that broken. The only place American representative democracy exists anymore today is in eighth-grade civics textbooks

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**Dysfunctional system**

General governance mechanics are important, as I’ve noted at some length above, and there are campaign finance systems that are way better than others at promoting true democratic representation, to be sure. But at the bottom of the pile of political engineering problems lies human nature. If we allow greed to control our public sphere, we will wind up with a government representing the one percent and not the ninety-nine percent. Indeed, it will be a government very much intentionally governing at the expense of the ninety-nine percent. We will wind up with a political system that is completely dysfunctional, except for purposes of the wholesale transfer of wealth upwards. We will wind up with policies in every domain – from national security to tobacco policy to guns, prisons and taxes and far beyond – that reflects the needs of the special monied interests over the public interest. And we will end up with a health care system whose purpose is not to provide health, but rather to enrich insurance and pharmaceutical corporations.

Hey, what the hell am I doing, saying “We will...”? Strike that.

We have.

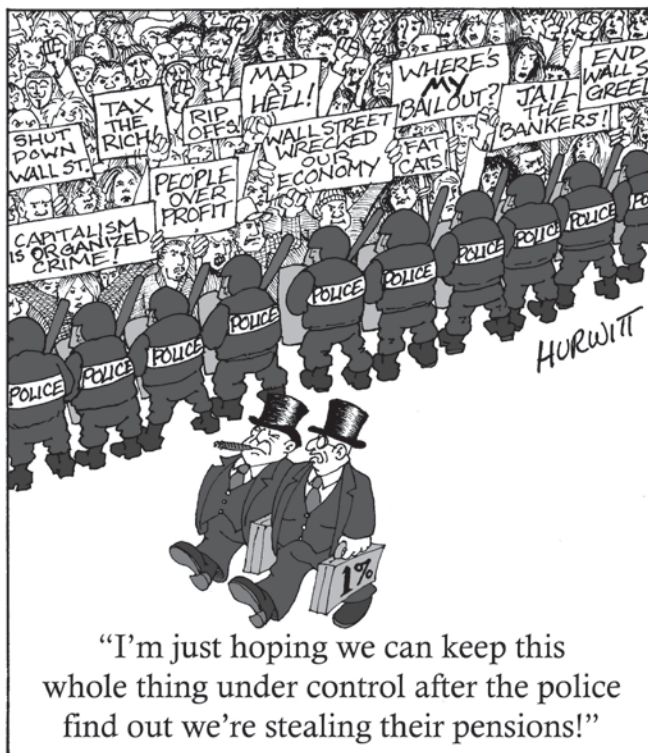
Welcome to America, 2012.

Here’s to your good health.

**CT**

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*David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. More of his work can be found at his website, [www.regressiveantidote.net](http://www.regressiveantidote.net).*





## This World (2)

Occupy Dusseldorf, March 17, 2012  
– Operation Turtle protesters march  
beneath large blow-ups of Mark  
Hurwitz's cartoon (left) from ColdType  
issue 60 of November 2011.

### Send us your Photos

*This World is a new feature in ColdType in which we invite readers to send photographs that capture a slice of the world in which we live. Please send photographs, which should be 240dpi (jpeg format, black/white or colour) to: [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)*

# Fear wears a black man's face

The black man has become the signifier for a host of unconscious fears that lurk within the white psyche, writes **Gillian Schutte**

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**My husband had to control his anger because he also knew that in this country an angry black man could get killed in cold blood in front of a bank merely for being black**  
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**M**y 12-year-old son has a taste for hoodies, rap and hip hop clothing. He carries a blackberry in his pocket which he reaches for every so often to text one of his friends. He has a friendly face and temperament but has also learnt at a young age to stand up for his own rights and speak out against the injustices of the world. Someone once suggested to me that his face is so sweet no one would do him any harm. But Trayvon Martin had a sweet face, too.

The horrible truth is that no matter how sweet his face is, he may also one day be perceived as a threat to some trigger-happy racist with a gun because he reached into his pocket for his Blackberry at the wrong moment – or simply because he is not white. Like Trayvon Martin he would never take abuse lying down. He would stand up to a man pointing a gun at him for no apparent reason.

I can tell by how angry and vocal he became when he heard the story about his father being surrounded by neighbourhood watch men, armed to the hilt with guns cocked when he went to draw money at an ATM in the Walkerville [Johannesburg] Spar last year. He went to the same ATM twice because he had not drawn enough cash to pay for the thatch he had gone to fetch. The second time somebody alerted the neighbourhood watch. They came like a small

army in pick-ups and ambushed him as he walked out the shopping centre.

My husband had to suppress his contempt for these white men who thought they had him figured. He knew their type well from his years of being a political prisoner on Robben Island. He had to control his anger because he also knew that in this country an angry black man could get killed in cold blood in front of a bank merely for being black. He firmly let them know that he knew his rights.

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**Ten squad cars arrived**

They wanted to search his car. He said no – that only the police had the right to search his car. Before he had finished his sentence the cops arrived in ten squad cars and guns at the ready. When they searched his car they found a ladder, some tools and gumboots because, as he had told them, he was on his way to fix the thatching of our weekend home in Magaliesburg.

The black cops said they were getting tired of the neighbourhood watch victimizing black men randomly. The report they received was that my husband was armed to the hilt. They told him that they too were ready to shoot. One wrong move and he may have been killed.

I am the white mother of a biracial male child who has been born into a world in

which to be black and male makes you vulnerable to random shootings in suburban settings, where it seems, any black male is a potential threat. It is a message that is deeply ingrained in the global white consciousness. When I think back to my own childhood I have to come to terms with the fact that I too was taught that fear wears a black man's face. Now I need to teach my child how to navigate this false construct that my white world was built upon.

I grew up in a South Africa that seemed reserved for whites only, where fear came in the form of the dustbin men, or the ice cream man or the old man who hobbled along our main street, probably to some impossible gardening job. And fear always wore a black man's face. I was often warned. "Don't eat that ice cream - it may have drugs inside" or "Stay indoors when the dustbin men come... you never know." My older sister used to quake in her pretty pink shoes and clutch her cat Tammy to her chest when she heard the dustbin men's whistles. Someone had told her that they stole cats and made hats out of them.

I can't remember seeing many other black men around as a young child but when my mother married a 'Rhodesian' farmer and shipped us all off to a better life on a tobacco farm in the mid seventies, suddenly there was an entourage of black men (who were referred to as boys) who ran our farm house. I came to know and love these men the way I used to love my series of surrogate black mothers back in South Africa.

It was around the same time that the bush war had moved into our area. As children all we knew was that we were surrounded by 'terrorists'. Now double security fences shot up around our houses along with brick mortar shields built in front of our windows. We were taught to shoot automatic Uzis, which remained under our beds at night. During school hours helicopters would come and drop pamphlets over our playgrounds, revealing to us the atrocities

that 'terrorists' were meting out on the locals. Images of women with ripped off lips, children swinging upside down from trees and decapitated old folk filled our dreams.

What we knew for certain about the "ters" is that they were black men. For some reason, I used to imagine that they were black men who wore red caps and red clown noses. I had to differentiate them from the black men that populated my young life, whom, no matter how hard I tried, I could not fear.

At the same time, posters of white war heroes were pasted in our country clubs, on our school walls and any other public space available. Army guys used to patrol our farms when our fathers were away on police reserve and my mother dutifully did her stints in the canteens to feed these "war heroes". My older sister used to swoon at these handsome white boys armed to the hilt. I began to fear them. They carried dried up terrorists ears in their pockets as proof of their ability to kill.

In my young mind I was not aware of the gross injustice of this slave tenure system that we were benefiting from - until years later when I majored in African Politics at University and things started to fall into place. I also learnt that it was not necessarily the freedom fighters that had ripped off the lips of the women in the propaganda pamphlets. This was long after my stepfather abandoned his farm and fled from a black government and we landed back in South Africa.

Again, we were fleeing from the danger that a black man presented to our safety and again I was flung into a society where black men were all but invisible, except for the occasional gardener. It was only when I went to study journalism at college in Durban that I encountered black men again, and this time on an equal footing. For the first time black men became part of my social circles as we pretended to be hard core journalists, drinking in pubs in the afternoon and discussing all manner of things.

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**Middleclass communities build mini armies under the guise of “neighbourhood watch” to defend themselves from the black male. They say it is only about crime, but I think it masks a deeper fear of blackness**  
.....

I was introduced to township life at the tender age of 18 and I took to it like a fish to water. Township jazz clubs became a regular weekend activity, as did braais at township homes, where I would sit smoking and drinking with the men while the women slipped into the toilet for a drag of a smoke or a sip of cider.

I got into the local black music scene and managed a band of black male musicians. I had a regular Jazz and Arts column in a local paper and started to put on concerts at a local community arts hall. Those were the heady days of struggle and jazz that allowed me to improvise and discover my fearlessness and freedom of choice.

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**Racial complications**  
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Two decades later I am married to Siphosiphiso and we have a beautiful male child, now 12 years old. We are a normal happy family for the most part. But after the Walkerville experience and the tragic killing of Trayvon Martin I know it is time for me to navigate the quagmire of racial complications that our world presents to us.

Having a male child I realise that I need to teach him to always look inwards for who he is and not to believe what the world tries to tell him he is. I need to help him deconstruct the many mixed messages that abound about the black male as constructed through the white gaze – in popular culture, in the media and in real life.

If you look around you will see the myriad constructions of the black male image. He is touted as the youthful sex symbol in advertising, or the paragon of success in upmarket media or the rapper with access to endless bling and pussy or the man that wears a suit like no other.

He is the face of political power and leadership and wealth, but he is also the man who is accused of corruption. He is the man desperately trying to make a living by selling trinkets on the pavements, the man who has lost his job and is struggling

with his dignity. He is the reason that people are building six-foot walls around their properties. He is the black boy-child who is shot with a hunting rifle whilst visiting his domestic worker grandmother at her place of work, in a country that remains silent. He is the young man who is killed by neighbourhood watch whilst walking to the shops to buy Snickers, because he looks suspicious.

Middleclass communities build mini armies under the guise of “neighbourhood watch” to defend themselves from the black male. They say it is only about crime, but I think it masks a deeper fear of blackness. Too many innocent young black men have been killed ‘accidentally’. The fear of black men is so deeply ingrained it has become part of the collective unconscious.

Deep down white society fears the black man’s political power, they fear his economic potential, they fear his poverty, they fear his sexuality.

The black man has become the signifier for a host of unconscious fears that lurk within the white psyche. It is this fear that makes it dangerous to be black and male in the world today.

I once told my son to be careful. He was jumping off a high wall in his Superman outfit. He was three years old. He said to me, full of confidence – “I am becarefulling mom.”

And now at twelve, I want to gather him in my arms and whisper in his ear – “Carry on becarefulling son. Don’t let the world’s irrational fear of your brown skin and curly hair and hoodies and hip-hop kill your confidence. Don’t let it kill you.” **CT**

.....  
*Gillian Schutte is an award winning independent filmmaker, writer and social justice activist in South Africa. She is a founding member of Media for Justice and co-producer at Handheld Films. This essay was originally published by the South African Civil Society Information Service at [www.sacsis.org](http://www.sacsis.org)*

# Police to get G20 overtime after

Government set \$387K tab for officers

Officers will be paid extra hours they worked for the G8 and G20. The federal government has set the \$387,000 tab. The Toronto Police Service billed the city for \$89.2 million for security costs for the G20 in 2010, but auditors will disburse \$1 million in funding to a police report on the city's budget on Tuesday. The money for overtime. The police service raised the Public Safety Canada



DARREN CALABRESE/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE PHOTO

Police try to restrain a demonstrator during G20 protests in June 2010.

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## This World (3)

If this is restraint, I'd hate to see what the cops do when they get angry. The caption-writer at the Toronto Star – which generally did a good job of covering police brutality at Toronto's G20 demonstrations in 2010 – distorts reality. Wonder what the caption would have said if a demonstrator had been photographed whacking a policeman?

### Send us your Photos

*This World is a new feature in ColdType in which we invite readers to send photographs that capture a slice of the world in which we live. Please send photographs, which should be 240dpi (jpeg format, black/white or colour) to: editor@coldtype.net*



# Another member of the family

**Alison Weir** invites readers to meet Jodi Rudoren,  
the *New York Times*'s new Israel-Palestine bureau chief

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**Most Americans are reluctant to discuss the potential bias in such a profoundly un-diverse system, having been conditioned to fear that such discussion would be "anti-Semitic"**  
.....

**M**ichael Lerner, the editor of *Tikkun* magazine, is known for his frequent condemnations of Israeli violence against Palestinians. He is labeled "pro-Palestinian" for such statements and is regularly attacked by pro-Israel zealots who charge that he is disloyal to the Jewish state.

Yet, in reality, Lerner frequently speaks of his devotion to Israel and states that his actions are taken in considerable part to protect it.

A while ago Lerner explained the difference in his feelings about Israelis compared to his feelings about Palestinians. "[T]here is a difference in my emotional and spiritual connection to these two sides," Lerner said.

"On the one side is my family; on the other side are decent human beings. I want to support human beings all over the planet but I have a special connection to my family."

This statement comes to mind when one considers the *New York Times* bureau chiefs who cover Israel-Palestine.

The most recent person to be chosen for this powerful post at arguably the most influential newspaper in the United States is Jodi Rudoren. She takes the place of Ethan Bronner, who was preceded by Steven Erlanger, who was preceded by James Bennet, who was preceded by Deborah Sontag. All, according to an Israeli report, are Jewish.

Most Americans – particularly those who would object to only white reporters covering racial issues or only male reporters covering gender issues – are reluctant to discuss the potential bias in such a profoundly un-diverse system, having been conditioned to fear that such discussion would be "anti-Semitic" or would open the commentator to this extremely damaging accusation.

In Israel, however, it is considered appropriate to discuss the Jewish roots of American politicians and journalists since Israel was created specifically to be "the Jewish state," Jews have elevated status in it, and the vast majority of Israeli land is officially owned by "world Jewry" (although some individuals have publicly opted out).

An article on the *Jerusalem Post* website, a major Israeli newspaper, focuses on this aspect. The article, "Judaism at the *New York Times*", reports that "all *New York Times*' bureau chiefs for at least the last fifteen years have been Jewish."

The article's author, Ashley Rindsberg, notes that "the *Times* doesn't consistently send Russian Americans to its Moscow bureau... or Mexican Americans to lead its Mexico City bureau..." and asks, "Why does the *New York Times* consistently send Jewish journalists to head their central office in the Jewish State?"

Rindsberg, who like many conservative Israelis considers the *Times*' reporting anti-

Israel, provides a somewhat convoluted answer. The *Times*' Jewish owners, Rindsberg posits, are uncomfortable with their Jewish identity. Therefore, he claims, they "would just as soon as not have reporters who could be identified for their Jewishness. And to prove it, they send Jews to the Jewish State to report in a most un-Jewish way."

**The Times' history of pro-Israel coverage**

Despite Rindsberg's view of *Times*, analysis shows its coverage to be consistently pro-Israel. A 2005 study found that the *Times* reported on Israeli deaths at rates up to seven times greater than its reports on Palestinian deaths, even though Palestinian deaths occurred first and in far greater numbers.

A 2007 study of the *Times*' coverage of various international reports on human rights violations by Israelis and by Palestinians found that the *Times* covered reports condemning Israeli human rights violations at a rate only one-twentieth the rate that it covered reports condemning Palestinian human rights violations. The investigation found that during the study period there had been 76 reports by humanitarian agencies condemning Israel for abuses and four condemning Palestinians for abuses. The *Times* carried two stories on each side.

In its early years the *Times* specifically avoided assigning Jewish reporters to cover Israel out of concern that such journalists would have an inherent conflict of interest. This policy was reversed in 1979 after Abe Rosenthal became the paper's executive editor and explicitly decided to choose Jewish journalists for the position.

While his first attempt failed (he had thought his choice, David Shipler, was Jewish), the Columbia Journalism Review reports that most of the journalists who succeeded Shipler, beginning with Thomas Friedman, have been of Jewish ethnicity. The article notes that "for a century [the *Times*] has served, in effect, as the hometown paper of American Jewry."

Former *NY Times* executive editor Max Frankel, who was an editor at the *Times* from 1972 through 2000, admitted in his memoirs: "I was much more deeply devoted to Israel than I dared to assert ... Fortified by my knowledge of Israel and my friendships there, I myself wrote most of our Middle East commentaries. As more Arab than Jewish readers recognized, I wrote them from a pro-Israel perspective."

An article by star reporter and author Grace Halsell describes her firsthand experience with pro-Israel bias at the *Times* in the early 1980s.

Halsell had written books about the plight of Native Americans, African Americans, and undocumented Mexican workers. She was a great favorite of *New York Times* matriarch Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, whose father had acquired the *Times* in 1896, whose husband and then son had run it next, and whose grandson is now in charge.

When Halsell next wrote a powerful book describing the Palestinian plight, she incurred Mrs. Suzberger's displeasure and was quickly dropped by the *Times*. Halsell writes: "I had little concept that from being buoyed so high I could be dropped so suddenly when I discovered - from her point of view - the 'wrong' underdog."

In her article Halsell quotes a revealing statement by an Israeli journalist following Israel's 1996 shelling of a UN base in Lebanon that killed more than 100 civilians sheltering in it: "We believe with absolute certitude that right now, with the White House in our hands, the Senate in our hands and the *New York Times* in our hands, the lives of others do not count the same way as our own."

Since 1984 *New York Times* bureau chiefs have lived in a house that was acquired for the *Times* by then Jerusalem Bureau Chief Thomas Friedman (now the *Times*' lead foreign policy columnist). The building originally belonged to a Palestinian family forced out in Israel's 1947-49 founding war. Israel afterward prevented the family from return-

In its early years the *Times* specifically avoided assigning Jewish reporters to cover Israel out of concern that such journalists would have an inherent conflict of interest

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**Overall, the thousands of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel seem largely to have been invisible to Times' reporters**  
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ing and reclaiming their home. Therefore, *Times'* bureau chiefs are in the strange position of living in a home that was stolen from Palestinians (acquiring property by violent conquest is illegal in today's world).

.....  
**Recent Situation: Bronner, Kershner, & Khader Adnan**

Rudoren's predecessor as Jerusalem bureau chief, Ethan Bronner, has a son who enlisted in the Israeli military. When this conflict with impartiality was exposed, even the *Times'* own ombudsman suggested that journalistic ethics required that Bronner be moved to a different beat. Yet, *Times* then-editor Bill Keller insisted that this gave Bronner "special sophistication" and kept him in his position.

Bronner's colleague at the bureau has been Isabel Kershner, who will apparently be staying on. J.J. Goldberg, editor of the *Forward*, writes: "Isabel Kershner immigrated to Israel from her native England as a young woman and spent a couple of decades in Israeli journalism and Jewish education before joining the *Times* a few years ago. By now she's thoroughly Israeli (and, for full disclosure, a friend)."

While pro-Israel Zealots vehemently attack Bronner and Kershner when they cover Palestinian victimization, the truth is that they overlook a great many instances. For example, a 33-year-old Palestinian father of two young girls (another child is on the way) was on a hunger strike that lasted for 66 days. He was near death when he finally decided to end it on Feb 21.

The young man, Khader Adnan, was protesting his imprisonment by Israel – he was never charged with a crime – and the beatings and humiliations he endured from Israeli interrogators. There was an extended international campaign about him that grew even more urgent when doctors began warning after 45 days that he was at risk of death. Eventually, there was so much pressure world wide (including by UN Special

Rapporteur Richard Falk and EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton) that Israel announced it would release Adnan at the end of his "sentence."

Yet, Bronner and Kershner – and *Times* columnists who frequently bemoan the alleged lack of a Palestinian Gandhi – did not publish a single story on Adnan until the 66th (and last) day of his hunger strike – after the *Washington Post* had finally carried a report two days before. The *Times'* headline was the very bland, "Hearing for Palestinian on Hunger Strike Is Set."

While Adnan's is the longest Palestinian hunger strike on record, through the years there have been hundreds of hunger strikes by multitudes of Palestinians in Israeli prisons; the *Times* almost never reports on them. It's revealing to compare their numerous stories on the Israeli tank gunner captured by Palestinians, Gilad Shalit, to the sparsity of their reporting on Adnan and others.

Overall, the thousands of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel seem largely to have been invisible to *Times'* reporters. While there have been gruesome reports of their torture for decades, there is little indication that Bronner or Kershner have investigated this or made much, if any, effort to visit Palestinians in Israeli prisons.

.....  
**Who is Jodi Rudoren?**

Now that Bronner's four-year term has come to an end (he says he initiated the transfer himself and was not pushed out over conflict of interest), it is not clear what went into new editor Jill Abramson's decision to choose Rudoren for this powerful position.

A cum laude graduate from Yale, Rudoren's journalistic experience appears to be limited to domestic subjects. Most recently she had been head of the *Times'* Education bureau. She speaks what she calls "functional Hebrew" but no Arabic. It's unknown how much time, if any, she has spent in Israel, whether she has family there, or

whether she has family members in the Israeli military.

When Rudoren received a tweet by Palestinian-American author Ali Abunimah, who noted that she would be moving into stolen Palestinian property, she responded: “Hey there. Would love to chat sometime. About things other than the house. My friend Kareem Fahim [a *New York Times* associate] says good things.”

This friendly but somewhat flip response to a serious subject has caused Israel zealots to attack her. The *Atlantic’s* Jeffrey Goldberg somewhat hysterically equated Abunimah, an author known for his intellectual analysis, with Israeli Jewish supremacists known for their violence.

Goldberg suggested that Rudoren should have “twinned” her tweet to Abunimah by reaching out to Kahanists – a group listed by both Israel and the US as terrorists. Goldberg should be pleased to learn that Rudoren said she had done just that, telling the *Jerusalem Post*, “One of the people I followed before reaching out to Abunimah was David Ha’ivri.”

Ha’ivri is an extremist settler rabbi who was involved with Jewish Defense League founder Meir Kahane’s Kach terror group, celebrated the assassination of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin when he had begun to make peace with Palestinians, and was convicted some years ago for desecrating a mosque. Abunimah, on the other hand, has written a book called “One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse,” in which he describes how Israelis and Palestinians can live together in peace.

Rudoren’s knowledge of Hebrew may have been bolstered by her summertime attendance at Camp Yavneh, a Jewish camp in New Hampshire that has an Israeli flag at the top of its website and boasts of its “strong Israeli programming.” It features a six-weeks “summer in Israel” program, though it’s unknown whether Rudoren attended this.

The camp website states that the current

boys’ head counselor “grew up in Gush Etzion, Israel, and has served as a Lieutenant Commander in the Israeli Army in charge of 150 soldiers in the Givatti Brigade.” Another counselor is a resident of the Israeli settlement of Efrat, which, like all Israeli settlements, is built on confiscated Palestinian land and is illegal under international law.

Despite an upbringing that appears to have included considerable immersion in Zionist mythology, indications are that Rudoren may be working to widen her view. She raves about a book by Peter Beinart called “The Crisis of Zionism” and retweeted a message by blogger Sami Kishawi. It’s interesting to note that the *Times’* only other female Jerusalem bureau chief, Deborah Sontag, often provided exemplary coverage; her term seems to have ended early.

.....  
**Tweeting like a J-Street official?**

Jeffrey Goldberg – who moved to Israel, became an Israeli citizen, joined the Israeli army, and worked as a prison guard at one of Israel’s most brutal prisons – assures readers that Rudoren is still within the pro-Israel fold, commenting, “I don’t know Rudoren... I do know her sister, from synagogue, mainly, and I don’t think Jodi is some sort of anti-Israel activist...”

Goldberg is concerned, however, that she is tweeting “as if she’s a J Street official.” For Goldberg this veers dangerously toward anti-Israelism.

In reality, however, J Street is a pro-Israel organization whose positions are dictated by what is good for Israel. Its founder has just published a book entitled “A New Voice for Israel.” If Goldberg’s assessment of Rudoren is accurate, then it appears that once again the *Times* has a person at the helm of its reporting on Israelis and Palestinians for whom Israelis are “family.” Quite possibly, literally.

Rudoren may be intending to cover the region accurately and with fairness. To do so, however, it appears that she will need to

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**If Goldberg’s assessment of Rudoren is accurate, then it appears that once again the Times has a person at the helm of its reporting on Israelis and Palestinians for whom Israelis are “family”**  
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## SAME AGAIN

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**She will be living in Israel, her children will go to Israeli schools, and her home will be one of the thousands confiscated from Palestinians**  
.....

overcome enormous ingrained bias, relentless and vitriolic objections of the organized pro-Israel community (quite likely including friends and family), and pressure by many powerful *Times* advertisers and colleagues.

On top of this, unless she chooses a different lifestyle than her predecessors', she will be living in Israel, her children will go to Israeli schools, and her home will be one of the thousands confiscated from Palestinians who are now living and suffering largely out of sight, their daily humiliations and victimization for the most part invisible.

These winds may be so strong that even when Rudoren believes she has stood upright against them, an outside view may show her tilted far over in the Israeli direction, her reporting on Israel-Palestine, to paraphrase Dorothy Parker, covering the gamut from A to C.

Let us hope that this doesn't occur.

Let us hope Rudoren understands that good reporting does not equate a false narrative with a factual one; that she will not be, in Abunimah's words, yet "another *New York Times* reporter for whom Palestinians are just bit players in someone else's drama."

Let us hope she understands that living in stolen property is not a good base from which to report honestly; that "balance" achieved by under-reporting Palestinian suffering while exaggerating that of Israelis is not balance, it is distortion. Let us hope, most of all, that she does not view some human beings as more important than others, but instead views all, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, as family. **CT**

.....  
*Alison Weir is executive director of If Americans Knew and president of the Council for the National Interest. She can be reached at [contact@ifamericansknew.org](mailto:contact@ifamericansknew.org)*

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# When populism is dangerous to democracy

George Galloway won the greatest by-election victory in British history, but the media still won't give him any respect, say **David Cromwell & David Edwards**

**G**eorge Galloway's stunning victory in the recent Bradford West by-election afforded a rare opportunity to witness naked imbalance, establishment scorn of any challenges, and blatant anti-Muslim propaganda in the corporate British media.

The excellent News Sniffer website exposed how the *Guardian* hurriedly fixed political editor Patrick Wintour's ugly analysis of Galloway's 10,140 majority win, with a staggering swing of 36 per cent from Labour to the Respect party. Wintour's shoddy journalism had initially focused on how the constituency's 'Muslim immigrant community' had largely abandoned Labour. The offensive trope of 'immigrant' Muslims appeared three times in his piece. And Galloway's popular call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan, and 'a fightback against the job crisis', was disparagingly cast as 'fundamentalist'.

It was shocking to see such elitist disdain for majority British views and for 'immigrant' communities expressed by a senior *Guardian* journalist. Someone on the newspaper, perhaps spotting the danger of the nation's flagship 'liberal' newspaper appearing so illiberal, acted swiftly to hide the evidence. Too late, News Sniffer was on the trail. This is what Wintour wrote:

'It appeared that the seat's Muslim immigrant community had decamped from

Labour en masse to Galloway's fundamentalist call for an immediate British troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and a fightback against the job crisis.'

This was amended to:

'It appeared that the seat's Muslim community had decamped from Labour en masse to Galloway's call for an immediate British troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and a fightback against the job crisis.'

.....  
**'The Muslim Vote'**

It is customary for the media to cast an honest, uncompromising political voice as 'controversial' and 'maverick' (or worse). And journalists did not disappoint. On the News at Ten, celebrity presenter Fiona Bruce, reportedly on a BBC salary of half a million pounds per year, referred blithely to 'controversial ex-Labour MP George Galloway'. (March 30, 2012). The British public will wait in vain for her to refer to the 'controversial' Prime Minister David Cameron or the 'controversial' President Barack Obama.

In a News at Ten 'analysis', the BBC's Iain Watson reported, with the broadcaster's version of impartiality, that Galloway had compared his victory to the Arab Spring and 'cheekily suggested he was challenging the entire British establishment'. (March 30, 2012)

But perhaps Galloway's suggestion was

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**Galloway's popular call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan, and 'a fightback against the job crisis', was disparagingly cast as 'fundamentalist'.**  
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**Oon Channel 4 News, Cathy Newman sought, like so many before her, to outwit Galloway - only to come out of the encounter with egg on her face**  
.....

accurate, 'cheeky' or no. Galloway was, in fact, pretty devastating in challenging the British media establishment in interview after interview. On Channel 4 News, Midlands correspondent Darshni Soni asserted that Galloway's 'fiery rhetoric on Iraq and Afghanistan specifically targeted young Muslims'; as though only 'young Muslims' should be concerned about Iraq and Afghanistan. ("Young Muslims defied elders to vote for Galloway"; C4 News, March 30, 2012)

Soni tried to trip up Galloway:

Soni: 'But what do you say to people who say you played that race card - you specifically targeted young Muslim men?'

George Galloway: 'Well, I think it was Labour that put up the Pakistani Muslim candidate, not us. So that's a ludicrous charge, to be honest.'

Soni: 'But you talked a lot about Iraq, Afghanistan.'

Galloway: 'Well, Iraq and Afghanistan are not issues only for Muslims.'

Also on Channel 4 News, Cathy Newman sought, like so many before her, to outwit Galloway - only to come out of the encounter with egg on her face. ('Cathy Newman interviews George Galloway', C4 News, March 30, 2012)

Newman: 'George Galloway - you've described this as the most sensational upset in history. I think you got a little carried away - there were two previous results with bigger swings. But it is pretty sensational nevertheless. What do you put it down to?'

Galloway: 'No I don't think I was exaggerating, if you'll forgive me, I'm a bit of a student of these matters. No party to the left of Labour has ever taken a Labour seat in a period when Labour has been in opposition.'

Newman pressed on:

'You're defining your terms very clearly and quite narrowly, but within those terms a sensational victory - what do you put it down to?'

Galloway responded amicably:

'I don't know why you're being so churlish about this. I know more about left-wing history than you do, I assure you. But anyway, I put it down to a tidal wave of alienation in the country, and not just in Bradford, against the Tweedledee-Tweedledum politics of the major parties.'

This is surely right. When much that matters is so clearly going wrong in this country and the world at large, no wonder the public is thoroughly sick of the fodder that is dished out as 'responsible' policies, debate and reporting.

Galloway continued:

'I think we saw what I described last night as "a Bradford Spring" moment - a kind of uprising, a peaceful democratic uprising of especially young people.'

Newman responded with barely disguised disdain:

'Isn't it slightly presumptuous or even arrogant though to describe a ... to compare a by-election victory with a revolution that has claimed tens of thousands of lives across the Arab world?'

Galloway exposed the biased stance of C4 News:

'Well I can see you and I are not getting on very well and probably that's a sign that I should go and do one of the many other interviews that are waiting for me. You obviously weren't listening or you're not hearing me ...'

Newman: 'I'm hearing you perfectly well...'

Galloway: '...I said a peaceful democratic uprising, a peaceful democratic uprising - that's what I think it was. You evidently don't. We'll see if it comes to anything. Thanks very much - because I really do have a lot of very important interviews to do.'

As one of our regular readers later reminded us on the Media Lens message board, the encounter was reminiscent of Jeremy Paxman's remarkable May 2005 interview with Galloway after he had won the Bethnal Green and Bow seat from the war-

supporting, Blairite MP, Oona King. In a dismal lowlight of a long BBC career, Paxman repeatedly asked Galloway:

‘Are you proud of having got rid of one of the very few black women in Parliament?’

Galloway rightly disparaged Paxman’s question as ‘preposterous’ saying that: ‘I don’t believe that people get elected because of the colour of their skin. I believe people get elected because of their record and their policies.’

There was more to come from the BBC. In an extraordinary segment on BBC Radio Five Live, reporter Anna Foster fired a series of hostile and loaded questions at Galloway. Just hours after his electoral victory, Foster kept asking why he had come to Bradford – an issue that he rightly said he had dealt with on numerous occasions before the election. Galloway took her to task for focusing on ‘the’ Muslim vote, as though Muslim voters were a homogeneous mass:

‘This is very incendiary and inflammatory language which the BBC keep using.’

After giving Foster several more minutes of his time, Galloway rightly described the interview as ‘a hatchet job’ and left the studio, leaving the BBC reporter flabbergasted.

Later that day on BBC2’s *Newsnight*, reporter Peter Marshall recycled the same discredited language:

‘It’s said you’ve relied very heavily on the Muslim vote. I mean, you yourself have said in the past that you used (sic)... you have the Muslim vote...’

Galloway responded:

‘I really reject this concept of “the” Muslim vote. Muslims are individuals just like everyone else. You wouldn’t say that there’s a “Christian vote” because Christians vote in all sorts of ways. And the Labour candidate, I remind you, was a Pakistani Muslim. So I really don’t think that’s a valid question. Every voter is an individual and every voter has to be appealed to.’

Marshall managed to include the standard description of Galloway as ‘a singular figure, a political maverick’ who ‘in triumph

is ‘unrepentant’. What he was supposed to be ‘unrepentant’ about wasn’t made clear. Perhaps for appearing on *Celebrity Big Brother*, pretending to be a cat licking milk from Rula Lenska’s cupped hands: stock footage that news broadcasters are seemingly obliged to repeat whenever Galloway is mentioned.

### The Wolf Man

The *Observer* played its part as well, publishing not just one but two anti-Galloway comment pieces. The first, by Andrew Rawnsley, set the tone, referring acerbically to Galloway’s ‘blushing modesty which makes him such an appealing character’. This was a dig at the Respect politician supposedly acclaiming Bradford West ‘the most sensational victory in British political history’. But, shooting himself in the foot, Rawnsley had got the quote wrong. Galloway had called it ‘the most sensational result in British by-election history’, not ‘political history’ – a crucial distinction. As we have seen, Galloway had clearly explained the basis for his claim.

For Galloway to draw any kind of comparison with the Arab Spring was, said Rawnsley, ‘a very advanced form of narcissism’. The *Observer* columnist then added the sly comment that Galloway had ‘declined to offer his fusion of Marxism and Islamism to voters at the five previous byelections of this parliament’. Whatever counts as a ‘fusion of Marxism and Islamism’ was not spelled out. It was instead left hanging in the air as something to be regarded by right-minded people as dangerously anti-capitalist and un-Christian; perhaps even unpatriotic and anti-British. But arguably the most blatant propaganda element of the *Observer* piece was the accompanying sinister-looking photograph of Galloway, reminiscent of Lon Chaney Jr as *The Wolf Man*.

By an amazing coincidence – or not – a second *Observer* hit piece by Nick Cohen deployed a similarly sinister photograph of

.....  
**After giving Foster several more minutes of his time, Galloway rightly described the interview as ‘a hatchet job’ and left the studio, leaving the BBC reporter flabbergasted**  
 .....

.....  
**Galloway's 'claim' that his by-election victory was the 'Bradford spring' exhibited, Cohen said, 'contemptible willingness to exploit the suffering of others for the purposes of self-aggrandisement' which 'no politician can beat'**  
.....

Galloway. The *Observer's* picture editor had obviously been busy scouring the pictorial archives and struck gold not once, but twice. The comment piece also had a cartoon-like flavour. For example, Galloway's 'claim' that his by-election victory was the 'Bradford spring' exhibited, Cohen said, 'contemptible willingness to exploit the suffering of others for the purposes of self-aggrandisement' which 'no politician can beat'. No politician? Not even Cohen's hero Tony Blair, who exploited the deaths of millions in the Middle East for his own self-aggrandisement as a 'peace maker'?

Almost in a parody of himself, Cohen wrote that:

'Galloway and others on the far left believe that Muslims can replace the white working class that let them down so badly by refusing to follow their orders to seize power.'

One had to check the date of publication. Yes, it was published on April 1. But, nonetheless, *Observer* readers were forced to accept that this was indeed not a spoof piece by a spoof Cohen.

The attitude was summed up by the title of a Liberal Conspiracy blog, run by Sunny Hundal: 'When populism is dangerous for democracy'. Hundal, the *Guardian's* 'blogger of the year' in 2006, was himself busy on Twitter. He referred to Galloway in responding to a questioner: 'I don't want any part of a left that supports dictators thanks. Maybe you do.'

We were intrigued by this and responded: 'Yet you write that Obama's re-election "is worth fighting for". Does Obama not support, indeed arm, dictators?'

The following day, Hundal replied. Here are some highlights from the subsequent exchange:

Sunny Hundal (SH): 'answer to that question is simple: as Us Prez Obama can't easily call for dictators to go. But Galloway isn't leader: he can.'

Media Lens (ML): 'You can't reject George Galloway for dictator "support" and

then back Obama who arms them, actually helps them kill.'

SH: 'can you name me one dictator that one Obama has cheerlead for?'

Writer and activist Ian Sinclair replied:

'Mubarak "is a stalwart ally... a force for stability and good" - Obama to BBC, 2009 <http://bit.ly/H2ZeLg>'

We responded to Hundal:

ML: 'Simple questions 1) Has Obama armed dictators? 2) Is that more or less important than what he/Galloway says about dictators?'

SH: 1) 'Has he personally sanctioned arming of dictators? No. They can buy weapons from China/Russia too, as Libya did.'

SH: 'he [Obama] didn't support Mubarak.'

We replied with a quote from 2011 in *The Times* on US aid to Egypt:

ML: "'the Mubarak regime is still receiving \$1.3 billion of military aid each year from America.'" (*The Times*, January 31, 2011)'

SH: 'Just for your info, since you guys set yourself up as a major source of info and critique: "military aid" is not guns/ammo.'

ML: 'True. Do F-16 jets, M-1A1 tanks, Harpoon, TOW, Hellfire, and Stinger missiles count? <http://tinyurl.com/5rwx7zf>'

SH: 'might help if you recognised that most of it referred to stuff over a decade, not during Obama. Now, answer my question?'

ML: 'Details here: <http://tinyurl.com/2ekorm9> May 2009 Apache attack helicopter sale here: <http://tinyurl.com/7djfdzl>'

And indeed Hundal's position was completely untenable. To sample at random, the *Washington Post* reported last December:

'The Obama administration on Thursday announced an arms deal with Saudi Arabia valued at nearly \$30 billion, an agreement that will send 84 F-15 fighter jets and assorted weaponry to the kingdom.'

And so on. Hundal wriggled and dug himself ever deeper. For us, it was another encounter with the curious capacity for 'selective inattention' found at the intellectual fringe otherwise known as 'the mainstream

media'. For Hundal, Galloway's words really are far worse crimes than Obama's active participation in the arming and diplomatic protection of murderous dictators who use his support to kill large numbers of people.

**Closing Remarks**

In our 2005 media essay, *Ambushing Dissent*, also analysing media treatment of Galloway, we noted how 'across the spectrum, "rogue" thinkers, politicians and parties are relentlessly smeared and mocked by the elite media. The effect is as inevitable as it is intended - to persuade the public to revile and turn away from radical voices threatening established privilege and power.'

The response to Galloway's latest electoral victory from the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, Channel 4 News and the BBC piles on the evidence. It shows - once again - that the supposedly liberal media, purveyors of 'open journalism', will fight tooth and nail to neutralise anyone who challenges the es-

tablishment status quo.

And yet it could hardly be more obvious that the British political system has degenerated into a grotesque, neo-feudalist fraud representing the same elite interests under different brand names. Our politics is structurally addicted to greed-based 'humanitarian' militarism, to exacerbating the catastrophic threat of climate change, and to denying the public any serious choice on the major policy issues of the day. An honest media would welcome any small sign of hope that the iron grip of this corrupt and oppressive system might be subject to serious challenge.

**CT**

*David Cromwell & David Edwards are co-editors of Media Lens, the British media watchdog - www.medialens.org - Their latest book, is "Newspeak In The 20th Century", Published by Pluto Press. John Pilger wrote of it, "Not since Orwell and Chomsky has perceived reality been so skilfully revealed in the cause of truth"*

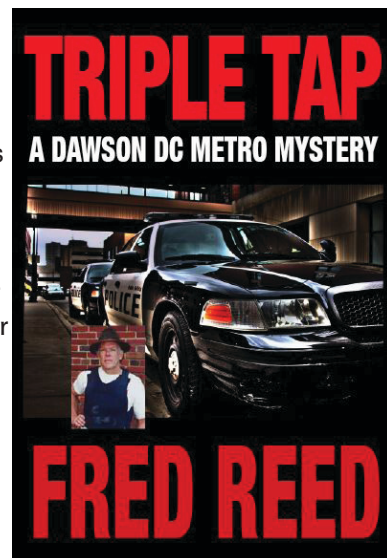
.....  
**Supposedly liberal media, purveyors of 'open journalism', will fight tooth and nail to neutralise anyone who challenges the establishment status quo**  
 .....

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